

Alfred Schütz Revisited: Social Exclusion of Refugees in Brandenburg

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Abstract: For refugees, the transition from their home to the host society is especially challenging. In particular, their situation shortly after arrival entails the risk of social exclusion. Based on two case studies, this article reconstructs experiences of exclusion within the integration processes of Cameroonian refugee men and unaccompanied minors in the region of Brandenburg, Germany. What connects the studies are the existential threats of being forced to wait due to having an unclear future and a pattern of being unable to refer to (positive) lived experiences in the local environment. The article approaches these dynamics by applying Alfred Schütz as a helpful analytical heuristic to the findings. The possibilities and pitfalls of the deployed Schützean framework are highlighted considering current methodological developments in the field.

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Since the so-called *Long Summer of Migration of 2015*, which saw an extraordinary movement of refugees to Europe, social issues of integration and participation have been under constant debate. In that regard, it is not possible to speak of integration and participation without at least touching upon the problem of social exclusion (Cresswell 2013). Refugees' efforts to

integrate are subject to specific pressures to prove themselves to the established actors of the majority of society. In that respect, refugees are much more than “outsiders” in the classical sense described by Elias and Scotson (1965). In a social climate in which xenophobic attitudes are becoming increasingly widespread (Davidov and Semyonov 2017; Gijssberts, Hagendoorn, and Scheepers 2017; Herowitz-Amir, Raijman, and Davidov 2017), a particular danger lies in that the majority society projects its fear of social decline onto them (Bauman 2004). Racial discrimination and marginalization then lead to a significant increase in situations of social exclusion.

Questions of integration and participation highlight the issue of social exclusion in that drastic fashion; first and foremost—by referring to it as a social status: refugee subjects are described as either included or excluded in society based on various factors that can lead to that state (for orientation, cf., the survey by Foblets, Leboeuf, and Yanasmayan 2018). However, less is made explicit about the processes involved at the micro-level: how is social exclusion experienced by the subjects? Where—in the individual experiences of those concerned—does social exclusion begin to take shape? Drawing on two case studies (Zalewski 2017; Thomas, Sauer, and Zalewski 2018) that constitute the empirical background of the qualitative analysis, this article seeks to unravel the broader notion of refugees’ exclusion, exploring the concrete social-psychological mechanisms of its (un)making. To do so, first, the state of the art—the circumstances feeding refugees’ social exclusion and discussions surrounding the contested concept of integration—is documented. Second, that state of the art is referred to in the theoretical perspective of Alfred Schütz (1944; 1946) as a tool to unfold such concrete mechanisms.

Theoretical Framework

Social exclusion is directly linked to people’s mental health situation. A plethora of studies emphasizes a special mental vulnerability of people in the arrival phase, observing that its specific stresses can be even greater than those caused by traumatic experiences during forced migration or in the country of origin (Lindencrona, Ekblad, and Hauff 2008; Carswell, Blackburn, and Barker 2011; Schweitzer et al. 2011). Subjective well-being after arrival is thus significantly lower (Ryan, Kelly, and Kelly 2009; Davidson and Carr 2010; Li and Rose 2017). First, low subjective well-being is directly connected to the asylum procedure. In that regard, one’s future essentially hangs in the balance. Residency status is usually only temporary (Momartin et al. 2006; Steel et al. 2006). The resulting uncertainty concerning the future must also be understood in the context of the looming scenario of possible deportation back to the violent conditions from which the asylum seeker has fled (Wright 2014; Robinson and Williams 2015). Compounding that situation, asylum procedures often drag on for long periods: serial renewals of “tolerated status” in Germany (*Ketten-duldungen*) are quite common and perpetuate stress (Laban et al. 2004; Laban et al. 2008). Consequently, that stress only subsides when permanent residency is obtained (Laban et al. 2004; Laban et al. 2008), which can often take years and is attained by very few people. Furthermore, the asylum procedure is often accompanied by unemployment. People are either legally prohibited from doing paid work, or there are too many institutional barriers to overcome. Without paid work, one’s situation seems all the more meaningless and stressful (Beiser and Hou 2001; Tinghög, Hemmingsson, and Lundberg 2007; Paul and Moser 2009). Being forced to live in collective accommodation also creates the risk of spatial exclusion, which can lead to social isolation (Porter

and Haslam 2005; Pieper 2008; Täubig 2009). That is particularly manifested in a declining social network (Steel et al. 2006; Ozer et al. 2008). Altogether, refugees usually have to simply sit out the arrival period. They can neither leave their past behind nor look to the future with hope for a new life in the host country (Denov and Akesson 2013). Arrival must rather be characterized as a state of waiting that constitutes a threat to one's power to act (Dupont et al. 2005; Vitus 2010; Kohli and Kaukko 2018).

Framing these circumstances more conceptually, the notion of "integration" has to be discussed. Particularly influential are approaches that conceive of integration as an outcome: the complexity of integration is determined using stage-and-phase models in an objectifying and quantifying way (Eisenstadt 1954; Gordon 1964; Esser 1980). That is manifested, for instance, in dichotomous perspectives (included/excluded), or in the establishment of degrees, or intermediate phases of integration, often shaped by external indicators, especially one's position in the labor market (Heath and Cheung 2007). Therefore, research into refugees' integration often poses the question: "What constitutes 'successful' integration?" (Ager and Strang 2008:184). As an answer, Ager and Strang (2008:184-185) propose four core domains: (1) achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, and health; (2) citizenship and rights; (3) social connection within and between groups in the community; and (4) barriers to such connection related to linguistic and cultural competencies and to fear and instability. These conceptualizations consider the causes and circumstances of integration, but less its concrete mode of manifestation. For that, a processual language is needed, grasping the ambivalence of integration processes' significance for the everyday lifeworld.

Alfred Schütz did not discuss the specific problem of refugee integration. Nevertheless, I argue that some of his conceptual insights may help out in that case. Worthy of being mentioned alongside Georg Simmel's (1971) studies on the sociology of migration and Ezra Park's (1928) work on migrant marginality, Schütz's (1944) study, "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology," is a classic in migration theory. Beyond the concept of foreignness highlighted in "The Stranger" and his essay "The Homecomer" (1976a),¹ Schütz's fundamental insights into the sociology of knowledge expand our understanding of integration and provide solid ground for the analytical questions raised here, with Schütz focusing on the everyday lifeworld as the key point of reference. It is precisely that social reality in which the subject follows a "pragmatic motive" to satisfy their needs immediately and where the subject's "natural attitude" appears unquestionable and inevitable (Schütz 1962:208). In "The Stranger," Schütz claims that a migrant's everyday lifeworld shortly after arrival in the host society is fundamentally disrupted. Like an "approaching stranger," the everyday lifeworld structures of his home society are the points of reference for his "unquestioned scheme of relevance for his relatively natural conception of the world" (Schütz 1944:502). Thus, he automatically begins to interpret the new social environment by applying the knowledge framework of his home society. However, there is often a considerable chasm between the two societies. In the new society, refugees have no lived history; they lack local experien-

¹ Both texts focus on the problem of foreignness, but differ in their methodological attitude. On the one hand—and that is my primary reference point—Schütz defines the stranger as a figure who tries to approach a new group that he does not know (yet). On the other hand, the homecomer from a different way of living, for whom Schütz chooses the example of a war veteran, expects to come along in his once known and intimate group, but fails.

tial and interpretive schemes (“relevance systems”). These must be painstakingly acquired from scratch.

Furthermore, a focus on the subjective meanings refugees attribute to processes of integration and participation is obstructed when a rather rigid understanding of integration as one-sided assimilation is applied, as was the case in the past (Alba and Nee 1997; Alba 2005). Therefore, critical refugee and migration studies emphasize refugees’ agency and the “autonomy of migration” (Bojadžijev and Karakayali 2007; Mezzadra 2011; de Genova 2017). In addition to these critics, Schütz offers a good tool for a virtual in-depth analysis of subjective meanings. For him, subjective meaning is created based on categorizing a social situation within the subject’s prior relevance systems: an internal (and thus subjective) representation of the objective action situation is formed, based on which the subject can act within the framework of the “stock of knowledge” on the situation (Schütz 1970). That creation of subjective meaning is driven by the so-called intrinsic relevances and imposed relevances (Schütz 1946). Whereas the former arise from one’s conscious plan of future action, the latter are (powerfully) forced on people by their past (Göttlich 2011). In the end, subjective meaning—in accordance with Max Weber (1978)—is the meaning the subject combines with their acting in a specific situation. Hence, in applying Schütz against the notion of integration as assimilation, the agency is employed not only as a political category but subdivided into empirically useful heuristics.

Set against the above backdrop, the underlying data and the methodology are subsequently outlined. Thereafter, this article demonstrates that using Schütz as an analytical tool opens one’s eyes to some very specific dynamics regarding integration processes and mechanisms of exclusion from the

standpoint of the subject. The empirical data are then meaningfully interpreted in three key ways: integration processes are understood as a crisis of understanding; imposed waiting in integration processes is strongly acknowledged; and Schütz is used as a starting point to grasp affective manifestations of subjective meanings in mechanisms of social exclusion. Finally, the article critically discusses its theoretical framework.

Data and Methodology

Geographical Context: The Region of Brandenburg

My analysis relies on two case studies, which are heterogeneous considering age groups, countries of origin, and methods applied, but which both cover integration processes in a single geographic context: the East German federal state of Brandenburg, one of the five new states founded after the German reunification in 1989. Since then, the region has undergone massive economic changes, times of increasing unemployment, demographic imbalances, and depopulation (Cassens, Luy, and Scholz 2009). Refugees entering Brandenburg in the context of the *Long Summer of Migration* brought about another form of a recent change to the region. Investigating integration processes in that specific environment appears to be particularly relevant: the region shows eroding social acceptance of refugees. Racist ideologies are gaining strength here, as evidenced by the right-wing party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), coming second (23.5%) in 2019’s local elections (Falkner and Kahrs 2019). Brandenburg is also one of Germany’s largest states, consisting predominantly of rural areas and few cities, thereby compromising social-spatial mobility and structures of supply (Born 2009).

What can be concluded is that the risk of social exclusion within everyday lifeworlds in Brandenburg is particularly high and thus worth a closer look. In the following, two case studies investigate that risk. They are utilized to understand how social exclusion begins to take shape in daily Brandenburg life from the standpoint of two groups of refugee subjects entering that local environment: Cameroonian asylum seekers (case study 1) and unaccompanied minor refugees (case study 2). The aim is not to compare these groups but to reconstruct the general patterns that apply in that region even when looking at two very different groups. Due to the combined analyses tied together through the specific geographic context, further questions of legitimacy arise. Potential clearly lies in the extraction of social exclusion mechanisms regardless of either country of origin or institutional treatment. Hence, the pitfalls of an ethnic lens and methodological nationalism can be avoided (Glick Schiller 1999; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Proceeding in this way may appear unconventional, but it was chosen as a novel way to identify commonalities where a research field of highly fragmented studies drawing on isolated ethnic and age groups tends to overlook them.

Case Study 1: Cameroonian Asylum Seekers

The first case study investigates the challenges faced by Cameroonian refugee men upon arrival in Brandenburg (Zalewski 2017). Qualitative interviews, which provide a classical gateway to subjective meanings (Kvale 1997), were utilized to facilitate in-depth exploration. The interviews were conceptualized as problem-centered following Witzel (2000), allowing a thematic focus on everyday experiences of social exclusion. The interview guideline covered topics such as spatial, financial, institutional, and cultural

exclusion, exclusion in the job market, and experiences of racism, the last of which may be regarded as part of the previous, but was added as an independent category worthy of investigation because it was of major importance to all the interviewees. Conducting interviews with refugees is a sensitive issue that requires one to reflect on power dynamics and research ethics (Fedyuk and Zentai 2018). Crucial in that regard was the researcher supporting the most important self-organized association of refugees in Brandenburg voluntarily beforehand and always relying on informed consent. Through building trust in that way, the group could function as the “sponsor” of the research (on the significance of sponsors, cf., the classic study by Whyte 1943). The group supplied the facilities in which the interviews took place: a public Internet-café that is run and owned by the group and serves as a safe space for refugees. The selection criteria were affected by that. Interviews were based on the trust-building process, which, in turn, established a snowball system, as all of the interviews were mediated through the sponsor. Further, the theoretical sampling approach, as suggested by grounded theory methodologies, was employed (Charmaz 2014:41). As the research was interested in an in-depth exploration of how social exclusion can be manifested in the everyday and not in a variety of life realities, a homogeneous group was selected: 6 male refugees from Cameroon, aged 22 to 36, living in collective accommodation in the same town. At the time of the interviews in 2015 and 2016, the men had been in Brandenburg for periods ranging from 2 to 17 months while awaiting the results of their asylum procedures. All of them were unemployed at that time. The interviews took from 41 minutes up to 1 hour and 19 minutes, with an average of 55 minutes. In the following, the interviewees’ names are anonymized for privacy policy reasons.

Case Study 2: Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

Additional data are presented from a second case study, which used mixed methods to evaluate the situation of unaccompanied minors from a variety of countries of origin in Brandenburg (Thomas et al. 2018). At the beginning of data collection in 2017, 1,503 cases of unaccompanied minors were accommodated in the facilities of the Brandenburg youth welfare system (Thomas et al. 2018:43). Two surveys that guided the study with $n=133$ and $n=138$ cases will not be part of the following; all data presented here were derived from group discussions and participatory fieldwork conducted with the minors (Thomas et al. 2018:48). In doing research with a vulnerable group, particular attention was paid to research ethics: in addition to informed consent, the participatory approach was chosen to enable moments of agency and empowerment for the youth, which worked against their social stigmatization in everyday life (for illustration, cf., Sauer, Thomas, and Zalewski 2019). The selection was based on voluntariness and was open to all. In that setting, peer research (Burns and Schubotz 2009) and photo-voice (Wang and Burris 1997) methods with a total of $n=40$ minors were employed. All of the participants were male, an important limitation of both case studies (for female-specific forced migration challenges in Germany, cf., the study by Schouler-Ocak and Kurmeyer 2017). Given that data on age and ethnicity were only provided in detail through the questionnaire, which admittedly had considerable overlap with the participatory fieldwork, the following information represents an approximation: 62% of the minors were aged 16 or 17, 32% were 18 years or older, and 6% were 15 years or younger (on the vague and limited means of age determination among unaccompanied minors, cf., Kenny and Loughry 2018). Numerous countries of origin were represented, the main ones being Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Guinea. In addi-

tion, one expert interview (Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2018) conducted with a manager at a child and youth welfare institution is presented.

Integration Processes as Crises of Understanding

It is particularly in their first months in the host society that refugees risk experiencing the sort of crisis elaborated by Schütz (1944). They are confronted with a fundamental and reciprocal problem of understanding. Their “thinking as usual” (Schütz 1944:501) has lost its universal validity in the new context. Thus, they experience a lack of orientation via a life-world that initially appears completely fragmented to them. For instance, unaccompanied minors initially have no grasp of their situation in the German youth welfare system because they have no prior lived understanding of institutional life in the host society, especially concerning the roles of carers (Nelson, Price, and Zuburzycki 2017) and guardians (Crawley and Kohli 2013; Sirriyeh 2013). That was stressed in an expert interview with a manager of a residential youth welfare facility for unaccompanied minors.

When they have been here for a while, they notice that not everything works. And, of course, that is frustrating at first. Because they don't come to Germany and start work. They first come into child and youth welfare. Then there are carers. Then there are guardians... And then some other people want something from them. What is actually going on around me? [Manager of a residential youth welfare facility for unaccompanied minors, m; trans. from German IZ]

The minors' initial lack of orientation within the German society addressed here by the manager of a responsible youth welfare facility manifests itself between two clearly disparate lifeworld systems. In

particular, the complex institutional structure of the new German lifeworld remains unclear here. As a Syrian minor (m) argued during participatory fieldwork and consequently stressed when he co-presented the results of the participatory research at various conferences, being new in Germany means to him “being a baby” once more, having to learn everything from the bottom up.

The adult Cameroonian refugees face a similar situation. Their everyday lifeworld in Cameroon was characterized by the social norms of spontaneity and mutual curiosity, whereas their everyday lifeworld in Germany is prestructured entirely differently, as was made apparent by Joseph (m, 26, Cameroon): “In Africa, people are very curious. They wanted to know what was going on there. But here?” Joseph could not immediately reduce the gap between the two lifeworlds via experience. He had been in Germany for 13 months, not enough to acquire the prerequisite “tested recipes” (Schütz 1944:502), but sufficient to experience the “old” recipes from Cameroon proven to no longer be valid. Hence, he has encountered severe social irritations in Germany. That was also made clear by Daniel and Armand:

I have always been with people around me. In Africa, we are like, “Hey, let’s go out, hey, let’s go there, let’s do this.” But here, you don’t see stuff like that. [Daniel, m, 25, Cameroon]

Here, it’s very different, because you see someone somewhere: “Hello.” “Good.” Go. “How are you?” “Good. Good.” When you say, “I’m fine, and you?” “Good. Thanks.” Then go. But, in Africa, it’s different. [Armand, m, 36, Cameroon]

Joseph, Daniel, and Armand live in different anonymous collective accommodation centers. Unaccompanied minors live in closely supervised child and youth

welfare facilities (Kohli 2007; 2011; Allan 2015; Thomas et al. 2018:109). Furthermore, they attend school daily and are not (yet) looking for work (Pastoor 2015; 2017). Nevertheless, their basic experiences of social exclusion in everyday life display a remarkably similar structure to the cases of Joseph, Daniel, and Armand cited above. The minors also experience a disruption of their relevance systems in the lifeworld. That is principally encountered at school, the primary site of contact with their German peers (Lems 2019), as one minor pointed out during a group discussion:

It’s difficult with Germans in my class. I am alone... Just “Hello,” “Hello, how are you?” or “Good morning.” That’s it. In my class. That hurts. [Unaccompanied minor, m; trans. from German IZ]

The Cameroonian men often share functioning lifeworld recipes, mainly with other refugees from similar contexts, although they had not necessarily been in contact in their home country: “As we are here, we are not friends, we were never friends back then, but we are brothers here” (Daniel, m, 25, Cameroon). It is crucial that mutual understanding functions in the way in which they are accustomed, as they can refer to the same normative framework. Unsurprisingly contact among them can initially be highly functional, as Alfred argued:

I don’t know anybody here. Only them from Cameroon. If I speak with them, that’s everything I want. If I see them, speak with them, they understand what I want, what I don’t want. [Alfred, m, 30, Cameroon]

Imposed Waiting in Integration Processes

In the following, Schütz’s (1946) notion of imposed relevances is employed to examine a particular manifestation of exclusion in the everyday.

Imposed upon us as relevant are situations and events which are not connected with interests chosen by us, which do not originate in acts of our discretion, and which we have just to take as they are, without any power to modify them. [Schütz 1946:470]

Refugees may have a great deal imposed upon them, especially legal restrictions within the context of asylum procedures. In the following quotation, it is only via the conceptualization of waiting as imposed beyond Daniel's plan of future action that subjective meaning becomes apparent to some degree.

I don't have anything to do. As for now, I'm always at home. How can a man of my age, I'm 25 years old. I get up in the morning, take a bath. Dress up. Sit at home right up to the next day. Sometimes when it's boring, I'll have to go out in the streets, take a walk. So it's really, really, really tough. It's really, really tough...Just sitting at home all day makes a man go crazy, you know. [Daniel, m, 25, Cameroon]

Daniel implies here that a man in his mid-twenties has rather strong orientations towards building a future. What is more, after months of personal struggle relating to his escape from Cameroon and facing death during his journey by boat, he longs to leave his past behind. However, upon arrival in Germany, his situation is structured through his personal history of forced migration. Time is crucial here in ways that intrinsic relevances are directed towards future action, whereas imposed relevances lie in the subject's past (Göttlich 2011:505). Having to orient the structure of one's everyday life towards these imposed relevances goes hand-in-hand with doing nothing and idleness in Daniel's case. Performing empty everyday routines, such as dressing, taking a walk, or sitting at home until the next day,

is without (positive) subjective meaning for him; on the contrary, it forces him to question himself as a whole because his new existence in Germany is what Dupont and colleagues (2005) describe as "killing the time." In the case of unaccompanied minors, the bed can function as a symbol of that experience; indeed, when asked within the framework of the participatory research to take pictures of the things that were most important to them in their homes, one presented a picture of his bed. He explained that it is the place where he spends most of his time (Thomas et al. 2018:165). Furthermore, the minors openly addressed problems of imposed waiting while searching for a job.

I am looking for vocational training. The immigration authorities say, "You have to do an internship first. I don't give you permission, you do an internship."... Then I go for an internship, I have the papers for my applications, I write them all. One hairdresser's shop here...I say to the immigration authorities, "I am doing an internship."...Then the immigration authorities say, "No, you have to first wait." How long do I have to wait? I am here for one year, and I am here waiting. [Unaccompanied minor, m; trans. from German IZ]

Imposed waiting then points to a captive life situation: the individuals cannot leave behind their old lives, nor can they begin a new one. Rather, they become "the mere passive recipients of events beyond our control" (Schütz 1946:470). Finally, in Mathias' self-descriptions, the extent to which that imposition ultimately progresses becomes clear.

When I came here, the more important for me was to make a new life. But, since I came here, I didn't get any chance here to make a new life. I don't know why. I don't know if I will stay in Germany or not, that is a very long time waiting...I don't know if I will stay or I will not

stay. Because I'm in the asylum procedure. Then I'm still waiting...Eat. And sleep. Eat. And sleep. It's very difficult for somebody who all the time works, then one time sleeps and eats. Six months. One year. Don't do anything. It's very, very difficult...Especially me, I didn't like all that time because I saw that I was spending my time on nothing. Since I'm here in Germany, I don't know what's going wrong with me. I look, one year and five months in Germany. Nothing is especially good for me. Just wait. [Mathias, m, 30, Cameroon]

Understanding these dilemmas as being forced to be inactive and to wait for one's "new life" to begin, it is unsurprising that one participant suggested that, ultimately, the situation resembles a form of imprisonment.

A human being is not supposed to sit down in the house. Just sit down in the house, not do anything. Nothing. You feel like in prison! [Alfred, m, 30, Cameroon]

What must be concluded from such experiences of imposed waiting in integration processes is that, in the end, they are accompanied by a severe subjective experience of alienation, disidentification, and loss of meaning, a finding that is in line with other studies in the field (Vitus 2010; Denov and Akesson 2013).

Affective Manifestations of Subjective Meanings in Mechanisms of Social Exclusion

By acknowledging that participation is structurally hindered in a way that may lead to personal alienation and subjective loss of meaning, the question arises of how these situations can be tracked down in the most comprehensive way possible. In the above cases, the loss of meaning was easily traceable: the researcher simply had to listen to what the participants

had to say about it. All of the interviewees were reflexively aware of their unfortunate situation and could verbalize their dilemmas in a way that was clear to others. However, in such a burdensome situation it may be the case that this is not possible for everyone (anymore). Subjective manifestations of experiences of social exclusion are not evident as such all the time. Rather, they may be implicit, such as embodied, or they may be so overwhelming that the individual cannot find the right words to describe them. In such cases, the researcher must be aware of what is being said between the lines, especially what emotions may convey when experiences can no longer be verbalized. That helps attain a better understanding of Luc's situation. He was in a situation where he had tried to find a job or something to do, but to no avail. As he claimed:

I have tried, and I haven't found work. It was so difficult then. I also tried to have an apprenticeship, but to do one?...Together with this woman, we tried to find an apprenticeship. It was so difficult then we didn't find one. The exact problem was that I came to Germany without certificates, and I can't do an apprenticeship without a certificate. That was the exact problem...I thought why don't they just do a test. A trial period, for example. Why don't they do that? We made a CV. We did that. I did that, did that, did that. Why don't they do a trial period to see whether I can do the apprenticeship or not? They just say, "You're an asylum seeker at the moment, and you cannot, may not, do that." [Luc, m, 22, Cameroon; trans. from German IZ]

What directly followed in his narration was first and foremost a description of a whole string of depressive feelings:

When I heard that, I feel very weak, I lose my courage, I don't have the strength to try or do anything.

I mean, I lose all my strength, I can tell you. Then I have too much stress and wonder, “What should I do? What will I do tomorrow? With my studies, how can I continue studying?” Questions like that. I ask myself such questions often, and I don’t know what the solution is (pause). And I feel very, very, very bad (speaking very softly). How can I say this? [Luc, m, 22, Cameroon; trans. from German IZ]

In the first paragraph, Luc’s effort to overcome structural disadvantages due to his status as an asylum seeker on his initiative and with institutional support is evident. However, ultimately, the barriers he faces to the labor market seem so great that such efforts fail after several attempts. In Luc’s experience, personal investment is then associated with his failure, a selective creation of relevance by him if we follow Schütz once more:

He groups the world around himself (as the center) as a field of domination and is therefore especially interested in that segment, which is within his actual or potential reach. He singles out those of its elements which may serve as a means or ends for his “use and enjoyment,” for furthering his purposes, and for overcoming obstacles. [Schütz 1944:500]

Luc assumes that finding a job in Germany, especially considering his significant efforts and the institutional support available, lies within his “potential reach.” Thus, in the event of failure, he experiences the moment of his enormous expense (“did that, did that, did that”) in direct connection to that lack of success. He experiences as irrelevant whether he does something or not; he will remain unemployed. In short, he experiences himself as powerless.

When relating the last paragraph of the quotation as the (emotional) long-term consequence to the

first, it becomes clear that in Luc’s case, the manifestation of the subjective meaning of his experiences has already proceeded to a point that can no longer be accessed just by an account to the conscious sphere. It seems as if Luc is virtually missing words (“How can I say this?”) to describe his condition in meaningful ways to others. His inability to determine his employment situation gives rise to feelings of resignation and self-abandonment coupled with a strong rumination on existential fears for his future (“What will I do tomorrow? With my studies, how can I continue studying?” I ask myself such questions often”). The subjective meaning of his situation upon arrival is decisively expressed in his emotions: despair (“I feel very, very, very bad”), despondency (“I lose my courage”), exhaustion (“I feel very weak”), and lethargy (“I don’t have the strength to try or do anything”), for instance. Thus, it is not only the reflexive consciousness—as Schütz would suggest—where subjective meaning must be explored (for current discussions in this regard, cf., Kissmann and van Loon 2019). What is more, subjective meaning is a delimited notion, that is, even though it can be reconstructed to a certain extent, it can never be grasped completely. As Wacquant (2004:vii) emphasizes, we must rather take into consideration that “the social agent is before anything else a being of flesh, nerves, and senses (in the twofold meaning of sensual and signifying).” Luc’s affective access to the world is, therefore, taken into consideration. Emotions show that what is happening to someone is of subjective importance (Katz 1999). In the sense of “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1969), Luc’s emotional expressions here are most important to attaining a view into his subjective situation upon arrival in Germany. They urge us to understand it as an existential threat.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This article has undertaken a qualitative analysis of the mechanisms involved in experiences of social exclusion within the integration processes of refugees in Brandenburg, Germany. On the one hand, the use of Alfred Schütz's theoretical perspective as a conceptual tool was found to have several benefits. First, following current approaches that criticize normative notions and models of integration (Crul 2016), it was able to challenge a very problematic, one-sided view of integration as assimilation. Second, it allowed for a broad focus on the processual level of daily life. Here, the theoretical argument outlined may go hand-in-hand with a more contemporary methodological one. Schütz's approach can potentially complement various qualitative methods that are used to empirically map everyday lifeworlds (cf., Yalaz and Zapa-Barrero 2017; Chase et al. 2019; Weidinger, Kordel, and Kieslinger 2019), as well as participatory approaches that enable their joint analysis (cf., Korjonen-Kuusipuro, Kuusisto, and Tuominen 2018; Mohammed et al. 2019). By referring to Schütz, the terminology and concepts used in studies applying these methodologies would become much sharper. Moreover, implementing his framework within the heart of empirical rendering promises the following: a profound basis for the now common, but sometimes blurred and tendentially underdeveloped concept of the everyday lifeworld. The term appears to be used broadly under different objectives, whether to reconstruct "everyday experiences," "daily lives," or "subjective perspectives." Referring to Schütz, it can also be argued that such attempts remain incomplete as long as an analysis of subjective meanings fails to form part of them.

On the other hand, pitfalls in applying Schütz to analyses are close at hand, too. The first to men-

tion is an essentialist conceptualization of refugees as strangers. Refugees, of course, are involved in much more than merely the subject position of an "approaching stranger" (Dahinden 2016; Hui 2016). Hence, when applying Schütz, it is strongly recommended that refugees are not pre-labeled as strangers per se and that overemphasis is thus not placed on conflictual moments in processes of integration and participation. One should rather, as a first step, make the social construction of strangers the object of study (Reuter and Warrach 2015:186). Beyond that, Schütz's lack of differentiation between migration and flight is problematic and outdated (Long 2013). His conception of foreignness is indifferent to the question of what causes it (Göttlich, Sebald, and Weyand 2011:23); it is necessary to add the moment of violence inherent in every act of forced migration to it. In particular, Schütz's assumed figure of "the ordinary citizen" in "The Stranger" can be highly misleading. What does it mean if one has experienced the existential threat of forced migration, but the other has not? Is the common world of everyday life still then intelligible? As Schütz (1976a) himself argues in "The Homecomer," a transcending foreignness may arise due to experiences such as war. Building reciprocity of perspectives may also fail in the light of the omnipresence of the discursive figure of *the refugee* in the mass media (Caviedes 2015; Vickers and Rutter 2016; Cooper, Blumell, and Bunce 2021). It might lead to what Schütz (1975:114) calls the "discrepancy between the uniqueness" of personal experience and people's "pseudo-typification." Ultimately, their everyday worlds must always experience validation through a socially significant other and be maintained as such (Schütz 1976b).² Otherwise, they may find themselves in the situation

² Schütz (1976b) illustrates that thought in his literary analysis of *Don Quixote*.

Robert Park (1928) once described: “The individual who through migration...leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another finds himself on the margin of each, but a member of neither. He is a ‘marginal man’” (Stonquist 1961:2-3).

We should go beyond making use of Schütz as merely a classic study and take into consideration his whole approach to social reality, thus revealing the mechanisms of social exclusion in a postmigrant society.³ In countries like Germany, migration is no longer an isolated phenomenon, but constitutive of society itself (Yıldız 2018:22). Thus, foreignness becomes more and more a phenomenon of general interest—as does the challenge of mutual understanding and building trustworthy relationships (Zalewski 2022). As has been pointed out recently, “consistent recognition of social realities of migration also requires adequate analytical and conceptual approaches” (Wiest 2020:3). Against this backdrop, it is worth (re-)examining Schütz’s ambitious program, old-fashioned as it may seem, in more detail. It should be thoughtfully adapted and expanded within how empirics are being processed. That means, amongst other things, that not only the reflexively available aspects but also the affective manifestations of subjective meanings in the mechanisms of social exclusion should be taken into consideration. Where it is difficult to verbalize experiences, new types of ethnographic methods (Kissmann 2009) may be applied, allowing us to observe emotions in detail and enabling us to capture the implicit aspects of subjective meanings.

³ In the notion of “postmigration,” “migration is to be considered a normal component of society, that is, all people are mobile in one or another way and live in a migration society, then migration research must address the analysis of society as a whole” (Hill 2018:100-101 as cited in Wiest 2020:3).

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