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Exclaves in the Externalisation Society: Accommodation, provisions and care for refugees in Germany

Abstract

Externalisation is a core structural feature of capitalist societies. The negative effects of a capitalist mode of society and economy are externalised to other countries and later generations. The question that will be addressed in this paper is how externalisation societies respond when people from the externalised societies push into the inside of the externalisation countries, as for example in the context of forced migration.

In this article, using the example of the accommodation, provision and care system for refugees in Germany, I will show that a fundamental element of externalisation is to re-externalise the people fleeing to the Global North into exclaves within the externalisation societies. I therefore argue that refugee accommodations need to be theorised as exclaves in externalisation societies, since spaces are created that are outside of these societies despite being territorially enclosed. In order to understand the character of the exclaves' borders and the bordering processes, I will refer to Critical Border Studies. This area of study helps us to conceptualise borders not only and not mainly as the material demarcation lines of a social entity. Instead, they result from a permanent social practice. They can be drawn almost anywhere and by anyone. Therefore, I will also trace the intended and unintended bordering processes in the context of refugee accommodation, and I will present examples in which these processes have failed. The added value of my contribution lies on three levels. First, I extend the externalisation concept and apply it to a new topic. Second, I add a global perspective to the understanding of refugee accommodation, provisions and care in externalisation societies by applying the externalisation approach to this field. Third, by introducing Critical Border Studies, I flesh out the externalisation concept by showing that borders are decentralised, highly fluid, never closed and neither universally valid nor visible to everyone.

Keywords: Externalisation, Critical Border Studies, forced migration, inclusion, exclusion, refugee accommodation

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1. Introduction

"Welfare capitalism typically exacts its toll beyond its borders – but gradually it seems that the empire is being beaten back now, that the externalisation effects are returning home." (Lessenich, 2017, 27, own translation)

"The isolation of Europe is not only being shifted further and further to the states south of the Sahara, but also being extended within Germany. This is figuratively shown by the long way to the LAF (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten – office for refugee affairs in the state of Berlin). We first had to drive to the ICC (International Congress Centre, temporarily the registration office for refugees arriving in Berlin), stand there in two different lines to even reach the reception counter, then wait again, then take a special shuttle bus to Turmstraße, walk through all kinds of paths along construction fences, stand in a line again and then wait in a shabby, worn-out room. (...) When I got there, it seemed to me as if Germany with its possibilities (...) was endlessly far away, separated from the rest of society by all these halls, corridors and paths, and light years away. Turmstraße is located in the heart of Berlin, the LAF is right at the Turmstraße subway station, and yet in the LAF you feel as if you are in a world of your own, where you can't really reach the other world. At the same time, it is completely invisible to the outside world, hidden and concealed behind fences. (...) Germany creates all kinds of little invisible corridors and places, or places that are only visible to refugees, that lead through society like a parallel world, separating it from the rest of society." (Field note from research diary on accompanying a refugee to an appointment at the LAF in Berlin, own translation).

Externalisation is one of the core structural features of capitalist societies (Lessenich, 2023, 20; see also 2017, 2020). In order to maintain their mode of production, these societies need to externalise the costs of their way of life to other countries and later generations. Stephan Lessenich gives the example of the contamination of entire swaths of land with several million tons of heavy-metal-contaminated sludge when a retention basin of an iron ore mine in Brazil broke. The heavy metals were used to produce coffee capsules, of which two billion are sold per year in Germany alone. Other examples for the externalisation of negative effects include struggles over raw materials such as oil or minerals and their extraction, which lead to internal conflicts and wars in countries of the capitalist (semi-)periphery.

However, the question arises as to how externalisation societies respond when the consequences of their way of life return to them, as for example in the context of forced migration. This is the main issue addressed in this paper. Human rights violations, economic and social inequalities, deprivation, hunger, war and violence, climate crisis and environmental disasters are often the direct or indirect effects of a capitalist world order, which produces numerous crises, feeds regional conflicts and forces more and more people to flee. Moreover, there is a lack of support by the core capitalist countries for civil society and movements against authoritarian or repressive regimes; on the contrary, externalisation societies partly support these regimes through economic relations. In 2022, 104.8 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced because of "persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order" (UNHCR, 2023, 2). The vast majority (62.5 million) were internally displaced persons. 70 % of refugees and other people in need of international protection were living in countries neighbouring their countries of origin; 76 % were hosted in low- and middle-income countries

(UNHCR, 2023, 2). Only a small percentage manages to reach Europe and to apply for asylum.

In this article, I will thus analyse the accommodation, provision and care system for refugees in Germany in order to develop a more differentiated and theoretically grounded understanding of the externalisation mechanisms described by Lessenich. I argue that the way refugees in Germany are accommodated and provided for follows the same mechanism of externalisation as in the externalised countries: The refugees are externalised once again. The refugees arriving in Germany are isolated, excluded and worse off than German citizens and other migrant groups. Accordingly, refugee accommodations need to be theorised as exclaves in externalisation societies, since spaces are created that are outside of the externalisation societies, despite being territorially enclosed. In order to theorise these processes of bordering within a country, Critical Border Studies can help us to understand that borders are not only and not primarily the demarcation lines of countries, but that they can be found and are drawn everywhere. Borders are never completely fixed and determined, but rather need constant reproduction. They can be irritated, shifted and changed on purpose or unintentionally. Accordingly, with the help of Critical Border Studies, we can understand refugee accommodations not as fixed and predetermined, but as social spaces where different actors are consciously and subconsciously engaged in the production of borders.

In order to substantiate this argument, I will draw on different materials. First, I will discuss studies of the past 20 years in Germany on the situation of refugees. Second, I will refer to documents such as laws and regulations in this field. Third, I will illustrate my argument predominantly with findings of a research project on accommodation, provisions and care for refugees in Germany that I conducted between 2016 and 2021. In this ethnographic field study, I analysed the subjectivation processes, the social spaces created in the accommodations and the impact on the refugees' agency. The study was carried out in ten different accommodations in six municipalities in five states of Germany. I conducted individual or group interviews with 85 residents and interactive photo voice workshops (von Unger, 2014; Thomas et al., 2018) with 36 residents. In addition, 13 employees of accommodations, six volunteers and seven full-time supporters, a doctor and a German teacher were interviewed, and numerous informal talks were held with residents, employees, volunteers, authority employees and translators. Through participatory observation, volunteer work in a shelter, accompanying residents in their everyday life (e.g., visits to authorities) and repeated visits to individual residents in their rooms and apartments (e.g. for joint dinner), different types of housing were researched in depth. Key documents (legal texts, press releases, official regulations, policy papers, media reports, publications by associations, organisations and authorities, etc.) were analysed. The empirical material was collected and analysed according to principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strübing 2004). However, as I will only refer to the empirical material in order to illustrate and support my theoretical

argument, I will not present the findings of the study in a structured form in this paper.

The added value of my contribution lies on three levels. First, I extend the externalisation concept and apply it to a new topic. Second, I add a global perspective to the understanding of refugee accommodation, provisions and care in externalisation societies by applying the externalisation approach to this field. Third, by means of the introduction of Critical Border Studies, I flesh out the externalisation concept by showing that borders are highly fluid, never completely closed and neither universally valid nor visible to everyone.

In section 2, I will outline the theoretical approaches of this paper, which are constituted by the externalisation concept as developed by Stephan Lessenich, on the one hand, and on the other hand in reference to Critical Border Studies. In section 3, I will give a detailed account of the exclusions refugees experience after their arrival in Germany. In this way, I will substantiate my main argument that refugee accommodations can be theorised as exclaves within the externalisation society. In section 3, the focus is on processes of (de)bordering and active borderwork in the context of refugee accommodation in Germany. I will show that the borders of the exclaves are not closed and clearly drawn, but are rather the subject of permanent negotiation processes, which can intentionally and unintentionally fail.

2. Theoretical approach

The theoretical background of this paper is built on Stephan Lessenich's concept of externalisation and Critical Border Studies. With Lessenich's approach, we can learn that the externalisation societies of the Global North need to externalise their costs of living in order to maintain their standard of living. Therefore, and this is the main argument of this paper, the costs have to be externalised even when the consequences have arrived in the form of forced migration. Lessenich identifies seven dimensions of externalisation, and we will see that in particular two dimensions are relevant when it comes to refugee accommodation in the countries of the North.

In order to better understand how the borders between refugees and non-refugees are drawn and how they work, I introduce Critical Border Studies. With Critical Border Studies, we can theorise borders not only and not mainly as the demarcation lines of countries. Instead, they can be found and drawn everywhere. Borders are never fixed and static, but rather always have to be (re)produced and are therefore subject to permanent acts of negotiation and irritation. As a permanent practice, bordering can also fail. Borders are never simply present; they are always in the state of becoming. Shifts and their deconstruction are already inherent to borders.

In the following section, I will introduce the main ideas of both theoretical approaches. They will provide us with the theoretical framework that helps us to

systematically elucidate and understand the character of refugee accommodation in Germany.

2.1 Externalisation

The concept of the externalisation society ties in with world systems theory (e.g., Wallerstein, 2004). World system theory divides the world into three areas: the capitalist centre, which is primarily constituted by the countries of the Global North, the periphery, which is constituted by the countries of the Global South, and the countries of the semi-periphery that lie in between. Lessenich argues that the costs of living in the capitalist centre are externalised to peripheral world regions; capitalist societies are always externalisation societies. Externalisation represents a specific mode of socialisation, a "historically situated and spatially circumscribed structural mechanism of social reproduction" (Lessenich, 2023, 20). This is based on seven mechanisms that build on each other, which I will present below (Lessenich 2023; see also Lessenich, 2020, 119–122).

Lessenich identifies the appropriation of production-relevant goods and resources in countries of the Global South as the *first and original mechanism* of externalisation. The *second mechanism* is their economic exploitation. In modern form, this occurs through the "legally codified form of unequal economic and ecological exchange within the framework of asymmetrical global labour, production, and trade regimes" (Lessenich, 2023, 21, in reference to Boatcă, 2015). This is followed by the material and symbolic devaluation of these goods and resources as the *third mechanism*. Four further mechanisms are necessary for the permanent reproduction of this functional context. The externalisation of the collateral damage and the costs of the capitalist system (*fourth dimension)* constitutes externalisation in the proper sense. In addition, as the *fifth dimension*, the economic and social space of externalisation societies must be closed. Immigration from the externalised countries must be actively prevented or regulated. This implies an "economic monopolisation of opportunities" (Lessenich, 2023, 22) in the form of a (drastic) reduction of "opportunities for production and consumption, mobility and living" (Lessenich, 2023, 22) in the externalised countries. The "consistent suppression of the entire practical context of appropriation, exploitation, devaluation, outsourcing, and closure from the socially effective store of knowledge" (Lessenich, 2023, 22) constitutes the *sixth dimension*. The active participation of all members of society and the externalisation dimension need to be externalised from common sense. This externalisation prevents questioning and potential change of the system. The *seventh, and last, significant mechanism* is the postponement of the consequences of externalisation to a supposedly distant future. This allegedly distant future is, as the most recent study of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows, approaching at a dramatic speed (IPCC, 2021).

The knowledge about the "imperial way of life" (Lessenich, 2023, 22, with reference to Brand & Wissen, 2017) needs to be split off from the societal collective consciousness, silenced or directed to "specialised actor systems" (Lessenich, 2020, 121, own translation), such as science, churches, NGOs and volunteers.

These seven mechanisms constitute the functional logics through which the capitalist social system reproduces itself globally. The externalisation societies themselves are constituted by "a complex ensemble of mutually supporting social practices, forms of subjectivity, and normativities" (Lessenich, 2023, 23; see also 2020, 122). This includes self-evident aspects of everyday life, such as a functioning infrastructure, and a lifestyle that conforms to the status quo:

> *"These social self-understandings and taken-for-granted realities are in turn embedded in a permanent process of explicit—and, in particular, also implicit—social self-clarification about the appropriateness and legitimacy of those global conditions in which one's own life unfolds. The externalization society is sustained by an economic-liberal moral economy that deems its own economic conduct to be ethically neutral." (Lessenich, 2023, 23)*

Citizenship is the key borderline between residents of externalisation and externalised countries (Lessenich, 2020, 125). It divides the world's population into those who share in the benefits generated and those who are completely or predominantly excluded from them. This division of the world is underpinned by an "asymmetric mobility regime", a "dense legal protective wall" (Lessenich, 2020, 137, own translations), visa requirements and a European border, asylum, and migration regime (e.g., Heimeshoff et al., 2014; Hess et al., 2017; Hess & Kasparek, 2010).

Lessenich argues that in the past decade this system has become fragile both internally and externally. The fossil energy regime and the global order of inequality, which form the central foundations of the externalisation system, have been shaken as a result of the climate crisis and an enormous increase in (forced) migration (Lessenich, 2020, 126). The question arises as to how the externalisation societies respond to the challenge of an increase in forced migration.

My findings will show that the refugees are externalised once again. As migration – in this case forced migration – from the externalised countries cannot be fully prevented or regulated, refugees are not integrated into German society and Germany's social structure. Instead, they are excluded in manifold ways in order not to destabilise the political, economic and social systems within the externalisation countries. Refugee accommodations therefore have to be understood as exclaves in the externalisation societies, as they constitute a world outside the social structure of the host country. With regard to Lessenich's concept, in particular, the fifth and sixth dimensions are relevant when it comes to refugee accommodation, as they highlight the necessity to close the economic and social space of the externalisation societies – even within the externalisation societies – and the need to separate this mechanism from common sense by separating refugees from the rest of society.

Accordingly, I will mainly refer to these two aspects. My analysis will reveal that refugees experience a (drastic) reduction of production and consumption, mobility and life opportunities after arriving in Germany. By separating them from the rest of society in terms of accommodation, provisions and care, access to the labour market and social participation, the knowledge about the externalisation mechanisms is split off from everyday consciousness.

While we can learn from Lessenich that externalisation is a fundamental mechanism in capitalist societies that is also powerful inside the externalisation societies, with reference to Critical Border Studies, we can better understand how the borders of the exclaves are drawn.

2.2 Critical Border Studies

> *"Bordering processes do not begin or stop at demarcation lines in space. Borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time, rather they symbolise a social practice of spatial differentiation." (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002, 126)*

With Critical Border Studies, we can conceptualise borders not as strict demarcation lines between two or more countries, but rather as manifold and decentered. This perspective can help us to better understand the function and structure of refugee accommodation in Germany and how borders are produced in the context of refugee accommodation and care. Critical Border Studies show that borders do not simply exist and that they are not bound to fixed territorial borderlines, such as the EU's external border (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 728). Instead, borders are continuously produced in many different places, they are found inside as well as outside of a society, they are mobile, perspective-dependent and relational (Rumford, 2012, 894). Borders are subject to a permanent process of negotiation and reproduction; as a result, they are not (anymore) easily identifiable and recorded on a map (Rumford, 2012, 891). Instead, borders are decentralised and diffused:

> *"By 'decentring' we mean an effort to problematise the border not as taken-for-granted entity, but precisely as a site of investigation. On this view, the border is not something that straightforwardly presents itself in an unmediated way. It is never simply 'present', nor fully established, nor obviously accessible. Rather, it is manifold and in a constant state of becoming. For that reason, we are committed to exploring alternative border imaginaries." (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, 728)*

The EU's external border is therefore not only located at the spatial edges of the EU, but also both inside and outside the border fences: "Europe conceived itself as developing borders of its own, but in reality it has no borders, rather it is itself a complex 'border': at once one and many, fixed and mobile, internal and external." (Balibar, 2015; see also Schwenken & Ruß-Sattar, 2014) There exists an "ensemble of sites of control, technologies of control and infrastructures of control" (Mau, 2021, 18, own translation). Steffen Mau therefore also refers to borders in the 21st century as "sorting machines of the globalised world" (2021, 15, own translation). Borders are consequently never merely the result of the negotiations and struggles of two powers. The border between Morocco and the Spanish exclave

of Ceuta, for example, is not only the land border between two states; it is also the materialisation of a restrictive European migration and border policy. Borders are thus always overdetermined (Balibar, 2002, 79), as they are more than mere territorial boundaries.

It is through "[t]erritorial strategies of ordering, bordering and othering" that homogeneous political entities, coherent and uniform orders and resulting nationalities are first created (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002, 126). This homogenisation process is simultaneously accompanied by practices of exclusion, difference-making and othering (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002, 126–127). Henk van Houtum and Ton van Naerssen hence argue that it is more accurate to speak of bordering instead of borders, a process which is primarily accomplished through the immobilisation of people, goods, money and services (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002, 125). Borders therefore require constant reproduction through practices of (re)bordering (Newman, 2006; van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Because of the "polysemic character of the border" (Balibar, 2002, 81), borders do not have to be equally visible, recognizable and effective for all people. Borders are highly selective and may have no direct or indirect effects for a large part of society (Rumford, 2012, 892), while they can be lethal for others. Some borders are visible and tangible only through the eyes of migrants, as I have shown in the excerpt from my field diary at the beginning of this text. Although the LAF is situated in the heart of Berlin, it was not immediately apparent that this building is a "sorting machine of a globalised world" that constitutes a border between the externalisation society and its outside. In the case of refugee accommodations, the fences around the accommodations are visible; however, the externalisation mechanisms behind these fences are not necessarily visible.

What also follows from the decentralised and non-permanent character of borders is that borders already have inherent possibilities for their deconstruction through practices of debordering (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2018). These practices of bordering, re- and debordering involve not only state or suprastate actors, but fundamentally all relevant actors. This production and deconstruction of borders by non-state actors is referred to as borderwork (Rumford, 2012, 898).

In sum, we can derive at least two important insights from Critical Border Studies. First, borders are flexible and not only the demarcation line of a country. They can be drawn at different times and places as needed (Rumford, 2012, 891). This can happen on the Mediterranean Sea, in consulates of EU members outside the EU, and also in the context of refugee accommodation, provisions and care in Germany. The second insight I would like to take from Critical Border Studies is the fact that borders are always subject to permanent processes of de- and re-stabilisation (Hess & Kasparek, 2017). Borders are continuously contested, and they already have inherent possibilities for their irritation and deconstruction. Through this lens, with regard to refugee accommodation, provisions and care, we can trace how borders

are subject to constant negotiation and reproduction processes and how bordering and borderwork fails – intentionally and unintentionally.

3. Refugee accommodations as exclaves in the externalisation society

During the "long summer of forced migration" (Vey & Gunsch, 2021, 8, in reference to Hess et al., 2017) in 2015 and 2016, over one million refugees reached Germany. Fleeing from persecution, conflict, war, violence and human rights violations, they arrived in the EU and Germany to seek asylum. These figures support Lessenich's observation that in the past decade, the externalisation society has been shaken both internally and externally. The common practice of the Dublin regulation that the first member state of the refugee's entry into the EU is responsible for the person's asylum claim was temporarily replaced by the sovereignty clause in Germany. The German chancellor decided that the German authorities would process the applications no matter where the refugee had entered the EU.

As the German authorities and infrastructures were not prepared for such a high influx of refugees – although the numbers of refugees had been increasing since 2008 and experts warned early on that the capacities would not be sufficient – this led to an infrastructure and supply crisis (Hanewinkel, 2015). Refugees were accommodated in emergency shelters in gyms, tent cities or repurposed buildings such as former hardware stores or airport hangars for months and years, being cut off from key provisions, care and infrastructure, and physically isolated from German society.

However, this development did not just start in 2015. Accommodation, provisions and care in Germany and the EU are generally characterised by a lack of supply in all areas, as social scientists and practitioners have shown and criticised in detail (e.g., Kleist et al., 2022; Pieper, 2013; Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2017; terre des hommes, 2020; with focus on the COVID-19 pandemic Huke, 2023). These studies show that refugees find themselves in a legal vacuum, with severely limited rights de jure and strongly limited rights de facto, as they have almost no means to enforce them.

Whereas other studies of the German accommodation, provision and care system mainly look at the situation of refugees in Germany, in this paper, on the one hand, I will relate the situation of refugees to that of other social groups in Germany in order to trace the systematic externalisation of refugees, and on the other hand, I will take a global look at the situation of refugees in Germany. I will draw the comparison by referring to key fields of everyday life, namely accommodation, provisions and care, access to the labour market and social participation. Education also constitutes a key area of everyday life. However, as in this field, access to infrastructure, provisions and institutions is comparably good, I will not discuss

this aspect. At the end of this section, I will take a closer look at so-called AnkER facilities that have been established in Bavaria, where the externalisation logic is almost fully implemented.

3.1 Accommodation

Refugees in Germany are obliged – depending on various parameters such as residency status or country of origin – to live in an initial reception facility for a "fixed period of time" (AsylGG § 47 para. 1) The duration of this fixed period of time varies over time. In 2022, it was – depending on different parameters – up to 18 months. Refugees from so called safe countries are obliged to live in initial reception centres until their asylum procedure is completed (Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration 2022). After this obligation expires, they are usually to be accommodated in so-called shared accommodations (AsylGG § 53 para. 1). Depending on the federal state, this regulation is interpreted very differently. Some states (e.g., until 2023, Berlin) prefer the accommodation of refugees in regular apartments, even though this is, at least since 2015, difficult to realise due to the rising number of refugees and the lack of affordable housing. By contrast, other states follow the approach of strictly separated shared accommodations, like Bavaria, which has the strictest form of mass accommodation system (see 3.5). What the mass accommodation looks like differs from state to state, but also from county to county, from municipality to municipality, and also within the municipalities. The accommodations range from repurposed military barracks or schools, over originally only temporary but now in fact long-term container villages, to newly constructed buildings with regular apartments, to name just a few examples.

There are no legally binding minimum standards for shared accommodations on the federal level. In 2018, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, together with UNICEF, issued "Minimum Standards for the Protection of Refugees in Refugee Accommodation Centres". However, they are not legally binding. As a consequence, the type of accommodations and available facilities varies greatly depending on the state, municipality and operator. Poor conditions often cannot be effectively criticised, and it is difficult to demand more needs-oriented accommodation, care and support (al Khlefawi et al., 2021). There is no institutionalised, comprehensive and binding complaint management system through which complaints can be reported in a low-threshold, anonymous and efficient manner and then dealt with systematically and effectively. Instead, as my accommodation study shows, it is quite common that refugees are not informed about their rights and how to enforce them. For example, it was reported by practitioners and experts in this field that the inviolability of the dwelling, which also applies to reception facilities, was not respected in many cases, and the refugees were not informed of this right either. Instead, it was not unusual that operators and employees of refugee accommodations told the residents that their application for asylum would be rejected if they complained about the housing and supply con-

ditions of the shelter. Their insecure legal status was used as a means of pressuring them to accept conditions that do not conform to human rights.

Due to this lack of legally binding standards, conditions in many accommodations are insufficient and regularly fall short of human rights standards (e.g., Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2017; terre des hommes, 2020, 7). In general, mass accommodation has a direct impact on refugee security, autonomy, privacy and agency. The accommodation and living conditions in mass accommodations are characterised by systematic alienation, de-subjectification and a lack of agency (Pieper, 2013; Täubig, 2009; Vey, 2018). Refugees are "confined, controlled and managed" (Pieper, 2013, 11, own translation). Due to this segregation, isolation and exclusion, collective accommodations are also characterised as sites of "(im)mobilisation", "tools of migration governance practices" (Devlin et al., 2021, 10), "semi-open camps" (Pieper, 2013, 351), "total institutions" and sites of "organised disintegration" (Täubig, 2009, 12, all own translations).

The lack of binding standards is in contrast to other social sectors in Germany where quality standards are legally binding, such as for example in elderly care facilities. Here, the quality of care facilities is regulated in a legally binding manner by the "Act on Quality Assurance and Strengthening Consumer Protection in Care" (*Gesetz zur Qualitätssicherung und zur Stärkung des Verbraucherschutzes in der Pflege,* SGB XI, including § 112 to 120). State funding is only provided if the operators of the homes agree to certain quality standards and if they comply with the standards. Establishing a quality management system in elderly care facilities is also mandatory.

3.2 Provisions and Care

Refugees receive their provisions and care according to the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*, AsylbLG). In initial reception facilities, where refugees are obliged to stay for as long as the first 18 months, according to § 3 AsylbLG, the "benefit-in-kind principle" (*Sachleistungsprinzip)* applies. This means that the necessary needs for food, hygiene articles, clothing, etc. are provided via value vouchers or food packages.

In shared accommodations to which refugees are transferred after this first time period, they receive standard benefits that cover daily needs and are granted either in the form of basic benefits or as subsistence assistance. These basic benefits cover necessary needs for food, housing, heating, clothing, health care and household necessities and consumables. In addition, refugees receive benefits to cover personal needs. There are also special benefits for certain life situations such as illness, pregnancy and childbirth.

The financial and material benefits for residents of collective accommodations are significantly lower than the *Bürgergeld* (until 2022 *Hartz IV*) that all other residents

in Germany and non-citizens with a residence permit receive. The *Bürgergeld* is based on the socio-cultural subsistence minimum, which represents the minimum amount required for subsistence in Germany. Already in 2012, the Federal Constitutional Court criticised the rates for refugees as being too low and called for them to be brought into line with the level of benefits under SGB II (Flüchtlingsrat Thüringen, 2021). However, these rates have still not been equalised, and in total refugees still receive significantly less than the socio-cultural subsistence minimum. PRO ASYL therefore speaks of a "parallel regime" for refugees (PRO ASYL, 2017). The human rights organisation generally considers the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act to be unconstitutional, as it provides for special treatment compared to other groups in need of support, which is not compatible with the German constitution (PRO ASYL, 2017).

3.3 Access to labour market

In a labour society, access to the labour market is key to an independent life. However, in addition to the exclusions in terms of accommodation and provision, the economic space is also closed or restricted for refugees. In the first three months after arrival in Germany, they are not allowed to take up gainful employment. An exception is made for refugees from Ukraine, who are allowed to start working immediately after arrival. From 2016 until 2020, refugees could participate in so-called "work opportunities" under the labour market program "Refugee Integration Measures" (*Flüchtlingsintegrationsmaßnahmen* (FIM)). This program provided so-called "work opportunities to refugees", for which the refugees received 80 cents per hour (in some municipalities they received around 1 Euro). This work could be carried out within the accommodation they lived in and included activities such as interpreting for the operator and employees, food or clothing distribution and cleaning of the accommodation. Outside the accommodation, they could work for state, municipal and non-profit providers, e.g., in maintaining green spaces or in social institutions. Such activities could be assigned and benefits reduced if refugees refused without justification to perform them (AslybLG § 5a para. 3). As these work opportunities were not considered labour, refugees did not receive a salary and thus were not entitled to receive the minimum wage at the time in Germany, which was 8.50 Euro.

After a waiting period of at least three months, refugees have different access to the labour market depending on their residency status. Refugees with an approved asylum application are allowed to work without any further approvals. Refugees who are still in the asylum process, or whose asylum application was rejected but whose deportation was suspended (*Duldung*), are allowed to work. However, they must obtain the approval of the immigration office (*Ausländerbehörde*), which in turn must obtain the approval of the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*). This does not apply to refugees who are obliged to live in reception centres or to individuals from a country that is considered "safe". In 2023, Albania,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Senegal and Serbia were considered "safe countries" (BAMF 2023). These refugees are not allowed to work at all.

For professional qualifications to be recognised, which is mandatory for several professions, a recognition examination must be carried out (*Berufsqualifizierungsfeststellungsgesetz* (BQFG)). The fee for this procedure is between 100 and 600 Euro, depending on the effort. Financial support can be requested for this purpose. My research indicates that this examination often proves difficult and does not lead to the desired result. The professional qualification of a refugee I accompanied was – at the end of a long process of more than one year – not recognised, although he had worked several years in his profession and had already studied several semesters at university in his field. After a long process of (non)recognition, he had to start vocational training again from the beginning, which was very frustrating for him.

3.4 Social participation

Refugees in Germany also face exclusion in terms of their social life inside and outside the accommodations. The often fenced-in, repulsive form of mass housing has a deterrent effect and promotes a perception of the residents as a homogeneous "mass". Mass accommodation – also due to the often inferior, structurally unsuitable buildings for housing – has a stigmatising effect. Everyday exchange with neighbours and civil society is prevented or made more difficult, as the accommodations constitute a separated, isolated and autonomous social space with their own facilities such as playgrounds and places to sit. Usually, in mass accommodations, all entry is controlled by a security service. In some accommodations that I visited, visitors were (illegally) forced to hand in their ID card at the entrance. Often, there are restrictions on visiting hours. For example, in the container villages I did research in, guests were not allowed to stay overnight and had to leave at 10pm. Security guards had established a security point at the far end of the site and reinforced the fence to prevent anyone from entering or leaving the site illegally.

As it is not unusual that adults share a room or an apartment with other adults they do not know, many residents have no (private) room in which they can welcome friends. Even if they have a private room or kitchen, it is often too small, crowded and not comfortable for hosting guests. In the interviews I conducted, refugees reported that they were ashamed to live so poorly, which was why they and their children did not invite friends, colleagues or classmates to come over constituting an enormous restriction on the social life of children and adolescents in particular. An interviewed refugee stated that he did not want his family from Iran to move to Germany until he found his own apartment to live in. He did not want to put them through living like this.

The social exclusion that refugees experience is not limited to the inside of the accommodations. It also applies when they leave the accommodation. In a con-

sumer society, money is key to social participation. Due to the very low amount of cash available to refugees, they only have limited (if any) access to resources, infrastructure and activities. This lack affects all kinds of areas. Even just getting to an event or a friend's place can be an almost insurmountable barrier. Affording the tickets for an event, buying something to eat or drink can constitute the next hurdle. My research showed that problems already arise in opening a bank account. Tobias Pieper already stated in his study published in 2008 that for refugees, the outside world appears "as if behind transparent bulletproof glass, close enough to touch and at the same time inaccessibly far away" (Pieper, 2013, 343, own translation). Residents therefore describe confinement as life in an "open prison" (Pieper, 2008, 7, own translation). They are allowed to leave the accommodations, but their agency in the outside world is strongly restricted.

3.5 AnkER facilities

The strict separation of inside and outside has been almost fully implemented in so-called "arrival, decision-making and return facilities" (*Ankunfts-, Entscheidungs- und Rückführungseinrichtungen,* short*:* AnkER facilities), which were established in the federal state of Bavaria and to some extent also in Saarland and Saxony in 2018. All refugees in Bavaria (except Ukrainians) have to remain in these centres until their asylum procedure is fully completed. In 2020, there were in total around 30 AnkER facilities and branches in Bavaria (Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat, 2020b). The building complex of these facilities is characterised by a prison-like structure with fences and walls reinforced with barbed wire, entry and bag checks, security guards and strict entry restrictions (Gelardi, 2021; Sperling & Muy, 2021). All central care structures, such as food supply through full catering, schooling, childcare, medical care and language courses are standardised, regulated and located directly in the centre. In the AnkER facility I visited, all kitchens have been removed from the individual accommodation units. Visits by friends and neighbours are restricted and only possible with many obstacles and inconveniences, such as bag searches upon entering the accommodation. Access for employees of external counseling organisations is restricted or – as my research revealed, in the case of the refugee counselling organisation *Flüchtlingsrat*, not permitted at all. Due to the centralisation of all necessary facilities and authorities, almost all matters must be handled directly in the AnkER facility – from the asylum application to childcare and language courses and doctor visits. The refugees should (have to) leave the AnkER facility only rarely. They are not allowed to stay out overnight. Products for everyday needs are covered mainly by non-cash supplies. This also includes a counted quantity of diapers, baby food and toilet paper per week (one roll of toilet paper per person and week) that is strictly adhered to. The residents receive a small amount of cash – between 80 and 120 Euro per month (Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat, 2020a). Day-to-day contact between refugees and the local population in school, education, or work is actively

prevented; in the AnkER facility I visited, separate bus routes have even been introduced that run exactly parallel to public transport.

In the same sense, Lea Gelardi describes the predecessors of the AnkER facilities – in reference to Michel Foucault – as heterotopias, since they have "a system of opening and closing that isolates them from the surroundings", and into which "one can only enter by either being forced to do so or undergoing entrance and cleaning rituals" (Foucault in Gelardi, 2021, 101, own translation). The accommodation in the AnkER facilities represents an "industrial-style simplification and increase in efficiency of the asylum process" (Devlin et al., 2021, 148, own translation). Due to the conditions prevailing in the facilities, the aid organisation Doctors of the World (*Ärzte der Welt*) discontinued its psychiatric consultation hours for refugees in a Bavarian AnkER facilitiy. The organisation argued that under the desolate conditions in the facility, they "could no longer take responsibility for the people, some of whom were seriously mentally ill" (Zenker & Kirchner, 2020, 70, own translation). The organisation criticised that the accommodation, provisions and care contravened the humanitarian obligations under international and national law in many aspects. Similar camps can be found at the EU borders and this trend is increasingly being realised und normalised in the planned facilities outside the EU borders.

4. (De)bordering and active borderwork in the context of refugee accommodation

By looking at key fields of everyday life, the analysis has revealed that refugees are systematically excluded from German society. The mechanisms of a drastic reduction of opportunities for production and consumption, mobility and living for people from the externalised countries described by Lessenich are reproduced when they reach the externalisation countries. This societal closure and exclusion in form of exclaves is relevant to the system. The refugees' lives take place in these exclaves – enclosed in borders that are predominantly visible and applicable only to them. An exchange with the rest of society is prevented, which could otherwise make people aware of the conditions outside the externalisation societies, those inside the exclaves, as well as the externalisation mechanisms.

In recourse to Critical Border Studies, we were able to trace that these borders are not only and not mainly constituted by the material fences around the mass accommodations. Rather, the borders of these exclaves are drawn in many different places and in various contexts. However, borders are never fully drawn; the produced exclaves are never completely closed and fixed. The potential failure of bordering processes is structurally inherent in any system. In this section, I will present examples of failed or challenged bordering processes. First, I will present examples of active borderwork through which borders were intentionally irritated. Second, I will give examples of failed bordering processes in which the closure of

the exclaves did not work for structural reasons. As we will see, unintended and intended bordering processes are often interrelated.

To begin with, I will present examples of intentional borderwork in the context of the demarcation between the exclaves and German society. The refugees who newly arrived in 2015/2016 were supported by thousands of volunteers who provided basic provisions and assisted the refugees in their arrival process. By entering the accommodations and committing themselves on a daily basis to the provision of refugees, the volunteers were blurring the boundary between the inside and the outside of the exclaves. They conducted active borderwork (Blank, 2021, 21). They entered the exclaves regularly, and by doing so, they brought the refugees' problems and struggles into German society, into their homes, work places, schools etc. Often, the volunteers brought refugees themselves to their homes, friends' houses und social lives. The volunteers thus counteracted the closing tendencies within mass accommodations. In some cases, this happened unconsciously and unintentionally. For the volunteers, it was just normal to do so. In other cases, volunteers actively got involved in integrating refugees and abolishing or shifting the borders. I would like to introduce here the example of an accommodation where, in lieu of cash, the refugees received grocery vouchers that they could only use in some local supermarkets and only for specific goods. In order to give the refugees access to other goods and stores, a local initiative regularly bought the vouchers – already before 2015 – and used them for their own purchases. Thereby, they provided the refugees more independent access to the local infrastructure, as the refugees were not bound to a specific grocery market and a very restricted range of products. Other initiatives I encountered actively worked to integrate refugees into the existing local structures, such as sports clubs, instead of establishing parallel structures in the accommodations. Conversely, volunteers and also social workers intentionally opened services for refugees to neighbours in order to prevent the installation of parallel structures and thereby dismantle the social space in the accommodations. The accommodations were to become places for meeting and exchange. By lobbying for equal access to infrastructure, resources and services and against parallel structures, political activists and volunteers in accommodations irritated borders and partially shifted them.

Furthermore, failed or irritated bordering processes can also result from unintended causes such as internal dynamics, competing logics and contradictions (Lahusen & Schneider, 2017; Vey, 2019). I would like to illustrate this aspect with two examples: first, the failed implementation of electronic entry controls in a refugee accommodation, and second, the politicisation of volunteers supporting refugees.

On the first example: The state authorities of one of the refugee accommodations I visited aimed to install electronic entry controls there. These controls would have made it possible to electronically control and track the entry and movement of the residents with cards. However, as the accommodation operator told me,

the internet connection was not stable enough to implement these plans. As the operator of this accommodation was additionally not very ambitious and interested in supporting the implementation, it failed and was abandoned. A manifestation and stronger control of the borders between the inside and the outside simply failed for organisational and technical reasons.

The second example I would like to present is the politicisation of volunteers. In contrast to the decades before, since 2015, many volunteers had started their engagement in this field predominantly for humanitarian reasons. The conditions for care, provisions and accommodation were especially bad in 2015 and 2016, and therefore, help was urgently needed. My research revealed that many citizens were called to action who had not been engaged in this field before. Many had never been intensively involved with the topic of forced migration. In the course of their activities, the volunteers were confronted with the situation in the refugees' home countries, the care, provisions and accommodation of refugees in Germany and German asylum laws and realities. As a result, politicisation processes were set in motion (see also Vey & Sauer, 2016). Volunteers started to critically reflect on the asylum policies in Germany and the EU. Many were shocked and frustrated and denounced the system, also because they felt left alone with all the tasks of providing basic care for refugees – care that they never intended to provide and which they were not trained for. This led to a politicisation of volunteers who became politically active, calling for a different asylum system, e.g. through protests, demonstrations or open letters. As a consequence, the externalisation mechanisms became visible and the strict separation between inside and outside, between them and us, was blurred.

5. Conclusion

Lessenich's concept of the externalisation society is an effective instrument with which the intersection of current global and local conditions, mechanisms and developments in the field of refugee accommodation in Germany can be analysed. In particular, as we have seen, the fifth and sixth dimensions are relevant in this context, as they highlight the necessity for externalisation societies to close the economic and social space and the need to separate this mechanism from common sense by separating refugees from the rest of society. Therefore, after their forced migration, a de novo externalisation of people fleeing to the Global North takes place in the EU and Germany. Refugee accommodations can thus be theorised as exclaves in externalisation societies. By applying the externalisation concept to the field of forced migration, a global perspective on the understanding of refugee accommodation, provisions and care in externalisation societies is introduced.

The reference to Critical Border Studies has allowed us to elucidate the production und character of these spaces in depth. Borders are decentralised, never fixed or valid for all. Borders can be drawn everywhere and by many different people and

means. Accordingly, mass accommodations can be understood as places where the borders of the externalisation societies are (re)produced inside of the capitalist centre. Within these exclaves, refugees are excluded with regard to key aspects of their lives: accommodation, provisions and care, access to the labour market and social participation. The analysis revealed that this exclusion is based on material borders such as fences or property lines at the accommodations, but also and mainly through immaterial borders such as restricted mobility, limited or denied access to the labour market, infrastructure, services and German society and social life. However, we have also learned that the decentralised and instable character of borders also results in a situation where borders reinforce a continuous need for reproduction. This necessity makes the irritation and shifting of borders possible. The deconstruction of borders can be conducted consciously and intentionally or unconsciously and unintentionally. Borders are always shifting and subject to permanent (re)production, which opens the space for different local and global world orders. Accordingly, research on forced migration, borders and capitalism needs to develop a differentiated understanding of, on the one hand, the externalisation mechanisms of societies of the Global North, and, on the other hand, the decentralised, uncompleted and overdetermined character of borders that makes transformations always possible and – in the long run – also likely.

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