

### "We Are the People." Refugee-'Crisis,' and the Drag-Effects of Social Habitus in German Society

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*Inken Rommel:*

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# "We Are the People." Refugee-'Crisis,' and the Drag-Effects of Social Habitus in German Society

Inken Rommel\*

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**Abstract:** »*Wir sind das Volk.* Flüchtlingskrise und Nachhinkeffekte beim sozialen Habitus in der deutschen Gesellschaft«. In Germany, like in other European countries, one can observe the recent rise of right wing movements, referred to by some authors as the New Right (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016). During the last years those tendencies were able to create and establish closed pictures of national identities, and promote these quite successfully through populist discourses (Speit 2016, 314). Since the so called 'Refugee-crisis,' they gained even more approval throughout German society and established the 'Muslim' as contrary to German habitus. On the contrary there are also civic movements that show explicit solidarity with refugees and offer their help to the newcomers, which was labelled as 'welcome-culture.' Since this polarisation of attitudes towards refugees is so obvious, the question that is addressed in this article concerns the motives and structural circumstances of this division of orientations throughout German society, and hints at questions of identity and habitus.

**Keywords:** Refugee-crisis, drag-effect of social habitus, New Right, Welcome-culture, Germany.

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## 1. Introduction

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In the consequences of war and economic crisis, millions of refugees were on their way to Europe and almost one million to Germany in 2015. From that point onwards, the discourse surrounding migration and asylum became central in political and public controversy. Earlier influential people like Thilo Sarrazin, according to Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations*, established a picture of the Muslim as the cultural enemy to western societies (Rommel 2016), and most refugees who came to Germany are Muslims. Since then the debate heated up on the topic of refugee relief. Are we, as a rich industrial country, committed to refugee relief (moral, ethical side, economic side)? To what extent are we supposed to help? What kind of risks can occur in the consequence of the

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great amount of refugees who came (under partially chaotic circumstances) to Germany.

Are we morally and accordingly ethically obliged to help out and integrate these refugees, or are we from the other perspective incredibly naive to think that those people, who are mainly culturally different, as it is emphasised on the nationalistic side of the figuration, are not going to exploit this kind of help for their own interests. Alongside these questions, a polarisation within German society took place, which might be only a symptom of deeper changes within society.

In 2016 it becomes particularly clear that the social center represents opinions which regard equivalence as a fundamental obstacle to democracy, as well as anti-human attitudes, which put these foundations in question and endanger them. (Zick and Küpper 2016, 15, translation I. R.)

The asylum seekers who arrived in 2015 seem to trigger extreme fears among great parts of German society (Zick 2016, 205); even though scientific representatives point out that the refugees present are neither an economic nor a demographic problem for Germany. Quite the opposite: they bring new dynamics and opportunities into an ageing population with little economic growth.<sup>1</sup>

According to that, the threat a significant part of German society is experiencing, is not based on material goods or direct concurrence but on issues of “identity.” The idea that foreign people can *become* German causes discomfort for some people (Treibel 2015, 47). The fear of “foreign domination” or of the allegedly “Islamisation” seem to be the main aspects of the right wing protest we are currently experiencing in a lot of European countries.

Two main opposing factions have developed out of this discourse around the so called “refugee-crisis” in Germany (Münkler and Münkler 2016, 186-7). On the one hand, there is a great welcome-attitude towards the refugees; thousands of civilians helped to supply them with food, clothes, bureaucratic help, language courses, welcomed them at the train stations and more. On the other hand there is a growing part of German society which experiences the influx of refugees as a big threat and rally to right wing movements (Vorländer, Herold and Schället 2016; Kellershohn and Kastrup 2016; Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016; Speit 2016).

In this article, I would like to describe both groups and their beliefs and claims with a focus on the right wing side. According to this, I will use Norbert Elias’s theoretical frame of reference to find some explanations for the development of strong right wing movements in Germany. In particular, the concept of “drag-effect of habitus” from Norbert Elias which refers to the fact that an asynchrony of the individual habitus and societal power-structures can emerge; social habitus is described by Elias as “habits and ways of thinking, feeling and

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<sup>1</sup> “The inflow of refugees is an economic stimulus for Germany” (Welt 2015, translation I. R.).

acting, which are bounded to the social group of an individual” (Elias 2001, 183). This phenomenon emerges particularly in times of shifting power-structures, as we can observe today within the European integration process – where more and more power-resources from the national state overflow to the super-national “integration unit” European Union.

My hypothesis is that this phenomenon of drag effects, can to a certain extent explain the extensive rise of right populist parties and movements in Germany and other European countries.

According to this, my hypothesis is that the “New Right” in Germany represents the people who suffer from this drag-effect of habitus as described by Elias. They personalise and ‘culturise’ (blaming Muslims, asylum seekers, the elites) developments which are caused by worldwide interdependencies, and reject the increasing interconnections in international spheres – since this rejection is without any perspective<sup>2</sup> of success, they react even more aggressively and desperately in addressing the allegedly guilty ones.<sup>3</sup>

Picking up earlier discourses, ‘the Muslim’<sup>4</sup> constitutes a suitable scapegoat for insecure right-wingers. According to this, I would postulate that these drag-effects of habitus are intensified by the financial crisis, which enhanced the insecurity about future wealth (Sommer 2010; Marg 2014) for large portions of European societies. Also the following politic of austerity increased the envy and mistrust between the countries. National governments used these quarrels for their domestic political interests and to stoke mistrust between the populations. The conflict between Germany and Greece, where the Germans regarded the Greeks as lazy, and the Greeks saw the Germans as Nazis, can be an example for this.

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## 2. Rise of Right Movements in Germany – the “New Right”

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Right wing populism has reestablished itself during the last years in Germany. In the 1990s and 2000s, parties such as the NPD who have represented right

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<sup>2</sup> “Globalization is inherent in modernity” (Hall 1990, 209).

<sup>3</sup> These reactions do not only show themselves in a raw language and a shift to the right in the discourse but also in an increasing numbers of violent incidents, as the latest numbers on attacks on refugees and their housings show (<<http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2016-09/rechtsextremismus-gewalt-anstieg-deutschland-neonazis-fremden-feindlichkeit-fluechtlinge>>, Accessed November 15, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> When Thilo Sarrazin published his book “Germany does away with itself” in 2010, where he characterises Muslims in Germany as a less intelligent and dangerous group which is culturally not compatible with German merits, a debate around the cultural identity arose in Germany (Rommel 2016; Bruns et al. 2016, 39). Speit also identifies Sloterdijk as relevant figure in this discourse (Speit 2016, 321).

politics in Germany for a long time, were a minor phenomenon only accepted by a small percentage of German people (Speit 2016, 317).

Noticeable is that not only poorly educated marginalised milieus support the New Right. The “New Right” in Germany can rely on much greater support throughout the whole of society, as the latest surveys show (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016; Bruns, Glöseö and Strobel 2016; Speit 2016). They emphasise the hypothesis that the bourgeois milieus play a great role in the establishment of right, nationalistic, and racist (*‘völkisch’*) ideas throughout Germany. Following Norbert Elias in his ‘Studies on the Germans,’ we also find the idea that bourgeois milieus, which were habitually bounded to militaristic merits, have been a supportive reference to the authoritarian ideas which became dominant in the 1930s (Elias 2005, 76 ff.).

The authors Bruns, Stroble and Glösel show that the “Conservative Revolution”<sup>5</sup> is an important frame of reference for the “New Right” and also an ideological bridge to other right currents (2016, 43-6). In the same way there is a differentiation throughout the population, the right scene is also divided into different currents. While for example Bruns et al. (2016) as well as Speit (2016) reveal the interconnections between the right currents, one can acknowledge the range of right orientations in the bourgeois party *AfD*, the young trendy *Identitarian movement* (Hafeneger 2014, 5) and *Pegida*, which is characterised by their scepticism against what they call “the elites” (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016).

There are connections between right-wingers throughout Europe, as for example the meeting of Marine Le Pen and Frauke Petry in 2016 demonstrates.<sup>6</sup>

To summarise, there are growing right wing movements, which are ideologically supported by significant parts of German middle class and bourgeois milieus. Prominent intellectuals like Sarrazin and Sloterdijk paved the way for this shift to the right (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 39; Speit 2016, 319; Rommel 2016). Even though these movements are bound to national interests, there are interconnections between right movements and parties throughout Europe. They share the idea of a “conservative revolution” against so-called “*Gutmenschen*” (“good humans”) and liberal elites (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016).

We understand the ‘new rights’ as a summary of all those groups which form a right-wing discourse on 1968 and are positive for the ideas and / or persons

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<sup>5</sup> Even though there is also criticism on the term of “Conservative Revolution,” since their alleged representatives are quite incoherent, they were able to identify key aspects of a mentality which they share: heroism, readiness to make sacrifices, readiness to use violence to follow one’s interests, the claim for a “male” society, rejecting everything which is perceived as “feminine,” such as peace, democracy, and pacifism (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 42-6).

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-10/afd-frauke-petry-marine-le-pen-front-national-treffen>> (Accessed November 15, 2017).

of the ‘Conservative Revolution’. [...] The ‘New Right’ thus consists both of a radicalized, value-conserving bourgeoisie and of modern right-wing extremism. (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 28-9, translation I. R.)

In the following, I am going to characterise three important currents of the “New Right” in Germany, with specific reference to the AfD, Pegida and “Identitarian movement.”

## 2.1 AfD – Alternative for Germany

In the aftermath of the financial crisis and the bank crisis and European debt crisis of 2008/2009, the “AfD” – Alternative for Germany – appeared on the political stage in 2013. Pivotal for their claims was the preservation of European banks during the crisis over German taxes (different perspectives are possible since a lot of creditors were German investors). In this period of the party formation there was already the tendency of criticising global interdependencies and European obligations as an economic threat for Germany – reorientation towards national interest was their credo from the beginning (Friedrich 2015, 28 ff.). In the course of the events which were labelled the “refugee-crisis” in the German discourse, in 2015, their contextual focus shifted from primarily economic themes, such as the abolition of the Euro in favour of national currencies, to more identity-centred themes like “German merits” and “core culture” which, from their point of view is being threatened by refugees coming to Germany.

Their main claims and viewpoints are to be read in their party programme from 2016. They believe in and point out the allegedly “distinctive entity” of the “cultural nation” of Germany and their responsibility in preserving this entity (AfD 2016, 32-3). Important to them is the claim for German “core culture,” instead of a politically supported multiculturalism, while multiculturalism is in turn interpreted as a great threat. AfD representatives fear the relativisation of German merits as the consequence of multicultural offers of construal. The German language represents a main object of German identity to them (AfD 2016, 32). “Politically correct” language and gender mainstreaming, which gained more importance during recent years in the German discourse, are rejected by the AfD (AfD 2016, 33).

Another important aspect of their worldview is the claim for a positive German culture of remembrance in opposition to the “shame culture of remembrance,” as perceived by Höcke for example (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2017). Even though Höcke is perceived as radical within his party, one can find the intention to create a positive remembrance culture in the party programme (AfD 2016, 33) – his speech can be seen as paradigmatic for a group of people who seem to suffer from a lack of *symbolic national pride* and perceive this as an emotional pain and shame. The concept of the “logic of emotions” (Elias and Scottson 1993, 18) which I will introduce later in this paper, might help to



explain this kind of personal emotional shame, which nation-orientated people feel, considering the “national history of shame” as Höcke calls it. They are aware of the loss of political and financial power of the institutional level of national states in favour of the institutional level of a supranational union like the EU.

“Islam does not belong to Germany” (AfD 2016, 44), is one of their most prominent statements. In great parts of German discourse, they refer to ‘Islam’ as an essential entity (Rommel 2016) and not as a diverse frame of reference which can be more or less important to the individual identity, as for example Pickel and Yendell show in their survey in 2016. They found that a great percentage of the people who are classified as ‘Muslims’ think of themselves as not, or not very religious. Labelling processes take place, which address Germans with migration backgrounds and refugees as one category – Muslim (Pickel and Yendell 2016, 275).

Another claim is that Germany is no “immigration country” (AfD 2016, 42) – the old credo of former German governments. It negates and disguises the several key roles immigration has played for Germany in the last decades (Bade 1994, 2013), and can also be seen as a symbolic degradation of immigrants already living in Germany – telling them you are not in; you do not belong in our country. They try to create a closed German identity, and present themselves as representatives of German culture which constitutes a usurpation of all ethnic Germans, and an exclusion of every one who is, from their point of view, not part of this culture (Kastrup 2016, 223).

About the AfD programme:

It is necessarily exclusive, is directed against all strangers alike (even if pragmatic political considerations allow “exceptions”) and also against all ‘Germans’ who are not willing to identify themselves with predefined ‘values and ideas.’ (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 26, translation I. R.)

The AfD supporters position themselves explicitly for liberalism of trade, but reject the mobility of migrants and legitimate this position by insisting on ethnic affiliation and an alleged incompatibility between “German” and “Muslim” “merits.” Since many asylum seekers who are currently coming to Germany are Muslims, they are discriminated against by AfD supporters for their political status as well as their “culture.” They also claim for austerity regarding the fundamental Right for Asylum (AfD 2016, 44).

In their rhetoric (AfD 2016), one can observe a well-known demagogic strategy of emphasising coherence on the inside and insuperable differences to the outside of their alleged group (Elias and Scotson 1993, 39).

## 2.2 Pegida – Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident

The development and the constitution of the right wing movement Pegida has been precisely analysed by Vorländer, Herold and Schäller (2016). Pegida is a movement which arose in October 2014. They meet every Monday in Dresden to protest against the politics concerning refugees, the ‘establishment,’ and the press. Although Pegida is mainly an East German phenomenon, there were attempts to start these demonstrations in West German cities but they were not as successful as in eastern parts of Germany. In Dresden, where Pegida was initiated, from 350 to 25,000 people attended these demonstrations (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016, 8). Even though Pegida and their attendees are less coherent compared to the other right currents, one can identify their overall positions as follows:

They address criticism to the political and social establishment. Similar to the AfD they believe German culture as being suppressed and infiltrated by Muslims (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016, 32-3). They also aim to protect German language, and a certain idea of German culture is paramount to them. Similar to the AfD they reject gender mainstreaming and politically correct language, which they express with labels such as “terror of minorities” or “dictatorship of sentiments” (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016, 34). Migration should only be possible if it suits German interests, and family politics must be in the focus of the government to solve demographic problems. The European Union should be a compound of sovereign national states instead of ongoing integration (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016, 36). According to these claims, Chancellor Angela Merkel is perceived as a traitor – as she made the decision to not close the borders when thousands of refugees were stuck at the Hungarian border in late summer of 2015 – she is being blamed by the Pegida protesters to make the alleged subversion of Germany by Muslims possible. This position has been illustrated through posters during the demonstrations, which show Merkel wearing a headscarf. Pegida protestors are chanting “We are the people” – this slogan referring to earlier events, when inhabitants of the DDR demonstrated against the socialist regime, claiming for democratic participation. This was a clever agitation since the Pegida- demonstrators point out their democratic rights against a regime of political correctness that from their point of view creates “bans of thinking and speaking” – with this image they try to cover their own exclusive and authoritarian orientations.

This slogan also represents the notion of a coherent “people” (*Volk*) with a “will of the people” and it implies the accusation of German politicians to act not in favour of the Germans, but of international elites and Muslims. They proclaim themselves as the mouthpiece for the “anxious and disaffected bourgeois” (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 201, 31).

This hints to the overall claim that the national state is the only legitimate form of representation to them. The ongoing political integration is perceived as a big threat regarding orientation and identity. “Our country, our merits” (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016, 94) is another slogan. Even so, they call themselves patriotic Europeans that represent nationalistic orientations.

The New Right proclaim that the re-orientation of the national state is a way of gaining back control over a confusing internationalised world. This seems to be an attractive proposal for identity, which has become politically endangered during globalised, post-modern developments (Hall 1990, 186).

### 2.3 Identitarian Movement

The *Identitarian Movement* is a European phenomenon, but in its various currents very nationalistic and culturalistic. The first gathering was in France in 2012, the consolidation of a German branch taking place in 2014 (Brunns, Göbel and Strobel 2016).

They are an offshoot of ethnopluralism, which has been described by Stuart Hall as a “cultural definition of race” (Hall 1994, 208) and which is based on the conviction that there are unvarying collective ethnic groups, which are all supposed to preserve their authentic culture and identity. Thus, European collective ethnic groups and their cultural identity are threatened by migrant flows and therefore need to be defended. In their opinion, no migration should be legal and ethnic coherence is the most important good, which needs to be preserved (Hafenegger 2014, 2-3).

The ideological content of Germany’s identity movement stands in the long tradition of modernized extreme rights, which focuses on the appropriation of themes regarding cultural hegemony. (Hafenegger 2014, 5, translation I. R.)

They demand direct democracy through which the “true will of the people” is revealed, using democratic freedom of expression to sell their notions of identity as “truth.” Followers of the Identitarian Movement stand in the tradition of the cultural war concepts, as in the conservative revolution of the Weimar Republic. Their ideological programme refers to the *Nouvelle Droite* (Hafenegger 2014, 3).

They address established politicians like Angela Merkel with the accusation of being part of a big conspiracy, which has the aim of a “massive replacement” of German people in favour of “Muslims.” This idea corresponds with the accusation of Pegida that Merkel acts in favour of Muslims instead of her own “*Volk*.” Particularly within the Identitarian Movement, the fear of a “great exchange,” in favour of Muslims, is dominant, aiming instead for a closed German culture according to their beliefs. European peoples are supposed to be “de-mixed.” They perceive themselves as counter movement to the 1968s movement and want to establish a new conservative *Zeitgeist*. They share connections to other New Right “culturalised” racist associations such as the *Insti-*

*tute for State Policy*<sup>7</sup> which is run by Götz Kubischek, a prominent right intellectual (Hafenegeer 2014, 3).

They address to the Germans the accusation of a “decadent society,” which risks the “overall despair” of traditions, merits, and homeland.

The core of ethno-cultural identity thinking focuses on demarcation and includes the idea that ethnic groups – so the group construction – their land and people, who are characterised by their language and culture are supposed to live in a coherent community in their historic place. (Hafenegeer 2014, 4, translation I. R.)

They subsequently assume a homogenous character and substantiality of peoples. They claim heterosexuality to be an important norm (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 17).

They stage themselves as resistance fighters against the Muslims and see themselves in the tradition of *Charles Martel*, with Muslims as *historic enemies* (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 16).

#### 2.4 Common Claims of Right Movements in Germany (AfD, Pegida, Identitarian Movement)

Summarising the statements of these three important currents of the “New Right” one can conclude that:

Representatives of the “New Right” in Germany promote a conservative view on gender roles and family life. They aim to preserve a certain idea of German culture and language. They insist on a priority to Germany, its people, and interests. They share a clear orientation towards the national state and are convinced that the national state should be the ruling institution. They support traditional family structures to preserve their “ethnic group,” which is imagined as coherent and stable. They support the statement that Islam does not belong to Germany; Muslims are perceived as cultural enemies trying to take over Germany, supported by German elites. The Pegida demonstrators expressed these claims through the slogan ‘we are the people,’ which represents the claim for elites to concentrate on them and their interests (see Sections 2 to 2.3).

They conduct a usurpation of all ethnic Germans (Hafenegeer 2014, 4) by assuming a coherent cultural orientation and a “will of the people” which is supposed to be represented by them. The alleged homogeneity though is an illusion (Treibel 2015, 51); actually, due to its historic formation, Germany and its people are very diverse.

The implicitness of using cultural arguments especially regarding Muslim people refers to an earlier discourse in Germany (Rommel 2016). This discourse focused on cultural differences as the cause of conflicts and inequality

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<sup>7</sup> “Institut für Staatspolitik”, located in Schnellroda, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany.

between the Muslim and the autochthonous parts of German society (Rommel 2016, 177).

In the aftermath of this discourse, a new form of discrimination became prominent; different from former racial ideologies not “race” but “culture” is perceived as the dividing paradigm to identify others who are rejected from belonging to Germany and its culture. One can observe this throughout all currents of the right movement.

The discourse surrounding core culture, initiated by the Interior Minister of Germany, exhibits how an essentialised and culturalised view on identity is also proclaimed by the so-called “established” parties; the German government and the conservative party in particular. Such a culturalised discourse obscures the structure and phenomena of inequality (Attia 2016, 181-99; Speit 2016, 324), which have to do with historical path dependencies – and estimates a power-based conflict as a conflict of cultural values (Rommel 2016).

## 2.5 Representations of Right Claims in German Society, Numbers

Some results of profound German surveys on right attitudes and right-wing radicalism can illustrate that claims and positions of right-wing populism, outlined above, have spread widely in German society. The authors of “Survey of the Middle (2016)” demonstrate for example increasing authoritarian aggressions against Muslims, Sinti and Roma as well as against refugees and asylum seekers (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 48). In addition, they observe an increasing radicalisation and the readiness to use violence among Germans.

Another survey on exclusive orientations throughout German society points out a radicalisation within the AfD (Klein and Müller 2016, 201). They also hint towards the fact that the political culture in Germany is dominated by radical currents today (Zick 2016, 211).

Accordingly, 40% of the people asked shared the opinion that “society is being infiltrated by Muslims” (Küpper, Häusler and Zick 2016, 143, translation I. R.), which demonstrates how much influence the closed picture of the ‘Muslim’ as a cultural-other has in German society. In addition, the “New Right” claim for a positive culture of remembrance receives great recognition among the Germans – with 40% of respondents of the opinion that, “We should have the courage to show a strong national sentiment again.” (Zick 2016, 211, translation I. R.)

Even though the AfD is trying to establish a “bourgeois” picture of their party, a representative survey shows that they are a party with a lot of extreme right-wingers. The researchers of the survey were also able to show that there are strong right-wing attitudes among Pegida supporters (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 92-3).

Right-wing extremism is analysed in respect to different dimensions. Some of them are of special interest to my hypothesis, since they show the re-

orientation of a great number of German people towards the national state as the most important frame of reference and object of identification.

According to this, another very important result for my argument is that chauvinism – characterised as a special bond to the national state – has increased significantly compared to 2014 (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 32 f.). 26.2% speak out for more enforcement of German interests in international relations (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 30-1).

An overall result is that men seem to be much more receptive to extreme right ideas (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 38). The authors also recognise a shift in racist patterns. While the overall approval of right extremism has diminished throughout society, at the same time the devaluation of certain groups such as Muslims, Sinti and Roma as well as refugees has increased (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 48).

Widespread is the mistrust of the state representatives in the whole of Germany, with 34.8% believing the national politicians to be “puppets of the underlying powers” (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 60). Likewise, there is scepticism concerning the press: less than half of the interviewees distance themselves from the term “*Lügenpresse*” (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 62) (“fake media”) which was chanted by Pegida- demonstrators. Decker and others are convinced that since 2014 the Pegida movement had great influence on the political discourse in Germany (Decker, Kiess and Bähler 2016, 63).

All of the depicted results share the commonality that they show an orientation (re-orientation) towards the national state and national interests, to the disadvantage of European integration, human rights, and refugee support.

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### 3. Welcome Culture – Counter Movement of Solidarity

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In contrast to the right-wingers who try to re-nationalise identity and politics, another movement became prominent during the so-called “refugee crisis,” which calls for worldwide solidarity: the so-called “welcome-culture” (Blomert 2017). Social scientists questioned people who showed civic engagement for refugees (Karakayali and Kleist 2015).

In their survey, they could isolate some overall claims of the representatives of the welcome-culture: They demand worldwide solidarity, human rights, and equality. They illustrate this claim by the exclamation „No human is illegal,” also used by NGO’s like *Pro Asyl*.

They mostly share the idea of a post-migrant society, which does not establish a hierarchy between core culture and minorities but encourages equitable participation for all. They claim “Unity in Diversity” (Münckler and Münckler 2016, 188, translation I. R.).

The EFA Survey on the phenomenon of “welcome culture” found out that there are two sub-groups within this group, who reason their dedication to refugees and migrants with two main motives:

The one sub-group – mostly students – name solidarity and social closeness as their main motive, while the other side, which is mostly represented by older people 50+, name “Christian merits” as their main motive for refugee-support (Karakayali and Kleist 2015, 32).

Another result from a different survey is that the support of the “welcome culture” has overall diminished during the last years, from 36% (in 2013/14) to 28.2% (in 2015/16) (Zick and Preuß 2016, 3).

The preference of refugees who are similar in religion and culture, is an attitude that seems to correlate with growing age within this group. Almost every one asked who agreed with this statement was older than 50 years old (Karakayali and Kleist 2015, 32).

According to this, one could also speculate that favour for certain ethnic or national characteristics is not only affected by class, educational and regional factors but also generational factors. The experience of equal interaction with foreigners or their children might be an inherent experience younger people share in contrast to elder generations. This certainly provides some interesting research questions for the future. The findings from the survey on the welcome culture (Karakayali and Kleist 2015) prompt the idea that younger people seem to be habitually more able to accept foreigners or migrants at eye level. The special cultural capital younger people share – such as foreign languages or digital networking – might also help explain the “feeling of closeness” (Karakayali and Kleist 2015, 32) which they address in the survey.

The *Pulse of Europe* movement also represents an international orientation, and can be perceived as a counter movement to the nationalistic agitations. As their interest, they formulate the goal “to make the idea of Europe visible and audible again” as well as the “preservation of a united Europe.”<sup>8</sup>

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#### 4. Sociodemographic Features and Representation of Preferences

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The current figures from Table 1 are not precisely comparable, but give an idea of the composition of the opposing groups and their educational level. One aspect that becomes clear is the gender-differences. While women dominate the *welcome culture*, the right-wing movements are male dominated. Both groups have a certain number of academics among them while representatives of the *welcome culture* share the highest educational level.

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<sup>8</sup> <<https://pulseofeurope.eu/pulse-of-europe/ueber-uns/>>, Accessed November 15, 2017.

Table 1: Dividing Lines

	"Welcome-culture" (EFA)	Right Attitudes Pegida (Vorländer 2016)	AfD (Mitte Studie Leipzig)
Age	20-30=34%; 60+ =2.5%	30-60	Average Age 46.9
Education	61.6% academic degree	33% academic degree	16.2% qualification for university entrance
Labour market, wages	69.2% satisfied with their wage	only 2% unemployed, over-average income	79% satisfied with their wage
Gender	female majority (72%)	male majority	male majority (64.2%)
Milieu	Students, Christians	Without Confession	43% no confession, 30.8% Catholic, 22.7% Protestant

It could be concluded that we find two groups in German society with somehow contradictory positions in relation to the German identity and then towards dealing with migrants in the whole, and especially refugees. On the one hand the supporters of the welcome-culture and on the other hand the Pegida-demonstrators and the AfD supporters, which represent the shift to the right in German society. Zick and Küpper ascertained a polarisation of political orientations throughout Germany (2016, 15 f.).

Bruns, Glösel and Strobel (2016, 64-5), as well as Speit (2016, 319), emphasise that well-educated bourgeois milieus<sup>9</sup> offer a great frame of reference to right ideas and thus play a leading part in the shift to the right, which took place in German society during the last years. Müller (2013) describes this as the "erosion of the centre of society"; Wilhelm Heitmeyer, who has run a long-term survey on the phenomenon of "group-based-misanthropy" (translation I. R.) labels these developments "de-culturation of the bourgeoisie" (Speit 2016, 325).

Speit associates this "de-culturation" with the radicalisation of economic circumstances in a neoliberal way (Speit 2016, 325). He also offers criticism of scientific and public discourses – according to him, they tend to focus too much on the *extreme right* currents with National Socialist background, disregarding

<sup>9</sup> The term "bourgeois" contains a lot of semantic contradictions (Marg 2014, 258). It can either be used for everyone who is a citizen of a national state or describe an economical and cultural current which is located between aristocratic currents or upper class, and working class (Kocka 2008, 3). The use of this term in this article complies with the latter understanding. Regarding the AfD, "bourgeois" is a self-description; they emphasise that a bourgeois-led national state is the only favourable institution instead of a European integration (Kellershohn 2016, 20).



reflexions on moderate right milieus. Thus, the relevance of right-wing citizens who share an *unequal value ideology* as part of their worldview, is hidden, which made the shift towards an ideology of unequal value between Germans and Muslims possible (Speit 2016, 322).

The typical claim from right-wing bourgeois milieus “You must be allowed to say that”<sup>10</sup> (Speit 2016, 318, translation I. R.), seems to be absurd since the expression of generalised prejudices about “the Muslim” or “the refugee” has become a normality in recent debates. The sociologist Harald Welzer refers to this process as “shifting baseline” that particularly occurs in times of great dynamics on the political level.<sup>11</sup> The slight changes in the connotations of the discourse remain unconscious,

because the messages, terms, concepts, and provocations alternate so wildly, that one hardly notices that what was unspeakable yesterday, is today already part of a seemingly normal political discourse. (Welzer 2017, 2)

This can become dangerous for social solidarity:

When misanthropic narratives and images of minorities are shared by the majority of a group, the prejudice shifts from ideology to social norm and becomes a shared reality of the group. (Zick 2016, 210, translation I. R.)

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## 5. The Attempt of an Explanation with the Help of Norbert Elias's Theoretical Frame of Reference - Concept of Social Habitus

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For Norbert Elias the term social habitus means that there are habits and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, which are bound to the social group of an individual (relative autonomy) and accordingly, that members of a group share together. The more complex a society is in its structure, the more layers of social habitus exist (Elias 2001, 183). The accelerated social differentiation during the last decades worldwide, but especially in industrialised countries, has led to several integrational problems within these societies (Hall 1994, 210).

Elias emphasises that even though in differentiated societies the social habitus can have several layers, there is a special importance of the survival-unit one is living in, for one's identity and habitual orientations:

It depends on the number of interlocking planes in his society how many layers are interwoven in the social habitus of a person. Among them, a particular layer usually has a special prominence. It is the layer characteristic of a mem-

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<sup>10</sup> “Das müsse man doch noch sagen dürfen” (Speit 2016, 318).

<sup>11</sup> For example the integration process of the European Union, growing international interdependencies, big problems like climate change and others.

bership of a particular social survival group, for example, a tribe or state. (Elias 2001, 183)

## 5.1 Drag-Effect of Social Habitus

In Elias's terms, the drag effect of habitus occurs when there is an asynchrony of habitual structures of individuals and the power structures they live in (Elias 2001, 167 and 281).

These drag effects are very likely to occur when central power resources shift from one less complex survival unit to a more complex survivor unit. In our example, this has been happening within the integration process from autonomous national states to the supranational European Union. "[...] in the course of such integration processes the individual first of all loses power opportunities in relation to society" (Elias 2001, 165, translation I. R.) – and accordingly in relation to European elites as it is perceived by Pegida (section 2.2). In this situation people "[...] have virtually no chance of influencing events on the global plane of integration" (Elias 2001, 165), for example financial crises, climate change, power of rating agencies, or international elites.

The diminishing influence of national decision-making is experienced by representatives of the *New Right*, but they do not perceive it as a result from worldwide interdependencies which have their dynamics separately from individual acting, but blame politicians, migrants, and refugees for enforcing these developments. Politicians, migrants, and refugees receive the blame for globalisation processes as concrete others. Although the ongoing integration of humankind is not steerable because it has its own dynamics, some people seem to be under the illusion that a withdrawal back to the level of the national state would be possible and that they could cut off supranational and international relationships and still succeed economically in a globalised world. A positivistic and individualistic ideology, which seems to be prominent among right-wingers, suggests that societies or even individuals can control and manage everything – for example, those integration processes<sup>12</sup> – and fail to realise that there are dynamics which evolve out of worldwide interdependencies, and which cannot be affected much by one country or person.

We may or may not welcome the increasing integration of mankind. What is quite certain is that to begin with it increases the impotence of the individual in relation to what is happening on the top level of Humanity. (Elias 2001, 166, translation I. R.)

To conclude, the ongoing globalisation (accompanied by new forms of communication and new power-structures) is a great challenge to the social habitus of those people who do not profit (losing position in favour of others) from

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the idea that Merkel herself opened the borders in summer 2015 and thus is personally responsible for the refugee crisis.

these developments, and especially those who see their social capital in danger (loss of function), and observe the emergence of new forms of capital that are generally valued but are out of reach for them, such as foreign languages and new forms of digital work.

This might explain the quite diverse composition of the New Right, which unites highly educated bourgeois milieus who see their status positions and capitals in danger as well as poorly qualified younger people who are, from the offset, overwhelmed by the requirements of a globalised *knowledge society*. They share the general precariousness of living conditions (Marg 2014, 234) in the form of short-term contracts and the requirement of lifelong learning with many other segments of the population.

It is a learning process to act under new requirements. This process can be delayed, is very complex and painful in terms of identity (Elias 2001, 285) and can lead to drag-effects of habitus.

The new and expanded ways to identify oneself now appear to us often as too diverse, too little permanent, and in its architecture and iconography too complicated. (Kaschuba 2016, 138, translation I. R.)

## 5.2 Scope of Identification

The explanation of why the process of habitual adoption to new power-balances is so painful and hard is connected to another phenomenon described by Norbert Elias. The “We-Identity” which is central to the social habitus and is bound to the survival-group an individual lives in (Elias 2001, 168).

On the European continent, the survival-unit national state has been central for at least two hundred years. The German integration process has been described historically as late and problematic (compared to other European countries) and ended in favour of a militaristic habitus (Elias 2005, 77) which can still be seen as part of the “national character” (Elias 2005, 94).

The re-orientation of these currents of German habitus is pushed by right intellectuals, who exploit uncertainty of some people to address their exclusive perception of German identity.

The polarisation of political orientations throughout German society is obvious: Some parts of German society, represented by the *welcome-culture* and *Pulse of Europe*, share a wide scope of identification, which has the whole world as their frame of reference (welcome culture), or the European Union (Pulse of Europe). While in other parts of German society, the “scope of identification” is bound to the national state as their dominant frame of reference (Pegida, AfD, *die Identitären*, “New Right”). This re-orientation gets pushed by right intellectuals who interrelate the feeling of depravation with myths about German identity and racial homogeneity, and address the wish for a “conservative revolution” (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 40 ff.).

“While some are looking ahead, the others orient themselves backwards” (Zick 2016, 214, translation I. R.).

### 5.3 Logic of Emotions

How can we explain the rigidity and the exclusive orientations of an intellectual class in Germany, which does not suffer from a lack of material resources or education? In their book “The Established and the Outsiders” Elias and John L. Scotson give a hint to the fact that when bare necessities are gratified, the competition between groups shifts from material resources as the most important goods, to prestige, pride, status, and interpretational sovereignty as the most important “goods” (Elias and Scotson 1993, 309-10). This is what happens with parts of the German bourgeoisie; they see their “ideology of unequal value” (Speit 2016, 322) in danger and experience new power-balances in favour of minorities as a great assault on their beliefs and their image of the world.

The mechanics of stigmatisation cannot easily be understood without a closer look at the part played by a person’s image of his group’s standing among others and, therefore, of his own standing as a member of his group. (Elias 2001, 9, translation I. R.)

This can also explain why their reaction to representatives of the welcome-culture are just as rigid as against minorities – they contemptuously call them “Good-Humans” (*Gutmenschen*). People with a wider scope of identification appear to them as traitors who endanger the cohesion of their national group (Elias and Scotson 1993, 12).

As in other cases the logic of emotions is stringent: power superiority is equated with human merit, human merit with special grace of nature or gods. The gratification received through one’s share in the group charisma makes up for the personal sacrifice of gratification in the form of submission to group norm. (Elias and Scotson 1993, 18, translation I. R.)

New power balances in favour of minorities endanger this feeling of superiority. “The strengthening of local identities can be counted as a severe defence reaction of the members of a ruling ethnic group, which feels in danger because of the presence of other cultures” (Hall 1994, 217). As an example Hall refers to a British discourse about the essence of being English. The German discourse about *core culture* can be assessed similarly. Another part of the explanation refers to the shaping of the German bourgeois habitus itself.

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## 6. Bourgeois Self-Image and Habitus

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The interconnectedness of parts of the bourgeois milieus and the *New Right* movements, has been refused especially by bourgeois milieus themselves (AfD) in popular discourse, by claiming they could not be addressed as right-wingers, since they were bourgeois (Speit 2016, 319). They experience themselves as representatives of humanistic bourgeois merits and morally on the right side even though they show exclusive orientations in certain currents.

In his “Studies on the Germans,” Norbert Elias reveals that the special historic development of Germany, which, compared to other European national states, was late and inchoate in its integration (Elias 2005, 77 f.), led to a situation where the bourgeois milieus adopted the standards of behaviour and feeling of the dominant aristocratic currents. Those were orientated towards a “*Kriegerkanon*” (“Canon of warriors”) (Elias 2005, 95) which evolved out of centuries of struggle and wars and contained the following ideas of “right of the strongest,” “preserving inequality between people,” “hardness of life” (Elias 2005, 93).

Hence, the German bourgeois milieus and their standards of behaviour and feeling were not only shaped by humanistic ideas and the enlightenment, as is emphasised in popular discourses, but also by this authoritarian “*Kriegerkanon*.” According to Elias, this canon had massive influence on the German “national character” (Elias 2005, 98) which means “the specific German tradition of behaviour and feeling” (Elias 2005, 98). This makes the reactivation of exclusive tendencies among these milieus possible, sharing the “Conservative Revolution” as a frame of reference (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 40). Representatives of the Conservative Revolution conceive themselves as a counter movement to the 1968-movement, which was represented by more liberal and egalitarian currents of the bourgeois. Within the shift to the right in Germany, “[t]he bourgeois are not merely passively agitated, but share a radically anti-egalitarian concept of democracy with the right-wing extremism.” (Bruns, Glösel and Strobel 2016, 31, translation I. R.).

Another important aspect concerning the establishment of exclusive tendencies within the German society is the focus on performance and achievement which includes the evaluation of people in the categories “useful” and “useless” (Sommer 2010, 270). This can function as a bridge to other forms of exclusive tendencies towards minorities.

Especially the “self-optimizing norm” as a facet of “market-shaped extremism” could be perceived as a strong connection to milieus of the middle, “opening up the doors for devaluation and exclusion with the argument of lack of usefulness and inefficiency.” (Speit 2016, 327, translation I. R.).

Sommer refers to Rommelsbacher, who describes right extremism not as a deviation from normality, but as the most radical form and politicised expression of a “dominance-culture” – tendencies of an ideology of unequal-significance was found throughout society in weaker forms (Sommer 2010, 270).

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## 7. Reflections

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The recent power shifts from national state to the European Union and the power shifts from national institutions to multinational institutions and compa-

nies, financial industry, and other world regions express an assault on the social habitus of certain groups, from young people with little education, to highly educated bourgeois milieus.

Thus the *New Right* follow the illusion that it would be possible to take back global interdependencies and go back to single national states as the highest level of integration, as survival units – a desperate attempt to adjust the actual circumstances to their nationalistic worldview.

The bourgeois habitus in its humanistic and egalitarian currents is still strong within German society as the support for the *welcome culture* clearly shows – “half of the people asked share positive emotions due to the fact that Germany has accommodated so many refugees” (Zick 2016, 213). Others who feel fear when considering the newcomers but see ways of solving the alleged problems do not behave as aggressively (ibid.).

Against the common thesis that the bourgeois and extreme right are antagonistic (Vorländer, Herold and Schäller 2016), it seems that the bourgeois habitus can also be the foundation for exclusive attitudes, as in some currents it contains the notion of a hierarchy of value between people. These authoritarian currents of the bourgeois milieus devalue humanistic ideas and aim for a legitimisation of totalitarianism (Speit 2016, 323).

Dörre, Kraemer and Speidel assess a “crisis of political representation” (2006, 124) in Germany. According to this, the political decisions of the European Union are regarded as nontransparent, unjust, and undemocratic by many people. In the face of that, the well-known national borders appear even more attractive.

Overall, there are fears of unforeseen global crises, uncontrollability of international markets and environmental risks. Actions and options from national governments are becoming more and more incomprehensible for the population. Subjective experience or real security loss on the one hand, and identity loss on the other hand can be the consequence and lead to aggressive closing processes.

Why does this affect only a part of the population while the other, conversely, sees increasing global integration as positive and expresses its solidarity with both the European neighbours and refugees? The question of why respective individuals feel addressed by one side or the other, is an aspect for further research. Zick points out that people who are afraid of new developments and newcomers, but still see ways of solving problems which might occur out of these processes, are less likely to become aggressive (2016, 214).

That is why he sees it as an important challenge to make people perceive solutions for new kinds of problems and encourage them to participate in solving them (Zick 2016, 214), instead of joining the panicmongering of the New Right.

The transformation of fear into rejection can be attributed to a loss of trust in the ability to control national institutions, missing information, or successful propaganda about a refugee crisis. (Zick 2016, 215, translation I. R.)

Politicians and journalists should therefore not take part in heating up the mistrust within society, but maintain a distanced perspective on real problems. Noticeable is that especially the conservative CDU/CSU is involved in these identity-struggles as for example the attempt to establish norms for a core culture by Thomas de Mazière shows.

Overall, we find a conglomerate of motives and dynamics, which explain the pronounced occurrence of the drag-effects of social habitus among the New Right. This has already led to a shift to the right during the so-called 'refugee crisis.' At the same time a large part of German society already shows a wider scope of identification and does not compensate its fears with aggressive, exclusive tendencies. Following Zick (2016) – the most important aspects to achieve non-aggressive orientation processes are transparency about political processes. This also concerns aspects of loss of power within global integration processes described by Elias (2001), and the demonstration of solutions for future challenges. Democratic processes must be applied transparently to the new institutional level of integration. This has not really taken place within the European Union and has probably fuelled the mistrust regarding the European Union and processes of globalization within German society.

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