

Transatlantic Discourse on Integration

**Integration of Migrants and Local Housing Policies
in Germany and the U.S.
A Conference Report**

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european forum for migration studies

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1. Introduction

Urban space, in particular the neighbourhood, take on a growing significance in the integration process as places where immigrants spend large amounts of their time. Home and habitat form a socio-spatial setting and support various integration processes such as language learning, schooling, training and career planning, socializing and participating in municipal and community life. Housing and residential areas therefore function as meaningful forces of integration.

On July 14th, 2006, the *European forum for migration studies (efms)* hosted a workshop about integration of migrants and local housing policies in Germany and the U.S. in Berlin-Schwanenwerder. The workshop brought together 29 managers and architects of integrative housing projects, representatives of the government as well as nongovernmental organizations, municipal commissioners for integration and academics.

These experts from Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States discussed about the integration of migrants in the field of housing: To which extent does segregation inhibit or foster the integration of migrants? What are the urban living conditions of migrants? How can disadvantaged neighbourhoods be improved? What are the roles of municipal administrations, public housing enterprises or migrant organizations? The international comparison and the transatlantic transferability of solutions are matter of particular interest.



2. Contents of the Workshop

- 9:00 a.m. **Welcome**
 Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann and Doris Lüken-Klaßen, *European Forum for Migration Studies (efms), Bamberg*
- 9:20 a.m. **“Effects of ethnic segregation”**
 Prof. Dr. Hartmut Häußermann, *Humboldt-University, Berlin*
“Recent trends in neighborhood change in the US: Consequences for immigrants and implications for local, state, and federal housing policy”
 Victor Rubin, Ph.D., *PolicyLink, Oakland, U.S.A.*
- 10:45 a.m. Coffee break
- 11:00 a.m. **“UK Housing Policies and Immigrant Integration”**
 Julia Hieber, *University of Oxford, UK*
“Segregation patterns and residential integration paths of migrants in Nürnberg”
 Simone Zdrojewski, *University of Bamberg*
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. **“Integration requires planning – The Project Grimmelsiepen”**
 Isa Karata, *Architect and coordinator of the project “Grimmelsiepen” Dortmund*
 and Niels Back, *Pastor and Commissioner for Christian-Islamic Dialogue, Dortmund*
“Affordable Housing Needs of New York's Asian Community”
 Margaret Chin, *Asian Americans for Equality, New York, U.S.A.*
“The Efforts of the Mannheim Communal Housing Company for the Integration of Migrant Clients”
 Stefan Möhrke, *GBG – Mannheimer Wohnungsbaugesellschaft*
- 3:00 p.m. Coffee break
- 3:15 p.m. **“Immigrants and the Housing Crisis in New York”**
 Javier H. Valdés, *The New York Immigration Coalition, U.S.A.*
“Immigrants in the city – recommendations for urban integration policy”
 Melanie Kloth, *Institute for Housing, Real Estate and Urban and Regional Development, Bochum*
- 4:30 p.m. **Concluding discussion**
- 5:00 p.m. Adjourn



The workshop began with a short introduction given by the hosts **Professor Dr. Friedrich Heckmann** and **Doris Lüken-Klaßen**. It served both as an introduction to the seminar's participants and its topics as well as historical summary on the island Schwanenwerder, where the seminar took place. Lüken-Klaßen accentuated that the conference location, although a very beautiful place, has indeed a unique past. Industrialist Friedrich Wessel purchased the island in the late 19th century. Wessel sold plots of the island to rich families who established spectacular lakefront villas. By the 1920s, Schwanenwerder had become a favourite spot for Berlin's bourgeoisie. Politicians, actors, aristocrats, and industrialists – among them many Jewish families – called Schwanenwerder their home. With the advent of the Third Reich and the expulsion of many Jewish families – many infamous Nazis took residence here, for instance Joseph Goebbels and Nazi architect Albert Speer. They even established a school for young women, called "Die Reichsbräuteschule". After the war, U.S. Army personnel and their families moved into the Nazi villas. Lucius D. Clay planned the famous Berlin airlift (Luftbrücke) here.

"Effects of ethnic segregation"

Professor Dr. Hartmut Häußermann from the Humboldt-University Berlin gave a lecture on the effects of ethnic segregation, i.e. the effects of concentration of foreign nationalities in particular urban areas. Such residential concentration of ethnic minorities is widely recognized as a crucial factor that inhibits the individual's life chances and endangers overall social cohesion. There are various effects which are often identified as problematic. First, ethnic segregation stands for a limited availability of social networks and less knowledge about several common norms and behaviours; therefore the social and cultural capital is limited. This, in combination with a social context in which all communication can be conducted in the mother tongue, results in complex problems: A lack of proficiency in the dominating language and limited social and cultural capital leads to poor educational performance, limited labour market opportunities and lower income. Another often mentioned effect of ethnic segregation is the influence ethnic elites' have over the community and the spread and implementation of fundamentalist and/ or non-democratic ideas. Finally, segregation often goes together with poor public services in segregated districts and stigmatization of the area. To conclude, effects on children and adolescents seem to be of great importance, because they are more susceptible to environmental influences. The segregation effects may have long-lasting consequences on their future well-being and life chances. Nevertheless, segregation can also have positive effects like social embedding, social networks and support for an ethnic economy. Moreover, there are differences within segregated groups; the segregation effects have mainly to be expected for persons with few resources, because only these groups are sharply segregated, and only for them social interactions and networks are restricted to the neighbourhood.

Even if it seems to be evident that the neighbourhood influences its residents, Häußermann highlights the methodological problem to isolate neighbourhood effects in research. As ethnic segregation is inextricably linked to poverty and social segregation, we will hardly ever exactly know which variable depends on which.



“Recent trends in neighbourhood change in the US: Consequences for immigrants and implications for local, state, and federal housing policy”

Victor Rubin is the Director of Research of the PolicyLink think in Oakland tank, a hybrid nonprofit organization that combines research, communications, capacity building, and advocacy under one roof. The focus is on fair distribution of affordable housing.

According to Rubin, there are currently four types of immigrant communities in the US: the urban gateway neighborhood, suburbanized immigrants, the rural immigrant community and the floating workforce. The urban gateway neighborhood and ethnic enclave is the most familiar type. It provides residents with relatively affordable housing, a familiar culture, support systems, and work opportunities without the need for English proficiency; but the exploitation of a vulnerable population in respect to housing costs and living conditions remains a serious problem. Another trend is the “emerging majority” of suburbanized immigrants, with an increasing diversity of types of communities as well as of nationalities. The latest form of immigrant community is the rapidly growing immigrant workforce and population in previously homogeneous small towns due to rural industrialization. Rural industries attract new workers, both documented and undocumented, to smaller towns. Many of these towns have significantly lower housing costs than major metropolitan areas. Discrimination in housing, as part of the broader challenges presented by racism and cultural sensitivity, is present but often not yet systematically measured or documented. The fourth kind, a trend that might be called “crises and opportunities” can be found at sites of (re)building, such as Gulf Coast and resort boomtowns. These locations attract a transient workforce. For instance in Louisiana and Mississippi, a largely Hispanic contingent workforce has been hired for much of the demolition, cleanup, and rebuilding efforts after the devastation of hurricane ‘Katrina’. Many of those new workers are living in substandard temporary camps and other group quarters. There is no strategy for the long-term inclusion of these workers in the respective community, and ambivalence on their part as to whether they will stay.

There is also the problem of affordable housing, Rubin went on. In high growth areas (e.g. California) we can see a shortfall in housing production each year. This together with an unhealthy racial bias leads to discrimination in rentals and sales, substandard, illegal conditions, overcrowding or predatory lending. Although this affects all kinds of low income and people of color, some factors are particularly difficult for immigrants, e.g. intimidation and a lack of options. Therefore local ‘Affordable Housing Policies’ are being implemented. Their goals are to encourage builders and investors through financial support such as tax credits and through other related policies to build more low cost housing. Furthermore, there are encouraging actions in some communities, spurred by immigrant organizations and social justice support groups. But in most cities there are no big changes in inspection, enforcement capacities or priorities yet. Also the federal role in enforcing fair housing and civil right laws is very small, as it is an under-funded part of the government.

Rubin finished by emphasizing that overall, the amount of time spent in the US still remains the key determinant of poverty and access to economic opportunity. And that the climate of “immigrant-bashing” is simultaneously an environment of newly self-empowered immigrant organizing efforts and strongly pro-immigrant local policies in some communities. The political battles are just beginning.



“UK Housing Policies and Immigrant Integration”

The principle of UK Integration Policies, according to **Julia Hieber** from the Oxford University is a multicultural approach to the integration process. Housing is a key dimension since it is directly related to the migrants’ sense of belonging, security, access to health-care, education, employment, and community relations.

She described local integration practices by taking the city of Birmingham as an example: Birmingham City Council is a large social landlord with an ethnic minority housing strategy and a ‘race and housing team’ monitoring and evaluating data. But there are some problems with the collected data, due to varying ethnic categories over time. Furthermore, the relations between the ‘race and housing team’ and the allocation department are rather weak. Asylum seekers are not part of municipal housing policies. On the topic of housing and integration of ethnic minorities, Hieber said that due to the combination of UK’s ethnic minorities’ young age, poor qualifications and poor jobs, unfavourable tenure patterns in housing are prevalent. For instance; they highly depend on social housing. Nevertheless, the home ownership rates among ethnic minorities are high in an internationally comparative perspective.

Hieber’s conclusion: (1) Asylum seekers are excluded from the housing policies linked to integration. (2) There is a need for qualitative research in refugees’ transition from social housing to owner occupation and in the housing-education-employment-nexus linked to the reproduction of discrimination and segregation of ethnic minorities. (3) There is a need for community-centred, holistic, inter-agency approaches with political commitment as UK housing policies are often contradictory with regard to integration.

“Segregation patterns and residential integration paths of migrants in Nürnberg”

Simone Zdrojewski from the University of Bamberg highlighted segregation patterns and residential integration paths of migrants in the city of Nürnberg on the basis of an empirical research project. After introducing the distinctive characteristics of Nürnberg’s districts and illustrating their distribution across the city she explained ethnic patterns of segregation.

Compared to the distribution of Germans the distribution of Turks is rather asymmetrical. A clear concentration can be determined in the social area close to the city centre, with a large proportion of foreigners and low socio-economic potential. Very interesting is the comparison of the moves of Turks within the city on the basis of their duration of residence. The district described above remains the area with the highest frequency of moves. Nevertheless, a significant shift to the city’s outskirts where the living conditions are better can be observed in case of a longer duration of stay of these.

She further illustrated the segregation patterns of Ethnic-German migrants from Eastern Europe. In contrast to the Turks they form a fairly new group and accordingly still are in an earlier phase of their integration process. This is also reflected in the residential context; the differentiation process is not yet as clear as the process among the Turks, living in Nürnberg for several decades. Zdrojewski assumed that the social differentiation processes within an ethnic group – intra-ethnic processes – were also reflected in the residential context, as the duration of residence increased.



Beside the intra-ethnic paths, different *inter-ethnic* segregation patterns can be observed. They depend on involuntary decisions as the dependence on low priced residences that are predominately available in certain social areas or on public allocation. Additionally, these segregation patterns depend on voluntary decisions. So for example the Ethnic-German migrants prefer living in newer buildings that are predominately in their relatives' neighbourhood, while Turks prefer living in older buildings that are located in the city centre.

“Integration requires planning – The Project Grimmelsiepen“

Isa Karataş and **Niels Back** presented the very ambitious and controversially discussed project “Grimmelsiepen”: The Turkish-Islamic association in the city of Dortmund-Hörde bought an area of 30,000 m² and developed together with the architect Isa Karataş a community centre and housing project that contains three elements. Those are a mosque and a community centre for social activities and religious practices, a housing area with semi-detached houses and terraced houses, which is open for every potential buyer irrespective of their origin or religion and thus is not restricted to members of the association and, thirdly, housing units for home and geriatric care for elder people. With this project the Turkish-Islamic association Dortmund-Hörde aims not only to provide nicer and larger accommodation in which to practice the Islamic religion and organise cultural, social and sporting activities but it also aims to support the integration process of their members. The City Council of Dortmund appreciates the project as a contribution to the integration and living together of different cultures to prevent a “parallel society”.

Despite this support, the realisation of this project, especially the intention to build a “real” mosque, was delayed by massive protests among the German residents. The protests cumulated in a right wing extremist demonstration in 2004. In response, people and organisations from civil society protested against the right wing extremist demonstration, conducted information events on the concrete plans for the project Grimmelsiepen and established a round table, which aims at improving the dialogue between people with different origins, cultures and religions in the neighbourhood of Hörde. At this round table, representatives of the Turkish-Islamic Association Dortmund-Hörde e.V., as well as representatives of the Christian churches (as for instance Niels Back, one of the presenters), political parties, the labour unions, a local housing company, the local public administration and the Council for Foreigners work together. Solutions were found concerning the call for prayer and the prevention of segregation: The muezzin only calls once a week for prayer and migrant families who apply together with a German family for a semi-detached house in the Grimmelsiepen housing project will be rewarded with more favourable conditions. It took four years until March 2006 before the concept for the Grimmelsiepen project was finally approved by the local politicians. After the final decision of the City Council of Dortmund the work will – in all likelihood – start in 2007.



“Affordable Housing Needs of New York’s Asian American Community. Preserving and building affordable housing through advocacy, organizing and collaborations”

Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) is a 32-year-old community based, non-profit organization established to advocate for equal opportunities for minorities with offices in the Chinatown, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and Flushing, Queens. Their programs and services include affordable housing development, direct social services, advocacy and community education and economic development.

Margaret Chin, Senior Policy and Program Advisor, started her presentation by giving some facts on NYC. Asian Americans make up 10% of NYC’s population expanding throughout all five boroughs. There are 1,042,397 rent-regulated units in NYC today, about 20,000-30,000 rent-stabilized apartments are de-regulated annually. In Chinatown (88,000 inhabitants, 63% Asians), 21.8% live in severely overcrowded conditions, and 21.5% pay more than 50% of their income on rent.

AAFE’s affordable housing work and preservation includes a combination of empowering the ethnic community through advocacy, community organizing, civic participation and collaborations with other groups. They are working with citywide actors such as the Association for Neighbourhood Housing and Development, New York Immigration Coalition and Housing Here and Now, also with different neighbourhood groups. Furthermore, the organization enforces the Local Law 79 “Tenant Empowerment Act” (2003-2005) that preserves 3,400 affordable units in Chinatown and is pushing several agendas (e.g. testifying at rent guideline board hearings, preserve rent control and stabilization law, battling NY State for Home Rule). Chin gave many examples where AAFE is fighting for affordable housing. Because of the Battery Park City Surplus Campaign, the Mayor agreed to establish a 135 million housing trust fund to build and preserve affordable housing. Another result is the so called Inclusionary Zoning that requires the developers to set aside a percentage of housing units to be affordable.

To conclude, Chin pointed out that the need for affordable housing is critical not just to Asian American families but also to immigrant families and low income families throughout New York City.

“The Efforts of the Mannheim Communal Housing Company for the Integration of Migrant Clients”

Housing companies are important actors in the field of housing. One that is noted for its activities in integration of migrants is the city of Mannheim’s Communal Housing Company (GBG – Mannheimer Wohnungsbaugesellschaft). Mannheim has about 320.000 inhabitants of whom 22% have a foreign passport. The GBG is a municipal company and owns about 22.000 apartments where 60.000 people live. **Stefan Möhrke** is a social worker responsible for the social management of this company. His presentation was on the integration efforts of said company.

One activity is district management. Together with the inhabitants of the districts and some welfare associations, municipal activities in education, culture, social affairs, housing and traffic are discussed. Different district teams are managing projects concerning e.g. the situation of the youth. In autumn 2006, there will be a new meeting place for inhabitants. Services like language courses or homework support will be offered there; it will also allow for issues like integration of migrants, intercultural communication and mediation. The GBG launched several other activities such as the



mediation programme “Köprü” (Turkish for “bridges”). The district management trains inhabitants coming from several cultural and ethnic backgrounds to settle disputes between neighbours.

Furthermore, the Mannheim town council and GBG agreed to setup a quota system: The GBG is renting at least 20% of their apartments to people with foreign passports. To improve the communication between employees and customers, the GBG organizes seminars for improving the employees’ intercultural competence. Möhrke pointed out that it is not easy to reach migrants by using the standard communication forms. Therefore, the GBG is also using new forms of communication as organizing common barbecues, which are used to discuss problems and needs of the inhabitants.

“Immigrants and the Housing Crisis in New York”

Javier H. Valdés from The New York Immigration Coalition characterized New York as a city of immigrants: from the 8 million inhabitants, 37% are foreign born. Between 1970 and 2000 the foreign born population doubled from 1.44 million to 2.87 million. NYC’s population increased during this time, while other US cities saw a major decline in population. The immigrants come from Latin America (32%), Asia (24%), Caribbean (21%), Europe (20%) and Africa (3%).

According to Valdés, the main issues concerning immigrants and housing are affordability, overcrowding, exploitation and harassment as well as access to services. The Low Income Housing Coalition ranked New York State the 5th least affordable state and found that a worker earning the minimum wage (US\$6.00) would have to work 121 hours a week in order to afford the fair market rental of \$945 a month for a two bedroom apartment in New York. But even this price is not a realistic one; the number of these “affordable” units is shrinking every year. As immigrants make up two-thirds of the low-wage workers in New York City, this disparity between income and rent has led to severe overcrowding within immigrant communities. This describes the main problem among the migrant households in NYC, especially for newly arrived immigrants. According to the US Census Bureau and New York City Department of Planning, immigrant renters are three times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions than native-born New Yorkers. Furthermore, immigrant renters are 62% more likely to live in dangerous housing conditions. According to Valdés, the reasons are a lack of affordable units, the role of financial institutions (mortgage), ignorance concerning illegality of renting practices, zoning regulations (down zoning) as well as the lack of enforcement and knowledge of city services.

Harassment and exploitation constitute the third problem concerning immigrants and housing. New York City has very strong Fair Housing and Human Rights laws. However, a case filed with the city’s Human Rights Commission takes about a year to be resolved. Finally, migrants only have limited access to services. A recent study by The New York Immigration Coalition and other community groups showed that 60% of immigrants surveyed did not know that a Housing Agency existed in NYC and 67% reported living in with bad housing conditions.

“Immigrants in the City – recommendations for urban integration policy”

Melanie Kloth from the Institute for Housing, Real Estate and Urban and Regional Development in Bochum summarized recommendations for urban integration policy by the project “Immigrants in



the City” by the Schader foundation. This project wants to enhance integration at neighbourhood level. Project’s partners are a group of experts, a practitioners’ network and the research institutes: the Institute for Housing, Real Estate and Urban and Regional Development (InWIS), and German Institute of Urban Affairs (difu). The recommendations are based on two assumptions. First, spatial segregation is a fact in countries with high levels of immigration. The belief that a “mix” of immigrants and natives in a neighbourhood is a useful instrument for integration should be abandoned. Voluntary ethnic segregation is neither avoidable nor does it necessarily thwart integration. The second assumption is that the capability of the labour market to act as an integrating force is declining; neighbourhoods are increasingly becoming the principal places of interaction and therefore more relevant for integration.

The project’s recommendations concern various fields of everyday life: One is about educational facilities: giving the younger generation a chance for unrestricted participation in society is a matter of public interest. Possible neighbourhood measures are, for instance, compulsory preschool language classes; using neighbourhood schools as integration sites and education venues for the district as a whole – adults included; leisure time activities to promote young people’s learning of German and of community rules. Moreover, special programmes should be developed and enhanced for persuading immigrants to participate at district and neighbourhood level and in housing companies. These programmes could act as a support for tenant councils by housing providers, personal contact to get tenants involved, involvement of local residents as mediators, user-friendly information on rights and obligations of tenants as well as public festivals and group activities to boost community spirit.

Home ownership of immigrants is often a sign for a planned long-term stay and the aim to move upward in the host society. Housing companies should encourage tenants to purchase their dwellings and become home owners. Of course, privatisation should be a fair deal. Furthermore, a neighbourhood ethnic economy is well suited to enable immigrants to find jobs, helps to get recognition by the host society and strengthens self-esteem. Therefore, municipal business promotion departments should support ethnic entrepreneurship.

The impairment of residents’ feeling of security reduces neighbourhood integration; this can be overcome by reconstruction measures and employment of personnel to improve security. Accordingly, public spaces that are venues of interaction, provide immigrants with orientation for life in their new home. They must be designed to fulfil the various needs of neighbourhood people. Additionally, changing public space into gardens for tenants to increase identification with building and neighbourhood by individual and recognisable design can be useful. And because mixed-use neighbourhoods have better integration conditions than large housing estates, new construction projects must be mixed-use solutions. The function of such mixed-use districts as “bridges” to the host society must be encouraged in every way.

Concluding, she stressed that the “Segregation as a fact”-thesis is discussed very controversially: many housing companies as well as politicians do not agree and suggest to keep on trying to disperse immigrants in the city. On the other side, actors at neighbourhood level mostly agree and want to see the focus of efforts on measures to improve living in the neighbourhoods.



3. The Participants of the Workshop

Niels Back, Pastor, Beauftragter des Kirchenkreises Dortmund-Süd für christlich-islamische Begegnung, Dortmund

Nicole Bosch, europäisches forum für migrationsstudien (efms), Bamberg

Wolfgang Bosswick, europäisches forum für migrationsstudien (efms), Bamberg

Margaret S. Chin, Asian Americans For Equality, New York

Werner Distler, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik – Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin

Christina Elvers, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Hartmut Häußermann, Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann, europäisches forum für migrationsstudien (efms), Bamberg

Lisa Henschel, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Berlin

Julia Hieber, Oxford School of Geography, Centre for the Environment, University of Oxford

Margarethe Hofmaier, Nachbarschaftshaus Prinzenallee e.V., Berlin

Isa Karataş, Architekt und Projektkoordinator "Projekt Grimmelsiepen", Dortmund

Gudrun Kirchhoff, Schader-Stiftung, Darmstadt

Melanie Kloth, Institut für Wohnungswesen, Immobilienwirtschaft, Stadt- und Regionalentwicklung GmbH an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum (InWIS), Bochum

Doris Lüken-Klaßen, europäisches forum für migrationsstudien (efms), Bamberg

Mekonnen Meshgena, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin

Stefan Möhrke, GBG – Mannheimer Wohnungsbaugesellschaft mbH, Mannheim

Wolf Müller, Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, Integrationsreferent des Bürgermeisters, Berlin

Sybille Münch, Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig

Nuno Oliveira, EUMC, Wien

Victor Rubin, Ph.D., PolicyLink, Oakland

Dr. Robin Schneider, Büro des Beauftragten des Senats von Berlin für Integration und Migration, Berlin

Dr. Philipp Schwertmann, Migrationsrat Berlin-Brandenburg, Berlin

Ulrich de Taillez, Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, München

Alan Tung, Public School No. 3 in Manhattan's Greenwich Village area; New York

Dr. Haci-Halil Uslucan, Otto-von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg, Institut für Psychologie, Magdeburg

Javier H. Valdés, The New York Immigration Coalition, New York

Layla Yüzen, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V., Berlin



Simone Zdrojewski, Graduiertenkolleg "Märkte und Sozialräume in Europa" an der Universität Bamberg