State support and its absence in the integration of refugees in Austria

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Abstract

"Wir haben so vieles geschafft - Wir schaffen das"[1]

The research question, investigated in thesis is *How state support influences integration?* I chose Austria, where a remarkable number of refugees arrived after 2015. The nine provinces of the country have different local policies. Among them, Vienna is a special case where in addition to the national integration program an *Integration from day 1* policy is implemented, meaning early intervention and increased state support. We know little about the actors and the processes of integration policy. I made six interviews to unfold the insight in refugee integration, and found that facilitators: teachers, NGOs, volunteers, networks, legal advisors etc. play a crucial role in social inclusion and integration. The earlier integration starts, in terms of interaction and social inclusion; and the more state support facilitators receive the faster and more successful integration becomes.

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[1] "We have done so much, we can do this!" Merkel, A. 2015. Bundespressekonferenz. August 31. Hinblick

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1. Introduction

1. 1. Refugee integration in Austria

In the country's modern history, after World War II, the Republic of Austria has been actively hosting refugees, primarily from neighboring countries (Gémes 2009, Valenta & Ramet 2011). In 2015, when the European Union experienced a mass migration of refugees, Austria was one of the main destinations where refugees applied for asylum. Between 2015 and 2016, 131000 asylum seekers registered in the country (Konle-Seidl 2018). The events are often referred to as a "crisis", however it is debated whether besides some administrational difficulties, the influx of asylum-seekers can be considered a state-level crisis (Brücker et al. 2020). Austria, similarly, to Germany and Sweden has an extensive integration program for refugees, which includes both language courses, and integration courses (Konle-Seidl 2018). The person with positive asylum status or subsidiary protection is eligible for these courses, however in the asylum procedure it is often not possible to attend them.[2] In 2017, an average asylum procedure took 9 months[3], and there are cases where the procedure takes up to years (Int. 6). The Republic of Austria is a federal state, in which all autonomous provinces (Bundesländer) have their own legislature and can pass bills independently unless these are unconstitutional.[4] This also leads to different policies relating to refugee integration, both in terms of sanctioning non-participation in integration courses[5] and making extra investments to support social inclusion and integration.[6] There is consequentially a difference between the capital city Vienna, which

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[2] https://www.integrationsfonds.at/sprache/deutschkursfoerderung/
[3] Medienservicestelle (2017), Asylanträge halbierten sich, Außerlandesbringungen steigen (Asylum applications halved, returns increased). http://medienservicestelle.at/migration_bewegt/2017/01/20/2016-asylantraegehalbierten-sich-ausserlandesbringungen-steigen
[4] Austria, Const., Article 140
[5] http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/reportdownload/aida_at_2016update.pdf
[6] https://www.vhs.at/de/projekte/startwien-integration-ab-tag-1

also has a Bundesland-status, and the rest of the country. Namely, in Vienna an *Integration from day 1* set of policies is implemented, aiming to enhance social inclusion and interaction with civil society and NGOs. In other provinces of the country, asylum-seekers are often placed in camps far from the city, until they receive refugee status and become eligible for the said means of social inclusion and state-assigned training. I call this opposing phenomenon *Isolation from day 1*, since it is a parallel model where NGOs and civil society are not encouraged to engage with asylum-seekers.

The obvious underlying question here is which procedure, both financial and human works better? Is it purely a nice humanitarian gesture from Vienna to engage with asylum-seekers on an early stage, or does it pay off in the long run in terms of labor market integration? Does social inclusion and early intervention enhance integration in a way, that is for the benefit of potential asylum-holders and the host society? Baubock & Tripkovic (2017) find that the waiting period in refugee homes can hinder language acquisition since people will lose their motivation and feel excluded from the society that they are supposed to become part of. They find orientation on an early stage is important since the asylum-procedure is a long-lasting and devastating process, with uncertainty and insecurity. One primary obstacle to overcome for a newcomer is linguistic integration, since it enables the individual to navigate their lives more independently in the new linguistic environment (Bakker et al. 2016, De Vroome & Van Tubergen 2010, Hainmueller et al. 2016, Hvidtfeldt et al. 2018, Brücker et al. 2019). Further literature (Becker & Ferrara 2019; Chin & Cortes 2015) suggest that the integration of refugees differs from the integration of other immigrant groups, given their special, highly disadvantaged circumstances, which require additional professional support.

Despite the usually highly disadvantaged circumstances, no previous knowledge of the host countries language (Brell et al. 2020, Fasani & Minale 2018), long-lasting asylum-procedure and PTSD (Ullmann et al. 2015) Adda et al. (2022) find that refugees can be faster integrated

into the labor market, with more benefits (taxes) to the host country that invested in integration schools. They find that people with refugee background have strongly founded ambitions and goals in the host country, but for that the political environment needs to be also supportive. Refugees aim to have permanent residency and later citizenship, and they are also more likely to take low-wage positions, which the local population is less likely to. For underqualified positions fast vocational training is considered enough (Hautz, H., Li, J., & Jørgensen, C. 2021). These findings suggest that immigration and integration policies are interdependent and have a positive effect on linguistic, and consequentially other domains of integration. To conclude, refugees are a more vulnerable population, who often aim to permanently stay in the host country. For that they are more likely to integrate faster when the environment allows them to. Given that refugees are a specific immigrant group with a traditionally more traumatic past than other immigrants, the state needs to make special initiatives for their integration where they can reconcile their past and move forward to maximize their potential.

My initial research question was *How early intervention/Integration from day1 supports refugee integration*? To answer the how question, I defined actors of integration and their role in the process to track and identify actions and relationships. The 'ground' I started with was realizing the importance of integration actors, and I interviewed six of them to learn how they think of the integration process. While I faced more depth and limitations than answers after an extensive analysis, I also came to understand patterns and found a model that explains my dataset.

The first part of the thesis overviews refugee integration in Austria, the novelty, and scope of the study. The second part argues why a grounded theory approach is most desirable for the study, how I executed interviews, and coded them to "ground" my theory. The theory is discussed in Chapter three in which final codes are discussed in context of the interviews and

literature. Finally, in the fourth Chapter I conclude the research by providing policy suggestions and ideas to further use the theory of state support and its absence in refugee integration.

1. 2. Novelty of the research

There are two types of literature or data that should be considered when studying integration, and the Austrian case. One is the corresponding literature of integration, (mainly frameworks of integration, which define dimensions and domains of integration) and the other are the data accessible from major Austrian institutions, such as Arbeitsmarktservice (Labor Market Service), and Österreichischer Integrationsfonds (Austrian Integration Fund). The Integration Fund is an organization responsible for the integration of migrants, and the Labor Market Service is specifically for labor market integration. Since these organizations are responsible for the integration of many people on an administrational level, they are expected to have a dataset of the procedure of Integration, however this dataset is hardly accessible.

I find the major integration frameworks arbitrary and case specific, this is not to falsify them but realize integration is a multidimensional process that varies and changes through context (North & Piccardo 2017). Werth, M., Stevens W., & Delfs S. (1997) find that integration is an interaction between a host and immigrant society, where these groups find a way of coexistence and integration policies aim to ease these processes. To any definition and measurement of integration they propose five aspects to consider: who is integrating; what is integration; and by whom is it defined; what are the dimensions; and what are indicators and measurements of integration. A more comprehensive model is proposed by Ager & Strang (2008), who recognize four dimensions: markers and means, social connection, facilitators, and foundation. Markers and means in their context refer to basic social benefits: employment, housing, education, and healthcare. Under social connections they mean social bridges, social bonds, and social links. Facilitators are considered language and cultural knowledge, safety, and stability. And a final

domain is foundation, like rights and citizenships. The authors provide an extensive overview of each domain, and they identify 10 domains within the four dimensions. Similarly, Harder et al. (2018) define new dimensions to integration: psychological, economic, political, social, linguistic, and navigational by proposing a survey-based measurement system to evaluate success in each dimension. Their survey includes a few close-ended questions which are to be asked from immigrants. I find this approach an important initiative. Harder et al. (2018) realizes the importance of evaluating integration policies through an immigrant's perspective. The study finds correlation among the six dimensions which proves the interrelatedness of integration types. The reason I found this model ill-fitting for my research is the lack of explanation of correlations, and the limitedness of the survey. While it tracks important measures of integration, the overall indicators are provided by the researcher, limiting immigrants to think within a certain set of dimensions and not allowing them to define what they experience as important. Konle-Seidl (2018) work with the data accessible from AMS and ÖIF and provides a comprehensive overview of the Austrian case, however the data set only deals with sheer numbers and categories of refugees, and does not discuss provincial difference. The overview helps us see refugee women participate less in the integration process (among other findings), but gives no explanation to the phenomenon.

While facilitating actors of integration: activists, politicians, NGOs, organizations, networks, translators, and lawyers are aware of their own output there is no study or report that collects their common achievements and struggles, and experience in the political environment of integration. Understanding the relationships among actors also highlights how state support and its absence influence integration. Previous academic work and professional reports point out some significant parts of the integration process, however I find the numeric data, and integration frameworks neglecting one's personal history, and the very insight of actors who are involved in the process. Therefore, I want to work out a new normative theory of

integration, that offers better understanding of the chances for refugees becoming full citizens, relying on the direct experience of refugees and professionals from the field of integration.

1. 3. Scope of research

Given that most integration frameworks are not explanatory of the parallel models in Austria (North & Piccardo 2017), and official tracking of integration is neglectful of individual history, and professional insights (Konle-Seidl 2018) I have decided to do an interview-based grounded theory research, which builds a theory from the constant analysis of literature and the gathered data. This method allows the researcher to work around an undiscovered topic starting from an early stage of data collection, and abstract the qualitative data into a theory that fits existing literature (Charmaz 2006). Since the theory arising from this research aimed rather to investigate in depth than width, I made six interviews with different actors of the integration process. The interviewees are from a diverse professional background, and two of them have refugee background in Austria. Most interviewees have more than one relation to the process of integration. I have interviewed a politician, a language teacher, a program organizer in an NGO, a legal counselor, and two refugees. Further detail of their relatedness to the integration process and previous works are presented in the Appendix.

Since I wanted to see how the Vienna model, or *Integration from day 1* works in practice, and whether participants of the integration process perceive the political environment positively I did not find it necessary to expand the scope to non-Viennese actors of integration. Nonetheless, there are interviews where Vienna is compared to other provinces, and one of the refugee interviewees had experiences in four Bundesländer, that he discussed in his answers. Another reason why an exclusively Viennese sample is satisfactory to begin with, is that Vienna does extra initiatives in addition to the national minimum of integration. Therefore, the

parallel models are not different extra initiatives, but rather Vienna is a province where they are implemented in opposition to the rest of the country where they are not.

In this sense exploring the Vienna model also depicts a reality without the extra initiatives. The city of Vienna and the Department for Integration and Diversity introduced *Integration from day 1*[7] concept to facilitate integration of refugees, from right upon arrival when their asylum is still pending. This holistic approach is to provide asylum-seekers with enough information and programs to interact and improve their lives and social networks, through five focal points. The five points are *German and multilingualism*; which happens through language vouchers, mobile applications, or affordable German courses. In addition, NGOs also offer language courses, usually targeting specific disadvantaged groups of people within the refugee community. *Education and work*; providing vocational training for people to enter the labor market, is co-funded by Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) and the European Social Fund. A third focal point is *Living together, and participation* enhanced by organizations which provide meetings to build a healthy neighborhood and can help with conflict resolution between immigrants and the local population. *Objectivity, measurability and information* manifests in The Vienna Integration and Diversity Monitor, which is a factual discussion about integration and diversity, to break down prejudices, providing information, sensitizing, raising awareness and promoting intercultural skills. Finally, a fifth point is *Human rights* which stands for creating equal opportunities and inclusiveness against xenophobia and racism. With these five points supported by the city through local and European funds, practiced by a diverse set of institutions and organizations, Vienna inevitably initiated an enhanced integration goal.

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[7] https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/daten-fakten/konzept-integration.html

Based on the literature and the five focal points of the Vienna model, various aspects of integration are important and can be politically enhanced. Some are the responsibilities of the local governments and its institutions, however most social inclusion and education is to be done through NGOs, civil societies and volunteers, whom I collectively refer to as facilitating actors or facilitators. The universal model of integration in Austria is to assign tasks from the state to the refuge individual, and it is rather a one-sided assignment than a conversation or integration of common goals. The Vienna model in opposition also recognizes the need for interaction between the immigrant and native society. The city provides a political environment in which non-governmental professional and volunteers are supported to achieve integration goals and social inclusion.

The primary expected outcome of the research was that state support through facilitators can enhance integration. I further suggested that the integration goals of the state, the individual and facilitators are more likely to meet where these actors are in interaction with one another.

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2. Methodology

The thesis explores the role of facilitators and political environment in the process of integration. To do so I executed six in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to derive a grounded theory from the data. Grounded theory is a research design which stems from the observation that pre-existing theories are often unfitting the data collected from interviewees (Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. 1967). This design originates from sociology, but it has been extensively used in other social sciences, due to the flexibility it provides (Creswell et al. 2007). Grounded theory allows the researcher to construct theory from a dataset, with which he or she might not be familiar enough to create a hypothesis or find suitable theory beforehand. This approach therefore is particularly useful for research, that is based on interviews to analyze re-occurring patterns from the stories and lives of individuals involved in the activity or event that is observed (Charmaz 2006).

I chose to follow the directions and test my dataset through three coding systems suggested by Charmaz (2006). She proposes to study multiple realities in their complexity, instead of focusing on a core segment of a phenomenon. The observation and analysis of multiple realities are particularly important in the case of integration, given the many co-existing actors that participate in the process (North & Piccardo 2017). Charmaz, furthermore, highlights the importance of views, beliefs, feelings, and other strong heuristics that are crucial in understanding individual stories which I also found particularly important in my interviews. "We want to know what is happening in the setting, in people's lives, and in lines of our recorded data. Hence, we try to understand our participants' standpoints and situations, as well as their actions within the setting" (p. 46)

Since I chose to study the actors in the process of integration, and create a theory based on what they reveal in my interviews, I am not aiming to falsify or verify a particular hypothesis, but to

elaborate on a set of phenomena through the valuable experience and history of individuals. The grounded theory research method is supportive of such study and leaves enough possibility to experiment with the dataset in a flexible way to derive the most feasible theory.

While acknowledging that no research can be free of all biases, I also knew that my connection and network of refugees significantly influenced my relationship with the research topic. I have a strong emotional connection and history with people with refugee backgrounds. To avoid biases, coding helped me immensely reduce strong personal stories and "noises" in the dataset from individualistic information to short verbal nouns, then merge them along commonalities, and analyze them across interviews. This type of reduction allowed me to catch the essence of data and get rid of most biases to reach the final theory.

2. 1. Conducting interviews

I chose theoretical sampling for both scientific and practical purposes, letting the initial dataset guide the direction of further gathering of data. On the one hand to keep the advantage of grounded theory research, to be open for further details to occur and let the data guide the theory it is desired to leave the list of interviewees open (Stern 2007). On the other hand, some of my interviews opened the door for new ones, since I was introduced to new people during the process, (snowballing effect) and it was desired for me to work with a diverse dataset. In addition to my final sample, I reached out to several more potential actors of integration, from whom I did not get a (positive) answer. ÖIF and language schools that provide certificate accredited by ÖIF are particularly relevant in the process of integration, however I did not receive an answer from them. Besides the initial email, I sent them two follow ups but they were ignored. Since I was not interviewing a specific group of actors, but the actors I could access, I also had to be flexible regarding the dataset, yet keep it consistent to reach saturation.

I also received negative answers, for actors not having enough time or human resources to help with an interview.

I chose to interview people with first-hand experience of the integration of refugees. Furthermore, it was important to find people or organizations who have been active after 2015, to limit the scope to the refugee influx and integration initiatives since then, for being a new integration policy environment and subject of heated political debate in Austria and beyond Triandafyllidou (2018).

I have interviewed 4 professionals from the field of integration and 2 refugees with active experience in the integration field. The number of interviews is low since I aimed to create a new in-depth theory, rather than do extensive testing, which is also a limitation of the study, and needs to be done to reach saturation in further research. When interviewing refugees, I chose people who have a sophisticated overview on the topic, given their higher education, good knowledge of English and remarkable experience in the process of immigration and integration, both as a refugee and as a civilian who works or volunteers for other refugees. There are facilitator actors which can be either formal (NGOs, organizations, networks) or informal (civilians, other immigrants, and refugees). The primary integration demand towards the individual from these actors varies. The individual's integration process constantly changes with the political and societal environment. They set new goals, discover opportunities, and aim to maximize their benefits.

In this study, I collected data from participants in a one-on-one interview setting. Except for one interview all of them happened in person. Three professionals met me at their office, and one over a videocall. I met my interviewees with refugee background in open spaces in Vienna. These meetings were more flexible in terms of location, since we had to adjust to the weather, but in every case, we had the privacy to talk freely being alone at comfortable locations. I

informed all participants about my research topic and what I will use the interview data for but allowed them to ask questions about me and my project. They allowed me to use their names in the study and gave their consent to record audio of the conversation, from which I derived transcriptions. At first, I asked a set of questions that are not directly related to the research, and were individualized in each interview. This is to get to know the person and their relevance in the research, and to show I am familiar with their work or challenges, to create a familiar environment and natural flow to the conversations. Then, I asked each participant a similar set of open-ended questions to let them express their experience and insights and I only interrupted when it was needed to specify their answers, to guide the conversation, or access more data when seen necessary. The length of interviews varied between 50 and 90 minutes but the core interview in each case was around 45-50 minutes long. After the first interviews I made my first transcriptions, and I recognized significant topics to further investigate and rearrange emphasis on specific questions (E.g., language acquisition soon enough became less relevant than I expected it to be, in opposition to social inclusion).

The leading set of questions which applied to each professional interviewee were:

- Since when have you been working with refugee integration?

- How do you define integration, and how can it be measured?

- What do you consider a positive development in integration since 2015?

- What do you think is the most urgent thing yet to be developed in integration?

In the case of interviewees with refugee background the set of questions altered as follows:

- When did you arrive in the country and what was your first interaction with the authorities?

- What are your means of interaction with the local population, NGOs, authorities?

- What are your personal goals of integration?

- What do you think are the main obstacles in achieving these goals?

These set of questions were expanded in various directions, depending on the occurring probing questions or the expertise of a given individual, but the main pattern I relied on here is to see since when an individual is involved in the integration process, what are their concept of integration and what to keep and change in the current environment.

2. 2. Data Analysis

The analysis of data followed the methods proposed by Charmaz (2006), however with the necessary adjustments. First, I transcribed all interviews and read them multiple times to make memos. The theory has been reached after three stages of coding, initial, focused and axial coding. It is important to note that my first five interviews happened in April and May of 2022, and after the in-depth analysis of the interviews and three stages of codes a theory appeared which I started testing with a sixth interview later, in September of 2022. While acknowledging, this is not enough testing to claim the theory has reached saturation, the sixth interview strongly correlates to previous findings, and fits the theory grounded in first five interviews. Since I was connected to professionals after my first interview, and this led to a clearly biased group of actors it was also important to test my theory by interviewing a professional who is not from the mentioned group. The sixth interview confirmed the findings of the initials, in this sense the theory stayed plausible.

2. 2. 1. Initial coding

Initial coding is the first attempt to track action and groups in the raw transcription and as such, still carries lots of opportunities to figure out new patterns and groupings (Charmaz 2006). Initial coding can be done from word by word to incident to incident. I chose to minimize arbitrary work and I only coded lines where I found significant action or emotion, and it allowed me to see reoccurring words and groups within specific interviews. It is important to

note at this stage I have not yet compared interviews with interview, just thematically colored the transcriptions, and only at later stages of coding I merged these topics or initial codes to more abstract categories. It is also important to note, that I reached the theory by coding the first five interviews, therefore the sixth is used in the discussion of findings, but not yet at upcoming stages of analysis. After initial coding, the following core categories were consistent in the interviews:

Political context effects: This is rather a collective category of a set of political phenomena such as political campaigning with refugees, making policies with coalition partner and so forth. The political context was consistently important, for all actors, political campaigning particularly for refugees. "When I arrived, it was election time and the whole media was dehumanizing refugees as demons and terrorists, who will rape women. How would you want to integrate?" (Int.4) As the example show, at the first stage of coding; personal, emotional histories are yet strong and they only allow the researcher to track groups of ideas, however to reach theory these need to be shortened and abstracted in further coding.

The city of Vienna in comparison: Most interviews defined their situation in comparison to other provinces of the country, and discussed what extra initiatives the city of Vienna does. "In Vienna it was clearer. I felt like now I can understand what is happening. And I sat down with the supervisor of the camp. When I went with normal questions, a list of questions she told me everything." (Int. 3) We see that while the thesis mainly discusses the case of Vienna, Vienna is also defined in relation to other provinces. In this sense the Vienna model and enhanced provincial support lets us visualize a context without them.

NGOs: NGOs were considered significant facilitator actors by beneficiaries, and professionals from the NGO sector, extensively talked about their role as an NGO. "Their work was essential in so many ways. Language, mental health, soft skills, networking, education. Really essential."

(Int. 4) As we see refugees also understand the extensive contribution of NGOs, and highly value them. It also tells us that their trust in NGOs might be higher, since their support is more personal, and their work and output is not a state function, but voluntary work.

Civil Society: Besides professionally organized groups or volunteers, the topic of civil society often appeared in interviews, since the local unorganized or politically not engaged society is also relevant in the integration process, taken the primary definition that integration is an interaction between a host and immigrant society (Werth, M., Stevens W., & Delfs S. 1997).

Social engagement: Within this category I collected the different means of engagement between the refugee individual and any other actors of the society, where I found it does not fit within the NGO or Civil society category, I included it here. For instance, meeting in a chess club might be an NGO organized event, but yet the interaction happens with a civil society member, and at this stage of coding I found a need for this category to cover gray areas of social interactions. "[*Fremde werden Freunde*] is an NGO. They get together every now and then at dinners, and at some events. They get people from migration backgrounds, and people from the locals together." (Int. 4) At this early stage of coding it was already apparent from personal stories, that facilitator actors are important to allow the native and immigrant population interact, and not to replace this interaction. Say, an NGO is not just to be company for immigrants but to meaningfully enhance social inclusion between new and incoming citizens.

Language: Language was considered an important tool and mean of integration along all interviews "you can learn German by being in the job or by exchanging with others (Int. 5)" In the interviews, as the example shows it was debated whether language courses are the only way to learn language. I was told by many interviewees that language courses are very meaningful support of learning, but language is a tool of information exchange and it requires actors to

engage in conversations, and social inclusion automatically will support language learning. Language courses are supportive of learning, but on their own they will not lead to social interactions.

Language courses: Language courses are organized means to learn the local language, and at this stage of coding it was important to discuss it separately, also due to the different ways of learning the language personally or in an institutional set-up, assigned by the state or voluntarily at an NGO provided course.

Integration courses: Integration courses did not appear in every interview, but were often discussed parallel to the state assigned language courses, in the interviews with refugees they were depicted particularly negative: "He just told me to get prepared to get faced with a lot of racism and a lot of stuff that they treat you like an animal." (Int.3) The integration courses teach refugees how to behave according to Austrian social norms, but they are rather arbitrary and in times perceived humiliating.

Waiting for asylum: Waiting for asylum was described as a long-lasting and devastating process along the interviews, and a very remarkable part of the integration process, on which the literature (Becker & Ferrara 2019; Chin & Cortes 2015) also elaborates.

Individual needs: Individual needs were reoccurring, both from the side of professionals and refugees. All respondents agreed that integration is an individual, self-improving process.

These categories were not universal in each interview and the subcategories remained specific and individual. I tried to avoid abstracting or merging significant lines at this stage to return to them and evaluate those multiple times before moving forward to focused coding.

2. 2. 2. Focused coding

Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006) emphasize the selectiveness of this second phase of coding, where an earlier large set of specific codes are reshaped and filtered to more abstract categories and sub-categories. To do so Charmaz suggests to take an initial code and create the verbal noun form of it to create action, making it more generalizable and less biased. At this stage of the analysis, I created tables to see the initial code of each person in the first interview-specific grouping. An example of this is the Political context effects group which appeared in every interview.

1. *Political context effect***s initial codes of five initial interviews**

Political context effects				
Putting more tension in political discussion and debate: elections	Experiencing political resistance against professional suggestions	Cooperating with Vienna	Differing realities, same function	Dehumanizing refugees in media "Demon, terrorists, rapers"
Refusing distribution of refugees: elections	Drawing arbitrary lines between good and bad immigrant	Acknowledging different target groups within immigrant societies	Experiencing transparency and more rights in Vienna	Witnessing the success of these messages
Negatively painting 2015 Forming a Red-Green coalition in Vienna: Integration Day 1	Addressing as political: living circumstances are part of a society	Cohabiting locals with immigrant groups in Vienna	Having more opportunities as asylum-seeker in Vienna	Not wanting to integrate, not believing the good will of the state
Arguing between municipality and national level	Degrading by acting as parent	Creating more opportunities in Vienna	Isolation from day 1 – Integration from day 1 Being easy or difficult about things changes a lot	Finding the resources of Vienna insufficient in opposition to the national government
Escalating the situation purposely	Keeping ÖIF a political and not professional body		Seeing efforts in Vienna	Urging to stop politicizing integration
Making it difficult to access data from ÖIF	Communication in Vienna is easier		Having trust in authorities again in Vienna	Enjoying the shifted focus to Covid and Ukraine
Politicizing language teaching	Changing state responsibility from sanctioning to opening meaningful and inviting opportunities			
Ideologizing education	Seeing the benefits of Vienna and villages			
Instrumentalizing integration				

I have created a similar table for each core category, and changed the codes to their verbal noun form. This made the cross-interview analysis and merging strongly related categories into one grouping possible. The Political context effects core category looked as follows after focused coding:

2. *Political context effects* **focused codes of five initial interviews**

Political context effects				
Dehumanizing refugees Lacking national support in Vienna Misusing ÖIF	Struggling professionally with resistance Creating opportunities instead of sanctioning Misusing ÖIF Working with the city sufficiently	Working with the city sufficiently Integration from day 1	Working with the city sufficiently Integration from day 1 Isolation from day 1	Dehumanizing refugees Lacking national support in Vienna

Merging the initial codes happened through finding commonalities among them, and trying to abstract them further. As an example, I found that the political tension in the first interview stems from differences between the national and local level. In this sense the refugee experience in the fifth interview where NGOs receive support from the municipality of Vienna, but not on the national level and it causes difficulties is a similar set of personal issues. I found that both can be abstracted to *Lacking national support in Vienna*. After Focused coding the previously raw categories were refined to seven distinct groups, which are *Political context effects, Community, Courses and language, Means to improve, Waiting for asylum, Individual needs,* and *Others*.

Community collected the initial codes in which individuals told me about first-hand personal connections. This included both the professional and refugee connection, but also how professionals gathered around specific expertise or topics to maximize their reach and cooperate meaningfully. Courses and language are discussed in the same category because both are dealing with the topic of developing skills to be more successful in the integration process. The importance of knowing the local language was consistent across interviews, but the obstacles and challenges identified were not always the same. In cases it was a criticism of the

Integration Fund, in other instances the struggle of making oneself understood in daily life situations, nonetheless I decided to collect language related information to this category, and it included sanctioning of non-participation at courses. Means to improve included direct suggestions to policy making, in later stage of coding I merged these suggestions into specific categories. Helping the helpers became a political context effect related axial code for example, but at this stage I collected the suggestions separately. Waiting for asylum was a commonly recognized struggle of refugees, it was more individualistic and personal than to include these codes to Political context effect. Individual needs was a code I found in the focused coding process, when I recognized the crucial role of personal integration of refugees, which is not related to the state or facilitators, but it is a personal goal to work towards, and can be supported or hindered by other actors. I recognized an important code at this stage of analysis but did not yet find a way to abstract it, therefore I called it Other.

The first four categories appeared in each interview; the importance of individual needs was articulated in four out of the five. I kept codes which were not in every interview, but correlates to the literature in the Other category. I found such data in two of the interviews. Furthermore, two of the several sub-categories appeared in each interview consistently, which I chose to call Interacting with refugees and Helping the helpers. The first falls into the group Community and refers to civic engagement and places and times of interaction between civil society or NGOs and refugees. The other subcategory was an In Vivo code[8] from my interview with Verena Plutzar and I used this term to describe the reoccurring phenomenon: Helping the helpers within the group of Means to improve. These codes and groups allowed me to start theorizing and find analytical linkages among interviews.

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[8] "Grounded theorists generally refer to codes of participants' special terms as in vivo codes. Their specialized terms provide a useful analytic point of departure. In vivo codes help us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (Charmaz 2006)

3. Focused codes of five initial interviews

Political context effects				
Dehumanizing refugees Lacking national support in Vienna Misusing ÖIF	Struggling professionally with resistance Creating opportunities instead sanctioning Misusing ÖIF Working with the city sufficiently	Working with the city sufficiently Integration from day 1	Working with the city sufficiently Integration from day 1 Isolation from day 1	Dehumanizing refugees Lacking national support in Vienna
Community				
Interacting with refugees Engaging civil society	Interacting with refugees Gathering in groups Interacting with the authorities	Interacting with refugees Gathering in groups Engaging civil society	Interacting with refugees Engaging civil society	Interacting with refugees
Courses and language				
Realizing immediately the importance of German Testing and sanctioning Assisting individually	Realizing immediately the importance of German Testing and sanctioning	Acknowledging the difficulty of learning a new language Valuing multilingualism	Realizing immediately the importance of German	Realizing immediately the importance of German Testing ad sanctioning
Means to improve				
Helping the helpers Responding quickly and sufficiently Depoliticizing integration	Helping the helpers	Helping the helpers Responding quickly and sufficiently	Helping the helpers Responding quickly and sufficiently Informing on arrival	Helping the helpers Informing on arrival Acting quickly and sufficiently Acting consistently Depoliticizing Integration
Waiting for asylum				
Structuring daily life	Structuring daily life	Structuring daily life	Traumatizing waiting period Taking own action Mistrust in the state	Isolation from day 1 Traumatizing waiting period Taking own action Mistrust in the state
Individual needs				
Reaching potential Empowering Researching demand	Reaching potential Empowering Researching demand	Reaching potential Empowering Researching demand	Reaching potential Empowering	
Others				
Identifying as an Austrian citizen with refugee background, stronger national identity that is not taken for granted			Identifying as an Austrian citizen with refugee background, stronger national identity that is not taken for granted	

2. 2. 3. Axial coding

After focused coding I came to conclude which codes are relevant for a theory, which codes are significant or frequent enough to keep and I grouped them in categories. Subcategories were the final sixteen axial codes or themes. The final six categories significant and consistent across interviews were *Political context effect (red); Community (green); Courses, and language (blue); Waiting for asylum (purple); Self-maximization (yellow); and Naturalization (black)*. It is important to note that despite the political context effect having remarkably more sub-categories (6), they all discuss how the Vienna model is seen in opposition to the national model and ÖIF. While empowerment has one frequently discussed sub-category, it is more extensively supported by literature. Therefore, I decided to discuss every axial code which occurred at least in two interviews and it is supported by the literature, and as long as they appeared at least in two interviews, their frequency was not anymore relevant for selection.

4. Axial codes of five initial interviews
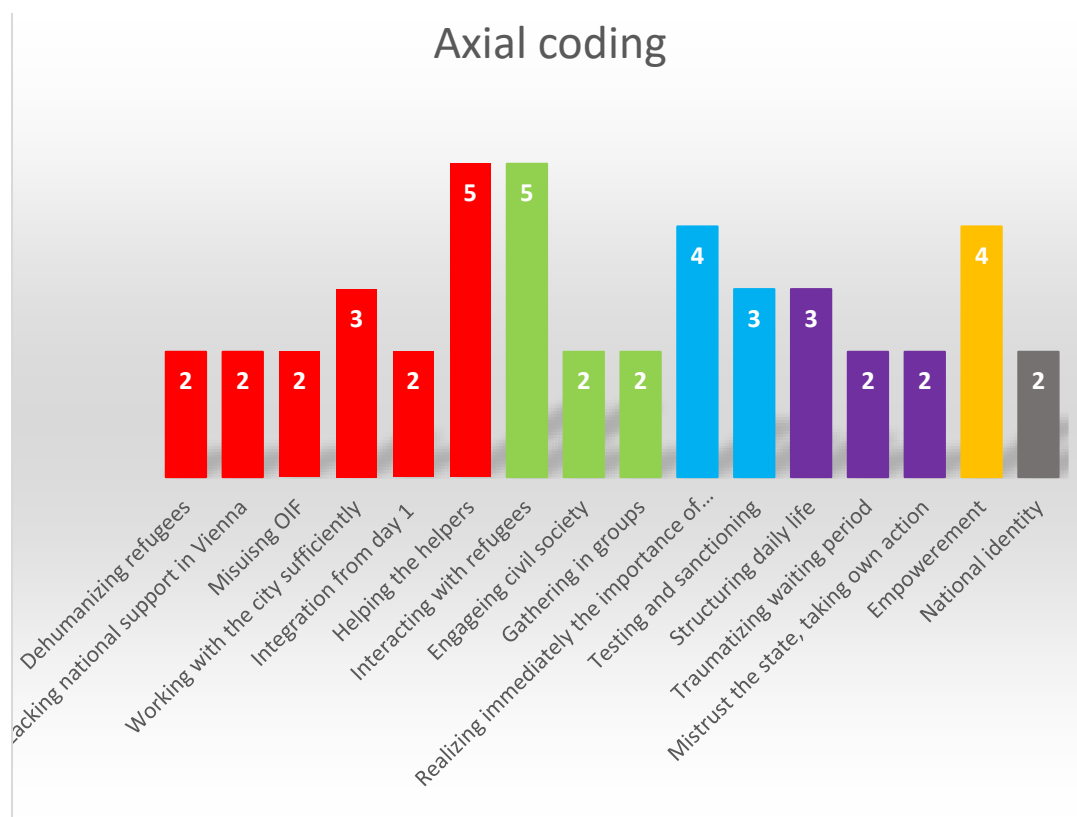
Through preliminary coding I recognized multiple relationships, and how integration is redefined in each of them. I had to come back to my initial research question, namely *how state support and its absence influences integration*. I found three main categories of actors which interact with one another in the process of integration, and these actors and interactions can be tracked in the sixteen axial codes. The most general and impersonal one I call the State, this collects the bureaucratic system of immigration and integration, relating institutions, and the government. The primary integration goal of these actors is language acquisition, cultural knowledge, labor market integration and preparing for citizenship. Secondly, there is the refugee individual, who escapes their homeland with their history, complex background and traumas and aims to restart their life in an unfamiliar environment. Their integration goal depends on their individual ambitions, and the environment, this individual level is seen in parts of *Waiting for asylum*, *Self-Maximization* and *Naturalization.* Lastly, there are societal actors which can be either formal (NGOs, organizations, networks) or informal (civilians, other immigrants, and refugees). The primary integration demand towards the individual from these actors varies. The individual's integration process constantly changes with the political and societal environment. They set new goals, discover opportunities, and aim to maximize their benefits.

The data set and previous coding clearly highlight how discrepancies arise when these interrelated set of actors do not communicate or work transparently, and integration goals develop independently. Whereas a higher level and frequency of interaction is enhanced, commonalities consequentially follow. In the Axial coding process, I realized there are three main actors in the integration process, with different integration goals and the more interaction, transparency and responsiveness can be observed, the more these integration goals can be unified.

3. Findings

3. 1. Political context effect

In this category, I collected ideas about the political environment, and how it influences the integration process. Within this category I found the most sub-categories, but most of them were different aspects of the Vienna model, how it is related to the state and how it is implemented locally. The *Helping the helpers* sub-category appeared in all initial interviews, and has been also confirmed as important in the later sixth interview.

Dehumanizing refugees

Dehumanizing refugees happens in several ways. Either by treating a group of people as senseless beings, who need to be obliged and sanctions by the government, or by negatively painting refugees in political campaigns. Sometimes the living conditions are inhumane and unsupportable. "I am not asking you to treat us like humans, just treat us like dogs. If someone would take pictures of this place and post them online to show the reality of this place, this will go viral." (Int. 3) What I find in common in all interviews whether they used the term dehumanizing (Int. 4), weaponizing (Int. 6), instrumentalizing (Int. 1) or indirectly referred to it (Int. 2, Int. 3), is that there are two views and practices. One acknowledges the individuals' personal history and needs to be integrated as a part of society, and another is not sensitive to the very essence of integration, the individual. Another practice is thematizing elections around immigration and refugees, to maximize votes.

> When I arrived, it was election time and the whole media was dehumanizing refugees as demons and terrorists, who will rape women. How would you want to integrate? While it was on TV, newspapers, everywhere. Refugees were the material of election campaign. That is why the central right and far right won the elections. So that is another thing. You require us to do this, and this and that, and at the same time, you kind of fuck us up on a state level. On the national level, and you pass legislation that actively discriminates against us. How does it work? (Int. 4)

People with refugee background usually escape from their own state, and have little trust in state institutions. This trust can be further hindered if refugees are target of hate propaganda,

from political actors. Facilitator actors are more disadvantaged if the state treats refugees as enemies. In this case even extra provincial initiatives are worsened by national level propaganda. Hall and Werner (2022) find that the more refugees trust in state institutions the more their social inclusion and integration is successful. In fact, trust is found to be a key factor to a refugee's future in the host country (Strang and Quinn, 2021; El-Bialy et al., 2017). While trust can be built in a provincial level, in personal networks, and facilitators can support refugee integration, the overall political environment, campaigns and public speech influences integration remarkably.

Lacking National support in Vienna, Misusing ÖIF

During my first interview, I was told how the Green party passed *Integration from day 1* in Vienna, and driven from their success in Vienna, they proposed to nationalize the initiative. However, it was not supported by their coalition partner, the Christian Democrats. The lack of national resources limits the ambitions of the province of Vienna and prevents refugees in other provinces receiving help from such programs. The political insight from the first interview resonated with the narrative of refugees and professionals, either through criticism of the government, or ÖIF.

> An opposition party could ask how many language courses and participants there were, how many teachers were there, how much money it costs, they could ask all these questions. However, because the fund [ÖIF] is a different body, different institution, it is not part of this parliamentary interpellation right. We cannot ask any of these questions, so the level of information is extremely limited. And the level of political interference is high. (Int. 1)

It seems that even if empirical evidence shows the success of the Vienna model, through personal histories, it is very problematic to compare it on the national level due to the lack of transparency from the integration fund. ÖIF was also mentioned in the second interview as unresponsive and obscure.

> ÖIF is an organization which was founded in 2005 and has increased its power ever since. (…) they do not have any data. They do not evaluate anything, and this is very catastrophic (…) because they are a political institution, but not professional institution. (Int. 2)

The politicized nature of ÖIF reoccurred in the sixth interview, proven to be an important code, in sense that there is a governmental body (state level), with integration demands, and no communication with professionals from the field, who could challenge the government, to adjust policies progressively.

> Since I worked here, and it has been six years, I never got any answer to any email. Even if they sent away a client from us by making a mistake. (…) the top managerial branch is always from the Conservative Party, close to the Interior Ministry. (Int.6)

The interviews with professionals highlighted how fruitful their conversation is with the province of Vienna and how insufficient with the Integration Fund. In this sense the communication between the state level and facilitators is absent outside of Vienna, but works well where *Integration from day 1* is implemented. This finding is not to be understated, since that is a clear challenge and obstacle of professionals.

Working with the city sufficiently, Integration from day 1

Integration from day 1, by name, is a very interesting phenomenon because only in my first interview did I hear of it, and in later interviews when I asked about it, people did not like the wording or did not know about the policies, even if I saw, they benefited from them.

> We said it will not actually be day 1 but as soon as possible integration measures, opportunities should be available regardless of asylum status. This includes of course German language courses because it is viewed as a pillar for integration. This is what we then rolled out this is what we in Vienna implemented. (Int. 1)

As I mentioned the word integration was not desired by my participants because they thought it is misleading, or overly politicized and attached to the negative campaigns. "In German, the word integration -because it is also in the media all the time, - it is like cursing." (Int. 1) "We do not use the word integration; we use the word inclusion. (…) it is important to show them that there's inclusion in many ways and not only the job market. (Int. 5) "It has become such a

political term weaponized by a lot of parties, I avoid using the term even. If I must use it (…) I am not just using the word integration as it is being weaponized for the Conservative Party or the right-wing party." (Int. 6)

It was very clear to me that integration is not a desired wording by my interviewees and I considered to use another word. At the end, I chose to stick with the word choice exactly for being discussed and controversial, and because it manifests the integration means and goals of all actors. Some find social inclusion a better wording, however it would then exclude the arbitrary state assignments, which is important for my study. Or even the individual ambition to begin specific vocational training. Integration therefore, is more inclusive, but it is important to see, how everybody locally involved in the process of integration are affected by the *Integration from day 1*, yet everybody has their own individual concept of integration. Despite not liking the specific word, or not knowing that the supportiveness of Vienna is manifested in a set of policies under *Integration from day 1* both refugees and professionals told me about their positive experiences in Vienna, which is partially due to these new sets of policies. However, this is important to mention again, Vienna is traditionally a socialist city, and the country has history with similar refugee inflows.

> In Vienna it was clearer. I felt like now I can understand what is happening. And I sat down with the supervisor of the camp. When I went with normal questions, a list of questions she told me everything. (…) There was a possibility for me to take a German course, even though I was waiting for my asylum. There was a possibility for me to volunteer and a lot of stuff. (Int. 3)

From the refugee perspective we see that the experience of living in other provinces, in camps isolated from the city does differ from the Vienna experience. Not just in terms of having a big international and immigrant population, but in terms of state and individual interaction through facilitators as well. Providing inclusion on an early stage of the asylum process is acknowledged and valued by the potential future citizen, whereas the information shortage and lack of interaction is scary and desperate.

"We like to cooperate with the city of Vienna a lot and it is why we value their work a lot, because they acknowledged various aspects of integration or inclusion." (Int. 5) Interviews with professionals confirm that their work is appreciated and supported by the city. "in the last years there is a Department for Integration and Diversity, and we worked together, we gave a conference together on language testing, questions of curricula." (Int. 2)

The interviews with professionals who are also involved in organizational work highlighted how facilitators and the state can exchange information, work together and have a common integration output or unite their concept of integration. This is also important, because organizations and language teachers have direct contact with refugees and through them the individual needs and challenges can be transmitted to the state level, and reflect them in policy adjustments.

My sixth interview was, again, valuable to see how a professional evaluates the same set of policies (indirectly), who I was not connected with by a politician involved in the creation of the said policies. It is important to note that I found working with the city sufficiently an important code, after conducting interviews with the professionals. It was clear to me that actors who work together will have somewhat similar experiences and opinions. I made my sixth interview with a professional, who is not related to my first interviewee and he confirmed the findings and importance of working with the city. He shared the positive experience of other networks and NGOs.

> [The relationship with the city of Vienna is] Very good. I would say. On the one hand, on an administrative level we work with the social branch of the executive, who are responsible for the basic social welfare of refugees in Vienna. We communicate with them daily. (…) On the more political level, we also have, sometimes a party that contacts us directly, if they go into negotiations with either the federal level or I do not know, they ask us what would be your demands? At the city level it is very open and very good. (Int. 6)

While *Integration from day 1*, *per se*, is not always known by refugees and professionals their conversation with the city is fruitful. NGOs and networks can apply for specific funds, and their voice matters in political debate. We see that it is secondary whether people are aware of the holistic goal under which nice opportunities arise, but what matters is an environment where early intervention is possible and supported. This seems to be a parallel reality and communication, to the one between NGOs and the government or ÖIF, and supports my observation the lack of *Integration from day 1* can be rightfully depicted as *Isolation from day 1*.

Helping the helpers

In my second interview with a language teacher, she used the term *helping the helpers*, and this is one theme that occurred directly in every interview. Helping the helpers means state initiatives to support the facilitating actors, or professionals working in the field of integration. I found that civil society and NGOs fill gaps in the field of integration, often they are more responsive to issues or challenges, but given that they are motivated by good will and they are not necessarily professionals, they can easily have negative experiences on the field or be exhausted.

> The people who came here [refugees] had specific problems. They had specific experiences. And they were not only happy to be here, and they were not only thankful for everything they got. And they were traumatized. They were difficult in communication situations. (…) And I always said from the very beginning, we need to establish programs to help the helpers. If I take civil society into my program, then I must take care of them. (Int. 2)

Through the second interview, we see how the three actors (state, facilitators, individual) need to work together, and communicate to ensure the integration process operates smoothly. If the state relies on volunteers and civil society too much, their high level or responsiveness in crisis can be soon exhausted. While good will on its own is often not enough, the training of helpers happens in specific cases, and I found it in the sixth interview as a positive case.

> Even if you study law, asylum law is not a subject. A new person will listen to counseling for four months, and after a while they take over certain steps under supervision and under guidance, step by step, until we all agree that this person is ready to do something completely alone. It is learning by doing. (…) There's no other way of training someone. (…) It was out of necessity to train people who do not know anything about this area of work by just taking them with us to come to us. (Int. 6)

The common element in the two cases is the lack of specific training of professionals to work with refugees. Language teachers are not specifically taught to work with refugees and lawyers are not taught asylum law specifically. The lack of this qualification is seen as an issue, and where additional training it is provided is considered crucial in working effectively. In all professional interviews the city of Vienna was considered an important partner who supports projects financially. It means that some expenses are covered by state level support. This means indirect support of the refugees through civil society and NGOs, besides providing the national minimum integration programs. Refugees also pointed out the lack of support of NGOs, and their exhaustions.

> Yes, some of the gaps were filled by some NGOs, but it was not enough to be universal. NGOs really helped a lot. Their work was essential in so many ways. Language, mental health, soft skills, networking, education. Really essential. Really essential work. (Int. 4)

Helping the helpers appeared in all interviews and has been considered as important in persuading integration goals of each actor. In Vienna I found it present and desired, while it was pointed out that with more national level support it could be further developed.

3. 2. Community

Interacting with refugees

Interacting with refugees was a crucial point and theme in all interviews, in fact it was already a theme before abstraction in the initial coding processes. Both facilitating actors of integration and refugees highly value different means of connections. While it sounds self-explanatory, practice does not follow where refugees are isolated from the local population. Therefore, to understand the importance of interactions, it is best to explore its absence.

I was often told about the housing circumstances outside of Vienna, and not only how inhumane living areas could be but how isolated the refugee camps were from the local population. Not only are they isolated but in instances there are clear signs of not being welcome in the country, by the facilitators themselves. In such cases communication between the individual and facilitators are limited, and negative.

> There is a specific area where they ride horses. (…) I was so excited to see horses, I wanted to take a picture of them. And once I got closer, a guy came out of nowhere, one of the people who are supervisors there. He shouted at me in German and told me to go away. I asked the person who was older there, who stayed there for a longer time. He said girls are coming there, and he does not want you to get closer to the girls because he fears what you will do with them. (Int. 3)

The parallel reality is what we see in Vienna, where asylum-seekers and refugees can find means to interact with the local population through NGOs. "Our biggest project now is about mental health. (…) The other important topic is political and democratic inclusion" (Int. 5) Such mentioned project helps the social inclusion of people and also provides them with company, acquaintances and potentially help them develop their life conditions and set of skills. The above-mentioned NGO's (*Fremde werden Freunde*) activity is a great example of multiple ways to let people connect, one of which is sports, that was also recognized by other

interviewees. "We have a swimming course (…), German class, we had a football group (…), a small cafe, from six to eight (…)" (Int. 6)

What we clearly see here is the difference between the provinces, how the individual relates to the state with and without facilitators. In absence of facilitators, as it will be shown in later parts the individual sets own integration goals, disconnects from the state and feels alienated in the society. Whereas, if early intervention is possible (not enforced, but provided) people have platforms of interaction and engage with the local society at an early stage. It is important to note that even where NGOs provide the said platforms, it is the decision of the refugee individual to participate or not, and it is also possible to remain alienated from the local society by choice, whereas in less progressive provinces it is also possible to arrange meetings with the locals through social media for instance. "You can go for a day trip, meet people (…) You are not only monitored by the supervisors, but you are also monitored by the people around you." (Int. 3) In group monitoring can be troublesome. In refugee camps outside of the province of Vienna, where people are more interdependent, new segregated groups appear. This is partially because their limited financial income in the asylum-procedure forces them to form one household (Int. 3), but also due to the closedness and isolation of camps where they can only communicate with one another. Where people strongly rely on each other it is seen to be difficult to break out from the inner group, since the individual is more reliant on, and accountable to them, than to the native society.

Three out of six interviews mentioned sports as a good way of social inclusion or integration program between the local and newcomer society, all these interviews were made with professionals. I found that the reason it was not discussed by my refugee interviewees is they already spoke English when they arrived to the country, where as sports seem to be an important way of interaction for others, who do not speak a common language with locals. Sports require minimum language skills, but they have internationally known, common rules.

These simple encounters help unconsciously both to feel included and to cope with PTSD, however they do not require difficult organization, administrational work, professional training of massive financial investment. This simple example shows us; however important, complicated initiatives might be, simple ones with good intention are equally (if not) more beneficial on the individual level.

Engaging civil society, Gathering in groups

2015 and the aftermath is remarkable for triggering social mechanisms, and activating politically uninterested parts of the civil society (Int. 1). Many NGOs have been founded in the time, and operate up until today. Both *Fremde werden Freunde* and *QueerBase* are NGOs that were founded in the aftermath of 2015 (Int. 5, 6). In my interviews this period was considered a momentum in this sense. This is important for realizing the need of professionals, and facilitating actors who can directly improve the life quality of refugees. This is of no surprise that so many actors have appeared in response to the "crisis" and raises concerns about places where the crisis is also present, was followed by such high level and frequency of activism, but state support was not enhanced beyond the national minimum.

We learn from the interviews, in crisis situation voluntarism is high and a group of both civilians and professionals want to help. They have little effect individually, and therefore they gather in groups along interest of professionalism. These professionals begin expanding their networks and expertise and work on the field gaining first hand experience. While we see that on the state level the integration procedure is highly politicized, facilitators face the reality of improving lives of refugees and they are meaningful actors between state and the individual. Gathering in groups is important for lobby and applying for funds, this way they can more effectively communicate with state level actors. This tells us the importance of communication and self-organizing on the level of facilitators, and we also see how non-professionals or

volunteers can become politically meaningful groups of actors. In the province of Vienna professionals told me about a fruitful cooperation with the city, but not on the national level. I found that professionals who have first-hand experience from the field of integration should be involved in the policy making process, since their suggestions are not arbitrary but reflect to the reality of refugee experience and integration.

3. 3. Courses and language

Realizing the importance of German, Testing and sanctioning

Language is often purely seen as an instrument for later steps of integration. However, language on its own provides immigrants with a variety of daily life solutions and enables them to communicate and maximize their political and societal benefits (Shohamy 2005). Linguistic integration provides the individual with communication skills necessary in the housing system, the labor market, education, and healthcare system, potentially policymakers and institutions (Extramiana et al. 2014, Ager & Strang 2008, Chin & Cortes 2015). The lack of language skills, therefore, prohibits the above-mentioned benefits for immigrants (Fasani & Minale 2018).

The reoccurring patter around language and language acquisition was the difference between state assigned language courses associated with punishment, and having the experience from the first day that German is indeed necessary. This is interesting on each level of integration. The state has specific demands which are manifested in mandatory language courses, the local government provides opportunities through NGOs to teach German to refugees, and the refugee him or herself also realizes in the first day of applying for asylum, that they need to learn the language to manage their life. Therefore, I consider language a common integration goal of three levels or actors of integration.

> Language is so much connected to your identity and to your daily life. (…) I can tell those people who do it in German courses, they do it also without German courses, you know? The courses can support something. But they must do it on their own. And nobody talks about how challenging, and frightening it is to enter a new language. (Int. 2)

Apparently, the will and opportunity to learn the language develop together, if the individual has no means to learn the language on their own, they will lose interest and motivation (Baubock & Tripkovic 2017), whereas in cases where courses are provided, they might still decide not to participate in special cases.

> (…) why would people not go on a language course if it would not be beneficial? If you think that people act in their best interest, why would they not do it? (…) if it is a woman who is a mother of 4-5 children and is not provided childcare and language course the same time, she must make a decision. This might keep her from taking the language course. If you look deeper, you will find this problem and seek a solution instead of going with this approach, treating them like stupid individuals who must be disciplined. (Int. 1)

This is interesting because language provides individuals with the possibility to function in daily life and enter further stages of integration (Shohamy 2005), yet it is enforced and not encouraged on the national level. I find that the purpose of state assigned language courses is not to support the refugee individual maximize their potential, but to quickly fill low-wage positions with refugees. However, this reduces the complicated process of integration to labor market integration and misses the crucial social inclusion. This policy is problematic in two levels, besides creating more isolation between actors of integration. On the one hand, German is only mandatory for non-EU citizens (Int. 2), it is possible for an EU-citizen to manage their life in *say* English comfortably (Int. 5) for decades, without knowing any German, whereas refugees are punished for non-participation in language courses by deducting social benefits from them. The degree of deduction depends on the province.[9] In this sense the current language requirement to stay in the country is unjust and discriminatory. On the other hand,

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[9] http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/reportdownload/aida_at_2016update.pdf

this massive effort to learn the language is not rewarded by any means (Int. 6), *say*, someone who lives in the country for years and managed to learn the local language does not yet have any political rights, before they become citizens, nor are they guaranteed a job. The only straightforward benefit of completing the assignment of learning German is not holding back social benefits. The financial support of people with positive asylum status only reach the poverty line in Austria even without deduction[10]. When a person has alternative ways of learning the language they can manage learning German even before they are eligible for the state assigned courses, as the refugee experience in interview 4 shows.

> I did not have to go through it because by the time I got my asylum, I had finished my German course level C1. No one could ask me to do any German courses. I just went there to show them my certificate. (Int. 4)

All six interviews highlighted how early on learning the local language becomes an important goal, but also how delayed it can be in specific cases. The person who enters the country often has different priorities, PTSD or children to take care of and all these possible circumstances can delay their language acquisition. The asylum procedure can take up to months and years, and the mandatory language programs only start later. Whether and when a person wants to socially engage and begin to learn the local language is very personal.

> I also asked a Caritas person at the Graz camp if there were any courses that we could take. He laughed and said you cannot take a course unless you get a positive answer for your asylum. (Int. 3)

I found where language courses are provided in the asylum procedure, the state, the facilitators, and the individual cooperate towards a common goal, whereas if support is denied the person will begin to mistrust the state or find alternative ways to maximize their potential. It is in the individual's best interest to manage their lives independently, and they realize from first day how much they need the language for that. If we assume people act towards their maximum benefit, we can be sure they will start language learning, unless they have a reason not to. In

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[10] http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/reportdownload/aida_at_2016update.pdf

my interviews the state was seen as a negative actor for sanctioning, and it was proposed the primary function of the state should be to provide people with the necessary means to act towards their benefit. If they do not, the state should investigate the individual (or group) case to see what is an obstacle to overcome before language acquisition. The current practices are warned to lead to parallel societies and segregation.

3. 4. Waiting for asylum

After receiving asylum, refugees begin the universal integration program supported by the state, however asylum processes might take up to months and years. This period of uncertainty without a structure in daily life is particularly challenging. On the one hand asylum-seekers fear to have their asylum-application refused and being deported from the country. On the other hand, where asylum-seekers live in an isolated place with limited resources and no interaction with the locals, parallel societies and integration goals will appear (Werth, M., Stevens W., & Delfs S. 1997)

Structuring daily life, Traumatizing waiting period

Courses, social inclusion, programs help the traumatized person to have more safety and certainty in their daily life, by giving them more structure (Int 1, 2). The goal behind *Integration from day 1* indeed is to enhance social inclusion through various ways, to provide psychological and legal support, to support the individual who might still suffer from their past traumas, or the stressful waiting period for asylum.

> What is the alternative? The alternative is that access to the labor market is not an option anyway. You do not have access to the labor market, this is a very hard obstacle. What else can you do with your life? What do you have access to or what do you want access to? (…) In an NGO for example, they do not only have language courses, but they also have sport events or cultural events or some other social activities like riding a bike together or going sightseeing in the city. So, I really appreciate those organizations that offer these social activities. (Int. 1)

The traumatized person is often not capable of structuring their lives, and it is also challenging for them to be aware of their possibilities. In the asylum procedure, which might take up to a very long time, the state neglects the individual and in these times of uncertainty the rule of facilitators is crucial. Courses, programs, events, communities give a sense of belonging, safety, and help the asylum-seeker structure their lives. Where the state provides facilitators with the necessary means, and facilitators engage with asylum-seekers as early as they are needed, *Integration from day 1* becomes a possibility to enhance integration.

Taking own action and mistrust the state

Besides my two formal interviews I often meet and talk with other Arabic speaking refugees who do not speak English or German, and they are afraid or uninterested in programs provided by NGOs or organizations. Their fear is from mistrust in institutions, the state or their own abilities to communicate. It is often the case that they prefer to sit in the camp and wait, which can also be the case without language boundaries.

> Since you lived in Vienna, inside the city, with the family, you met people daily and you interacted with people daily. Did you communicate with the people in English? Did you already make local friends?
>
> No. I was just walking in the streets. (Int. 4)

While they are waiting for asylum, they have no, or little structure of life and they are very much limited to their linguistic minority. Not only that their means of communication are limited, but they show signs of PTSD (self-destructive behavior: smoking and drinking too much, insomnia, concentration issues, overwhelming (survival) guilt or shame (to be a refugee). My two formal interviewees were not in the same linguistic situation, yet they had similar experiences. Both interacted with NGOs and highly valued them, but both had mistrust in the state and institutions of integration and decided to act on their own. Since they are highly educated English speakers, they managed to reach out to the necessary people or institutions to improve their conditions.

In the third interview, I was told about living in 3 camps before moving to Vienna, and how limited information were there. They were asked if they needed psychological help after arrival, but when they asked for it, therapy was refused from them. My interviewee at one point outraged about the inhumane living conditions, that they are forced to live in, "on top of each other". The supervisors at the camp blamed the situation on the government and no improvement or support was provided. This case suggests a trouble at the facilitator-state communication, which results in issues between facilitators and the individual.

> We received a list of advocates, telephone numbers, and stuff like that. To tell people, if you have any questions, you can contact them. If you have any stuff, you can contact them, but no one really contacted. I felt like at this point no one is willing to give me any answers. (Int. 3)

I asked my interviewee if he had a list of contacts to reach out to, and he said there was, but after these initial experiences he gave up on it, in this sense the facilitators failed to their function making the communication between them and refugees, them and the state and between the state and refugees impossible.

3. 5. Self-maximization

Empowerment of the individual is creating an environment in which he or she can maneuver and move towards their potential. For that facilitating actors need to be in close contact with their target group to know what is needed from them, and the state needs to create the necessary means for that. Berg (1997) finds that the work of integration needs to be organized in a way that considers everyone's personal needs.

> [Integration] is a personal term, not a general term. (…) There are things that you carry with you all the time, from your history, from your culture, from your family, from everything, from the country you come from. (…) Now I am realizing that integration is not my goal. My goal is to achieve what I came here for. To have a better life, start a new life. To integrate in my own way. I want this country to accept me for who I am, for the things that my country did not accept me for. (Int. 3)

We see that integration also happens on the personal level, where the individual integrated their past and present, and set new goals. These new goals are to be realized and used by policy makers; however, state institutions are impersonal, and they have other functions than investigating individual cases. This makes it particularly important to consider first-hand contact facilitators in policy making, so that the person can be seen and understood in the integration process.

Empowerment

During my first set of interviews, I still focused a lot on language acquisition and sometimes asked too much about it, neglecting the complexity of integration. In such instances my interviewees changed to a more straight-forward tone to ensure I understand language on its own is not integration.

> Just hang out. Just be seen as a human you know... You exist. It is not about language. Being appreciated, being talked to, being seen. Otherwise, would you be just sitting in your room? You do not know anyone; you are left behind. (Int. 4)

It is important for the individual to be seen and recognized as a human, who is not secondary to the native population. The state necessarily functions as a bureaucratic set of institutions and the importance of facilitators is very high.

> Integration is not just language and how to act in the metro... But trying to shed all these ideas, close-mindedness, prejudice, these ideas that you carry with you. I am a relatively open-minded person, but I still have prejudice, I have a lot of complexes that I also need to understand. So instead of focusing on how to talk in the metro or how to do this or how to say this in German also, interacting with people and knowing what issues and traumas they have. (Int. 3)

Listening, understanding, and acknowledging were key terms in the interviews, given that all interviews were conducted with (former or current) firsthand facilitators, and refugees we see that on the personal level the individuality of integration is crucial. However, this aspect is not possible without initiating conversations and investing to realize demands. I must come back to my initial idea, that each actor of the integration process has their own integration goal, and

these goals can be unified through communication. It can be realized from the stories that refugees sometimes do not need language courses or social engagement from day 1, but accessibility of facilitators, transparency in the process and platforms to be seen and understood in their own phase. None of these are equally provided in each province, since the national minimum program disregards the individual aspect of integration.

3. 6. Naturalization

Nationality, national identity

The last stage of formal integration is being naturalized and becoming the citizen of the host country. The relationship of the individual and the country varies. Some young people spend most of their young life in the host country and grow into adults there. The long-lasting formal integration process means that their citizenship is the result of a serious investment, and it is not taken for granted.

> There are many young people who have been here for a good part of their young lives, and they (…) would get very loyal very enthusiastic citizens, more enthusiastic than the native citizens who sometimes take it for granted. If they would see this opportunity from the perspective of the state to welcome these new citizens as such. (Int. 1)

As it was previously discussed Adda et al. (2022) shows that refugees, besides having extra challenges to overcome compared to economic migrants, their ambition to stay in the host society and the fact they are more likely to take lower-paid positions allows them to be integrated to the host society faster. This integration process, however, can be enhanced or hindered by the state and the bureaucratic system, depending on how they treat the potential future citizens, which is also confirmed in the first interview. As the first interview pointed out, the refugee influx after 2015 brought an impeccable number of potential new citizens, who can have strong ties to the country and build a nationalistic feeling, but without being welcomed

by the overall state, their formal integration process might not develop together with a sense of belonging.

> I am grateful every day for Austria. (…) I want to give back to the country. It hosts me, it welcomes me. It was not the best welcome, but I feel safe at least. I will always be thankful for this. I think in the future the people who pay back the country, like me, who were refugees coming out from nothing will be more patriotic and helpful for the country even more than the locals. (Int. 3)

The success stories confirm that people who arrive to the host country with a conflicted past can become active civilians, taxpayers or become Austrian citizens. The state is responsible for realizing this human capital if the goal of integration is to have enthusiastic and engaged citizens, which is overall more important than arbitrary assignments, and strict sanctioning.
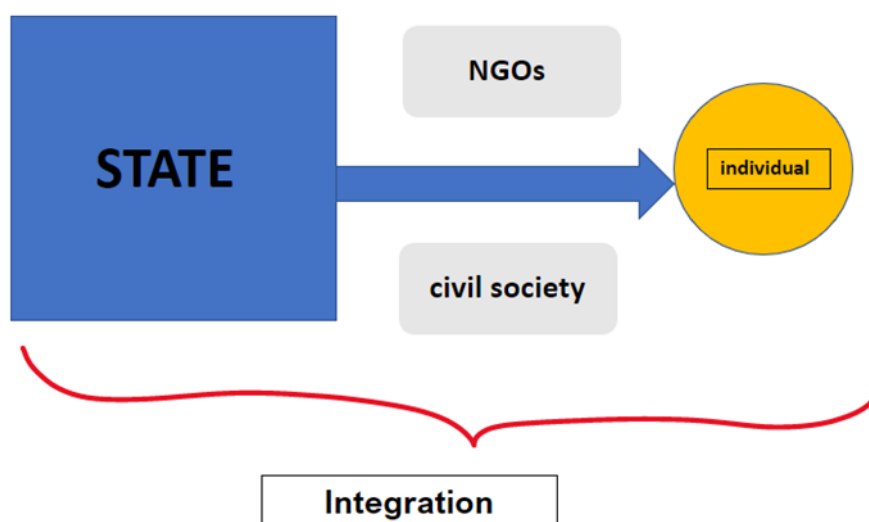
4. Conclusion

4. 1. Emerging theory

After analyzing each category and theme, I came to separate three groups of actors in the integration process. There is the state, the overall state, which is an impersonal set of institutions. They assign the refugee population through policies to go through certain means of integration, but there is little if any connection between the self-functioning system and individuals. I chose to also analyze facilitator actors, who interact with the state and/or refugees into two categories: NGOs, which is a professional, organized setup, and civil society who are engaged in the integration process, in this sense qualify as facilitators, but they are less frequently engaged volunteers, or temporary helpers. Finally, the principle actor of the integration process is the refugee individual.

All four actors have a perception of what integration means, and all four have a demand or goal set for the individual. While these expectations can be contradictory, it is possible to integrate them through common goals formulated during interaction. In case of *Isolation from day 1*, the four actors exist independently, and minimal if any interaction is possible. The only clear demand is from the state towards the refugee individual (blue arrow), who faces expectations and no exchange of ideas around integration.

5. Integration when *Isolation from day 1* is applied

The other possibility is *Integration from day 1*, where the earlier, and closer these four actors coexist and exchange ideas, the more their goals and expectations will meet. On the one hand because interaction enhances social inclusion, and the included individual will form common sense with civil society, mutually changing each other's perception of the other, and in the other hand, for having access to more information and possibilities in the unfamiliar environment. Under *Integration from day 1* the state will remain to have direct expectations from the individual. However, due to the enhanced and frequent interaction between NGOs and civil society actors and the refugee individual their concept of integration will formulate in relation to one another. Native and politically organized interest groups, furthermore, have more access to communication and change expectations of the state, and as such can influence the way they approach refugees.

6. Integration when *Integration from day 1* is applied
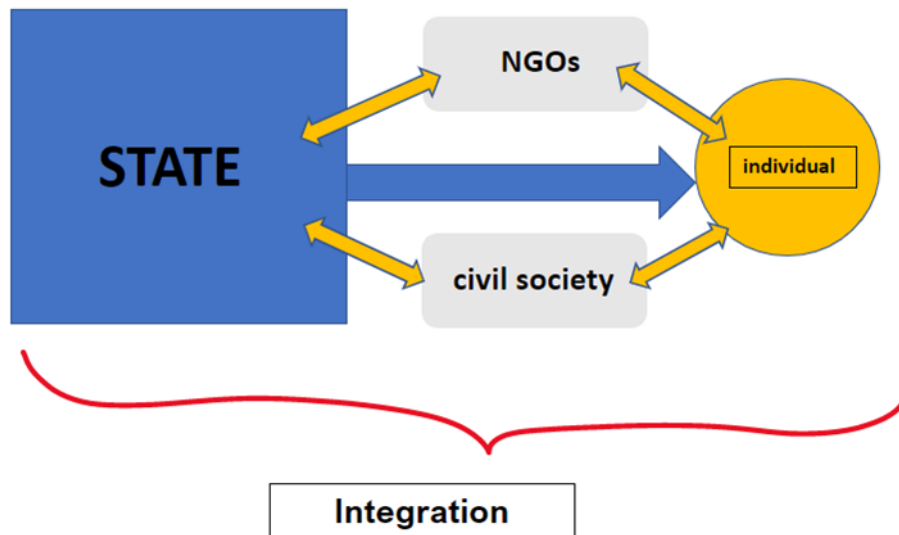
The final theoretical model required me to come back to my research question, which is how state support and its absence influence the integration of refugees. After the coding process and analysis of findings, I came to conclude that without state support through NGOs and civil society, parallel societies and integration goals appear, while where state support enhances the interaction through NGOs and civil society, native and immigrant individuals have more commonality in social interactions and integration goals, being mutually supportive of achieving these goals. The findings show that state support and its absence influence the integration process in a way, where the state (or province) provides facilitators with the necessary resources to socially engage with refugees, the integration goals of actors are more unified, and the process is more humane, transparent and desired by the actors.

4. 2. Policy recommendations

I concluded four principle ideas to be considered in future policy making. These ideas are built upon the finding that state support influences integration. Independent integration goals of actors can be unified through increased level of interaction.

Depoliticize integration: I propose a pragmatic solution to maximize the potential in human capital that is accepted in the country as asylum-seekers already. This investment is important, because asylum-applicant are potential future citizens. Once a country accepted a group of asylum-seekers, they should not be targeted by negative electoral propaganda. Such negative painting not only raises moral concerns, but contradictory to any healthy integration process. Political campaigning and party branding might be restricted in a way that minority groups of the country cannot be targeted of hate propaganda from the time they entered the country, or they applied for asylum in the country.

Furthermore, the institutions of integration should be transparent and responsive. We see that a passive political entity like the Austrian Integration Fund is problematic for enforcing integration and language courses, but not allowing an exchange of findings and ideas with facilitators.

Mutual process of actors: Integration is to be acknowledged as a multi-actor process, where the actors have their own perception of integration, that might change through the process depending on the policy environment. To ensure integration goals are not developing independently in a segregated way, it is desired to have a lively conversation among actors. Facilitator actors should be recognized as such by the state, and they should be provided with the necessary means to enhance the integration and social inclusion process. Namely, it is important that the state provides financial support, or professional trainings to the "help the helpers", not to be exhausted or lack orientation and stop valuable volunteering. Regular

communication helps to recognize challenges and needs of actors, and policies can be adjusted in cases when necessary. However, without a responsive state level even if NGOs and volunteers have good intentions and actively participate it will not remain sustainable.

Increased support of social inclusion: Integration should always include a high degree of social inclusion, in which along the arbitrary integration process, both the native society and immigrants are provided with opportunities to interact. Social inclusion will lead to social cohesion, more interaction will lead to to more unified integration perspectives. The lack of social inclusion can hinder the integration process, and lead to segregation in future societies. It is crucial that the interaction and social inclusion are available as early on as possible. People have nearly no legal means to enter the country (Int. 3, Int. 6), unless they have a visa and decide to stay, and apply for asylum. The way to the host country for illegal immigrants is dangerous, and people are traumatized and injured on the way. They need to be listened to, they need to experience a positive and humane face of the state in the asylum procedure in order to process what happened to them on their way, and give them support and orientation.

Investigating individual cases: Individual cases are to be considered in future policy making. Without recognizing the individual history and aspirations of people, it is difficult to find common integration perspectives, and can alienate the individual from the state and society. The state needs to provide an optimal political environment for facilitators to investigate these individual cases. This helps to explain why certain parts of the target group are less likely to participate in integration courses, or what obstacles are to be worked on before starting integration.

4. 3. Final thoughts

In my research I showed how state support influences integration. After the analysis of interviews, I found the Vienna model, *Integration from day 1* is a desirable model because early intervention enhances integration success. In this process facilitators are crucial, because professionals and volunteers have a first-hand experience with refugees. For refugees to restart their life in a new country after a traumatizing past and illegal journey is difficult. Their difficulties are individualistic and so are their integration goals and their need to be socially included. Individual cases can be investigated on the individual level by facilitators and this is why it is important to support these actors in the integration process, so that the state can enhance integration instead of hindering or delaying it.

Further research should more widely investigate the case of Vienna and Austria, so that the grounded theory can reach higher saturation, for which generally more testing is required. The theory can be then further tested in other political environments, or between countries where similar discrepancies developed.

Appendix: Information on interviewees

Faika el-Nagashi. Faika el-Nagashi is a politician of the party Austrian Green party, *Die Grünen*. She has been a member of the national parliament since 2019. Previously she was a member of the local government in Vienna between 2015 and 2019. The same year she was elected in 2015, she worked as a civil activist, gaining firsthand experience in the field of immigration and integration. Between 2015 and 2019 she contributed to the set of integration policies, and *Integration from day 1* as a holistic approach of early intervention. She is the co-author of the book *Für alle, die hier sind[11]* (2022), which is the biography of them as immigrant women fighting for a socially just, anti-racist, solidary society and politics in Austria. (Interview 1)

Verena Plutzar. Verena Plutzar is a linguist and language teacher. She worked as a language teacher for refugees of the Yugoslavia war after 1992. Between 1998 and 2001, she organized 600 hours-long German courses for accepted refugees in the 11th district of Vienna. In 2003, together with two other professionals, they founded the Language Right Network, *Netzwerk SprachenRechte* as a direct response to a new policy which obliged non-EU citizens to learn German to keep their right to stay in Austria. The network is vocal in situations where language rights are harmed. They raise awareness of and take part in the discussion around language rights through research, conferences and advisory. They work together on projects with the city of Vienna, the University of Vienna and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), among others. (Interview 2)

Aiham. Aiham is a dentist from Syria, and he has arrived in Austria and applied for asylum in the fall or 2021. He has experienced living in four refugee camps around Austria and has been finally placed in Vienna with the support of *Queer Base* an NGO that provides legal support to

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[11] For everyone, who is here

LGBTQ+ refugees. After moving to Vienna, he has been working as a part-time translator for *Queer Base*. He has received his asylum, finished the integration course and currently studies German to later be employed as a dentist. (Interview 3)

Abdullah. Abdullah is a student and employee from Syria. He has arrived in Austria and applied for asylum in 2017. He has been placed at his family under family unification. He got his asylum after 8 months, but at the same time he applied to study in the University of Vienna and studied at an intense German course provided by the university. He has finished all integration courses; he studies at the Central European University, and he is an employee at an Austrian bank. (Interview 4)

Kathrin Braun. Kathrin Braun is a project manager and researcher at the NGO *Fremde werden Freunde* since 2020. *Fremde werden Freunde* or Foreigners become Friends is an NGO that was founded in 2015 and operates successfully up until today. After 2015 many active volunteers wanted to support refugees and immigrants, but they did not know where to start, as a result a group of people who were actively networking founded this organization to give orientation to volunteers and support social inclusion of immigrants. The organization works with eight professional employees and an extensive volunteer network from both the local population and immigrants. Most professionals are also from a diverse immigrant background. (Interview 5)

Ralph Guth. Ralph Guth is a legal advisor at *QueerBase* in Vienna. He joined the legal team as a volunteer activist, and now works there full-time. His work includes legal advisory as well as preparation for the central interrogation before the Federal Office and emotional support in the asylum process. *QueerBase* is a LGBTQ+ refugee organization that was founded in 2015 and operates successfully since then. The organization provides legal counseling and social

inclusion opportunities. Ralph has done his compulsory social services at ÖIF in 2007.

(Interview 6)

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