Chapter 1
Introduction

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Since at least the summer of 2015, refugee migration to Europe has been a topical issue in academic, political and public debates. While European meta-discourses often link to security issues, border security and problems with "burden sharing", which are reflected at the state level and expanded by questions of social policies and so forth, the local level is largely neglected.

Yet, it is at the local level where policies are implemented, often with varying practices which are intertwined with local specifics regarding political culture and the state of civil society. Taking on a cross-national comparative perspective, research on the local level can reveal influences of national framings on the development of reception processes, policy and discourses.

This volume aims to show the development of "the refugee crisis" and reception processes, and the repercussions of this "crisis" for policy development and public discourses at the level of European localities. It brings together a selection of fresh empirical research on reception processes and the development of structures, practices and discourses at the local level throughout Europe. The contributions are based on desktop research and document analysis as well as on a large variety of empirical fieldwork including media analysis, expert interviews, focus group discussions and ethnographic research. This fieldwork integrates perspectives from political and administration stakeholders, civil society and its institutions, grassroots organizations and asylum-seeking migrants throughout European countries which were touched by the "refugee crisis" in very diverse ways (Austria, Belgium,

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Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the Netherlands). Hence, the volume shows the varieties of refugee reception and integration strategies and practices, taking into account the geographical, historical and political contexts of the specific case study regions (see for example Chaps. 2, 3, 6, 9 and 10). By also including perceptions of the local public and how these translate into policy development, it contributes to the nexus between migration/integration of refugees on the one hand and societal development and political culture on the other (see for example Chaps. 6, 8 and 11). Through highlighting examples of experimental governance and multi-sectoral approaches, we point to the role of localities in shaping innovative policies (see for example Chaps. 7 and 12), but we also highlight the effects of tightening national (or supra-national) policies on specific places and localities, and on the inhabitants of those places (see for example Chaps. 2, 3, 4 and 5).

This introductory chapter will first highlight approaches that were central for creating this volume and which appear as cross-cutting themes throughout the single contributions. Notably, these are the topics of local governance and the constitution of spaces and places of reception (Sect. 1.1.1), and the crisis narrative, its foundations and practical consequences (Sect. 1.1.2). In the last section (Sect. 1.2), we introduce the single contributions of this volume.

1.1 Rationale and Conceptual Framework

1.1.1 Local Governance and the Constitution of Spaces and Places of Reception

The admission and reception of asylum seekers is obviously a matter for multiple governance levels. While EU laws lay the ground for entry into the EU space, defining member states' responsibilities for the handling of asylum applications and giving guidelines for the asylum procedures, it is the local level where asylum seekers are allocated, and where practical questions regarding accommodation, health issues, education or social integration have to be tackled. Given the fact that asylum policies are shaped at the national and supra-national governance levels, there is an obvious mismatch between the role of localities as being the major places of reception and integration of asylum seekers on the one hand, and their limited role in the decision-making process around whether to take in asylum seekers or not, and how (and at which point of the asylum procedure) they can shape asylum seekers' paths to long-term integration. However, against the backdrop of the formal structure of governance, localities can carry out further functions beyond those set out by law, and can even undermine the reception system as designed by national or EU norms. The (counter-)active role of the local level is particularly evident in the case of networks of cities claiming a greater role in the asylum decision-making processes at the EU level by becoming 'cities of refuge' (Eurocities 2015; Doomernik and Ardon 2018).

In migration research, the new focus on the local was fuelled by the 'spatial turn' in social sciences, which called for a reintroduction of space as an analytical category for the research of social phenomena (see e.g. Bachmann-Medik 2016: 211 ff.; Warf and Arias 2009). The 'local turn' as part of the 'spatial turn' led to a more detailed conceptualization of the 'local' as a spatio-temporal setting which determines a specific opportunity structure in which migrants' integration trajectories can unfold (Glick-Schiller and Cağlar 2011: 63). For migration policy research, the 'local turn' implies a reconceptualisation of the local as a level of policymaking rather than merely focusing on national policies (Caponio et al. 2018; Stephenson 2013; Zapata-Barrero et al. 2017). Zapata-Barrero et al. (2017: 2) stress that within a multilevel governance research framework, the local perspective can "contribute to a more in-depth understanding of why and how cities and regions respond differently to similar challenges, and of why and how these different answers can affect state-based models of immigration management".

The new sensitivity towards the scale of observation is also appreciated in the context of growing critique against the essentialisation of the nation state in migration research, labelled as "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). This also entails a closer look at local actor constellations, problem perceptions and civic cultures which determine how the task of migrant integration is approached within a specific municipality. Among the most convincing approaches for analyzing those local negotiation processes as crucial aspects of policy development, the migration regime approach has become quite prominent in recent years, even though it lacks a clear-cut explanatory structure due to the multitude of definitions and applications in research (for a review see: Bernt 2019). However, as Bernt (2019: 11) points out, the approach has its merits if used as "a perspective that tries to break free of state-centrism, to urge researchers to think about a multitude of actors and relationships, emphasizing relationality and openness in the field of migrations [sic] studies." And that's exactly what the contributions to this volume are doing.

A number of contributions also take a decidedly critical geographical perspective and apply concepts focusing on the spatiality of reception processes, resulting from a translation of hegemonic ideas and discourses into practices and material configurations of places of reception. The contributions of Göler (Chap. 4) and Kreichauf (Chap. 3), for example, present analyses of local geographies of asylum, applying Marc Augé's (2009) concept of non-places and Michel Foucault's ideas on heterotopias (Foucault 1984). Focusing on the micro-level of asylum seekers' accommodation facilities, both authors explore how spatial, material and institutional differences affect everyday relations between asylum seekers and local residents and can even affect asylum seekers' chances of being granted asylum. With a conceptualization along the dialectics of openness/closure, or inclusion/exclusion, Göler and Kreichauf both demonstrate how spatial and social categories are linked in terms of producing spaces of inclusion or exclusion, and thus non-places or heterotopias. Also the contribution of Semprebon and Pelacani (Chap. 2) relates to critical concepts of space by depicting new "spaces of transit" or "internal hotspots"

along the Italian Brenner route, which are not only defined by the geographical layout of the space but by social borders of inclusion.

1.1.2   The Notion of Crisis

As the initial idea for this volume developed in the context of increasing arrivals (and shipwrecking incidents) of asylum seekers at the European shores, which was visible at the local level at least since 2013 and later labelled under various 'crisis' narratives (among others: 'migration crisis', 'refugee crisis', 'reception crisis', 'governance crisis', and 'state crisis'), we deem it necessary to reflect on the notion of crisis and its meaning in the context of asylum in Europe. As Scholten and Van Ninsen (2015: 3) point out in their introduction to a special issue on the role of policy analysis in 'crisis' situations, "crisis is often defined in a broad sense, involving concerns about levels and types of immigration as well as concerns about the integration of migrant groups and categories." However, there is no clear definition of what the constituents of the crisis are, and who is deemed responsible for reacting to it.

In applied research in the context of migration and disaster management, the concept of crisis usually relates to humanitarian crises such as natural catastrophes or armed conflicts, combined with the inability of affected individuals, communities and states to cope with the outcomes of the critical event (Hendow et al. 2018: 13). In a historical perspective, the crisis definition gradually changed from a more "technical" understanding of crisis as a natural hazard to a more sociological definition of crisis as "a process of interaction between external forces, such as a natural hazard or armed conflict, and the socio-economic and political conditions in a society" (Hendow et al. 2018: 14).

In this relational understanding, the concept of "vulnerability" also appeared, taking into account varying abilities to cope with the impact of a hazard, due to personal or group characteristics (Wisner et al. 1994). The focus on human agency and coping strategies led to the adoption of *resilience* as a key concept of disaster management (Hendow et al. 2018: 17), which is commonly understood as "the shared social capacity to anticipate, resist, absorb and recover from an adverse or disturbing event or process through adaptive and innovative processes of change, entrepreneurship, learning and increased competence" (Frerks et al. 2011). We can conclude that the definition of a situation as a crisis is based on subjective perceptions and is in a relational sense, rather than on the basis of objectively measurable indicators (Lindley 2014).

Furthermore, as Hendow et al. (2018: 14) point out, the perception of a situation as critical is related to certain thresholds or tipping points, which highlight the processual character (rather than static situation) of a crisis and also stress "the relevance of rising tensions and the multiplicity of factors that shape a crisis as outcome" (ibid.). In the case of migration to and asylum in Europe, we can certainly see several thresholds, constituted by strongly increasing numbers of migrant arrivals in

particular spots (first of all along the Italian and Greek shores, mostly observable on the Greek island of Lesbos and the Italian island of Lampedusa), which were not adequately equipped for the reception. Later, these thresholds also emerged in countries of second reception, such as in Austria, Germany, or the Netherlands, where additional reception centres were provisionally erected in camp-like structures. In the course of the "migration crisis", so-called internal hotspots developed at places where migrants got stuck on their way through Europe, or after having been deported due to the Dublin Regulation. For a number of years, one of the most well-known places was the so-called "jungle" of Calais, a series of makeshift camps for migrants desperately trying to reach the UK via the Channel Tunnel or under the chassis of a lorry going on a cross-Channel ferry. But also the Italian border towns of Ventimiglia or Como, or certain cities along the Brenner route – as is shown by Semprebon and Pelacani in this volume – developed into internal hotspots.

Those localities serve as a showcase for the inadequacy of European asylum governance, highlighting the inability of political actors and regulating bodies to integrate those autonomously acting migrants into the logics of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), with its fixed regulations regarding national responsibilities for the processing of the asylum claim, and strict regulations regarding the support provided to migrants and the eligibility for this support. Consequently, in this volume, for example Müller and Rosenberger (Chap. 5) speak of a "migrant reception crisis" rather than a 'migration' or 'refugee crisis', stressing the structural mal-equipment and practical policy failures in the challenge to adequately respond to the needs of asylum seekers (see also Chaps. 2 and 6 in this volume).

However, moving through the contributions of this volume, we can also observe that the 'crisis' – of whatever it may exactly consist – plays out in different ways: in many of our case studies, it results in a backlash regarding integration and diversity, constituted by processes of socio-spatial exclusion of asylum seekers (campization, in Kreichauf's words) as a measure to cope with increasing numbers of arrivals (such as in the cases of Denmark, Austria and Germany). In other cases, 'crisis governance' resulted in local innovations and experimental governance (such as in the case of Plan Einstein laid out in Chap. 12), or increasing engagement of non-state actors and civil society, who gradually turned from people "who just wanted to help" into individual stakeholders who learned to express political claims (see Chap. 11). In some cases, the sudden surplus of clients constituted by the refugees (for example in the area of social housing or education) highlighted the shortcomings of existing state structures, where neoliberal policies had already led to a serious reduction in quantity and quality before the 'refugee crisis'. Thus, the arrival of refugees could serve as a catalyst for processes of change.

Throughout Europe, the perceived 'refugee crisis' went in line with politicization processes, leading to the rise of Eurosceptic, nationalist and xenophobic parties and governance approaches, which is most notably seen in the case of Hungary (see Chap. 8). But also in other countries, and observable at the local level and in local discourses, public debates started on the legitimacy of asylum seekers' presence in European localities. On the one hand, those debates argued about the legal legitimacy of asylum seekers, identifying so-called "poverty migrants" as persons not

deserving asylum in Europe, and not deserving direct support in the localities, which might be given to the detriment of economically poor local inhabitants. On the other hand, debates on the presence of asylum seekers were structured around attributes such as culture, gender, religion or ethnicity, identifying especially young, male, single Muslim asylum seekers as a threat to the cultural hegemony of white, Christian, democratic Europe. Those "othering" processes have led to strong xenophobic and nationalistic movements and the concomitant evolution of nationalist right-wing parties throughout Europe, which are a major challenge for the European integration process.

1.2   Structure of This Volume

This volume is based on the assumption that regulatory structures and the development of policies in the field of asylum reception are reconfigured at the local level, depending on the discursive framing of the topic in general and in relation to other topical issues in the relevant local and national frames.

The volume contains three – argumentatively connected – parts: the first addressing the governance of asylum and the structures of reception systems and spaces and places of reception; the second analyzing perceptions and discourses on asylum and refugees, their evolution and the consequences for policy development; and the third examining practical challenges and local responses in the field of refugee reception and integration.

The first part of this volume explores the spatial and temporal dimension of refugee reception processes and its governance at the local level, presenting case studies from Italy (Chap. 2, Semprebon and Pelacani), Denmark (Chap. 3, Kreichauf), Germany (Chap. 4, Göler) and Austria (Chap. 5, Müller and Rosenberger). By taking a comparative perspective on the development of national and local reception structures and reception cultures, the contributions show the significance of local configurations for the development of spaces and places of asylum in Europe. A specific focus of all contributions in this part is the issue of how the governance of asylum has been adapted due to the stress situation since 2015.

Chapter 2 (Semprebon and Pelacani) looks at Italy, highlighting reception structures along the border between Austria and Italy, specifically in the cities of Bolzano, Verona and Trento. The region serves as a transit space for onward-moving migrants, but due to the border enforcements in Germany and Austria, many of them get stuck in the region and have to rely on the local welfare infrastructure to survive. Also migrants who were returned from Austria and Germany to Italy on the basis of the Dublin Regulation frequently stay in the region. However, the reception infrastructure is primarily designed for initial asylum applicants, excluding those mobile migrants[1] who decided to travel onwards. Thus, the access to social services based

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[1] In view of the fact that it is not always clear whether individuals who more or less spontaneously cross into Europe are intent on applying for asylum or would be granted protection if they did so,

on categorization processes of migrants effectively serves as a social boundary, which turns transit migrants into "second-class citizens". The case study shows that it is not only first reception policies that have undergone a rescaling process from the EU level via the national level to the local level, but also policies of deterring individual mobility, which transforms the three case study sites into "internal EU hotspots".

Chapter 3 (Kreichauf) discusses adaptations of the Danish reception infrastructure as a reaction to the increase of arrivals. Kreichauf examines how the state's further tightening of restrictive reception and accommodation policies significantly impacts the socio-spatial configurations of accommodation facilities, and refugees' access to housing and their well-being. He discusses the links between the tightening of laws, the deterioration of living conditions and the (re-)constitution of large accommodation facilities as means of socio-spatial exclusion. Introducing the concept of "campization", Kreichauf stresses the fact that the geographical location and the material configuration of asylum accommodation are crucial elements of Denmark's policy of deterrence and exclusion of refugees.

Chapter 4 (Göler) also takes a deep look into a camp-like reception infrastructure, this time in the German state of Bavaria. The initial reception centre at Bamberg is a model facility that manages all the steps of the asylum decision (until possible rejection, followed by deportation) on site. The reception centre is located in a former military compound and thus is exclusionary in terms of the location and material configuration. Drawing on Marc Augé's concept of 'non-spaces' as well as on findings from camp research, Göler introduces the notion of "geographicities" as a relational approach towards spatial and social order and relevant political, economic or historical framings. Implementing a variety of empirical methods, among others a mapping exercise with inhabitants of the reception centre, his research reveals an alienation of refugees in the local and urban contexts, in which (politically deliberate) approaches to integration are largely missing.

In Chap. 5, Müller and Rosenberger provide an overview of Austrian reception policies "before and after the reception crisis of 2015". They show how localities respond to the allocation of asylum seekers, differentiating between two groups of relevant actors: administrative authorities on the one hand, and civil society actors on the other. Their analysis of the developments since 2015 reveals ambivalent results concerning the local turn in migration governance. In terms of legal powers on admission, they find municipalities losing importance, while in terms of support and inclusion municipalities gain in importance, not least because of the exclusionary stance of the national government on asylum and reduced public funding for integration facilitators.

The second part of this volume focuses on public discourses on immigration and refugee reception in Europe and explores how they translate into reception practices and policy-making, and vice versa. Following the main rationale of this volume, the

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we use the term "migrant" to cover all those instances and reserve "asylum seeker" and "refugee" for where these are more appropriate.

three chapters in this part highlight discourses and their outcomes for the local level, using case studies from Italy (Chap. 6), Belgium (Chap. 7) and Hungary (Chap. 8).

Chapter 6 (Pogliano and Ponzo) studies the development of two urban crises in Italy evolving in the context of refugee movements since 2013: the rapid increase of transit refugees at the Central Station of Milan, and refugees' illegal occupation of four buildings in Turin's former Olympic village. The chapter explores the framing of those events in the local media and policy discourse, identifying two specific and competing frames that evolve during the period of observation: the victim frame and the humanitarian frame. The authors highlight how policy networks and the local media were mutually involved in the process of narrative-making and how the cohesion of the policy networks strengthened their ability to affect the local media frames. They thus connect to social movement studies, which just recently have begun to consider the role of media and communication in the organisation of "contentious collective action" (McAdam et al. 2001), by raising the visibility of their political claims.

Chapter 7 (Ravn et al.), which is a case study of a European-funded local support programme for unaccompanied minor refugees in Antwerp, Belgium, explores the notion of *deservingness* which underpins this programme. Ravn et al. argue that deservingness is a central notion in European discourses on refugee reception (e.g. Holmes and Castañeda 2016), pointing not only to the legal and economic dimensions, but also to the moral dimension. They analyse how deservingness is reproduced by local actors of refugee assistance. One major finding is that stakeholders' different ideas on deservingness reflect their different aspirations about the kind of citizens young refugees should become. This chapter thus illustrates how refugee reception programmes may trigger reflections on the shape of society and the criteria for becoming a member of it.

Chapter 8 (Simonovits) focuses on yet another discursive line that developed in the context of refugee movements in Europe since 2015. Taking the example of Hungary, Simonovits explores the notions of *fear* and *xenophobia* in the context of refugee reception and specific local civil society responses which result from these perceptions. To provide a deeper understanding of those reciprocities, it is necessary to explore the connection between fear, risk perception, and the development of public opinion and public vote. Simonovits uses the Integrated Threat Theory (originally developed by Stephan and Stephan 1993), which incorporates several theoretical perspectives on stereotypes and prejudices, and thus arrives at a differentiated typology of real and perceived threats, their development with respect to individual and group characteristics, and their effects in terms of anti-immigrant attitudes and practices. The findings show how efficiently the anti-immigrant government narratives shaped public attitudes on immigration and integration.

The third part of the volume explores how discourses translate into practices. Following Bourdieu's "Theory of Practice" (1977), we assume that the development of practices and policies in the area of local asylum management is not only based on laws and regulations, but that it develops following implicit rules. The local level and specific features in it can thus be perceived as a *field* (in Bourdieu's words), where actors compete for power and influence, and develop specific strategies that

guide actions and actors. By analysing a field, we better understand manifold influences such as the configuration of actors, their room for manoeuvre, formations of knowledge, normative discourses and power resources. The four contributions in this section (three case studies on Germany, one on the Netherlands) shed light on local governance in the field of housing and education (Chaps. 9, 10 and 12) and on the motivations and interactions of private and public actors (Chaps. 11 and 12). The questions addressed in this section are: How are policies influenced by public perceptions and discourses, and vice versa? How do local policy responses in the context of asylum migration and political/managerial practices vary, and how can variations be explained? Which interactions between policy fields and between different policy levels have occurred, and what are the long-term consequences of these interactions?

Chapter 9 (Glorius and Schondelmayer) presents a regional case study from East Germany and examines how the integration process of adolescent refugees in the educational system was managed during the years of large-scale arrivals in 2015–2016. Glorius and Schondelmayer not only highlight the contextual specifics of the case study and thus point to the significance of the local level in understanding processes and outcomes of reception policies, but also address the notion of *integration* from various actors' perspectives. This helps to expand the view on the topic, which usually focuses solely on the "official" level of reception and integration governance.

Chapter 10 (Adam et al.), again a regional case study in Germany, addresses the field of refugee housing. Adam et al. conceptualize individual housing as a crucial step in integration and highlight the interconnections of governance sectors—refugee reception and social housing—in the field of housing. Affordable housing, in many of Germany's densely populated urban areas, is increasingly contested and politicized, and thus the competition for affordable housing could (further) evoke social tension in these regions. The authors explore different housing strategies for refugees in a large city and smaller towns, illustrating the variety of approaches and difficulties with their implementation.

In Chap. 11, the volume's final regional example from Germany, Hoppe-Seyler highlights the role of local voluntary organisations as important actors in the local governance of refugee reception, taking over basic tasks from municipalities such as language teaching and providing refugees with information and practical help. She specifically addresses the motivation for voluntary work, highlighting how the emotional and spatial dimensions are meaningful to the analysis of volunteer practices as well as their conflicts and ruptures. Furthermore, she shows the politicization of volunteers and the potential for conflicts resulting from politicization, not only for individual volunteers and refugee relief organisations, but also for local policy-making.

Chapter 12 (Geuijen, Oliver and Dekker) again turns to the housing sector and presents a local housing project in the Netherlands, which combines refugee reception policies with other sectors of policy-making (social work, neighbourhood development, social work with youth). In particular, Geuijen, Oliver and Dekker show how, through the development of multi-sector and multi-level alliances, the

project was made appealing to different constituents for different reasons. The chapter also illustrates how the experiment resulted in the initiators manoeuvring within different political contexts and constraints locally and nationally. In this way, it did not challenge the existing structures outright, through decoupling from the national level, but negotiated within these, to bring the concept into being. The chapter thus presents a refreshing example of how the so-called 'refugee crisis' could provide an opportunity for experimentation at the local level in European cities.

The concluding Chap. 13 (Doomernik and Glorius) wraps up the major findings of this volume. It highlights the conceptual challenges and knowledge gaps that were brought to the fore by the single contributions, and identifies interesting research questions for further research in this rapidly changing policy field.

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