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## Immigration strategies of cities: local growth policies and urban planning in Germany

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### ABSTRACT

Immigration is one of the most contentious fields in policy-making, not only on the European and national, but also on the local level. Due to the declining and ageing populations, European cities today increasingly need immigration. On the other side, right-wing populist parties are increasing, who are following an anti-migrant agenda. This paper examines the opportunities that cities have to more effectively attract migrants at the municipal level. The literature indicates that cities cannot pursue their own migration policies given their dependence on states' migration regimes. Cities face a dilemma. They are responsible for integrating migrants but not for recruiting them. Urban growth policies and urban planning approaches often aim to attract highly skilled workers, creative classes and students. But cities have no control over the inflow of refugees, however, as they are allocated by the state. Against this backdrop, this article examines and compares the cities of Bremen and Leipzig to assess which immigration strategies German cities are developing and whether a shift from reactive integration plans to proactive immigration policies is occurring. In the conclusion, the paper reflects on factors that encourage and hinder the formulation of immigration strategies and explain the 'strategy gap' at the local level.

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### Introduction

Immigration is one of the most contentious areas in European policy-making. Diminished national control over immigration has contributed to the rise of right-wing populist parties and to neonationalist policy-making in many European countries, and largely explains the successful Brexit referendum. The business world and European Commission, meanwhile, emphasize the importance of immigration, arguing that today's knowledge societies are defined by a growing competition to attract highly skilled workers and the 'brightest minds'. The creation of the European single market, a liberal cornerstone of the European Union, has allowed EU citizens to freely choose where to work and live. This means nation-states have little control over the migration of workers within the EU. Nation-states do, however, retain control over immigration from non-EU third party states. Efforts by the European Commission to establish a common European

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regime to regulate the immigration of workers from non-EU third party states (Commission of the European Communities, 2008) received little support from EU member states due to concerns over a partial loss of national sovereignty. By and large, the European Union's initiative is now considered a failure (Scholten & Penninx, 2016, p. 105). However, over the course of several years, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) tried to transfer a degree of authority over asylum and refugee matters to the European level. Yet this system, too, is teetering on the brink of collapse since the onset of 2015 European refugee crisis. Whether refugees should be taken in and relocated within the EU is threatening to divide the bloc. At the same time, the external borders of 'fortress Europe' are being bolstered. This manifests what has been referred to as the 'liberal paradox' (Hollifield, 2006): economic forces largely favour open borders, while powerful political actors prefer to more tightly control or even seal borders.

Thus far, steering immigration has been one of the core tasks of nation-states. They control their respective territorial borders, issue entry visas and can grant citizenship to new arrivals. This is why in the field of urban studies, cities and municipalities are deemed largely dependent on national 'migration regimes' (Horvarth, Amelina, & Peters, 2017; Pott & Tsianos, 2014). Control over immigration is exerted through an intricate system of multilevel governance that involves the EU, nation-states, regions and municipalities (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Recently, researchers have started devoting more attention to the local dimension of migration politics (Caponi & Borkert, 2010). The 'local turn' in migration studies (Hackett, 2017; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio, & Scholten, 2017) marks a shift away from solely examining the national level to studying the growing divergence between national and local immigration policies (Borkert & Bosswick, 2007; Schmidtke, 2014). This is because cities and municipalities serve as real life laboratories for managing immigration. It is here that migrants are integrated into the labour and housing market, into the education system, the cultural scene and political order. Cities must find answers to growing migrant populations and increasing ethnic diversity. Unlike many national decision-makers, a large number of cities address these challenges in a proactive and open-minded manner. While leading political figures in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and Germany claim that the politics of 'multiculturalism' has failed (Geddes & Scholten, 2016, p. 3), many major cities have long since developed programmes for integrating migrants and managing ethnic diversity (Fassmann & Kohlbacher, 2016; Gestring, 2014; Schiller, 2017).

So far, the 'local turn' in migration research has focused on the way in which urban integration policies address resident migrants. Currently, European cities face a dilemma in that they have no authority to select or recruit immigrants, yet are responsible for integrating migrants who arrive at their doorstep (Häußermann & Oswald, 1997, p. 26). This article therefore examines what kind of strategies cities are developing to select or recruit migrants. Which factors would justify granting cities a more proactive role in this policy field, without of course ignoring the authority of nation-states to determine overall national immigration policies?

### **Factors driving cities to develop immigration strategies**

Research in the field of urban planning and political science has identified numerous factors driving cities to develop strategies for managing immigration:

1. *Decentralizing immigration policies.* Many European countries are witnessing a growing spatial disparity between metropolitan areas and rural or industrial regions. With regard to immigration, cities and regions experiencing growth face entirely different challenges than shrinking cities and regions (Williams, 2009). Migrants arriving in booming metropolitan areas often find themselves competing with the poorest segment of the local population for housing and jobs. In contrast, economically disadvantaged cities and regions are characterized by a surplus of vacant housing stock, high unemployment and a shortage of skilled labour. Such divergent trends and needs have led traditional immigration countries like Canada and Australia to decentralize immigration policy-making. In Canada, control over the recruitment of immigrants was largely shifted from the national level to regional provinces (Schmidtke, 2014). Australia, in turn, has begun issuing special entry visas for immigrants willing to settle in economically disadvantaged towns and regions (Sumption, 2014). These examples illustrate that by decentralizing immigration policy-making, immigration can help offset regional disparities. This requires strategically linking regional policies and immigration policies, and shifting decision-making power to the subnational level.
2. *A declining and ageing population.* Growing spatial disparities in many European countries are putting pressure on shrinking cities, in particular. Shrinking cities are marked by declining populations, vacant properties, economic and social deprivation, high unemployment and are also confronted with rapidly ageing populations. These cities therefore depend on immigration to counteract the decline and ageing of their populations (Berding, 2008). Strategies aimed at attracting migrants could thus serve as a means of initiating demographic regeneration.
3. *Local progrowth policies.* Urban policy-makers and businesses often form progrowth coalitions to pursue what researchers term 'progrowth governance' (Pierre, 2011). Policy-making of this kind aims to stimulate economic growth and employment, and seeks to attract new residents to cities. In Germany, progrowth governance is driven by investors' desires to reap profits but also by fiscal considerations. Cities hope to attract new residents to boost urban population figures as these numbers largely determine the extent of funding allocated by the state to municipalities. As such, urban progrowth policies aim to attract investors as well as new residents.
4. *Shortage of skilled labour.* Shrinking cities and regions often face a growing shortage of skilled labour as qualified and mobile workers move elsewhere, leaving behind less qualified and less mobile industrial workers. These struggle to find employment in burgeoning sectors like the service industry or knowledge economy. This leads to a pronounced shortage of skilled labour in economically disadvantaged regions. Businesses offer jobs but cannot find individuals to fill these positions due to a qualification 'mismatch' (Brücker, 2013). Today, in many of these cities and regions there is a particular labour shortage in the areas of technical engineering, the health sector, in nursing and skilled crafts.
5. *Cities competing for talent.* In certain areas like the IT sector, globalization has brought about a worldwide competition among cities to attract highly qualified 'talents' (Facchini & Lodigiani, 2014; Kuptsch & Pang, 2006). Young, university-educated individuals, students and creative types are highly mobile and highly sought-after by European cities. As European populations shrink and grow progressively older, cities find themselves competing for such migrants. Cities that fail to draw in young, qualified workers

face a bleak economic future. Studies analysing the appeal of urban labour markets have shown that urban quality of life constitutes an important factor, alongside promising employment opportunities (Buch, Hamann, Niebuhr, & Rossen, 2014). The future of cities therefore also partially depends on whether they appeal to skilled migrants.

6. Migration researchers have been calling for a shift from a *problem-centred to a potential-focused perspective* on international migration. A reorientation away from solely examining the burdens of immigration and problems associated with integrating foreign migrants has been suggested. Instead, researchers recommend conceptualizing immigration as a potential resource for urban development (Nuisl & Schmiz, 2015; Pütz & Rodatz, 2013; Yildiz & Mattausch, 2009). Scholars assume that migrants can potentially contribute to urban regeneration by revitalizing deprived neighbourhoods, enhancing urban quality of life by opening shops, and strengthening the labour market through entrepreneurship. Scholars also believe that advertising ethnic and cultural diversity can increase the appeal of cities towards potential new residents and businesses (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013).

The city of Detroit, situated in what is known as the US ‘rust belt’, is a pioneer in the area of developing urban immigration strategies. The city was once a major hub of the automotive industry but has seen its population drop by over 60% since 1950. Detroit gained notoriety for its unprecedented urban, social and economic decline. A plethora of vacant properties and lots, a shrinking population, unemployment and poverty forced Detroit to file for bankruptcy in 2013. In that same year, Detroit’s mayor joined business and citizen representatives to devise a strategy for the city’s future, culminating in the so-called ‘Detroit Future City’ plan. It envisions attracting growth industries and young talents to the city, and training the local population. It is hoped that migrants settling in Detroit will boost this broad education initiative, help counter the ageing of the local population and revitalize deprived neighbourhoods (Tobocman, 2014). The governor of Michigan has agreed with the city to press Washington to issue visas allowing 50,000 skilled migrants to settle in Detroit over the course of the next five years (ibid: 2). Meantime, the anti-immigration policies of the Trump administration is counteracting the local strategy – resulting in a drop of international student applications and visa challenges for health-care workers, who travel across the border from Canada. The travel ban from majority-Muslim countries has also rocked large Arab American and Islamic communities in the city. These problems show the dependency of cities on national migration regimes. But against the backdrop of the city’s numerous abandoned buildings, its high unemployment rate, poverty, ethnic segregation and diminished public services due to scarce municipal funds, it remains very unclear if this strategy will actually succeed in attracting highly skilled migrants.

### **Different kinds of migrants that cities can attract**

So far, nation-states alone have been in charge of regulating immigration. Cities are subject to national immigration regimes, occupying a subordinate position in national systems of multilevel governance. Nevertheless, this article argues that cities have a certain scope for action when it comes to recruiting and selecting migrants. Different kinds of migrants

must be discerned: those seeking employment, those striving to acquire an education, those looking for a new place to settle, and those fleeing to safety. Following the immigration policies at the supranational and national levels, many cities are using the following categories to distinguish different groups of migrants:

- *Highly skilled migrants.* Cities are keen to attract highly skilled migrants. These migrants are university-educated or have a professional or technical degree. Which is why most EU member states introduced a so-called 'Blue Card' system, making it easier for these individuals to legally immigrate (Chaloff & Lemaitre, 2009). During recent decades a broad tendency towards the adoption of more skilled-selective immigration policies can be recognized in most European countries. In contrast to the recruitment of manual guest workers until the 1970s, today highly skilled immigrants are most welcome (Facchini & Lodigiani, 2014). The EU's single market is characterized by economic competition. Accordingly, European cities compete for highly skilled and highly mobile migrants, who in turn are drawn to promising job markets and liveable cities. Many of them are drawn to public institution jobs (e.g. universities, clinics, the cultural sector) or business-related service jobs (e.g. R&D, consulting, IT, media).
- *Labour migrants.* Nation-states regulate the inflow of labour migrants from non-EU third party states. Within the EU, the single market allows for the free movement of labour. Since 2014, all EU citizens can freely choose where to work. This freedom, however, is viewed very differently on the supranational and local level. The EU no longer deems the movement of labour within the single market a form of migration, welcoming it instead as labour mobility (Engbersen, Leerkes, Scholten, & Snel, 2017). In contrast, many western European cities criticize the inflow of migrants from eastern EU member states as 'poverty-driven migration', fearing it will necessitate greater welfare spending and accelerate the decline of already deprived neighbourhoods (Ulbricht, 2017). The EU's single market has made it almost impossible for nation-states to regulate this form of labour migration or to select high skilled migrants. Cities can only indirectly attract labour migrants through a supply-side approach focusing on jobs and housing.
- *Students.* Nowadays, many university towns seek to attract students, hoping they will permanently settle after finishing their degrees. Cities accept that an influx of low-income students could mean a statistical increase in urban poor. In Germany's federal system, each federal state is responsible for its education sector, for running universities and thus regulating the inflow of students. Cities therefore depend on federal education policies to attract students.
- *Reurbanised residents.* New residents are a main target group for many urban regeneration strategies and housing policies of cities. Reurbanised residents are individuals who deliberately opt to move from suburban settings or other cities to new urban areas. This group comprises singles, young urban professionals, high-earning families and commuters (Tallon, 2010). Many cities hope to appeal to this demographic group and outshine other cities by (re-)developing new neighbourhoods (e.g. Hamburg's HafenCity) or waterfront areas (e.g. Port City Rotterdam).
- *Refugees.* Cities have little leeway in steering this kind of immigration, as nation-states alone determine how asylum-seekers are distributed domestically. In Germany, neither the national nor the federal level holds an exclusive right to pass legislation pertaining

to asylum-seekers and refugees. Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees processes the applications of asylum-seekers. Germany's federal states, in turn, are responsible for housing said individuals and ensuring they receive assistance to cover their basic needs. In practice, federal states pass down this responsibly to the municipal level. Asylum-seekers are distributed throughout the country according to a distribution quota. German cities therefore have no say in how many asylum-seekers they must take in (Gesemann, Roth, & Aumüller, 2012). A mandatory residence for migrants can be stipulated on the national and federal level. German cities and municipalities must accept such stipulations and are merely free to take in greater numbers of refugees than required.

### Research focus: urban immigration strategies

This article examines cities' approaches to developing proactive immigration strategies and argues that these constitute an emergent municipal policy field. It pursues the following core questions: (1) To which extent do cities regard immigration as something that can be planned and targeted through urban development efforts? (2) What kind of strategies are being devised by city planners to steer immigration? (3) To what extent are immigration and integration policies fused for the purpose of developing urban regeneration strategies?

The present state of research differentiates between proactive immigration strategies and reactive integration strategies. Whereas immigration policies target migrant flows, integration policies target the resident migrant stock and prioritize integration. The following chart provides an overview of local strategies for managing immigration (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Urban strategies for managing immigration.

Strategic field	Target groups	Objectives	Instruments
Urban development policies (proactive flow management)			
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New residents</li> <li>Young residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow local population</li> <li>Counteract ageing of local population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting investors</li> <li>Creating jobs and providing housing</li> </ul>
Recruiting/retaining skilled workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly skilled workers</li> <li>Skilled workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boost competitiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offering vocational training</li> <li>Offering jobs</li> <li>Technology centres</li> <li>University courses</li> </ul>
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract students</li> <li>Encourage students to settle in region after completing degree</li> </ul>	
Urban development and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reurbanised residents</li> <li>Returners from suburbia</li> <li>Inbound commuters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regenerate neighbourhoods</li> <li>Reduce vacant properties and lots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban development projects</li> <li>Housing construction projects</li> </ul>
City marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreign specialists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting cosmopolitan image</li> <li>Foster local identity as a city of immigrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing campaigns</li> <li>'Culture of welcome'</li> </ul>
Integration policies (reactive stock management)			
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asylum-seekers and refugees</li> <li>Foreign labour migrants</li> <li>Family reunification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugees grow urban population</li> <li>Harness diversity as a resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration and diversity plans</li> </ul>

Source: Author.

This chart illustrates that municipalities, i.e. public institutions, cannot develop immigration strategies all by themselves. Instead, public and private actors need to work together. Companies and business associations play a major role in attracting and retaining (highly) skilled workers. Germany's federal states, in turn, are responsible for operating universities and thus for attracting students. And private as well as public housing companies play a role in pushing housing development forward. The extent to which cities can devise urban immigration strategies therefore strongly depends on their urban governance capacities (Pierre, 2011).

### Comparing a west and an East German city

For the purpose of answering the aforementioned core research questions, this conceptual framework will be utilized for the subsequent comparative case study research. The German cities of Bremen and Leipzig were selected as case studies in the context of the 'UrbanReg – Urban Regeneration Practices, Migration and the Production of Socio-Spatial Disparities in European Cities' (2015–2018) research project. Germany's immigration regime has been classified as part of the northwest European 'guest worker system' (Fassmann & Kohlbacher, 2014). Unlike the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, Germany did not experience an inflow of migrants from former colonies, instead the domestic economy forced the recruitment of foreign workers between 1955 and 1973. Different immigration phases can be identified for Germany since World War Two: First, the inflow of individuals displaced by war, then that of southern European 'guest workers' and their families, followed by ethnically German resettlers from former Soviet republics and other Eastern European states, 'contingent refugees' participating in resettlement programmes, labour migrants from eastern European EU member states, and last asylum-seekers and refugees fleeing Middle Eastern conflicts and wars. In the post-war period, West Germany recruited several million so-called 'guest workers' from southern Europe to make up for a shortage of industrial workers. Bilateral recruitment agreements were made with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968). The guest worker regime was stopped in 1973. For a long time, it was assumed that these workers would stay in West Germany only temporarily. In East Germany, it was similarly assumed that the country's so-called 'contract workers' would return to their home countries. However, family reunification, among other factors, transformed the temporary form of 'guest workers' into permanent settlement. Between 1973 and the creation of the EU single market, West Germany – according to other West European countries – tightly controlled the inflow of labour migrants. An unintended result of the restrictive policies for labour migration was an increase of asylum migration and family reunification, which became the main channels of entry.

The political division of Germany between 1949 and 1989 manifests itself in the composition of western and eastern German populations today. Presently, foreigners comprise 8.7% of the western German population but only 3.7% of the eastern German population (including Berlin). In 2015, individuals with a migrant background (i.e. individuals born without German citizenship, or individuals who have at least one parent born without German citizenship) comprised 23.9% of the population in western German federal states (including Berlin), yet only 5.3% of the eastern German population (excluding



Berlin). The percentage of foreigners and individuals with a migrant background is far greater in western German cities than in eastern German cities, resulting from the integration of former 'guest workers' and their families into former West German society. In some metropolitan cities like Offenbach and Frankfurt am Main, over half of all residents have a migrant background. This figure is far lower in eastern German cities as most 'contract workers' repatriated and many others moved elsewhere due to the economic crisis that beset the region after German reunification. Since 1990, foreign immigration to east German cities largely resulted from state allocation schemes (of ethnically German resettlers, Jewish 'contingent refugees', asylum-seekers) rather than for economic reasons. Specifically, east Germany cities were suffering from high unemployment and struggling economically. In some cities, xenophobia was rife. Together, these factors limited the inflow of foreign migrants (Gesemann et al., 2012).

For a long time after reunification, many politicians and parties on the national level refused to accept that Germany had become a country of immigrants. German cities, in contrast, had long since found pragmatic ways of managing the de facto inflow of migrants (Borkert & Bosswick, 2007). In 2004, Germany for the first time passed an immigration law to control and limit the inflow of migrants, and to regulate the settlement and integration of migrants within the country. After many decades of disputes, national policy-makers had finally recognized that Germany had become a country of immigrants. Since then, national, federal and municipal decision-makers have developed policies to help immigrants integrate into society. Together, representatives from the political sphere, from unions, employee associations and migrant associations developed a national integration plan in 2007. It affords a key role to municipalities in ensuring migrants are integrated (Bommers, 2009). And following the 2015 European refugee crisis, Germany's conservative parties are gradually overcoming their reluctance to pass a new immigration law to better regulate (and limit) the inflow of labour migrants from non-EU states. A new immigration law is on the agenda of the national government coalition since 2018. Advocates of a new immigration law argue that it would help to select skilled migrants and to distinguish more clearly between asylum- and labour migrants (SVR, 2018).

### Case study selection and comparison: Bremen and Leipzig

Selecting Bremen and Leipzig as case studies allows for a comparison of a west German and an east German city. Both have populations of about 550,000 residents (making them second tier cities), look back on a long legacy of trade, were beset by economic crises following deindustrialization, and have now embarked on a path to transform themselves into university and knowledge-based cities focused on the service industry (Plöger & Lang, 2013). Bremen's dock and shipbuilding industry has been ailing since the 1970s, causing a persistent regional economic malaise resulting in the highest poverty rate among Germany's federal states and a chronically underfunded municipal budget. Leipzig, which has a long history of hosting trade fairs and conventions, saw its population drastically shrink in the 1990s after the decline of its industrial sector following postsocialist transformation. Despite the creation of new public service jobs and some success in attracting industrial manufacturers to the region, Leipzig still has many low-income residents, an above average unemployment rate and numerous low-paying jobs. Since 2010, the populations of Bremen and Leipzig began growing again in what has been referred to

as a process of ‘reurbanisation’ (Brake & Herfert, 2012). Both are even considered ‘phoenix cities’ (Power, Plöger, & Winkler, 2010) that are burgeoning once more after overcoming a phase of industrial decline. The following table provides key data on both cities (Table 2).

While over 30% of Bremen’s population have a migrant background, this figure is less than 15% for Leipzig. The vast majority of migrant residents in Bremen have Turkish roots, whereas most migrants in Leipzig hail from eastern Europe and (post-) socialist countries (Ukraine, Russia, Vietnam). Overall, Bremen is a more cosmopolitan city. Leipzig, in contrast, only gradually began developing into an international European city in the last decade. Significant differences between both cities also remain regarding the housing sector and labour market. In Bremen, many residents own their own homes, while in Leipzig most residents live in rented accommodation. Many individuals commute into Bremen for work but live in the suburbs. The opposite is true for Leipzig. Here, many commute out of Leipzig for work but live in the city. Accordingly, Bremen appears to be an attractive place for work whereas Leipzig seems to offer a high quality of living.

### Migration balance

The following table depicts the migration balance (sum of in- and out-migration) for Bremen and Leipzig (Table 3).

A closer look at the data between 2005 and 2014 reveals a steady inflow of migrants from other parts of Germany. Both cities have, however, been experiencing a marked rise in the inflow of foreign migrants. The number of foreign migrants arriving each year almost doubled between 2005 and 2014. Today, about one third of all migration to Bremen occurs from abroad. In Leipzig, only one quarter of migrants are foreigners (Table 4).

### Urban immigration strategies

The next section analyses the kinds of strategies pursued by Bremen and Leipzig to steer immigration. The analysis is based on an examination of urban development and

**Table 2.** Comparative data on Bremen and Leipzig.

Comparative data (2015)		Bremen	Leipzig
Demographics	Population	557.400	560.500
	Population development 2005–2015	+3.934	+65.195
Migration	Migration balance (2014)	+3.392	+12.403
	Percentage of population with migrant background	32.5	12.3
	Percentage of foreigners	15.1	7.5
Education and qualifications	Number of students (winter term 2015/2016)	33.103	37.257
	Percentage of highly skilled workers	12.1	19.2
Labour market	Employees with social security benefits	260.385	248.952
	Unemployment rate (2014)	9.9	9.4
Housing	Ratio of owned apartments	38	11
City as a work place	Commuter balance	70.461	37.179
	Inbound commuters	115.002	96.088
	Outbound commuters	42.682	58.909

Sources: Infosystem Bremen ([www.statistik.bremen.de](http://www.statistik.bremen.de)), Leipzig: Statistical Yearbooks (compiled by the author).

**Table 3.** Migration balance for Bremen and Leipzig between 1990 and 2015.

Year	1990	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015
Bremen	8,149	332	3,792	2,635	2,374	848	1,092	3,514	3,392	6,244
Leipzig	-17,016	1,012	3,330	1,843	4,939	5,221	4,359	10,889	12,403	n.a.

Sources: Bremen: Infosystem Bremen, compiled by the author, Leipzig: Statistical Yearbooks (compiled by the author).

integration programmes devised by both cities between 2005 and the present.<sup>1</sup> In addition, 10–12 interviews were conducted in each city with urban policy-making, public administration, business and civil society experts. This analysis of urban immigration strategies differentiates between targets and concrete projects or measures. The subsequent table provides an overview of these urban immigration strategies (Table 5).

## Findings

Major empirical findings of this analysis were collated in case study reports for each city (see Kühn & Bernt, 2019). A comparison of both cases yields the following insights:

1. Bremen and Leipzig pursue progrowth policies yet neither explicitly develop immigration strategies. Their urban development programmes do, however, *implicitly* refer to immigration strategies. General urban development targets like ‘making the city more attractive’, ‘enhancing competitiveness’ and ‘increasing urban quality of life’ allude to immigration. These targets indicate that Bremen and Leipzig find themselves competing against other cities within a neoliberal order brought about by the liberalization of the EU’s common market.
2. Both cities seek to attract *young* and *highly skilled workers*. The labour market in both cities is, however, split into a low-income and a high-income segment. The latter offers only a very limited number of jobs. In Bremen, the percentage of individuals employed in the high-income segment is far below average compared to other cities. Consequently, highly skilled individuals are moving elsewhere. In both Bremen and Leipzig, resident migrant populations are significantly less educated than the native German population. This pronounced disparity in levels of education can be attributed to the influx of low-skilled workers in the past. And in Bremen, third- and second-generation immigrants still have not caught up with the native German population in terms of educational achievements. The refusal to recognize migrants’ diplomas and degrees makes matters worse. Newly arriving immigrants, however, tend to be better educated than previous generations of immigrants. Overall, Bremen and Leipzig

**Table 4.** New arrivals in Bremen and Leipzig by origin.

New arrivals (total)	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2014
Bremen total	24,136	23,777	26,741	27,587	29,266	30,062
From Germany	18,301	17,942	19,924	19,329	19,556	18,487
From abroad	5,468	5,835	6,817	8,258	9,710	11,575
From EU countries	2,512	3,114	3,357	3,979	5,336	5,910
Leipzig total	n.a.	24,300	26,382	30,961	32,355	35,381
From Germany	n.a.	20,277	22,055	25,584	25,319	27,460
From abroad	n.a.	4,023	4,327	5,377	7,036	7,921
From EU countries	n.a.	1,911	1,924	2,894	3,974	4,170

Sources: Infosystem Bremen ([www.statistik.bremen.de](http://www.statistik.bremen.de)), Leipzig: Statistical Yearbooks (compiled by the author).

**Table 5.** Strategies pursued by Bremen and Leipzig to attract immigrants.

Strategic Components	Bremen		Leipzig	
	Targets	Projects/Measures	Targets	Projects/Measures
Demographics	'Bremen is a growing city situated within Germany's northwestern metropolitan region. We want Bremen to continue growing as comparable cities are doing' (Koalitionsvertrag 2015)	Undetermined	'Leipzig is growing sustainably' (INSEK L 2017) 'Retaining' young residents who have completed their education; reduce out-migration of families, encourage return of former residents (SEKo L 2008)	'Inflow of individuals with a migrant background' to stabilize demographic trend (SEKo L 2008)
Attracting/retaining highly skilled workers	'Young, highly qualified, highly skilled workers and managers' (Leitbild HB 2009)	Technology park, university, science park, Airportstadt industrial estate	'Compete internationally to attract jobs, highly skilled workers and companies', 'remain appealing to entrepreneurs, businessmen and creatives types' (INSEK L 2017) 'Appeal to young employees' (SEKo L 2008)	Schools and higher education institutions help attract/retain highly skilled workers Academia, business world and city work together
Education	Universities and research centres 'attract young students' (Leitbild HB 2009)	Bremen University is officially classified as an 'excellent' institution Promoting education and science	'Leipzig to become an international and innovative city of science', 'Increase the number of international researchers and students' (INSEK L 2017) Leipzig to develop into a regional 'education metropolis' to attract students (SEKo L 2008) 'Encourage higher education graduates to stay' (SEKo L 2008)	One-off financial payment for students permanently relocating to Leipzig (since 1999) Increased number of natural science and technology-focused university courses Development of four science quarters
Urban development and housing construction	'Attracting new residents' and 'discouraging residents to move to the suburbs' (Senator of Finance 2015) 'Young urban types' and 'Baby boomers'	Housing strategy: create 1,400 housing units annually New 'Überseestadt' city district	Renovate 'trademark' historical 'Gründerzeit' quarters in city centre (INSEK L 2017)	
City marketing	'Bremen! A highly liveable, urban and interconnected city' (Leitbild HB 2009)		'Leipzig is booming' 'Leipzig liberty'	
Integration	Refugees contribute to urban growth (IK HB 2016)	Emergency programme to create refugee accommodation (since 2015)	Recruit highly skilled workers from abroad (IK L 2012) Support migrant-run businesses	Neighbourhood management programme for Leipzig's Eisenbahnstraße

hope to attract immigrants who are significantly better educated than migrant populations already residing in both cities.

3. Bremen and Leipzig also aim to attract *students*, hoping they will permanently settle after completing their degrees. But as Germany's federal states oversee the operation of universities, cities have no influence on the extent or quality of university courses offered. Leipzig hopes to entice prospective students by granting one-off payments. Bremen, unlike Leipzig, is a federal state in its own right, affording it greater authority to regulate university matters. The city's financial woes, however, severely limit its ability to take any meaningful measures. Overall, financial and political constraints limit how much further the university sector can grow. Some federal states are even reducing the number of available university places. These factors therefore place a structural limit on how many additional students can be drawn to cities. Both Bremen and Leipzig thus concentrate on enticing students to permanently settle in either city after finishing their degrees.
4. Both cities promote close cooperation between the education sector, academia, the research and business sector to *create high-skilled jobs* that will entice highly qualified individuals to remain in the region. In this effort, Bremen has reoriented its university towards natural scientific and technological disciplines and founded one of Germany's largest technology parks. Leipzig's university, in contrast, is specialized in humanities. The potential for university to business technology transfer is therefore limited, as is the likeliness of networks developing between both sectors.
5. Urban development and housing policies in both cities, meanwhile, target an entirely different demographic: young urban professionals, baby boomers, commuters and families returning to the city from the suburbs. In Bremen, the redevelopment of the city's former docklands into the 'Überseestadt' district marks a major urban development project. Initially, investor-driven *waterfront development* led to the creation of exclusive housing units. Leipzig, in turn, advertises the abundance of historical 'Gründerzeit' housing stock and the concomitant ease of finding accommodation. The city did not influence or steer the inflow of creative and alternative types into these neighbourhoods, who have acted as pioneers of urban regeneration.
6. Until about 2010, both cities primarily focused their efforts on attracting *domestic migrants* from elsewhere in Germany and from their respective suburbs. Bremen and Leipzig largely concentrated on competing against other national and regional cities. Initially, neither cities paid much attention to the gradually increasing inflow of foreign migrants. In recent years, however, Bremen and Leipzig have begun ascribing strategic importance to international immigration. Leipzig in particular is positioning itself as an international European city since establishing its 2017 urban development plan.
7. Both cities regard *international immigration* as a potential advantage but also as a problem.<sup>2</sup> They consider this form of immigration potentially conducive to urban growth and a means of making their city more international and diverse. Yet both cities are also concerned that foreign immigrants could prove difficult to integrate and that other unpredictable issues may arise. 'Diversity' is promoted as an urban resource in both cities' urban development and integration programmes. At the same time, urban planners deem areas with large shares of foreigners and migrants 'socially deprived' neighbourhoods. Their urban development approaches, hence,

appear *ambivalent* towards international immigration. It seems that calls by migration researchers to shift from a problem-centred to a potential-focused perspective on international migration are not being heeded in present-day urban planning in Germany.

## Conclusions

Which conclusions can be drawn regarding urban efforts to attract migrants and develop local planning strategies to this end? This section enumerates and reflects on several findings that may also apply in other contexts.

1. Workers, trainees and new residents move to cities due to liberalized labour markets, education sectors and housing markets in Europe. Within the EU's liberalized common market, cities and municipalities compete against each other to attract new residents through their respective labour markets, university places and housing opportunities. The inflow of asylum-seekers and refugees, in turn, constitutes an entirely different form of immigration. These migrants are allocated to cities by the state and through a system of multilevel governance involving the national tier, federal states and municipalities.
2. Cities have only a limited ability to plan and manage the inflow of immigrants. This is because socio-economic push and pull factors connected to urban labour and housing markets have a major influence on immigration. As does the phenomenon of 'chain migration', whereby immigrants follow acquaintances or family members to reunited with them in foreign cities. The effect of immigration on urban development is therefore difficult to steer. The case study of Leipzig shows that the city experienced an unexpectedly rapid influx of immigrants after 2010. This is because urban population forecasts tend to assume present immigration trends will continue in a similar fashion. In Leipzig, urban development planning was swiftly adapted to the rise in immigration, initiating a radical paradigm shift away from ameliorating the effects of urban shrinkage, to managing urban growth.
3. Why have cities, despite competing with each other and aiming to boost urban growth, so far not devised strategies explicitly targeting immigrants? One explanation for this strategy gap is that urban policy-making has largely been supply-side oriented. Urban policy-making has for instance focused on supplying space for companies, providing adequate infrastructure and housing, hoping these will be sought-after. Deliberately *recruiting highly skilled workers* to meet the needs of local companies and cities, in contrast, remains an inchoate policy field. This would require cities to switch from a supply-side strategy to a demand-side strategy in managing immigration (Chaloff & Lemaitre, 2009). Germany does not yet have in place national policies to regulate immigration in accordance to domestic demand, although the country is a popular destination for immigrants (Schmidtke, 2014). Unlike in Canada, German cities cannot draw inspiration from national policy-making when it comes to developing urban immigration policies.
4. Another explanation for this strategy gap is that private companies are primarily responsible for the shortage of highly skilled workers and for developing strategies

to change this. In demand-side immigration policy systems employers are key players, because a job offer is necessary in order to apply for a visa (Facchini & Lodigiani, 2014). And Germany's federal states, which operate universities and research institutes within their borders, in turn are responsible for attracting students and highly educated individuals. When it comes to devising urban immigration strategies, cities are therefore dependent on companies and the policy-making of federal states. Accordingly, cities must develop *urban governance capacities* to network with these sectors.

5. Urban policies predominantly aim to generate economic growth and attract investors. Growing urban populations by attracting immigrants is a secondary objective. Against the backdrop that 'soft' location factors enhance the appeal of cities and boost competitiveness, the question at hand is whether individuals move to cities due to job opportunities, or if jobs are created only after individuals move there. The comparison of Bremen and Leipzig illustrates that cities either attract new residents because of local job opportunities or due to urban quality of life. Leipzig receives large numbers of immigrants because of the urban quality of life it offers, despite its mediocre jobs market as is evident from its many outbound commuters. Bremen, in contrast, receives many inbound commuters who work in the city but live outside. This demonstrates that the city appeals to many particularly for its labour market but less so as a place to live.
6. So far, urban development programmes and integration schemes have been devised by different departments of municipal administration, making it difficult to combine them into a holistic approach. Both case studies discussed in this article clearly demonstrate that German cities pursue neoliberal progrowth regimes and social policy approaches focusing on integration, yet without harmonizing the two. Urban development programmes entail supply-side oriented policies to attract immigrants, while integration schemes aim to better integrate local migrants. Moves to strategically link immigration policies and integration policies have been limited as actors predominately perceive resident migrants from a problem-focussed perspective that emphasizes integration deficits. Urban development policies largely focus on attracting young, highly educated and creative types from abroad as a potential driver of urban regeneration, rather than tapping into the potentials of local migrants.

## Notes

1. Key documents in Bremen are the 'Vision for urban development in Bremen 2020' (Leitbild HB 2009) and the 'At home in Bremen. Advancing integration and securing social cohesion. Cornerstones of the Senate's medium-term integration plan' (IK HB 2016) integration programme. In Leipzig, key documents comprise the 'Integrated urban development plan for Leipzig 2020' (SEKo L 2008), the draft version of the integrated urban development plan 'Leipzig 2030' (INSEK L 2017) as well as the 'Overall plan for the integration of migrants in Leipzig' (IK L 2012).
2. Under the section 'Immigration as a challenge and opportunity', Bremen's urban vision reads: 'Bremen's population is growing because of domestic and international immigration. Without these new arrivals, the city's population would shrink. [...] Immigration presents a great opportunity that can make the city more appealing and produce cultural and economic prosperity. Integrating immigrants into society remains a persistent challenge.' Leipzig's

urban development plan 'Leipzig 2030' states: 'Immigration enhances cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, making the city more international. This creates uncertainty and challenges but also great opportunities regarding economic competitiveness, urban quality of life and social stability.' (INSEK 2017).

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