

Abstract

The reigning view within politics and media is that national and particularly ethnic origin – the "other" and "foreign" cultural background – might provide an explanation for the failure of "successful integration" from parts of the immigrant population. In the following article, I present a different hypothesis: namely, that the marginalization of third-country nationals and immigrants from the new EU member countries in Austria is due primarily to social exclusion by the host society. Indicators on education and the utilization of education, participation in the labour force, unemployment and occupation and housing conditions, as well as poverty as a key indicator provide evidence to this effect. It would thus appear that the public debate on ethnicity and cultural barriers to integration largely serves to camouflage social inequality and discrimination.

Keywords: Migration, education, living situation, poverty, ethnicity.

Introduction

The European Commission declared 2010 the "European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion." The president of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, explained that the recession in the wake of the recent global economic crisis hit "the most vulnerable members of society the hardest." This group of the most vulnerable includes migrants, but not all migrants: "Some travel above deck, while others have to crouch below deck, according to Nazim Hikmet. Today, some fly 'business class' while others cram onto boats (...) in the Mediterranean in the hope of setting foot on European soil" (Haug 2010: 75). Some are cosmopolitans of transnational high-tech capitalism, others cosmopolitans of necessity. Integration is not an issue in the case of global citizens – due to their disposition, they must be seen as integrated per se. Conversely, the international cosmopolitans of necessity on the lower deck are required to integrate – i.e. assimilate – although very little is done to enable them to escape from this lower deck. Ostensibly, the economic crisis will further exacerbate societal contradictions and social dislocation, and discrimination, segregation, and racism (cf. Weiss 2010: VII; cf. Aschauer 2010: 307–346) will take the place of integration on the agenda: both during crises and in cases of shipwreck, it is imperative to batten down the hatches and hit the other decks.

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Immigration to Austria, a short overview

In 2010, Austria had a residential population of 8.3 million. Of these, approximately 1.5 million people or 18.6 per cent have a migration background.¹ 1.1 million were first-generation immigrants and 405,000 were of the second generation. Two thirds of all people with an immigrant background (1,027,900) came from non-EU countries: 507,100 were from the former Yugoslavia and 263,000 were of Turkish origin – the two countries from which immigrants in Austria have traditionally originated from. Immigration in Austria began after the Second World War in the early 1960s; initiated via direct recruiting in the countries of origin, it eventually evolved into chain migration, and has been accompanied by the subsequent immigration of family members since the 1970s. Since the mid-1990s, an increasing number of immigrants have come from countries in the EU. New immigration from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia is now negligible. The social situation of the immigrant population is difficult to describe adequately, as immigrants and refugees are a highly heterogeneous and a diverse group of people. As described metaphorically above, the spectrum spans from top executives to refugees from crisis-stricken regions. Lumping such dissimilarities statistically into categories such as "people with an immigrant background" or "third-country nationals" accomplishes little; rather, it obscures the societal contradictions. To the extent that the facts allow, I will take a different approach in this paper.

Education and its utilization

Statistical data on education and above all on adequate utilization of education can provide important information for the socially marginalized segments of the population. It can be determined whether immigrants are more or less "integrated" with the latter meaning that immigrants have increasingly abandoned their status as a group on the fringe and gained a foothold in mainstream society, i.e. in the influential middle class. In Central Europe, at least, this is the standard reference social group for integration, since more than half of the population subjectively considers themselves part of the middle class (cf. Noll/Weick 2011: 1-7; cf. Gächter 2010: 134).

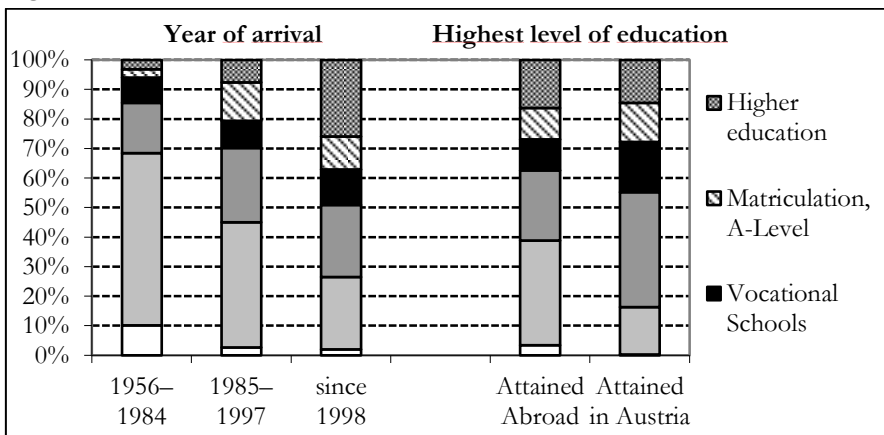
In the early days of "guest worker" immigration, the intention was to employ immigrants in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. There was no interest of the political class and the public in the level of education of workers; in general, compulsory education was sufficient in the industries in which immigrants were planned to be employed in. This legacy of "guest worker

¹ According to the definition of Statistik Austria, persons with an immigrant background are all immigrants and naturalized citizens whose parents were both born in a foreign country. Persons who themselves were born in a foreign country belong to the first generation and persons who were born domestically belong to the second generation. When calculated according to the percentage of residents with an immigrant background, Austria ranks third among the countries in the EU; when only those persons who are citizens of foreign countries are counted, Austria ranks seventh.

policy" characterizes the history of migration in Austria through the present. Stratification and segmented labour markets were the effect of this policy: Immigrants still represent 59 per cent of staff in the building-cleaning industry, 44.6 per cent in agriculture, 42.6 per cent in tourism, and 24.3 per cent in the construction industry (Biffl 2000: 207f.).

The following table illustrates how the acquired formal educational level based on the highest academic qualification earned in a foreign country changed over time among the immigrant population, grouped into three time periods (1956–1984, 1985–1997, and beginning in 1998) and compared to the percentage of the population whose academic qualifications were acquired domestically.

Figure 1: Working-age resident population according to year of arrival and highest level of education.



Source: Gächter 2010: 158, (translation by the author)

As the table shows, during the influx periods of 1985–1997 and since 1998, the level of educational titles has seen an increase. But this is more a reflection of the international educational expansion and the partial educational integration of immigrants in Austria (cf. Haller 2008: 184ff.) than of a change in the needs of the Austrian economy. Only in recent years have highly qualified immigrants been at the centre of Austria's economic and political "desire for foreigners" as arranged by the Sozialpartnerschaft.² From 2005 until 2009, the proportion of immigrants from an academic background rose from 13.7 per cent to 20.3 per cent, while the proportion of people with a compulsory school diploma fell from 30.6 per cent to 21.3 per cent (bmask

² In Austria, Sozialpartnerschaft (social partnership) is the term to designate a specific and particularly strong form of peaceful and consensual cooperation between economic interest groups representing capital and labour, political institutions and governments (consociational democracy).

2011: 5). But only since 1 July 2011, has there been a point-based legal system in place (Rot-Weiß-Rot-Card) that – apart from the now even more difficult, yet nevertheless possible subsequent immigration of relatives – permits immigration and residency only to highly qualified immigrants.

Since 2001, every respondent to the micro-census has been asked to list his or her country of birth, and since 2008, respondents have been asked to list the country of birth of their parents. This enables three statistically distinguishable categories to be formed, based on the country in which the highest academic qualification was acquired and the country in which the parents were born.

Table 1: Statistical categories by country of education and birthplace of parents

Statistical categories	Place of education	Parents' place of birth
"Natives"	Highest academic qualification in an EU-15 or EFTA country including Austria, Malta and Cyprus	At least one parent born in EU-15, EFTA
"Second generation"	Highest academic qualification in an EU-15 or EFTA country including Austria, Malta and Cyprus	Neither parent born in EU-15 or EFTA
"First generation Immigrants"	No academic qualification in an EU-15 or EFTA country	Neither parent born in EU-15 or EFTA

Source: Gächter 2010: 137 (translation by the author)

Among "first-generation immigrants", labour force participation rate is lower in comparison to the native population on every educational level in eight of the nine Austrian provinces. It is lowest on the lowest educational level, and highest for the middle segment – superior to compulsory schooling, but inferior to university qualification. This only affects the rate of employment, however, meaning general employment opportunities rather than employment that corresponds to the educational qualifications, as an average education does not necessarily mean an average level of occupation, as the situation in all provinces confirms.

For the population referred to here as "second generation", the general trend towards better educational titles is confirmed compared to the "first generation". This applies much more to the eastern and southern provinces than to the western provinces in Austria. Other than in Tyrol and Vorarlberg (the western provinces), the proportion of people with average schooling is significantly higher (40–56 per cent), and that of people with higher education ranges from 9 per cent to 32 per cent. "There is growing evidence that an average education is being made the norm for the 'second generation' (...). And the fact that the transition to an adequate job tends to be smoother for those

with an average education than for those with a lesser or higher education level is consonant with that." (Gächter 2010: 151f., translation by the author) The group with average education is seven times more likely to find intermediate occupation³ in seven provinces (ibid. 153f.).

Although in every province, the demand for workers in service-level positions and apprentice positions is greater than the proportion of the population with a correspondingly low level of education, there are more people with a moderate level of education and training than available jobs. In the case of higher education, supply balances out demand, with the exception of two provinces (cf. Gächter 2010). The distinct deskilling of immigrants described above is thus virtually inherent in the system. Some portions of the population, however, are significantly more affected by this than others: the lowest proportion of overqualified people is found in the EU-15 countries. Most affected are immigrants from the new EU member countries and immigrants from South-East Europe, with the greatest discrepancies occurring among people with a high school diploma. The conclusion of Statistik Austria is that "even immigrants with equal formal education occupy positions inferior to persons born in Austria. This occupational segregation is also associated with a greater proliferation of stressful working conditions (such as shift work) among immigrants." (Statistik Austria 2009b: 59)

The unemployment rate among the immigrant population – both in the "first" and "second generation" – is twice as high as among the native Austrian population (11.8 per cent to 5.9 per cent and 9.2 per cent to 4.1 per cent among young people); the duration of unemployment – 87.3 days in this instance – is, however, substantially shorter (cf. bmask 2011: 6ff.). The lower level of labour participation is thus strongly influenced by the higher unemployment, but also by higher absence from the job market (among adolescents with an immigrant background, 10 per cent, versus 3.2 per cent among native Austrians). In the case of women from Turkish families, "regardless of whether they wear traditional religious dress," it is quite demonstrably a result of discrimination, since they "have to contend with an inordinate degree of rejection by potential employers, as a survey conducted in Vienna in the spring of 2008 revealed (European Union Fundamental Rights Agency 2009)" (Gächter 2010: 154, translation by the author). Despite differences concerning the extent to which they are discriminated, studies in several European countries confirm that discrimination exists in the employment of migrants. (cf. overview in Gächter 2004: 13ff.; cf. Wrench 1999; cf. Zegers de Beijl 1999).

Immigrants with an average education are predominantly engaged in service-level positions and apprentice positions (cf. Gächter 2010: 160). In general, higher education does not lead to greater engagement in the workforce; in fact, it may even be an obstacle. Depending on the province, only 16 per cent to 40 per cent of people have adequate employment corresponding to their educational academic level, compared to 53 per cent to 73 per cent of

³ Skilled occupations requiring formal apprenticeship or intermediate vocational schooling

the statistical category "natives" (ibid 161). The vast "remainder" can only find work in service-level positions and apprentice positions (34 per cent to 64 per cent) or in mid-level positions (16 per cent to 30 per cent). The amount of education going to waste here is astonishing. Deskilling is obviously rooted in the Austrian system: institutionally, legally, formally, and informally through discrimination and racism. The push since mid-2011 for the immigration of highly qualified foreign nationals while systematically devaluing and neglecting the qualifications of existing immigrants is therefore inexplicable.

Social and housing situation

The severe discrepancy between the living conditions of native residents and immigrants is demonstrated alone by the fact that as many as two thirds of natives live in homes or condominiums, as opposed to only 12 per cent of immigrants from Serbia and 13.1 per cent of immigrants from Turkey. A third of native Austrians share the remaining housing market with nearly 90 per cent of the immigrant population, albeit on unequal terms: Third-country nationals only have access to rented individual apartments and co-operative apartments, and municipal apartments have only been available to them since 2006. The unequal relations are demonstrated by three main indicators: floor space, rooms, and cost of housing per person, respectively. Native Austrians have an average of 44.1 square meters of floor space at their disposal, while immigrants from the former Yugoslavia have 25.2 and immigrants from Turkey 20.9 square meters. Native Austrians pay 5.02 euros per square meter, while persons from the former Yugoslavia pay 5.65 and persons from Turkey pay 6.15 euros per square meter. Native Austrians have 1.9 habitable rooms per person, immigrants from the former Yugoslavia have 1.2 per person, and immigrants from Turkey have 1 per person, respectively (cf. Statistik Austria 2009: 80ff.).

The obvious guess would be that the vast discrepancies have their source in national origin. In 2010, the ZeMiT–Center for Immigrants in Tyrol conducted a study of the residential situation of people with an immigrant background analysing the legal situation and lending practices of communities (ZeMiT 2010) and commissioning the ZSI–Center for Social Innovation to conduct a micro-census evaluation (ZSI 2011). The path to the statistical population categories investigated was again via the country of education and the birthplace of the parents (see above), but this time in six categories. 46 variables were assessed, of these 15 relate to origins, 6 to housing segment as defined by the law, 5 to place of residence, 14 to profession, 5 to household, and one to price.

Floor space in square meters per person, the 14 profession-related and 5 household-related variables comprise more than half of the explanatory power of the model, and the origin-related variables a mere ninth. In the number of rooms per person the first origin variables hold fifth and sixth place. Immigrants from Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and the Former Yugoslav Republic

of Macedonia have 0.8 less rooms available per person in the household than native Austrians, followed by 0.5 less rooms for immigrants from Croatia and Bosnia and the new EU member countries. Not until twelfth place does the origin variable for persons from Turkey, who have 0.4 less rooms per person, come into play. In cost per square meter, the 6 legality-related variables are shown to account for 50 per cent of the explanation. The primary price-driving factor is the price of renting, followed by short-term contracts and fixed-term leases. The origin variable ranked fifteenth for Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (not naturalized), which raised the price by 0.70 euros per square meter. The remaining origin variables are insignificant.

August Gächter of ZSI concludes the following based on the factors square meters per person, number of rooms, and living costs: "When it comes to more or less square meters per capita, the makeup of the household and income opportunities are the decisive factors. The cost of housing is also important as a single variable. Everything else that could be included in the analysis is relatively insignificant, including the origin country of the family and the generations since immigration. In other words, the social dimension dominates strongly over other influences." (ZSI 2011: 21, translation by the author) Gächter's findings corroborate the hypothesis supported in this contribution that the marginalization of third-country nationals and immigrants from the new EU member countries in Austria is due primarily to social exclusion by the host society. The social dimension expresses the social exclusion: The serious danger of poverty (see below) of large numbers of third-country nationals reflects their discrimination in the workplace, for instance through de-qualification, lower salaries and discriminating employment practices (see above). The following example from the housing market underlines the connection between social peripheries and social exclusion by discrimination and racism.

The result of the community survey on the living situation and housing allocation practices in Tyrol yielded sobering results. Austria did not implement the European Council Directive concerning the long-term residential status of third country nationals of 11/25/2003 until 1 January 2006. Possession of a "permanent residence permit" is a precondition for equality for foreign nationals and thus for eligibility for public housing apartments. This status depends on five years of uninterrupted settled resident status, the applicant's financial and social situation, and adequate housing (sic!). In accordance with EU regulations, the housing allocation policy of the province of Tyrol, which is not publicly accessible (sic!), provides no waiting periods and quotas for equal-status third country nationals.

ZeMiT's study of apartment allotment practices, however, unsurprisingly found that in 8 out of 10 municipalities in Tyrol with a population of more than 5,000 and a proportion of resident foreign nationals of more than 8 per cent, community-specific guidelines have been developed that contain restrictive provisions: 2 communities only allow Austrian citizens to live in municipi-

pal housing facilities excluding even EU-citizens. In 7 communities, the length of stay in community or employment in the community plays a role, which is not in accordance with the European Council Directive. In 2 communities, the former must be longer for eligible foreign nationals. In 6 communities, there are unofficial quotas for third-country nationals. Ethnic origin plays a very important role. People from Turkey are viewed as a "problem," and accordingly are put at a disadvantage via extra quotas in three communities even if they are already naturalized, which is an outright act of racism. Only in 3 communities are claimants officially afforded equal consideration, distributed according to social criteria.

Figure 2: Housing allocation practices in 10 communities of Tyrol: Restrictive provisions

	No community-specific guidelines	Community-specific guidelines with restrictive provisions	Restrictive provisions in detail
Number of communities*	2	8	Municipal housing facilities only for Austrian citizens (2)
			Length of stay or employment in the community (7)
			Longer length of stay or employment in the community for third-country nationals (2)
			Unofficial quotas for foreign nationals (6)
			Extra – negative – quotas for people with Turkish background (3)
			Officially equal consideration, distributed according to social criteria (3)
* population above 5,000 and proportion of foreign nationals above 8 per cent			

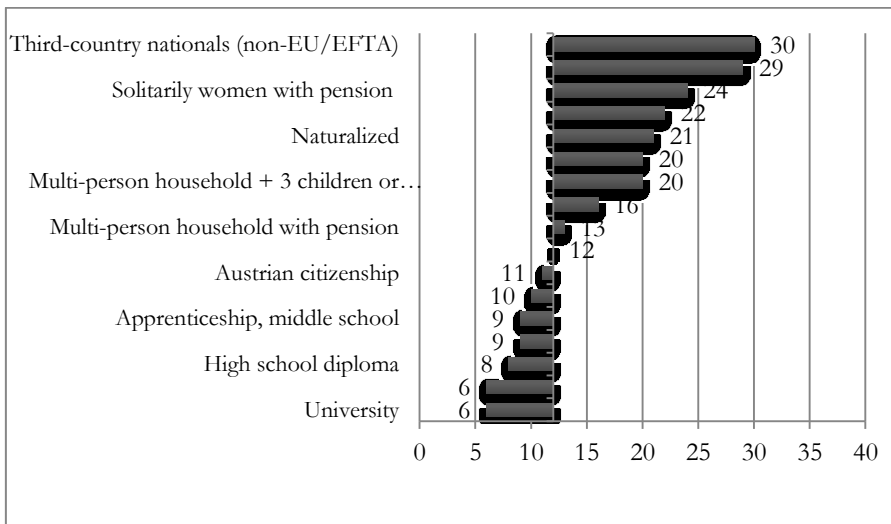
Poverty as key indicator

As in all countries in Europe, the EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) poll has been conducted in Austria since 2003. In 2007, the percentage of the Austrian population at risk of poverty averaged 12 per cent below the European average of 17 per cent (bmask 2010: 22). The median of the equivalent income⁴ of households was 19.011 net euros per year, or 1.584 euros per month, in Austria in 2007. For a one-person household, the threshold for risk of poverty is 60 per cent of the equivalent income, or 11.406 eu-

⁴ Half of the income is above, half below the median value.

ros per year or 951 euros per month.⁵ If one considers those average incomes that are less than this value, those who are affected are – unsurprisingly – single-parent households, female retirees, but above all, immigrants: "Foreign nationals have the highest risk of poverty. Even those who are naturalized have a poverty risk rate well above the average for the general population." (ibid. 28). Foreign nationals who are not from the EU/EFTA have a poverty risk of 30 per cent, and naturalized persons a poverty risk of 21 per cent. Single-parent households (single parents) rank almost as poorly as third-country nationals, as figure 6 reveals while also clearly showing that poverty is primarily caused by societal factors, such as poor education, a number of children higher than the one or two that are typical of the middle class, accompanied and reinforced by additional sources of discrimination, such as ethnicity.

Figure 6: Poverty risk in per cent by socio-demographic characteristics.



Source: (bmask 2009: 54, translation by the author)

The poverty risk explains the high risk of over-indebtedness of third-country nationals, which is nearly three times that of native Austrians, as well as payment delinquency, which is twice as high (cf. bmask 2009: 146). A particularly alarming fact when describing the social situation of citizens of non-EU countries in relation to the native populace is the pronounced tendency to solidify at low levels. "For (people from the EU-/EFTA region, ed.) it can be assumed that poverty is mainly a temporary state – in contrast to the situation of foreign nationals from the non-EU-/EFTA-area, who, even if they have

⁵ Multiple-person households are weighted as follows: for a single adult with child, the median income is 1.236 Euros, with 457 Euros added for each additional adult and 285 Euros per month for each additional child.

lived in Austria for an extensive period of time or have obtained Austrian citizenship, have an increased risk of long-term poverty" (ibid. 130, translation by the author).

Conclusion

In questions of integration, ethnicity and origin play an important role in public and published opinion, with physical appearance, language, origin, religion, and "values" derived from them indicating "ethnicity." "Problems with integration" are attributed to certain groups of immigrants, according to this stereotype; the archetypes for this practice are the Roma and Sinti from eastern and South Eastern European countries. In central European countries, which are characterized by the guest worker immigration policies of the 1960s and 1970s, "integration problems" are generally associated with people from Turkey, and their "ethnicity" is fixated firmly around Islam. The "foreign" religion, Islam, is viewed as an obstacle to integration, as endless public debates about the headscarf demonstrate (cf. Bunzl/Hafez 2009; cf. Baghajati 2010).

In the key areas of life that the native Europeans and immigrants share, "problems" articulate themselves primarily as ethnic rather than as social; social problems that are attributable to social inequality are swept beneath a rug of ethnicity that serves as a universal explanation. In the long run, the ethnic "otherness" that is rendered visible and that is to a certain extent social exclusion and poverty, differentiates foreign nationals from locals.

I have presented a different hypothesis: namely, that the marginalization of third-country nationals and immigrants from the new EU member countries in Austria is due primarily to social exclusion by the host society. Indicators on education and educational utilization, labour force participation, unemployment, occupation, and housing conditions of third-country nationals and people from the new EU member countries, which cumulate poverty and poverty risk, have provided some evidence that the primary barriers to integration can hardly be attributed to immigrants' national origins and cultural backgrounds. A multitude of interwoven social factors, together with legal hurdles, institutional discrimination, structural, formal, and informal discrimination, for example in employment and the search for housing, have significantly more explanatory power.

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