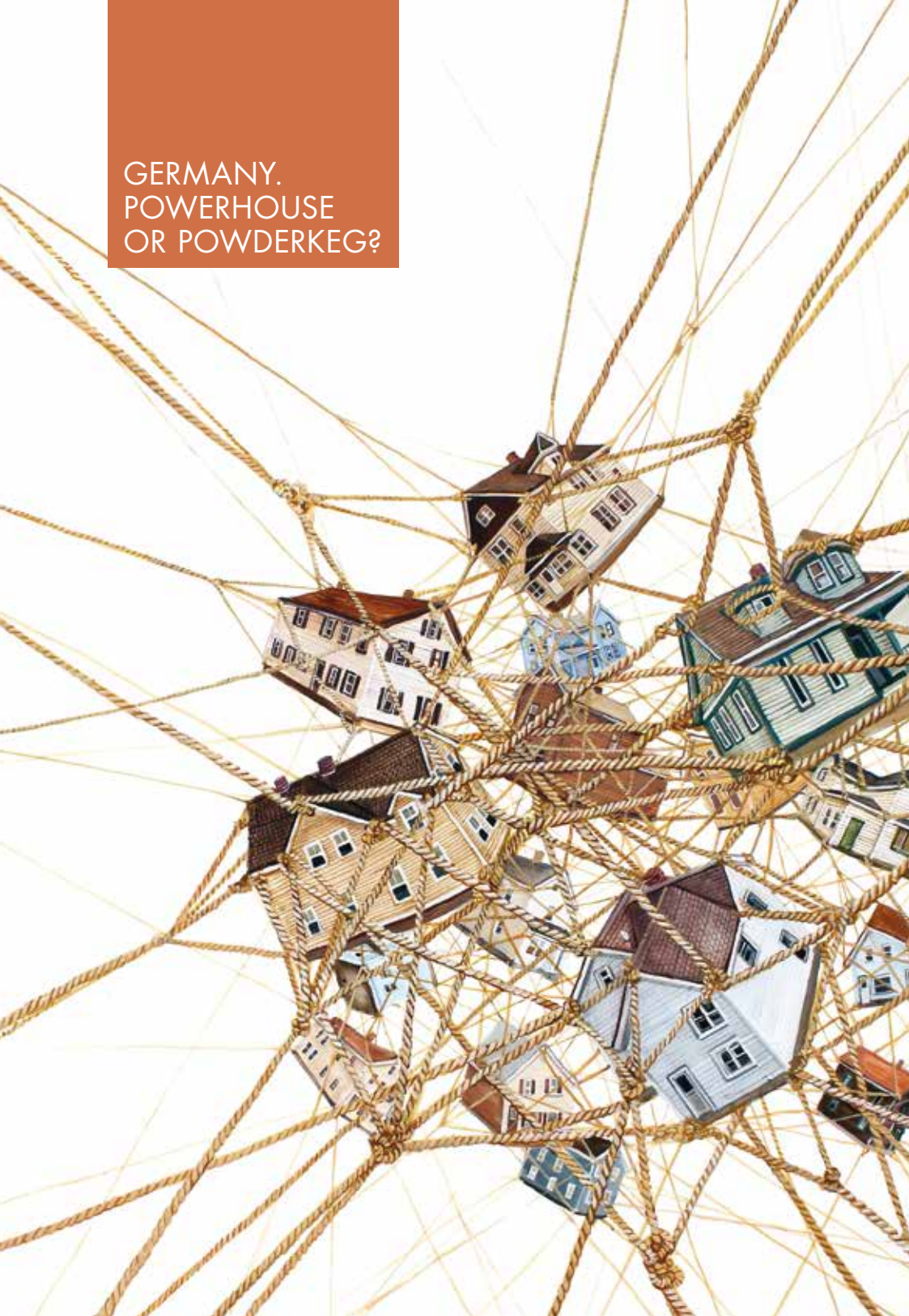


GERMANY.
POWERHOUSE
OR POWDERKEG?



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DESPITE SIGNS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY, EUROPE, INDEED THE DEVELOPED WORLD, HAS BEEN ENGULFED BY A WAVE OF ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR. WHAT IS GOING ON? AND WHY? CHARLES WEULE'S ON-THE-GROUND REPORT FROM GERMANY, THE HEART OF EUROPE'S IMMIGRATION CRISIS, MAY HELP SHED SOME LIGHT.

PREFACE

THE PRESENT DECADE HAS BEEN A TUMULTUOUS ONE FOR EUROPE. MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF COUNTRIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION WENT THROUGH A SOVEREIGN DEBT CRISIS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2008-09 GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS AND, AT LEAST FOR NOW, FISCAL AUSTERITY AND UNPRECEDENTED MONETARY EXPANSION CONTINUE TO SIT SIDE BY SIDE AS THE TWIN PILLARS OF ECONOMIC POLICY.

A REGION THAT WAS ALREADY APPREHENSIVE FROM ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES WAS FURTHER SHAKEN BY THE SERIES OF ISLAMIC TERRORIST ATTACKS AND THE INFLUX OF MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES *EN MASSE* FROM THE OTHER END OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND BEYOND.

The angst and frustration culminated in the vote of the British people on 23 June 2016 to leave the EU, but the chaos that ensued at Westminster suggests that 'solutions' and stability, if there were such a thing, are still some distance away.

Of these continual crises, last year's refugee crisis has been one of the most trying on the cohesion and strength of the EU and was arguably a key factor that shaped the outcome of the Brexit referendum.

While politicians and bureaucrats wonder at the intensity and spread of anti-establishment sentiments and mainstream media busy themselves with denouncing the re-emergence of far-right nationalism, an on-the-ground, first-hand account of the daily interactions between the locals and the newly arrived immigrants may shed some light on the cause of the widespread discontentment and the breakdown of a precarious equilibrium and unity.

And so we present you with this special report from Charles Weule. Charles is a former investment analyst at Platinum, who now lives and works in Germany. Equipped with a unique linguistic gift, Charles has travelled to and lived in many parts of the world. Having learned Japanese fluently, he went on to become totally proficient in Mandarin. As with these two Asian languages, his use of German leaves him indistinguishable from a native.

Charles has been teaching languages in Berlin. In 2015 he joined the ranks of thousands of Germans to help – to work with – the one million refugees that have found their way to this new ‘Promised Land’. The seemingly trivial encounters relayed in Charles’ account paint quite a different picture to what one might hear from both Chancellor Merkel and her counterpart in the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) party.

The picture is not one comprised only of lifeless children washed up on the shores of Greek islands and war-ravaged families marching through the perilous roads of the Balkans. Nor is it as simple as altruism versus xenophobia, good against evil, right versus wrong. Truth and reality are often drowned out by the voices from the two extremities of the spectrum.

The multiple rounds of financial bail-outs extended to other EU nations did not much diminish the heroic status of Angela Merkel in the eyes of the German people. But when she decided to welcome the countless immigrants fleeing war-torn Syria and Iraq (and whoever else that saw it desirable to join them on the journey) with open arms, many turned against her and sided with neighbouring governments with less magnanimous policies.

The lack of consultation with Germany’s own citizenry as well as other European countries, the lack of consideration given to both short- and long-term consequences, and the sheer unpreparedness for what was to follow

– which was so atypical of Germans – annoyed, frustrated and enraged many.

When large numbers of foreigners with different religions, different values and different expectations are suddenly imposed on communities, at least some of their concerns and displeasure seem natural enough. The issue of immigration is much more than economics and politics. It impacts on the collective sense of security, identity and sovereignty of a population, and is emotive at an individual level.

While we may observe from afar the geopolitical crises playing out in Europe and analyse the economic impact of the ECB’s negative interest rates, Charles’ report brings a broader and closer view on the situation in the region and gives us a rare insight into the thinking of ordinary German citizens. He also provides us with a historical perspective. Viewed in the context of the country’s past woes and vicissitudes, the generosity of the German people shines through as all the more extraordinary and their fear and exasperation all the more understandable. It helps to understand how governments’ mismanagement of sensitive issues like mass immigration could lead to popular revolts and irrational outcomes like Brexit, and this may in turn help us prepare for what may be lying ahead.

KERR NEILSON

Managing Director
August 2016





THE BALKAN ROUTE TO EUROPE'S POWDERKEG

BY CHARLES WEULE

QUESTIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY

THESE ARE INTERESTING TIMES TO BE LIVING IN GERMANY – INDEED IN EUROPE, WHICH SEEMS TO GROW AND SHRINK, WAX AND WANE, BE NEAR EXPLODING AND THEN CALM AND CIVILISED (ALBEIT AMID TALK OF CIVIL WAR) FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT.

INTERESTING TIMES – A VIEWPOINT FOR SOCIOLOGISTS AND SIMILARLY PASSIVE OBSERVERS. FRIGHTENING TIMES – IN THE MINDS OF A GROWING MANY.

Sovereignty, once the stuff reserved for kings, has long been owned by respective peoples, thanks to Europe's gift of Enlightenment. Or at least that was the taught thought.

While the Brits, in the tradition of the Magna Carta, are leading the charge against wanton waste stemming from Brussels, Berlin's citadel has been rocked regularly enough over the last twelve months to suggest that policy there is also out of joint.

Hubris had grown around Deutschland's hitherto ability to contribute, indeed instigate, remedies for the transnational problems of others. Less than a year ago, however, that reputation began to unravel, as word went out from Berlin that displaced folk who could find their way to central Europe would find shelter inside Germany's welcoming borders.

Unlike mobile phones, passports proved irrelevant (which is itself a shocking fact of temptation. Even after living here legally for eleven years, whenever I renew my residency permit I need to prepare ten pieces of stamped documentation proving that I have work, health insurance, superannuation and that I have never received a cent of welfare or other government money). And so more than a million came.

THE IDEA WAS THAT THE REST OF THE CONTINENT WOULD BE COAXED INTO PITCHING IN TO ALLEVIATE THE BURDEN ADDING DAILY ON GERMAN SHOULDERS.

Europe's changing political make-up, however, saw this last of Berlin's great hopes severely falter, indeed backfire.

Talk by the Chancellor or any other German minister holds less sway across Europe. Attempts to pull European 'partners', even kicking and screaming along, have not worked. Lecturing the rest of Europe with wailing words backed by Brussels that Europe is built on values of solidarity and doing the right thing; suggesting Europe should morally act as one, even simply requesting a token show of help – Germany's Coalition ministers have resorted to all this in front of the cameras and who knows what frantic mix of insisting and pleading behind the scenes.

This developing lack of continental deference has begun to impact German domestic issues and the topic of refugees has grown into the biggest and most pressing set of questions for the government, dominating not daily, but hourly discussions on German radio and television.

SO MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN UNANSWERED. HOW MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY ENTERED GERMANY LAST YEAR WITHOUT SHOWING ANY IDENTIFICATION?

How many were refugees fleeing conflict and how many were simply opportunists seeking a better life? Are they literate, educated? Are they traumatised and needing long-term therapy and care from psychologists and counsellors?

Reportedly only 363,000 of the 1.25 million newcomers came from war-ravaged Syria. Many are from Afghanistan where German soldiers and others have spent years and millions of euros, even sacrificed their lives, helping to bolster the local economy and security.

Why should they qualify as asylum seekers when at least parts of their countries are safe to live in? Why do so many come from countries free of conflict? Why don't they stay where they land in Europe and are supposed to register? *Have they been registered?*

Heightened security concerns, especially after repeated terrorist attacks in Europe recently, have exacerbated the dilemma that had grown around the number of asylum seekers into a full-blown crisis. More general concerns have similarly taken hold, not least in terms of how politicians and people lower down Germany's bureaucratic food chain ought to deal with such large and, moreover, *unknown* numbers of people from often unknown backgrounds.

Young men from the Maghreb claimed status as Syrians until translators detected their varied Arabic. Not to worry, suggested pro-refugee politicians and overly optimistic industry leaders, Germany could easily do with a few thousand educated young people to fill vacancies across the booming home economy.

Linguistic idealists saw chances to promote German culture and language through this supposedly malleable, integration-willing million. In the meantime, we were told, there are plenty of tax euros available to take care of accommodation, education and whatever. Whatever indeed!

Other locals were more sceptical. Statistics collected about the newcomers remain blurry at best, given the number of folk without identity papers but who share similar names and claim January 1 as their birthday. Others shy away from registering their whereabouts in the first place.

UNCERTAINTY COUPLED WITH FEAR CONTINUES TO REIGN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE WHICH IS DOMINATING GERMAN AND WIDER EUROPEAN POLITICS. SOME CLAIM THIS IS ALL EXAGGERATION.

Cognitive dissonance is of course a most human condition and points to our fallibility and inability to recognise fault. Cognitive dissonance in the political world, however, can have dire effects on policy and therefore future generations.

Germany's Vice-Chancellor has suggested that *five million* refugees could be assimilated over the next five years – a statement easy enough to make, easy enough for his supporters to support.

BUT WHERE AND HOW SHOULD THESE MILLIONS BE ACCOMMODATED, SCHOOLED AND EMPLOYED? MANY EUROPEANS SHARE A SENSE OF WONDERMENT AS TO HOW EVERYTHING SHOULD FINALLY PLAY OUT.

Countries outside Europe like Jordan and Turkey continue to house many more refugees. And Australia has a higher proportion (with 28%) of foreign-born residents compared to the EU (averaging 9%). So why all the fuss?

The main cause for furore centres on the fact that Germany has been left facing a problem of its own making and the need to accommodate hundreds of thousands of newcomers to Europe continues to fall on German shoulders. However broad they may be, they are not those of Atlas. Nor has Angela Merkel's superhero status translated into further trans-European currency.

Part of the 'problem' concerns the fact that a significant role of sovereign government – namely immigration policy – in effect broke down. Uncontrolled and unchallenged, more than a million mainly single young Muslim men were allowed to flood sovereign borders.

DOING THE RIGHT THING VERSUS A DIVIDED EUROPE

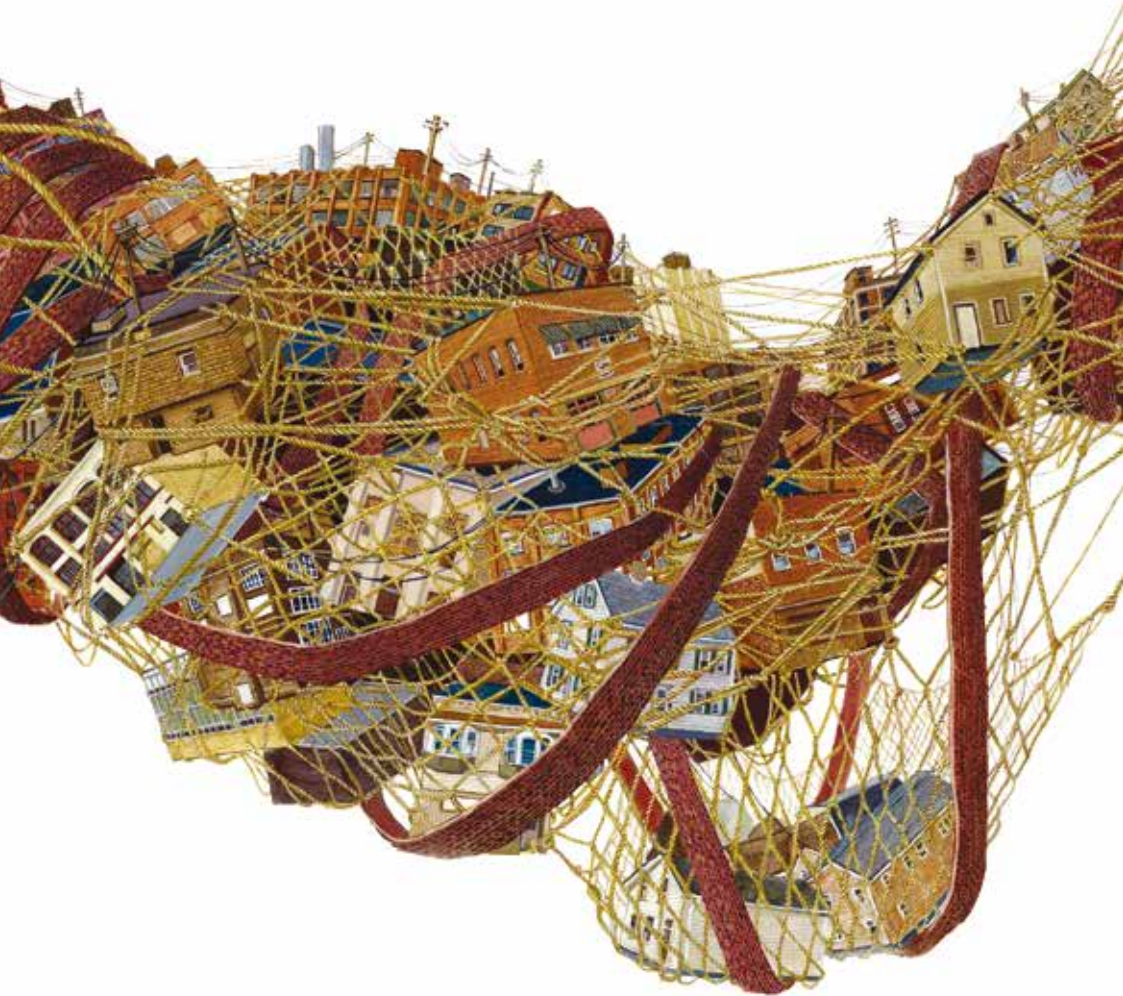
UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF 2015 EUROPE WAS MOSTLY PREOCCUPIED WITH GREECE'S RECURRENT SOVEREIGN DEBT CRISIS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A 'GREXIT'.

THE ISSUE OF REFUGEES PADDLING ACROSS PARTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN FEATURED AS LITTLE MORE THAN A SIDE-STORY, BECAUSE, FOR THE MOST PART, GREECE'S PROBLEMS WERE ONLY REPORTED FROM A NORTH EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE.

So when did the waves of migrants arriving in whichever parts of Europe become a *European* crisis?

Ironically, the answer depends on which part of Europe you consider. The year 2014 saw 276,000 people enter the EU illegally, 207,000 of whom crossed the Mediterranean. Almost 203,000 sought asylum in Germany, 60% more than in 2013. Deutschland is now the second most popular destination for migrants, after the USA.





The first half of 2015 (with almost 70,000 arrivals) saw Greece replacing Italy as the most popular point of entry. For July 2015, Frontex reported a record of 107,500 refugees crossing EU frontiers, near half of whom entered Greece while some 20,000 arrived in Italy. Arrivals in August alone totalled around 110,000 with near double that figure registering as a monthly peak in October.

By year end, between 800,000 and 900,000 refugees were *estimated* to have reached Greece. Previously a bumper year for immigrants to the EU saw figures around *half a million*.

NEW JARGON SPRANG UP: 'HOT SPOTS' WERE THE ISLANDS WHERE REFUGEES WERE FLOODING IN, THE BULK OF WHOM THEN KEPT MOVING ALONG THE 'BALKAN ROUTE' TO THE OPEN ARMS OF CHANCELLOR MERKEL.

Greece as well as Italy became overwhelmed by the new arrivals from Syria and elsewhere, people whose plain intent was getting their foot in Greece's door and then into Europe proper. Yet, the rest of Europe did little to assist.

It was only when tragic reports surfaced of some of the actual victims of unscrupulous people smuggling inside the EU that the authorities finally acknowledged that something had to be done. The worst came in August 2015 when more than seventy corpses were found in an abandoned truck along a road in Austria. One little girl among the victims was no more than one or two years old.

AND SO THE GERMAN CHANCELLOR OPENED THE FLOODGATES, INVITING AND WELCOMING THE SUPPOSEDLY HARD-DONE-BY INTO DEUTSCHLAND AND HENCE EUROPE, WITHOUT ANY CONSULTATION WITH HER NATIVE CITIZENRY OR ANYONE ELSE IN THE UNION, RAISING THE IRE OF MANY.

It seemed the right thing to do, after all. What decent European could have disagreed with her *at the time*?

But many Europeans wish German politicians had been more aware of the rest of their 'Europe' and had acted more responsibly before sending out 'the wrong signals' to desperate folk beyond Europe's shores. There, people smugglers helped feed demand by orchestrating a deluge of misinformation, turning the average refugee's 'smartphone' into something of a misnomer that 'informed' the desperate folk about all the good things waiting in Germany – a free apartment, easy work or just free money!

Indeed, Deutschland's prying open the floodgates at one end helped little at the narrow locks along the Balkan way. Despite being under obviously immense strain, little effective aid ever flowed to Lampedusa or Lesbos.

I watched, among others, Luxemburg's foreign minister, comfortably stationed in the EU's smallest, if not richest, member-state, condemn Hungary's actions with tear gas and water cannons against frustrated refugees determined to enter the main part of the European Union.

Then the famous fence rose. The first of many, back down through the Balkans, with the final stand-offs occurring along Greece's border with Macedonia. News followed that several hundreds, then thousands, of refugees had re-adjusted their route to Croatia whose government said they would 'welcome' them on their way to apply for asylum – further north.

Incidentally in 2014 Hungary reportedly registered 43,000 asylum seekers with the number quadrupling in 2015. Croatia's intakes are either inaccurate or laughably low. Could Eurostat's 140 for all of 2015 be right?

Of course, there are arguments as to why refugees prefer not to stay in Croatia, given the country's 'overly' homogeneous society and the fact that unemployment is far higher than in friendly multicultural Deutschland where they can hook up with friends and family from home.

BUT IT WAS A TELLING MOMENT WHEN SOME GERMAN COMMENTATORS CRITICISED CROATIA'S LEADERS AS BEING NO BETTER THAN PEOPLE SMUGGLERS IN THEIR DESIRE TO LOOK GOOD WHILE EAGERLY PUSHING THE DESPERATE WEARY SOULS IN TRANSIT TO MARCH ON NORTHWARD.

Within hours of the first hundreds of refugees arriving and subsequent tensions with Croatian police rising, Croatia became the next EU country to instigate border closures.

WHILE MANY GERMANS ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS AND SECURITY THAN COLLECTIVE SOVEREIGNTY, THEY COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND THEIR NEIGHBOURS' DISINTEREST IN JOINING GERMANY IN THE MASS INTAKE OF NON-EUROPEANS.

After all, it wasn't *their* heads of government who invited a million strangers into the heart of Europe. Far from the notion of solidarity that Brussels intended, the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians have taken to helping defend each other's borders, even sending troops in some cases. That is the state of Europe caused by irresponsible talk in Berlin, they claim.

Having finally accepted that the problem lies further away than the 'hot spots', Berlin saw it bilaterally convenient to donate 3 billion euros to Turkey's much-in-need government in order to convince that country's fickle regime it could better regulate (i.e. diminish) the flow of migrants from Syria to Europe (i.e. Germany).

MOUNTING PRESSURES FROM WITHIN

IT WAS IN SEPTEMBER 2015 THAT MERKEL'S TRADITIONALLY OSSIFIED EXPRESSION FAMOUSLY SURPRISED MANY WITH THE DECLARATION THAT 'IF WE SHOULD BE SORRY FOR DOING THE RIGHT THING AND HELPING (HOWEVER MANY MILLIONS) IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED, THEN THIS IS NOT MY COUNTRY'.

Similarly gaunt during a rare talk show appearance shortly before key provincial elections in March 2016 and following growing support for her chief critic from within, the Governor of Bavaria, the Chancellor admitted to having no 'Plan B', asserting that she was sure she was on the right track.

The right-leaning (if not hell-bent) AfD (Alternative for Deutschland), albeit new to Deutschland's political scene, shocked the established spectrum of German parties with their landslide acquisition of seats in all three provincial parliaments contested in March 2016.



In Sachsen-Anhalt, the AfD upset all rivals, taking second place with 24.2% of the vote, behind only Merkel's CDU (Christian Democratic Union) which won 29.8%, down from 32.5% in 2011 and losing numerous seats. The Left, which came second in the 2011 election, saw about a third of their base obliterated this time round, plunging from 23.7% to 16.3%, while the SPD (Social Democratic Party), the CDU's federal coalition partner, was embarrassed by the halving of its support to just 10.6%.

A CLEAR SENSE OF MORAL RIGHT MAY OBTAIN ANY NEED FOR MAJOR POLICY CHANGE IN MERKEL'S MIND, BUT ACTION OF SOME KIND IS NEEDED.

Considerable to-ing and fro-ing between Berlin and Munich only adds to signs of uncertainty. Bavarian ministers tell Berlin that it is all well and good to say a million refugees are welcome but it's not much fun for everyone in Bavaria, the south-eastern part of Germany where the majority of immigrants trudge their way in. Berlin seems to offer little more than half-baked measures on a region-by-region basis.

Closer to earth, I shuffled along to our local teacher training centre for two seminars on 'intercultural expertise', followed a few days later by a 'theme day' on welcoming and integrating refugees, where we were advised by our bureaucrat lecturers to refrain from using all manner of 'water-related metaphors' when referring to refugees: terms like 'waves', 'flood', 'inundation' were to be avoided. Lots of good intentions lost in a lot of

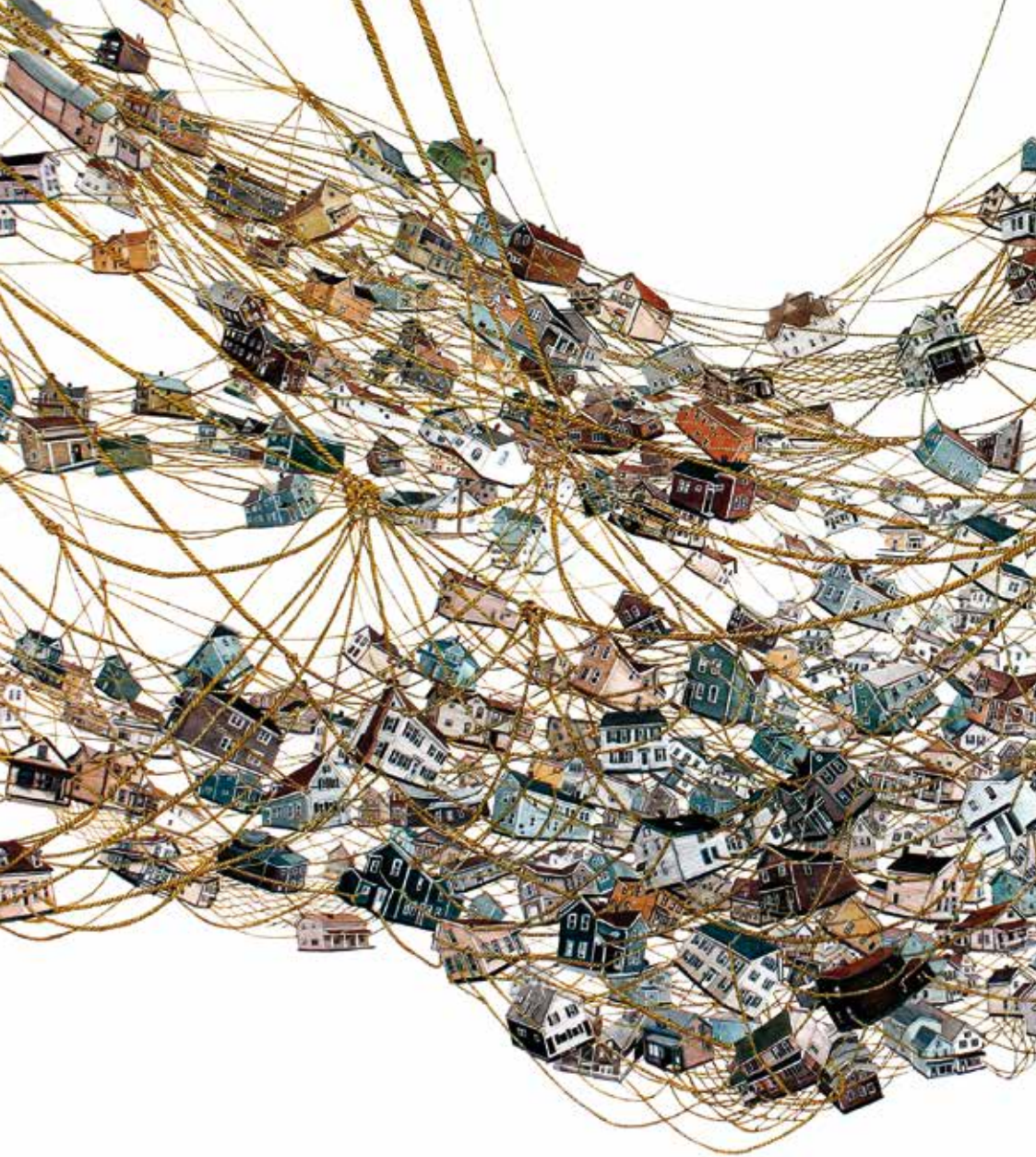
scrambled quotes and figures rather than any helpful knowledge or practical tips for dealing with the newcomers.

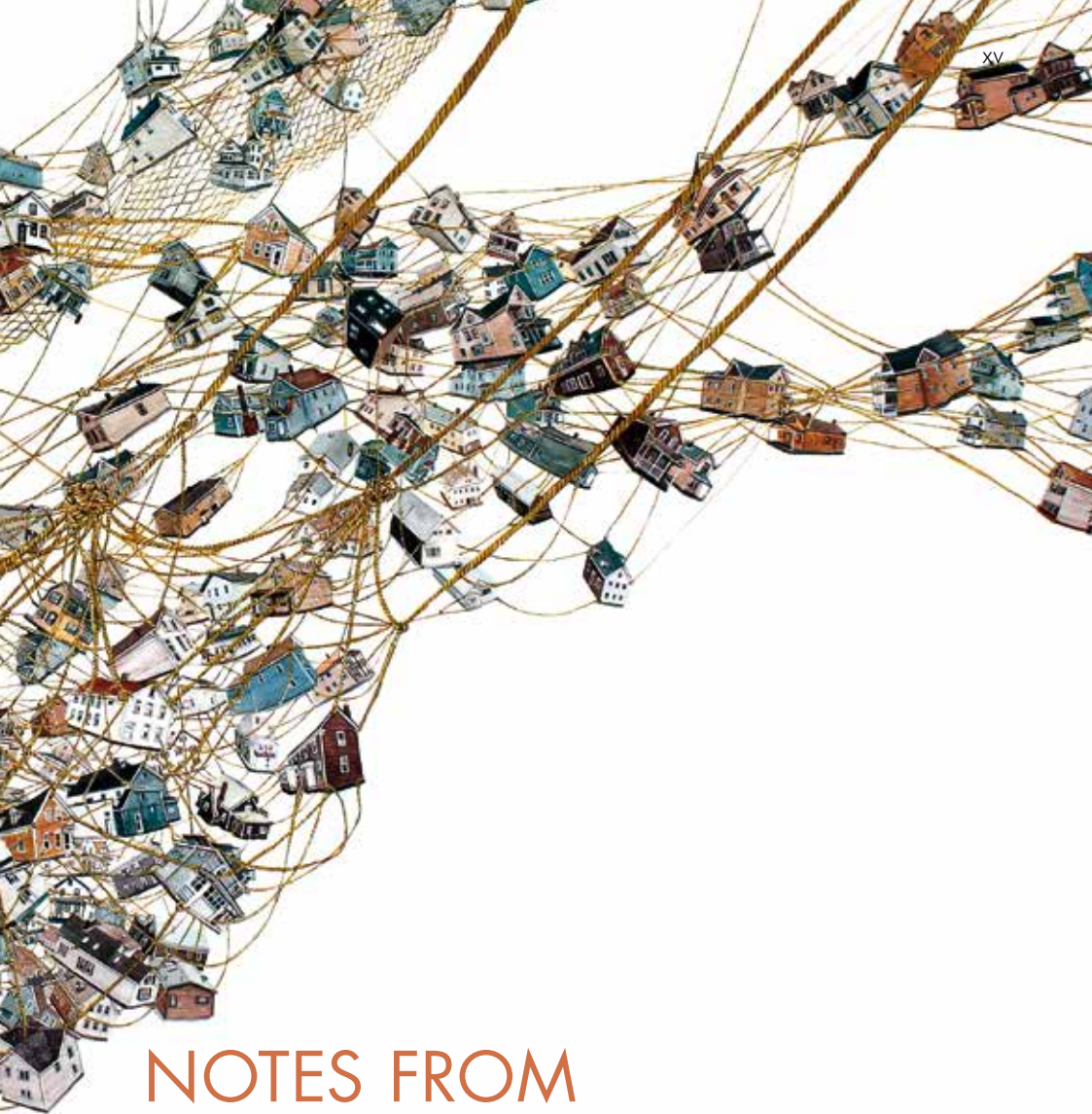
There appear to be two sides to the Chancellor's approach, summed up respectively as 'sit on your hands until the rest of Europe finally does the right thing and takes several hundred thousand refugees off our hands', and 'throwing money (reportedly not a problem in fiscal-strong Deutschland) at pieces of the problem in the meantime'.

Waking up to the reality on the ground means far more than passing on a few euros here and there to local councils who are the ones who have to deal with everything from setting up beds and bathrooms in gyms and school halls, then telling surprised locals where they needed to go instead for sport and school, to re-organising teachers and counsellors so they can cater to the individual needs of new arrivals, to drawing up and filling out new forms for everything from bus passes to doctor's visits. Take it from me: the tasks are overwhelming.

IN THE MEANTIME, BACK IN BERLIN, THE FEDERAL MOVERS AND SHAKERS REMAIN LAX TO ADMIT THEY HAVE TURNED UP SHORT OF MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE PLETHORA OF ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE DEALT WITH BY A MORE WHOLESOME REFUGEE INTAKE POLICY UNDER THEIR AUSPICES.

Indeed they are increasingly running out of rhetoric to support the government's stand or lack thereof concerning the crisis.





NOTES FROM ON-THE-GROUND

LAST SUMMER I TYPICALLY LEFT BRANDENBURG GATE STATION ALONG THE FAMOUS UNTER DEN LINDEN BOULEVARD TO FINISH MY COMMUTE TO WORK ON FOOT. I OFTEN LOOKED BACK PAST THE STATION EXIT AND RAN MY EYES UP AND DOWN THE GATE'S PROUD STRUCTURE, STRUCK WITH ITS ACCRETED SYMBOLISM. I CONSIDER HOW FORTUNATE I AM – WE ALL ARE – THAT BERLIN IS FREE.

From West to East, as I would head further into what used to be the dreaded communist zone – hardly imaginable thirty years ago and now a mere fact of daily routine. After work, I typically took in some air with a walk towards Potsdamer Platz.

Strolling along Hannah-Arendt-Straße, I would dodge all manner of preoccupied tourists, including go-carters and cohorts on Segways. The broad, deep green horizon of the Tiergarten with its traditional order of botanical uniformity offered relief with its appearance in the distance while to my right the Holocaust Memorial opened up its menace of reminders to thinking folk.

Beyond, the Reichstag with its trendy transparent dome settles in to fill out a picture of local and global perspective. Children and older fun-seekers hug and slap individual pieces of the Jewish Memorial. Others hop and skip and stand and sit atop the perhaps otherwise boring, lifeless, non-retaliating blocks which comprise this most industrial, most German field of remembrance.

AND I WONDER IF THEY, EVEN AS TOURISTS FOCUSED ON FUN, HAVE ANY IDEA AS TO THE MEANING OF THE PLACE THEY ARE BOUNCING AROUND.

The dark grey waves of curiously undulating concrete lend their own sense of understanding. A mix-match of Prussian perfection in terms of shared shape and symmetry while each individual block rises with its own smack of stature, relevance, and right, tall or short, as if to say, 'Here I am! Remember me!'

The end of August 2015 was the end of a month which had brought little rain while searing temperatures had motivated many Berliners to rise earlier for work so they could achieve more output with pots of coffee or carafes of water during the cooler mornings. The harsh climate had turned the edges of many trees' foliage into an uncustomary autumnal tone – a look of healthy vibrant green lost to premature yellows and even wrinkled, withered tones of brown.

That was last summer. Since then much has changed while many in mid-2016 are still playing catch-up. As a recently appointed teacher for refugees, let me report from my own on-the-ground experience.

Good old Europe is still home to many idealists who want to save the world inside borderless Europe's fickle frontiers. Finally in January 2016 a perusal of disappointing statistics made clear that a high proportion of the new arrivals are illiterate, at least with respect to the ABCs of the Roman alphabet.

Some Africans feel far from home in Europe, believing that every priority is given to Syrians and others from the Middle East at their expense.

When a group of Somalis realised I was Australian, they laughed at my position as a German teacher. But the laughter soon stopped when one of them was keen to find out what the chances were for migrating to Australia.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A MENTALITY THAT THE WEST IS PUTTING EVERYTHING OUT ON OFFER AND THEY CAN PICK AND CHOOSE AS THEY PLEASE.

A colleague went to the trouble of providing folders and dictionaries to our school's refugees at her own expense. The following day, one African handed his gift of a dictionary back, asking why he couldn't have a 'new' one like other classmates.

After a mid-term test, I divided the beginners into those who could move to intermediate level and those who had to stay behind until they improved. The same fellow, kept back as a result of his own performance, then stopped coming to school. There were even a couple who failed to take care of the notebooks we handed out free of charge at the start of the course and then asked for free replacements six weeks later.

Every day I set out dictionaries on desks for people I couldn't be sure would turn up. When they did come, they didn't want to bother with books or hand-outs unless there were helpful pictures or – as I have taken to doing – explanations in their own languages.

INDEED GERMANS ARE GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ALL OVER THE PLACE IN ARABIC AND OTHER LANGUAGES.

Given the distances travelled and the relatively few possessions they had, it should come as no surprise that many asylum seekers are more than keen to receive everything on offer. Everybody in class is suddenly alert when someone receives a government form which might relate to more money.

WHAT IS DISAPPOINTING IS THAT FEW SEEM WILLING TO OFFER MUCH OF THEMSELVES IN RETURN. AND THAT HAS MANY LOCALS SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS, SOME IN WONDER, OTHERS IN ANGER.

People see news reports featuring streams of young, single Muslim men pouring into their countries and swarming around landmarks where they harass local women while seemingly have nothing better to do.

The thought of trying volunteer work, like thousands of Germans do, is not something that crosses their minds, whether it is because of the lack of such a concept and custom back in their homelands or of the uncertain circumstances in which they find themselves in their new country.

Then there are those for whom even paid work seems not enough. One young Afghani man, who claimed to have been a banker in his homeland, was given a traineeship in a local factory. The arrangement was heralded on TV news as a shining example of the government's refugee settlement policy. But when the TV crew returned a few weeks later for a 'follow-up' program on the new trainee, he was nowhere to be found.

So why had he not gone back to work after Day 1? It turned out that standing and doing manual work for eight hours a day was not what he had expected of his 'new life' in Europe. His wish was to become a professional footballer. So the good-minded folk who had arranged his apprenticeship were left confused and disappointed.

OBLIVIOUS TO HOURLY NEWS REPORTS ON THE LATEST GOVERNMENT POLICY CONCERNING THEIR FUTURES, SOME REFUGEES SEEM EQUALLY OBLIVIOUS TO HOW UNWANTED THEY ARE IN MANY PEOPLE'S MINDS AND BACKYARDS.

'They don't want to work like Germans, so what do they want here? Money for nothing forever?'

The media react with talk of *Hetzer* (agitators) and those intent on undermining Germany's post-war democratic Constitution. They invite liberals to friendly interviews aimed at challenging any 'thinking' person's desire to side against Deutschland's 'welcoming culture' or *Willkommenskultur*.

Yet the press claim to be at a loss as to why ever more people feel misrepresented and denied a voice! Journalists' condescending anti-AfD, anti-PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans opposed to the Islamisation of the West) sermonising only serves to up the ante against them.

Daily scenes are televised of people stranded further afield at national borders as local authorities have toughened up and clamped down on letting everybody – anybody – in.

SCENES INCLUDE DESPERATE MEN RAMMING SECURITY FENCES AND THROWING STONES AT GUARDS IN FRUSTRATION. 'WE ONLY WANT TO PASS,' THEY CLAIM. BUT THAT'S HARDLY TRUE.

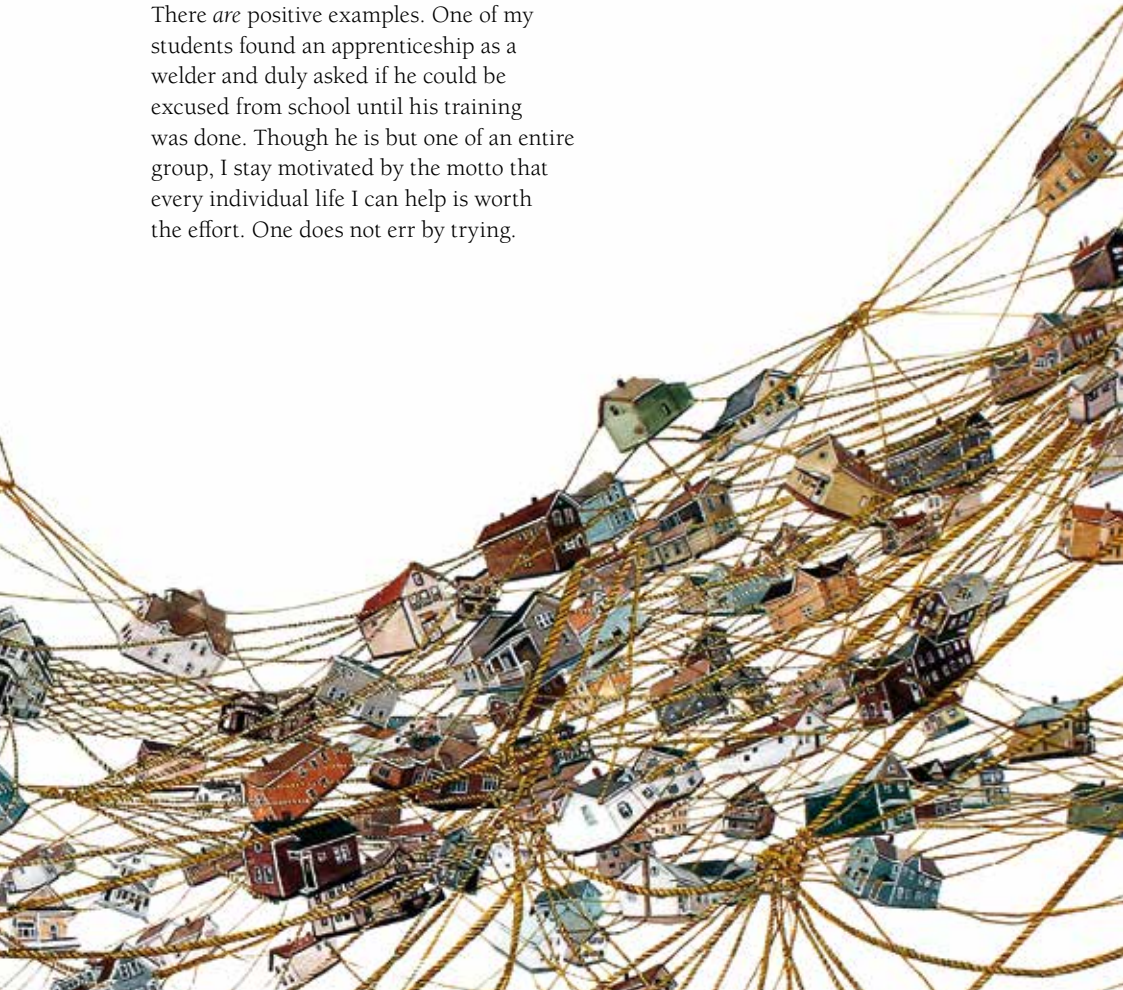
They want much more than that. 'An apartment and social aid money already waiting for them', according to some smugglers' advertised lines. 'Germany wants you', they have heard. 'Why won't they let us in?' they ask. And children are brought into the protest in an attempt to raise sympathy for their plight.

But many in Europe ask what parents subject their children to all this. What person brings yet another child into a world wrecked by war or into such circumstances while they are on the run?

What sort of responsibility does that show?
What sort of people are being let in, often
without identity papers, but with what
lack of compatible thinking?

Time and again I come across some well-
meaning journalist's report about some
young refugee who just wants to make it
to Germany so he can study computers.
That is also the answer I get from several
of my own pupils, who yet leave me
flabbergasted at their lax attendance
records and general disinterest in doing
any after-class study.

There *are* positive examples. One of my
students found an apprenticeship as a
welder and duly asked if he could be
excused from school until his training
was done. Though he is but one of an entire
group, I stay motivated by the motto that
every individual life I can help is worth
the effort. One does not err by trying.



DIFFICULTIES OF INTEGRATION, AND DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

'YOU HAVE TO LEARN DEUTSCH IF YOU WANT TO STAY HERE, LIVE HERE, WORK HERE.' (FAIR ENOUGH. AUSTRALIANS ALWAYS SAY FOREIGNERS WHO COME TO AUSTRALIA SHOULD SPEAK ENGLISH.)

BUT THE LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND VICE-CHANCELLOR SURPRISED MANY WHEN HE ANNOUNCED, 'PEOPLE WHO COME HERE BUT DON'T WANT TO BE INTEGRATED SHOULDN'T BE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.' SENTIMENTS ARE CHANGING.

I have given my pupils newspaper articles about the problems refugees face finding a flat, a job, or long-term residency – all intended to help motivate them, so that they see learning Deutsch is the key to all these things and more. Yet, they remain some of the friendliest and most unmotivated people I have ever come across. Of course they are happy enough in the classroom where they can chat around the room in Farsi or Arabic.

Despite having gestures and body language down pat, and when that doesn't work, resorting to my trilingual trick with English and French as well as Deutsch as required, still there are always one or two who want confirmation from a neighbour using their own language.



It is one thing to be understanding and accepting, but when students spend all their time outside class speaking their own languages, their time inside the classroom has to be in German as much as possible. That is why, when the questions keep flowing in English, I reply in simple, slow Deutsch, so they see that they *can* understand.

I ask what a word means and when they finally turn to a dictionary and tell me the word in English, I say, yes, but explain the meaning to me in German. 'I can't!' eventually gives way to a decent attempt – and progress.

Some of my students are keen to head off into the working world 'ASAP' (even though they are not yet legally permitted to work and hardly possess the basic language skills needed) and I would be left wondering at yet more truancies until I spotted them in tradesmen's clothes at the local train station.

As is often the case with adult immigrants, the eagerness to improve their material situations is not matched by an appreciation of the importance of learning the local language and that it holds the key to better work and better housing as well as their chances of integrating into mainstream society and becoming accepted.

I CAN SEE JUST HOW COMMUNITIES BUILD UP AND RISK BECOMING RULED BY GHETTO MENTALITIES. THE FIRST GENERATION IS ALWAYS THE CHALLENGING ONE AND THE ONE FACING THE MOST CHALLENGES.

My Scottish ancestors spoke English well enough but preferred to intermingle and intermarry with each other after arriving in Australia. It took a couple of generations before they branched out to hitch up with Anglicans and others.

HOWEVER, TODAY IN DEUTSCHLAND, MANY NEWCOMERS ARE OF THE BLUNT OPINION THAT THEY CAN ALREADY SPEAK ONE WESTERN LANGUAGE, WHICH HAPPENS TO BE ACCEPTED AROUND MUCH OF THE WORLD, SO WHY THE NEED TO LEARN GERMAN?!

I have had to go to meetings to translate (from French or English) regarding issues with their mobile phone contracts, or explain a fine resulting from their riding public transport without a ticket. With eleven nationalities represented – Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya, Cameroon, Iran, Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Albania and even India – you can rest assured, there is never a dull day in the classroom.

As a *freier Geist* (free spirit) who has been fortunate to travel much of the world and pick up languages here and there, I have to realise that these migrants are here for very different reasons.

FREIHEIT (LIBERTY) IS STILL A NEW CONCEPT AND EXPERIENCE FOR MANY. BUT AS I SPENT ONE LESSON DISCUSSING, THEY HAVE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN EUROPE, BUT ALSO DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, THE FIRST BEING TO REGULARLY ATTEND CLASS AND NOT JUST THAT, BUT TO ACTUALLY LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BENT OVER BACKWARDS TO WELCOME THEM IN.

As a teacher on the frontline, I am one of the few folk trying to guide and cajole these folk into thinking differently, to begin considering the expectations of local folk, of the people who go to work every day and pay taxes for their free lessons, accommodation, travel and healthcare.

'Integrated' has come to mean learning and accepting the German language, legal system, moral values as well as other cultural mores, particularly respect for women and gender equality. The shock of the 2015 New Year's Eve attacks where hundreds of women in cities like Cologne, Hamburg and Stuttgart were allegedly harassed and/or robbed by around 2000 foreign-born men was heightened by the inability of local police to help the victims or act against the perpetrators and the fact that it took days for details of the incidents to become public.

There was an overriding desire by authorities to prevent distrust of asylum seekers spreading as a result. Only 120 suspects have subsequently had any action taken against them at all, according to news reports from 10 July 2016.

The 71 unnamed souls who suffocated in the truck brought into Austria and the face of the three-year-old Syrian boy washed up on a Turkish beach remain symbols of suffering innocents.

The stone-hurling angry young men along reinforced EU borders reveal that other side of humanity when frustration and a sense of injustice feed in to generate violence in yet another situation of 'us-and-them'.

Such action does little to win new friends among European populations who are fearful of such large numbers of disenchanting youths who are not merely wanting, but demanding, entry and other rights from Europe as though they were EU citizens and descendants of those who over the centuries fought for the freedoms that Europe offers today.

THE DEVELOPING FEAR IS THAT IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE NEWCOMERS WILL SEEK TO CHERRY-PICK FROM AMONG EUROPEAN FREEDOMS, RIGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY AS THEY SEEK TO IMPOSE NON-EUROPEAN VALUES AND BELIEFS ON THE REST OF EUROPE'S PEOPLE.

The Ottoman Empire did enough of that across the Balkans when they had the chance, after all.

For who helped Europeans out during times of hardship like the black plague? A pertinent question with respect to the history of Vienna. The 1670s saw the city ravaged by the disease to the extent that about one third of the population succumbed. Far from sending help, the Turks seized the opportunity to attack the fatigued survivors in yet another attempt to take the city and all it meant to non-Muslim Europe. Europeans have, after all, gone through hell and more to defend their homelands and their peoples, and to bring peace and prosperity to this continent.

WHY DO SO MANY HIGH-HANDED POLITICIANS AND IMPERIOUS TECHNOCRATS SEE NO POINT IN CONSULTING THEIR ELECTORATES BEFORE EMBARKING ON POLICIES WHICH WILL NOT ONLY AFFECT TODAY'S PEOPLE, BUT ALSO GENERATIONS TO COME?

'Nobody asked us!' is a cry one hears constantly – about the EU, the Euro, the refugees... Sovereignty, those same politicians like to proclaim, lies with the people. Yet, in reality, they seem to have little respect for it.

There is also far too much wishful thinking and self-deluding by the dilettantes among Germany's politicians and business community. The fact that many of the newcomers are functionally illiterate features little in their rubric-based assessments of how easily the refugees will fill the gaps in Germany's economy. They seem blind to the possibility that the newcomers may end up alleviating no more than a small fraction of the country's shortage of qualified manpower.

The fact that Europeans might be further undermining political and economic development of the countries of origin of these young people is also selfishly ignored by these 'welcoming' elements of German society.

And what of those angered by 'the system' which has no job, no place for them, even after struggling through school and training programs – whether native or newcomer?

THE PROBLEM IS THAT SUDDEN INCREASES IN POPULATIONS DUE TO INTAKES OF PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE QUICKLY ASSIMILATED AND FEEL ISOLATED, EVENTUALLY FORMING GHETTOS AWAY FROM LOCAL SOCIETY, INEVITABLY BECOME AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BURDEN FOR THEIR HOSTS.

No-go zones for police would seem to be the stuff of fantasy and yet it is a very true reality in Belgium, Sweden and Germany. Such places become hotbeds of dissent and radicalisation. Forgotten are the niceties of Europeans who once welcomed and helped these people. Indeed they rise up in anger against these very neighbours.

AND SO MORE EUROPEANS ASK, WHAT GOOD DOES MULTICULTURALISM BRING US?

940,000 of Deutschland's elderly work as 'mini-jobbers' to supplement their meagre pensions. Around 10% of locals lack functional literacy and can't perform basic arithmetic. *Gastarbeiter* (migrant workers) from the 1960s and their families continue to live in ghettos or parallel *Gesellschaften* (societies). Yet, none of that supposedly concerns the inflow of new folk, Chancellor Merkel keeps reassuring us (or perhaps herself).

Every level of government has had to own up to deficiencies in how they are trying and being made to cope. Why, after all, should school buildings for German children and homes for the elderly be turned over for renovation as accommodation for refugees?

WHY HADN'T THE GOVERNMENT WITH ITS MASS OF ELITE BUREAUCRATS AND THINK-TANKERS THOUGHT ALL THIS THROUGH BEFORE ACCEPTING THE FIRST THOUSAND REFUGEES IN 2015 WHEN THEY NOW HAVE TO RESORT TO SUCH MAKESHIFT REMEDIES AT MANY LOCAL PEOPLE'S EXPENSE?

Most of my colleagues agree that with fewer arrivals, smaller numbers and a more coordinated process, there is a real chance to help the refugees as well as enrich European society.

BUT WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN EUROPE TODAY SHOWS EXACTLY HOW ACCEPTING SUCH BARELY MANAGEABLE NUMBERS YIELDS A PLETHORA OF UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS.

Desperation, if allowed to fester, breeds some of humanity's worst features. Extending a hand of charity leads to further expectations of continued hand-outs.

And then there are tensions which permeate a classroom where ideally all are equal and encouraged to learn and develop. A picture of these folk having left everything with nothing in the hope of something better fades with the daily reality I and others witness, where gratitude seems unknown.

OLD WOUNDS RE-OPENED

IN THE TRUE GERMAN SPIRIT OF 'EUROPE', I RECENTLY SUBMITTED AN APPLICATION FOR EU FUNDING TO PROMOTE EDUCATION AT BOTH ENDS OF THE DIVERGING SPECTRUM: TO HELP MORE NEWCOMERS TO BECOME BETTER INTEGRATED AND LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO RADICALISING ELEMENTS, WHILE ALSO REACHING OUT TO THE GROWING NUMBERS OF DISENFRANCHISED NATIVE YOUTH WHO ARE IRRITATED BY THE POST-HIPPIE STATUS QUO WHERE EVERYTHING MULTICULTURAL IS GOOD AND EVERYTHING GOOD IS HANDED TO NON-GERMANS AT THE EXPENSE OF 'REAL' GERMANS.

And it is not just the youth who are thinking that. They hear it from their parents and grandparents who wonder what is happening with this sudden intake and the government's futile attempt to cope with one million-plus foreigners.

Remember that some German families have, in the space of a hundred years, been through the Kaiser's autocracy, the ill-fated Weimar Republic with its hyperinflation and black market economy, the Nazi dictatorship with all its horrors before being thrown out of their homelands and shoved in with other German refugees in the Berlin area, only to be hounded by further dictatorship under Soviet-imposed communism.



Rather than being able to finally enjoy the glories of freedom and democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many then found themselves submitting to everything forced on them by West Germans after 1989, including permanent redundancy, thanks to the West's unforgiving system. And now this! Why do all these foreigners get to fare so much better? Why is there forgiveness all over for them?

Many folk have recounted the shocking way in which they were treated following the 1990 takeover of the old Communist East. Solidarity featured little in West German minds. Many Easterners were simply done away with – thrown onto an ever-mounting scrap pile of once-valued workers. Others had to justify why they should be kept on or reassigned, while retraining to Western standards in order to get up to scratch.

NOW THE TALK IS ABOUT MAKING GERMANY'S SYSTEM 'FLEXIBLER' TO ACCEPT WHATEVER QUALIFICATIONS THE REFUGEES CAN OFFER. NO WONDER FORMER GDR CITIZENS REMEMBER THE GOOD OLD DAYS. AND NOW?

They see people granted free money, medical help and legal representation after turning up without any papers. 'What reward is this?', they ask, after working under duress for a lifetime. Maybe they weren't the freest people, but they had work – something that is very important to Germans – and identity; in other words, security.



There were plenty of German children left orphaned, barefoot and hungry in 1918 and even more had suffered a similar fate by the time one tyranny replaced another in 1945.

West Berliners still express their thanks for the Allies' governments and pilots who enabled the 1948-49 airlift which kept the island-city alive despite Stalin's efforts to choke the population.

SADLY STALINISM LIVED ON TO BUILD AN UGLY WALL WHICH COST MORE LIVES AND LIBERTY. YET MANY OF TODAY'S NEWCOMERS CLAIM EUROPEANS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY'VE BEEN THROUGH.

I try to counter this attitude by teaching about the long struggle for freedom in Europe: the many horrific wars and rebellions put down time and again.

One piece of vocabulary I provide is *Trümmerfrauen*: the women who filled the ranks of workers across post-war Germany set to do such back-breaking work as clearing roads and buildings of the mass of rubble left by bombing raids and artillery bombardments. Most of Germany's men were dead or interred, so the work was left to the women, who got on with it.

Positioned in the heart of Europe, Germany has been home to many nationalities throughout its history. As with France's Huguenots, when Roman Catholics in Bohemia threatened Hussites and other non-conformists for refusing to convert, it was Germany where many

found refuge. Rixdorf in Berlin still bears signs of their time there.

I also make a point of having students make a list of prominent Jewish Germans, many of whom have bettered humanity with their contributions of work. The idea is that they realise Europe has a rich and diverse history, where making a contribution matters.

Football can act as a unifying force, given how young men from Syria, Iran and Afghanistan tell me about taking part in regular games in their 'free time'. It is a pity they don't view language the same way. Broken English would seem to suffice and cutting short lessons to head off to football training is the norm rather than the exception.

At least that is better than their taking part in another violent anti-Israel protest. One Palestinian youth proudly told me about one such event, and I spent the rest of the lesson extracting an understanding from him and others that whatever political or military situation exists back home, those problems cannot be allowed to foment new problems here in Europe.

Nor should he or anyone blanket another individual with a general hatred, just because he or she might be Jewish or of whatever other religion or ethnicity.



WHY ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

UNDERSTANDABLY, DEUTSCHLAND'S *WILLKOMMENSKULTUR* HAS WITHERED AND LARGELY DRIED UP. A LOOK THROUGH THE INTERNET REVEALS WHAT MANY FEAR MIGHT HAPPEN IF MORE POLITICIANS DON'T WAKE UP.

The officially propagated show of Potemkin-style communities managing to cope with their dictated share of displaced folk seeking peace while willing to learn and work with anyone and everyone in Europe – *i.e.* to integrate and contribute – is typical of the picture the political class seeks to promote: a picture that is desperately needed to justify their policy of acceptance, even of the thousands who deliberately destroyed their identity papers in order to better their chances in Europe.

Growing segments of local society are rising up: some quietly, fearful of being labelled racist; others feel compelled to act with a perceived need to take back what Germany's misguided technocrats have capitulated, and against the people allowed in and given the good life only to throw it back in the faces of hard-working, tax-paying Germans who fund their new paradise.



OTHER FOLK CLAIM TO KNOW BETTER AND SPEAK ABOUT BEING ON THE 'RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY'. PERSPECTIVE, HOWEVER, COMES FROM WHERE ONE STANDS.

The *Constitutio Antoniniana* is a reminder of edicts dealt out by dictators who require no consultation (other than with their own pious wisdom) and which result in eventual disaster. Emperors rashly granting outsiders full citizenship rights merely in the hope that virtues of responsibility will trickle down into their barbarian minds in 'good time' either want to be applauded for their memorable munificence or are plain mad. For what if 'good time' fails to pass before some of those barbarians within begin sacking Rome?

Oddly, Germany's brand of politician-intellectuals appears given to dwelling on the superficial. Ever chasing race by colour, German cameramen are told to hone in on members of an audience who are obviously from an African or Asian background.

I listened to one Berliner explain how he has grown to resent being regularly asked where he is from, all because of his African father and inheritance of different hair and skin. Worse is it when the enquirer responds with an expression of surprise, even disappointment, on hearing that he comes from Berlin. Books and their covers!

Believing only positive things can come of accepting even more immigrants, the fellow said that finally, when twenty million more 'foreigners' are let in, the resulting wave will help to break down these old, outdated notions and related trappings of *the* German mentality and *the* German culture.

Suddenly the same man is not what he a few seconds earlier purported to be: German. Talk about wanting to pick and choose – and undo the rest!

I asked an African recently in Berlin as to his background. 'Do you know how often I get asked that? Do you know what it's like?' he started. 'I can guess,' I replied. 'Have you lived as a tall white guy in China or Japan?' Sometimes it is all about changing someone's way of thinking, letting them stand in your shoes, or you trying on theirs, for a change.

Individual interpretations are what impact on our daily reality. Doing the right thing remains a shared universal virtue. But for and with whom?

Priorities can take their toll. Many European women no longer feel safe walking the streets at night.

AND IT IS PRECISELY THE STREETS WHERE MANY FEAR THERE WILL BE A RETURN TO THE CONFLICT AND CHAOS BETWEEN POLITICAL EXTREMES WHICH SYMBOLIZED THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC'S PLIGHT TO SURVIVE.

WE OWE IT TO THEM TOO

ONE REASON I CAME TO GERMANY WAS TO UNDERSTAND MORE OF THE COUNTRY'S LENGTH OF HISTORY BEYOND THE INFAMOUS NAZI PERIOD.

Now I realise how extremes come to dominate a politically unstable land. The Kapp Putsch of 1920 demonstrated the Weimar Republic's problems from the beginning. Little was heard from moderates in contrast to the shouting and stomping by radicals at both ends of the political spectrum. You can read all the history books and statistics you want, but it is difficult to understand a time you never lived in.

Today, however, I am a witness to how people are feeling pulled one way or the other as time spreads out long enough, demarcated by events which help define a populace's general response to what is going on.

What is going on? Statistics fall short of presenting the real picture and a deficit of answers encourages, rather than dampens, fears. Despite all the talk of German scientific method and efficiency, nobody can say where the tipping point is with respect to a mass of people who belong to a minority of nationalities with very foreign belief systems.

How many of these people can settle and fit into domestic society over what spread of time before social problems like long-term unemployment and reliance

on welfare lead to their becoming prime recruits for terrorism? What load can local society take before more than the usual minority of extremists grows to incorporate more of mainstream folk disenchanted with what is happening on the ground in their local areas?

A few people speak of possible turmoil inside Germany turning into wider unrest. Even civil war. Exaggerations, I originally thought. But as time passes, there is more of this talk around.

Especially after the heart of Europe came under attack early on the 22nd of March. Then the list of words featuring disenchantment, marginalisation, disenfranchisement, frustration, racism and unemployment grew to include straight-out anger and hate.

The same day saw an announcement that an emergency meeting would be held 48 hours later. And an admission that Europe – the authorities, those with responsibility and means – had ignored radicalisation for too long. Always preoccupied with more pressing issues. More pressing than the boatloads of migrant lives landing on Lampedusa or adrift elsewhere which passed with little more than a turn of heads or shake of shoulders by Brussels' big wigs.

It is remarkable how an emergency summit can be summoned so swiftly when that same Brussels itself becomes Ground Zero. When bombs detonate and chaos explodes only miles from where the big chiefs habitually meet for a pow-wow, suddenly matters of European security *matter*.

But how can it be that super-bloc Europe, brimming with think-tanks, resources and rumours of efficiency, cannot multi-task?

Brussels on one hand preaches richness of diversity, coupled with magical rhetoric about ‘solidarity’, while breaching the very essence of Europe – diversity of opinion and culture – by condemning those who suddenly don’t toe the line. *Whose* line, after all?

GERMANS HAVE STOMACHED IMPOSITIONS LIKE THE LOSS OF THEIR GRAND CURRENCY, THE DEUTSCHE MARK, FOR THE SAKE OF THE MASTER EUROPEAN PROJECT.

But that same Europe has done little to reach out with equal solidarity to shoulder the good burden of suffering the refugees called to Europe’s heart and suckle.

Deutschland – for all her grandeur and economic prowess – stands suddenly alone, like a time in 1945. Stranded like a refugee in the middle of Europe. And Chancellor Merkel, after all her splendour of diplomatic politicking through earlier challenges, stands increasingly isolated in her own heartland.

Her Coalition partner in Bavaria is determined to stand against Berlin’s lack of a federal refugee policy. Doing so has brought him support right across Germany, rather than mere slights of criticism for being a traitor to the Coalition’s cause. Attempts at new policy measures have been too piecemeal and too slow coming, all despite the employment of the term *Beschleunigung* (acceleration) for the government’s ‘new’ approach.

I can’t remember a time when so many experts could talk about such a pressing issue for so long while achieving so little. TV and radio programs are full of useless commentary every hour of the day. You can’t go anywhere without the topic of refugees popping up in, if not dominating, conversation.

When I recently took a class of obvious refugees – Africans, Arabs and Persians – for a tour around town, I was amazed at the reactions we got. Some German folk were quite aggressive in how they barged past us mumbling disapproval. Others passed careful perusal over us before landing a congratulatory smile on me. Some Germans think I’m a kind of mini-hero for getting on with what I get paid to do. I guess they wished they could expect the same of their sovereignty-bemoaning politicians.

Back in Berlin, realising after many end-of-school photos and hugs how I will miss more than a few of my wards of the past year, I consider again the Holocaust Memorial. How evil people then and now can get away with pulling innocent people about like livestock over unbearable distances, whether in packed Nazi railroad carriages or sealed containers today.

I don’t think any like-minded survivor of the *Shoah* would hold it against me for thinking of the 71 victims found asphyxiated in the overcrowded truck which became their tomb in a part of Europe’s Promised Land. As decent members of Humanity, we owe it to them to remember what they had to go through, although that should never have been the case. ■

