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BERGEN STUDIES IN SOCIOLOGY

"Liquid integration" of vulnerable migrant youth. Some general considerations

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Abstract

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This research paper aims to outline the concept of "liquid integration" within the context of vulnerable young migrants' experience. We argue against an understanding of integration as a "start-to-end" process in which the young migrant starts as "not integrated" and after a while somehow reaches a socially ascribed miraculous status of being "fully integrated" within a new structural and social context. Based on the idea of "liquid integration" we rather propose a conceptualisation of integration as a continuous, open and contingent process of personal and institutional adjustment and counter adjustment over time. We argue that putting this processual argument at the fore in theoretical and empirical analysis helps us to better understand the multilevel dynamics, complexities and temporality of contingent integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

Keywords: integration, liquid, young migrants, vulnerability

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1   Introduction

by Jan Skrobanek

The aim of this paper is to outline the concept of 'liquid integration' in the context of increasing international mobilities, migration, social change, and the resulting diversity, with specific reference to young migrants in vulnerable conditions[1]. Many existing concepts of integration still retain the central premise that after a certain time different actors (individuals, groups or even nations) somehow resemble one another and become, over the course of the exchange, integrated in a common, more or less stable social body (van Reekum, Duyvendak, & Bertossi, 2012; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).[2] Against this kind of 'problem-of-order tradition' (Abbot 2016: 201), we argue that integration should instead be conceptualized as a never-ending, contingent process of change–stability dynamics, marked by an emergent process of individual as well as institutional adjustment over time (Jobst & Skrobanek, 2020; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019).

Our starting point is the idea of 'liquid' modernity, times and society (Bauman, 2000, 2002; Bauman, 2007). With the focus on 'liquid', the perspective proposed here critically reflects on the interwovenness of the 'young migrants in vulnerable conditions' manoeuvring, their practices and structural dynamics affecting them, in the context of complex mobilities and migrations in a temporal (cross-sectional as well as longitudinal) perspective. It also examines simultaneously occurring contingent institutional adjustments and counter-adjustments (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 307). It is argued that the analysis of this intersection of individual and structural dynamics at a specific moment in time is crucial for adequately understanding the dynamics of 'liquid integration' in the context of local, regional, national and global change (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 307).

We embark on our discussion with a reflection about the challenges and pitfalls of the term 'integration', especially when it comes to issues such as process, contingency, and emergence. To remind us that these issues are nothing new, our next step is to revitalize some key observations and thoughts from the founders of migration research. Having identified that process, change, and contingency were already key issues of the classics of integration research, we go on to discuss the contemporary dynamics confronting young people in general, and young migrants in vulnerable conditions in particular, during their transition from youth to adulthood in Europe. Based on the discussion so far, section 6 outlines the concept of 'liquid integration' (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019)[3] in the context of emerging uncertainty, change and fluidity (Bauman, 2007: 1), 'liquid migration' (Engbersen, 2012), 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007) and processes of 'differentiated embedding' (Ryan, 2018), while combining the integration concept with a broader processual (Abbott, 2016) as well socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Our final step is to provide a heuristic model

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[1] We here take a broad perspective regarding the term 'young migrants in vulnerable conditions' understanding that the category 'young migrants' comprises 'asylum seekers', 'refugees', 'unaccompanied young migrants/minors', 'young migrants with third country nationality', 'young undocumented', 'young stateless' or 'young born in a third country' all from the age 15-29 (Consortium, 2019: 5) who are or have experienced 'vulnerable conditions' like 'being underaged in the migration process', 'seeking asylum', 'being a refugee', 'being undocumented', 'having no parents', 'having no nationality', 'not having legal status', 'low physical or psychological wellbeing', 'exposed to negative life events', 'adverse childhood experiences', 'illness', 'injuries', 'disabilities', 'social, cultural and economic exclusion' etc. (Consortium, 2019: 8).

[2] Often called 'group', 'nation', 'society' or 'global network' (van Reekum et al., 2012; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).

[3] The core idea of the paper – namely 'liquid integration' – and parts of its argument are based on a conference paper (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018) presented at several conferences in 2018, which was published in a revised version at the beginning of 2019 (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019). However, the theoretical background of the LI idea, the conceptual adjustment of this idea, and the conclusions which have been derived from the discussion reach far beyond the conference paper's previous conception.

for understanding 'liquid integration' in the context of youth migration, change and diversity, then discuss some key methodological concerns.

We are fully aware that in the face of more than a century of confusion, it would be overly ambitious to resolve all the conceptual and normative issues of the integration concept, its pitfalls as well as analytical and empirical challenges, with this research paper. However, in proposing the summary term 'liquid integration' we hope to foster a critical awareness of the multifaceted, fundamentally processual nature of integration dynamics, thereby promoting a radically situational approach to integration – a lens revealing micro-processes on the individual and institutional level, as well as the ecological interlinkage between these levels.

The argument of LI suggested here, and the theoretical and methodological conclusions drawn, must be understood as 'radically processual'. Hence, LI – as it is presented here – should not be understood as an exclusive and strict. Instead, we see the processual LI concept as a starting point, inviting for critical reflection and discussion.

2   How to read this research paper

by Jan Skrobanek

This research paper was originally prepared as MIMY[4] internal working paper.[5] The internal working paper was then sent – based on common agreement among the MIMY consortium – to two internal 'critical friends', for a critical review as well as critical feedback on the working paper draft.[6] The final version of the working paper was sent to all partners for information purposes before it was submitted for approval on August 2020[7] to the EU. The full approval was given in July 2021.

The here proposed LI approach is characterized by a radical theoretical and methodological openness, has been intended as a theoretical as well as methodological starting point for framing the theoretical reflection and research strategy regarding MIMY's multifaceted subject of investigation – namely the empowerment of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and related processes of liquid integration (LI)[8]. Therefore, the argument of LI suggested here, and the theoretical and methodological conclusions drawn, must be understood as 'radically processual'. Thus, we see the processual LI concept as a starting point, inviting to adapt the concept in theory and research and to further develop LI – informed by research results. Thus, LI is not static but open for development, change and adjustment. It invites to become subject to ongoing reflections, discussions and, if required, adjustments and revisions.

The core idea of the paper – namely 'liquid integration' – and parts of its argument are based on a conference paper (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018) presented at several conferences in 2018, which was published in a revised version at the beginning of 2019 (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019). However, the theoretical background of the LI idea, the conceptual adjustment of this idea throughout the paper,

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[4] The acronym MIMY stays for EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions. MIMY has received Funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 870700. (https://www.mimy-project.eu/).

[5] For this report slightly changes were done to the original internal working paper. These changes especially comprise the use of the acronym MIMY throughout the text and repeating references to the MIMY project. However, nothing was changed regarding the content of the argument.

[6] I am grateful to Professor Birte Nienaber for reading the draft of the paper and making valuable comments and suggestions on it.

[7] This has been the actual publication date of the internal working paper.

[8] Throughout the paper the abbreviation 'LI' will be used for 'liquid integration'.

and the conclusions which have been derived from the discussion reach beyond the conference paper's previous conception.

3   What is the problem with the term 'integration'?

by Jan Skrobanek

Over the course of debate, integration has retained its image of being floppy, slippery, chaotic and contested in the normative and theoretical discourse (Ager & Strang, 2008; Grillo, 2011; Jenkins, 2011: 256; Rytter, 2018; Wieviorka, 2014). To put it critically, the concept of 'integration' has not only become a so-called 'red herring in social theory',[9] by producing more misunderstanding than clarity, but has also created difficulties regarding its empirical application. Thus 'integration' has caused increasing strain, and has inspired desires for and illusions of stability, which distract from dynamic and open understandings of social processes.

3.1   Sources of confusion

The sources of confusion are manifold. A first central source of confusion is 'the many normative understandings in the sense of accentuated wishes of the world as to how it should stay or develop in the future' (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 309); such understandings are mainly found in the public, political or practical policy field (Jenkins, 2011: 256). It is the 'emic' use (Rytter, 2018: 1) of the concept of integration which has fostered its 'exceptionally unclearness' (Rytter, 2018: 3).[10]

A second source of confusion is that there are a range of 'conflating efforts', merging and not analytically separating individual, social and system integration contexts (Lockwood, 1964: p. 244; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010: 247), which make it theoretically and empirically difficult to explore the dynamic interconnections between individual, social and system integration.[11]

A third source is the absence of a clear shared definition of integration and its components, the minimal definitional accuracy in analytically differentiating integration from other concepts such as 'acculturation', 'accommodation' or even 'assimilation', and hence the large grey area of concept overlap (Ager & Strang, 2008; R. D. Alba & Nee, 2003; Anthias, 2013; Brubaker, 2004; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). As Jenkins puts it, the 'semantic stretch and the concept's role in debate in the public sphere – in which people use the same word but frequently talk past each other, about very different things – raise significant doubts, at least, about whether 'integration' can ever be a useful analytical concept' (Jenkins, 2011: 256).

A fourth source of strain is the many existing intra- and interdisciplinary academic disputes regarding the theoretical and methodological conceptualization of integration. Although 'integration' and 'integration dynamics' have been researched extensively over the last few decades (Ager & Strang, 2008; Boski, 2008; Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016; Loch, 2014; Olwig & Pærregaard, 2011; Rytter, 2018; Wieviorka, 2014), the existence of many different theoretical ideas has made it difficult to reach consensus on the conceptual and methodological front (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 316). This has been exacerbated by the scarcity of systematic empirical investigations disaggregating the concept of

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[9] The term 'red herring' was used by Loyal and Barnes in their criticism of the concept of 'agency' (Loyal and Barnes 2001: 524)

[10] According to Rytter (2018: 15), 'emic refers to descriptions and understandings formulated by people themselves, while etic is the description provided by the analytical observer or social scientist'.

[11] In our case to scrutinize and to understand how structures affect migrants (adults in general and young migrants in particular), but also how practices of migrants also affect and thus transform structures.

integration and scrutinizing how different dimensions or layers of the theoretical concept are in fact interwoven with contextual aspects or circumstances in concrete practical situations.

Fifthly, the term integration is difficult to understand since it adopts – and here it shares its destiny with other concepts such as acculturation, assimilation or accommodation – a 'one size fits all' approach (Schwartz et al., 2010: 240) to different groups, in our case for example young asylum seekers, refugees, unaccompanied minors, young stateless persons or generally young migrants with third country nationality in vulnerable conditions.

Sixthly, the 'one size fits all' approach of integration has been – and it has this in common with the concepts mentioned above – insensitive towards varying contexts (Schwartz et al., 2010: 247). It can be argued that "beyond ethnicity and cultural similarity, other factors may also determine which subgroups of migrants may face different types (and degrees) of acculturative challenges" (Schwartz et al., 2010: 240).

And finally, seen from a broader perspective, one cannot avoid the impression that the understanding of integration as 'non-teleological', 'fluid', 'processual', 'open' and 'contingent' – an understanding that involves both simultaneous and longitudinal transformative dynamics at an individual as well as structural level, and envisages different social units marching towards a new processual, constantly changing social, cultural or economic state – is still in its infancy. It even seems that ideas about multi-dynamic 'open-ended processes of becoming similar or different' – already addressed in the many classic texts following the absorption and assimilation approaches – have almost been forgotten and buried, in light of 'mass migration' and 'migration crisis' framings (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 309).

3.2 Three basic meanings of integration

Against this background, one could generally say that the concept of 'integration' appears more as a 'bumpy' than a 'straight line theory' (Gans, 1992: 44; Jenkins, 2011: 256).[12] Moreover, the concept shares the same destiny as 'assimilation', since its usage varies between a 'transitive', an 'intransitive' (Brubaker, 2004: 119) and an 'open' understanding, apart from the misunderstandings within the debate over the concept of integration. Adapting Brubaker's (2004: 118 ff.) reflections about 'assimilation' to our discussion and extending them, we could say that there are in fact three ideal types of meanings of integration existing in the debate.[13] The first type thinks of integration as 'complete absorption' (hence becoming identical) (Brubaker, 2004: 119), or in other words 'ethno-cultural accommodation in the current climate … achieving full embeddedness and social mobility within it' (Anthias, 2013: 329), while the second type of understanding and use is more concerned with 'processes of becoming similar' (but not identical) (Brubaker 2004: 119). Although these two understandings imply different degrees of 'becoming similar', they nevertheless share a common ground: their 'teleological fixation' and 'stability fixation', i.e. the idea that a migrant (always) becomes integrated into a somehow stable social unit. The third type of understanding, however, goes beyond fixations on teleology or stability, instead assuming that integration is a fairly open, contingent process. This third type is therefore far-removed from and resistant to ideas of social engineering. However, concepts of this type, which have at their core constant ongoing change over the course of time (the temporal), contingency, an interwoven dynamic flux of change and/or stability on the individual and structural level in a temporal perspective, and dynamic forms of adjustment within and between the

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[12] Gans (1992: 44) referred to the concept of 'ethnicity' and not to the concept of 'integration' when he wrote: '…I would replace what has often been described as […] straight line theory with bumpy line theory, the bumps representing various kinds of adaptation to changing circumstances – and with the line having no predictable end.'

[13] An almost similar perspective is taken by Alba and Nee (2003) when they discuss 'old' and 'new' conceptions of assimilation (R. D. Alba & Nee, 2003: 2-11).

different levels in the context of integration are still rare (Jobst & Skrobanek, 2020: 29; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019).

Bearing in mind the many pitfalls of the concept of integration, we could join the 'frontline assembly' of integration antagonists 'writing against *integration*' (Rytter, 2018: 15), and relegate 'integration' to the dustbin of history. However, tempting this step would be, though, it would not relieve us of the social facts behind the contested meaning(s) as discussed below. It is exactly this point which constitutes the foundation for our thoughts and ideas regarding 'liquid integration' – putting radical processualism into the centre of our argument, and circumventing 'emic' in favour of 'etic' understandings of integration (Rytter, 2018: 1).

4 Change vs. stability: Old concepts cast their shadows

by Jan Skrobanek & Solvejg Jobst

It has often been overlooked that 'old' perspectives on the problem of integration already struggled to theorize and empirically model the manifold dynamics of preserving or transforming the old while thinking change (Park & Burgess, 1921: 663 ff.) or discontinuity, unity or disunity. Integration theories (and policies) still struggle with the issue of how different people can manage to cooperate and actively participate in different social contexts over the course of time, how risks and malfunctioning social interrelations (Merton, 1938) can be bypassed,[14] and how the dialectics of stability and change on the individual and structural level can be modelled theoretically as well as methodologically, and approached empirically.

Although most classical approaches were marked by the dominant frame of reference of 'teleological fixation' and 'social engineering' when it came to the stability of existing social systems, they nevertheless recognized the fact of process and change. Concepts such as 'assimilation' (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928: 890; Park & Burgess, 1921: 769-770) and 'amalgamation'[15] (Park, 1928: 890; Park & Burgess, 1921: 769-770), 'accommodation' (Park & Burgess, 1921: 663-665), and their sub-concepts 'monistic assimilation' or 'pluralistic assimilation' (Taft, 1953:45, 46), 'acculturation' (Boas, 1896: 10; Park, 1928: 890; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936: 149), 'absorption' and 'adaptation' (Eisenstadt, 1952: 225ff.), to name just a few of them, already tried to cope with issues of change, instability and openness in the context of migration, and with the associated 'fusion process' of people with different 'cultural', 'social' and 'economic' backgrounds.

The founders of assimilation-accommodation theory – here especially Park and Burgess (1921), Park (1928), Redfield (1936) and later Taft (1953) – took a radical stand on the fusion process in the context of migration. Park (1928: 882) wrote: 'Among the most important of these influences have been – according to what I have called the catastrophic theory of progress – migration and the incidental collisions, conflicts, and fusions of people and cultures which they have occasioned.' Park and Burgess named this fusion process 'assimilation', and defined it as 'a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experiences and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life' (Park & Burgess, 1921: 363). It was Redfield, fifteen years later, who explicitly introduced the term 'change' to the immigration-assimilation debate. In his view, 'Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups' (Redfield et al., 1936:149). Later, Taft called this process 'pluralistic assimilation', understood as the

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[14] Or, if they have already developed, can be reduced.

[15] This '[…] is a biological process, the fusion of races by interbreeding and intermarriage' (Park & Burgess, 1921: 737), while 'Assimilation, on the other hand, is limited to the fusion of cultures' (Park & Burgess, 1921: 737).

outcome of a 'two-way interaction … with resulting group norms emerging from the interaction of the original norms of the members of both groups' (Taft, 1953: 51).

It is worth noting that although assimilation became understood as an open two-way process based on mutual exchange and ideally recognition, it was recognized from the very beginning that in fact the two-way process could oscillate between a radical openness – a two-way fusion process – at one end of the continuum and radical closeness – a one-way fusion process – at the other end. Especially when economic or political power games come into play, the process of 'fusion' of different cultures becomes a one-way assimilation: 'The conquering peoples impose their culture and their standards upon the conquered, and there follows a period of cultural endosmosis' (Park, 1928: 891).[16] Based on their studies, the founders of migration research already saw evidence that enforced hegemonic patterns of socialization eroded the ideal of mutual interpenetration and fusion, that there were 'patterns of change-resistance', 'counter reactions' and 'unforeseen disturbances' as well as progress and setbacks in the temporal process of conflation.[17] Glazer and Moynihan (1963) conclude, based on their research in New York, that there was no melting pot, no homogenization in the sense that people and/or groups were transformed into something new and were no longer identifiable as culturally different (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963: 13).

It is exactly this subsequent dynamic of interrelationship at the individual as well as structural level which fosters individual, social, and structural change and development. These dynamics have been at the core of most controversies over the anticipated or imagined loss of stability in the context of migration, on the grounds of immigrants' failure to adopt the dominant beliefs, values and practices of the receiving country. However, the dominant discourse too often hides the issue of observable dynamics of change and stability. As pointed out before the founding fathers of migration research – e.g. Boas, 1896 Eisenstadt, 1952; Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928; Park & Burgess, 1921 or Redfield et al., 1936, just to name a few – recognized and underlined multidirectional and multifaceted fusion processes in the context of migration-integration-dynamics. However, in the political field[18] the desire for a 'unidimensional process in which retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the receiving culture were cast as opposing ends of a single continuum' (Schwartz et al., 2010: 238) has always been at the forefront of 'integration ideologies' (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997: 373-375). Ignoring the already-existing multiplicity of immigrant practices in a new environment (Gordon, 1964), not recognizing that the private as well the public arena (values, practices etc.) are open and contingent fields of change, and neglecting the reality of constant transformation have been the hallmarks of the discourse of reproduction and stability in the context of migration-integration dynamics (Bourhis et al., 1997: 373). Furthermore, the reproduction and stability frame of reference fails to consider observable or unobserved dynamics, contingencies, and multidimensional manifestations of integration on the individual and structural level (Jobst & Skrobanek, 2014, 2020; Ryan, 2018: 248; Skrobanek, 2015), and turns its back on the social fact of the ongoing fusion of 'different cultures in values, skills, identifications and action references to a new cultural unity' (Esser, 1980: 20).

'Integration' is still thought of as social and system integration into something that is a kind of stable category oriented towards reproduction and stability. However, we argue that this is not an adequate way of conceptualizing integration. Not because it is normative and still preserves the illusion of

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[16] Zangwill stated as early as 1909 that 'The process of American amalgamation is not assimilation or simple surrender to the dominant type, as is popularly supposed, but an all-round give-and-take by which the final type may be enriched or impoverished.' https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23893/23893-h/23893-h.htm

[17] It was Hansen who encapsulated this with his notion of the 'principle of third-generation interest' (Hansen, 1952: 495).

[18] However, this counts also for some contributions in the scientific field. As latest research indicates dominance of system-centric reproduction oriented contributions dominate compared to relativistic or patchwork approaches (Jobst and Skrobanek 2020: 24).

stability against the stormy waters of change. But rather because of the social and system dynamics themselves, which have intensified in recent decades (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills, & Kurz, 2005; Buchholz et al., 2009; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2015; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Hagestad, 1991), and which interweave with contingent integration practices of mobile individuals (Bradby, Liabo, Ingold, & Roberts, 2019; Huijsmans, 2012; Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Ryan, 2018; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2010; Titzmann & Lee, 2018).

5 Contemporary dynamics
by Jan Skrobanek

5.1 Risk, uncertainty and contingency as contemporary 'hallmarks' of integration

5.1.1 General trends

There seems to be a consensus that changes in the context of globalization, environmental change, more frequent cyclical economic shocks, crises and depressions, as well as mass migration and mobility have transformed risks and challenges for social and system integration (Bauman, 1998; Bauman, 2002; Bauman, 2007; Beck, 1992; Blossfeld et al., 2005; Buchholz et al., 2009; Castells, 1997; Castles, Haas, & Miller, 2013; Urry, 2000b).[19] At least four interrelated structural shifts have increased risk, uncertainty and contingency. According to Blossfeld et al. (2005), these shifts consist in the 'internationalization of markets', the 'intensification of competition', the 'accelerated diffusion of knowledge' and the 'rising importance of markets' (Blossfeld et al., 2005: 2). However, we would add the multifaceted dynamics of global mobility and migration (Castles et al., 2013; Faist, 2013; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). These shifts have in a certain manner and different compared to other times accelerated changes and exacerbated instabilities and uncertainties not only on the micro but also on the meso and macro level (Blossfeld et al., 2005: 3; Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2015: 1124; Urry, 2007: 26-31). They call for new theoretical perspectives and concepts on integration as well as new methodological approaches to catch up with 'accelerating social change and temporariness, transnationalism, increasing diversification and challenges of fragmentation and fluidity' (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018: 186).[20]

5.1.2 The impact on young people

A sound body of youth research has illustrated the impacts of these growing complexities, challenges, dynamics and instabilities on the transition from youth to adulthood for young people (Bendit & Miranda, 2015; Buchmann & Solga, 2016; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Heinz, 2009b; Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013; Skrobanek, Ardic, & Pavlova, 2019; Skrobanek, Reißig, & Müller, 2011; Walther, 2006). Transition options and transition practices have not only diversified over recent decades (Bendit & Miranda, 2015; Lorentzen, Bäckman, Ilmakunnas, & Kauppinen, 2018; Sironi, 2018; Walther, 2006). They have also been prolonged, and have become fragmented, fragile and contingent (Roberts, 2012: 485; Skrobanek, 2017; Skrobanek et al., 2019). Higher risks in transitions have significantly increased

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[19] We do not want to be misunderstood here. 'Risk', 'uncertainty' and 'instability' have always been – to a varying degree throughout history – an essential part of social and system integration processes. There have been many times in the past where social and system integration processes were riven with risks, uncertainties and instabilities at the sub- and supra-national level (e.g. economic depressions, diseases, wars, migration etc.). However, the character, shape, impact and perception of risks, uncertainties and instabilities have varied over the course of time. Sometimes, e.g. in the baby boomer or so called 'golden age' period (postwar period after second world war), things were seen as less risky, less uncertain and less instable (although for some groups this might not count as Stuart Hall again and again emphasized) (Roberts, 2009, 2012). And if there was risk, uncertainty or instability perception this was perceived as less challenging, scary and threatening compared to e.g. economic depression or world war times.

[20] For the same argument see e.g. Crul, 2016, Schwartz et al., 2010, Urry, 2000a: 18-20 and Urry, 2007: 17-43.

the risks of keeping young people away from key areas of social integration, such as engagement in apprenticeships or on-the-job training, (further) education, paid work, family formation, civil movements or politics, over long periods (Côté, 2000: 1; Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013: 264-265; Skrobanek, 2017: 2). Apart from these concrete transition risks (Furlong et al. 2011: 361), young people face higher risks of intergenerational declines in job prospects and living standards compared to the the 'baby boomer generation' (Roberts, 2012: 485-486). However, due to the complex, multifaceted and open opportunities (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013), young people today[21] enjoy more options than ever before for education and employment, mobility, as well as lifestyle and partner choice (Hagestad, 1991; Heinz, 2009a, 2009b). 'Freedom of travel, speech, political participation, and participating in a consumer society, with a good range of leisure activity options, have become available for an increasing number of young people. Processes of individualisation – however good or bad they are valued – have made young people more 'capable of reinterpreting, bypassing or innovating life course specific patterns of transitions while breaking-up, transforming or circumventing traditional patterns of transitions of parent culture' (Skrobanek et al., 2019: 3). This has empowered young people 'in the sense that it gives them a semblance of control over their personal biographies' (Miles, 2000: 53). Insecurity and unpredictability on the one hand and available opportunities and life chances on the other are the ingredients of the 'risk-choice-freedom paradox' in a complex, changing world (Skrobanek et al., 2019: 3).

With this, however, it is not meant that structural impact and forces have diminished, that young people's practices are no longer framed by structural forces, inequalities and power relations (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 5). Young people's practices have always been structured, but to varying degrees in history, and young people have always found their idiosyncratic answers and solutions on the individual as well as collective level in concrete historical situations (Behrens & Evans, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Heinz, 2009a). The most interesting empirical question therefore is how life chances and resulting practices of young people general and young migrants in vulnerable conditions in special are today framed by objective and subjective dimensions of life, how strong objective and subjective dimensions interlace and how similar or different these processes are compared to earlier times (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

5.1.3   Key areas where young migrants are under pressure

Hurrelman and Quenzel identify four key areas of participation of young people on their way from youth to adulthood (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013: 263) in the advanced economies of the Northern hemisphere. These areas are 'qualification', 'commitment', 'production and consumption' and 'participation'. Qualification comprises the development of the intellectual and social skills 'necessary to meet performance requirements and societal demands, as well as to attain the educational qualifications necessary to assume the social membership role in the labour force' (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013: 263). Commitment embraces identity development and management and the realization of positive as well as stable social relations (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013: 263). Production and consumption encompass active participation in the apprenticeship and labour market and thus the opportunity to realize economic independence, and to refresh one's own work, skill development and consumption. Participation comprises 'The development of an individual system of values and norms and the competence to participate politically, and so to assume a citizen's social membership role' (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013: 263). This not only covers the skills for active political participation, but also the competencies to use digital arenas reflexively and participate actively in them. Participation in or access to these areas provides the necessary resources and tools young people need to actively realize their personal biographies and control their transition from youth to adulthood (Miles, 2000: 53).

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[21] This argument is of course most valid for young people in the industrialized countries of the Northern hemisphere (Skrobanek et al., 2019: 2). However, this does not count for every young in these countries, especially not for those living in poverty (Dewild, 2003; Skrobanek & Tillmann, 2015).

Bearing this in mind and taking into consideration the shifts described in the preceding section, it becomes clear that young migrants in vulnerable situations face major challenges in their transition from becoming and being a migrant (here the label itself and the objective and subjective dimension of the young migrants life) to leaving the social, institutional or self-defined status of 'migrant'. Hence, if the consequences for young people who have grown up and been socialized in the Northern hemisphere are striking, they are even more challenging for young migrants in vulnerable conditions who have been socialized under different social, cultural, or economic circumstances. The consequences for young migrants are manifold. Over the course of migration-settlement-migration episodes, their previously acquired 'recipe knowledge' – suited to the ecological surroundings of their country of origin – is at high risk of no longer being useful, beneficial or applicable (Erel & Ryan, 2018). The young migrants, especially in vulnerable conditions, have high risks for ending up in asymmetrical exchange situations, for example in a detention camp, relying on the goodwill, institutional defined decrees of freedom and institutional procedures of the border control regimes. Later on, in the destination countries, their modes of acting and routines – acquired in the country of origin and often adapted to idiosyncratic practical contexts during their migration journey – are at high risk of being a bad fit for the new contexts and related expectations in the destination countries. Their cultural and social resources will only be of limited use for increasing their chances of smooth and risk-free transitions from country of origin, to limbo, to destination country integration. Generally, their production functions and therefore their realization of subjective well-being and social recognition will be at risk, often over a long period of time (Ormel, Lindenberg, Steverink, & Verbrugge, 1999). Especially young migrants in vulnerable conditions will be caught out by the increasingly 'fuzzy' nature of the life course (Heinz 2009: 3), intensifying individualized risks and uncertainties regarding their decisions and resulting practices. This will also affect dynamics of re-evaluation or devaluation regarding e.g. recipe knowledge and routine performances (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 56), cultural (Erel, 2010) or social capital (Allen, 2009). So a process that has been conceptualized as a 'pilgrimage' (Frankenberg, 1987: 122) for young people growing up nowadays, 'captur[ing] individuals' wanderings through shifting social matrices, webs of interdependence, and symbolically constructed contexts' (Hagestad, 1991: 41), assumes a multifaceted, dynamized and even more involuntary[22] form for young migrants. Structural, cultural, biographical and autobiographical discontinuities (Hagestad, 1991: 43-44) are the hallmarks of young migrants' experiences during their migration-integration-transition.

5.1.4 Power asymmetries

The adjustment of young people to given conditions implies both the engagement of young people and the engagement of institutions which provide the means for realizing 'qualification', 'commitment', 'production and consumption' and 'participation'. However, the 'two players are unequal in terms of power and resources' (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013; Spencer, 2011: 203). If we focus on young migrants in vulnerable conditions, the 'vertical dimension of social power' (R. Alba & Duyvendak, 2019: 105) becomes even more important for understanding their manoeuvring under given institutional constraints. As 'institutions broadcast mainstream standards and values to all parts of society' (R. Alba & Duyvendak, 2019: 110), and give or deny access, distribute or redistribute resources on the basis of unequal power distribution, they establish the degrees of freedom for young people's practices in general and for young migrants' adjustment practices in particular.

As Coleman made clear, this 'inequality matrix' poses fundamental challenges for the exchange between individuals and corporate actors (Coleman, 1982: 19-25; Skrobanek, 2015: 58), and for the participation of the young in education, the labour and housing markets, social participation and interaction within networks, cultural exchange and development, civic and political participation as well as identity formation (Spencer, 2011: 203). When it comes to capital, young migrants in vulnerable

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[22] The concept of 'pilgrimage' is viewed critically here, since the concept overemphasizes choice and voluntariness in contrast to external forces, restrictions and structural constraints.

conditions are the one with the least resources for manoeuvring successfully under given (new) constraints. The odds for experienced or coming negative life events, injuries and handicaps, are comparatively high among these young people. They have had, have and will have higher risks for encountering social, cultural or economic hardship or exclusion during the migration odyssey (Consortium, 2019: 7). Hence, young people in vulnerable conditions often cannot be counted as part of the 'socio-economic floor to the mainstream' (R. Alba & Duyvendak, 2019: 111). So, for the young migrant in a vulnerable condition the negotiation of interests and survival in the new contexts is dominated by power asymmetry, and depends on the goodwill, acceptance and cooperation of corporate bodies and their corporate agents.

Taking all this into consideration, it can be concluded that especially young migrants in vulnerable conditions are under substantial pressure when it comes to the realization of 'qualification', 'commitment', 'production and consumption' and 'participation' under the new circumstances they must deal with in the context of their migration. This brings great challenges for their physical and mental wellbeing as well as 'social recognition' (Consortium, 2019; Esser, 1999: 92; Nauck, 2008: 122), and is a direct threat to their 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1984: 23).

5.2 'Liquid migration'

A third central dynamic linked to our approach here is the 'liquid migration'. The 'liquid migration' concept was introduced by Engbersen (Engbersen, 2012: 98), with the core idea that classic migration mainly based on '"thick" and stable social institutions' has transformed into a more liquid phenomenon based on 'more flexible, "thin" institutions'. According to this argument, liquid migration is characterized by six properties underlining the new multifaceted dynamics of international mobilities: a) its temporary character, b) the complexities of types of migration, with a focus on labour migration, c) the legal status of migration, d) the multiplicity and multidirectional character of mobility, e) the individualization of movement and f) the 'intentional unpredictability' of mobility/migration episodes (Engbersen, 2012: 99). It is posited that this has led to an increased unpredictability of migration flows (Engbersen, 2012: 100), and has changed the patterns of temporality of moving and staying (Engbersen, 2012: 102).

The idea of 'liquid migration', then, is another touchstone for our reflections on the liquid integration approach proposed here. The multifaceted and oscillating character of contemporary migration patterns, their flux, dynamics and instabilities as well as the diversification of migration patterns, of channels of migration and of ethnic groups on the move (Crul, 2016; Meissner, 2015: 561; Vertovec, 2007), cannot remain without consequences for integration processes. Facing these challenges, the integration process itself is becoming – as already argued – dynamized, diversified, multifaceted and contingent.[23]

5.3 'Super-diversity'

Further important issues for understanding liquid integration are the global interconnectedness and interdependence of regional spaces, the resulting diversity of social, cultural and economic exchanges, and multi-ethnic hybridization, all of which have made migration as well as integration processes even more dynamic, complex and unpredictable (Blossfeld et al., 2005; Urry, 2007; Vertovec, 2007: 1026). Urry (Urry, 2000a) made this clear when he sketched out his ideas regarding 'diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information, and wastes; and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, such diverse mobilities' (Urry, 2000a: 185; 2000b, 2007). Based on his

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[23] We are of course not ignorant regarding latest contributions which reflect on the limitations of this concept (Bygnes & Erdal, 2017; Ryan, 2018). However, as underline before this is not a theoretical dispute on the matter but rather an empirical issue regarding what can be actually found.

analysis, Urry advocated new mobile rules for sociological methods (Urry, 2000a: 18-19) to deal with the emerging 'hybridization'. In this context it was Vertovec (2007) who used the term 'super-diversity' to capture the increasing multi-ethnic complexities in the cosmopolitan areas of Western Europe (Vertovec, 2007: 1026), and to gain a better understanding of contemporary migration-integration dynamics by using a 'multi-dimensional perspective on diversity' (Vertovec, 2007: 1026).

These 'super-diversity' dynamics have direct consequences for the individual as well as for social and structural integration processes, due to their multifaceted layers and the interweaving of levels. Crul summarizes this idea as follows: 'We cannot approach people of the same national or ethnic migrant background homogenously in terms of their values, cultural repertoire, skills, opportunities or identity. This reality demands a new theoretical perspective which sheds more light on the dynamic interplay between ethnicity, generation, age cohorts, education, gender and legal status on the one hand and the majority–minority context of integration in big cities on the other' (Crul, 2016: 58).

5.4 'Differentiated embedding'

by Louise Ryan

The concept of embedding aims to capture migrants' differentiated and multilayered depths of attachment and belonging across different sectors or domains including, for example, employment, civil society, local neighbourhood, social relationships, etc. (Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015).

As a dynamic process, embedding calls attention to the salience of temporality. The historical period, as well as the geographical context of migration, is pertinent to understanding particular immigration regimes and the associated opportunities and obstacles to embedding.

As well as time, it is important to locate embedding in particular geopolitical contexts. Focusing on 'differentiated embedding' means acknowledging that the places in which migrants are embedding are not static but rather are continually being made and remade, including by waves of migrants (Hess, 2004; Massey, 2004; Rishbeth & Powell, 2012). Moreover, some migrants may never develop a sense of belonging in or identification with a place (Trąbka & Pustułka, 2020). Hence, embedding is not an inevitable outcome of migration.

While differentiated embedding suggests agency, research has highlighted the barriers that migrants may encounter in their efforts to forge new ties, and develop attachments to particular people, places and institutions (Ryan, 2018). According to the concept, building new relationships in new places requires not only effort, but also opportunities, shared interests and mutuality (Ryan, 2016). Obstacles to embedding could include a lack of resources, lack of language skills, racism and anti-immigrant hostility, as well as institutional barriers such as temporary or insecure immigration status. Such obstacles may curtail the chances and motivations of migrants to forge and sustain ties, develop a sense of familiarity with and confidence in local areas, and hence impede feelings of belonging with people, places and institutions in the destination society.

Moreover, different opportunities and obstacles may result in different degrees or depths of embedding across multiple domains of society. Consequently, we may observe deep embedding in some dimensions of a migrant's life in the destination society, such as a strong network of family and friends, but simultaneously shallow embedding in other dimensions, such as the workplace or civic institutions. The concept of differentiated embedding (Ryan, 2018) is now starting to be applied in the literature to analyse migrants' multi-layered and dynamic processes of belonging, attachments and identification in destination societies (Maslova & King, 2020; Wessendorf, 2018).

Of course, migrants may not only be embedding in new places but also negotiating long distance relationships in the country of origin, and across several countries where relatives and friends may be

scattered (Ryan and Mulholland, 2015; 2018). These long-established connections do not simply endure if neglected, but also require work, commitment, and investment of time and energy (Ryan, Klekowski von Koppenfels, & Mulholland, 2015).

Therefore, in the context of migration, embedding can be understood as a differentiated process, whereby migrants may develop meaningful forms of multi-layered connectedness, within particular spatial and temporal contexts. These forms of connectedness may be of a political, economic or sociocultural nature, and engage varied aspects of the migrant's needs, including the material, relational and emotional. The dynamics of such forms of connectedness express ongoing opportunities and obstacles, in ways informed by 'agency', 'structure', and mediating variables. Hence, embedding is not necessarily a progressive process but may be reversed over time in the form of disembedding (Ryan, 2018; Ryan & Mulholland, 2015).

5.5 Summary

Risk, uncertainty and contingency, liquid migration and the resulting super-diversity as well as differentiated embedding are some of the hallmarks of contemporary processes of social and system integration in the context of globalized migration processes. These developments are the reason why it is increasingly difficult to think about integration as a start-end process, in which an actor (for example a young migrant vulnerable conditions) starts from a state of 'not being integrated' and ends up being socially and structurally integrated. Higher risks of a temporary character of the social, cultural and structural realm, the corresponding adjustments on the individual level, and the feedback effects of agency on the environment form the present-day matrix of integration processes, their success or failure like they have done before. However, the quality of their contingent character regarding past, present and future integration dynamics seems to have changed over the last 20 years.

A concept of integration that ignores these manifold dynamics cannot work as a proper basis for addressing and understanding these developments. We therefore need new perspectives and thinking, to provide new gateways for conceptualizing and understanding 'liquid integration processes' 'in the context of increasingly super-diverse, complex, changing, fragmented and transnationally linked communities' (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018: 181) beyond societies (Urry, 2000b).

6 Liquid integration – thinking the unthinkable[24]

by Solvejg Jobst & Jan Skrobanek[25]

6.1 Where to start

Based on the preceding discussion, one could argue that building common and efficient models for understanding and predicting change in the context of globalization, migration and mobility has become illusive, since the 'development of various global "networks and flows" undermines endogenous social structures which have generally been taken within sociological discourse to possess the powers to reproduce themselves' (Urry, 2000b: 1). Hence, there have been increasing calls to develop 'new theories' as well as methodologies (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; King, 2018; Rytter, 2018; Urry, 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Wieviorka, 2014), to enable us to catch up with the aforementioned contingent dynamics of the latest sociocultural and economic developments (Jobst & Skrobanek, 2020; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018, 2019).

Classical social theory normally thinks in terms of linearity and stability in the context of migration. A person moves from A to B, and depending on the social and system-specific similarities/dissimilarities

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[24] This chapter is based on an earlier version which was published in Skrobanek and Jobst (2019).
[25] Authors in alphabetical order.

between contexts A and B, he or she has a shorter or longer way to go in adjusting – or as Taft (Taft, : 45) would say, going through 'a process of becoming alike' – to the new social, institutional and structural contexts. As has been mentioned above, this concept of integration is resistant to change.

However, empirically as actors adjust, the structures change, and as the structures change, the actors try to adjust both immediately and in the long term. This fosters contingency, which is yet to be considered and understood with any accuracy in social theory and research. It is this observation that encourages us to assume that integration is an open and more or less unpredictable and contingent process, which produces and depends on change (Abbott, 2016: 4; Baker, 1993: 123; Harris, 1987; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018; Urry, 2000b: 205ff.). Adapting Baker (1993: 135) to our problem of integration, we could say that integration means to 'encounter a continual flux of order and disorder'. It includes simultaneous processes of integration and differentiation and its contingent, open and dynamic character of movement and countermovement always implies a time lag in theoretical and empirical accounts of integration processes. This dynamic and its implications for conceptualizing and accounting for integration empirically has been underplayed in the integration debate. Against this background, the classical concept of integration and its persistence and popularity has to be critically reconsidered.

Radically put, many approaches still fail to model and understand the complex temporal dynamics of environmental (or structural) frameworks, migrants' room for manoeuvre over time under these dynamics, and the changes integration practices make to the environment as people act under given circumstances.[26] Thus the processes of adjustment undertaken by young migrants in vulnerable conditions to contexts that move and shift when the young attempt to traverse it (Burawoy, 1998: 4), the impact of ongoing system transformations on young migrants' practices, and the feedback of these practices into the system, all of which have simultaneous and longitudinal effects, are still poorly understood.

Against this background, we seek to provide a new lens to help encourage the debate about the ways we understand integration and its theoretical and methodological challenges.

6.2   The 'liquid' idea in the context of 'integration'

A first key starting point for the LI concept is Bauman's idea of the 'liquid'. Bauman (2007: 1) argues, 'First of all, the passage from the "solid" to a "liquid" phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set.' Bauman continues: 'Forms, whether already present or only adumbrated, are unlikely to give enough time to solidify, and cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies because of their short life expectations […]' (Bauman, 2007: 1).

These great shifts on the macro and meso level will inevitably have consequences for the individual. 'Identities seem fixed and solid only when seen, in a flash, from outside. Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated from inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile, vulnerable, and constantly torn apart by shearing forces which lay bare its fluidity and by cross-currents which threaten to rend in pieces and carry away any form they might have acquired' (Bauman, 2000: 83). These dynamics produce 'chaotic, unintended and non-linear social consequences … which are distant in time and/or space from where they originate and which are of a quite different and unpredictable scale' (Urry, 2000a: 19).

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[26] 'For, it is impossible to step twice in the same river.' Heraclitus cited in Chitwood (2004: 66).

As has been underlined in section 5, these forces have different impacts on individuals, different groups and contexts. Taking the arguments of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) and 'liquid society' (Bauman, 2007: 3) seriously, in the context of accelerated mobility and migration (Castles, 2000; Goldin, Cameron, & Balarajan, 2011; Urry, 2007), it can be assumed that young migrants in vulnerable conditions in particular are one of those groups of young people who are most affected by these challenges while moving from and through different micro, meso, exo and macro contexts during their passage. Not only must they cope with the imperatives of these different contexts, but the practices of young migrants also affect these contexts (e.g. institutions or the agents of these institutions).

Hence, interlinking the 'liquid' argument with the discussion above indicates that simple linear understandings of integration ignore the multifaceted dynamics of the integration process. This way of seeing leads to a first basic assumption the LI concept builds on:

> *Assumption 1: As the young migrant in vulnerable conditions tries to adjust to or integrate into new environments, not only does he/she undergo change, but the social and institutional environment and its immanent practices, which the young migrant seeks to adjust to, are constantly transforming as a result of practices, and while transforming have a feedback effect on the individual.*

Therefore, we assume *an open, contingent process of adjustment and counter-adjustment during migration at the personal and institutional level, whereat both levels are interwoven through practices.* Contrary to most of the existing integration concepts, we posit that 'integration' processes are present over the whole course of the migrant's pathway, as well as episodes of settlement and non-settlement. In this perspective, 'integration' begins with the first steps or episodes before migration,[27] and once the process has started it becomes a never-ending story throughout the life-course.

> *Assumption 2: Linear, circular, and pendulum migration processes, such as coming and leaving, settling and un-settling as well as resettling, moving forward and moving back, migrating and re-migrating, staying and oscillating across geographical locations, migrating in circles (to one place, to another place, to a third place and back to the starting point to recharge energy for future moves), intensify the complexities and dynamics of integration processes.*

This has consequences for adjustment at the individual as well as institutional (or even broader structural) level. These dynamics heighten the difficulties of integration and the unpredictability of integration-related outcomes in the context of individual, group-related and structural change. Both individual and institutional characteristics and states are temporary, uncertain, and therefore at risk of unpredictable change and openness.

> *Assumption 3: Integration processes – in a radically processual perspective, at both individual and structural level – must be understood as non-linear, contingent, unpredictable and variable over the course of time.*

The "liquid" perspective focuses on complex environmental (respective structural) frames of reference and dynamics, migrants' room for manoeuvre over time under these dynamics, and how adjustment practices – both at the individual as well as institutional level – effect the environment as people act under given circumstances. Thus, the processes of adjustment undertaken by the migrant, the impact of ongoing system transformations on the practices of the persons and the feedback of these practices to the system, all of which have immediate and longitudinal effects, are still poorly understood.

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[27] Starting to think about migration options, searching for relevant information, adjusting individual practices, reframing reference systems etc.

6.3 Putting 'process' and 'flow' in focus

There has always been a struggle between two camps of social theory described here in ideal-typical terms: a) the reproduction-of-order tradition, which assumes that structural forces manage to reproduce social order, and b) the change-of-order tradition, which assumes a continuous process, change and flow of social order (Abbott, 2016: 203-204; Bauman, 2007: 1; Elder & Georg, 2016: 66; Hagestad, 1991; Harris, 1987; Heinz, 1991).

Regarding the instability and changeability of institutions, Abbott states that 'society is never in equilibrium'[28] (Abbott, 2016: 204) and that 'this "disequilibrium" is typically substantial, not purely formal' (Abbott, 2016:204). Thus, order and disorder are part of the same situation, both simultaneously and in a longitudinal perspective.

These systemic contingent dynamics seem to have direct and indirect consequences for the individual and the structural level. As argued before, personal traits and identities as well as institutional settings no longer seem fixed and solid (Spencer, 2011: 203). 'Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated from inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile, vulnerable, and constantly torn apart by shearing forces which lay bare its fluidity and by cross-currents which threaten to rend in pieces and carry away any form they might have acquired' (Bauman, 2000: 83).

According to this hypothesis, perceived stability of structures as fixed and solid – still on of the common cores of contemporary integration ideologies (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016; Rytter, 2018) – increasingly appears to be just a series of snapshots which fake solidity, stability and the site-specific convergence of social acts. The storyboard of integration that has always been taken for granted seems – although it is often hard to accept – fragile, processual and marked by an open-ended, inherently unstable dynamic character (Abbott, 2016; Baker, 1993; Prigogine, 1977).

In this sense, a fixation with stable outcomes in the context of integration amounts to an epistemological fallacy, which seriously limits our understanding of integration as a dynamic, open-ended process. As Abbott writes, social processes such as integration do 'not have outcomes': 'It just keeps going. Individuals don't have outcomes either, except the invariant one that we must all expect in Keynes's long run' (Abbott, 2016: 4). This implies that there is no fixed time point in the course of integration from which integration is to be judged (Abbott, 2016: 204). If integration does not have stable outcomes, one can only conceptualize it as something that is in 'perpetual motion' (Abbott, 2016: 204). This argument resembles to some extent the uncertainty relation postulated in physics. Since we cannot measure the content and force behind the processes of integration exactly, defining integration outcomes is in fact meaningless.

> *Assumption 4: As actors adjust, the structures change, and as the structures change, the actors try to adjust both simultaneously and in the long run. This fosters contingency, which is yet to be considered and understood with any accuracy in social theory and research.*

Against this background, it is proposed here that integration of young migrants in vulnerable conditions can no longer be conceptualized as a start-end process in which the young migrant starts from a state of disintegration and ends up being socially and structurally integrated. The increasingly contingent character of the social, cultural and structural, realm the corresponding adjustments on the individual level and the feedback effects of agency on the environment form the matrix of *liquid integration*.

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[28] See Prigogine's (1977) remarks on system instabilities.

6.4 Liquid integration: constant flux of adjustment

The issues discussed so far indicate that approaches to integration with a 'teleological' or 'problem-of-order' focus are out of step with current patterns of both individual and institutional contingent adjustment processes – hence 'perpetual motion' dynamics – in the context of migration, mobility and integration. From this point of view, integration can no longer be defined by an explicit starting and endpoint, and it can no longer be reduced to an approach based on the 'problem-of-order' tradition (Abbott, 2016: 203). Instead we propose that the 'integration' of a young migrant in a vulnerable position[29] should be conceptualized as an open-ended contingent process of change and adjustment over the course of time, though it does have a definite starting point with birth and a definite end with death. The time between these two events is open and contingent (Chaplin, John, & Goldberg, 1988: 542). Hence integration librates between temporal stability, temporal order and temporal changes in institutional and structural constraints and opportunities on the one hand, and life-long individual adjustment to changing situations on the other (Baker, 1993:123; Chaplin et al., 1988: 542; Francis, 1993: 239; Urry, 2000b: 206).

'Liquid integration' in this sense has a contingent, open shape, turning integration practices into a constant, multidimensional adjustment to new contexts and – simultaneously – to constant, ongoing changes in the contexts in which the practices and their adjustments are applied. This means life-long interdependency and interplay of personal development and the development of social structures, shaping and reshaping the personal, social and structural levels (Bauman, 2007:1; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 313).

From this starting point, LI means (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019: 313):

a) an ongoing adjustment of habits, routines and acts – in other words practices – in the context of migration/mobility, in the face of changing institutional and structural opportunities and constraints (Dannefer, Kelley-Moore, & Huang, 2016),
b) the production of emergences (Sawyer, 2001; Urry, 2000a, 2000b) risks and uncertainties (Beck, 1992) for the individual and the system, based on individual or collective practices, in the face of opportunities and constraints existing at a specific moment in time (Roberts, 2009),
c) radical rifts between the decline, reappearance and change of importance of artificial group categories ('groupism', (Brubaker, 2004: 11) and 'national containers' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002)).

Thus, while social and structural changes, processual and non-linear in their nature, encourage individuals to adjust to fluid conditions, the practices of adjustment conversely feed institutional and structural change. Moreover, while actors act to modify the (constantly transforming) environment, they bring (unpredictable) change to this (institutional as well as non-institutional) environment. The concept further assumes that contemporary change to the environment (and thus the social, cultural and structural realm) is 'faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into' (Bauman, 2007:1).

Regarding the concrete fields of participation and development of young migrants in vulnerable conditions discussed in section 5.1.3, 'qualification', 'commitment', 'production and consumption' and 'participation', the ongoing opportunities in these fields as well as the constant adjustment of field-related interests, choices, decisions and actions of young migrants in vulnerable conditions, and taking into consideration the multifaceted processes of adjustment, it becomes very clear how differentiated, multidimensional, multi-dynamic and complex integration processes have been over the course of time. Consequently, the scientific study of 'liquid integration' incorporates multilevel, processual and temporal perspectives. The multilevel perspective focuses on the interlinkage and embedding of

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[29] This applies to all migrants. However, as proposed in chapter 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.1.4 young migrants – and here especially in vulnerable conditions – are most exposed to it.

different levels of the human–environment interaction, while the longitudinal perspective focuses on change and/or stability over time. Both perspectives must be taken into consideration if one wants to understand and/or explain processes of integration/disintegration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 188ff.). To properly deal with the complexity of 'liquid integration' – that is, the interwoven dynamic flux of change and/or stability on the individual and the structural level in a temporal perspective – in the following discussion we propose a socio-ecological perspective for modelling ongoing change over the course of time (the temporal), its contingency, and the dynamic forms of adjustment within and between the different levels.

6.5   Liquid integration in a socio-ecological perspective

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecology of Human Development* offers an essential starting point for underpinning the LI idea, since the approach understands the interaction between humans and the environment as a nested interdependent arrangement of concentric structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 41), labelling these structures micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, and conceptualizing them as both dynamic and contingent over the course of time and the life course of a young migrant in a vulnerable conditions. Patterns of action and relationships that a young migrant experiences during his/her periods of movement, short and long stays as well as settlement, and performs within his/her microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22) are related to other contexts that are visible to the subject.

Taking Bronfenbrenner's definition 1 in the *Ecology of Human Development* as a starting point and applying it to our concern, we could say that the scientific study of LI deals with 'the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being' (in our case the young migrant in vulnerable conditions), 'the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 21), and the dynamics of this interconnection in a temporal – both cross-sectional and longitudinal – perspective (Abbott, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 28; Dannefer et al., 2016; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 963).

The study of LI thus starts with the elaboration of liquid integration practices of the persons involved in social interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22). The mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25) refers to 'the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates […]'. From the perspective of a young migrant, for example, the relationship between the 'borderland' (Agier, 2016), 'camps' (Agamben, 1998), migrant or refugee reception centres, special schools or even special classes for migrants, all embody a mesosystem, and the migrant's behaviour cannot be properly understood without examining the particularities of these systems.

To fully scrutinize the complex dynamics of LI also means to focus on those areas of life 'that do not involve the developing person as an active participant' but which influence the settings in which the young migrant is directly or indirectly involved (the exosystem) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). From the perspective of the young migrant in vulnerable conditions, this could be, for example, a social network, the media, charity organizations, the police etc. The migrant's manoeuvring is always to be seen in the context of these social institutions.

The macrosystem ultimately refers to 'consistencies in form and content of the lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 26).

With the help of this heuristic, it becomes possible to systematize, contextualize and interpret the respective conditions or influencing factors for the individual actions of young migrants in vulnerable conditions on the micro level, and to model how their actions interact with or influence the processes on the other levels. Here we are especially interested in how institutional agents are representing,

reproducing but also changing through their practices the institutional framework addressing young migrants in vulnerable conditions. By means of this depth of field and complexity of the modelling of LI processes, it is possible to trace the social meaning of migrant-specific actions – for both the young people themselves and the other parties involved (e.g. corporate actors, stakeholders etc.) – back to intra- and interpersonal conditions (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 185).

The assumption that structural constraints have an impact on individual practices and that individual practices, conversely, feed the structures is nothing new (see for example the discussion in (Zollschan & Hirsch, 1964)). Agents and structures interact with each other and hence they are a precondition for each other's existence (Archer, 1996, 2010). However, the aim of the concept of 'liquid integration' is to explicitly focus on the dynamics of the reciprocity of individual and collective adjustment, individual and collective practice, and structural change within the context of migration and integration.

The LI concept therefore helps 'to understand the interpretive processes whereby choices are imagined, evaluated, and contingently reconstructed by actors in ongoing dialogue with unfolding situations' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 966), it enables us to simultaneously model change in social and system integration areas (Lockwood, 1964: 252), and it helps to interrelate these different dimensions for a processual understanding and a processual (time lag) explanation of 'liquid integration'(Consortium, 2019: 11); see also (Baas & Yeoh, 2018; Cresswell, 2006; Cwerner, 2001; Elder, 1994 ; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984; King, 2018: 5; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018, 2019; Urry, 2000b). Applying this perspective in research makes us aware of different layers of agency – 'routines, purposes and judgement' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 963) – that young migrants rely on throughout their practices, and helps us to understand how these layers are interrelated empirically (Consortium, 2019: 9; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 963).

The concept of 'liquid integration' takes into account situational and personal conditions, their variations over time, and the reciprocal relation/interrelatedness between the levels over time. As argued above, LI in past, present and future temporality (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 963) implies simultaneous as well as time-delayed dependencies (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 191-192), and thus the LI concept makes it possible to link information about intra- and inter-individual changes directly with the dynamics of the different system levels and their changes and effects over the course of time (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 192, 194).

The proposed concept of a sequential LI perspective suggests at least three central foci (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 192):

a) A focus on 'relational' (simultaneous) effects, studying the interlinkages which arise between institutional, systemic factors and LI practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and young non-migrants over the course of time and during the young migrants' life-course.
b) A focus on cross-sectional stabilities and changes, enabling to scrutinize how institutional and systemic factors, the LI practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and non-migrants and the interactions between the two dimensions change over time
c) A focus on long-term effects, casting light on the relationships which arise between institutional, systemic factors and LI practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and non-migrants over the course of time and during the migrants' life-course.

It is further assumed that young migrants are 'neither cultural' nor 'psychological dopes' (Stam & Ellis, 2015); rather, they are actors who are continuously or unconsciously engaged in defining their social situation, who manoeuvre throughout their life stage, and are reflexive in the sense that their actions are inextricably intertwined with structural constraints (Dannefer et al., 2016: 91; Elder, 1994; 1995: 47; Elder & Georg, 2016; Skrobanek & Karl, 2016; Stam & Ellis, 2015). Through this lens we see young migrants 'as actively engaged in defining their social situation and in making choices, being embedded

in their social-cultural and economic situation' (Skrobanek & Karl, 2016: 99), recognizing, as subjects of their actions, that the options they have are bounded by the circumstances under which they act (Bynner, 2005; Evans, 2002, 2007; Skrobanek & Karl, 2016: 99). In doing so, their subjective self-understanding of being agentic is discursively developed while a) interpreting, deciding/choosing, acting, incorporating, reproducing or changing their sociocultural and economic environment/structures, b) being more or less aware of doing these things, c) engaging in doing LI while doing a and b (Skrobanek & Karl, 2016: 99) and thus d) achieving agency (Biesta & Tedder, 2007: 132).

The proposed concept of liquid integration is fundamentally open regarding the context of 'grounded' or 'non-grounded lives' (Bygnes & Erdal, 2017).[30] Hence, liquid migration can head towards a more or less reproduction-of-order adjustment, for example that 'migrants search for stability and a "re-embedding" through the labour market, career progress, and new community and family networks' (King, 2018: 6) to secure their 'psychic wellbeing' and 'social recognition' (Esser, 1999: 92; Nauck, 2008: 122) and thus achieve 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1984: 23). However, there is no guarantee that chosen practices will match contemporary structural conditions, especially if these contexts – as King underlines in regard to migration – change 'both quantitatively and qualitatively' (King, 2018: 5). Neither is there a guarantee that institutional frameworks and actions will match the young migrants' adjustment practices during the odyssey of their migration. This 'unpredictability' (King, 2018: 5) and 'uncertainty' (Bauman, 2007: 1ff.; Blossfeld et al., 2005: 16) regarding adequate practices of young people, the actions and reactions of institutions or institutional agents to those actions, and related outcomes in the context of interwoven agent-structure processes, is the fertile soil for liquid integration. Moreover, since these intertwined processes are complex from both a cross-sectional and a longitudinal perspective, we argue for a dynamic multilevel and process-focused model of liquid integration.

7 Liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions – a heuristic model combining macro-meso-exo-micro levels

by Izabela Grabowska and Jan Skrobanek[31]

Putting the 'liquid integration' idea at the core of integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions, we follow a radical situational approach: an approach which a) puts micro-processes at individual (young migrant), institutional (corporate agents, institutional constraints) and broader exo and macro level into focus and which b) researches the ecological interlinkage between these levels in a temporal perspective (Consortium, 2019: 8).

Based on the socio-ecological perspective introduced in the preceding section, which addresses the four MMEM (macro-meso-exo-micro) (Bronfenbrenner 1979) levels for researching the 'liquid integration' of young migrants in vulnerable conditions, the proposed heuristic model assumes that young migrants in vulnerable conditions 'become actively engaged in defining their social situation and manoeuvre throughout their life-stage' in concrete time and space (Consortium, 2019: 15; Dannefer et al., 2016: 91; Elder, 1995:47; Elder & Georg, 2016: 447; Schlimbach, Skrobanek, Kmiotek-Meier, & Vysotskaya, 2019). In doing so they develop a biographically and socially embedded (Ryan, 2018) self-understanding of being agentic (Skrobanek & Ardic, 2016).

On the micro level, relating to self, person, agent, actor, the heuristic model focuses on young migrants' agentic practices, informed by the past, the present and perceptions regarding the future

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[30] For preventing any misunderstanding, we underline again that this is nothing more than an assumption which has to be further discussed, tested and if necessary adjusted.
[31] Authors in alphabetical order.

(Emirbayer & Mische 1998) and framed by contextual (vulnerable) meso framework conditions (socio-economic and cultural context, peers, family, experiences with corporate agents/stakeholders and institutions). Firstly, there are migratory transitions connected to a migratory experience and changing settings for a young person (Grabowska, 2016). Secondly, migratory transitions overlap with puberty, adolescence, emerging adulthood and youth-adulthood transitions, which happen to every young person in a society. Thirdly, migratory transitions are marked by specific social, cultural, structural, civic and identity related processes which shape ways into and out of 'qualification', 'commitment', 'production and consumption' and 'participation'.

On the meso level, regional and local employment, education, welfare and social relations systems and their interlinking with the agentic practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions come into focus. According to 6.4 and 6.5, at the meso level the interrelationships between various settings comply or clash: between school, family, work, and social life. This is an important space for exploring the successful and unsuccessful adjustment of young migrants to institutional constraints, investigating the impact of young migrants' adjustment practices on institutions, and understanding the feedback – hence successful or unsuccessful – reactions of corporate agents and institutions to young migrants' practices. The meso level helps to understand both external constraints and immediate negotiations, but also identity, social capital, collective action, group culture, networks, and civil society. 'By building on collective identity, shared history, common spaces, and ongoing social relations, groups provide mechanisms through which individuals fit into larger structures, and through which social structures shape individuals' (Fine, 2012: 159).

The interrelatedness of the micro and meso level is of central importance regarding LI processes since it involves everyday interactions, negotiations and confrontations, cooperation and rejection between the young migrant and his/her ecological setting. It can help to understand in depth the nuances of social phenomena connected to the integration processes of young migrants, how young migrants' practices affect their surroundings (corporate agents, institutions, networks, milieus etc.) and, conversely, how the ecological conditions affect young migrants in vulnerable conditions adjustment processes – hence the liquid integration of the young during life-course.

The exo level includes settings where young migrants do not actively participate, but which affect them from above. At this level we can observe how young migrants might be either constrained or enabled by the settings and structures they are in. It might include contemporary discourse, politics, institutional practices, an extended family, parents' and siblings' friends, parents' places of work, spaces for social life. This level is closely related to the meso level. However, being aware that its components establish a kind of broader opportunity frame with a more indirect impact on the practices of the young vulnerable migrant we have due to ongoing theoretical and methodological reflection included this level in the heuristic model.

On the macro level, we look at the broad systems, hierarchies, institutions and policy patterns that shape the integration processes of young migrants. The focus on macro characteristics provide essential information for understanding social interactions and relations that happen at the micro-meso and exo level. Therefore, the interplay of all levels is critical for understanding the adjustment of young migrants in vulnerable conditions to existing situations, how institutions and the corporate actors within act and react to young migrants manoeuvring and how liquid integration – fostering or hindering adjustment – comes in a concrete historical situation into life.

From our point of view, this multilevel approach allows for various inter-level comparisons, references and juxtapositions (graph 1). It also helps to see both convergences and divergences between these levels, which either advance, halt, or reverse the integration processes of young migrants.

Graph 1: Heuristic LI model
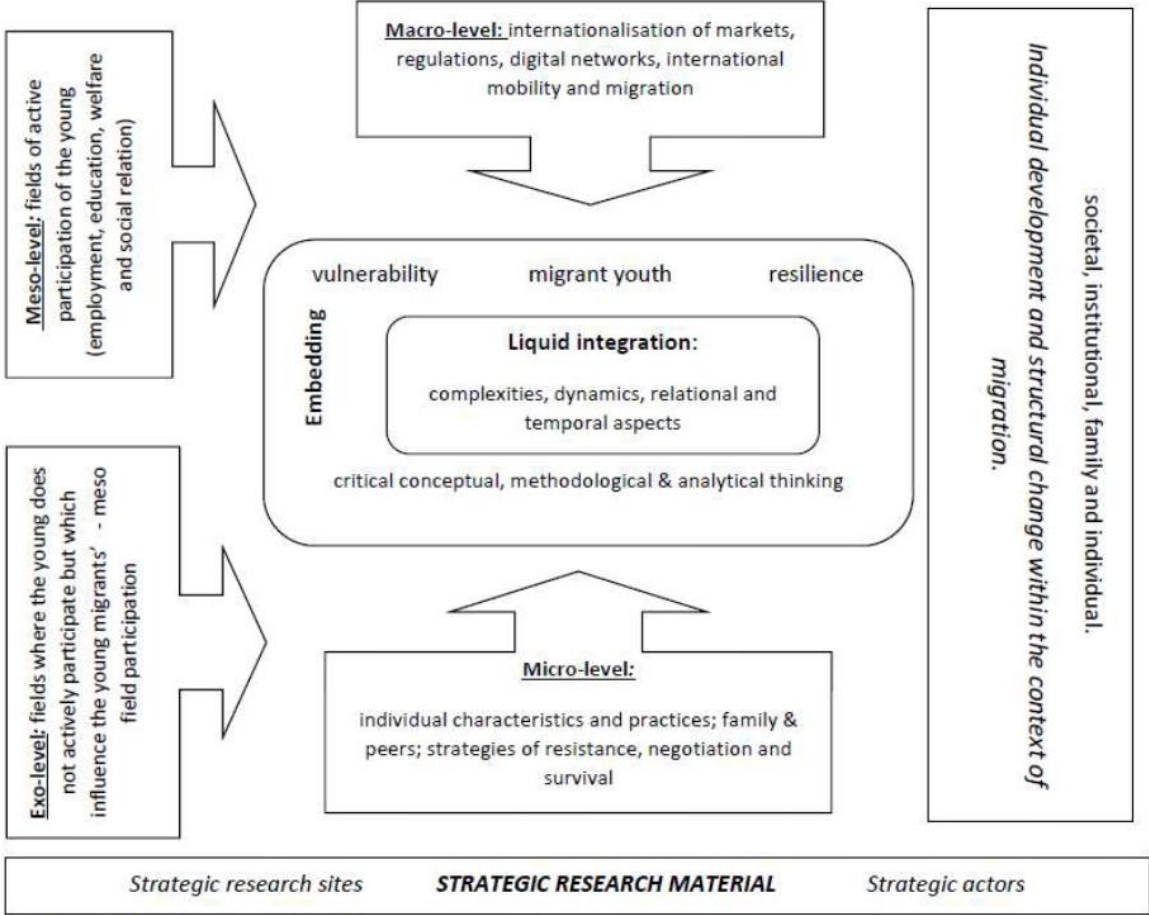
Source: MIMY Team's elaboration.

This multidimensional holistic framework in a radically processual perspective, provides researchers, practitioners, policymakers and the general public with a better understanding of liquid integration processes relating to young migrants in vulnerable conditions (Consortium, 2019:22), and hence help them to better understand the dynamics and open nature of integration processes within the contexts of structural resistance and rigidity and the young migrants as well as corporate actors role within these processes. By foregrounding the perspectives of migrants in vulnerable conditions (as well as those of locals and stakeholders) and embedding them in broader micro, meso, exo and macro contexts, the approach allows analyses of how young migrants and people they are in contact with (e.g. corporate agents) perceive interaction contexts in general, but also how both sides think and feel about inclusionary or exclusionary practices (e.g. administrative, social and economic) (Consortium, 2019: 22). It also informs us about how integration processes are happening, decided, and negotiated, to what extent they are contingent, unintended or emergent in their outcomes, and how they manifest themselves in the daily life practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

Since institutional frameworks vary regionally, the spatial dimension plays a decisive role for understanding the variations and interrelatedness of institutions' and young migrants' practices. Therefore, the strategic research sites (Merton, 1987: 11) may be both institutions (e.g. migrant centers) and geographical areas, defined by population density and settlement type (e.g. urban and rural). The proposed heuristic model takes into consideration existing variations, while focusing on

spatial variations of institutional practices relating to the adjustment of young migrants in vulnerable conditions to new contexts (Consortium, 2019: 22).

When a strategic research site perspective is taken, 'Problems that have long remained intransigent become amenable as investigators identify new kinds of empirical materials that effectively exhibit the structure and workings of the phenomena to be understood' (Merton, 1987: 11). The LI perspective therefore seeks to uncover new issues from the perspective of young adult migrants, and to offer new tools to make the integration process of such migrants inclusive, encompassing *ecological transitions*, that is, any alterations of a position in the environment resulting from a change in role and setting (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

Most importantly, LI aims to better understand and to improve the situation of younger migrants in vulnerable conditions and support them in becoming active and self-confident citizens within the new ecological settings (Consortium, 2019: 22). Putting the experiences of young migrants and related persons at the heart of the proposed model, along with their needs, expectations, actions and reactions – in short, their practices – helps to better understand social and system integration and processes for empowering young migrants, as well as points of success and failure of these processes (Nienaber 2012).

8   Opening up the discussion

In proposing the summary term 'liquid integration' we want to foster a critical awareness of the multifaceted radically processual character of integration dynamics, and a radically open discussion based on this perspective. With this we hope to promote a radically situational approach to integration – a lens through which micro-processes on the individual and institutional level as well as the ecological interlinkage between these levels will come into perspective.

As stated at the beginning of the discussion, the LI perspective proposed here, and the conclusions derived from it are to be understood as 'radically processual'. Therefore, all the contextualized and proposed theoretical and methodological aspects based on LI are nothing more than starting points, inviting to develop and to adjust the concept based on discourse and research. Thus, the understanding of LI must be informed by an ongoing dialog between theory and findings (Layder 1998), discussion and research, and will be hopefully subject to ongoing inspiration, critical reflection, discussion, and if required adjustment and revision.

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