

Bordering through recalibration: Exploring the temporality of the German “Ausbildungsduldung”

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journals.sagepub.com/home/epc**Kari Anne Drangslund** 

University of Bergen, Norway

Abstract

The past decades of inquiry into the “what, where, and who” of borders have more recently been followed by an interest in borders’ temporal dimensions. In this article, I contribute to this research by analyzing how border temporalities operate on the scale of the lived experiences of rejected asylum seekers in Germany. My point of departure is the so-called *Ausbildungsduldung*, which since 2016 has permitted the suspension of deportation for rejected asylum seekers who start vocational training. After three years of training glimmers a promised residency permit. I approach the *Ausbildungsduldung* as a biopolitical technique of bordering and focus on its temporal aspects. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, I investigate how young Afghan asylum seekers negotiate the *Ausbildungsduldung* and how they can make its promised future their own. I show how the state deploys techniques of “future giving,” suspension, and deportability to produce skilled workers, and argue that the *Ausbildungsduldung* works as a bordering technique by producing affective attachments to a particular future trajectory, and by elevating certain ways of dealing with suspension and deportability in support of this trajectory. Showing how migrants are compelled to “wait well” while confined to a condition of deportability, the paper highlights how migrants’ experiences and practices of time become central to processes of bordering.

Keywords

Borders, temporality, migration, *Duldung*, waiting

Corresponding author:

Kari Anne Drangslund, Centre for Women’s and Gender Research, Postboks 8905, Bergen N-5020, Norway.

Email: Kari.Drangslund@uib.no

Introduction

I am sitting next to Alan in his lawyer's office in central Hamburg on an August afternoon in 2017. The lawyer has just told him that the German authorities have rejected his asylum application. She reads aloud from the *Aufenthaltsgesetz* (Residency Act) before she sketches out the consequences in plain German. Alan faces a situation of rightlessness and an everyday life overshadowed by the threat of deportation. Alan looks down, his hands still in his lap. For some seconds there are only the distant sounds from the street outside. I am thinking about his words in the waiting room: "I cannot stay like this... I think about my future, you know." Then, the lawyer rises and fetches an information leaflet from a stack of similar ones in the cupboard behind her. It is an advertisement for vocational training, signed by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce. She gives it to Alan, and says, "Have you considered starting vocational training? You know I told you about this new regulation. With vocational training, you can stay." Alan holds up the leaflet, and I read, typed in white on a red background: "Your future starts right here."

With the 2016 *Integrationsgesetz* (Integration Act), German authorities opened a path to residency for rejected asylum seekers who manage to start and complete vocational training (*Ausbildung*). For the duration of training (mostly three years), rejected asylum seekers are granted the right to a long-term suspension of deportation, legally termed *Duldung*. The *Duldung*, or "toleration permit," is not a residency status; it merely prescribes that deportation is suspended and the migrant's presence temporarily tolerated. The *Ausbildungsduldung* terminates if training is broken off. Nevertheless, in the context of increasingly harsh German asylum policies, the so-called *Ausbildungsduldung* has created reverberations of hope. As the above story from the lawyer's office illustrates, the regulation comes with the promise of a German future. Completed training opens the possibility for a two-year residency permit, which might subsequently be renewed. The *Ausbildungsduldung* appears as a "gift of future," in this case represented by the advertisement passed over the lawyer's desk.

In this article, I approach the *Ausbildungsduldung* as a technique of bordering, and focus on its temporal aspects. The past two decades of critical engagement with the "what, where, and who" of borders (Johnson et al., 2011: 68) in critical border studies have recently been followed by a growing interest in what might be termed questions of borders' "when." In other words, scholars are paying increasing attention to the role of time in bordering processes (see for example Andersson, 2014; Bagelman, 2016; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Tazzioli, 2018). I build upon and contribute to this research by engaging scholarship on time that allows for a focus on how borders operate in peoples' lived temporalities, understood as their practices, conceptions, and experiences of time (Sharma, 2014). I argue that such engagements may deepen understanding of the complex relation between time, power, and capital at biopolitical bordering sites such as the *Ausbildungsduldung*.

The analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork among asylum seekers and tolerated migrants in Hamburg in 2017 and 2018. Particularly relevant is my interaction with eight Afghan asylum seekers in their early 20s. For all of them, *Ausbildung* was the subject of anxious reflection regarding their prospects of staying in Germany. Through encounters such as that between Alan and his lawyer, the word spread that *Ausbildung* was the "only way" for Afghan asylum seekers to a future in Germany. Yet, by highlighting the situated gazes of my interlocutors (Cassidy et al., 2018), I show that they are differently positioned in relation to its apparently open future. The *Ausbildungsduldung* thereby appears as a biopolitical mechanism for filtering migrants and for the differential investment in their lives, conditional on their ability to become a skilled worker. In other words, while the

advertisement promises Alan, “*your* future starts right here,” the question arises: How can Alan actually make this future his, or rather, become its “you”?

This article engages with this question by drawing on Sarah Sharma’s (2014) work on temporal “recalibration.” With the concept of recalibration Sharma (2011) highlights a form of temporal power that functions by synchronizing people’s practices and experiences of time, such as their “sense of the future or the present, to an exterior relation” (442). In other words, recalibration attends to the “normalizing temporal orders” (Sharma, 2014: 111) that elevate particular temporal practices and orientations to time and devalue others. As a technology of the self, recalibration involves learning to “deal with time” in the proper way (Sharma, 2011: 442).

In the context of the *Ausbildungsduldung*, the analytical lens of recalibration highlights how the regulation’s promise of a (German) future comes with the expectation that migrants synchronize their temporal practices and experiences to its particular spatiotemporal order, or what I call *border timespace*. Importantly, in this respect, I show how the regulation was enabled by discourses of demographic change and future labor shortages. As a mechanism for producing today’s future skilled workers, the *Ausbildungsduldung* deploys not only temporal techniques of what I label “future giving” but also suspension and deportability and thereby shapes a particular border timespace. Through an ethnography of my interlocutors’ negotiations of the expectation to recalibrate, I show how recalibration in this context pertains to enhancing particular orientations to the present and to the future, and specific ways of negotiating the uncertainties related to deportability and suspension.

The article is structured as follows. First, I situate my approach in the general literature on border temporalities and waiting. Then I discuss my methodology. In the next two sections, I explore the future promise of the regulation before I analyze it as a technique for producing today’s future skilled workers. I subsequently turn to three of my interlocutors and show how they negotiate this border timespace in relation to their lived temporalities. Their struggles make recalibration visible as a painful, incomplete, and resisted practice. By focusing on recalibration, which is articulated as an expectation to “wait well,” the article complements studies on the synchronizing function of borders that has mostly focused on tempo and deadlines as techniques for synchronizing migrants’ mobility with the needs of labor markets (see Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Tazzioli, 2018; Tsianos et al., 2009). Furthermore, by highlighting how the *Ausbildungsduldung* enforces a suspension of the present, it gives nuance to current understanding of bodily and temporalizing effects of waiting and deportability.

The temporalities of borders

In the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in the role of time and temporality in bordering processes. As Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) argue, the idea of the border as primarily a spatial arrangement tends to downplay the profound temporalizing effects of border crossings as well as the role of time in techniques of control and regulation in border regimes. The newfound interest in the temporal dimensions of how borders “are enacted, how they function, and how they generate effects of containment and selection” (Tazzioli, 2018: 15) seems crucial given current developments in the European border regime, to which temporal techniques of bordering are central.

Drawing primarily on Foucauldian and Marxist approaches to time as fundamental to disciplinary techniques of power and value production (Foucault, 1977; Thompson, 1967), scholars have illuminated the role of tempos, timings, and rhythms in the control and filtering of migrants. One endeavor of this literature has been studies of the role of deadlines

and time limits in “the disciplining of mobility” (Tazzioli, 2018: 16). As Tazzioli (2018: 16) shows in a study of the European hotspot system, such “precise dates and lapses of time” serve to limit migrants’ rights to access particular spaces and support systems. These have disciplinary effects, as migrants must comply with them to become eligible for protection, relocation, or legalization schemes. Another important contribution is studies of the paces and tempos of border regimes that illuminate the role of acceleration and deceleration as techniques of governing, filtering, and (il)legalizing mobility (see for example Tazzioli, 2018; Tsianos et al., 2009). Andersson (2014) makes a fine study of the “logics of speed” of ongoing developments in border surveillance, intelligence, and camp design within the European border regime (see also Cwerner, 2004). Importantly, Andersson shows how acceleration and time–space compression produce effects of waiting and immobility for migrants. In other words, while the system of control accelerates, migrants are slowed down in camps and detention centers. Yet, as Andersson argues, and as geographical work on waiting and displacement illuminates, waiting is not a byproduct of increased acceleration, but rather a technique of power (Conlon, 2011; Hyndman, 2019; Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al., 2002; Schuster, 2011; see also Karlsen, 2015; McNevin and Missbach, 2018).

While Andersson is concerned with the EU’s external borders, other scholars have underlined the centrality of temporal techniques when borders move inside the sovereign territory (Bagelman, 2016; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). These works are recalling how borders are increasingly understood to be performed through encounters between various actors, and to be made and remade through complex social, political, and cultural processes (Cassidy et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2011; Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002). Importantly for the present analysis, such studies often approach borders from a biopolitical perspective, addressing their filtering function in relation to national and global economic policies. The notion of the “biopolitical border” directs attention to borders as instruments “in the systematic regulation of national and transnational populations, their movement, health, and security” (Walters, 2002: 571). In a context of states increasingly seeking to reconcile “sovereignty with economy” (Johnson et al., 2011: 64), a biopolitical approach highlights borders as regulatory mechanisms in processes of filtering that are largely “based on the capitalization” of people’s resources (Walters, 2002: 128).

From a perspective underlining the entanglements between capital and biopower, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) for example analyze how border regimes manipulate and stretch migrants’ time to produce governable and useful subjects from “ungovernable flows” (149). As such, they form part of a broader literature focusing on how techniques such as programmed delays, suspension, and deportability function to synchronize migrant mobility with the needs of national and global labor markets (Barber and Lem, 2018; De Genova, 2013; Tsianos et al., 2009). This literature illuminates the “continuities between the temporal strategies” of temporary labor migration, and “the more violent practices of confinement and detention” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 137). Indeed, it highlights how the “blurring of the boundaries between legality and illegality” is at stake in such “temporal contestations” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 140)—an observation that has salience in relation to the *Ausbildungsduldung*.

Recalibration within the border timespace

A feature of much of the aforementioned literature on border temporalities is that it approaches time “in terms of quantifiable units” (Sharma, 2011: 440), that is as something that can be saved or lost, stretched or compressed. In other words, the problem of time and

the “temporalities of control” (Tazzioli, 2018: 14) have to do with pace, tempo, and rhythms, and accordingly with how states use time to control migrants’ bodies and mobilities in space. Yet, the advertisement changing hands in Alan’s lawyer’s office, promising a future that is reachable through years of training in a condition of deportability, indicates that the “temporal aspects of managing the force of life” (Sharma, 2014: 16) in the German border timespace reach beyond pace and bureaucratic and legal rhythms and deadlines. Addressing how Alan can make its promised future his, requires, I suggest, extending the engagement with the temporalities of control, to include a focus on how borders intervene in peoples’ affective and embodied relations to time: their futures and presents (see Lilja et al., 2018). This article sets out to do so drawing on Sharma’s (2014) work on lived and relational time, and biopolitical techniques of recalibration. A rich literature has addressed how accelerated asylum procedures, temporariness, and waiting in camps and transit-zones affect migrants’ everyday lives (Bagelman, 2016; Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Mountz et al., 2002; Schuster, 2011). A focus on how power intervenes in tolerated migrants’ lived temporalities might extend such observations.

In her book *In the Meantime*, Sharma (2014) takes departure from past years’ engagements with speed and acceleration within the social sciences. Based on Massey’s (1994) critique of universalizing discourses of “time-space compression,” Sharma criticizes “common-sense notions of universal temporal acceleration under neoliberalism” (Smith and Vasudevan, 2017: 213). What is “shared across the temporal differential is not so much the general speed of life” (Sharma, 2014: 18) she argues, but rather an expectation that people synchronize their pace, practices, and experiences of time to speed as a powerful discourse and temporal order. Through an ethnographic investigation of business travelers, taxi drivers, and office workers in the US, she shows that while they are immersed in the same web of temporal relations, they are differently positioned in relation to this expectation to synchronize. Her work chimes with feminist geographers’ work on how migrants’ waiting is differentiated along lines of gender, race, and health (Conlon, 2011; Hyndman, 2019; Mountz, 2011; Schuster, 2011). Sharma reads people’s efforts to synchronize through the theoretical lens of Foucault’s (1978) biopolitics. Based on ethnography she argues that the temporal aspects of power cannot fully be understood in terms of disciplining bodies, their pace and movement in space through workhours, deadlines, or control of tempo, that is through controlling segments of time. Central in biopolitical time management, she contends, is techniques that operate through “giving meaning to time” (Sharma, 2014: 18) or what she terms “techniques of recalibration” (Sharma, 2014: 105). Recalibration “accounts for the multiple ways in which individuals and social groups synchronize their body clocks, their senses of the future or the present, to an exterior relation—be it another person, pace, technology, chronometer, institution or ideology” (Sharma, 2014: 18). In other words, biopolitical interventions in the life forces of populations and people “elevate certain time practices and relationships to time while devaluing others” (Sharma, 2014: 15), in relation to dominant and “normalizing temporal orders” (Sharma, 2014: 140). Sharma thus explores how power intervenes—discursively and materially—in people’s embodied conceptions and experiences of time. She shows how sedentary office workers are recalibrated to the pace of office-work through in-office yoga that both works on their bodies and experiences of time, in terms of “being in the present.” On the other hand, irregular migrant taxi drivers are expected to work on their embodied temporal experiences without any supporting infrastructure. Importantly for the present analysis, her work illuminates how recalibration “takes on a specificity depending on where one is located within the biopolitical economy of time; between investment and disinvestment, let to live and let to die” (Sharma, 2011: 442).

In this article, recalibration provides an analytical angle for engaging with temporal orders and related practices of synchronization within the German border regime. I approach such temporal orders through the notion of timespace. Timespaces, as formulated by May and Thrift (2003), contain diverse and often conflicting representations, disciplines, technologies, and rhythms of social time. While this article focuses on time, the notion of timespace captures how the spatial and the temporal are entangled (Hägerstrand, 1975; Massey, 2005; Pred, 1977). My exploration of the border timespace in the present analysis first involves unpacking how it is characterized by suspension, deportability, and “future giving.” Second, it involves ethnographic attention to how its promised future anchors measures of productive agency and temporality (Bear, 2014). Acknowledging how people are differently positioned within the border timespace, recalibration is a perspective from which to investigate how the *Ausbildungsduldung*’s promised future is conditional on how migrants navigate deferral, deportability, and its tenuous promise in relation to their lived temporalities and the “intimacies” of waiting (Mountz, 2011: 394). As Barber and Lem (2018) have shown, migrants’ lived temporalities are “often out of sync with the temporal priorities” (10) of various bordering actors. By paying ethnographic attention to material and discursive practices of synchronization, the analysis allows visibility to how these are resisted and negotiated.

Methodology

My analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Hamburg from August 2017 to June 2018. I conducted participant observation in two asylum camps and two humanitarian organizations. I also conducted interviews with partners within the craft sector, activists, and public bureaucrats (federal and regional).

This paper draws mainly on work with seven Afghan men and one Afghan woman, whom I met in the camps. I acquired unlimited (temporal) access to these otherwise strictly controlled spaces and met people in the common areas or through volunteers and camp employees. The *Ausbildungsduldung* presupposes that the migrant holds a deportation issue and has signed a training contract with a company. Furthermore, while the law is open for discretion, the prevailing interpretation in 2017 was that migrants with a Dublin-decision¹ and most migrants from so-called secure third countries were non-eligible (Röder, 2017).² My focus highlights Afghans as a target group for the *Ausbildungsduldung* in Hamburg.³ Four interlocutors had started training or pretraining programs. The others were working to find a training company or to learn German, which is a prerequisite for a training contract. This illustrates how the *Ausbildungsduldung* affected my interlocutors even before having enrolled. Of particular importance for the analysis is long-term contact (2017–2020) with three interlocutors: Alan, Nasir, and Sharif. My focus on men is primarily a matter of circumstance, given that the majority of camp residents were male. However, gendered norms and family obligations seemed to make the *Ausbildungsduldung* less accessible to women.

The analysis draws from several consultations between migrants and their attorneys or service providers. My interlocutors often asked me to join such consultations, partly to provide emotional and language support. These encounters give invaluable insight into the temporal politics of borders and migrants’ negotiations of these. However, they do raise questions regarding consent and disclosure—questions pertaining more generally to my study. I use data from consultations to the extent that counselors and migrant interlocutors consented. Yet I had to be sensitive regarding how my presence could affect consultations and how power relations affected migrants’ consent. I often refrained from taking notes.

I have shared fieldnotes and analysis with interlocutors over the years. To manage issues relating to disclosure I have changed their names and slightly altered bodily and biographic features.

The Ausbildungsduhlung: Closed futures and glimmers of hope

Recall how the lawyer gave Alan the brochure proclaiming that “your future starts right here” minutes after she had told him that his anticipated future was closed to him. Such a folding of closed and (apparently) open futures was a general characteristic of the border timespace that my interlocutors navigated. It requires attention in order to understand the affective force of the Ausbildungsduhlung and how it functions as a filtering technique.

When I started my fieldwork in Hamburg in August 2017, Germany had seen two years of rapid reforms of its asylum regulation through several so-called asylum packages. The German border timespace was marked by what an asylum activist interviewee labeled a “shock therapy” of asylum policies: a rapid series of changes including a cutback in asylum seekers’ rights, rising thresholds of positive asylum decisions, and harshening detention and deportation practices. An aspect that deserves mention in this context is the introduction of the concept of *Bleibeperspektive* (prospects of staying) in 2015. The notion is a temporal technique that establishes previous rates of positive asylum decisions for specific nationality groups as the basis for evaluating people’s prospects of staying in Germany. Since 2015, German authorities have categorized Afghan asylum seekers as having “bad prospects.” While implemented as a technical construct, critics have argued that it actually serves to *produce* prospects. On the one hand, this relates to the discursive force of categorizing migrants prior to the asylum decision. On the other, numerous rights and support structures, such as language courses, are differently distributed according to people’s good or bad prospects of staying. Thus, the concept influences migrants’ opportunities for “good integration”—a notion that is increasingly important in German asylum policies (Voigt, 2016). My Afghan interlocutors, while mostly still awaiting decisions on their asylum status, were painfully aware that their prospects were bad. In the context of increasing deportation flights to Afghanistan in 2017, this contributed to a general “sense of deportability” (De Genova, 2002: 439), characterized by uncertainty and fear.

It was against this bleak background that the Ausbildungsduhlung appeared in 2016. The regulation prescribes a long-term suspension of deportation for tolerated migrants who start vocational training. The Duldung needs some explanation. It is not a residency status, but prescribes a short-term (normally 3–6 months) suspension of the enforcement of expulsion due to factual, humanitarian, or legal reasons, such as health, pregnancy, or lack of identity papers (Mitrić, 2013; Drangland, 2019). It can however be renewed, and many live in this condition for years. While the Duldung provides some social rights and at least temporary security, studies highlight it as a condition characterized by uncertainty, social stigma, and rightlessness. Importantly, while my tolerated Afghan interlocutors had a work-permit, the Duldung often entails a work-ban (Castañeda, 2010; Mitrić, 2013). In this context, the 2016 Ausbildungsduhlung was launched as a radical change. First, it prescribes that training gives tolerated migrants the right to a Duldung for the full duration of training. Second, successfully completed training entails the right to a two-year work-related residency permit. Yet, the Ausbildungsduhlung remains a condition of deportability. Moreover, it entails a prohibition to travel abroad and to family reunification. The Ausbildungsduhlung thus highlights the interweaving of spatial and temporal forms of control in the German border timespace.

Nevertheless, the predominant framing of the Ausbildungsduhlung in 2017 was in terms of “hope” and “possibility.” As one volunteer in Alan’s camp said: “Before, there was such

a lack of perspectives. Depression all over. Since the summer of 2016, that has really changed. Now there is a new glimmer of hope.” Her comment demonstrates the sense of hope produced through the promise of a German future. The volunteers urged “their refugees” to start training to secure their stay, and the nongovernmental operator of Alan’s camp professionalized their relationship with the skilled craft sector to ease their residents’ transition into training. It is important to mention here that while other federal states have sought to limit the scope of the regulation, the social democratic government of Hamburg has pushed for a broad implementation and recruitment to training, as exemplified by the encounter between Alan and his lawyer in the public legal counseling service he visited. By 2017, the Hamburg Ministry for Integration and Labor had established numerous support structures related to training for (rejected) asylum seekers. Furthermore, they instructed camp operators to prioritize migrants in training for relocation to better housing. This illustrates how the regulation influenced the dynamics of investment in migrants within the border timespace. As one ministry employee told me: “We tell the volunteers to advise their young people not to study, but rather to say, make sure you get into training.” While her comment illustrates the political and bureaucratic support for the regulation, it also demonstrates a sense of urgency in giving the right advice; making other choices threatens migrants’ prospects of staying in Germany.

For my interlocutors, a sense of urgency fueled the regulation’s association with a secure future. As Nasir once said: “You know, we Afghans have bad prospects in Germany. My lawyer told me that to stay I should start vocational training. For us Afghans, that is the only way.” Nasir was awaiting his asylum decision for the second year. He gave much thought to starting training, as he had little hope of a positive decision and German law provides few other possibilities for legalization. Nasir’s comment demonstrates how for the people I spent time with, their affective attachments to the imagined future of *Ausbildung* were coproduced by a sense of there being no other options. Yet, before investigating how Nasir and Alan negotiated the tenuous promise of the *Ausbildungsduldung*, there is a need to unpack the conceptions of the valuable migrant subject that the regulation embodies, and how it deploys suspension and deportability to synchronize migrants’ mobility with economic concerns.

Producing today’s future skilled worker

In the context of years of a booming German economy, the skilled craft sector and related political bodies have increasingly recognized tolerated migrants and asylum seekers as a recruitment base. “For eleven years, companies have had more positions than people,” the director of one of Germany’s largest employers’ associations told me to explain how the *Ausbildungsduldung* was enabled. Accordingly, since the early 2000s, economic actors, such as the skilled craft sector, have pushed for an adjustment of the *Aufenthaltsgesetz* to secure the status of rejected asylum seekers in training. While the *Aufenthaltsgesetz* has previously allowed for the possibility of some categories of tolerated migrants to undertake training, this right has been regulated through short-term toleration permits. As such, the timings and rhythms of the *Aufenthaltsgesetz* conflicted with the “temporal needs” of training companies. Tellingly, the skilled craft sector lobbied for the regulation under the slogan “security of planning,” referring to companies’ need to plan their labor force. This objective was actually inscribed in the act as a main intention of the regulation (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016b).

While past and present labor shortage is a backdrop for the identification of illegalized migrants as a recruitment base, it is important to notice how economic actors have framed

their claims within a broader narrative of future workforce shortages, or what Schultz (2018) calls a “demographic rationality.” As Schultz (2018) argues, demographic rationalities are based on a particular temporality “with reference to the future as the central dimension” (2). This future imaginary is often produced through long-term population projections that legitimize policies in the present. A further temporal characteristic is that of crisis narratives that draw on “imaginaries of the future reproduction of nations and human capital on the one hand” and on futures of “superfluous, globally fluctuating dangerous bodies on the other” (Schultz, 2018: 2). The former narrative was central to advocacy in support of the regulation. A position paper from the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations (BDA) is illustrative in this respect.

Not least with a view to the growing skills shortages that are already perceptible in many sectors and regions in the wake of demographic developments, it is important that all possibilities are identified and used to exploit all existing potential already present in Germany as fully as possible. This must also include a closer examination of the situation of asylum seekers and tolerated residents. (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, 2015: 1)

The position paper frames “growing skills shortages” in the present as evidence of a larger process of ongoing “demographic developments.” This framing is not unique to the BDA. A review of position papers and policy documents (see for example Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, 2017) shows that an urgent future of workforce shortages was an important argument for actors pushing for the regulation.

From a perspective highlighting the market rationalities and related demographic epistemology underpinning the *Ausbildungsduldung*, it appears as a temporal and biopolitical technique of “re-embedding to enable future utility” (Hodges, 2014: 39). In other words, by discursively framing rejected asylum seekers as “potential skilled workers” and “re-embedding” them into material and institutional structures of training, they may be produced as skilled workers for a future that has “already become present” (Hodges, 2014: 39), as the BDA quotation shows. What seems to be at stake is not “who” migrants are in terms of their “legally marked” ID, but “what they have the potential to become” (Akalin, 2007: 212). The future of workforce shortages thus seems to be the standpoint from which migrants’ value in the present is judged. Such logics are present in the BDA paper, with its reference to asylum seekers and tolerated migrants as “existing potential” within the German territory that should “be exploited” “in the wake of demographic developments.” It becomes clear, as Mountz et al. (2002) note within the US context, how migrants’ waiting is imbricated with demographic and economic concerns (see also Barber and Lem, 2018; Conlon, 2011).

Yet, the framing of asylum seekers and tolerated migrants in terms of “today’s future” skilled labor conflicts with territorialist and temporal logics of sovereign border enforcement within which the illegalized migrant is primarily apprehensible as a “detainable and removable subject” (Noll, 2010: 253). A central stake in the political negotiations was whether deportable migrants starting training should be eligible for a temporary residency status or solely a tolerated status. The government decided on a long-term toleration permit. Following the government, making deportability conditional on (performance) in training ensures that the regulation would not be “misused” (*missbraucht*) to “delay” (*verzögern*) deportation (see for example Deutscher Bundestag, 2016a: 71). The *Ausbildungsduldung* chimes with De Genova’s (2002: 439) argument regarding “deportability”—the “possibility of deportation”—as not only crucial in the legal production of migrant illegality, but as sustaining illegalized migrants’ tractability and vulnerability as workers. As I elaborate more

later, in relation to the *Ausbildungsduldung* deportability works together with suspension and its future promise to ensure that migrants stay on the (right) path to the (right) future.

In that respect, the training contract has salience as a synchronizing tool. Its function might be illustrated by an example from a legal session for undocumented migrants that I visited. During the session, a young man told the lawyer that he was worried about the requirement to reveal his identity to receive the *Ausbildungsduldung*: “The reason the immigration authorities cannot deport me is that they do not know my name,” he said. The lawyer reassured him: “You make sure you give them your training contract before you give them your ID papers and not the other way around. Then you will get your toleration permit and you will be safe. You do this and this,” he said, pretending to place first one, then a second document on the table. His answer demonstrates the altered temporal standpoint of judgments, pointed out above. The marks of past border crossings are temporarily erased—what counts is the young man’s potential as a skilled worker. However, the reference to the timing of presenting papers highlights that the young man is only “safe” within the timespace defined by the contract. The training contract appears as a synchronizing tool, through which the government deploys suspension and delay to synchronize migrants’ mobility with the economic needs of the classed German labor market and, to paraphrase Sharma (2014), keep them “within a pace and path commensurate with [] capital” (54) and geopolitics. Its function recalls Barber and Lem’s (2018) conceptualization of temporary work schemes in terms of “temporal–spatial fixes” (7) that, they argue, function to “prepare laborers in waiting” (9), and resolve problems and contradictions of migrant surplus populations. The timespace of the *Ausbildungsduldung*, defined and regulated through the contract, appears as produced through suspension, deportability, and the folding of closed and promised futures. I will now explore how my interlocutors negotiate this timespace in relation to their lived temporalities, thereby highlighting how the regulation enacts its filtering function.

“I cannot wait so well”

Once I was studying with Nasir on the floor of his 12-square-meter barrack room in the asylum camp, he showed me a biographical letter he had written in his German class. I read it, and in surprise pointed to the last sentence: “In my future I would like to do *Ausbildung*.” “Why did you write that? You said it is not an option for you” I asked. Nasir laughed: “I wrote ‘in my future I want to work,’ but my teacher corrected it with her red pen.” The teacher’s red pen powerfully accentuates the “redemptive” logic of the *Ausbildungsduldung* in 2017. A redemptive logic anchoring a conception of an open future and a subject with forward-oriented agency yet abstracted from concrete social and embodied experiences of time, as depicted below.

When I met Nasir, he had been living in Hamburg for two years, dreaming of making a living for himself and supporting his mother in Afghanistan. We spent many hours together, studying German and sharing Afghan food, defying the prohibition on cooking in the barracks. Camp life was marked by slowness and boredom—a sharp contrast to Nasir’s life in Afghanistan: “I have worked in construction since I was nine. You know us Afghans work all the time. Now I do nothing. I just play with my phone.” However, on an intimate, bodily scale, the inactivity and immobility made his “thoughts swirl” and “heart beat too fast,” as he put it, illustrating the “cumulative stress” (Mountz, 2011: 388) and “slow violence” (Hyndman, 2019: 7) associated with prolonged waiting. During one of our walks in Hamburg’s many parks, Nasir told me he feared he was “slowly going crazy,” owing to loneliness, insecurity, and fear of deportation—an utterance starkly highlighting

the embodied experience of his life slowly being disinvested. Struggling to find words of comfort, I asked him whether training could be an option for him. Yet while Nasir himself recognized *Ausbildung* as “the only way,” and indeed as an *open way*, at the same time it seemed painfully closed to him. Interrupting my question, he said: “Everybody tells me I should start training so I could stay, but I cannot. Training takes so long . . . I must work now. My parents really need money.” Nasir’s answer highlights training as a time of suspension of work and income. Moreover, it indicates how people are differentially positioned in relation to the *Ausbildungsduldung*’s promised future. Indeed, my interlocutors often discussed how gendered family obligations, but also age, health, and educational background conditioned who could start and succeed in training. Their discussions and Nasir’s concerns highlight how migrants negotiate waiting along various lines of differentiation (see Conlon, 2011; Mountz, 2011; Drangland, 2019). For Nasir, his obligations to support his mother in Afghanistan *now* and in the immediate future created a painful condition of inability to accept the regulation’s invitation to a German future.

Yet Nasir kept striving to make a living for himself at the intersection of these conflicting social, legal, and affective temporalities. While he often repeated that he had to work “now,” he kept visiting training events and preparing for the required German test, in accordance with the urging of people around him. However, he found German difficult, as he only had four years of primary school. Moreover, his “swirling thoughts” made it “hard to concentrate,” as he said. In December 2017, he failed the German test by one point. When he received his final rejection and deportation order in June 2018, he called to tell me. At that time, he had started self-medicating with drugs, and his mother’s disappointment with him combined with his fear of deportation. He said, “My mother asked, ‘are you a junkie now?’ She said she thought she had raised me as a man, not as a weakling.” Reflecting on his inability to start training, he continued: “You have to be strong to wait. I am not so strong. I cannot wait so well.” His comment regarding “waiting well” demonstrates how “crossing the border” to a future in Germany requires recalibration in the sense of dealing with learning, suspension, and deportability in certain ways. “Good waiting” here seems to involve an orientation toward the intermediate future of learning, the suspension of the relationally lived “now,” and particular ways of navigating the embodied and conflicting temporal modes of learning (concentration) and deportability (headaches and swirling thoughts). Nasir considered his inability to synchronize the conflicting temporalities of learning and deportability to be a personal failure, and a gendered mark of weakness. Seen in context of his teacher’s “red pen,” his statement regarding “waiting well” recalls Conlon and Gill’s observation that asylum seekers in the UK and Irish Republic are trained to be “reflective entrepreneurs of the self” (Conlon and Gill, 2013: 245). They show how migrants, through orientation booklet or educational classes, are compelled to “produce themselves as ‘liberal subjects’” (Conlon and Gill, 2013: 244) and acquire skills that facilitate their participation in “productive circuits of capital and liberal society” (Conlon and Gill, 2013: 253). To produce oneself as a skilled worker in the timespace of the *Ausbildungsduldung* requires working on one’s temporal experiences. Sharif’s story might highlight this further.

“It’s good for the future, but people want to work right away”

Some weeks before I met Nasir, I met Sharif in the camp’s activity room, where he volunteered. At that time, Sharif was awaiting his asylum decision for the second year, in a provisional camp meant to house migrants for their first six months. His negotiation of the *Ausbildungsduldung* adds to the understanding of how it asserts a “time control that

revolves around recalibrating” (Sharma, 2014: 96) the migrant’s body and their temporal dispositions to its particular timespace.

In September 2017, I joined Sharif for a counseling session at an organization working with asylum seekers and training. This was Sharif’s third appointment with the energetic supervisor, who inquired whether he had decided what training to do. When Sharif shook his head, the man became upset:

If you don’t know, I cannot help you. You don’t have much time. Your life is at stake. When I see you sitting with your head hanging down like that, you will never get into training. You have no motivation! You have to want it!

Silence followed. Then Sharif said: “But I do not know what comes after . . .” letting the sentence trail off. The meeting ended after an hour, with the agreement that Sharif should attend a course that, in Sharif’s words, “helps people find their motivation.”

The reference to “motivation,” “want,” and Sharif’s “hanging head” depicts an expectation that Sharif should orient affectively toward the future horizon of training. There is an urgency to this; his “life” hinges on it and time is short. Motivation appears here as a temporal orientation that might be reworked through counseling. In interviews with social workers, motivation was a recurrent theme. Many expressed a concern regarding finding the “true reasons” behind their clients’ desire to enter training. They considered that successful completion of training depended on inner motivation for training and not solely for residency.

Sharif completed the motivation course, passed his German exams, and joined a pre-training program. Then, in December, he quit training and found himself a full-time job. Important to notice here, is that while work might lead to a future residency permit, Sharif knew the path would be long and uncertain, and that he would still be deportable. Thinking about his situation, Sharif often returned to the topic of motivation and training. Reflecting on the difference between “interest” and “motivation,” he once explained, that while he surely found training “interesting,” he had no “motivation” because “Motivation has to do with your status, with your situation, how you live” By drawing attention to uneven material conditions, he challenged the notion of motivation as a temporal mode abstracted from lived time and space that accordingly may be reworked through motivation courses. His answer to the supervisor, “I do not know what comes after . . . ,” points in a similar direction. Sharif often talked about his difficulty in envisioning a life after training. He related his “lack of motivation”—“my biggest problem,” as he often said with a wry smile—to his limited knowledge of the practical and economic implications of vocational training for his future daily life.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that others found it easier to envision their life after training and to negotiate the temporal order of the *Ausbildungsduldung*. As one young girl said: “I do training now, and when I get my residency, I will study.” She saw training as a strategic step toward long-term studies and her temporal orientation reached beyond the five years of the regulation. Also, Sharif understood training to require a temporal orientation toward training’s end—an orientation, however, that he did not “want” to recall the supervisor’s words above. As he once said:

Germans have so much patience. My supervisor says, “in Germany you make a plan, and go there, step, by step.” It is a long time – three years. It is good for the future, but people want to work right away.

His reference to “patience,” to “make a plan” and to the conflict between temporal orientations to the “right away” (of the present or immediate future) and the intermediate future of accomplished training, highlights the temporal order of the *Ausbildungsduldung*. The motivation course appears as a technique of recalibration, that, recalling Sharma’s (2014) analysis of in-office yoga, works to produce a particular temporal comportment and outlook for subjects who are “stuck in otherwise confining spatial arrangements” (105), while acknowledging the different conditions of office workers and my interlocutors. It recalls Bagelman’s (2016) critique of how sanctuary spaces and practices in the UK work to govern migrants through inducing a more productive and positive conception of waiting time, thereby compelling them to “commit to the rules of the game” (Bagelman, 2016: 39). Sharif, however, did not want to “commit to the game”; that is, to bind himself and his present to the unknown future of training and endure years of suspension of income. He sought other ways to navigate the timespace of his present and to “do something against deportation,” as he said.

The danger of the present

Finally, it is time to return to Alan, who managed to start training as a bricklayer. During his first year of training, he often pointed out how working and spending time with colleagues helped him deal with insecurity and fear. However, he also highlighted training as a timespace where dwelling on present longing and insecurity threatened his ability to study and thus his future. This may be illustrated by an encounter in Hamburg Central Library in December 2017, where we were meeting to study German. When Alan appeared, he greeted me without his usual smile. “There is war in front of my house,” he said. He picked up his phone to play me an audio recording from his wife and scrolled through their messages—colored speech bubbles of anxiety and comfort sent between Hamburg and Kabul the previous 20 minutes. Then the sound of shooting and airplanes mixed with the busy sounds of the library café. After a while, Alan pointed to the books at the café table: “I am sorry, but I cannot learn today. When your head is at peace, you can learn. Without a calm mind you cannot learn. I read and read but it means nothing.” He continued: “I can learn and wait, but how long must I wait? How long? I do everything; get up early, go to language course after school, but the problem is here,” he pointed to his head, “and here,” pointing to his heart: “They do not work.”

One argument in support of a long-term toleration permit was to provide better conditions for learning. As an employee in the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs told me: “The legislator intended to give people the possibility of good learning conditions, without the fear of deportation.” However, the scene above exemplifies how, for my interlocutors, the *Ausbildungsduldung* was a condition of uncertainty and anxiety. As Alan’s comment about the importance of a “calm mind” depicts, he, similarly to Nasir, found that longing and fear made it hard to learn. While he was “doing everything”—struggling to orient himself toward learning and structuring his days accordingly—his head and heart seemed to be affectively oriented elsewhere and “elsewhen” (Kafer, 2013: 3), to other spaces and times. As mentioned, the *Ausbildungsduldung* rules out family reunification, and Alan negotiated the longing for his wife and children with the temporalities of learning and the fear of deportation. As he once said: “I think about my midterm exam all the time,” highlighting a fear of failure and subsequent deportation, which was a common topic among my interlocutors. His comment makes the *Ausbildungsduldung* visible as a condition of stretched out border crossing, with the exams as crucial border crossing points.

Scholars have pointed out that deportability often enforces “orientations to the present” (De Genova, 2002: 427) owing to precarious material conditions and the absence of a promising future. The timespace of the *Ausbildungsduldung*, however, nuances this picture. I asked one interlocutor who trained in elderly care how he negotiated the insecurity of his situation. “I go on, I always go on. I keep my mind on the goal. I cannot think about the present,” he said. As suggested above, the *Ausbildungsduldung* seems to impose a temporal order that elevates an orientation toward the intermediate future of examinations and completed training. The man’s statement, however, also highlights the necessity of being oriented *away* from the present which also figures in Alan’s, Nasir’s, and Sharif’s negotiations of the *Ausbildungsduldung*. Indeed, Alan’s comment regarding a “calm mind” emphasizes how dwelling on present longing and anxiety is a hindrance to learning and performing well in training, on which deportability hinges. The men’s reflections furthermore illustrate how the expectation to recalibrate interweaves with sovereign and spatial forms of power, materializing through their precarious legal status and, in Alan’s case, the prohibition on family reunification. It should be noted, however, that while Alan emphasized the danger of orienting to the present, he often also expressed the view that thoughts of his family kept him going and ensured that he persevered with training. His situation recalls Bryan’s (2018) work with labor migrants in Canada, where she shows how feelings generated through family separation and waiting “ensure a high degree of productivity and loyalty” to legalization schemes (137). In a similar vein it might be argued that the German economy “capitalizes on the intensity” (Bryan, 2018: 137) of Alan’s feelings, producing an affective attachment to the future of being a skilled worker in Germany.

Concluding discussion

Work on border temporalities and waiting has over the past years complemented spatial perspectives and broadened the understanding of how borders work to control, contain, and filter migrants. This work highlights the centrality of pace, deadlines, and deferral in the control and governing of migrants and illuminates how prolonged waiting saturates migrants’ everyday lives. Moreover, scholars have shown how borders operate through time to control the “speed of migrants’ movement into labour markets” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 132). This article contributes to such research through an ethnographic investigation of a novel regulation: the German *Ausbildungsduldung*. The orchestrating of migrants’ bodies in space through delay and pace is central to the “temporalities of control” (Tazzioli, 2018: 14) of the *Ausbildungsduldung*. Indeed, my analysis of the political negotiations of the regulation or the role of the training contract highlights the centrality of temporal techniques in the German state’s efforts to synchronize migrants’ mobility with economic concerns.

In 2017, the predominant framing of the *Ausbildungsduldung* in public discourse was in terms of “hope” and “possibility.” Also, my Afghan interlocutors related affectively to the *Ausbildungsduldung* in terms of opening a future. As Alan once said enthusiastically, “In Germany, if you are useful, they appreciate that and let you stay.” His comment highlights that the *Ausbildungsduldung* produces structures for investment in migrants’ lives. Yet his reference to “being useful” also draws attention to the relation between capital and bordering. Analyzing the regulation and highlighting its underpinning demographic rationality, I show how the *Ausbildungsduldung* works as a tool for producing skilled workers and argue that it should be understood as a biopolitical mechanism for filtering and governing migrants. Furthermore, exploring the *Ausbildungsduldung* by highlighting the situated

gazes of my interlocutors makes their different positions in relation to its apparently open future evident.

This article started out by asking how Alan could make the *Ausbildungsduldung*'s promised future his own. To address that question, I have focused on the *Ausbildungsduldung*'s temporal dimensions. I show how the regulation, as a mechanism for producing today's future skilled workers, works through suspension, deportability, and "future giving." Exploring ethnographically Nasir's, Sharif's, and Alan's navigations of the German border timespace, I argue that the regulation works as a filtering mechanism by producing affective attachments to a particular future trajectory, and by elevating certain experiences and practices of time in support of this trajectory, for example through motivation courses. The lived temporalities of my interlocutors appear as the realm where "everyday borderings" (Cassidy et al., 2018: 139) are performed through micro-practices of synchronization or recalibration. In other words, how my interlocutors relate to the present and the future, and how they negotiate the temporalities of learning, waiting, suspension, and deportability, are crucial for their inclusion into the structures of training.

My analysis of the *Ausbildungsduldung* shows, I argue, that researching the temporalities of the biopolitical border timespace requires broadening the analytical lens beyond an occupation with tempo and bureaucratic and legal rhythms as ways of governing migrants through manipulating quantities of time. To broaden this lens involves being attuned to how biopolitical interventions work to govern and filter migrants through operating on their embodied experiences and conceptions of time. In the timespace of the *Ausbildungsduldung*, deportability hinges on performance in exams and apprenticeship, which makes it pertinent to "wait well," as Nasir puts it. The *Ausbildungsduldung* entails an expectation that migrants work on themselves and their embodied experiences of time while confined to a condition of deportability. "Waiting well" involves being "motivated" and oriented toward the intermediate future of training and away from present longing, material precarity, and violence. My interlocutors' negotiations of the *Ausbildungsduldung* highlight, however, that people's relationally lived presents cannot be suspended. They powerfully illuminate the violence produced by the interweaving of spatial and temporal techniques of bordering in the European border timespace, and the importance of critically addressing politics of "future giving" such as the *Ausbildungsduldung*.

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ORCID iD

Kari Anne Drangslund  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6727-4132>

Notes

1. A “Dublin-decision” refers to the fact that another country is held responsible for their asylum application according to the European Union Dublin Regulation.
2. In 2017, Ghana, Senegal, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.
3. Afghans were the third largest group of asylum seekers to Germany in 2017. In decisions on Afghan asylum cases in 2017, around 45% received some form of protection (*Gesamtzuschutzquote*) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018).

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Kari Anne Drangsland is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Women's and Gender Research, University of Bergen, Norway. Her PhD project is part of the interdisciplinary research project "Waiting for an uncertain future: The temporalities of irregular migration" (Wait). Trained as a human geographer, Drangsland has worked since 2009 as a University lecturer within the fields of urban planning and migration, and written numerous research reports on planning and migration in the empirical contexts of Germany and Norway. She has also led several projects on migration and urban planning within the fields of design, architecture, and art.