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В третий номер пятого тома серии «Демография. Социология. Экономика» вошли статьи по результатам работы X Международного научно-практического форума «Миграционные мосты в Евразии: миграция как ресурс социально-экономического и демографического развития». Форум стал финальным этапом в серии международных научно-практических конференций, проводимых в рамках юбилейного года проекта «Миграционные мосты в Евразии», и был организован Институтом социально-политических исследований РАН и МГИМО МИД России. Книга рекомендуется студентам, аспирантам, преподавателям, ученым и экспертам в области миграции, формирования миграционной политики, рынка труда.

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In the third number of the fifth volume of the series “Demography. Sociology. Economics” is included articles on the results of the X International Scientific and Practical Forum “Migration Bridges in Eurasia: migration as a resource for socio-economic and demographic development”. The forum was the final stage in a series of international scientific conferences held in the framework of the anniversary year of the project “Migration bridges in Eurasia”, and was organized by the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University of the MFA of Russia. The book is recommended for students, graduate students, teachers, scientists and experts in the field of migration, the formation of migration policy, the labor market.

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# LIQUID INTEGRATION. THINKING BEYOND CONVENTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

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**Abstract.** The aim of the paper is to lay down a new perspective on integration – namely liquid integration – in the context of increasing international mobilities, migration and social change. Our point of departure is the idea of “liquid” modernity, times and society, introduced by Zygmunt Bauman. With the idea of ‘liquid integration’, the focus of the analysis turns from the static to the contingent processes and dynamics of adjustment and counter adjustments of individuals, their practices and structures in the context of complex mobilities and migration in a temporal (cross-sectional as well as longitudinal) perspective. We argue that the analyses of this temporal intersection of individual and structural dynamics is crucial for adequately understanding the dynamics of liquid integration in the context of global change. Thus, the concept “liquid integration” presented in this article is intended to capture the complexity and temporal intersection of integration processes and social change.

**Keywords:** integration, migration, liquid, change, process.

## «ЖИДКАЯ ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ». РАЗМЫШЛЕНИЯ ЗА ПРЕДЕЛАМИ ОБЫЧНОГО ПОНИМАНИЯ

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**Аннотация.** Цель работы состоит в том, чтобы сформулировать новый взгляд на интеграцию, а именно на «жидкую интеграцию», в контексте увеличения международной мобильности, миграции и социальных изменений. Отправной точкой является идея «жидкой» современности, времени и общества, представленная Зигмунтом Бауманом. С идеей «жидкой интеграции» фокус анализа переходит от статических к случайным процессам и динамике адаптации и контр-адаптации людей, их практик и структур в контексте сложной мобильности и миграции во временной перспективе. Мы утверждаем, что анализ этого временного пересечения индивидуальной и структурной динамики имеет решающее значение для адекватного понимания динамики «жидкой интеграции» в контексте глобальных изменений. Таким образом, понятие «жидкая интеграция», представленное в этой статье, призвано охватить комплексность и временное пересечение интеграционных процессов и социальных изменений.

**Ключевые слова:** интеграция, миграция, жидкость, изменение, процесс.

**Introduction.** Integration has always been one of the most controversial topics in science and public debate. Against a background of increasing migration, not least due to the East–West migration after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the growing number of refugees and other migrants from the various war and crisis zones around the globe, the topic has become more and more dynamic and explosive in recent years. Parallel to these developments, the global interconnectedness and interdependence of regional spaces and thus the diversity of social, cultural and economic exchanges has become even more dynamic, complex and unpredictable (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills, & Kurz, 2005; Urry, 2007). This does not remain without consequences for the “social integration” of actors (Lockwood, 1964) and for the “system integration” (Lockwood, 1964) of institutions and larger parts of society. Building common and efficient models for understanding and predicting change in the context of globalization, migration and mobility has become illusive, since “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, 2000: 1). Calls are becoming louder for “new rules of sociological method” (Urry, 2000:1) and “new theories” (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; King, 2018; Rytter, 2018; Wieviorka, 2014) which enable us to catch up with contingent dynamics of latest socio-cultural and economic developments.

Classical social theory normally thinks in terms of linearity and stability when it comes to integration in the context of mobility and/or migration. One moves from A to B and depending on the social and system-specific similarities/dissimilarities between context A and B one has a shorter or longer way to go in adjusting to the new social, institutional and structural contexts. However, what this simple linear understanding ignores are the multifaceted dynamics to the integration process. While one tries to adjust oneself to or integrate into new environments, not only does the individual undergo change but also the social and institutional environment one seeks to adjust to is permanently transforming. Thus the process of integration is characterized by threefold simultaneous dynamics: a) the efforts of the individual to adjust to a new social and institutional environment, b) an ongoing transformation of the contemporary social and institutional structures a person wants to adjust to and c) a permanent reevaluation of the adjustment efforts in the context of change of the (new) environment. These dynamics accelerate the efforts and unpredictability regarding integration-related outcomes in the context of individual, group-related and structural change.

Therefore, our main argument here is that integration is an open and more or less unpredictable and contingent process that produces and depends on change (Abbott, 2016: 4; Baker, 1993: 123; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018; Urry, 2000: 205–210). It includes simultaneous processes of integration and disintegration and its contingent, open and dynamic character of movement and countermovement always implies a retardation of theoretical and empirical accounts of integration processes. This dynamic and its implications for conceptualising and accounting for integration empirically has been underplayed in the sociological debate. Against this background, the classical concept of integration and its perseverance and popularity has to be critically reconsidered.

Based on the idea in the following discussion, we seek to provide a new lens to help encourage the debate about the ways we understand integration and its theoretical and methodological challenges. We derive the idea of “liquid integration” (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018) from the concepts of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000), “liquid society” (Bauman, 2007: 3) and “liquid migration” (Engbersen, 2012: 98) and combine it with the notion of longitudinal development to reach a new theoretical and empirical understanding of integration. To be clear from the outset, with the idea of LI we aim to elaborate further what has already been implied by the ‘liquid idea’ (Bauman, 1998; Bauman, 2000, 2002; Bauman, 2007), Giddens’ ‘duality of structure’ approach (Giddens, 1984), Urry’s (2007) ‘complexity approach’ to mobility, Abbott’s ideas on ‘processual sociology’ (Abbott, 2016) or Bronfenbrenner’s idea of the ‘ecology of human development’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In doing so, we wish to go beyond the latest critiques of the integration paradigm, namely ‘super-diversity’ (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Vertovec, 2007), ‘two-way integration’ (Carrera & Faure Atger, 2011; Taft, 1953) or even ‘three-way integration’ (Garcés-Masareñas & Penninx, 2016), ‘differentiated embedding’ (Ryan, 2018), ‘counter-integration’ approaches (Rytter, 2018; Wieviorka, 2014) or ‘transnationalism’ (Faist, 2010; Vertovec, 2001). The concept of “liquid integration” we propose thus owes its intellectual heritage to a range of arguments already introduced to the debate, not to mention all the contributions cited in the following chapter. However, as far as we are familiar with the state of the art, the term “liquid integration” has not been used before.

We will outline our argument first by discussing some of the origins of the concept of integration, second by reflecting “liquid integration” in times of uncertainty, change and fluidity (Bauman, 2007: 1) while combining the integration concept with a broader processual perspective (Abbott, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) – and in a final step by establishing new theoretical and methodological perspectives for further research in the field of integration.

**Integration: nothing new but old concepts?** Over the course of debate, integration has retained its image of being a kind of conceptual red herring, floppy, slippery and chaotic in the normative and theoretical discourse (Ager & Strang, 2008; Rytter, 2018; Wieviorka, 2014). The term ‘integration’ appears – as Gans argued in regard to concepts of ethnicity – more as a “bumpy” than a “straight line theory” (Gans, 1992: 44), with progress or setbacks and general unpredictability over the course of time. A source of confusion is, on the one hand, the many normative understandings in the sense of accentuated wishes of the world as to how it should stay or develop in the future and, on the other hand, the existence of many different theoretical ideas which serve as a kind of analytical tool with which to measure the stability and change of personal characteristics and/or social arenas, fields and context within the framework of migration and/or mobility. Despite this vagueness and confusion, the term “integration” still enjoys a high level of popularity in mobility and migration research.

It is worth noting that so-called classical approaches to the problem of integration have more or less slipped from the radar and thus can no longer be consid-

ered substantial starting points for debate and reflection. Such concepts are for example “assimilation” (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1928: 890; Park & Burgess, 1921: 769–770) and “amalgamation” (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.), just to name few of them. However, if one examines the current integration debate, many critical voices in the context of the so-called “migration crisis” implicitly or explicitly use arguments from the founding fathers of migration and integration research listed above. Especially the ideas of a “[...] fusion of (two) different cultures in values, skills, identifications and action references to a new cultural unity” (Esser, 1980: 20) (authors’ translation), “...subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield et al., 1936:149) or “[...] that not only migrants change their ‘frame of reference’ while maneuvering in new contexts but that the new contexts and established ‘frames of reference’ also begin to change as soon as interaction starts (Taft, 1953: 51) are living on.

However, one cannot avoid the impression that the understanding of process and contingency – and thus both simultaneous and longitudinal transformative dynamics – in which different social units march towards a new processual, permanently changing unity are still in its infancy or that such ideas seem even forgotten and buried. Due to this practice it has become easily overlooked that those ‘old’ perspectives already struggled to theorize and empirically model the manifold dynamics of preserving or transforming the old while somehow accommodating (Park & Burgess, 1921: 663 ff.) new circumstances, generating 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 and how the dialectics of stability and change on the individual and the structural level can be modeled theoretically and approached both methodologically and empirically.

If one consults the relevant literature, it becomes striking that different acculturation policies – or, in the words of Bourhis et al. (1997: 373–375), “integration ideologies” – still share – besides their different perspectives on private values – one common core: the reproduction of so-called “public values” (Bourhis et al., 1997: 373). Thus, almost all of the policies fail to consider that not only the private arena (values, practices etc.) are an open field for change but that the public arena (public values) are in permanent transformation too. They turn their back on the dynamic, contingent and multidimensional appearance of integration on the individual and the structural level (Ryan, 2018: 248). One characteristic example is the 2004 “Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union” (Union, 2004). In a first statement, it is established that “Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.” By this they mean that integration processes are a “dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation, not a static outcome” (Union,

2004: 13).<sup>1</sup> However, in the very next statement this multiple openness of outcome is already put into perspective when it is underlined that “Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union” (Union, 2004: 13) and hence “[...] respect for common European and national values” (Union, 2004: 13) and when integration is defined via participation in employment, education and a “basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history, and institutions” (Union, 2004: 13).

As this example shows, integration is conceptualised as social and system integration into something that is a kind of stable category. However, we argue that this is no longer an adequate way of conceptualising integration. Not because it is normative and still preserves the illusion of stability against the stormy waters of change. It is rather because of the social and system dynamics themselves, which have intensified in recent decades (Blossfeld et al., 2005; Buchholz et al., 2009; Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2015; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018) and which interlace with contingent integration practices of the mobile (Ryan, 2018).

**Processual sociology as a starting point.** There has always been a struggle between two (idealistically conceptualised) camps of social theory: a) the reproduction-of-order tradition, which assumes that structural forces manage to reproduce social order (Abbott, 2016: 203; Elder & Georg, 2016: 66) and b) the change-of-order tradition, which assumes a continuous process, change and flow of social order (Abbott, 2016: 204; Bauman, 2007: 1).

Regarding the instability and change of institutions, Bauman (2007: 1) for instance argues in his book *Liquid Times*, “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.” Targeting the reproduction-of-order assumption, Bauman writes further: “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). From a more ontological point of view, Abbott states that “society is never in equilibrium” (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 changes are not without consequences for the individual. Personal traits like “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

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of a “two-way” interaction or process is nothing new. Taft introduced this term to underline that interactions between different actors always imply adjustments by both partners (Taft, 1953: 51).

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).

The same holds, in our view, for integration itself, which seems fixed, solid and straight, in common integration ideologies (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016: 12). However, this is just a snapshot which fakes solidity, stability and site-directed convergence of social acts. If one takes a closer look at integration, its fragility, its processual and open-ended dynamic character becomes visible. In this sense, one could say that the focus on integration as a stable outcome seriously limits our understanding of integration as a dynamic open-ended process. Social processes like 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). Applying Abbott's argument to integration, one could say that there is no fixed time point in the flow of integration from whose perspective integration is to be judged (Abbott, 2016: 204). If integration does not have stable outcomes, one can only conceptualise 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.

There seems to be consensus that changes in the context of globalisation, environmental change, cyclical economic shocks and mass migration have accelerated 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, 2000). Mills and Blossfeld (2005: 2) list four interrelated structural shifts which from our perspective accelerate patterns of liquid integration. These shifts are the "internationalisation of markets", "intensification of competition", the "accelerated diffusion of knowledge" and a "rising importance of markets" (Blossfeld et al., 2005: 2). All of these factors have accelerated changes, instabilities and uncertainties not only on the micro- but also on the meso- and macro-level (Blossfeld et al., 2005: 3; Grzymala-Kazłowska, 2015: 1124). In this context, integration can no longer be conceptualised as a start-end process in which an actor (for example a migrant) starts from a state of disintegration and ends up being socially and structurally integrated. The increasingly temporary character of the social, cultural and structural, the corresponding adjustments on the individual level and the feedback effects of agency on the environment forms the matrix of liquid integration. As actors adjust, the structures change and as the structures change, the actors try to adjust both simultaneously and in the long term and this fosters contingency which is yet to be considered and understood with any accuracy in social theory and research.

**Liquid integration: conceptualising flow in integration.** Almost all of the existing concepts of integration still keep alive the idea that after a certain time different actors (persons, groups or even nations) somehow resemble one another and become, over the course of exchange, integrated in a common, more or less



stable social body – often called the “group”, “nation”, “society” or “network” (van Reekum, Duyvendak, & Bertossi, 2012; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). This form of (re)establishment of order (Abbott, 2016: 203) can be achieved whatever time and energy is needed. We argue that it is about time that this view and conceptualisation of integration changes radically. It is becoming increasingly clear that existing integration theory is out of step with current patterns of adjustments in the context of global migration. In our understanding, integration can no longer be defined by an explicit starting and endpoint, it can no longer be reduced to the existing frameworks. Against this kind of “problem-of-order tradition” (Abbott, 2016: 203), integration has rather to be conceptualised as a never-ending open process of change and contingent adjustment over the course of time while having a definite starting point with birth and a definite end with death. However, the time between both events is rather open and contingent (Chaplin, John, & Goldberg, 1988: 542). Hence integration oscillates between temporal stability, temporal order and temporal change of 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, 2000: 206). We call this process “liquid integration” (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018), an integration which is realised in a “liquid modern society” (Bauman, 2007:1) during movement “in which the conditions under which its members act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines (Bauman, 2007:1). “Liquid integration”, we will argue, no longer has a start and an end, since “life and that of society feed and reinvigorate each other” (Bauman, 2007:1). It has a permanently open shape, fostering integration practices into a multidimensional permanent adjustment to new contexts and – simultaneously – to the permanent ongoing change of the contexts in which the practices and their adjustments are applied. Hence “liquid integration” is characterised by a life-long interdependency and interplay of personal and social structure development in the context of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000), “liquid society” (Bauman, 2007:1) and “liquid migration” (Engbersen, 2012: 98; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018). It becomes permanently reshaped while remaining dynamic for both the personal, social and structural levels (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018).

From this point of departure, LI means (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018):

a) an ongoing adjustment of habits, routines and acts – hence 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) and risks (Beck, 1992) for the individual and the system, based on individual or collective practices in the face of temporal existing institutional and structural opportunities and constraints and

c) thinking beyond synthetic group categories (“groupism”, Brubaker, 2004: 11) and “national containers” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002).

Thus, while social and structural changes encourage individuals to adjust to the fluid conditions, the practices of adjustment vice versa feed institutional and

structural change. Moreover, while actors act to tweak the (permanently transforming) environment, they foster (unpredictable) change to this environment. The concept further assumes that contemporary change to the environment (and thus the social and structural) is “faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into” (Bauman, 2007:1).

Hence, the scientific study of “liquid integration” requires at least two perspectives: a multilevel and processual, temporal perspective. The multilevel perspective focuses on the interlinkage and embedding of different levels of the man–environment interaction while the longitudinal perspective focuses on change and/or stability over time. Both perspectives have to be taken into consideration if ones wants to understand and/or explain processes of integration/disintegration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 188ff.).

To underpin our argument and to systematize the complexity of “liquid integration” in the context of the human–environment relationship, we propose distinguishing between different levels of analysis of the LI process. As we have already outlined elsewhere (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017, 2018), a number of multilevel models of social explanation have been developed in sociology. Pioneers in this field have been Weber (2007), Bronfenbrenner (1979), Coleman (1990), from a more general sociological point of view and more specifically in regard to migration Park and Burgess (1921), Eisenstadt (1952); Gordon (1964) or Alba and Nee 2003 (Alba & Nee, 2003) just to name a few. What all of these approaches have in common is that they try to interlink more context-specific constraints with personal characteristics and vice versa – thus they try not only to conceptualise interlinkages between the structural conditions and individual practices but also to model feedback loops from the individual to the structural (emergence) (Sawyer, 2001). However, what these approaches have overlooked is the interwoven dynamic flux of change and/or stability on the individual and the structural level in a temporal perspective. Moreover, they struggle to conceptualise the permanent ongoing change over the course of time (the temporal), its contingency and the dynamic forms of adjustment within and between the different levels. Radically put – and drawing on Heraclitus (Chitwood, 2004: 66) – existing approaches still fail to model and understand the complex process of environment (or structural) frames of reference dynamics, migrants’ room for maneuver over time under these dynamics and the changes integration practices make to the environment while 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 simultaneous and longitudinal effects, are still poorly understood.

From our point of view, both Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) *Ecology of Human Development* and Giddens’ idea of “duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984: 25) offer an essential starting point for underpinning the LI idea, since both approaches understand the interaction between man and the environment as a nested interdependent arrangement of concentric structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 41), labeling

these structures micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems and conceptualizing them as both dynamic and contingent over the course of time.

Related to the integration of migrants (but this also holds for mobile persons in general), this means that the patterns of action and relationships that a migrant experiences during his stays and movement and performs in his micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22) are related to other contexts that are more or less visible to the subject. Based on Bronfenbrenner's definition 1 in the *Ecology of Human Development*, one could say that the scientific study of LI deals with "the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being" – in our case the migrant or mobile person – "the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 21) and the dynamics of this interlacement in temporal – both cross-sectional and longitudinal – perspective (Abbott, 2016; Dannefer et al., 2016).

The study of LI thus starts with the elaboration of liquid integration practices of the persons involved in social interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22). In a second step, the study of LI refers to the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25), to "the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates [...]". From the perspective of a migrant, for example, the relationship between the "borderland" (Agier, 2016), "camps" (Agamben, 1998), migrant or refugees reception centers, special schools or even special classes for migrants, all embody a mesosystem, and the migrant behavior cannot be properly understood, regardless of the particularities of these systems.

To do justice to the complexity of scrutinizing the dynamics of LI also means to focus on those areas (the exosystem) of life "that do not involve the developing person as an active participant" but which influence the settings in which the migrant is directly or indirectly involved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). From the perspective of the migrant, this could be for an example a social network, the media, charity organizations, the police etc. The migrant's maneuvering 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 systematise, contextualize and interpret the respective conditions or influencing factors for the individual actions of actors on the micro-level. It is also possible to model how the individual actions interact with or influence the processes on the other levels. By means of this depth of field and complexity of the modeling of LI processes, it is possible to trace the social meaning of migrant-specific actions back to intra- and interpersonal causes and thus at least begin to take into account the general problem of incomplete explanations (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 185).

The assumption that structural constraints have an impact on individual practices and that individual practices vice versa feed the structures is nothing new (see for example the discussion in Zollschan & Hirsch (1964)). Giddens

calls this phenomenon the “duality of structure” (Giddens, 1984: 25). Agents and structures are affiliated with each other and hence they are a precondition for each other’s existence (Giddens, 1984: 25). However, what is intended to be emphasized with the concept of “liquid integration” is the explicit focus on the reciprocity of individual adjustment, individual practice and structural change within the context of migration. The LI concept helps us 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 arenas (Lockwood, 1964: 252) and it helps us to interrelate these different dimensions for a processual understanding and a processual (time lag) explanation of “liquid integration” (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018, 2019) in the context of “liquid migration” (Engbersen, 2012: 98). The concept of LI “liquid integration” takes into account situational and personal conditions, its variations over time and the reciprocal relation/interrelatedness between the levels in temporality (Baas & Yeoh, 2018; Cresswell, 2006; Cwerner, 2001; Elder, 1994 ; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018; Urry, 2000). LI in temporality implies simultaneous as well as time lag 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).

Overall, this sequential LI perspective (Graph 1) leads to three central foci in the context of liquid integration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 192):

Focus on ‘duality’ effects (simultaneous) (Giddens, 1984: 25),

- a) Focus on cross-sectional stabilities and changes,
- b) Long-term effects.

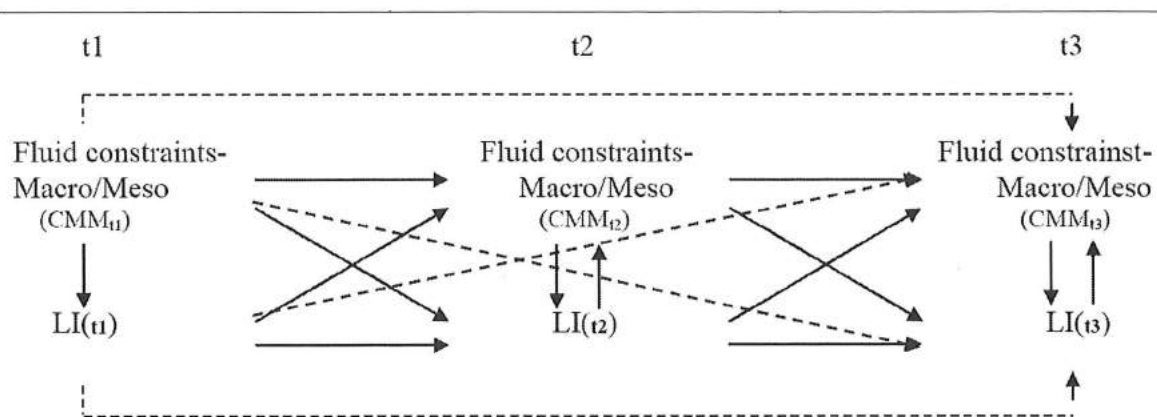
Based on the LI approach, the overall concept further assumes that migrants become actively engaged in defining their social situation and maneuver throughout their life-stage (Dannefer et al., 2016: 91; Elder, 1994; 1995: 47; Elder & Georg, 2016). In doing so, their subjective self-understanding of being agentic becomes discursively develop while a) interpreting, deciding/choosing, acting, incorporating, reproducing or changing their socio- cultural and economic environment/structures, b) being more or less aware of doing these things and c) while doing a and b achieving LI (Skrobanek & Karl, 2016: 99).

This iterative process perspective allows us to scrutinize

a) how change or stability of institutional and structural frameworks and evoking LI practices of migrants are interlaced,

b) to what extent structural and LI practice transformations increase or diminish living opportunities and

c) what effects LI practices and structural changes have on each other over the course of time (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018).



Note: LI = liquid integration = framing of situation, goals and practices as well as ongoing adjustment of framing, goals and practices in the context of fluidity/change of social and structural integration patterns in temporality.

**Pic. 1. Heuristic model for simultaneous and time lag effects in the context of LI.**

The proposed concept of liquid integration is principally open regarding the context of “grounded” or “non-grounded lives” (Bygnes & Erdal, 2017). 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 to sustain “ontological security” (Giddens, 1984: 23). However, there is no guarantee that chosen practices match contemporary structural conditions, especially if these contexts – as King underlines in regard to migration – change “both quantitatively and qualitatively” (King, 2018: 5). This “unpredictability” (King, 2018: 5) and “uncertainty” (Bauman, 2007: 1ff.; Blossfeld et al., 2005: 16) regarding adequate practices and related outcomes in the context of structural processes are the fertile soil for liquid integration. Moreover, since these intertwined processes are both complex in a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective, we argue for a dynamic multilevel and process-focused model of liquid integration.

**Conclusion.** The liquid integration argument proposed in this paper seeks to underline the dialectical structure–subject relationship in the field of migrant adjustment and structural change in the context of mobility/migration. Our point of departure was the idea of “liquid” modernity, times and society, first introduced by Bauman and later adapted to the context of migration – here especially liquid migration. By “liquid integration” we mean an integration which is characterised by a contingent life-long interdependency and interplay of personal and social structure development in the context of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000), “liquid society” (Bauman, 2007:1) and “liquid migration” (Engbersen, 2012: 98; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2018).

With the word ‘liquid’, the focus of the analysis turns from the static to the contingent processes and dynamics of adjustment and counter adjustments of individuals, their practices and structures in a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspec-

tive. In our perspective, this temporal intersection of individual and structural dynamics is yet to be sufficiently elaborated in the field of integration-migration research and this prevents us from adequately understanding the dynamics of liquid integration in the context of global change.

If the assumption holds that we presently live in a dynamist, risky, ever-changing and contingent world – then our argument has found the right context. It introduces a new term for understanding integration processes in ‘fluid’ and ‘liquid’ times and while doing so argues for a new theoretical perspective on integration, on the complex intersection of individual and structuration dynamics in temporality as well as for the application of new empirical strategies for modelling and researching liquid integration.

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