MARGINALISED EVERYWHERE!:
A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES OF QUEER INDIVIDUALS FROM TÜRKİYE IN BERLIN, GERMANY

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MARGINALISED EVERYWHERE!: A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES OF QUEER INDIVIDUALS FROM TÜRKİYE IN BERLIN, GERMANY

Durmuş Dikmen
121605022

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Büke Boşnak
İstanbul Bilgi University _____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Özge Onursal Beşgül
İstanbul Bilgi University _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Damla Bayrakter Aksel
Bahçeşehir University _____

Date of Approval: 6/26/2025

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Durmuş Dikmen

Signature:

ABSTRACT

Since 2010, the increasingly authoritarian political climate in Türkiye has led to systematic human rights violations and further exclusion of queer individuals from the public sphere. This tendency intensified particularly after the 2013 Gezi Protests, resulting in a visible increase in queer migration from the country. However, the increasing migration to Germany cannot solve the structural and social challenges faced by Türkiyeli queer individuals, even though their numbers have risen, as the complex and multilayered conditions of the migration context continue to persist. In this framework, this research examines the migration trajectories of queer individuals who have relocated from Türkiye to Berlin, with a particular focus on the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the process of social integration. Based on the intersectionality approach and the theory of social integration, this research explores how intersecting identity axes shape the experiences of queer migrants. Through qualitative research and semi-structured interviews, the research offers an empirical analysis of how NGOs contribute to the integration of Türkiyeli queer migrants in Berlin. The findings indicate that the fragility of NGO institutional structures, the broader political environment, and the migrants' dependency on social service professionals emerge as key factors influencing integration processes. In conclusion, this research highlights both the facilitating and limiting dimensions of NGO involvement. It reveals how civil society actors, despite their limitations, can serve as vital intermediaries in the resettlement and sense of belonging of migrants.

Keywords: Migration; Queer Migration; Intersectionality; Social Integration; Non-Governmental Organisations(NGOs)

ÖZ

2010 yılından bu yana Türkiye'de giderek otoriterleşen siyasi iklim, sistematik hak ihlallerine ve kuir bireylerin kamusal alandan daha fazla dışlanmasına yol açtı. Bu eğilim, özellikle 2013 Gezi Eylemleri'nden sonra yoğunlaşarak ülkeden kuir göçünde gözle görülür bir artışa neden oldu. Ancak Almanya'ya artan göç, Türkiyeli kuir bireylerin, sayı itibariyle artsalar da, karşılaştığı yapısal ve sosyal zorlukları kesinlikle çözemiyor, çünkü göç bağlamındaki karmaşık ve çok katmanlı koşullar varlığını sürdürmeye devam ediyor. Bu çerçevede, bu araştırma, Türkiye'den Berlin'e taşınan kuir bireylerin göç yörüngelerini, özellikle sivil toplum kuruluşlarının (STK'lar) sosyal entegrasyon sürecindeki rolüne odaklanarak incelemektedir. Kesişimsellik yaklaşımı ve sosyal entegrasyon teorisini temel alan bu çalışma, kesişen kimlik eksenlerinin, queer göçmenlerin deneyimlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırıyor. Nitel araştırma ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla yapılan bu çalışma, STK'ların Berlin'deki Türkiyeli kuir göçmenlerin entegrasyonuna nasıl katkıda bulunduğuna dair ampirik bir analiz sunmaktadır. Bulgular, STK kurumsal yapılarının kırılganlığının, daha geniş siyasi ortamın ve göçmenlerin sosyal hizmet uzmanlarına bağımlılığının entegrasyon süreçlerini etkileyen kilit faktörler olarak ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, STK katılımının hem kolaylaştırıcı hem de sınırlayıcı boyutlarını vurgulamaktadır. Sivil toplum aktörlerinin, göçmenlerin yeniden yerleşimi ve aidiyet duygusu konusunda sınırlılıklarına rağmen nasıl hayati aracılar olarak hizmet verebildiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç; Kuir Göç; Kesişimsellik; Sosyal Entegrasyon; Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları

To my mother, whose unwavering encouragement and resilience shaped who I am today

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I am also deeply grateful to all my loved ones who stood by me during this journey. Although I would have liked to thank each of them individually, for fear of leaving someone out, I would especially like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my dear friends. The meaning of this research lies not only in its academic achievement, but also in the personal significance it has gained through your support. Thank you for being by my side throughout this process. My own journey of migration to Germany has also been part of this path, and it has given me strength while conducting this research and deepened its meaning for me.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the participants who made this research possible. Thank you for trusting me, sharing your migration experiences, and generously offering your time and insight, as well as for the support you provided throughout the entire process. Without you, this research would not have been possible.

I am thankful to the Turkish Association in Berlin-Brandenburg (TBB) and the project team of My Family - Queers in Migrant Community for their generous support during my fieldwork. I also extend my gratitude to all civil society actors who contributed to this research, directly or indirectly, and to everyone who showed interest in it, those who listened, encouraged, celebrated, and reminded me of its value.

To my beloved family: I would like to thank, above all, my mother Ziyaver Dikmen, my dear sister Emine Samar, and my sweet niece Aden Samar. Your presence, your unconditional support at every step, and your care, not only asking what I had eaten but also how I felt, have always given me strength. *Sizi çok seviyorum*.

Lastly, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all queer individuals and communities in Türkiye and elsewhere who continue to resist, create, and care despite all forms of oppression. This research draws its inspiration from your courage, determination, and solidarities that transcend borders.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD: Alternative for Germany

AKP: Justice and Development Party

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

CDU: Christian Democratic Union

e.V: Registered Association

GLADT: Gays and Lesbians from Türkiye

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and others

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

QPoC: Queer People of Color

SOGIESC: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics

TBB: Turkish Union in Berlin-Brandenburg

INTRODUCTION

Migration has historically been a powerful and transformative force, significantly shaping the development of cultures, the formation of societies, the public sphere, and the construction of identities. It intersects with various fields such as sociology, psychology, law, economics, and security (Biroğlu, 2024).

There is a wealth of research on Türkiye-Germany migration, a prominent topic in the literature for many years. Migration between these two countries has been ongoing since 1961. The first wave of migration from Türkiye occurred that year, following a bilateral agreement between West Germany and Türkiye. Since then, migration from Türkiye has steadily grown (Gursel, 2018). The first generation of immigrants, who came through the labour migration agreement (Anwerbeabkommen), settled and built lives in Germany, forming the foundation for today's third generation of Turkish immigrants. As of 2023 , approximately 1.54 million Turkish people reside in Germany (*Türken in Deutschland bis 2023*, n.d.). A micro-census conducted in the German capital of Berlin revealed that the Turkish population stood at 109,280 as of 30 June 2024 (*Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg*, n.d.).

Whilst the primary assumption when migration is discussed is that it is a phenomenon of spatial mobility, it also brings with it multilayered challenges that intersect with individuals' gender, sexual orientation, race, class and national identities (Luibhéid & Cantu, 2005). Particularly in recent years, there has been a notable increase in literature on queer migration, as well as on the regions, communities, and experiences of queer individuals (M. T. Altay, 2019; Bayramoğlu, 2022; Gursel, 2018; Petzen, 2004). Accordingly, queer migration, which is the focal point of this study, is considered as a subfield of migration studies.

Berlin, the field of this study, holds particular significance in this context. With a large Turkish population, the city is also recognised as a queer city(Andersson, 2023; Çetin, 2018; Kosnick, 2016) Berliners often say, "Berlin is not like the rest of Germany." The city has long been celebrated for its open, "anything goes" atmosphere and is renowned

for its history of erotic and queer cabaret, earning its reputation as the capital of queer Germany (Petzen, 2004).

However, it is important to note the increasingly difficult conditions for queer individuals in Türkiye, especially in the past decade, where widespread homophobia, discrimination, and legal uncertainties have created a repressive environment. In contrast, Berlin offers a welcoming/safe space, known for its acceptance and inclusivity, making it an ideal city for individuals seeking a sense of community and belonging. The main objective of this study is to explore the migration experiences of Turkish queer migrants and examine the role of NGOs in facilitating their social integration. By placing these experiences within the broader frameworks of migration studies, queer theory, and social integration, this thesis aims to shed light on the complexities faced by Turkish queer migrants.

1.1. Research Question

When I moved to Germany two years ago, I was filled with hope as a queer person. I looked forward to finishing my studies and starting a new chapter in my life. However, I did not anticipate encountering both racism and homophobia in the country I had so much hope for. It took me time to find a space where I could integrate, despite the presence of a large Turkish community. As a queer migrant, I had expected to connect more easily due to this shared background, but it wasn't as straightforward.

As I explored Berlin, I began to think about the experiences of other queer migrants from Türkiye, which raised the question: How do queer migrants from Türkiye experience the migration process in Berlin? With a significant and growing Turkish population, Berlin has been chosen as the field. The city's reputation as a welcoming place for queer individuals is reflected in its diverse range of spaces and events that cater to the LGBTQ+ community. Berlin's landscape, featuring a queer archipelago of electronic dance music clubs (Andersson, 2023) events like the Christopher Street Day parade, Fuck Parade, and Carnival of Cultures, showcases the city's support for LGBTQ+ visibility and inclusivity (Tülü, 2023).

So, I started to think about how Turkish queer migrants find spaces where they can feel safe and belong. Do they have access to these spaces? What do these spaces offer them? Later I wondered whether there are any NGOs in Berlin that provide counselling for Turkish queer migrants. Subsequently, after some research, I came across two NGOs. When I saw the assistance and workshops they provided, these observations ultimately led me to my main research question: How do NGOs (non-governmental organisations) support the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin? Specifically, I aim to explore whether NGOs facilitate the social integration of Turkish queer individuals into Berlin's society and spaces. I also examine whether these services are accessible and how NGOs shape this process.

This research is critical in today's rapidly changing world, where understanding the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin holds both theoretical and empirical significance. The theoretical contribution lies in examining the intersectionality of migration and queer identities, offering insights into the unique challenges faced by this group. It will also help develop theoretical frameworks around migration, queer studies, and social inclusion.

Empirically, the study explores how NGOs support the integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin, revealing their roles and limitations based on the lived experiences of migrants. By gathering perspectives from migrants, this research can identify best practices for supporting social integration.

In order to unpack this main inquiry, the study also addresses two sub-questions. The first sub-question, How do queer individuals from Türkiye experience the migration process in Berlin?, focuses on the lived experiences of Turkish queer immigrants. This question is crucial because it highlights how their experiences may differ from non-queer migrants and reveals how queer identity intersects with the migration experience.

The second sub-question, What are the key challenges and opportunities encountered by Turkish queer migrants in terms of social integration? aims to identify the barriers and facilitators of integration. This understanding seeks to provide valuable insights for NGOs to develop support systems for this community.

Together, these research questions focus on the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin's urban context. By addressing these questions, the research seeks a deeper understanding of migration, queer identity, and social integration, while also offering empirical insights into how NGO practices intersect with queer migrants' lived experiences in Berlin.

1.2. State of Art

This thesis aims to explore the experiences of queer individuals immigrating from Türkiye to Berlin, focusing on their migration process and the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in facilitating social integration.

First, it is essential to explain the concept of a Türkiyeli queer migrant individual. When I refer to "Türkiyeli", I emphasize its diverse, multi-generational, and postnational connotations. The term "Turkish" is used as an attribute of Türkiyeli, not solely as a descriptor for Turk ethnicity. As Petzen (2004) noted, some people are not ethnically Turkish but come from Türkiye and have opted for Turkish citizenship. In addition, this distinction is important because the thesis focuses on marginalised individuals who migrated from Türkiye or were forced to migrate, aiming to be unifying rather than divisive.

This study will focus on semi-structured interviews with Turkish queer migrants residing in Berlin. Participants may have diverse migration backgrounds, including refugee status or migration for reasons such as education or employment. NGOs supporting migrants from Türkiye in Berlin help all migrants without making a clear distinction. Therefore, it is more accurate to evaluate and support these individuals under the general title of "migrant".

Many studies have examined how Turkish queer migrants navigate the often conflicting cultural norms and expectations of Turkish and German identities (Bayramoğlu, 2022; Kosnick, 2016; Petzen, 2004). Researchers have found that many queer migrants experience significant pressure from their families and communities to conform to traditional gender roles and heteronormative expectations, leading to feelings of isolation

and internal conflict as they attempt to reconcile their sexual and gender identities with their cultural heritage (ibid.)

Meanwhile, Turkish queer migrants face discrimination and marginalisation within the wider German society. Some studies emphasise how xenophobia exacerbates the difficulties experienced by this community (Çetin, 2018). However, despite these challenges, the literature also highlights the strategies Turkish queer migrants have developed to build community, find support, and defend their identities (Bayramoğlu, 2022; Gursel, 2018).

Berlin is a particularly significant field of study for examining Turkish queer migrant individuals. Many researchers have conducted their field studies in Berlin, which is considered the most queer-friendly city in Germany, with some even expressing that "it is not like the rest of Germany (Petzen, 2004). Furthermore, Berlin has a significant Turkish population, largely attributable to the influx of Türkiyeli migrants during the 1960s. In the present times, migration flows from Türkiye, particularly to Berlin, are still ongoing. Along with this migration flow, Berlin is actually one of the first destinations preferred by Turkish queer migrants.Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise Berlin's significant place in the queer scene. In consideration of the substantial queer population and the multitude of queer organisations and queer spaces in Berlin, the city represents a strategic location for reaching individuals from Türkiye who identify with queer communities.

1.2.1. Social Integration

The process of integration is instrumental in the migration experience. Some academics perceive the concept of integration as a contextual, personal and somewhat "chaotic" concept. Many studies emphasise that the concept of integration can have different meanings for individuals and that it is challenging to provide a comprehensive definition of the concept (Ager & Strang, 2008; Berry, 1997; Robinson, 1998).

In this context, it is evident that the concept of social integration is more comprehensive and detailed. In a comprehensive approach to the concept of social integration, Esser

(2001) has identified four dimensions. These dimensions are acculturation, interaction, identification and placement (Esser, 2001). Acculturation is defined as the acquisition of cultural knowledge and competencies that are effective in the interaction of migrant individuals with society. Interaction is the mutual interaction of migrant groups with host society members during the acculturation process. For example, this may manifest as friendships or marriages. This interaction, whether provided or attempted, signifies that migrants communicate with the host country's society, thereby fostering intimacy. Identification denotes individuals perceiving themselves as part of a collective entity and becoming situated within the social order. Therefore, it is addressed in the context of the migrants' sense of belonging, which may be to the host country society or an immigrant community from the country of origin. Placement differs from the other three dimensions in that it concerns the distribution of vertically valued resources such as rights, income or status. In contrast, differences in acculturation, interaction and identification refer initially only to horizontal differences without further valorisation or devaluation (Esser, 2002).

Esser highlights the interconnectivity of these four forms of social integration. Upon analysis of Esser's theory, it becomes evident that a specific temporal pattern and mode of integration emerge through a range of processes occurring within this time frame. It is important to note that the proposed sequence of integration is not a linear or absolute process. Rather, integration can be achieved to varying degrees, contingent on the unique experiences and processes undergone by individuals and groups (Karaköse, 2022).

In parallel with the model analysed by Esser under four dimensions, Wolfgang and Friedrich examine social integration as four basic forms. These are structural integration, cultural integration, and interactive and identificational integration. The authors briefly summarise social integration as follows:

> *"Social integration can be defined as the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society. Integration is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society. For the immigrants, integration means the process of learning a new culture, acquiring rights and obligations, gaining access to positions and social status, building personal relationships*

> *with members of the host society and forming a feeling of belonging to, and identification with, that society. For the host society, integration means opening up institutions and granting equal opportunities to immigrants. In this interaction, however, the host society has more power and more prestige."*
>
> *(Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 11)*

This study is based on the assumption that social integration is a multidimensional and dynamic process for migrant individuals. In this context, the four main dimensions of Esser's social integration model, acculturation, interaction, identification and placement, are preferred as the analytical framework. These four dimensions of Esser's (2001) model address the social integration process of migrants not only with superficial factors such as cultural adaptation or establishing social relations but also with in-depth factors such as a sense of belonging and the rights and status they acquire in society. Esser's four dimensions make it possible to conduct a multi-layered analysis by examining individuals' integration experiences at both horizontal (acculturation, interaction, identification) and vertical (placement) levels.

The reason for choosing this model is that it allows for a multidimensional understanding of social integration processes. The integration of immigrants into society is not limited to the acquisition of cultural skills; it also encompasses different areas such as developing social relationships, feeling part of new communities, and obtaining certain rights and statuses in society. Furthermore, all four dimensions have been chosen to address the experiences of Turkish queer migrants within a complex, transitional, and multi-layered network of social relations that are not limited to their identities as "migrants" or "queer." In this context, the theory's inclusivity is utilized to deepen the analysis of the study and reveal how individual experiences are shaped within structural and cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that this multidimensional social integration process may be deemed incomplete without an analysis that takes into account all of the individual's social positions simultaneously. In light of the aforementioned points, the intersectionality approach constitutes an additional theoretical dimension of the study.

The theory of intersectionality, as proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), posits that individuals encounter distinctive experiences as a consequence of possessing multiple marginalised identities. Consequently, the analysis of these experiences, according to Crenshaw, cannot be conducted through the utilisation of a single category. Crenshaw's examination of the specific forms of discrimination faced by black women due to both race and gender provides a guiding model for understanding the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by queer immigrants due to both their immigrant status and their sexual orientation/gender identity (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). This approach is significant not only due to the notion of multiplicity of identities, but also because it seeks to understand the simultaneous effects of social structures on individuals. Shephard (2016) combines intersectionality with transnational queer experiences to argue that queer migrants cannot be defined by fixed, singular identities; instead, they should be situated within variable, mutually influential contexts (Shephard, 2016, p.39). The study thus presents a unique theoretical synthesis by examining the social integration processes of Turkish queer migrants through both Esser's multidimensional integration framework and the intersectionality approach.

A further salient focus of this study is its limitation to institutionalised NGOs. Institutionalised NGOs have been found to contribute to the social integration processes of immigrant individuals with their professional service structures, resources, and support mechanisms (Aygün, 2019). In this context, the impact of the services provided by NGOs on Esser's four dimensions of integration will be analysed. The evaluation will systematically analyse how services such as legal counselling, psychosocial support, and housing assistance offered to migrant individuals by NGOs contribute to the integration of individuals. In this framework, the analytical framework is structured according to Esser's four dimensions. This enables a comprehensive and intersectional understanding of the social integration process of Turkish queer migrant individuals. It also demonstrates how institutionalised NGOs in Berlin facilitate this process.

1.3. Structure of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, the general scope of the study, the research question, the state of art and the limitations of the study are explained. In the second chapter, the literature review and methodology subheadings regarding the analytical structure of the study are addressed. Within the scope of the literature review, the study is discussed through three main theoretical frameworks: social integration, queer theory emphasising on intersectionality and non-governmental organisations. In the methodology section, the social integration theory used in the study and the thematic analysis carried out with the intersectionality approach are explained in depth. In the third chapter, the migration motivations of Turkish queer individuals, their visibility in Germany and their relations with queer spaces; finally, the institutionalised civil society structure in Germany and the activities of two NGOs, TBB and GLADT, which are within the scope of this study, are elaborated in detail. In the fourth chapter, the study is analysed under four main headings: acculturation, placement, interaction and identification, and the findings from the field work are discussed under these headings. Lastly, the final chapter tries to answer how NGOs play a role in the social integration processes of Turkish queer migrants.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this thesis stem primarily from the fact that the study area focuses only on NGOs in Berlin that support queer individuals from Türkiye. This limits the generalisability of the findings to other organisations working with different migrant groups. This means that while the results may provide valuable insights for NGOs assisting Turkish queer migrants in Germany, they may not be fully applicable to organisations supporting individuals from different ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, as a master's thesis conducted in a limited timeframe, the research focuses only on the social integration of Turkish queer migrants and does not address the dimension of system integration in depth. The scope of this study also does not cover other important areas such as queer spaces and public spaces. In addition, the study

exclusively focuses on institutionalised NGOs, thereby excluding non-institutionalised civil society formations and grassroots social movements. While these informal networks may play a crucial role in the lives of queer migrants, especially in urban contexts like Berlin, their fluid and decentralised nature posed methodological limitations that rendered them beyond the scope of this research.

This limitation emphasises the need for future research to examine broader dimensions as well as the experiences of other diverse groups of queer migrants in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the struggles and opportunities queer migrants encounter.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter's purpose is twofold: to provide a comprehensive overview of the research's theoretical and methodological underpinnings and to present the research question in concrete terms. It is structured into two sections: a literature review and a detailed exposition of the methodology. In the subsequent section, a literature review will be conducted to elaborate on previous studies and to provide a conceptual basis for the research question. The literature review will be grounded in three primary strands of literature, namely social integration, queer theory with an emphasis on intersectionality, and the role of NGOs in assisting migrant individuals.

2.1. Literature Reivew

The literature review is a critical component of any research endeavour. It establishes a comprehensive context for the study, facilitates the identification of gaps in existing knowledge, and identifies the most significant theoretical frameworks that can be adapted to address the research question (Karabacak, 2021). The fundamental research question guiding this study is, "How do NGOs support the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin?". This research question draws from three main areas of literature: social integration, queer theory emphasising intersectionality, and the role of NGOs in assisting migrant individuals. Therefore, the subsequent literature review has been organised into three sub-sections to explore these concepts in depth. The first of these sub-sections concerns the definition of social integration, the second addresses the concept of queer theory and intersectionality, and the third examines the role of NGOs in the social integration of queer immigrants. It is evident that, when considered collectively, these frameworks underscore the significance of the research question and this study.

2.1.1. What Is Social Integration? A Brief Introduction to Social Integration

The phenomenon of migration has historically been a powerful and transformative force, significantly influencing the development of cultures, the formation of societies, and the construction of public space and identities. It intersects with various fields, including sociology, psychology, law, economics, and security. Currently, migration is a prominent topic in both academic and political discourse globally (Kaya, 2018).

Immigrants entail the transfer of linguistic and cultural capital (including religious beliefs, worldviews, and traditions) to the host society. This can give rise to tensions between the cultural values of the country of origin and those of the host country. Consequently, the integration of migrants has become a prominent topic of academic inquiry in recent years (Uslu, 2022).

While cultural differences are generally seen as a richness (*Göç Ve Kültür*, n.d.; Hofstede, 1984), sociocultural conflicts resulting from these differences with migration have prompted significant inquiries. The question of how immigrants will integrate into the host society, the level of acceptance of immigrants by the host society, and how different socio-cultural groups will live together has become a focal topic of discussion in migration studies (Uslu, 2022).The issue of integration, which is frequently discussed in the Western-centred international migration and asylum literature, has been addressed from the perspective of civil society in the context of making political demands, social movements and civic participation studies since the 1990s, with the prominence of the universal human rights perspective and the inclusion of migrants in society (De Haas et al., 2019; Halm & Sezgin, 2012).

A review of the literature reveals that some scholars view integration as a contextual, personal, and somewhat “chaotic” concept. These scholars highlight that integration can hold different meanings for individuals and that it is challenging to present a comprehensive definition of the concept (Ager & Strang, 2008; Berry, 1997; Robinson, 1998).

Berry (1997) demonstrates in the ‘Migration, Acculturation and Adaptation’ study that integration is a multidimensional concept. Berry discusses the processes of migration, acculturation and adaptation, how individuals adapt to a new culture and the factors that influence these processes. He argues that cultural adaptation is a dynamic process that leads to changes in the cultural patterns of both groups (migrant and host society). Berry argues that this process involves both opportunities and challenges for individuals and the efforts and outcomes of individuals in adapting to this new environment.

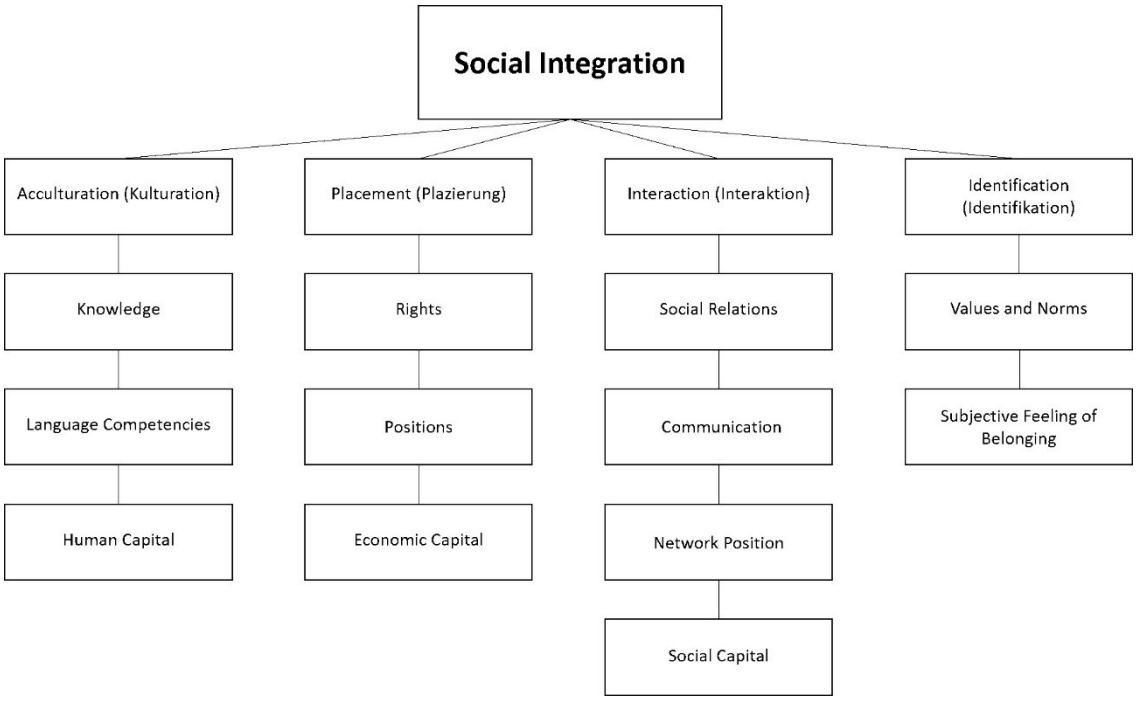
In this study, Berry (1997) puts forth the proposition that there are four acculturation strategies that individuals may adopt in the process of cultural adaptation. These strategies are as follows: segregation/separation, assimilation, marginalisation and integration. He sets forth these strategies: 1) Segregation/separation represents an acculturation strategy in which individuals elect to maintain their own cultural identity and characteristics, eschewing interaction with the host society. 2) Assimilation signifies the complete adaptation of individuals to the culture of the host society, with the concomitant relinquishment of their own cultural identity. 3) Marginalisation can be defined as the detachment of individuals from both their own cultural identity and the cultural characteristics of the host society. The fourth strategy, integration, involves simultaneously preserving the individual's cultural characteristics and participation in the new culture. Berry (1997) highlights that among the four acculturation strategies, integration is the most beneficial for individuals, facilitating positive adaptation.

The study also examines the factors influencing cultural adaptation and acculturation processes. These factors include age, gender, education level, reasons for migration, cultural values of the new society and social support systems. Berry posits that these factors interact in a complex way, influencing the cultural adaptation processes and adaptations of individuals. The results of the study underscore the significance of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, offering valuable insights for researchers, policymakers and practitioners engaged in the field of migration and cultural adaptation (Berry, 1997).

Berry’s (1997) context is conceptually connected with Esser's (2001) “Integration und Ethnische Schichtung” (2001). Esser emphasises the opportunities and obstacles that individuals face in social, economic and cultural contexts, particularly when explaining

the social integration processes of immigrants. Esser (2001) analyses social integration through four main dimensions: acculturation, interaction, identification and placement (see Figure 2.1.).

Figure 2.1. Dimensions of Social Integration



(Source: *Adapted from Esser (Esser, 2001). Translated by the author.*)

Esser (2001) categorises integration under two main headings: system integration and social integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007). The origin of this distinction is based on Lockwood's (1964) research, "Social Integration and System Integration".

Lockwood defines system integration as "regular or conflicting relationships between parts of the whole", whereas he explains social integration as "regular or conflicting relationships between actors in a social system" (Lockwood, 1964). In this framework, Lockwood defines system integration as a spontaneous functioning of the social structure and integration that emerges independently of the goals of individual actors, while social integration is an integration process based on direct interactions of individuals and groups.

Esser (2001) places emphasis on the integration distinction, which highlights the role of social structure, a factor that is often neglected in integration debates. Building on Lockwood's fundamental conceptualisation, Esser examines both the mechanisms of integration within the functioning of the social system and the processes of direct inclusion of individuals into society with a comprehensive approach (Esser, 2001).

In this distinction, Esser analyses the different dimensions of social integration in a more systematic framework. He defines these four basic dimensions as acculturation (Kulturation), placement (Plazierung), interaction (Interaktion) and identification (Identifikation) (see figüre 2.1.). Esser briefly defines these dimensions as follows: Acculturation is defined as the acquisition of cultural knowledge and competencies that are effective in the interaction of immigrant individuals with the host society. Interaction is the mutual interaction of immigrant groups with members of the host society in the process of acculturation. This interaction may, for example, take the form of friendships and/or marriages. This indicates that, whether achieved or attempted, immigrants are communicating with the society of the host country and thus fostering proximity. Identification refers to individuals' perception of themselves as part of a collective entity and their placement within the social order in the host society. It is, therefore, addressed in the context of immigrants' sense of belonging, which may be to the host country society or a community of immigrants from the country of origin. Placement differs from the other three dimensions in that it concerns the distribution of vertically valued resources such as rights, income or status (Esser, 2009).

Esser's acculturation dimension of social integration resonates with Berry's (1997) emphasis on individual cultural adaptation. However, while Berry explains cultural adaptation at the individual level (Berry, 1997), Esser (2001) provides a more comprehensive context for the process by analysing the effects of this integration on social mechanisms. In particular, Esser (2006), in his study "Migration, Sprache und Integration", focuses on the role of language acquisition as a facilitating factor in the participation of individuals in social life and the labour market. Subsequently, Esser argues that multiple identities and resources, such as bilingualism, do not always facilitate integration and may even strengthen ethnic segmentation (Esser, 2009).

In parallel with Esser's model, which was analysed under four dimensions, Wolfgang and Friedrich also examine social integration in four basic forms. These are structural integration, cultural integration, and interactive and identificational integration. Bosswick and Heckmann (2007) provide a concise summary of social integration as follows:

> *" Social integration can be defined as the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society. Integration is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society. For the immigrants, integration means the process of learning a new culture, acquiring rights and obligations, gaining access to positions and social status, building personal relationships with members of the host society and forming a feeling of belonging to, and identification with that society. For the host society, integration means opening up institutions and granting equal opportunities to immigrants. In this interaction, however, the host society has more power and more prestige"*
>
> *(Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007, p. 11)*

Bosswick and Heckmann analyse social integration in terms of structural, cultural, social and identity integration. They emphasise how these dimensions are shaped by local policies and social dynamics. Similar to Bosswick and Heckmann's (2007) study, Esser analyses the effects of integration in the local context. However, Esser analyses this point from a more critical perspective. As such, Esser concentrates on how ethnic concentrations can prevent integration. He emphasises that the main factor here is related to ethnic segregation and disadvantages observed in the labour market (Esser, 2009).

Ager and Strang's (2008) study "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework" is another study in parallel with the studies mentioned above. In this study, Ager and Strang explain the integration framework through individuals' participation in society, social bridges and connections (Ager & Strang, 2008). This framework is related to Esser's (2001) interactional integration dimension (see figure 1). While Ager and Strang emphasise the mostly positive implications of social ties in the integration process, Esser

offers a critical perspective on the limiting aspects of these ties. Indeed, as mentioned above, he emphasises that social ties based on ethnicity may limit the opportunities that individuals face in the labour market and society.

In light of these, Esser's (2001;2002) theoretical and empirical has an important place in the literature in understanding integration as a multidimensional process. While there are many points of intersection with the studies of researchers such as Berry (1997), Bossnick and Heckmann (2007), and Ager & Strang (2008), Esser's (2001) analytical and critical perspective can be considered an important basis for researchers and policymakers to investigate the social integration processes of migrants. The present study adopts Esser's (2001) four-dimensional model as a primary analytical framework due to its capacity to conceptualise integration through structurally distinct yet interconnected domains. These dimensions not only enable a systematic categorisation of social integration, but also provide a coherent basis for analysing complex positionalities when used in conjunction with intersectionality theory. Although Esser's approach has been critiqued for its traditional orientation, in this study it is critically recontextualised to better capture the differentiated experiences of queer migrants. Complementarily, Ager and Strang's (2008) model serves as an additional reference point, particularly in regard to social bonds and domains of access such as housing, employment, education, and health. Their approach aligns closely with Esser's interactional dimension and contributes a more contemporary lens for understanding how access to rights and relational belonging impact integration outcomes.

2.1.2. Queer Theory and Intersectionality

A fundamental argument of queer theory is that identities are not stable and natural, but a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly constructed under the influence of social structures and norms (Butler, 1999)[1]. Butler's (1999) "Gender Trouble, Feminism and

[1] Judith Butler's "Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity" was first published in 1990 and reissued in 1999.

Subversion of Identity" is considered as one of the fundamental works of queer theory (Halperin, 1995; Sedgwick, 2024; Sullivan, 2003).She proposes to rethink the concepts of social norms and performativity[2] from a queer perspective. She defines gender as a performance produced through repeated social practices rather than an inherent basis (Butler, 1999). By this approach, Butler argues against the traditional gender binary (male/female) and suggests that gender should be considered in a polyvalent and flexible context.

The concept of intersectionality was first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the study "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (Carastathis, 2016; Collins, 2022). Crenshaw (1989) developed the concept of intersectionality as a framework for understanding individuals' experiences of marginalisation resulting from the intersection of identity components such as race, gender and class. This concept emphasises the unique forms of marginalisation created by the intersection of different forms of discrimination, such as race and gender. Crenshaw's (1989) works have particularly focused on showing how both race and gender norms marginalise Black women. This has transformed feminist theory and the fields of social justice (Crenshaw, 1989).

Cooper (2015) reinterpreted intersectionality in the context of queer theory and extended this approach through migration experiences. Cooper examined how queer identities intersect with migration processes and how these processes shape marginalisation. According to Cooper (2015), identity elements such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and immigration status profoundly affect the form of oppression that individuals are

[2] Judith Butler's concept of performativity draws heavily upon J.L. Austin's understanding of speech acts, Michel Foucault's analysis of the dynamic between discourse and power and Jacques Derrida's deconstructive engagement with iterability. Gender, far from being a natural or innate characteristic, is a social construct produced and reinforced through deeply embedded behaviours and social norms. These norms shape gender expression, reinforcing heteronormativity and broader social hierarchies (Butler, 1999, 2011).

subjected to. The combination of these elements makes the discrimination faced by queer individuals more complex (B. Cooper, 2015).

Intersectionality, when considered in conjunction with queer theory, provides a multifaceted perspective on the intersection of gender, sexual orientation and ethnic identities, as well as the reproduction of these identities within social contexts (Butler, 1999). Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework, in collaboration with Cooper's (2015) expanded analyses utilising queer theory, facilitates a more profound comprehension of the intricate structure of identities and the dynamics of social power. While Butler (1999) does not explicitly state that gender is an intersectional construct with other identity categories such as race and class, her critique of the normative constructions of gender and sexuality provides a significant foundation for analysing the dynamics of these intersections. To illustrate this, consider Butler's (1999) theory of performativity, which demonstrates how gender is shaped not only by individual performances but also by racial and class norms (Butler, 1999).

The following theories offer the possibility of bringing together different perspectives in analysing the social integration processes of queer migrants by examining the processes of marginalisation and exclusion arising from the intersection of gender, sexual orientation and ethnic identities. In a multicultural city like Berlin, which is the focal point of this study, the social integration of queer migrants is not only a cultural integration process but also a dynamic process in which gender, sexual orientation and ethnic identities are constantly reshaped in the social context. The extant literature offers a variety of approaches to understanding the various dimensions of queer intersectionality. Based on Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, studies are focusing on the multi-layered forms of discrimination experienced by queer individuals. Cooper (2015) examines the marginalisation processes experienced by queer migrants, whilst Butler's (1999) performativity theory is utilised to understand how queer identities are negotiated beyond normative structures.

Queer identities are analysed in interaction with both individual experiences and social and political contexts (Gursel, 2018). In this context, Gürsel's (2018) work, "Berlin'deyim Aşkım!: On Performativity, Advocacy and Transnational Solidarity amongst Queer,

Turkish-Speaking Migrants in Berlin", is particularly pertinent. This study focuses on the experiences of Turkish-speaking queer individuals in Berlin in a transnational context. Gürsel's (2018) analysis explores the performative expression of these individuals' identities, intersecting it with their advocacy and solidarity practices. The study delves into the formation of solidarity networks among Turkish-speaking queer migrants in a multicultural metropolis such as Berlin and how these networks function as a resistance mechanism against marginalisation. It provides a comprehensive overview of solidarity practices and offers insightful analyses of the effects of these practices on the relations between gender, language and culture.

Altay's (2019) work, Negotiating Community Engagements and Alliances: Queer People of Color and Turkish Migrants in Berlin, goes beyond simply addressing cooperation and negotiation processes within the community of queer individuals and Turkish migrants in Berlin. It makes significant contributions to the literature by placing intersectionality at the centre of its analysis. Altay (2019) demonstrates how alliances and conflicts within the queer community impact the experiences of marginalization faced by queer individuals. Furthermore, this study utilizes intersectionality as a crucial tool for analyzing the complex social relations experienced by the new wave of Turkish LGBTQ migrants in Berlin. This approach aids in unravelling the multiple forms of oppression they face, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation (M. T. Altay, 2019). He also argues that analyzing oppression solely through isolated identity categories fails to capture the complex realities faced by individuals, advocating instead for a more holistic understanding of how various forms of oppression intersect. In other words, the central proposition of Altay's (2019) critique of intersectionality is that addressing any form of oppression solely within separate identity categories like gender, race, or sexual orientation cannot fully reflect the intricate and inseparable realities of individuals who encounter multiple forms of oppression. These oppressions are often intertwined and cannot be analyzed in isolation (M. T. Altay, 2019). The study focuses on the struggles of queer individuals as they navigate their communities while simultaneously striving for existence within a broader social context.

Specifically highlighting the experiences of queer people of color (QPoC) as a reflection of multiple layers of oppression, Altay (2019) examines how QPoC negotiate their identities within both LGBTQ and ethnic communities, thereby revealing the complexity of their social positions in Europe. In this context, Altay (2019) emphasises the significance of positionality, stating that the identities of new wave Turkish LGBTQ migrants are not fixed but are shaped by their interactions within QPoC spaces, challenging traditional notions of race and ethnicity (M. T. Altay, 2019). In light of these observations, Altay (2019) posits that QPoC spaces facilitate intricate interactions that influence debates surrounding racial and ethnic locations, thus offering a comprehensive insight into the broader implications of intersectionality. These implications are paramount in understanding how marginalised groups encounter exclusion and discrimination.

Bayramoğlu et al.'s (2024) study "Transnational Queer Cultures and Digital Media" comprehensively addresses the transformative role of digital media in the construction of queer identities and the formation of transnational queer cultures. The study examines the contributions of digital media to the creation of a new queer public sphere that transcends geographical boundaries and questions traditional social norms. The authors emphasise that digital platforms, especially social media platforms, offer a unique space of expression, communication and connection for transnational queer individuals (Bayramoğlu et al., 2024). On these platforms, queer individuals can freely express their identities, connect with like-minded individuals and share their own experiences. The study emphasises that especially social media platforms play a vital role for queer individuals in the processes of expressing their identities in a performative way, sharing their experiences, developing a sense of belonging and building online communities. Practices such as digital activism, digital storytelling and virtual events are presented as examples of how digital media can be used to disseminate queer cultures and strengthen transnational queer communities. The study also draws attention to the inequalities in access and representation created by digital media for some queer groups. Ultimately, Bayramoğlu et al.(2024) provide an important study that examines the transformative impact of digital media on queer cultures and the opportunities and challenges created by this impact in depth.

In the context of the reviewed literature, these studies demonstrate that queer identities are not only limited to individual experiences but are also shaped by complex interactions with social, political and cultural contexts (M. T. Altay, 2019; Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Butler, 2011; B. Cooper, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Gursel, 2018). In conclusion, it is evident that queer theory and intersectionality provide a significant theoretical framework for comprehending the social integration of migrants, particularly in a multicultural city such as Berlin. The integration processes of queer migrants are not merely a cultural adaptation but rather a dynamic process that intersects with gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic identities. This theoretical perspective serves as a potent instrument for grasping the multifaceted experiences of marginalisation encountered by queer individuals.

2.1.3. The Role of the NGOs in the Social Integration of Queer Migrants

As previously mentioned, "social integration" can be defined as including and accepting migrants into the host society's fundamental institutions, relationships and positions. Integration is defined as an interactive and multidimensional process between immigrants and the host society (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2007).

However, this process is subject to many parameters, including language barriers, discrimination, legal uncertainties, cultural incompatibilities and lack of interaction with local communities (Esser, 2006). In this context, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) emerge as significant actors in assisting migrants with the challenges they encounter, by establishing supportive social networks and accelerating social integration processes (Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran, 2022). The existing literature examines the contributions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this domain, along with the challenges they face, and puts forward approaches to the integration process of migrants (Aksel & Boşnak, 2022; Bockmeyer, 2006; Sunata & Tosun, 2019; Zihnioğlu & Dalkıran, 2022).

The social integration of immigrants is not merely an individual integration process but rather a multifaceted process that necessitates alterations in social norms and policies

(Aksel & Boşnak, 2022). A multitude of studies across Europe underscore the multifaceted challenges confronted by migrants and the pivotal role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in this process. A notable example of this is provided by the study "The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Integration of Third Country Nationals in the European Union" by Odorige (2018). In this study, Odorige (2018) analysed the role of NGOs in migrant integration in the context of Germany and Hungary and demonstrated that these organisations undertake important functions in areas such as language training, access to the labour market and building social ties. However, the study also emphasises that the lack of a long-term vision of integration policies and the inadequacy of government-NGO cooperation limit the effectiveness of these processes (Odorige, 2018). The study also examines in detail how NGOs play key roles in social interaction and identity construction (ibid. p. 240). Although this research does not directly address queer individuals as the main focus, it is important as a comprehensive examination to understand the role of NGOs in general.

A further study, "Cracking the Swedish Code: A Case Study on Integration of Migrants by NGOs in Malmö" by Igefjord (2023), reveals how non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support migrants' social capital development and access to the labour market. It is emphasised that NGOs operating in Malmö accelerate the integration processes of migrants by establishing social networks to facilitate language training, adaptation to bureaucracy and understanding of local functioning. However, the study also points out that integration is often treated as a one-way process, with insufficient emphasis on the responsibility of the host society to integrate (Igefjord, 2023).

Building on this, Ozbay's (2018) research, titled "Fighting to Get Friends: The Effect of Civil Society Activities on Social Integration of Refugees Experiences of Refugees from a Danish Civil Society Organization", examines the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the social integration process of refugees in Denmark. Ozbay (2018) emphasises that social activities and support groups offered by NGOs reduce refugees' sense of loneliness and enable them to participate more effectively in society. Furthermore, it is asserted that these organisations facilitate the development of social and human capital among refugees, thereby contributing to their integration into the host

community. Refugees themselves assert that the integration process is a mutual endeavour, emphasising the importance of active participation by both refugees and the host community (Ozbay, 2018). The research reveals that refugees perceive the integration process as a moral and economic responsibility, underscoring their commitment to contributing to their host societies. This study underscores the pivotal role of social and human capital in the integration process, highlighting that NGOs not only address the immediate needs of refugees but also foster social integration by providing support in crucial domains such as language proficiency and access to information (Ozbay, 2018).

From this general context, with a focus on the integration processes of queer individuals, it is evident that they involve more specific dynamics. The social integration of migrants, especially queer individuals, is a complex and multifaceted process involving various stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organisations (Mole, 2021). Existing literature on this topic highlights the challenges queer migrants face, such as navigating their intersecting identities, accessing basic services, and building a sense of community in the host country. Non-governmental organisations have become significant actors in addressing the challenges faced by queer migrants and facilitating their social integration. These organisations typically offer a range of services that are essential for the successful integration of queer migrants, including legal assistance, language courses, cultural orientation, and psychosocial support (Aygün, 2019).

In the context of queer migrants from Türkiye to Berlin, the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in facilitating this integration process is of particular importance. Existing studies on this topic emphasise the challenges faced by queer migrants, such as navigating their intersecting identities, accessing basic services and building a sense of community in the host country (M. T. Altay, 2019; Aygün, 2019; Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Petzen, 2004). While there are numerous studies in the literature analysing the Turkish community in the context of diaspora, research on the experiences of Turkish LGBTQ+ individuals is limited (Bayramoğlu et al., 2024; Gursel, 2018; Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2014; Petzen, 2004) While the extant literature focuses on the integration of Turkish people into German society, the unique problems faced by queer individuals in this

process have not been sufficiently addressed (M. T. Altay, 2019). This situation makes it difficult for queer migrants to negotiate their identities and feel belonging even within their communities(Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2014; Verkuyten, 2016).

Aygün's (2019) study, "Practice, Prospects and Challenges of NGOs Working with LGBTIQ Asylum-Seekers in Germany: Homonationalism as a Practice-Informing Concept for International Social Work with LGBTIQ Asylum-Seekers and Refugees", emphasises that services for LGBTIQ individuals both enable individuals to express their identities freely and facilitate their participation in society. The study demonstrates that services such as hormone therapy, psychosocial support and legal counselling for transgender individuals assist queer migrants in coping with the discrimination and exclusion they encounter (Aygün, 2019). In this context, the study offers a more in-depth insight by examining practical services for LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees, in contrast to previous studies that have focused exclusively on legal frameworks. It is also argued that NGOs are influenced by concepts such as homonationalism[3], which can impose limitations on the support provided to queer individuals. Aygün emphasises that the frameworks within which NGOs operate can, at times, result in the marginalisation of non-normative identities and that asylum organisations frequently offer a limited understanding of queerness. In line with broader debates in the literature, attention is also drawn to the gaps in understanding how the lived experiences of LGBTIQ individuals intersect with other systems of power, such as class, race, and nationality (ibid.).

Despite its reputation as one of the most inclusive cities in Germany for queer people, Berlin still faces significant integration challenges for queer immigrants (Sozashvili, 2023). Sozashvili's (2023) study "Towards Another Closet?! The Social Integration-related Experiences of Georgian LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers in Berlin, Germany"

[3] Puar (2018) defines homonationalism as the intersection of national identity and specific homonormative values. This concept posits that certain queer identities are regarded as "acceptable" provided they adhere to heteronormative norms, while others are marginalised (Puar, 2018). The three main symptoms in Puar's definition (sexual exceptionalism, queerness becoming a regulatory norm, and whiteness supremacy) are adapted in Aygün's (2019) study to understand the approach of NGOs in Germany towards LGBTIQ individuals (Aygün, 2019, pp. 29-31).

examines the integration process of queer individuals migrating from Georgia to Berlin in the context of intersectional discrimination. The study reveals that queer individuals are exposed to multi-layered discrimination not only due to their gender identities but also due to their refugee status. This combination of factors significantly hinders the establishment of social ties and integration into local society among these migrants. The research demonstrates that, in addition to the systemic discrimination experienced within state institutions, queer individuals face exclusion within their own ethnic communities. This situation confirms the difficulties of queer individuals to negotiate their identities and feel a sense of belonging in the Berlin context (ibid.). The study also acknowledges the crucial role played by some NGOs in Berlin in establishing safe spaces for queer migrants and promoting social integration. Nevertheless, the study underscores that, despite the provision of opportunities for the cultivation of social networks, precarious livelihoods, discrimination in employment, and uncertainties impacting the well-being of individuals persist as ongoing challenges (ibid.).

In light of the aforementioned discussion, it can be concluded that this literature review, which extends from Europe in general to the Berlin context, clearly demonstrates the multidimensional roles of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the integration processes of queer immigrants. The aforementioned organisations assume vital functions such as strengthening the social bonds of queer individuals, combating discrimination and creating safe spaces where they can freely express their identities.

Nevertheless, as documented in the extant literature, such efforts fall short of fully addressing the intersectional challenges faced by queer individuals, and more comprehensive studies are needed (Manalansan, 2006; Shephard, 2016). As Manalansan (2006) and Shephard (2016) emphasise, a significant number of studies on queer migration either neglect the concept of queer identity in the context of migration or prioritise migration while relegating sexual orientation and gender identity to a secondary position. Indeed, Altay (2019) and Gürsel (2018) have also revealed that Turkish queer migrants in Berlin experience exclusion due to both their migrant and queer identities. Aygün's (2019) study demonstrates that these intersectional experiences are predominantly overlooked in the services provided by NGOs to LGBTIQ+ refugees. The

central objective of this thesis is to address the shortcomings of both fields by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the social integration of Turkish queer migrants.

To sum up, as was stated above, Esser's (2001) four-dimensional integration model constitutes the conceptual framework of this study. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationships between individuals and their host society. This model has been utilised to analyse the social integration processes of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin. The analysis encompasses not only economic and structural domains but also social relationships and levels of belonging. Complementing this, intersectionality has been adopted to understand the forms of exclusion experienced by queer immigrants due to their multiple identities. This approach, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), reveals how individuals are subject to specific forms of exclusion at the intersection of multiple marginal identities. It is evident from studies such as those by Manalansan (2006) and Shephard (2016) that queer migrants are subject to dual exclusion within both the migrant community and the queer community. This demonstrates that intersectionality plays a pivotal role in the analysis of these groups. In the context of a relatively inclusive city such as Berlin, where the study is conducted, it is imperative to recognise that the challenges faced by queer migrants in their daily lives can be comprehensively understood by considering these multiple identities in conjunction.

Moreover, the present study's original contribution lies in its emphasis on the role of NGOs in the integration processes of Turkish queer migrants. In the extant literature, the social support mechanisms, legal counselling, psychosocial assistance, and cultural mediation activities provided by non-governmental organisations, particularly for immigrants, have been discussed in various contexts in terms of how they can be effective in integration processes. Nevertheless, the impact of these services on intersectionally marginalised groups, such as queer migrants, remains under-researched. The present thesis aims to address this lacuna by seeking to understand how the services provided by NGOs shape the social integration of Turkish queer migrants.

It is important to bear in mind that Hartmut Esser's four-dimensional integration model provides a comprehensive framework at the structural and cultural levels, it does not

analytically consider identity-based differences such as gender, sexual orientation, or queer identity. Esser's integration theory focuses primarily on variables such as ethnic origin, language proficiency, social networks, and institutional participation. However, this theoretical framework cannot explain the marginalisation of queer individuals. The present thesis puts forward a more comprehensive analysis of the multi-layered experiences of exclusion faced by queer immigrants. To this end, it employs Esser's model in conjunction with an intersectional approach.

In conclusion, the place and importance of this study in the relevant literature can be evaluated at three levels. Firstly, it reinterprets Esser's model from an intersectional perspective by analysing the multi-layered structure of social integration in the case of queer immigrants. Secondly, it makes an empirical contribution to intersectionality theory by revealing the forms of marginalisation experienced by queer immigrants, both at the individual level and at the structural level. Thirdly, by examining the role of NGOs in social integration processes within a queer context, it offers a critical and original contribution to the literature on civil society. In addressing these lacunae, the central objective of the thesis is to make a significant contribution to extant theoretical and practical discourses by undertaking a thorough analysis of the social integration experiences of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin.

2.2. Methodology

The present chapter delineates the methodological framework that guides this research, including the fieldwork and analysis processes. Its objective is to ensure that the selected empirical methods align with the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter is structured in two sections: the first provides a comprehensive overview of the application of multiple qualitative research methods, including interviews and participant observations; the second focuses on the implementation of these methods in the field and their subsequent analysis.

2.2.1. Multiple Qualitative Methodology

In this study, multiple qualitative methodology was employed to comprehensively examine the social integration experiences of Turkish queer migrants. Since qualitative research allows us to investigate the subjective experiences of individuals and their meanings in a social context (Rudestam & Newton, 2014), it has been chosen as the methodological approach for this study. Moreover, qualitative methodologies are especially well-suited for gaining profound insights into the experiences of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups(individuals who are marginalised and exposed to multiple forms of exclusion) (Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2023). In this context, terms such as "disadvantaged" and/or "vulnerable" refer not only to individual vulnerabilities but also to the multi-layered structural inequalities experienced by queer migrants due to their intersecting identities, such as ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, and migrant status. This study therefore examines queer migrant individuals not merely as disadvantaged groups but as individuals whose intersectional identities render them both visible and excluded within social contexts.

The theoretical framework utilised in this study is predicated on Esser's four-dimensional social integration theory, a concept that was thoroughly expounded upon in the preceding section. However, the present study examines Esser's model in conjunction with queer theory, which foregrounds intersectionality, because Esser's model does not provide an analysis in the context of identity, such as gender, sexual orientation or queer identity. Instead, Esser (2001) focuses more on structural variables such as origin, language proficiency, social networks, and institutional participation, and is not theoretically sufficient to explain the intersectional experiences of queer individuals. Therefore, this thesis examines the social integration of Turkish queer migrants by applying Esser's model in tandem with queer theory's intersectional perspective, thereby offering a more inclusive analytical framework.

Although intersectionality can be interpreted in different ways, its critical premise is this: that addressing any form of oppression within isolated identity categories such as gender, gender identity, race, and sexual orientation fails to adequately represent the complex

realities and experiences of multiple forms of oppression that are intertwined and inseparable (M. T. Altay, 2019; McCall, 2005). This methodological approach draws on McCall's (2005) definition of methodological complexity with intersectionality. McCall (2005) argues that advancing with only singular categories in social analysis is limited and that the multidimensional structure of social relations must be considered instead. She emphasises the importance of examining how gender intersects with other social positions (McCall, 2005). As seen in Tunay Altay's (2019) study with Turkish LGBTQ+ individuals in Berlin, McCall's understanding of intersectionality provides an effective tool for analysing the position of queer migrants within complex social networks. Similarly, the present study employs McCall's (2005) conceptual framework and utilises intersectionality as a means to analyse the intersections and complex social relationships experienced by Turkish queer migrants in Berlin in terms of social integration.

The primary data collection method used in this study was semi-structured in-depth interviews. The semi-structured interview method allowed participants to share their experiences while ensuring that specific themes were addressed systematically (Aksel & Boşnak, 2022). As aforementioned, a specific method was designed to collect data that would answer the research question of this study. However, secondary data (articles, tables, newspapers, reports, etc.) were also utilised to enrich the content and validity of the research.

How were semi-structured interviews conducted for this research? The research question, "How do NGOs support the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin?", was addressed in the previous section, where it was stated that only institutionalised NGOs were included in the scope of this research. In this regard, contact was made with two NGOs established by Turkish individuals and/or assisting Turkish immigrants primarily. The Türkische Bund in Berlin-Brandenburg (Turkish Union in Berlin-Brandenburg), otherwise known as TBB e.V., is an organisation that functions as a neutral umbrella organisation. It consists of various organisations and individuals. The TBB is comprised of 37 member organisations and 86 individual members. As an organisation primarily working for immigrants from Türkiye, TBB collaborates with administrative bodies and other organisations to promote legal, social and political equality and equal treatment for

people with a migration background, as well as peaceful coexistence and solidarity among all people in Berlin and Brandenburg (*Über den TBB – TBB-Berlin*, n.d.). The second is GLADT e.V. (Gays and Lesbians aus der Türkei / Gays and Lesbians from Türkiye), a self-organised group of black, indigenous and people of colour lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, inter and queer individuals living in Berlin. They engage in a multifaceted struggle against various forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and ableism, at various levels. A particular focus of their work is on intersectionality, i.e. the intersection and interaction of different forms of discrimination and the resulting specific experiences (*Über uns*, n.d.).

In this context, I contacted these two NGOs before the fieldwork to discuss my research. I subsequently received responses from both NGOs. GLADT stated that they did not have sufficient capacity to support my research. However, I later had the opportunity to learn about the project titled "My family - Queers in the migrant community"(*Meine Familie – Queers in der Migrationsgesellschaft – TBB-Berlin*, n.d.) carried out by TBB. Since the scope of the study was within the context of NGOs, participants were reached through NGOs. It is essential to emphasise here that another qualitative method used in this study is participant observation. Participant observation is a qualitative method that involves the researcher taking an active role in the field as an observer to directly observe social interactions, relationships, and social processes (Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2023).

As a researcher, I participated in the Lubunca Workshop as part of the project entitled "My Family - Queers in the Migrant Community" organised by the TBB. Thus, apart from fieldwork, I did not directly observe the interactions of the participants in this event with Turkish queer migrants. This was followed by a briefing session for the workshop participants about the scope of my research, after which seven individuals agreed to participate in my research. Subsequently, the snowball method was utilised to reach a greater number of participants, thereby enabling the completion of the field interviews. It is imperative to state this aspect the participants were not selected randomly. Therefore, the criteria for participants who have been interviewed can be listed as follows: Having resided in Berlin for at least 6 months, having migrated from Türkiye, and having knowledge and experience of either of the two NGOs (TBB or GLADT) referred to in the

research. Additionally, NGO work/research conducted within the scope of SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) provides important insights both in terms of data collection and the researcher's ethical responsibilities (Aygün, 2019; Erdem et al., 2024). With this in mind, both ethical and methodological principles were considered during the fieldwork.

Some of the questions asked to Turkish queer migrants in semi-structured in-depth interviews are listed below: In which aspects did you face the most difficulties while integrating into daily life in Berlin? Did the way you express yourself or your lifestyle change in Germany compared to Türkiye? How did you benefit from NGO services? How do you think the support provided by NGOs contributed to your social integration process? ; Were there any areas where the support you received from NGOs was insufficient? Can you give an example? ; How did being a Turkish queer immigrant affect your experiences in Berlin? ; Did you encounter any difficulties accessing work or education opportunities in Berlin? ; Based on your experiences, what would you recommend to policymakers and NGOs to improve support for Turkish queer migrants?

On the other hand, while this research focuses on the social integration experiences of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin, my position as a researcher directly influences both the methodological framework and ethical responsibility of it. As a queer, Turkish, and recently migrated researcher, I am conducting this research not only out of academic curiosity but also out of an internal motivation shaped by personal experiences. During my journey of migration to Germany, I directly experienced that integration is not only determined by structural elements but also by multi-layered dynamics such as language, cultural belonging, identity, and visibility. In particular, I observed that the German language barrier creates serious limitations in fundamental areas such as communicating in everyday life, being visible in public spaces, and establishing connections with communities. These observations have strengthened my research motivation and deepened my connection to the field.

In other words, my position during this research required me to go beyond the principle of "empathic neutrality" (Gill et al., 2008), which is often discussed in qualitative research, and adopt a participatory and critical approach in which the researcher is not

only an observer but also an experiencing subject. The researcher's awareness of their own identity and experiences is not only an ethical responsibility but also a methodological necessity (Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2023; Yaka & Çakır Kılınçoğlu, 2024). Against this backdrop, I have endeavoured to develop a multi-layered analysis that does not overlook the impact of my own experiences on the research process, while maintaining a self-reflective stance.

2.2.2. Field Work and Analysis

The fieldwork was conducted in Berlin, and the required ethical approval was obtained from İstanbul Bilgi University Ethics Committee before starting the data collection. The project number is 2024-20113-189. Result of the Evaluation by the Ethics Commitee is available in the printed version of this dissertation. Participants were briefly informed about this approval before each interview, and their verbal consent was simultaneously recorded at the beginning of the interviews. In addition, participants were informed about potential risks and data security issues that may arise during the interview process (Erdem et al., 2024).

The interviews were conducted between February - April 2025. I conducted fifteen interviews during this fieldwork. Table 2 presents reflexive screens (Altay, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2014) that demonstrate the essential characteristics of the participants. These reflective screens are as follows: age, gender identity, sexual orientation, years abroad from Türkiye, and length of interviews. The analysis of both gender identity and sexual orientation contributes to the diversity of the sample. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed using Sonix.ai (*Automatically Convert Audio and Video to Text*, n.d.). Audio recordings were immediately encrypted and stored in secure files, with access granted only to the researcher (Gill et al., 2008; Rudestam & Newton, 2014). All collected data were securely stored in encrypted and password-protected files, and no data were shared with third parties (Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2023).

Table 2.1. Overview of Participant Data[4]

Name	Age	Gender Identity	Sexueal Orientation	Years Abroad From Türkiye	Length
Tuna	33	Man	Queer	10 Years	Approx. 43 minutes
Serkan	32	Man	Gay	9 Years	Approx. 30 minutes
Ahmet	39	Man	Queer	15 Years	Approx. 87 minutes
Berk	25	Non-binary	Queer	3 Years	Approx. 43 minutes
Deniz	29	Man	Gay	7 Years	Approx. 69 minutes
Emre	35	Man	Gay	12 Years	Approx. 30 minutes
Ali	34	Man	Queer	6 Months	Approx. 57 minutes
Nermin	42	Trans woman	ND (Not-declared)[5]	7 years	Approx 55 minutes
Su	28	Trans woman	ND (Not-declared)	1 years	Approx 80 minutes
Can	21	Man	Queer	1 years	approx. 68 minutes
Ata	33	Man	Queer	7 years	approx. 47 minutes
Mine	30	Trans-non binary	Queer	2 years	approx. 51 minutes
Burçin	31	Woman	Lesbian	8 months	approx. 50 minutes
Arda	33	Man	Queer	8 years	approx. 78 minutes
Damla	34	Woman	Lesbian/ Asexual	9 years	approx. 41 minutes

Participants range in age from 21 to 42. Three participants identify as gay, eight identify as queer, one identifies as lesbian, and one identifies as lesbian/asexual. Regarding gender

[4] In Table 2.1. and other ethnographic materials, pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of participants.

[5] The presence of the letters (ND) in the data indicates that the participant did not wish to respond to the question.

identity, participants are predominantly cisgender, meaning they identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Additionally, insights into participants' migration backgrounds and educational profiles are incorporated in the analysis section.

During the data collection process, the locations for the interviews were carefully selected to ensure the safety and comfort of the participants. The format of the interviews was based on the participants' preferences: 8 interviews were conducted online via Zoom, while the other 7 interviews were conducted in person. Qualitative interviews were conducted in queer-friendly social spaces, community centres, or locations requested by participants. The primary criteria for selecting interview locations were safety, comfort, and privacy. A pleasant atmosphere was created to enable participants to express themselves freely (Erdem et al., 2024).

Thematic analysis, a data analysis method, has been used to analyse field findings as it is a comprehensive and systematic method that allows for the identification of patterns of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Morgan, 2022). The thematic analysis was conducted following the three phases and was carried out with utmost care. Primarily, the transcripts of the interviews were carefully scrutinised to identify themes relevant to the research topic. Following this, thematic categories were established in line with the theoretical framework. The main themes selected within the framework of the research question were acculturation, interaction, identification, placement, and finally, intersectionality. In identifying the themes, Esser's (2001) four-dimensional social integration theory and McCall's (2005) definition of intersectionality and methodological complexity were taken into consideration. In the previous sections, it has been stated why Esser's four-dimensional social integration theory was preferred in this study and why this theory was addressed with McCall's (2005) definition of intersectionality and methodological complexity. Therefore, analysing the collected data through these themes is significant to answer the research question. Thirdly, the interviews were analysed and categorised under each of the themes mentioned above, thereby seeking to adopt a comprehensive perspective.

Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data, summaries of the findings were presented to the participants after the interviews and feedback was received. This process

increased the reliability of the data by obtaining confirmation from the participants (Aksel & Boşnak, 2022). Through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the participants, the objective is to reveal the unique experiences of Turkish queer migrants regarding their social integration processes elaborately. By doing so, the study endeavours to achieve qualified and comprehensive results based on a solid theoretical background and in-depth analysis of field data.

In the next chapter, the historical background of Turkish queer migrants in Germany and the functioning of NGOs will be explored to provide a better orientation to the research topic.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Queer individuals in Türkiye, particularly since 2010, have been subjected to systematic violations of rights and increasing practices of exclusion in the public sphere due to the rapidly authoritarian political climate. The anti-LGBTI+ discourse of the political power is legitimized through event bans, targeting practices, and mechanisms of impunity; while heteronormative values, reproduced at the societal level, reinforce this oppression. The 2024 report of Kaos GL reveals the concrete form of this antagonistic discourse, emphasizing that the presence of LGBTI+ individuals in the public sphere is seriously threatened and that hate-based attacks have become more systematic (Dikmen, 2025). As the LGBTI+ movement has become more visible in public space, the reaction of AKP-affiliated politicians has intensified accordingly (Çetin, 2016). In this context, migration becomes not only a search for physical safety for queer individuals but also a means of struggle for recognition, freedom of expression, and existence. This chapter consists of three sub-sections: The LGBTI+ Movement in Türkiye, Political Pressures, and Migration Motivations; Berlin as a Destination of Queer Migration and the Visibility of Turkish Queers; and lastly,The Institutional Structure of Civil Society.

3.1. The LGBTI+ Movement in Türkiye, Political Pressures, and Migration Motivations

Since the 1990s, the LGBTI+ movement in Türkiye has begun to increase its public visibility, and the institutionalization process accelerated in the 2000s (Bayramoğlu, 2025). NGOs such as LambdaİstanbuI and Kaos GL not only demanded rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity during this period but also became influential actors in areas such as media representation, legal status, and public awareness (Çetin, 2016).

The visibility gained during this process, albeit relatively, along with international civil society support and relationships established with municipalities, constituted a significant threshold in terms of social recognition of the movement. However, the increasing

visibility of queer subjects has led to greater pressure through counter-measures developed at both the discursive and structural levels by the ruling bloc. Particularly with the coming to power of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in 2002 and its consolidation over time, counter-discourses regarding the public presence of the LGBTI+ movement have intensified.

The migration motivations of queer individuals from Türkiye are shaped not only by individual and economic reasons but also at the intersection of political pressures, social exclusion, and normative forms of violence. In this context, it is important to note that the Gezi Park protests, which began on May 28, 2013, constituted a turning point in terms of the public visibility of the queer movement. As Cabadağ & Ediger (2020) point out, LGBTI+ groups redefined their presence in public space during the Gezi protests not only through their mass participation but also through symbolic interventions. However, this visibility, especially after 2015, has been attempted to be restricted within the framework of the government's so-called security-oriented reflexes.

The banning of the Istanbul Pride March since 2015, police interventions, and the coding of the rainbow flag as a threat in the public sphere demonstrate that the pressures have spread not only to physical but also to cultural and symbolic realms (Cabadağ & Ediger, 2020). The banning of LGBTI+ symbols in many areas, from universities to state institutions, reveals a multilayered exclusionary practice targeting the legitimacy of queer existence in the public sphere (ibid.).

This atmosphere of oppression has directly affected not only citizens but also queer migrants residing in Türkiye. As Koçak (2020) indicates, queer refugees are exposed to double exclusion both within state structures and among other refugee communities; this situation entails a threat not only to status but also to visibility 30.07.2025 15:32:00. As the capacity of LGBTI+ individuals to express themselves in the public sphere becomes increasingly limited, alternative platforms such as digital media have begun to be instrumentalized for accessing strategic information and solidarity prior to migration. As Bayramoğlu (2025) demonstrates, for queer individuals, these digital platforms function not only as spaces of solidarity but also as an infrastructure for migration.

Many of those who left Türkiye during this process have been associated with the increasing political pressure following the Gezi uprising. In this context, individuals who went abroad are also referred to as the "Gezi diaspora" or the "Gezi generation" (Gürsel, 2018). In this framework, the decisions of queer individuals to leave Türkiye are not merely individual preferences but are considered as a strategic means to sustain life under unsustainable conditions. This historical-political context offers a critical ground for understanding the migration decisions, the forms of oppression encountered, and the processes of political repositioning of queer migrants from Türkiye living in cities like Berlin. The following section will discuss the queer movement in Germany and the presence of queer migrants from Türkiye in Berlin.

3.2. Berlin as a Destination of Queer Migration and the Visibility of Turkish Queers

The queer movement in Germany gained visibility within the broader context of the social movements that emerged in the 1970s, similarly to other Western European countries (Huneke, 2022). Berlin became one of the central hubs of this historical development, renowned as a site for alternative lifestyles and political resistance. Despite the large size of the Turkish migrant community during this period, it is striking that queer individuals from this community remained absent from public representation.

The Turkish communities that settled in Germany as part of labor agreements beginning in the 1960s gradually formed a permanent diaspora. However, the heteronormative representation of these communities contributed to the invisibility of queer individuals within both the family and the broader communal sphere. Turkish queer individuals in Berlin have been exposed not only to racial and cultural exclusion resulting from migration but also to exotification, orientalist coding, and microaggressions within queer communities themselves (Kluthe, 2009). These multiple layers of exclusion led to the need for Turkish queer migrants to construct their own counter-public spaces.

The positioning of queer migrants from Türkiye who arrived in Germany after 2010 reflects not only a search for protection but also a broader process of political and cultural

reconfiguration. As Cabadağ and Ediger (2020) emphasize, the increasingly repressive climate in Türkiye following the 2013 Gezi Uprising impacted not only individuals but also collective queer organizations, prompting many to relocate abroad. This shift, as encapsulated in the phrase "We Disperse to Berlin," refers not merely to geographic dispersion but to political repositioning(Cabadağ & Ediger, 2020). For queer migrants from Türkiye, Berlin functions not only as a space of asylum but also as a site for the regeneration of activism (ibid.). In this sense, the rise of queer organizing within the diaspora reflects not only a form of identity-based solidarity but also the production of alternative politics in the face of systemic oppression.

This process of repositioning has also manifested through spatial strategies of belonging. One notable example is Gayhane, a monthly queer event held at SO36 in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, which has stood out as both a safe space for Turkish and other queer individuals and a site where they actively constructed their own social environment in resistance to dominant white queer norms (Gursel, 2018). Similarly, formations such as Kuir+Lubun Berlin not only offer networks of social support but also establish a translocal field of political activism by fostering a symbiotic relationship with the ongoing struggles in Türkiye (Cabadağ & Ediger, 2020). These formations demonstrate that migration is not merely a rupture but rather a form of resistance redefined and sustained across different geographies.

Queer spaces in Germany largely reflect a Western-centered queer culture, which may cause queer immigrants from different backgrounds, particularly queer individuals from Türkiye, to feel marginalized. Some studies emphasize the lack of venues where queer individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds can express themselves, noting that the absence of spaces for cultural reference-sharing deepens their sense of detachment (M. T. Altay, 2019; Bayramoğlu, 2022). Given the recent increase in the number of immigrants in the region, it can be argued that these venues have enabled the emergence of new community hubs for queer immigrants from Türkiye. Nevertheless, this issue will be explored in greater depth during the thesis process. In this context, it would be premature to claim that there has been an actual expansion in queer spaces without conducting fieldwork, particularly in light of existing literature on the subject.

To cope with the aforementioned difficulties and sustain their sense of belonging, Turkish queer individuals have established various support networks and initiatives. One notable example is the queer collective Kudur, which plays an important role by presenting house and pop music infused with Middle Eastern, Balkan, and Mediterranean elements, often featuring emerging trans and queer BIPOC musicians (Alexandra, 2024). Another significant venue is SO36, a well-known cultural space in Berlin that hosts *Gayhane* on the final Saturday of each month, a disco party for the LGBTQ+ community. Gayhane fosters a multicultural environment and, while it primarily attracts queer migrants from Türkiye, it also draws participants from the broader Middle Eastern diaspora as well as local Germans (Gursel, 2018; Petzen, 2004). As such, Gayhane not only brings together individuals with shared cultural backgrounds but also provides a space of interaction and mutual adaptation between Turkish queer individuals and the wider German queer scene. In this respect, it exemplifies social cohesion and intercultural exchange.

At the same time, these organizational structures have also made visible the hierarchies of power within queer communities. It has been observed that even within these initiatives, trans individuals and refugees are at times marginalized. This reveals the normative boundaries within queer organizing itself and underscores that visibility does not always equate to empowerment (T. Altay, 2024). As such, Turkish queer individuals living in Berlin confront multilayered forms of exclusion stemming both from their migrant status and their queer identities. Over time, these struggles have shaped processes of political subjectivation.

The experience of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin is not merely a migration story but also a manifestation of political resistance and solidarity that arises from oppression (Cabadağ & Ediger, 2020). The queer counter-public spaces created within the diaspora offer a collective organizing alternative to white, Eurocentric queer norms while also sustaining a continuity with the queer movement in Türkiye. Shaped outside the historical trajectory of the German queer context, this experience demonstrates that migration is not only a change of place but also a redefinition of identity and politics.

3.3. The Institutional Structure of Civil Society

In Germany, social integration policies targeting migrants have historically been shaped not only by demographic needs but also by the aim of maintaining societal order. The migration flow, which began in the 1960s with the "guest worker" (Gastarbeiter) programs, gradually evolved into permanent settlements and the institutional visibility of migrant communities. However, this transformation has been reinforced not only by a migration policy focused on the labor market but also by a discourse of "integration". At this point, migrants were expected to become "compatible" individuals not only economically but also culturally and socially; to achieve this goal, the state positioned civil society as an intermediary. Thus, NGOs have gradually gained a central role in the implementation of social integration policies (Pape, 2020).

However, this process has also transformed the nature of civil society itself. The transformation described by Thierse and Schiffers (2021) with the term "NGO-ization" refers to a shift in which non-governmental organizations move away from grassroots political movements and become increasingly intertwined with the state, operating on a project-based and fund-dependent structure. In this context, NGOs are turning into technical actors that merely provide support and consultation services; the space for critical subjectivity is narrowing, and the demands of the communities they represent are increasingly defined within the boundaries of institutional language. This new form of integration is not merely a process of cultural adjustment but also a construction of normative citizenship Thierse & Schiffers, 2021).

As Pape (2020) states, most NGOs in Germany are structured around short-term projects and shaped by the priorities of funding institutions. This leads to the formation of support areas that are limited not by the needs of migrant and queer communities but by the service categories foreseen by the system. As discussed in Troschke (2024), civil society in Germany is increasingly shaped by state priorities, especially in areas such as welfare and integration. While service-oriented roles are supported, advocacy functions remain contested, and the capacity of NGOs to act as critical voices appears to be weakening due to rising political and administrative pressures (Troschke, 2024).

At this point, NGO-ization is not only an organizational transformation but also a process that shapes political subjectivity. For queer migrants, contact with NGOs can both provide access to safe spaces and involve confrontation with the normative limitations of these structures. In the study conducted by Sozashvili (2023) with Georgian queer migrants in Berlin, it is observed that the supporting institutions are often open only to specific gender performances, degrees of visibility, and criteria of political conformity. Participants report that institutional expectations force them into certain molds and that some identities and life practices are perceived as more acceptable than others. This demonstrates that the role of civil society as a space of solidarity for queer migrants depends on the structure, language, and politics of representation of the institutional framework.

The next section will discuss more closely the positions of institutions such as GLADT and TBB, which facilitate in Berlin with a focal focus on migrants from Türkiye.

3.3.1. TBB and GLADT

The Turkish Union in Berlin-Brandenburg (TBB) is an umbrella organization that operates with the aim of ensuring the participation of migrants from Türkiye in social life as individuals with equal rights. Founded in 1991, TBB emerged from an initiative formed by Türkiye-origin associations that organized in opposition to the "Foreigners Bill," and based on this historical foundation, it has become a significant actor in the fields of collective representation, the struggle for rights, and combating discrimination (haber.com, 2020; *Über den TBB – TBB-Berlin*, n.d.).

TBB's institutional structure has diversified over the years in response to the needs of migrant communities; by implementing projects in areas such as women's rights, youth work, combating discrimination, and queer rights, it has built a pluralistic structure within civil society. Within this framework, the Antidiskriminierungsnetzwerk Berlin des TBB (ADNB- Anti-Discrimination Network Berlin of the TBB), launched in 2003, is a comprehensive project that offers multilingual counseling services and empowerment activities against racism, Islamophobia, and forms of intersectional discrimination, and builds networks with the state and other civil actors (*Adnb.de/En/*, n.d.).

Within this institutional framework, the project “Meine Familie - Queers in der Migrationsgesellschaft (My Family - Queers in Migration Society),” launched in 2023, aims to develop collective solidarity and visibility strategies against the exclusionary structures and norms faced by both queer migrants and their families. The main objective of the project is to increase the acceptance of queer individuals within their migrant communities and families, to enable them to construct their own narratives, and to access support mechanisms. Accordingly, the project has identified two main and two sub-target groups: queer individuals of migrant origin and their relatives, as well as queer and non-queer migrant organizations and mainstream institutions (*Über den TBB – TBB-Berlin*, n.d.).

The project adopts an intersectional approach and conducts activities in areas where experiences of migration, family, identity, and discrimination intersect. To this end, a series of video interviews has been produced, documenting the experiences of queer individuals under the themes of “being queer,” “family,” and “migration.” These videos not only increase the visibility of queer individuals but also become pedagogical tools that foster empathy and understanding within migrant communities.

The project has also established two adult support groups: the Queer Support Group and the Relatives of LGBTI+ Individuals Group. These groups aim to provide participants with safe spaces and to foster social connections through creative workshops, experience-sharing, and joint activities. This structure plays an empowering role in helping queer individuals cope with loneliness, exclusion, and intra-family conflicts(*Meine Familie – Queers in der Migrationsgesellschaft – TBB-Berlin*, n.d.).

In addition, the project also functions as a counseling and referral center. By directing individuals to relevant expert organizations on issues such as multiple discrimination, the coming-out process, and queer life, this structure facilitates access to personalized support services based on the specific needs of clients. Aiming to address the lack of information and support especially in cases where queer individuals experience discrimination based on both migration status and gender identity, this structure helps to fill the gaps within the institutional system.

TBB's "Meine Familie" project contributes structurally to the recognition struggles of queer migrants not only within the broader society but also within their own diaspora communities; at the same time, other structures that organize this struggle based directly on lived experiences also play an active role in Berlin. In this context, GLADT e.V., one of the 38 civil society actors supported by TBB, stands out as a pioneering organization representing the self-organization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) queer individuals.

GLADT e.V., by contrast, is a pioneering organization based in Berlin that positions itself as a self-organization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) queers. Established in 2003 as a continuation of the Türkgay group founded in the late 1990s, GLADT conducts an intersectional struggle against forms of discrimination in which migrant and queer identities are deeply intertwined (Kluthe, 2009). According to Altay (2019), the founding of GLADT emerged from a need to build a self-managed structure in response to racism within queer scenes; during the establishment process, the visibility of internal differences such as being a woman, being trans, and being Kurdish became subjects of debate.

One of GLADT's main focus areas is to create safe spaces for individuals located at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (such as queerphobia, racism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism). The organization offers psychosocial counseling services through counselors with similar lived experiences, providing anonymous and multilingual support, while also referring individuals to professionals in areas such as health, legal support, addiction, and the coming-out process. Especially for migrant and refugee queer individuals, GLADT adopts an empowering perspective based on experience-sharing in the support services it provides to non-white queer people (Kluthe, 2009; *Über uns*, n.d.). Education and workshop activities also occupy a central place in GLADT's work. Workshops delivered by non-white facilitators on topics such as intersectionality, sex/gender diversity, anti-racism, and decolonial pedagogy form part of GLADT's transformative struggle against normative exclusions. Projects such as "Diskriminierungsfreie Szenen für alle" (Discrimination-Free Scenes for All) in particular have made internal exclusions within queer scenes visible, while also

strengthening the organization's intersectional position with both the white majority society and migrant communities.

GLADT presents a self-organized and inclusive model that is attentive to the multilayered experiences of discrimination faced by queer migrants in Berlin. It maintains its grassroots structure, its fight against multiple forms of discrimination, and its public policy-level demands as a Berlin-based yet inspiring example. In this regard, GLADT offers a model that is inclusive, self-organized, and sensitive to the intersectional discrimination experiences of queer migrants.

However, these transformative structures have become increasingly fragile in the current political climate due to the rise of anti-civil society discourse and budgetary restrictions. As of 2025, the federal government in Germany plans to implement cuts in various public expenditures as part of its budget-saving targets. This situation has heightened concerns about sustainability, particularly among independent organizations that provide services to migrant and queer individuals. In the draft budget prepared by the Ministry of Finance, it was stated that new projects would only be funded through equivalent cuts elsewhere, and that the expansion of existing programs would not be possible under the temporary budgetary conditions (Kyllmann, 2025).

In parallel, a comprehensive parliamentary inquiry led by CDU leader Friedrich Merz, which questions the neutrality of certain civil society organizations, has been interpreted as a significant instrument of pressure, particularly against anti-fascist and anti-discrimination organizations. This initiative poses a threat not only to funding sources but also to the legitimacy and public visibility of these organizations (Escritt, 2025). Therefore, the strengthening of civil society structures that play a central role in the social integration of queer migrants depends not only on institutional capacity but also on the maintenance of democratic protection mechanisms.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research question that grounds this study is: "How do NGOs support the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin" Drawing on Esser's (2001) four-dimensional social integration theory and McCall's (2005) intersectionality approach, the empirical part of the research is designed to examine the role of NGOs in the social integration processes of Turkish queer migrants based on their experiences. Within this framework, this chapter aims to examine the social integration experiences of Turkish queer immigrants living in Berlin through qualitative data. This chapter is organised under four main headings in line with Esser's (2001) theoretical framework: acculturation, interaction, identification, and placement. Esser's theory is examined alongside McCall's theory based on multiple intersectionalities. This approach aims to construct a more comprehensive analysis that takes into account the multiple identities of individuals.

In the analysis, intersectionality is used not only as a theory but also as a functional analytical tool for understanding the experiences of the interlocutors. McCall's (2005) approach to intersectionality allows social categories to be understood not only as predefined fixed structures but also as relational and multi-layered. In this vein, the study analyses the forms of discrimination experienced by Turkish queer migrants not solely through the lens of a "single" identity, but through the inequalities arising from the coexistence of multiple identities (e.g., queer, migrant, trans, refugee, etc.)(McCall, 2005). Through McCall's (2005) approach, defined as "intercategorical complexity," this analysis examines the intersections between different social categories and how these intersections give rise to new forms of discrimination (McCall, 2005). As an example, the challenges faced by an interlocutor in accessing healthcare services due to their trans woman identity were evaluated not only in relation to gender identity but also in conjunction with their migrant status, economic insecurity, and barriers to accessing institutional systems.

The 15 interlocuters in this study came to Berlin with different migration motivations. Seven of the interviewees migrated for educational purposes, four due to asylum seeking,

two for family reunification, and two for work purposes. These differences in migration motivations and statuses directly affect the interlocutors' social integration processes, the bureaucratic obstacles they encounter, and the ways in which they access NGO support. This variety has made it possible to assess intersecting inequalities within a broader framework in the analysis.

The analysis process was structured using thematic analysis and coded into six main themes and over thirty sub-themes using the MAXQDA programme. The themes include migration process, NGOs and social integration, identity and expression, economic conditions, social relations, intersectionality, and experiences of discrimination. The analysis section was conducted in contexts where the coding system aligns with the theoretical framework. At the end of the chapter, an intersectional synthesis of these four dimensions is presented, and a comprehensive evaluation of the study's main research question is provided. This synthesis aims to reveal the extent to which NGOs play a transformative or limiting role in the social integration processes of Turkish queer migrants.

4.1. Acculturation

Esser (2001) defines acculturation as the process of learning the language, norms, and basic behavioural rules of the society to which individuals have migrated. This process operates particularly in the context of language acquisition and is highlighted as a prerequisite for social interaction (Esser, 2006). Acculturation forms the basis for social integration (Esser, 2001). It is therefore seen as the first step towards individuals finding their place in society and integrating (Esser, 2009).

Acculturation for Turkish queer migrants is shaped by both the norms of Germany and the unique urban landscape of Berlin. In this context, most of the interlocutors emphasised that Berlin, unlike other cities in Germany, is a city where more immigrants, queer individuals and different communities coexist. As one interlocutor stated;

...But really, apart from these public spaces, apart from a few markets where I speak German, I have never been exposed to a place where I had to speak German. Other than this, I speak Turkish in ninety per cent of my life now. The advantage of Berlin. Therefore, the language barrier does not prevent me from expressing myself in Berlin.

(Burçin, 31, lesbian woman)

Burçin's (31, lesbian woman) narrative shows that the acculturation dimension in Berlin does not operate in the classical sense of 'adaptation to the mainstream culture'. This statement, which emphasises that she is able to maintain her daily life without knowing German or using it to a limited extent, reveals that the multicultural structure of Berlin and Turkish-speaking social spaces offer an alternative living space for migrant individuals.However, this situation is closely related not only to the general structure of Berlin, but also to the neighbourhoods where most of the Interlocutors live, such as Kreuzberg and Neukölln, where the Turkish immigrant population is concentrated. These neighbourhoods are places where both everyday language and cultural norms are experienced in multiple forms, and thus the public sphere is experienced in relatively 'migrated' forms. Hence, the language barrier does not constitute a decisive obstacle in terms of sustaining life or expressing oneself in Berlin; on the contrary, multilingual and multicultural neighbourhood life makes this process relatively easier. As a matter of fact, many interlocuter stated that they found Berlin's culture, which does not harbour a "single mainstream culture", liberating in terms of linguistic and cultural diversity. As a parallel to the foregoing context, Deniz (29, gay man) emphasised the following:

...I don't know, I'd rather be in Berlin than in Paris or Madrid or Rome... Because as I said, it's like you can still live a little bit of your culture here. For example, we are sitting in a cafe right now, I mean we are sitting in a cafe where saz is playing and listening to folk songs…

(Deniz, 29,gay man)

This discourse of Deniz (29, gay man) not only compares Berlin with other parts of Germany, but also with the big cities of Europe and emphasises that Berlin is "still able to keep its culture alive even if just a little bit". In fact, this emphasis shows that Berlin is a city of diversity. In other words, it is also the effect of the fact that the largest immigrant population in Berlin consists of Turkish people. When looking at the discourses of most of the Interlocutors, one could say that there is a sizeable community living in Berlin and that this community provides the participants with the space to live their own language and culture.

Esser (2006; 2009) underlines acculturation in the context of social integration as learning the cultural norms, language and rules of the host society. However, at least in the case of Berlin and in line with the narratives of the interlocutors, individuals were able to continue their daily lives without speaking German and without feeling close to the identity of "Germanness". This situation reveals that Esser's acculturation dimension can go beyond classical assimilation expectations, especially in multicultural and immigrant-intensive cities. Yet, in his studies (2006; 2009), Esser argues that assimilation is a more functional model for structural integration (placement) by opposing multicultural belonging strategies, albeit more normative. As mentioned above, the fact that interlocutors can use Turkish to "survive" due to Berlin's multicultural structure indicates that acculturation in Berlin is more pluralistic and intersectional rather than a unidirectional and dominant assimilation mechanism. However, in line with the patterns of the interlocutors, it is necessary to emphasise that state policies and nationalism, even in multicultural areas, require immigrants to live like a "German" and to speak German.

However, the multicultural structure of Berlin did not always have the facilitating influence that the interlocutors expected. Some Interlocutors stated that they came to Berlin with high expectations, and that they experienced an acculturative stress during the transition to Berlin after having positive experiences in a different city. Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) narrative explains this situation:

> *I had a culture shock, when I first came to Berlin, I was living in Leipzig, I was coming to Berlin from time to time, but I was not staying even for a day...Leipzig was beautiful and a small city...I liked it very*

much. I never had any problems...Then I came to Berlin...When I first came, I had a lot of culture shock. Germans do not like the word culture shock very much. What do you mean? This is the federal capital...But it is what it is.

(Nermin,42, trans woman, refugee)

Esser (2001) stresses that the definition of acculturation does not only consist of learning the norms of the host country society, but also that the emotional and psychological process in which the individual encounters these norms affects the experience of social integration. In the narrative of Nermin (42, trans woman, refugee), she stated that the concept of "culture shock" is not very popular among German people and this expression does not find a common equivalent in everyday language. In the same direction, this observation also shows that the concept is in harmony with its historical and theoretical phase. The term cultural shock was first introduced to the literature by Kalervo Oberg (1960) and was defined as the anxiety and alienation caused by the loss of cultural codes that individuals are used to when they enter a new cultural environment (Oberg, 1960). However, today, especially with the work of Berry (1997), it is accepted that the concept of "acculturative stress" is more inclusive than the concept of cultural shock. This is because the difficulties faced by immigrants in a new culture are not limited to a sudden and temporary shock, but involve more complicated and long-lasting coping processes (Berry, 1997). For this reason, beyond Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) statement, this study is based on the concept of "acculturative stress" in order to analyse that the process of cultural shock is more ambivalent and to better explain the dynamics of integration. However, Nermin is in fact not the only participant who experienced acculturative stress, as the majority of the interlocutors stated that although Berlin is multicultural and unlike mainstream German cities, they face unexpected challenges in everyday life.

Through the narratives of the interlocuters in the context of acculturation, it has been observed that queer migrant individuals in fact make both connections and comparisons between their past experiences and their current lives. These comparisons reflect striking

observations about the pace of life, social norms and daily rhythm of Berlin. As Berk (25, non-binary, refugee) indicated:

> *In Istanbul because there is a 24/7 life... Even in a place like Berlin...I remember I was in a Starbucks...I think they told me that they would close at 6 or 7 o'clock. I was so surprised...I was thinking that you are in the centre of Europe and there is a 24/7 life. Actually, I saw that there is no such thing...Especially the winter depression affected me very much here. And people were actually taking precautions. For example, taking vitamin D as an external tablet. I realised this much later. They had depression. After I overcame them, I realised that it was necessary to take such precautions and I actually adapted to the situation.*
>
> *(Berk, 25, non-binary, refugee)*

Berk's (25, non-binary,refugee) expression reflects a process in which acculturation is not only about integrating into Berlin, but also about individuals questioning their old rhythms, habits and ways of relating to the city. Coming from a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul, Berk (25, non-binary,refugee) is confronted with Berlin's stricter rules on time, movement and public life, and feels the necessity to integrate not only emotionally but also physically and in terms of everyday life. This process goes beyond the normative conformity expressed in Esser's (2001) acculturation dimension, and involves individuals acquiring knowledge of local procedures, social behavioural patterns and cultural expectations and becoming involved in everyday life, as highlighted by Ager & Strang (2008) under the heading "language and cultural knowledge".

On the other hand, another interlocutor Can (21, queer man, refugee) stated that he felt safe in his experiences in Berlin and emphasised that this awareness reinforced his feeling of safety:

> *But you know, for example, if I had done this in Türkiye, I would never feel safe, I mean, I would never feel safe when I spend time on my own*

for a long time or in places where there are no people... After that, I mean, yes, it makes me feel very safe...I mean, in general, whether there are such people or not, ...you know, whoever I see now, I am in the conclusion that everyone is generally just on their own. (Can, 21, queer man,refugee)

Can's (21, queer man, refugee) narrative exemplifies that the individualism and indifference he encounters in public spaces in Berlin is not a threat to him: it offers a space of freedom of expression and safety compared to his past in Türkiye, where he faced oppression from his family and his ex-partner's family. In fact, acculturation is not only associated with the acquisition of new norms and habits, but also with the evolution of the individual's perceptions of the social environment. The multi-layered oppression Can's (21, queer man, refugee) queer and refugee identity faced in Türkiye is transformed into a safer existence experience through this anonymity and individualised social structure in Berlin. This, in turn, embodies how the dimension of acculturation can be experienced in different ways under intersectional conditions.

4.1.1. Language Barrier

One of the most fundamental elements of acculturation is that migrants acquire the language of the host country and can use this language effectively in social interactions (Esser, 2001, 2006, 2009). In this context, language acquisition of Turkish queer immigrants plays a fundamental role in their lives. Knowledge of German is not only a means of communication but also a cornerstone of participation in public life, institutional processes and social relations. In fact, all of the interlocutors narrated that the language barrier in their first years in Berlin was not only limited to official institutions, but also caused feelings of exclusion, being misunderstood and vulnerability in daily life. As Ata (33, queer man) explained it as follows:

German society in general, my ability to defend myself, to defend against discrimination was not there for the first three years. Because I didn't speak German, the first three years... At least I didn't have the

> *ability to speak German enough to defend against any attack, discrimination or any issue that bothered me. So the first three years were a bit depressing... Because one of the biggest problems of this country in general is discrimination based on language... Based on this, racism is also very common...*
>
> *(Ata, 33, queer man)*

Moving from this narrative of Ata (33, queer man), which stands out as a common recurring pattern in 12 of the interlocutors, the lack of language competence turns into a fundamental barrier that makes queer migrant individuals feel both vulnerable and emotionally fragile. Ata's (33, queer man) account of not having the language competence to defend himself in his first three years in Berlin is not only an individual challenge; as Esser (2001, 2006) points out in the dimension of cultural integration, the lack of language acquisition, which is a prerequisite for full inclusion in society, leads migrants to feel insecure in social relations, public space and institutional spaces. In fact, the majority of the interlocutors stated that without German proficiency they feel constantly 'on edge' and avoid speaking German unless they have to. This observation shows that the language barrier is not only a communication problem, but also a structural inequality that produces emotional and social vulnerability. This vulnerability is particularly visible in the small but influential spaces encountered in everyday life. Damla's (34, lesbian/asexual woman) experience concretely demonstrates how the language barrier leads to a sense of embarrassment in social settings:

> *Once I was going to take the metro with my bicycle, they don't put bicycles in the first carriage... The engineer came out and immediately said no, you can't get on, look here, it's a bit like this... The language there, look, the language there gives you a lot of trouble, you can't defend yourself. If they tell you that you are doing this wrong, you consciously want to say that you didn't do that, but you can't... You continue to be humiliated in such a crushed way... That day, for example, I couldn't get back on the metro, I couldn't get on another*

carriage out of shame... Anyway, I continued saying that I would get on the next one…

(Damla, 34, lesbian-asexual woman)

The language barrier increases the feeling of social exclusion and loss of self-esteem for the interlocutors, not only in communication with official institutions but also in the most ordinary daily life practices. Damla's (34, lesbian-asexual woman) narrative shows the emotional impact of not being able to defend herself even though she did not make a conscious mistake. As Papoutsi et al. (2022) argue, this coincides with a sense of shame that is carried throughout the migration journey and reproduced through the process. Shame is manifested here not only as an individual emotion but also as a multi-layered vulnerability that affects one's position and visibility in the new society (Papoutsi et al., 2022). On the same line, another interlocutor Nermin (42, trans woman, refugee) expresses the language-based experience in daily life as follows:

For example, in supermarkets, I come across discrimination a lot at the checkouts. If they realise that you speak poor German, their attitude changes in an instant... just pass the product, say the price, take the money and that's it. No other contact is necessary... There are such things even there... There's a lot of these things going on. So there are many in social life…

(Nermin, 42, trans woman, refugee)

This narrative of Nermin (42, trans woman, refugee), similar to the narrative of Damla (34, lesbian, asexual woman), emphasises that language can be the main source of discrimination and exclusion in daily life. Such distant attitudes, which are predominantly shaped by language deficiency and/or accent, are described by the interlocutors not only as communicative difficulties, but also as experiences that are intertwined with perceptions of both exclusion and racism. As Bucholtz and Hall (2004) point out, certain linguistic forms or accents are marked as "non-normative" and this situation turns into ideological indicators that determine the social status or belonging of individuals. Such language practices cause the competences of migrant individuals to be read through

deficiency or inadequacy, thus creating a deeper sense of exclusion (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Therefore, linguistic vulnerability is not only a communication issue, but also damages the individual's sense of self and capacity for social acceptance.

In this regard, it can be said that language becomes not only a means of communication but also a part of the individual's bodily performance. In Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) narratives, the experience of exclusion often starts at the moment of speaking rather than appearance; the accent or linguistic structure causes the person to be labelled as "foreign". This situation shows that markedness, as stated by Bucholtz and Hall (2004), turns into an embodied form of stigmatisation. As a matter of fact, some interlocutors stated that although they were close to European norms in terms of their clothing styles, spatial preferences, etc., when they started to speak, they immediately encountered otherness (ibid.).

Through such experiences, the language barrier and/or language-based markedness constitute an obstacle to the full integration of Turkish queer migrants into the social and cultural sphere in Berlin. Accordingly, the majority of the interlocutors stated that the support of NGOs in alleviating the deficiency in the language barrier axis and the difficulties in their lives is both empowering and has certain limitations. Su (28, trans woman, refugee) stated:

> *When I spoke to someone working at TBB (Turkish Union in Berlin-Brandenburg), the first thing this person said to me was that you don't speak German, you go to official institutions... If they tell you the word "termin" (appointment), either write it down or learn it well. He said, pay attention to that word. And the first German word I learnt was "termin"... That worker told me something very simple, but maybe it accelerated me to get a residence permit...it was a great benefit.*
>
> *(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)*

However, this encounter of Su (28, trans woman, refugee), in line with the experiences of the other two interlocutors in the same context, indicates how the language barrier encountered in official processes in Germany can have vital consequences for migrants,

especially for migrants with refugee status. Especially for an immigrant with refugee status, it is not only the knowledge of German vocabulary matters, but also understanding what these words mean in daily life and bureaucratic processes, and how often they will encounter them, such guidance assumes a life-saving function. To this extent, in areas where state mechanisms are inaccessible or inadequate, the engagement of NGOs not only as technical support but also as a bridge makes these orientations possible (Aksel & Boşnak, 2022; Chui et al., 2019). Similarly, Berk (25, non-binary, refugee), like the other 6 interlocutors, attended a language course organised by NGOs for migrants. Berk (25, non-binary, refugee) stated the limitations of the language courses and support provided by NGOs as such:

> *At KuB (Kontakt- und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und Migrant_innen e.V./Contact and Advice Centre for Refugees and Migrants e.V.)[6] I also attended a few German courses...I could not continue much because I was in a terrible psychological condition. In fact, those courses were not very efficient anyway…Because German is already a difficult language. It is never a language that you can learn 1 or 2 lessons a week... That's why I noticed it there. So I don't think I can learn it this way anyway, because I couldn't do it since I couldn't organise and study at home. That's why I passed with that difficulty, but they helped me anyway.*
>
> *(Berk, 25, non-binary, refugee)*

Berk (25, non-binary, refugee) actually learnt German through their own efforts. Yet, they stated that this learning process was often shaped as a personal need and a self-defence strategy. Their need to express themselves and to protect themselves against discrimination turned language learning into a necessity. However, despite having developed their linguistic competence, Berk (25, non-binary, refugee) states that they

[6] KuB (Kontakt- und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und Migrant_innen e.V.) - a contact point and advice center for refugees and migrants (*Startseite · Kontakt- Und Beratungsstelle Für Flüchtlinge Und Migrant_innen e. V.*, n.d.).

have been subjected to both micro-level discrimination and direct physical attacks. This narrative reveals that although language learning is a key element of acculturation, it is not enough on its own; queer migrant individuals face the risks of identity-based prejudice, violence and exclusion.

Accordingly, the role and limits of institutional support mechanisms also occupy an important place in interlocutors' narratives. When the narratives of most interlocutors are examined, it is evident that services such as counselling and legal support provided by NGOs, although they do not completely eliminate the multiple vulnerabilities of queer refugee individuals, they serve as a partial stabiliser in the processes of coping with these vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, the quality of such supports, as well as how and by whom they can be accessed, play a decisive role in the integration experiences of the interlocutors. Frequently, it is emphasised in interlocutor narratives that such support is mostly provided through individual relationships or coincidental encounters. This fact reveals structural limitations in terms of the continuity and accessibility of support mechanisms.

How acculturation is supported through NGOs is not limited to courses or interpreter support; it is also enabled by the creation of inclusive and safe social environments that respond to subjective needs. The flexibility and responsiveness of such queer-focused micro organisations can offer a more effective and transformative structure than public-based institutions.

Interlocutors are not only queer or migrant, but also at the intersection of multiple disadvantaged positions (e.g. refugee, transgender, economically disadvantaged), which makes social integration processes more intricate and multilayered. In McCall's (2005) framework, this encompasses not only challenges, but also possibilities for solidarity and alternative forms of organisation. The identity diversity of the interlocutors directly shapes their integration experiences and differentiates the way NGOs engage in this particular process.

In this context, language barriers not only hinder communication in institutional settings but also expose deeper structural inequalities shaped by disparities in legal status and access to information. Most refugee interlocutors in this study settled in Berlin without

proficiency in either German or English, which significantly limited their access to services. In contrast, nearly all interlocutors who migrated for purposes such as education or family reunification arrived with English language skills and noted that this helped them communicate more easily, at least in everyday life. As Ager and Strang (2008) emphasise, language deficiency is not merely an individual barrier but a crucial factor that differentiates the experiences of refugees and other migrants. Therefore, language-related challenges in integration processes are too complex and intersectional to be attributed solely to immigration status. Based on the narratives of the participants in this study, it appears that, specifically in relation to language barriers, factors such as legal status and level of prior knowledge are more decisive than sexual orientation or gender identity. In this regard, queer identity do not seem to lead to significantly different outcomes compared to other migrant groups.

In the following section, how these experiences of Turkish queer migrants are shaped in the context of placement will be discussed in detail.

4.2. Placement

Placement refers to the relationship that migrants establish with the host society in areas such as participation in the labour market, housing, education, access to health services and legal status processes (Esser, 2001). These areas interact with language acquisition and competence in a reciprocal way, as language acquisition is not independent of these areas but is a process that intersects with them in a multidimensional way. These structural areas are the basic threshold areas that determine not only the survival of migrants yet also their integration into society as autonomous individuals. Turkish queer migrants experience these spaces in much more disadvantageous and exclusionary ways due to intersecting identities such as gender identity, sexual orientation and migration status (McCall, 2005). Therefore, placement is a critical dimension of social integration as it relates not only to material settlement processes such as housing, but how these processes are indivudually experienced through access to institutional structures, the provision of legal and economic security, and their connection to historical background and identity.

The access of migrants to the labour market and educational opportunities in Germany is not only based on their individual motivation or qualifications, but also on how they are recognised by the state including institutional acknowledgement of their language level and migration status. Notably, in the context of migration status, both the individual's legal status and the reason for their arrival can have major exclusionary consequences in relation to the structural needs of the system (Manalansan, 2006).

The narrative of systemic inequalities forms a pattern when it comes to both access to the right to work and participation in basic language courses, especially for queer individuals with refugee status among the interlocutors. Berk's (25, non-binary, refugee) expression of the multiple disadvantages arising from the combination of being a refugee and non-binary identity and their impact in the context of access to education/employment is stated thus:

> *When you first arrive, they definitely do not offer you a labour system for the first 6 months, 1 year. You are not allowed to work, I was fluent in English...At least I speak enough to be able to work... They definitely restricted access to this. Firstly, the right to work was taken away... Secondly, they do not enroll you in a German course. 6 months, 1 year. You are actually scattered from one place to another. I also went through that process. That's why it was very difficult for me...the biggest difficulty is already experienced at this point, especially lubunyas who seek asylum.*
>
> *(Berk, 25, non-binary, refugee)*

Berk's (25, non-binary, refugee) testimony reflects not only the restrictions of rights directly imposed by refugee status, but also the inequality-producing nature of state support mechanisms that do not recognise the identity of the individual. As a matter of fact, not only Berk (25, non-binary, refugee), but also other interlocutors with similar status repeatedly narrated experiences such as not being able to access the right to work and German language courses in the first months and remaining in the system for a long

time without being guided. At this point, NGOs are expected to address this gap by engaging in the process through social support, orientation and empowerment services. However, this potential is not always realised effectively. One of the reasons for this limitation is the direct dependence of many NGOs in Germany on state funding. Studies show that organisations' concern about losing funding can prevent them from intervening in politically "radical" areas, such as refugees, queer rights and the intersection of structural exclusion (Lang, 2012). In Germany, the law limits the involvement of NGOs in "everyday politics", which can lead to organisations acting out of fear of jeopardising their tax exemption and official status (ibid). Thus, the state of loneliness and directionlessness shared by queer interlocutors with refugee status is not only individual, but also an outcome of the political limitations of organisational structures.

Institutions' classification based on documents and status reproduces structural exclusion for queer refugees (Sozashvili, 2023). In this context, the role of NGOs should include not only technical support, but also knowledge generation and orientation about the codes of the system (Chui et al., 2019). However, in most cases, these potential roles are either not realised or are carried out in a limited way. The experiences of the interlocutors, specifically in the areas where they have one-to-one contact with state institutions, clearly reveal how this institutional gap is embodied. Can's (21, queer man, refugee) narrative reveals how injustice in the labour force turns into an element of exclusion in contacts with state institutions. Can (21, queer man, refugee) expressed his experience thusly:

> *The Jobcenter[7] is actually supposed to finance my German education up to C1, but I encounter something like this: I am asked to find a part-time job and they say they cannot finance it...the social worker expects me to find at least a part-time job in the same professional group as I work in Türkiye. But there is something he forgets that I was at least a*

[7] Jobcenters are institutions run either directly by municipalities or in cooperation with local employment agencies. In addition to providing employment support to people receiving social assistance and the long-term unemployed, they also have primary responsibility for integrating individuals who have been granted refugee status into the labour market (Their Way, 2017).

student in Türkiye, I mean, for example, I don't even have the title of a student right now so that I can go and find a job in this professional group, whether it is an internship or something else...But since this is not the case, I am a bit stuck and desperate…

(Can, 21, queer man, refugee)

Can's (21, queer man, refugee) account illustrates not only the technical constraints of language learning and access to the labour market, but also how the social positioning of queer refugees is distorted by institutions. The invalidation of one's pre-migration status and experiences in the host country affects the individual both psychologically and economically. This is where McCall's (2005) "intracategorical intersectionality" approach is particularly revealing: the individual becomes systematically invisible at the intersection of refugee, queer and unemployed identities, and the institutional structure reduces the individual to a singular category (e.g. "employable individual") without paying attention to this multiple vulnerability. Building on Can's (21, queer man, refugee) narratives, other interlocutors (Deniz 29 gay man, Nermin 42 trans woman refugee, Burçin 31 lesbian woman) stated that the system does not recognise multiple identities and past experiences. Such cases demonstrate that individuals are constructed as passive subjects who are only expected to "integrate" and that their real needs, such as redefinition, support or re-enforcement of temporary status, are often ignored by institutional actors. This raises the question of how and by whom systemic gaps can be filled.

According to Bosnak (2021), rights-based advocacy NGOs engage in legal advocacy practices by developing alternative discourses to state policies. If these actors assume more visible and supervisory roles vis-à-vis public institutions, civil society can be strengthened not only as service providers but also as actors that offer a rights-based framework for integration processes (Boşnak, 2021). However, existing narratives suggest that such support is often either unevenly distributed or solely dependent on the initiative of individual counsellors. Most notably for queer refugees, this situation increases the risk of exclusion from both social services and access to legal rights, leaving individuals in uncertainty and precarity (Aygün, 2019; Camminga, 2024).

4.2.1. Legal Prosedures and Access to Rights

Access to legal status is a decisive threshold for migrants to access basic services such as housing, health, employment, education and social support. Yet, it is not only a bureaucratic process for Turkish queer migrants, but also a multi-layered process shaped by the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity and immigration status (McCall, 2005). The narratives of interlocutors, for instance, often show a common pattern of systemic uncertainty, institutional exclusion and emotional precariousness in the application, follow-up and approval stages of legal status processes such as residence permit, asylum process or family reunification. This state of precariousness is further deepened by the fact that queer identities do not conform to the heteronormative assumptions of the system. The level of visibility of the identity during institutional contacts determines the risk of discrimination to which the individual is exposed, which increases vulnerability (Manalansan, 2006; Puar, 2018). Therefore, not only the existence of legal rights, but also whether access to these rights is provided in an equal and accessible manner determines the structural dimension of social integration (Esser, 2001).

The testimonies of the interlocutors indicate that access to legal rights is not limited to the individual application process; it involves a multidimensional struggle such as how information is obtained, whether there are guidance mechanisms and how language barriers are overcome. In this context, rights-based advocacy NGOs, even if they are in the minority, act as a bridge against the ambivalent structure of the system (Aksel & Boşnak, 2022; Boşnak, 2021; Chui et al., 2019). In this regard, Burçin's (31,lesbian woman) narrative constitutes an instructive case study; she reveals that the support she received from NGOs before departure made it possible for her to learn about how the process works:

> *...before I came, I was actually researching how to go through the visa process smoothly and I came across TBB... of course there was another website. It is now closed, I think because its funds have been cut... I think there was such a site called Life in Germany... We saw TBB's name there... So this is actually a very big question mark for queer*

> *people in the family reunification visa... Because they cannot get married in Türkiye and people are not aware of that family reunification visa and they do not know how to get married here. When we were researching that process, we asked for help from someone working at the TBB.*
>
> *(Burçin, 31, lesbian woman)*

Burçin's (31, lesbian woman) statement shows that NGOs can play a critical role not only during the application process, but also at the stage of access to information beforehand. In particular, it is valuable to emphasise that NGOs are a good transition connection to the fact that queer individuals cannot marry in Türkiye but have the legal right to do so in Germany and how complex the process is. In addition to this, the fact that the website Life in Germany, which Burçin mentioned, has also been closed down, also reveals an exceptional experience of Burçin (31, lesbian woman) in this regard. It is seen that such assistance is far from being systematic and only some individuals can access it only through their own individual efforts. Therefore, this situation constitutes a privileging of a vital support for queer migrants. Although currently the TBB still provides legal support in this regard, if individuals are not aware of this service or do not have personal networks to access it, this can put them in a situation of potential vulnerability. These circumstances reveal the fragility of queer solidarity networks and the ambivalent process of accessing certain networks.

In parallel to this, Arda's (33, queer man) account underlines that technical access to legal information alone is not sufficient, and that NGO guidance has a transformative effect in making sense of this information:

> *...the system can easily open and read the laws, they provide you online. You know, you can see what is what just by pressing and clicking. But of course, interpreting it, i.e. understanding it, is also not possible for German-speaking people. For example, for example, of course I have seen the help of NGOs in this regard...TBB, I mean, they also provide*

certain legal counselling and I had to go back and forth a lot at that time...In that respect, for example, I got a lot of help from them.

(Arda,33, queer man)

Arda's (33, queer man) narrative reveals that even in a context where access to legal information through online platforms is possible, it is not always easy to make this information meaningful and functional for the individual. Interpreting this information requires advanced language skills as well as a certain level of legal literacy. This situation points not only to the language barrier rather to the fact that the technical nature of legal information may become inaccessible to the individual without institutional guidance. As Esser (2001) has pointed out, placement in social positions is possible not only by defining rights, but also by making these rights meaningful and accessible to the individual. What is important is that even an individual who is in a relatively more advantageous status, as someone who has come to Germany for higher education, still requires this kind of orientational support within the institutional functioning. This "advantage" derives in particular from the possibility of a more stable right of residence and a legally less uncertain stay in Germany, due to the educational visa. However, this is limited to the period of study; in the post-study period this legal stability can be substituted by uncertainty and precariousness. Hence, it reveals that access to legal information is shaped not only by linguistic but also structural inequalities. On the other hand, many interlocutors stated that similar services can also be obtained through paid counselling; however, this is a serious obstacle for queer migrants with limited access to financial resources. This statement refers not only to individual economic deprivation, but also how legal support services are offered predominantly within market conditions, rather than as public provisions. Therefore, NGOs stand out for queer migrants not only as providers of support, a more accessible and a reliable solution in conditions where access to paid counselling is not possible. Within this framework, Arda's (33, queer man) experience points not solely to an individual need, albeit a structural necessity.

Conversely, some interlocutors stated that NGOs are not competent enough in the production of legal information and that this information is provided by queer individuals.

Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) narrative below shows that such structures can evolve into interfaces which transform the experiences of the clients into institutional knowledge rather than a counsellor position. This situation suggests that NGOs act with limited institutional capacity, which is shaped not only by providing support, but also by the funding and service relationship with the state; therefore, the experiences of the individuals receiving support sometimes play a role in compensating these institutional gaps:

> *...there was a law to facilitate my deadname and gender marker as I wanted. TrIQ (TransInterQueer)[8] gave the consultancy of that law, but TrIQ cannot provide any convenience because it does not know the process of the new law...Then the organisation made a statement, it said that we want experienced people to have information about the process. I sent each of the reflections via e-mail. In fact, I gave a data. A lot of people like me did this... Well, at the moment, that association has not done anything on its own, because if I don't call and inform, if someone else calls and doesn't inform, the association will not know about it...*
>
> *(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)*

Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) testimony shows that queer migrants become not only "recipients of help" but also active actors who fill institutional gaps in the system and transform their experiences into knowledge. This reveals the structural vulnerabilities that arise at the intersection of queer identity and migration status. As Camminga (2022) states, transgender refugees are often underrepresented by both state institutions and NGOs, which means that their dual vulnerability not only renders them invisible, but sometimes turns them into silent actors in the knowledge production of institutions. This

[8] TrIQ (TransInterQueer e.V.) is a community-based organisation for the empowerment of trans, inter and non-binary people. It provides counselling, information, advocacy and works to increase visibility (*Ziele und Grundsätze – TransInterQueer e.V.*, n.d.).

situation can sometimes devolve into an orientation that obscures the primary responsibilities of NGOs (Camminga, 2024).

Certain staff members within queer-focused NGOs, based on their experiences, act as an intermediary in enabling individuals to become not merely recipients of services, but also active members in a broader community. These structures can be empowering for queer migrants to cope with bureaucratic processes by offering a non-hierarchical solidarity space.

From this point of view, the access of queer migrants to support in legal processes is of great importance not only to legal rights, but also how institutional guidance on these rights is organised. However, this counselling is often provided at the initiative of individual actors. Another narrative of Su (28, trans woman, refugee) is one of the most concrete examples of this situation:

> *...there was nothing that the organisation taught me or facilitated me. But the experiences of the person who counselled me in the organisation facilitated my integration. One of the examples of this is reaching the right NGO.What happened when I reached the right NGO? I was able to change this dead name and the gender marker on the official documents.*
>
> *(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)*

The second narrative of Su (28, trans woman, refugee) reveals more clearly how these vulnerabilities operate in practice. The interlocuter states that in legal support processes, she benefited from the personal experiences of the individuals working in the organisation rather than the general structure of the institutions. This may suggest that institutional guidance emerges not as a systematic right, but as an advantage that often depends on individual initiatives. Particularly for queer individuals with refugee status, such an assistance is not only limited to access, it is also an indispensable component of their struggle for visibility and recognition. “Reaching the right NGO” is a determining factor in this sense; however, since access to information on which organisation is the right one can only be possible through experience and guidance, this is not always possible for

newly migrated individuals. As a matter of fact, this situation was emphasised in similar ways in the narratives of other interlocutors.

By this point, access to the right NGO appears not merely as a coincidence but also as a form of privilege shaped by pre-migration experiences of queer migrants. Su (28, trans woman, refugee), for instance, as an activist who worked in an LGBTI+ NGO in Türkiye, migrated with experience in both the processes and the functioning of the NGO. However, despite this knowledge, Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) contact with Schwulenberatung (LGBTI+ support centre) did not provide any concrete support in the process; on the contrary, it caused a time loss. This situation demonstrates that institutional support and structures are too fragile and unpredictable to be explained only by access to information or individual capacity. As a matter of fact, while some interlocutors (Can 21 queer man refugee, Berk 25 non-binary refugee, Arda 33 queer man) similarly stated that they could not benefit from the interactions they established with the same organisation, only one interlocutor (Nermin, 42, trans woman refugee) was able to reclaim the financial aid payment withheld by Jobcenter through the same organisation. These statements reveal that institutional support does not work in a systematic way, but rather depends on variables such as the counsellor encountered by individuals, the time of application or the information capacity of the organisation. Thus, these testimonies imply that the social integration experiences of queer migrants in particular are shaped not only by gender identity, but also by intersecting factors such as migration status, institutional navigation capacity, and access to pre-migration knowledge. In turn, these insights indicate that support systems may ignore structural differences between individuals, which is in line with Cammiga's (2022) analysis of institutional insecurity and McCall's (2005) conceptualisation of the production of intersectional inequality.

Moreover, this structural inequality is not only limited to NGOs; it is also reinforced by unpredictable practices such as civil servant initiatives that emerge in contacts with official institutions. This kind of institutional encounters reveal that queer individuals struggle for recognition and respect not only through legal procedures but also at the level of daily interactions. Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) experience clearly illustrates such extra-systemic forms of discrimination and transphobia:

...there was a woman at the Jobcentre, a German woman... letters came there saying Sehr Gertee Frau Öztürk (Dear Ms Öztürk). One of those letters is in the hands of the woman who had an appointment with me and you are waiting in the waiting room, she calls you by your name Frau Öztürk... you go... Yes, Mr Öztürk, she says. I think she's confused or something. I'm so fed up that I don't dwell on it... She repeated it 3 times, 5 times, 6 times, 8 times. At the end of the 15-minute interview, I finally said, I said, I mean, I said, do you realise that you specifically call me Mr. Can you please focus on our problem, she scolded me saying how much nonsense you get caught up in...I didn't get any money from the Jobcenter for 7 months,because of this dialogue, the woman got annoyed with me, she said, I don't pay you, you should come to your senses, for example, I didn't get any payment for 7 months…

(Nermin, 42, trans woman, refugee)

In Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) narrative, not just the non-recognition of her gender identity, but the institutional sanction she experienced after her objection against this non-recognition is also striking. The interlocutor's testimony points to a practice of de facto retaliation, which resulted in the official's insistent rejection of her identity as trans woman, as well as the interruption of the participant's payment in response to the reaction against this. This case demonstrates that the subjectivity of individuals working in public institutions, especially for queer refugee migrants, can not only determine access to services but also directly determine economic life (Camminga, 2024). In such narratives, gender, immigration status and economic dependency come together to reveal intersections that reproduce inequality. Sharp distinctions between categories of identity are often not fixed, but intertwine into multi-layered forms of exclusion (McCall, 2005). This is why, in Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) experience, these three dimensions, gender identity, refugee status and economic dependency, not only intersect, but mutually reinforce each other and establish a structure of inequality that paves the way for institutional reciprocity.

As Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) experience demonstrates, institutional subjectivity is a key element of queer migration from the point of view of queer refugees. It reveals that it can not only create financial insecurity, but also deep vulnerabilities in terms of the principles of recognition, institutional trust and equality. Arda's (33, queer man) statement emphasises that such vulnerabilities cannot be reduced to the attitudes of individual civil servants; they are linked to a ground of inequality embedded in the structural functioning of public institutions:

> *...some laws clearly state in their written forms that in fact this final decision is at the discretion of the officer there who deals with your case in your file, in your case, and I have seen this in many different places later on in time...*
>
> *(Arda, 33, queer man)*

These practices cannot be considered merely as individual discrimination; they make sense within the structural organisation of the public service in Germany. As Mehde (2023) points out, the structural difference in status between civil servants (Beamte) and contract employees (Tarifbeshäftigte) gives civil servants a wider discretionary power under public law (Mehde, 2023, pp. 40-43). Institutional differences at federal and state level also make this discretionary power open to a certain degree of arbitrariness, which can lead to serious inequalities for individuals.

Accordingly, the access of queer migrants to legal rights depends not simply on legal regulations, hence on the individual approach of the civil servant. Thereby, the seemingly egalitarian framework of the system becomes based on arbitrariness and initiative in practice; whether some individuals can actually exercise their rights or not is shaped according to "who they come across". Although NGOs attempt to balance this process, the fact that the outcome often depends on whether one "happens to encounter" a supportive advisor or civil servant reveals a reality far removed from structural equality.

4.2.2. Access to Housing and Health Services

Housing is not only a necessity for the social integration of queer migrants; it also constitutes an important structural threshold for the recognition of identity, the development of a sense of belonging and the provision of security. Although Esser's (2001) study does not directly address housing as a theoretical sub-heading of the placement dimension, he states that structural inequalities in the housing market deepen the processes of social marginality when migrants are forced to live in low-income and ethnically segregated areas (Esser, 2001, p. 19). However, the findings of this study do not fully align with Esser's (2001) approach. The majority of the interlocutors live in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants, such as Neukölln and Kreuzberg. These neighbourhoods function not only as a result of spatial segregation, but also as spaces where queer communities live and where public visibility and solidarity are possible. While Esser (2001) based his studies on normative social integration, the findings of this research show that migrants develop different settlement strategies in the face of the exclusionary structures presented to them. As emphasised in El-Tayeb's (2011) study, the national imaginary that Europe constructs for migrant communities constantly positions these groups on the "periphery" and constructs a national identity to which they cannot fully belong. Therefore, these spaces where queer migrant individuals are concentrated can also be seen as queer counterpublic spaces that transcend the national imaginary (El-Tayeb, 2011c).

In this conjuncture, the experiences of the interlocutors reveal how housing is transformed into a multi-layered field through the relationship established between the theoretical framework and daily life practices. Almost all of the interlocutors stated that they had serious obstacles in the process of finding a flat in Berlin. These obstacles are not only caused by financial deprivation or status, but are also closely related to the visibility of queer identity and ethnic identity. Particularly for individuals with refugee status, housing is often reduced to temporary solutions, dependence on the social environment and spatial instability. Mine's (30, trans non-binary) experience highlights that this housing crisis is not limited to some individuals, but has become a systematic threshold for migrants in metropolises like Berlin:

> *There was a house-hunting process... It lasted for six months. From home to home, from home to home... And as far as I understand it, it is a difficulty that everyone in Berlin is already experiencing...*
>
> *(Mine,30, trans non-binary)*

This narrative shows that the housing crisis is not only an individual experience, but also a socially normalised state of vulnerability. Drifting from "home to home" produces a constant uncertainty along with spatial instability. Based on this narrative, similar barriers regarding the housing process of queer migrants are also visible in Emre's (35, gay man) narrative:

> *If you can find something through friends, you can find something, but in the general market, you are discriminated against in the housing market...I think the biggest difficulty in Berlin is the integral problem of finding a house...*
>
> *(Emre, 35, gay man)*

Emre's (35, gay) statement reveals that economic conditions intersect with identity-based prejudices in shaping his housing experience. Signifiers such as sexual orientation, appearance, name, accent make an individual's queerness and being a migrant visible at the same time, which can trigger exclusion practices, especially in the formal housing market. These forms of discrimination make visible the intersecting inequalities that queer migrants are exposed to through both their sexual identities and their migrant status. The experiences of Mine (30, trans non-binary) and Emre (35, gay man) make visible the inequalities in queer migrants' access to housing through both invisible market-based discrimination and forced dependence on social support systems. Yet these vulnerabilities are not limited to the housing market. For some interlocutors, the housing experience is shaped by more complex forms of exclusion that occur directly within public institutions, particularly in state-supported refugee accommodation systems. Such an experience reveals how security can be violated and trans identities rendered invisible, even in institutions designated for trans queer refugees as individuals in need of special protection. Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) narrative clearly reflects this situation:

Especially when I stayed in the Heim (refugee shelter), I could never stay in humane conditions because I was put in the Trans GBT Heim, but there are men there too. I mean, gays are not free from masculinity or bisexuals are not free from masculinity and I was triggered. It was horrible for me to be able to share a room with a man all the time, even with several men. I couldn't sleep at night... Until I reached this room... Which took me a year and a half…

(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)

Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) experience reveals how institutions such as GBS Heim (Heim für Geflüchtete mit besonderem Schutzbedarf /Shelter for refugees in need of special protection), which are defined under the status of "special protection", are insufficient to meet the specific needs of trans women. Although this form of accommodation is ostensibly organised to protect vulnerable groups, the fact that Su (28, trans woman, refugee) had to live in the same space with cis men due to mixed dormitory room practices exposes that this structure operates according to cisnormative norms of masculinity. This situation brings out the hierarchies and differentiations within identity categories. Thus, the definition of protection offered by the system is shaped in a framework where the needs and requirements of all identities are not taken into account at the same level. Despite the claim of inclusiveness of protective systems, this narrative makes visible how trans women are left in a subordinate position in accessing the right to housing.

In line with all these narratives, it is important to keep in mind that the multifaceted structural inequalities that queer migrants are exposed to regarding shelter further increase their vulnerabilities and disadvantages. In the encounter with these vulnerabilities, the supportive role of NGOs can function as a vital intervention under certain conditions. However, only one of the interlocutors in this study (Can, 21, queer man, refugee) stated that he was able to find a solution to his housing crisis with the direct support of an NGO. Can (21, queer man, refugee) was placed in a temporary shared house through the HVD (Humanistischer Verband Deutschlands, Landesverband Berlin-Brandenburg e.V / The Humanist Association Berlin-Brandenburg) within the scope of the project called

Neustart[9], which was organised under the umbrella of the HVD, and in this process he had access not only to residence, but also to social support, guidance and institutional recognition:

> *For example, my 6 months are over with this organisation and if I am still in the same conditions when these 6 months are over ... Unfortunately, this was not resolved within six months, so we applied to the assistance programme for another six months extension and it was accepted again... I am now staying in a WG (Wohngemeinschaft/Shared Flat), I am no longer staying in a shelter... But there is also the possibility that Sozialamt will not renew this contract, and if sozialamt refuses to renew this contract, then I will no longer be able to participate in their aid programme and I will have to leave, for example, the WG I am in now. ...really, you know, after I left the shelter and switched to a WG, I said I can breathe now in Germany...*
>
> *(Can, 21, queer man, refugee)*

Can's (21, queer man, refugee) narrative illustrates that housing is not only a physical space; it is also a space of psychosocial security, social recognition and existential breathing space. However, this support is not permanent and autonomous; it has a bureaucratic structure that is based on the approval of public institutions, is temporary and conditional. Although NGO assistance is structured according to individual need, the sustainability of this assistance depends on the approval of Sozialmt (Social Welfare Office). This demonstrates that the NGO is not only a service provider, but also an actor that negotiates with public institutions and acts as a bridge in the functioning of the institutional system. Can's (21, queer man, refugee) experience points out that access to

[9] Neustart Counselling and Housing Support is a queer-friendly and anti-discrimination counselling and housing support project operating throughout Berlin. The project, run under the umbrella of HVD e.V., provides support in areas such as temporary housing, individual counselling and access to social rights, particularly for refugees and LGBTQI+ individuals (*Neustart – Beratung und Wohnunterstützung*, n.d.).

the right of housing for queer refugees is made possible not only by receiving assistance, but also by being included in the bureaucratic processes in which this support is reproduced; thus, it contains a structural fragility. This state of multiple institutional conditionality crystallises the structural fragility shaped at the intersection of queer identity and refugee status (McCall, 2005).

Based on this point, it becomes evident that not only access to housing, but also to healthcare services, and particularly to psychological support, for queer migrants is similarly shaped by time-limited, conditional, and institutionally approved support structures. Although health is not directly addressed as a parameter of social integration in Esser's (2006) study, individuals' physical well-being is indirectly included as a target of human capital investment; however, this is framed through instrumental rationality, based on the assumption that the individual chooses the most efficient path to integrate into society more quickly. In this study, it is important to keep in mind that access to healthcare for queer migrants is not merely a matter of physical well-being; it is also approached as an intersectional field of positionality tied to recognition, visibility, and the continuity of safe living conditions. Thus, the individual's physical and mental well-being shapes personal welfare, as well as integration processes such as education, employment, and social participation (Ager & Strang, 2008).

In the light of the field findings, it is an output that queer migrants benefit from psychological support services in unequal, intermittent and fragile ways. Psychological support is defined as an essential area of need for interlocutors in terms of coping with migration-related problems, as well as experiences of loneliness, social recognition and social belonging. However, the process of accessing this support coexists with multiple barriers arising from language barriers, differences in legal status, institutional limitations and non-recognition of queer identity. In this context, Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) experience expresses the limitations in this process as follows:

> *Psychological support promises one-to-one Schwulenberatung, but we could not catch a deadline with him and since we could not catch any termination (appointment), they did not actually give me counselling...But Schwulenberatung does not cause this situation. The*

state is the cause. In other words, NGOs think that they are producing solutions in order to remove the bad label on themselves. But the problem remains the same. So it's not a practical solution.

(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)

Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) testimony shows that the problems experienced in the context of psychological support stem not only from the institutional inadequacies of NGOs, but also from a structural transformation in which social services are increasingly transferred to NGOs. This process, which Thierse and Schiffers (2021) define as "NGO-isation", has resulted in NGOs becoming the main providers of social services, while the social responsibility of the state is pushed to the background, making support mechanisms both fragile and temporary.

On the other hand, although many of the interlocutors interpreted similar access problems solely as a lack of NGOs, Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) assessment indicates a critical attitude towards recognising the structural dimensions behind these relationships, which, as mentioned earlier, are in fact influenced by both the pre-migration and post-migration experiences of individuals. These fragile structures reveal how support processes are intertwined not only with access to services, but also with relational dimensions such as trust and belonging.

In another interview, Burçin (31, lesbian woman) emphasises how ambivalent the relationship queer migrants have with psychological support systems is:

...for psychological support, it is left only to such social support...And already finding a therapist here, believe me, I mean, it has to be waited for months, years to get a free psychological support...Maybe it would be better if there was something that was not such a luxury...if something like that was developed...

(Burçin, 31, lesbian woman)

Burçin's (31, lesbian woman) statement reveals the difficulty of having psychological support recognised as a right, as well as the practical challenges of accessing it. Along

this line, it emerges that the support for the mental health of queer migrants is often left to the social environment, not the institution; and in fact, queer migrants who do not have access to that social environment or who do not have access to that social environment find themselves in another disadvantaged situation. This is a narrative that expresses the structural nature of support systems as well as their intertwining with relational, temporal and financial equality.

Ali's (34, queer man) narrative, on the other hand, expresses in a simple but powerful way how these structural deprivations are experienced in an emotional context:

> *At least to know that you are listened to and psychological support... and of course to realise that you can belong to a group... I guess I would expect this from an NGO.*
>
> *(Ali, 34, queer man)*

This narrative reflects not only an individual need but also a concrete expectation of NGOs. In addition, it can be understood that for queer migrants, NGOs are not solely service providers, but also as structures that offer emotional security and a sense of community. However, the frequent failure to fulfil these expectations disrupts the connections individuals establish with their support systems. As a matter of fact, Yarwood et al. (2022) emphasise that LGBTQI+ migrants' participation in health services is not limited to technical access alone, but can be possible only if these services are organised in ways that are sensitive to identity differences, safe and sustainable (Yarwood et al., 2022).

In the following section, how these experiences are shaped in the context of interaction will be discussed in detail.

4.3. Interaction

The interaction dimension, in Esser's (2001) work, emphasises the decisive role of reciprocal social relations in the individual's integration into society. This would aim for the individual to become a part of the social structure not only through their systemic

settlement, but also by establishing ties in everyday life (Esser, 2001). On the other hand, McCall's (2005) approach renders visible how these social relations are not neutral or egalitarian; on the contrary, they are differentiated through multiple identity positionings and axes of inequality. Therefore, the social interaction experiences of queer migrants are analysed not only through access opportunities but also through normative forms of exclusion, struggles for recognition and multi-layered placement disparities.

Berlin's urban culture based on individuality (Mole, 2018) is simultaneously experienced as a space of relative safety and social isolation for queer migrants. This cultural atmosphere directly shapes the ways of socialisation, normative expectations and expressions of queer migrants. This dual situation between security and loneliness is revealed through the transformative and limiting nature of social relations.

> *In other words, in these meetings, gatherings, parties, solidarity parties, we got in touch with many of our friends in such places... This is the Lubunca Workshop organised by the TBB, as I said, the parties organised by the Turkish people, this and that... We met many of our friends there and we have such a group of friends with those we are more closely associated with... I think we do it with such a consciousness, like we are entrusted to each other. And well, there is really a great solidarity between us.*
>
> *(Burçin, 31, lesbian woman)*

Burçin's (31, lesbian woman) account highlights that queer migrants, in the face of the loneliness, precariousness and normative exclusion they face in Berlin, create an alternative space of belonging and security through the forms of interaction they establish among themselves. Events such as the Lubunca Workshop organised by the TBB function as not only spaces for cultural exchange but also as social spaces where mutual solidarity, visibility and a sense of mutual responsibility are established. Such spaces are examples of solidarity practices developed by migrant queer individuals to cope with exclusion, loneliness and precarity. As El-Tayyeb (2011) emphasises, diaspora belonging may be based on common origin, but it may also be based on communities constructed through

mutual recognition, memory and collective affectivity. However, such social bonds are not always horizontal and egalitarian; they can sometimes become exclusionary or limited inclusive structures due to in-group dynamics, visibility practices and limited resources (El-Tayeb, 2011a). Although Turkish queer migrant individuals can develop social ties where they feel safe and belong to themselves, the sense of security for this community is not always reciprocated in public spaces; they face the risks of re-marginalisation and violence outside the social environment, especially in public spaces. Indeed, another interlocutor Arda (33, queer man) stated that he was subjected to the first homophobic attack of his life in Berlin as follows:

> *I mean, one cannot escape from anything. I mean, one can't escape from oneself anyway, but if you say something like, I don't know, I'm running away from homophobia, that's not it either. I mean, I experienced the first homophobic attack in my life in Berlin. I had never experienced such a thing in Istanbul, for instance.*
>
> *(Arda, 33, queer man)*

This ambivalent experience reveals that spaces of social interaction can be both safe and threatening at the same time for queer migrants, and visibility sometimes carries the risk of being targeted rather than protected. Arda's (33, queer man) homophobic attack illustrates that despite Berlin's relatively queer-friendly image, various threats still exist for queer migrants in the public sphere. Even though Arda (33, queer man) did not be subjected to such an attack in Istanbul, the fact that he was exposed to such violence in Berlin highlights the fact that security for queer individuals can alter not only on a country-by-country basis, but also depending on the geographical context and the level of visibility.

In extension, although many interlocutors found Berlin relatively safe, almost none of them felt one hundred percent safe and they did not believe in the existence of such a place either. This situation can be explained by the fact that the relatively egalitarian, inclusive and protected living space imagined by queer migrants about Europe, specifically the expectation of a society free from discrimination based on gender and

sexual orientation, could not find a place in the post-migration reality (El-Tayeb, 2011b). Moreover, in Arda's (33, queer man) statement, along with the perception of a threat, a sense of acceptance and fatigue in coping with the continuity of these threats is also observed. However, beyond a subjective fatigue, this feeling can be interpreted as a collective collapse regarding the failure to build the social security that queer migrants have imagined in Europe (ibid.). The normalisation of the state of not feeling safe is fed not only by external conditions in this context, but also by the normalisation of repeated experiences of exclusion over time. Thereby, this state indicates that queer migrants have to continue their pursuit of security physically, emotionally and existentially collectively.

This ambivalent perception of security directly shapes the social interaction strategies of queer migrants and increases the prominence of both individual and community-based solidarity structures. On this point, it is seen that NGOs are actors that not only provide technical support for queer migrants, but also play a facilitating role in social interaction and the construction of belonging. The testimony of Arda (33, queer man), for example, refers to various NGO practices ranging from the legal assistance provided by TBB to the psychological support mechanisms of Schwulenberatung and the function of fostering inter-community bonding during open counselling hours. These structures indicate the supportive engagement of social interconnectedness on both spatial and emotional levels.

However, it should not be overlooked that such positive experiences are often limited to individuals who have been living in Berlin for some time or who have been referred to NGOs. Moreover, some of the interlocutors stated that they had serious difficulties in establishing social ties, particularly in the preliminary stages of migration, and that access to existing solidarity structures was often dependent on coincidences. Therefore, it is understood that support services are directly related not only to technical access, but also to recognition of identity, ethnicity and structures of belonging. Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) narrative provides an example of how such exclusion operates at the organisational and interactional level:

> *There were a few organisations to help Turkish migrant women or refugee women. I knocked on the door of one of them... I said, you are also doing this work. Give me a hand. Do we find a psychologist or do*

I come here once a week for meetings...I said please, please, I really can't do this anymore... The woman said to me, Why isn't your name Turkish? She said, Aren't you Turkish? I mean, I am not Turkish either, but when we go out we say we are Turks, but in fact my father is not Turkish and my mother is not Turkish. But we are Turks... After that, you are not Turkish, you are not Kurdish. She said that we mostly help Kurdish women, Turkish women and so on. She said, look at other things. I was shocked there...

(Nermin, 42, trans woman, refugee)

Nermin's (42, trans woman, refugee) statement indicates that queer migrants can be exposed to experiences of exclusion not only at the macro level but also in micro-scale community structures. The exclusionary approach she encountered in the NGO she applied for help is directly related to the functioning of the institution as well as the subjectivity and sense of belonging of the staff working there. This situation shows that not only structural conditions but also personal attitudes and perceptions within these structures are determinative in the functioning of support mechanisms. Nermin (42, trans woman, refugee) has become a subject whose legitimacy of her request for assistance is questioned because her ethnic identity is not clearly defined as Turkish or Kurdish. Although the NGO carries inclusiveness as a mission, the exclusionary approach of the individual working there reveals the exclusion practices arising from the fixed and homogenous construction of identity categories. Therefore, the support offered by NGOs to queer migrants is shaped not only by their legal structures, but also by the identity perceptions, prejudices and positions of individuals operating within these structures. This pattern reveals that the social integration of queer migrants is not only possible through their own efforts; they also need spaces of communication that need to be structurally supported. Ata's (33, queer man) statement shows that not only queer individuals but also individuals in solidarity with them can be subjected to discrimination, reminding that social interaction should be built on the basis of mutual responsibility:

...in the past, I think it used to be, I mean, I used to get more support from non-queer people... But now it seems as if that hasn't happened

much, and I think what is called mainstream has also become sensitive... a group of LGBTI+ supporters, allies I work with, for example, they sometimes talk about things that can be defined as discrimination because they are criticised for being together with LGBTI+ people, for supporting them. ... for this reason, it is necessary to organise not only the thing, the victim, but also the groups and individuals who are in solidarity with them… collective organising is the key...

(Ata, 33, quer man)

This statement of Ata (33, queer man) shows that anti-queer opposition is not limited to directly targeted individuals; at the same time, groups showing solidarity with them can also be exposed to exclusionary practices. As the mainstream in Berlin has become more conservative and normative in recent years (Aydemir et al., 2025), not only queer individuals but also their supporters have become targets due to their visibility. In this context, what Ata (33, queer man) emphasizes is that social interaction should be an organised unity based on mutual responsibility between communities and with institutions.

Regarding the above narratives, it is precious to underline that social interactions are shaped not exclusively by identity, but also by the relational dynamics established between multiple positional axes. Within this context, queer migrants' experiences of social interaction in Berlin are not merely individual and everyday contacts, moreover, they exist through social ties facilitated or sometimes limited by NGOs.

Besides, in these narratives, the interaction dimension is seen to be in an intersecting relation with other dimensions of social integration. Hence, individuals' social interaction practices do not only exist in the interaction dimension; they should also be considered as multi-layered intersectional experiences that affect and feed on other dimensions of social integration.

In the following section, it will be discussed in detail how these experiences are analysed in the context of identification.

4.4. Identification

According to Esser (2001, 2009), the identification dimension of social integration is defined as the emotional and symbolic belonging relationship that the individual establishes with the host society. This dimension is related both to institutional integration and to whether the individual feels that they belong to that society (Esser, 2001).However, the experiences of the Turkish queer migrants analysed in this study indicate that belonging is not a stable and homogenous process; it is a field that is constantly negotiated with intersecting identities and fragile social positions.

The belonging among all of the interlocutors was often described in terms of the social ties established not with the state or the majority society, but with their own queer migrant communities. In particular, NGOs and migrant initiatives create safe spaces, albeit temporary, that enable the organisation of these ties. Tuna's (33, queer man) narrative is remarkable in this perspective:

> *I started playing volleyball in a queer volleyball association... Probably just over a year after I moved in and I am still an active member of that club... Vorspiel Queer Volleyball Sports Club[10] and therefore being together with people like me, people like me, people with migration backgrounds like me in a queer sports club and actually sharing with them not only something intellectual but also something physical... People from many different backgrounds come together for a purpose and realise something there, share something...sport united us…*
>
> *(Tuna, 33, queer man)*

[10] Vorspiel - Queerer Sportverein Berlin e. V. is a dynamic and inclusive organisation committed to sport and the promotion of diversity. They work for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, queer and other people (LGBTIQ+), especially in the field of sport (*Unser Leitbild - Vorspiel – Queerer Sportverein Berlin e.V.*, n.d.)

This statement of Tuna (33, queer man) demonstrates that belonging is not solely an identity-based sentiment, but something that can be constructed through collective action and the embodied experience of being together. The realisation of practices such as sports in collective spaces shaped under the umbrella of an NGO enables individuals to establish new bonds. Such spaces provide more than just social support, they also produce a form of collective recognition.

However, it is observed that this experience has often become possible not through large and institutionalised NGOs, but rather through micro-organisations that are more flexible and can establish direct contact with everyday life. In this context, Vorspiel contributes to a micro-community practice in which queer migrants can develop a collective belonging as well as providing a sporting space. Besides, Tuna (33, queer man) is not the only interlocutor who shares this experience; five interlocutors who are active in the same club similarly expressed their sense of belonging through this collective structure and agency.

Another form of sense of belonging through collective agency and collective spaces can be seen in activities that enable access to queer cultural memory. Mine's (30, trans non-binary) narrative emphasises a different micro-community experience in this context:

> *TBB's Lubunca workshop played a very critical role for many of the attendees there, inevitably. After that, we all met, many of us met, a new group was formed, everyone actually has a Berlin history of 2 or 3 years... For example, those who are 5 or 6 years experienced don't come a lot because maybe they have already established a community...But there are refugees, those who come through family reunification, those who come through work, etc. We were able to form a group of 7 or 8 friends thanks to that workshop...*
>
> *(Mine, 30, trans non-binary)*

Mine's (30, trans non-binary) statement indicates how NGO-supported cultural activities can be transformative in terms of social bonding and micro-community building among queer migrants. These activities, which are held in the context of learning a language such

as Lubunca, which is excluded by the majority society but produces belonging within the queer community, enable not only identity-based sharing but also engagement between individuals with different migration statuses. Moreover, this narrative shows that the temporality of migration is significant in shaping these bonds. While newcomers are still looking for a community, most of the interlocutors who have been living in Berlin for more than 4 years have already established their own environment, albeit relatively. This difference reveals that the workshop in particular functions as a resilient space where both new encounters and collective belonging can be generated.

Yet, as reflected in interlocutors narratives (see Table 2.1), some interlocutors who have resided in Berlin for an extended period have also indicated that they have established their social circles predominantly with other Turkish queer individuals and people with a migration background in general. This inclination is underpinned by the prevailing sentiment that these groups offer a more profound comprehension of their needs and facilitate a more secure and authentic social environment. This situation exemplifies the enduring significance of micro-communities as spaces for solidarity and belonging, particularly for queer individuals, regardless of the length of residence.

On the other hand, not every queer migrant's experience of belonging is constructed in such collective and safe forms. The narratives of some interlocutors provide evidence of fragmented and contradictory forms of orientation towards the community. Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) narrative is of utmost relevance in this respect:

> *Discrimination, until today... Unfortunately, I say unfortunately, but I have not experienced a transphobic attack by a white person. I have experienced racist attacks. I have not experienced a transphobic attack. I have actually experienced discrimination from people of immigrant origin, from people who are immigrants. Obviously, I don't feel like I do belong I don't see the same people who traumatised me in Türkiye, but I see the same, similar, very similar people here... There is nothing that has changed in that sense. I am constantly triggered, I am constantly triggered..Because you experience transphobia at the very point where you will be accepted. I don't see it as accepted, but I like*

> *to experience this, or maybe I can build belonging on this, because there are some rights recognised here. Unfortunately, it feels like a luxury because we yearn for those rights. I know that I can defend myself in line with some of the rights recognised here.*
>
> *(Su, 28, trans woman, refugee)*

Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) narrative strikingly reveals that queer migrants' experiences of belonging are not always safe, stable or collective. Su (28, trans woman, refugee), who is at the intersection of identities of trans woman and migrant with refugee status, expresses that she is exposed to transphobic attitudes not only from the majority society, but oftentimes also from migrant communities. While struggling with racism on the one hand, having to struggle with transphobic reactions from individuals/groups of migrant background on the other hand indicates that she experiences "dual vulnerability" (Camminga, 2024).

Meanwhile, Su (28, trans woman, refugee) turns belonging into a state of mind determined by the need for defence and vigilance rather than the desire to be included somewhere. This experience is an example of intersectional vulnerability where the individual's identities do not reinforce each other; on the contrary, they produce new forms of exclusion in different contexts. As a matter of fact, according to MANEO's report for 2024, the number of cases of violence against LGBTIQ+ in Berlin increased by 8% compared to the previous year and a total of 738 incidents were reported (MANEO – Das schwule Anti-Gewalt-Projekt in Berlin, 2025). These data expose that the fragility of belonging that emerged as experienced by Su (28, trans woman, refugee) reflects a reality that is felt not only individual level but also structurally among queer individuals in Berlin. Although Su (28, trans woman, refugee) states that she is in contact with various NGOs, these exclusionary practices she is exposed to in the public sphere show that her sense of belonging cannot be fully strengthened even with institutional support. These processes, which Puar (2018) calls "regulatory inclusion", become visible in Su's (28, trans woman, refugee) case. The recognition of individuals within the framework of limited rights simultaneously keeps them within the system and exposes them to exclusionary norms. This ambivalent position damages the sense of belonging of queer

migrants; it necessitates that recognition should be inclusive and sustainable not only at the legal or institutional level, but also at the social level.

In light of this, the narratives of the interlocutors reveal that the sense of belonging is constructed in contradictory, temporary and often strategic ways, rather than a fixed sense of "us" orientated towards the majority society. NGOs, besides being structures that provide assistance in this process, provide practical grounds on which micro-communities, relational forms of recognition and alternative spaces of belonging are established. However, these structures do not overlap with the national and holistic understanding of belonging assumed in Esser's (2001) identification model; on the contrary, they point to a reality in which belonging is shaped by a majority of fragility and negotiation. While the relational spaces offered by NGOs serve as a bridge for establishing a sense of belonging in daily life, they also provide an alternative ground for attachment that counteracts the normative understanding of social integration, which centres this process around the majority society.

The next chapter will explore the results from a broader aspect.

CONCLUSION

This research has aimed to analyse the experiences of Turkish queer migrants living in Berlin in the context of social integration. The main question of the research is "How do non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support the social integration of Turkish queer migrants in Berlin?". In this direction, the research has discussed the effects of the multi-layered identity positioning of queer migrants on the social integration process and what sort of role NGOs play in this endeavour. Within the scope of the qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 interlocutors; the data obtained were analysed by thematic analysis method within the framework of Hartmut Esser's (2001) social integration theory and Leslie McCall's (2005) intersectionality approach.

The research findings revealed that the social integration experiences of queer migrants are not homogenous; they are shaped by intersectional factors such as identity, status, gender and sexual orientation. The acculturation dimension, which is seen as the first step of social integration in Esser's (2001) conceptualisation, had a decisive place in the experiences of individuals in this study. In this context, language acquisition stands out as an intersectional factor not only in communication but also in all processes of discrimination, access to institutional settings and recognition.

While the role of NGOs is particularly prominent in the dimensions of acculturation, placement and interaction, it is more limited in the dimension of identification. In this dimension, individuals' engagement with micro-organisations is more prominent. Interlocuter narratives indicated strengthened interactions with need-oriented micro-structures, such as activities such as sports or organisations for transgender migrants. The fact that one interlocutor stated that she only consulted a organisation specifically for transwomen for hormone therapy, demonstrates the importance of such organisations.

Although all individuals with migrant status were analysed in the research, it was observed that interlocutors with refugee status had more extensive interaction with NGOs compared to individuals who came through education or family reunification. The reason for this is that refugee individuals need more institutional support in areas such as access

to legal rights, accommodation and health services. On the other hand, individuals who came through education or family reunification felt less need for support due to their social networks and the recognition of their status. However, although these individuals stated that they did not experience discrimination in institutional processes, language acquisition again played a decisive role.

In the experiences of trans women interlocutors, it was noted that multiple forms of discrimination like racism and transphobia were experienced simultaneously. These forms of exclusion affected the social integration process of individuals not only on a material level, but also on a psychological level. In particular, it was stated that the support requested from NGOs in the context of psychological support services was insufficient. Some of the interlocutors primarily criticised NGOs due to their lack of knowledge about institutional structures. However, individuals who gained more experience in the process pointed out that the responsibility in these areas belongs not only to NGOs but also to public institutions.

The limitations of NGOs stem not only from their own structure but also from the initiative of the individuals working there. The fact that two individuals who apply to the same NGO have very different experiences reveals that assistance can be determined by personal initiatives, not institutional ones. This situation illustrates that the social integration process of queer migrants can be quite ambivalent and unpredictable.

At the theoretical level, Esser's (2001) social integration conceptualisation addresses migrants as a singular category and therefore fails to explain the multi-layered identities of queer migrants. McCall's (2005) intersectionality approach overcomes this deficiency and makes visible the effects of different social positioning of individuals on social integration. However, many of the interlocutors stated that the concept of social integration was not deemed meaningful for them and questioned the normative aspect of the concept. Nevertheless, Turkish queer migrants stated that they felt a stronger sense of collective belonging within the queer diaspora.

One of the important outcomes of the study is the connection between NGOs and the state. The fact that NGOs benefit from public funds has occasionally transformed them

into subcontractor actors of the state and narrowed their sphere of action. This situation is further complicated by the fact that refugee individuals, in particular, have to come into contact not with NGOs but directly with state institutions. It has been observed that the limitations of NGOs are often determined by state policies. On the one hand, increasing right-wing populist tendencies and the political atmosphere in Germany (e.g. the strengthening of the AFD) both increase individuals' concerns about the future and make the funding processes of NGOs uncertain.

The contribution of this research to the literature is that it goes beyond the emphasis on visibility, public space and queer spaces in studies focusing on Turkish queer migrants and discusses social integration processes in an intersectional context and through NGOs. In this respect, it is aimed to bring a new perspective to the field. Considering the limitations in the literature, this study aims to provide a ground for future research. It has been revealed that in the context of queer migration, not only social but also system level integration experiences needs tobe analysed in a deeper perspective.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Result of the Evaluation by the Ethics Committee

Result of the Evaluation by the Ethics Commitee is available in the printed version of this dissertation.