

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/167894>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

***STIMMUNG* AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY: ANXIETY, EUPHORIA,
AND EMERGING POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITIES DURING THE 2015
“BORDER OPENING” IN GERMANY**

C. Nicolai L. Gellwitzki

University of Warwick

Accepted for publication by the *Journal of International Relations and Development*, July
24th 2022.

Abstract This article draws on Heidegger’s notion of *Stimmung* (mood, attunement, atmosphere) to further develop the study of public moods in IR. To that end, it synthesises two recent developments in ontological security studies (OSS), the decentred Deleuzian approach that emphasises the role of affective environments in subjects’ sense of and search for ontological security and Heideggerian readings of anxiety as (public) mood. The developed framework maintains OSS’ conceptual focus on anxiety whilst centring the locus of analysis around dynamic affective environments rather than individual subjects. This framework allows for exploring the relationship between anxiety and the radical agency, emerging political subjectivities, and intense (positive) moods it can facilitate. The empirical added value of this framework is illustrated through an analysis of the public mood of anxiety that preceded and enabled the “border opening” in Germany during the so-called migration crisis and the subsequent euphoria it engendered.

Keywords: public moods; migration crisis; ontological security; anxiety; euphoria; IR theory

INTRODUCTION

At the height of the so-called migration crisis (henceforth migration crisis) in early September 2015, the German government announced what would come to be called a ‘border opening’, instead of raising a drawbridge to keep asylum seekers out.¹ Before the implementation of the so-called ‘open door policy’ (see Dingott Alkopher 2018), there were intense and widespread anxieties over German identity elicited by a substantial increase in right-wing extremism in the form of hate comments on the internet, almost daily arson attacks on asylum seeker homes, and violent xenophobic protests in several cities. In the two weeks before the ‘border opening’ the German president spoke of a ‘dark’ xenophobic Germany (Gauck 2015), chancellor Merkel warned the population against following xenophobes with ‘hatred in their hearts’ (*MDR Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk* 2015), and vice-chancellor Gabriel called violent anti-migration protestors in the Saxon town of Heidenau a ‘pack’ that needed to be ‘locked up’ (*FOCUS Online* 2015). Moreover, national media outlets and politicians alike described the arson attacks and riots as shameful for the entire country (see, for example, Reichelt 2015). The general population widely shared this sentiment. In one survey, for example, 87% of the respondents stated that they felt ashamed of the arson attacks on asylum seeker homes (infratest dimap 2015). This sense of shame was further aggravated by the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding through the migration crisis in which a lorry full of 71 dead migrants was found in Austria in late August and image of drowned two-year-old Alan Kurdi appeared on newspaper front pages across the world in early September.

In stark contrast to this anxiety, the ‘border opening’ sparked a collective cathartic experience during which large parts of the population participated in the so-called *Willkommenskultur* (welcome culture) by donating money and goods, welcoming asylum seekers at train stations, or volunteering to help in various forms (see, for example, Gazit 2019; Sutter 2017, 2019). Descriptions of this affective experience range from ‘collective euphoria’ (Anlauf et al. 2020) to a general ‘summer fairy tale’ (Reitz 2015) to the argument that many

members of the public were ‘downright intoxicated’ by the praise of the international press (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2020) as well as by their own performance of ‘welcome culture’ (Schmid, 2015). As president Gauck (2016) put it, from the outside ‘the attitude of many Germans in the summer and autumn of 2015 [seemed to be] exuberant feelings or naivety. But for us Germans [...] this attitude meant more: For many older people, [it] [...] was a commitment to a country that, after its deep fall, now wants to be open [...] but never again xenophobic or even racist [...] it was an exhilarating experience’. Importantly, it was not only exhilarating but also pervasive and affected everyone from individual citizens to political actors to a degree that Armin Laschet, deputy chairman of the conservative CDU, defended the ‘border opening’ by arguing that ‘we were all in this intoxication’ (*Die Welt* 2016) and Katrin Göring-Eckardt, leader of the greens in the Bundestag, stated in a parliamentary debate that for the first time in her life she was ‘unreservedly proud’ to be German (*Abendzeitung* 2015).

In summary, around the ‘border opening’, there were two relevant and easily discernible public moods (in Heideggerian terms) or affective atmospheres (in Deleuzian terms): anxiety and euphoria. The crucial questions this article seeks to address are how can we understand and theorise this sudden transition from anxiety to euphoria, as well as the relationship between anxiety and other moods beyond fearfulness more generally? And what does that tell us more broadly about the role of public moods in International Relations (IR)? To answer these questions, this article develops a Deleuze-inspired reading² of Heidegger’s notion of *Stimmung* to conceptualise (public) moods as affective environments. However, instead of arguing for an understanding of public moods as an external affective influence on actors (see, for example, Ringmar 2018), this article theorises public moods as ‘referential centres of existence’ (see Breidenbach 2020: 20) from which the categories of subject and object emerge. Put differently, actors’ understanding of themselves, including their self-identity narratives, desires, and more generally, ontological needs, as well as of others, and the world is fundamentally contingent on

the (public) moods they find themselves in. The article, therefore, argues for a foregrounding of public moods in the study of (inter)national politics.

The article contributes primarily to the literature on Ontological Security Studies (OSS) but also to emotion research in IR more generally. Regarding OSS, this article synthesises the field's scholarship on existential anxiety (see, for example, Browning 2018; Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020), Heideggerian moods (Berenskötter 2020; Rumelili 2021) and affective atmospheres (Solomon 2018). The notion of *Stimmung* emphasises the transsubjective properties of (public) moods whilst positing anxiety as the basis of all other affective experiences, positioning it at the conceptual and empirical centre for the study of public moods. Therefore, the article develops a framework that brings together Solomon's (2018) decentred approach to ontological security with Rumelili's (2021) conceptualisation of anxiety as public mood, thereby situating the decentred approach within broader debates in OSS. This approach allows an appreciation of how public moods influence individual subjects' experience of being-in-the-world as well as their sense of and search for ontological security.

The introduction of *Stimmung* into emotion research in IR furthermore offers a conceptual bridge between emotion and affect, allowing us to negotiate the terrain of individual feelings and broader affective dynamics³ and to gain a more differentiated understanding of moods across different levels and how they influence one another. In its illustrative case study, the article explores how spatially limited moods, engendered by micro-political encounters, spread and reverberated and ultimately developed political implications on a macro level. This resonates with existing research on circulations of affect (see, for example, Ross 2014) and develops it through public moods' grounding in anxiety, rendering it a more focused concept with an array of diverse but well-explored psycho-political implications (see Krickel-Choi 2022b for an overview). Thus, the notion of *Stimmung* offers an avenue towards a stronger

integration of OSS and emotion research in IR, two strands of literature that ultimately share the same interest: the role of affectivity in (inter)national politics.

This article begins by mapping the treatment of anxiety in the literature on ontological security. It then elaborates on the concept of *Stimmung* before synthesising it with the scholarship on ontological security. Subsequently, it will apply the framework to the illustrative case study of the German 'border opening' during the migration crisis to highlight the analytical value of re-centring the study of (inter)national politics and ontological security around public moods.

ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY, ANXIETY, AND BEYOND

Ontological security is the capacity to keep existential anxiety at bay and experience oneself as a whole, temporally continuous and purposeful subject with agency in a predictable and meaningful world populated by Others. Much of OSS explores how subjects encounter so-called critical situations, 'circumstances of radical and unpredictable disjuncture', that challenge subjects' ability to 'go on' with their everyday life because they subvert self-identity narratives, are marked by uncertainty and as such engender existential anxiety (Ejdus 2018: 887). Anxieties, in that sense, arise through the experience of uncertainty regarding existential questions that can no longer be bracketed out, for example when practices and routines are disrupted by a political crisis (Homolar and Scholz 2019), subjects' self-identity narratives are not or no longer recognised by others (Greve 2018), subjects feel a mismatch between their actions and their aspired self-identity narratives (Steele 2008), subjects fail to maintain a positive self-image (Chernobrov 2016) or more generally lose their stabilising emotional anchors (Kinnvall 2004) or their stable cognitive environment (Mitzen 2006). The primary focus of OSS is, therefore, the study of subjects' attempts to manage anxieties to regain or maintain a sense of ontological security (Krickel-Choi 2022b). This otherwise extremely diverse literature has in common the implicitly shared understanding that anxiety motivates

much of human behaviour as subjects tend to avoid it at almost all costs. This renders conceptualisations of anxiety crucial for the study of politics.

In recent years, scholars have shown an increasing interest in the phenomenon of anxiety and its political implications more broadly (see, for example, Browning 2018; Cash 2020; Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020; Rosher 2022). Due to the diverse traditions and thinkers this research is based upon, different ways of theorising anxiety and its impact have emerged, ranging from anxiety's role in the facilitation of Lacanian fantasies of fulfilment (Browning 2019; Eberle 2019; Vieira 2018) and in structuring subjects' mode of relating to themselves and others (Cash, 2020; Gellwitzki and Houde, forthcoming) to the notion that general anxieties tend to transform into concrete fears (see for an overview Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020) to the idea that anxiety can be a gateway to radical agency (Berenskötter 2020; Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Rumelili 2021). In general, however, anxiety is mainly theorised as a subjective emotional experience elicited by existential questions concerning subjects' lives (see Ejodus 2018 for a detailed discussion); the experience itself is usually theorised as to pertain to the individual subject. As Solomon (2018: 938) put it, OSS is fundamentally 'subject-centred'.

This subject-centrism is, of course, a perfectly legitimate and insightful approach to understanding ontological security-seeking practices in world politics. However, as Solomon (2018) points out, it risks neglecting broader affective dynamics and their influence on subjects' search for ontological security. Solomon's criticism departs from the observation that during the Arab Spring, what would generally be considered a critical situation, subjects experienced extremely unstable cognitive environments but nonetheless felt a heightened sense of ontological security in the 'affective atmospheres' of the protests. Solomon's (2018) timely intervention subverts the established claim that subjects need a stable cognitive environment to bracket out existential questions, enact agency, and to feel ontologically secure. Moreover, it implicitly decentres OSS from its conceptual focus on anxiety as it leaves the relationship

between affective atmospheres and existential anxieties underexplored. However, the intervention shows that affective environments influence the formation of political subjectivities as well as subjects' search for and sense of ontological security. Therefore, moving beyond a sole appreciation of subjective affective experiences is imperative.

OSS scholarship based on existentialism has also begun to argue that anxiety is not only a subjective experience with socio-political implications but also a collective and social phenomenon (see, for example, Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020). Most notably, Rumelili (2021) has drawn on Martin Heidegger's (2008; first published 1927) book *Being and Time* to conceptualise anxiety as a public mood. Rumelili (2021) applies the notion of public mood to the contemporary 'age of anxiety', conceptualising it as a structural condition of late modernity. This reading of Heidegger is an essential first step toward understanding anxiety as a public mood. However, it does not fully capture the social nature of public moods and the dynamic affective environment they constitute that, on a national level, are closely intertwined with political discourses and individual subjects' experiences. Moreover, whilst Solomon's (2018) work only focuses on how affective atmospheres can *positively* influence subjects' sense of ontological security, Rumelili (2021) only discusses how public moods can have a *negative* influence. Bringing both arguments together, the following section will argue that the notion of *Stimmung* offers the possibility to theorise how public moods can have a positive *and* negative influence on subjects' sense of ontological security by conceptualising them as affective environments that are always grounded in existential anxiety.

***STIMMUNG* AND ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY**

Before delving into Heidegger's work, it is useful to discuss the concept of *Stimmung*. Like many of Heidegger's concepts, *Stimmung* is a regular German term with ambiguous meaning that is usually translated into English as mood or attunement. Breidenbach (2020: 4) argues that there are three ways to understand *Stimmung*: first, the psychological mood, which refers to a

subject's affective state; second, the affectively charged atmosphere of a place or situation; and third, the tuning of an instrument. Gumbrecht (2012: 4) prefers the translation of *Stimmung* as feeling or climate, as it describes a feeling 'so private it cannot be precisely circumscribed' whilst also referring to 'something objective that surrounds people and exercises a physical influence'. Importantly, *Stimmung* is always relational as attunement requires a reference point and a harmonic relationship between the different attuned elements. Attunements are thus 'never stable, but [...] always intrinsically linked to change: it is dynamic, kinetic, as well as potential' but also 'physical; as a vibration, it involves movement in space and across time' (Breidenbach and Docherty 2019: 4). In Heidegger's writing, all these different connotations are invoked which renders his work at times challenging to translate yet it also underlines the crucial argument that moods do not exist in isolation. Subjects constantly (re)attune to others and their affective environment; they are affected by others and the environment whilst also affecting them.

THE ONTOLOGY OF MOODS

This brings us to Heidegger's notion of *Stimmung*⁴, and more specifically, the *Grundstimmung* (fundamental mood) of anxiety. For Heidegger, being in a mood is an *ontological condition* of being a human so that one is *always* in a mood. Such a mood is neither a mere temporary affective diversion from rationality that distorts an individual's perception of an objective shared world nor 'an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on things and persons [...] It comes neither from "outside" nor from "inside", but arises out of Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 2008: 276). Notably, for Heidegger this being-in-the-world is *always* influenced by others, a condition referred to as being-with, as ontologically there is no such thing as a lone or pre-social individual detached from other individuals and the world. Therefore, moods are fundamentally social phenomena that pertain to spatial-temporal situations of different scales and are engendered and transformed through social interaction.

Heidegger further emphasises this sociality by arguing that moods are contagious, as most clearly articulated in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, his posthumously published lecture series from 1929/193, wherein he argues that

A human being who [...] is in good humour brings a lively atmosphere with them. Do they, in so doing, bring about an emotional experience which is then transmitted to others, in the manner in which infectious germs wander back and forth from one organism to another? We do indeed say that attunement or mood is infectious (Heidegger 2012: 66–67)

Moods are fundamentally contingent on interactions between subjects and the space in which this interaction occurs. As such, moods do not pertain to individual subjects since they are transsubjective. The English language is quite insightful here as it already indicates that subjects do not *have* a mood like they would have an emotion, but instead find themselves *in* a mood that pre-existed them just like they find themselves in discursive structures which pre-existed them. As Heidegger famously argued, subjects are thrown-into-the-world and for him the major implication of this thrownness is that humans are always already in a mood. In *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger is most explicit about this when he writes that

Attunements are not side-effects, but are something which in advance determine our being with one another. It seems as though an attunement is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through. [...] It is clear that attunements are not something merely at hand. They themselves are precisely a fundamental manner and fundamental way of being, indeed of being-there [Da-sein], and this always directly includes being with one another. [...] An attunement is a way [...] that sets the tone for such being, i.e., attunes and determines the manner and way [...] of this being [...] (Heidegger 2012: 67)

Crucially, Heidegger's use of the concept of *Stimmung* varies quite significantly in terms of what might be called 'levels of analysis', ranging from the general sensibility of an age as in Rumelili's (2021) age of anxiety, to the mood of a specific public (see Ringmar 2018; Kustermans and Ringmar 2011) such as fearfulness after a process of securitisation, to the

atmosphere of a specific spatiotemporal situation (see Ringmar 2017) to the mood of a particular subject (see Berenskötter 2020). These existing applications of Heidegger's notion of (public) moods to politics have predominantly focused on what moods *do* but largely neglected the broader ontological framework within which it was developed.

The reading that this article develops is focused on public moods 'pertaining to a particular society at a particular time' (Ringmar 2018: 42). Contrary to Ringmar's (2018) conceptualisation, however, this article suggests maintaining Heidegger's central argument that every mood is always profoundly intertwined with anxiety (more below). As such, it is different but complementary to existing understandings of Heideggerian moods in OSS (Berenskötter 2020; Rumelili 2021) as subjects constantly attune and re-attune to different situations and these different layers of moods influence and blend into and inform one another. For example, local moods engendered by micro-political events can develop into public moods (see Ross 2014) whilst public moods influence individual subjects' sense of ontological security and thereby their behaviour during such micro-political events. Importantly, understanding anxiety as a Heideggerian mood, no matter at what 'level of analysis', has manifold theoretical consequences (see Berenskötter 2020; Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Rumelili 2021). In this article I explore, first, the implications for subjectivity, otherness, and worldliness; and second, the implications of understanding anxiety and other affective experiences as public moods and how it differs from previous conceptualisations of anxiety and fear in OSS.

STIMMUNG AND (POLITICAL) SUBJECTIVITY

Concerning the first point, Heidegger offers a bridge between subject-centred OSS scholarship and decentred Deleuze-inspired affect research. Unlike the latter, Heidegger never explicitly develops how *Stimmung* relates to subjectivity, but both approaches to affectivity nonetheless resonate significantly with one another in this regard. To appreciate this overlap, it is important to point out the general context of *Being and Time*. Much of the book's first part is dedicated to

overcoming the distinction between subject and world as it is found in Western philosophy and epitomised by the Cartesian subject. The notion of *Stimmung* is central to this effort. As Breidenbach (2020: 20) concisely puts it, attunement presupposes a fixed point to which other elements are attuned; for Cartesians, that is the cogito, the unitary subject, whereas for Heidegger the ‘attunement of Dasein and world itself constitutes the referential centre of existence’. Thus, moods do not negotiate the relationship between pre-existing world and detached subjects; they are not simple distortions of subjects’ understanding of the world and Others. Moods are prior to these categories. Instead, the notion of *Stimmung* implies that the continuous attunement between subject and the world is ‘precisely what produces the categories of subjectivity and world in the first place’ (Breidenbach 2020: 20; see also Ratcliffe 2002: 289-290).

Political subjectivity, the collective ‘we’, forms through subjects’ similar *attunement* to the public mood. Put differently, subjects who attune similarly will understand themselves, others, and the world in a similar way (Ahmed 2014). Public moods, as a form of affective experience, orient, direct, and motivate cognition and guide attention, perception, and behaviour (Hall and Ross 2015: 856). Importantly, whilst there is but one public mood, not every subject attunes in the same way to it, resulting in different political subjectivities whereby a shift in these attunements can also result in a shift of public mood.

This is where anxiety as *Grundstimmung* and constitutive of the human condition becomes crucial. To utilise OSS vocabulary, subjects tend to ‘manage’ existential anxiety through various means, yet it is covered up at best and constantly threatening to break through into everyday life (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020; see also Heidegger 1996: 177). In the process, anxiety is never truly resolved or negated but transformed into other moods. More specifically, Heidegger (2008: 234) argues that anxiety incites subjects to ‘flee’ into-the-world; thereby, they identify with pre-existing signifiers (see also Kinnvall 2004) and subject positions and anxiety tends to be transposed into fear(fulness) as also well-established in OSS (see Kinnvall and

Mitzen 2020). Anxiety, however, has also a creative potential for Heidegger as it allows subjects to self-reflect and radically re-attune to the referential centre of existence (see also Berenskötter 2020; Rumelili 2021).

For Heidegger, existential anxiety often arises when there is a tension between subjects' everydayness, in OSS terms their need for a stable cognitive environment, and their desire for a meaningful and purposeful life (Browning and Joenniemi 2017). When subjects experience anxiety, everyday concerns lose significance and the world disclosed is unfamiliar and uncanny (Heidgger 2008: 233-234). If subjects embrace this anxiety, subjects can experience *Ent(-)schlossenheit*, a Heideggerian pun which refers to resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) and 'un-closedness' or 'un-lockedness' (*Ent-schlossenheit*). Anxiety, in other words, is not only a profound crisis of meaning and an extremely unpleasant affective experience but can also disclose and 'unlock' novel possibilities of becoming to resolute subjects which in turn can lead to radical agency and radical re-attunement.

In Deleuzian terms, in the public mood of anxiety new political subjectivities might emerge which manage anxiety whilst radically reorienting subjects' identifications, attention, priorities, and behaviour (see Hall and Ross 2015; Solomon 2018). Moreover, the re-attunement and radical agency can be experienced as meaningful and purposeful which will lead to positive feelings of joy, enthusiasm, pride, fulfilment and purpose, a change of mood, and a heightened sense of ontological security (see Solomon 2018; see also Bollnow 2009; Deleuze 1988). These emerging political subjectivities can either reify into permanent self-identities or dissolve once the intense affective experience subsides or the public mood changes (Hall and Ross 2015). In either case, the intense emotional experience will result in long-lasting changes in subjects' emotional investments in particular issues and general sensitivities which can serve as resource and constraint for future political mobilisation (Gellwitzki and Houde, 2022).

These insights have far-reaching consequences for studying the political implications of public moods, in particular Solomon's (2018) suggestion to re-centre the analytical focus on

the affective environment rather than pre-existing subjects if one wants to explore the dynamic emergence, transformation, and dissolution of political subjectivities. After all, these political subjectivities, their significant others, and their understanding of the world are contingent on the affective environment from which they emerge. Capturing the influence of public moods is challenging, but as explored in the empirical section below, it allows for an appreciation of the volatility of political and popular responses in times of crises that otherwise remain inexplicable. At the same time, the notion of *Stimmung* suggests focusing on anxiety as it is linked to and the basis for all other affective experiences; as such, it is ambiguous in its consequences and can facilitate both the politics of fear and security but also the emergence of resoluteness, new political subjectivities, radical change, and ultimately positive collective experiences.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MOODS

Having discussed some of the ontological implications of public moods, the question of how the notion of mood makes a difference on an epistemological and empirical level remains. For Heidegger, moods are an ontological condition for being human and only through moods subjects can engage with the world. As Heidegger (2008: 176-177) phrases it,

[t]o be affected by the unserviceable, resistant, or threatening [...] becomes ontologically possible only in so far as Being-in as such has been determined existentially beforehand in such a manner that what it encounters within-the-world can 'matter' to it in this way. The fact that this sort of thing can 'matter' to it is grounded in one's [mood] [...] Existentially, a [mood] implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us.

In other words, being affected by the world but also affecting the world is contingent on moods as only through moods it becomes 'possible directing oneself toward something'; and at the same time, mood can close off certain experiences 'more stubbornly than any not-perceiving' (Heidegger 1996: 129, 128). Feeling safe and secure, for example, is for Heidegger (2008: 182) only possible in a mood of what he calls 'fearfulness'⁵ that also allows subjects to

feel threatened and experience the emotion of fear. As Ratcliffe (2013: 164) interprets Heidegger's argument, '[b]eing a vulnerable entity that cares about its existence is a precondition for feeling safe just as much as it is for feeling afraid. An indifferent or invulnerable being could feel neither safe nor unsafe'. A public mood of fearfulness, thus, will be predominant in situations where the politics of security are prevalent (Rumelili 2021). At the same time, not all moods disclose the possibility of harm to subjects' physical security-as-survival or ontological security-as-being. A mood of boredom might not disclose to subjects the possibility of physical threat but rather a lack of meaning and agency in their life, rendering them more susceptible to political projects and mobilisation, including war (Kustermans and Ringmar 2011). In contrast, a mood of euphoria can render experiences of safety and threat impossible similar to the position of *asecurity* (see Rumelili 2015).

From a phenomenological perspective, elevated moods are marked by a heightened *Lebensgefühl* (vital feeling; literally feeling of living) and changes in *Gemeinschaftsbewußtsein* (community-consciousness), *Zeitbewußtsein* (time-consciousness), and *Realitätsbewußtsein* (reality-consciousness) (Bollnow 2009: 66). Deleuze (1988: 101) moreover points out that positive affective experiences, referred to as 'joy, and what follows from it, [fulfil] the ability to be affected in such a way that the power of acting [...] increases relatively'. Put differently, positive moods do not merely *feel* good, they change subjects' experience of themselves in their bodies, their relationships, time, and 'reality' itself and they increase the capacity for agency that is experienced as meaningful. It is arguably for this very reason that during the demonstrations of the Arab Spring protestors did not experience ontological insecurity (Solomon 2018) since the possible threats to self-identity narratives, routines, and practices were either simply not disclosed or did not matter in the public mood within which they found themselves.

Ontological security-seeking, thus, is influenced by public moods in so far as that in every mood a certain range of possible 'threats' to physical and ontological security are

disclosed whilst others are closed off. Since moods vary in intensity and subjects can attune differently to them, moods' ability to disclose and close off experiences and threats also varies. Therefore, public moods are crucial for subjects' sense of and search for ontological security as for example, a cognitively unstable environment, violations of self-identity narratives, or disruptions of routines *only* matter if they are *disclosed* to subjects as critical situations. This disclosure is contingent on the *immediate* affective experience of moods and prior to subject's *mediated* capacity for self-reflexion.

In sum, there are two ways in which a public mood of anxiety influences subjects' sense of and search for ontological security. First, subjects flee from anxiety into-the-world and cover it with everydayness. In the process, subjects attune to the public mood in a similar way with others, thereby forming political subjectivities. Importantly, anxiety in these cases is not 'managed' by being negated but rather by being transformed into other, less intense moods. Heidegger discusses the moods of fearfulness (2008) and boredom (2012) in detail, but he also mentions other moods, including 'hope, joy, enthusiasm, gaiety [...] satiety, sadness, melancholy, and desperation' (Heidegger 2008: 395). Depending on subjects' attunement, different threats to their physical security and ontological security, including routines and self-identity narratives, might be either disclosed or closed off. Second, subjects can embrace anxiety, become resolute and thereby 'manage' it by performing meaningful and purposeful agency and re-attuning to other subjects and the public mood in a novel way, leading to emerging political subjectivities or novel interpretations of pre-existing self-identity narratives.

THE 'BORDER OPENING' AND A SHIFT IN PUBLIC MOOD: FROM ANXIETY TO EUPHORIA

The following empirical section focuses on the case of Germany between 21 August and 15 September 2015. It serves as an illustration of the theoretical argument to demonstrate the importance of studying public moods' political implication and influence on subjects' sense of and search for ontological security. The context of the case is within the broader migration crisis

in Europe and especially the time around the so-called ‘border opening’ around 4 September 2015. This allows for an investigation of the public mood prior, during, and after the ‘border opening’.

Methodologically, the article traced public moods by exploring two epistemological sites. First, the public discourse during the period through investigating the themes and aspects of reality it disclosed and emphasised in what way and which ones it closed off and neglected. Second, the micro-political encounters (see Solomon and Steele 2017) between locals and asylum seekers at train stations, most notably in Munich, after the ‘border opening’. This includes video footage of the encounters, interviews with participants trying to explain their reasoning for participating and to articulate their affective experiences, and media coverage of these encounters more generally.

Previous work on the ontological security-seeking practices at the time has either explored the governmental response by arguing that Germany was in a state of asecurity and therefore adopted an ‘open door policy’ (Dingott Alkopher 2018) or the positive German societal response, including the greeting of asylum seekers at train stations, arguing that they were ‘attempts to cope with ontological (in)security through precarious symbolic encounters with newcomers’ (Gazit 2019: 586). This article complements this scholarship by arguing that a public mood of anxiety *enabled* the border opening and the encounters between locals and strangers and whilst the latter were indeed a way to manage anxiety, they also engendered a public mood of euphoria which led to the state of asecurity as described by Dingott Alkopher (2018). Put differently, Germany was not in a state of asecurity because of the absence of anxieties; instead, public anxieties enabled subjects to perform radical agency which led to a public mood of euphoria within which the possibility of being threatened was not disclosed.

THE XENOPHOBIC RIOTS IN HEIDENAU AND THE PUBLIC MOOD OF ANXIETY

Throughout the summer of 2015, Germany had seen a significant increase in protests and right-wing extremist violence against asylum seekers and asylum seeker homes. On 21 August, a demonstration with up to 1,000 participants against a new asylum seeker home in the town of Heidenau escalated and resulted in three nights of riots by up to 600 Neo-Nazis (see, for example, *Bild.de* 2015a; *Sächsische.de* 2015; Hebel 2015). On the first night, a mere 137 policemen were deployed to face the rioters who threatened the first asylum seekers who were moved into the facility the same night.

The riots had far-reaching implications for German ontological security. Contemporary German self-identity narratives usually depict Germany as a humanitarian and civilian power (Dingott Alkopher 2018) and position Nazi Germany as its constitutive Other (Bachleitner 2021). However, in Heidenau right-wing extremists had first demonstrated side by side with regular citizens and then violated state institutions and German self-identity narratives without facing any consequences, bringing the country dangerously close to its constitutive Other. This was rendered extremely visible by extensive (inter)national media coverage, creating a stark mismatch between aspired and recognised identity. The result was widespread anxiety and emotional responses across the population; one survey, for example, found that 87% of respondents stated that they were ashamed of the violent protests against refugees (infratest dimap 2015).

The riots dominated public discourse for days as they fed into broader anxieties over German identity that were further aggravated by the general violence against asylum seekers. In the week after the Heidenau riots alone five arson attacks against asylum seeker homes were recorded as part of what some journalists called a “horror series” (Bartsch et al. 2015: 30). The spark had turned into a ‘wildfire’ and attacks on asylum seeker homes occurred almost on a daily basis (Tretbar and Bosch 2015) whilst volunteers and political parties were increasingly threatened by right-wing extremists, including bomb threats against political parties and state institutions (Tretbar et al. 2015). In general, the overt display of hatred of migrants, volunteers,

and politicians was an anxiously and widely debated phenomenon across the political spectrum and different media outlets. One journalist attempted to capture this public mood and wrote that ‘violent xenophobes spread a climate of Angst [anxiety] in Germany’ (Maier 2015).

The perceived significance of the riots is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that both chancellor Merkel and vice-chancellor Gabriel visited the town to condemn the rioters and right-wing extremism. Even the normatively politically neutral German president Joachim Gauck gave a remarkable statement to journalists. He argued that ‘[t]here is a bright Germany that shines here [the asylum seeker home] compared to the dark Germany that we feel when we hear of attacks on asylum seekers’ accommodations or even xenophobic actions against human beings’ (*Bundespraesident.de* 2015). The colour scheme itself already entails emotional connotations and moral judgments. However, it also illustrates a tendency: out of the public mood of anxiety, a fundamentally good, ‘bright’ German political subjectivity emerged that was pro-migration, tolerant, and progressive whilst simultaneously a bad ‘German Other’ arose, a racist and xenophobic spectre from the past. At the same time, the arriving migrants were not securitised but either incorporated into the emerging political subjectivity of ‘bright Germany’ or at the very least framed as referent subjects of security, threatened by the German Other or the crisis more broadly. The latter was also widely discussed in media discourse which was permeated with stories of asylum seekers drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, images of suffering individuals on the flight and footage of police forces in Macedonia and Hungary trying to violently prevent migrants from crossing the border. All this further fuelled the public mood of anxiety.

The public mood, then, disclosed and emphasised the threat posed by the German Other and the suffering of asylum seekers which became the all-dominating topics in public discourse. Both topics further subverted German self-identity narratives, the former by questioning Germany’s discontinuity with the past and the latter because it illustrated Germany’s shortcoming in upholding its humanitarian values and ambitions. The acknowledgement of the

incongruity between self-identity narratives and actual behaviour combined with the general uncertainty of the crisis, in turn, further reinforced anxieties and made the public more sensitive to right-wing extremist violence, the fate of asylum seekers, and their own role in the crisis. The influence of this public mood on political processes can be traced both on a micro and a macro-political level.

On a micro-political level, the public mood incited many subjects to engage in the so-called *Willkommenskultur* ('welcome culture') which can be interpreted as a form of anxiety management. In the context of the migration crisis, the term welcome culture emerged to describe practices such as volunteering to help asylum seekers settle into German society. As Sociologist Nassehi suggests, welcome culture and the 'truly heartfelt willingness to welcome' by the public would arguably not have existed without the 'radical protests' against asylum seekers (Zielcke 2015). However, as Gauck (*Bundespraesident.de* 2015) put it, by late August 'hundreds of thousands of people' across Germany were volunteering and embodying 'bright Germany'. Likewise, many government officials, politicians and newspapers across the political spectrum encouraged volunteering and referred to volunteers as examples of a 'new' or 'true' Germany. Many newspapers, most notably the tabloid Bild, published numerous mundane everyday stories on individuals who were performing welcome culture and stated in a few sentences how it made them feel good about themselves. Thereby, even those who did not perform welcome culture themselves could nonetheless vicariously identify (see Browning et al. 2021; Browning and Haigh 2022) with the performances of others via social media and the extensive media coverage. Performances of welcome culture, in that sense, became a way to delineate one's own political subjectivity from that of the xenophobes which may explain their high attractiveness to many subjects.

Overall, the public mood of anxiety was so intense that it became almost impossible to remain neutral toward asylum seekers. Since the anti-migration position was occupied by a constitutive Other most subjects attuned in a similar way, forming an emerging pro-migration

political subjectivity transcending traditional socio-economic cleavages. In quantifiable terms, 95% of respondents of a representative survey stated that they found it positive that private individuals were getting involved with refugees on site whilst 96% stated that they thought it was right that Germany was accepting refugees who had fled from war or civil war (Infratest dimap 2015). Despite all this, however, the affective environment remained one of anxiety as the violence by right-wing extremists did not subside, uncertainty prevailed, and the emerging political subjectivity lacked (international) recognition. Moreover, despite the many micro-political performances of welcome culture, the German government's passivity subverted the country's self-identity narrative of a humanitarian power. Put differently, subjects who identified with the 'new' German political subjectivity were still plagued by a fundamental gap between their aspired self-identity narrative, the actual deeds of their political representatives, and the identity recognised by others.

Fourteen days after Heidenau, on 4 September, around 1,200 migrants embarked on what became known as the 'march of hope' from Budapest towards Germany. This increased the urgency of the crisis as the German government needed to decide how to react. On the night from the 4th to the 5th of September German chancellor Merkel and Austrian chancellor Faymann promised to take in the migrants from the march as well as those stuck at the train station in Budapest as a one-time emergency measure due to the situation at the Austro-Hungarian border (*Zeit Online* 2015). This 'open border' became a more permanent state and was later referred to in English as an 'open door policy' (Dingott Alkopher 2018). The 4th to the 6th of September would later be described as a 'turning point in [Merkel's] chancellorship' and one of those 'moments that change an entire continent' (Von Blume et al. 2016). Indeed, even at the time politicians, the media, and social media all agreed on the historical significance of Merkel's decision.

This moment of 'border opening' is insightful as it demonstrates the ambivalence of the public mood of anxiety. Until September 2015, the German government had remained largely

passive in the migration crisis apart from calls to distribute asylum seekers across Europe. In that sense, the public mood of anxiety had paralysed the government as the radical contingency and uncertainty surrounding the crisis had rendered decisive action impossible. However, on 4 September, the public mood of anxiety rendered the German government 'resolute' in a Heideggerian sense as it disclosed (or rather un-closed) novel possibilities upon which the government acted. Rather than reacting to the situation with bordering and security practices as Giddensian-inspired literature would suggest, the government performed radical agency by taking in an unprecedented number of migrants and suspending the Dublin II regulation which had been EU law since the 1990s. This was not only an historic and unprecedented decision but also utterly unexpected and inconceivable from a conservative-led government.

The public mood of anxiety, thus, is instrumental in understanding the decision to 'open' the border as well as subsequently not 'close' it ten days later when that possibility arose. Put differently, the public mood developed political effects by highlighting the salience of humanitarian values and the need for a recognised positive self-identity over ideological and partisan preferences, exclusionary elements of national self-identity narratives, and security-informed considerations regarding migration. Accordingly, the government sought to manage the public mood of anxiety by attempting to fulfil a particular self-identity narrative that would delineate it clearly from the right-wing extremism spreading in Germany. Thus, the government did not only temporarily change its policies to govern migration but also to address its own population's emotional needs (Mavelli 2017). This essentially ruled out enforcing a closure of the German border which policymakers suspected would be unbearable for the German public (Lemay 2021).

ENCOUNTERS AT TRAIN STATIONS

Some trains with asylum seekers had arrived in Munich before the border opening and had been welcomed by local volunteers quite positively (Alkousaa et al. 2016); yet, due to restrictive

measures, most asylum seekers had travelled to Germany by other means. After the ‘border opening’, however, officials in Hungary let asylum seekers board trains to Germany and these trains (partially) channelled migration streams into the city of Munich.⁶ 13,000 asylum seekers arrived at Munich central station on 6 September alone and between the 5th and the 14th of September a total of around 67,000 arrived (Anlauf et al. 2020). From Munich, many asylum seekers boarded trains to other German cities. No matter where asylum seekers arrived, they were greeted by a crowd of applauding and euphoric locals. The following paragraphs concentrate on local encounters between citizens and migrants at train stations, the euphoric local moods they engendered, and how they spread until they became a dominant public mood.

From 5 September onwards, public discourse was dominated by the arrival of asylum seekers in Munich and other cities. As the prime-time news show *Tagesschau* (2015a) described it, the entire day ‘emotional scenes’ were taking place as hundreds of Munich citizens welcomed asylum seekers with applause and cheering as well as with toys and chocolate for the children. These encounters generated an intense atmosphere at the train station, referenced in almost every report by journalists on the ground. Some even described the atmosphere as ‘*Volksfeststimmung*’ (funfair mood) (Langenau 2015), or as the ‘mood at the finish line’ of a marathon, that is ‘excessive enthusiasm, exuberant, euphoric’ (Amann, Bartsch, et al. 2015: 16) or retrospectively simply as ‘euphoria’ (*tagesschau.de*, 2020). The euphoric mood that characterised the encounters between locals and asylum seekers at the train stations was in stark contrast to the humanitarian catastrophe at hand and created ‘almost surreal’ images (Amann, Bartsch, et al. 2015: 16), an ‘absurd scenery that nonetheless gives the viewer goose bumps’ (Langenau 2015) and ‘heart-breaking scenes that move many to tears. Emaciated refugees who wave and sometimes cry because people cheer and applaud them [...]’ (Vick 2015).

Interviews with some of the applauding locals further illustrate the mood at train stations. One elderly man at the central station in Munich, seemingly close to tears, stated that he was ‘very touched because there were so many people who were shouting “welcome” and

applauding and opening their hearts for [...] refugees'; another, maybe thirty-year-old and visibly happy man, also in Munich, said that 'it is very nice to see that so many people from Munich are here [at the train station]' and show that 'the stupid people who put asylum seeker homes on fire, that this is not Germany' (*Zeitpunktplus* 2015). A spectator in Dortmund shared a similar sentiment and stated that 'I'm also struggling with tears right now because I'm just sorry about what they [the refugees] have to go through [...] that they can at least come here, I think that is very nice' (*DW Deutsch* 2015).

Other journalists interviewed volunteers at Munich central station. A young woman, for example, argued along a similar vein that '[...] at the moment there are so many who somehow burn down refugee homes [...] and I said I want to set a sign against that so that [the refugees] see that they are welcome [...]' (*Journalistenakademie* 2015). Another volunteer, a middle-aged woman, stated 'I just had the feeling that I had to help. So rather than crying in front of the TV out of compassion, I thought I would just go to the main station and help [...]' (Hengst and Sperber 2015). Overall, the mood was so intense that many remembered their experiences very clearly, even months or years after the event. One volunteer remembered that she had 'goosebumps like never before in [her] life' (Alkousaa et al. 2016) and another remembered a 'queasy feeling' because of how positively the asylum seekers were greeted by the crowd and further stated: 'It took me a moment to collect myself and I left the concourse. I fought back tears for a moment' (*tagesschau.de* 2020), and a police officer reminisced that the entire city was in 'collective euphoria' (Anlauf et al. 2020).

What these quotes illustrate is the intensity of the mood at the time as well as the (initially) spatially restricted nature of it. Leaving the train station was initially 'enough' to escape the local mood whilst the mere physical presence at the train station was already a way to perform welcome culture, to regain a sense of meaningful agency, and to delineate one's own political subjectivity against that of 'the stupid people' who set asylum seeker homes ablaze. In fact, the recurring references to tears indicate that the mood was often experienced as

overwhelming but at the same time positive, enjoyable, and even intoxicating, resulting in a heightened sense of ontological security. Put differently, the dynamics at the train station offered local counter-moods that eventually spread through public discourse and emotional contagion. In that sense, the local mood created waves like a stone falling into water and it spread rapidly. Guyton and Makowsky (2015), for example, observed that ‘[i]n the whole city [of Munich], whether in pubs or at the bus stop, there seems to be a positive basic feeling, a mood [...]’. Eventually, this mood spread all over the country. A contemporary observer described the public mood in Germany as ‘a collective emotional frenzy’ and argued that ‘hardly anyone can escape the prevailing mood at the moment’ as the ‘feelings of an entire country are synchronised’ leading to the emergence of a ‘great coalition of empathy’ (Schnabel 2015). Overall, “[o]ne can hardly overestimate the general euphoria that captured large parts of the civil society” (Vollmer and Karakayali 2018: 120-121).

THE PUBLIC MOOD OF EUPHORIA

This political subjectivity of ‘bright’ Germany fully emerged in the public mood of euphoria and provided a ‘new’ and highly desirable German identity widely recognised by national and international media and politicians. Many newspapers printed entire pages of other countries’ media coverage of the German response to the arriving migrants. Tabloid *Bild* (2015b), for example, published an article with excerpts from international media with the headline ‘the entire world celebrates us Germans: how dealing with refugees shapes a new image of Germany’. This international recognition addressed many of the public anxieties concerning German identity and as a result, as one commentator put it, many Germans got ‘downright intoxicated’ by the praise of international media (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2020).

Moreover, whilst performances of welcome culture had until then not been uncommon they now became widespread. As Mertins (2015) put it, ‘[s]uddenly the whole of Germany want[ed] to take care of refugees – a collective emotional outburst’ and ‘[e]very association,

every school, and every parish offers help'. These performances further fuelled the public mood of euphoria as they allowed subjects to enact a desirable and positive political subjectivity and as a result, as one journalist put it, '[m]any Germans g[o]t intoxicated by their welcome culture' (Schmid 2015). Significantly, whilst the applauding at the train stations subsided after a few days, the performances of welcome culture transformed into more enduring social structures. By November 2015, 10.9% of the German-speaking population over 14 (about 7.6 million people) was helping asylum seekers in different ways, ranging from volunteering on the ground to money or in-kind donations to offering accommodation in their private homes (Ahrens 2017). Importantly, even those who did not participate in performances of welcome culture could nonetheless vicariously identify with those who did, thereby experiencing praise and recognition.

This emerging public mood also significantly affected media and politicians who were often associating the 'border opening' with emotional aspects of German collective memory (see also Bachleitner 2021; Schuette 2018) such as the flight and expulsion of Germans during and after WWII, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the so-called 'summer fairy tale' during the 2006 football world cup in Germany. Such references to the past can reinject emotions from the past into the present (see Ross 2014) and give the general mood a specific form (see Ahmed 2014). Initially, politicians and media outlets across the political spectrum apart from the AFD agreed that the 'border opening', the German population's reaction to it, as well as the public mood were extremely positive and thereby (re)produced and circulated the latter.

In general, the public mood transcended traditional levels of analysis. A study that analysed coverage by mainstream media outlets, for example, found that in August and September 2015 '[h]ardly any comment [...] attempted to differentiate between right-wing extremists, politically unsettled [individuals], and concerned citizens who felt marginalised' whilst they simultaneously reported predominantly positively about welcome culture and asylum seekers (Haller 2017: 135). Retrospectively, the editor-in-chief of the news magazine

Die Zeit levelled a similar criticism against media coverage, including that of his own magazine, as he believed that ‘[w]e [Die Zeit] have made ourselves not only observers but also actors in this “refugees welcome movement”’ (Niggemeier 2016). Along a similar line, vice-chancellor Gabriel argued in an interview on the fifth anniversary of the Heidenau riots that he had the impression that journalists wanted to tell a specific story, the story that ‘[a]t last we are the good Germany’, that was the mood’ whilst also pointing out that his ‘colleagues in the Bundestag were suddenly almost euphoric because they were cheered by [the NGO] Pro Asyl and the churches’ (Parnack and Machowecz 2020). The sheer intensity of the public mood of euphoria was illustrated by one newspaper that pointed out that the ‘border opening’ was one of these ‘few historical moments in which Germans [...] dare to say that one can be proud of this country for once’ (von Altenbockum 2015). In sum, the public mood of euphoria was pervasive and affected everyday citizens, media, and politicians alike.

The crucial question is how this public mood affected (inter)national politics and subjects’ sense of, and search for, ontological security. First and foremost, in the public mood of euphoria the government and many everyday citizens were in a state of asecurity as common security-related concerns were suspended (see Dingott Alkopher 2018). Accordingly, the large numbers of strangers entering the country were not primarily disclosed as a security issue or a threat to German identity. Instead, welcoming them into the country and humanely treating them became a way to perform a ‘new’, positive German identity providing systems of meaning and morality. This emerging political subjectivity was widely recognised by asylum-seekers, (inter)national media, and politicians alike, resulting in a heightened sense of ontological security and feelings of purpose, pride, and agency (see, for example, Sutter 2017, 2019). Subjects were aware of the radical contingency of the future, yet in the public mood of euphoria it was experienced as a blank canvass against which subjects could project and perform their desired identity rather than having to suffice with the negative German identity of the past. In other words, this affective environment not only influenced subjects’ feeling of ontological

security but also fundamentally influenced how they understood themselves and their political subjectivity vis-à-vis this critical situation.

This is not to say that especially everyday citizens uniformly felt the same way. However, even if individuals were strongly opposed to the ‘border opening’, the mood of euphoria that largely neglected any potential issues or concerns often associated with migration nonetheless *affected* them, albeit negatively. Social media and online comment sections of newspapers were full of angry subjects voicing their (negative) opinion about government, ‘do-gooders’, and migrants alike to such an extent that many newspapers removed the comment function. Put differently, those who felt negatively about the unfolding events were mostly neglected in public discourse and seemingly felt extremely alienated by press coverage and official political discourse that failed to acknowledge their anxieties and concerns. This also indicates that whilst public moods affect everyone who finds themselves in it, it does merely influence, not override, cognition.

As every intense affective experience (see Hall and Ross 2015), the euphoria did not prevail. It peaked in the early days of the ‘border opening’ and subsequently subsided; after a few weeks, the public mood was less intense and more ambiguous. The number of incoming asylum seekers declined, and their arrival by train and welcome by volunteers became a routinised practice rather than a celebrated historic anomaly (Sutter 2017, 2019). However, the public mood of euphoria nonetheless had long-lasting implications. For once, the German government not only decided to ‘*open*’ the border, but it also decided not to close it a few days later when it had the chance, leaving the border open until March 2016 (Alexander 2017). As then minister of the interior Thomas De Maizière argued in a 2019 documentary about the events of September 2015, ‘talking about limitations, border closure, and rejections was completely against the [public] mood these days’ (Twente 2019). Instead of going against the mood and subverting the emerging political subjectivity of a ‘new’ and ‘bright’ Germany, the government thus decided to maintain its humanitarian stance for the time being whilst pushing

for European solutions that would externalise security practices to the EU's external borders (Lemay 2021).

Notably, the political subjectivities that had emerged during the migration crisis were often reified in more permanent social structures of volunteers (see, for example, Sutter 2019). In May 2016, a study found that about 11.9% of the population volunteered to help asylum seekers and about 75% could imagine helping in the future (Ahrens 2017). At the same time, not everyone was attuned to the public mood of September 2015 in a similar way. Whilst during the time frame examined in this article these misattunements remained side-lined in public discourse they would ultimately facilitate the electoral success of the right-wing populist party AFD which became the first such party in the German parliament since 1945. The originally Eurosceptic AFD was thought to be in its demise in July 2015 after its founder Bernd Lucke had left the party. Its recovery and successful reinvention as an anti-migration party, according to then vice federal spokesman Gauland, was due 'primarily to the refugee crisis' who called the crisis 'a gift' for the AFD (Amann, Baumgärtner, et al. 2015: 24) and research has attributed the AFD's success in the 2017 federal selection to the 'open door policy' (Dostal 2017). In other words, the intense affective experiences of subjects before, during, and after the 'border opening' unsettled established structures, practices, and norms and not only enabled radical forms of agency but also resulted in long-lasting changes in political subjectivities.

CONCLUSION

Public moods shape (inter)national politics and ontological security-seeking dynamics. This article has argued that public moods are best understood as transsubjective affective environments that influence subjects' experience of being-in-the-world. This article furthermore suggested treating public moods as 'referential centres of existence' rather than (pre-existing) subjects. This enables scholars to study the volatile and dynamic political and popular responses to critical situations and the emergence, transformation, and dissipation of

political subjectivities that are difficult to quantify or explore through traditional social scientific means. The study of public moods, thus, offers an explanation of dynamics that otherwise remain inexplicable.

This does not negate the importance of other explanatory factors but rather indicates that public moods influence which one of those are perceived as salient and how (critical) situations are experienced as relating to them. In the case of the ‘border opening’, other research has emphasised how, amongst other things, national self-identity conceptions (Dingott Alkopher 2018), collective memory (Bachleitner 2021, Schuette 2018), the German population’s emotional needs (Mavelli 2017), migrants’ potential to contribute to Germany’s economy and welfare system (Pinkerton 2019), and more generally, elite, public, and media representations and perceptions of asylum-seekers (Lemay 2021) have shaped political and popular responses to the crisis. However, public moods as *immediate* affective experiences influenced subjects’ sense of and search for ontological security and thus ultimately guided these *mediated* responses.

The Deleuze-inspired reading of Heidegger developed in this article offers a bridge between Solomon’s (2018) decentred approach that emphasises how intense affective environments in critical situations and instable cognitive environments can lead to heightened feelings of ontological security and Rumelili’s (2021) conceptualisation of how public moods can be anxiety or fear-inducing for subjects. Overall, the article has argued that the notion of *Stimmung* can help us understand how public moods can both enhance subjects’ sense of ontological security and be detrimental to it. Crucially, it can conceptualise the role of *positive* affective experiences, their relationship to anxiety, and their influence on ontological security dynamics. Furthermore, the article has made a case for understanding public moods on a national level as dynamic affective environments intimately intertwined with anxiety and other moods, both on a micro (see Solomon 2018) and structural level (see Rumelili 2021).

This synthesising of Deleuzian (Solomon 2018) and Heideggerian (Rumelili 2021) approaches to OSS has, of course, also its limitations. There are some inherent tensions between Deleuze-inspired affect research and ontological security theory, a framework that privileges anxiety over other affective experiences and furthermore posits assumptions of how subjects deal with it. In contrast, affect researchers often quote Spinoza who pointed out that ‘[n]o one has yet determined what the body can do’ (cited in Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 3) to emphasise the potentiality, ambiguity and creativity of affect, and OSS scholars need to be careful not to essentialise how the ‘self-in-the-body’ (see Krickel-Choi 2022a; see also Purnell 2021) experiences and manages anxiety. Nevertheless, whilst affect research can serve as a reminder to OSS that anxiety is always ambiguous in its implications, focusing on anxiety might render some affective dynamics more visible and explorable than others. Apart from that, the grounding in anxiety also renders the concept of public moods quite complex and thus potentially unattractive to emotion research in IR more generally. Some scholars thus have decoupled anxiety from the notion of public moods (see Kustermans and Ringmar 2011; Ringmar 2017, 2018). For the sake of parsimony, the framework developed here can certainly be utilised in a similar fashion. However, decoupling public moods from anxiety unavoidably neglects some of the complexity of affective situations and OSS’s analytical toolbox that helps explore seemingly irrational behaviour, creativity, and radical agency.

Looking forward, the article raises several questions for future research. Does the performance of radical agency always entail a transition into heightened moods such as euphoria? Can the distinction between (public) moods and emotions provide novel insights or analytically added value to studying emotions in IR and ontological security-seeking practices? How can we better theorise and understand the influence of positive public moods and affective dynamics on ontological security-seeking practices? Regarding the latter point, a more robust engagement with affect research is a promising research avenue to explore what else ‘the body can do’ to establish feelings of ontological security-as-becoming. After all, subjects are

predominantly in moods *other* than anxiety and it is these other moods that OSS has yet to explore.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Christopher Browning and Madeleine Fagan for their feedback on the manuscript and more generally for their advice and enlightening conversations over the last few years. I would also like to thank Anne-Marie Houde, Nina Krickel-Choi, Joseph Haigh, Ben Rosher, and Charlotte Heath-Kelly for their insightful comments on previous versions of the article as well as the editors and the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful suggestions.

NOTES

¹ Whilst often referred to as ‘border opening’, Merkel did, in fact, not open the border as Schengen borders are open by default but instead opted not to close them (see Zehfuss, 2020)

² This means that my reading of Heidegger is strongly influenced by Deleuze (1988; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) and Deleuze-inspired affect research (see, for example, Massumi, 2002; Anderson, 2009; Ross, 2014). This is important as Heidegger is ever so ambiguous in his writing and often neglects ontic manifestations of being; I, therefore, resort to Deleuze-inspired research and terminology to draw out *Stimmung*’s implications for individuals’ political subjectivity.

³ I thank reviewer 3 for this formulation.

⁴ Heidegger differentiates between the ontological condition of *Befindlichkeit* (state-of-mind) and its ontic manifestation of *Stimmung* (mood). For the sake of theoretical parsimony and conceptual clarity, I refer to both as *Stimmung*.

⁵ There is a general debate whether Heidegger’s understanding of fear(fulness) indicates that he does not distinguish between moods and emotions or whether his description of fear is inconsistent with his account of moods. I read fearfulness as a mood which is distinct from but related to the emotion of fear (see also Bollnow, 2009; Ratcliffe, 2013).

⁶ Whilst this led to a temporary increase in arrivals of asylum seekers, especially in Munich, overall, fewer migrants arrived in Germany after the ‘border opening’ than before it (see Zehfuss, 2020).

REFERENCES

- Abendzeitung* (2015) Ein ‘Septembermärchen’ mit Flüchtlingen, available at: <https://www.abendzeitung-muenchen.de/politik/ein-septembermaerchen-mit-fluechtlingen-art-304563> (accessed on 10 September 2021).
- Ahmed, Sara (2014) ‘Not in the Mood’, *New Formations* 82: 13–28.
- Ahrens, Petra-Angela (2017) *Skepsis und Zuversicht: wie blickt Deutschland auf Flüchtlinge?*, Hannover: Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland.
- Alexander, Robin (2017) *Die Getriebenen: Merkel und die Flüchtlingspolitik: Report aus dem Inneren der Macht*, 4th ed, München: Siedler.
- Alkousaa, Riham, Sven Becker, Nina Brnada, Anna Clauß, *et al.* ‘Das Märchen eines Sommers’, *Der Spiegel* (12 August): 20-29.
- Amann, Melanie, Matthias Bartsch, Jürgen Dahlkamp, Markus Dettmer, *et al.* ‘An der Grenze’, *Der Spiegel* (11 September): 16–23.
- Amann, Melanie, Maik Baumgärtner, Markus Feldenkirchen, Martin Knobbe, Ann-Katrin Müller, Alexander Neubacher, and Jörg Schindler ‘Aufstand der Ängstlichen’. *Der Spiegel* (11 December): 18–27.
- Anderson, Ben (2009) ‘Affective atmospheres’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 2(2): 77–81.
- Anlauf, Thomas, Bernd Kastner, and Ramona Dinauer (2020) ‘Flüchtlingsherbst 2015 in München: Bewegende Begegnung’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, available at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muenchen-fluechtlinge-2015-hauptbahnhof-1.5014315> (accessed on 10 September, 2021).

Bachleitner, Kathrin (2021) *Collective Memory in International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartsch, Matthias, Maik Baumgärtner, Jan Friedmann, Christina Hebel, *et al.* (2015) 'Die Luntener'. *Der Spiegel* (28 August): 30-33.

Berenskötter, Felix (2020) 'Anxiety, time, and agency', *International Theory* 12(2): 273–290.

Bild.de (2015a) Die Schande von Heidenau. Available at: <https://www.bild.de/regional/dresden/asyl/brauner-mob-verletzt-31-polizisten-42282832.bild.html> (accessed on 29 July 2021).

Bild.de (2015b) Pressestimmen zum Umgang mit Flüchtlingen in Deutschland. Available at: <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/pressestimmen/die-ganze-welt-feiert-die-deutschen-42487816.bild.html> (accessed on 22 September 2021).

Bollnow, Otto Friedrich (2009) *Das Wesen der Stimmungen*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Breidenbach, Birgit (2020) *Aesthetic and philosophical reflections on mood: Stimmung and modernity*, London: Routledge.

Breidenbach, Birgit and Thomas Docherty (2019) 'Introduction', in Birgit Breidenbach and Thomas Docherty, eds, *Mood: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, New Theories*, 1-21, New York: Routledge.

Browning, Christopher S. (2018) "'Je suis en terrasse": Political Violence, Civilizational Politics, and the Everyday Courage to Be', *Political Psychology* 39(2): 243–261.

Browning, Christopher S. (2019) 'Brexit populism and fantasies of fulfilment', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32(3): 222–244.

Browning, Christopher S. and Pertti Joenniemi (2017) 'Ontological security, self-articulation and the securitisation of identity', *Cooperation and Conflict* 52(1): 31–47.

Browning, Christopher S., Pertti Joenniemi, and Brent J. Steele (2021) *Vicarious identity in international relations: self, security, and status on the global stage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bundespraesident.de (2015) Besuch einer Berliner Flüchtlingsunterkunft, available at: <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Berichte/DE/Joachim-Gauck/2015/08/150825-Besuch-Fluechtlinge-Wilmersdorf.html> (accessed on 2 August 2021).

Cash, John (2020) 'Psychoanalysis, cultures of anarchy, and ontological insecurity', *International Theory* 12(2): 306–321.

Chernobrov, Dmitry (2016) 'Ontological Security and Public (Mis)Recognition of International Crises: Uncertainty, Political Imagining, and the Self', *Political Psychology* 37(5): 581–596.

Deleuze, Gilles (1988) *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (2004) *A thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum.

Die Welt (2016) Laschet verteidigt Merkels Flüchtlingspolitik. 16 January, available at: https://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/thema_nt/article151085673/Laschet-verteidigt-Merkels-Fluechtlingspolitik.html (accessed on 15 November 2021).

Dingott Alkopher, Tal (2018) ‘Socio-psychological reactions in the EU to immigration: from regaining ontological security to desecuritisation’, *European security* 27(3): 314–335.

DW Deutsch (2015) *Flüchtlinge: Welle der Hilfsbereitschaft in Deutschland* | *DW Nachrichten*, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_YBTm9jhIc (accessed 4 October 2021).

Eberle, Jakob (2019) ‘Narrative, desire, ontological security, transgression: fantasy as a factor in international politics’, *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22(1): 243–268.

Ejdus, Filip (2018) ‘Critical situations, fundamental questions and ontological insecurity in world politics’, *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21(4): 883–908.

FOCUS Online (2015) Gabriel attackiert Fremdenhasser: „Pack, das eingesperrt werden muss” - Video, available at: <https://www.focus.de/politik/videos/> (accessed on 30 July 2021).

Gauck, Joachim (2015) Interview mit der Tageszeitung General-Anzeiger Bonn, available at: <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Joachim-Gauck/Interviews/2015/150829-Bonner-Generalanzeiger-Interview.html?nn=1891682> (accessed on 10 August 2021).

Gauck, Joachim (2016) ‘Ansprache von Bundespräsident Dr. h. c. Joachim Gauck beim Weltwirtschaftsforum am 20. Januar 2016 in Davos’, available at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/ansprache-von-bundespraesident-dr-h-c-joachim-gauck-788560> (accessed on 9 August, 2021).

Gazit, Orit (2019) ‘Van Gennep Meets Ontological (In)Security: A Processual Approach to Ontological Security in Migration’, *International Studies Review* 21(4): 572–597.

Gellwitzki, Nicolai and Houde, Anne-Marie (2022) 'Feeling the Heat: Emotions, Politicization, and the European Union', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* (early view).

Gellwitzki, Nicolai and Houde, Anne-Marie (forthcoming) 'Narratives, Ontological Security, and Unconscious Phantasy: Germany and the European Myth during the Migration Crisis', *Political Psychology* (accepted for publication)

Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J Seigworth, eds (2010) *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Greve, Patricia (2018) 'Ontological security, the struggle for recognition, and the maintenance of security communities', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21(4): 858–882.

Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich (2012) *Atmosphere, mood, Stimmung: on a hidden potential of literature*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Gustafsson, Karl and Nina C. Krickel-Choi (2020) 'Returning to the roots of ontological security: insights from the existentialist anxiety literature', *European Journal of International Relations* 26(3): 875–895.

Guyton, Patrick and Arno Makowsky 'Ein Bürgermeister schafft's nicht allein'. *Der Tagesspiegel* Online, available at <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/reportage/fluechtlinge-in-muenchen-ein-buergermeister-schaffts-nicht-allein/12315342.html> (accessed 20 August, 2021)

Hall, Todd H. and Andrew A.G. Ross (2015) 'Affective Politics after 9/11', *International Organization* 69(4): 847–79.

Haller, Michael (2017). 'Die "Flüchtlingskrise" in den Medien: Tagesaktueller Journalismus zwischen Meinung und Information', Frankfurt am Main: Otto Brenner Stiftung.

Hebel, Christina 'Flüchtlingsheim in Heidenau: Rechter Terror mit Ansage'. *Spiegel Online*, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/fluechtlingsheim-in-heidenau-rechter-terror-mit-ansage-a-1049372.html> (accessed 20 August, 2021)

Heidegger, Martin (1996) *Being and time: a translation of Sein und Zeit*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Heidegger, Martin (2008) *Being and time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Thought.

Heidegger, Martin (2012) *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: world, finitude, solitude*, Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press.

Hengst, Björn and Sandra Sperber 'Flüchtlinge am Hauptbahnhof München: Erschöpfung und Zuversicht', *Spiegel Online*, video available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/fluechtlinge-am-hauptbahnhof-muenchen-erschoepfung-und-zuversicht-a-1051656.html> (accessed 20 August, 2021)

Homolar, Alexandra and Ronny Scholz (2019) 'The power of Trump-speak: populist crisis narratives and ontological security', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32(3): 344–364.

infratest dimap (2015) DeutschlandTrend September 2015, available at https://www.infratest-dimap.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dt1509_bericht.pdf (accessed 17 February, 2021).

Journalistenakademie (2015) *Münchner Hauptbahnhof: Flüchtlinge willkommen*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76ZwcBnxKd8> (accessed 22 September 2021).

Kinnvall, Catarina (2004) 'Globalisation and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security', *Political Psychology* 25(5): 741–767.

Kinnvall, Catarina and Jennifer Mitzen (2017) 'An introduction to the special issue: Ontological securities in world politics', *Cooperation and Conflict* 52(1): 3–11.

Kinnvall, Catarina and Jennifer Mitzen (2020) 'Anxiety, fear, and ontological security in world politics: thinking with and beyond Giddens', *International Theory* 12(2): 240–256.

Krickel-Choi, Nina C. (2022a) 'The Embodied State: Why and How Physical Security Matters for Ontological Security', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 25(1): 159-181.

Krickel-Choi, Nina C. (2022b) 'The Concept of Anxiety in Ontological Security Studies', *International Studies Review* 24(3): viac013.

Kustermans, Jörg and Erik Ringmar (2011) 'Modernity, boredom, and war: a suggestive essay', *Review of International Studies* 37(4): 1775–1792.

Langenau, Lars (2015) 'Flüchtlinge in München - Bonbons statt Brandsätze', *Süddeutsche.de*, available at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/fluechtlinge-in-muenchen-bonbons-statt-brandsaetze-1.2636088> (accessed 20 September, 2021).

Lemay, Isabel (2021) 'Theorising the Life and Death of Moments of Openness towards Refugees in the Global North: The Case of Germany during the 2015-2016 Refugee "Crisis"'. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, doi: 10.1080/15562948.2021.2006386

Maier, Anja 'Flüchtlingshelfer auf dem Land: Gegen die Angst'. *Die Tageszeitung: taz*, (28 August 2017): 7.

Massumi, Brian (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press.

Mavelli, Luca (2017) 'Governing Populations through the Humanitarian Government of Refugees: Biopolitical Care and Racism in the European Refugee Crisis', *Review of International Studies* 43(5): 809-832.

MDR Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (2015) Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel in Heidenau | MDR, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18DisxxMT60> (accessed on 2 August 2021).

Mertins, Silke 'Ein deutsches Märchen'. *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (13 September): 24.

Mitzen, Jennifer (2006) 'Ontological security in world politics: State identity and the security dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations* 12(3): 341–370.

Niggemeier, Stefan (2016) 'Einmal "Willkommen!" und zurück: Die "Zeit" und die Flüchtlinge', *Übermedien*, available at: <https://uebermedien.de/7672/einmal-willkommen-und-zurueck-die-zeit-und-die-fluechtlinge/> (accessed on 2 August 2021).

Parnack, Charlotte and Martin Machowecz (2020) 'Sigmar Gabriel: Das "Pack"'. *Die Zeit* (6 September): 10-11.

Pinkerton, Patrick (2019) 'Governing Potential: Biopolitical Incorporation and the German "Open-Door" Refugee and Migration Policy', *International Political Sociology* 13(2): 128-144.

Purnell, Kandida (2021) 'Bodies Coming Apart and Bodies Becoming Parts: Widening, Deepening, and Embodying Ontological (In)Security in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic' *Global studies Quarterly* 1(4): ksab037.

Ratcliffe, Matthew (2002) 'Heidegger's Attunement and the Neuropsychology of Emotion', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1: 287-312,

Ratcliffe, Matthew (2013) 'Why Mood Matters', in Mark A. Wrathall, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, 157–176, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Reichelt, Julian (2015) 'A German disgrace called Heidenau', *Bild.de*, available at <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/heidenau/zwischenruf-heidenau-in-englisch-42302018.bild.html> (accessed on 3 August, 2021).

Reitz, Ulrich 'Ein zweites Sommermärchen?' *Focus* (12 September): 5.

Ringmar, Erik (2017) 'What are public moods?'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 21(4): 453-469.

Ringmar, Erik (2018) "'The Spirit of 1914": A Redefinition and a Defence', *War in History* 25(1): 26-47.

Rosher, Ben (2022) "'And now we're facing that Reality too": Brexit, Ontological Security, and Intergenerational Anxiety in the Irish Border Region', *European Security* 31(1): 21-38.

Ross, Andrew A. G. (2014) *Mixed Emotions: Beyond Fear and Hatred in International Conflict*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rumelili, Bahar (2015) 'Identity and desecuritisation: the pitfalls of conflating ontological and physical security', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18(1): 52–74.

Rumelili, Bahar (2021) '[Our] age of anxiety: existentialism and the current state of international relations', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 24: 1020-1036.

Sächsische.de (2015) Rechte Demo gegen Asylunterkunft eskaliert, available at: <https://www.saechsische.de/rechte-demo-gegen-asylunterkunft-eskaliert-3179945.html> (accessed on 29 July 2021).

Schmid, Thomas (2015) 'Warum Flüchtlinge nicht automatisch Bürger sind', *Die Welt*, available at <https://www.welt.de/kultur/article146352332/Warum-Fluechtlinge-nicht-automatisch-Buerger-sind.html> (accessed 22 August, 2021)

Schnabel, Ulrich 'Große Koalition des Mitgefühls'. *Die Zeit* (10 September): 33–34.

Schuette, Leonard August (2018) 'Collective memory in Germany and the great foreign policy debate: the case of the European refugee crisis', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31(3–4): 272–290.

Solomon, Ty (2018) 'Ontological security, circulations of affect, and the Arab Spring', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 21(4): 934–958.

Solomon, Ty and Brent J. Steele (2017) 'Micro-moves in International Relations theory', *European Journal of International Relations* 23(2): 267–291.

Steele, Brent J. (2008) *Ontological security in international relations: self-identity and the IR state*, London: Routledge.

Süddeutsche Zeitung (2020) 'Fünf Jahre nach dem Flüchtlingssommer: Asylpolitik trennt', available at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/migration-fuenf-jahre-nach-dem->

fluechtlingssommer-asylpolitik-trennt-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200809-99-97816 (accessed on 16 July, 2021).

Süddeutsche Zeitung (2020) Fünf Jahre nach dem Flüchtlingssommer: Asylpolitik trennt, available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/migration-fuenf-jahre-nach-dem-fluechtlingssommer-asylpolitik-trennt-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200809-99-97816> (accessed on 16 July 2021).

Sutter, Ove (2017) “‘Welcome!’: The emotional politics of voluntary work with refugees”, *Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis* 2(1): 5–25.

Sutter, Ove (2019) ‘Narratives of “Welcome Culture”’: The Cultural Politics of Voluntary Aid for Refugees’, *Narrative Culture* 6(1): 19–43.

tagesschau (2015) *Tagesschau 20:00 Uhr, 05.09.2015*, YouTube, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjNvsp7ywqQ> (accessed 20 September 2021).

tagesschau.de (2020) ‘Ich kämpfte kurz mit den Tränen’, available at: [tagesschau.de/fluechtlingshelfer-muenchen-2015-101.html](https://www.tagesschau.de/fluechtlingshelfer-muenchen-2015-101.html) (accessed on 20 September 2021).

Tretbar, Christian and René Bosch (2015) ‘Vom Funken zum Flächenbrand’, *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, available at <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/hetze-und-gewalt-gegen-fluechtlinge-vom-funken-zum-flaechenbrand/12238494.html> (accessed on 6 August, 2021).

Tretbar, Christian, Sven Lemkemeyer, Ruth Ciesinger, Matthias Meisner, and Martin Pfaffenzeller (2015) ‘Erfurts OB Andreas Bausewein will Asylbewerber-Kinder nicht einschulen’, *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, available at <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/fluechtlings-debatte-am-dienstag-erfurts-ob-andreas->

bausewein-will-asylbewerber-kinder-nicht-einschulen/12230518.html (accessed on 6 August, 2021).

Twente, Christian (2019) *Stunden der Entscheidung: Angela Merkel und die Flüchtlinge*, available at: <https://www.zdf.de/dokumentation/dokumentation-sonstige/stunden-der-entscheidung-160.html> (Accessed on 22 September, 2021)

Vick, Klaus (2015) 'Ausnahmezustand am Hauptbahnhof: Eine Reportage', <https://www.tz.de>, available at <https://www.tz.de/muenchen/stadt/ludwigsvorstadt-isarvorstadt-ort43328/fluechtlinge-muenchen-ausnahmezustand-hauptbahnhof-eine-reportage-zr-5499239.html> (accessed 22 September, 2021).

Vieira, Marco A. (2018) '(Re-)imagining the "Self" of Ontological Security: The Case of Brazil's Ambivalent Postcolonial Subjectivity', *Millennium* 46(2): 142–164.

Vollmer, Bastian and Serhat Karakayali (2018) 'The Volatility of the Discourse on Refugees in Germany', *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2): 118–139.

Von Altenbockum, Jasper 'Ein nationaler Kraftakt'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (8 September): 1.

Von Blume, Georg, Marc Brost, Tina Hildebrandt, Alexej Hock, *et al.* (2016) 'Grenzöffnung für Flüchtlinge: Was geschah wirklich?' *Die Zeit Online*, available at https://www.zeit.de/2016/35/grenzoeffnung-fluechtlinge-september-2015-wochenende-angela-merkel-ungarn-oesterreich?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.startpage.com%2F (accessed on 20 August, 2021)

Zehfuss, Maja (2020) "'We Can Do This": Merkel, Migration and the Fantasy of Control', *International Political Sociology* 15(2): 172-189.

Zeit Online (2015) Ungarn: Tausende Flüchtlinge in Österreich eingetroffen, available at: <https://www.zeit.de/politik/2015-09/ungarn-fluechtlinge-grenze> (accessed on 16 August, 2021).

Zeitpunktplus (2015) Flüchtlinge: Deutschland kann stolz auf Wilkommenskultur sein, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd5blDE6rn4> (accessed on 20 September, 2021).

Zielcke, Andreas (2015) 'Das Ende der großen Gesten', *Süddeutsche.de*, available at <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/soziologe-das-ende-der-grossen-gesten-1.2643902> (accessed on 16 February, 2021).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C. Nicolai L. Gellwitzki is a PhD Candidate in Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick. His research is located at the intersection of (critical) security studies, political psychology, and emotion research in IR.