Introduction

"And who are you?"

"A foreigner, of course!"

Speaking to my eleven-year-old daughter Olga at the end of the year 2000, this was the answer I received. I had asked her who she was, who she felt herself to be in terms of "nationality." We had moved to Berlin in the summer of that year, and she had never lived in Germany before. She was born in 1989 in St. Petersburg, then still known as Leningrad. I arrived on the scene when she was four, first as her mother's boyfriend, then her husband. In 1995 we moved to Berkeley, Northern California, for our studies and enrolled her in a school. In 1999 we left Berkeley to spend a year in Moscow. There we decided to move to Berlin. At first Russian was our family language, and Olga used the German word *Ausländer*, "foreigner," in a Russian sentence: Ауслендер, конечно!

I was shocked – after half a year in America she had described herself as American, despite holding only a Russian passport. By this point in Berlin she had German citizenship, but described herself as a foreigner.

Perhaps it was because German was her third identity after Russian and American. Or that we lived in America before 9/11 and long before Donald Trump, when immigrants were not yet viewed with general suspicion.

And yet something wasn't right. Olga attended a regular primary school in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Almost all her friends had at least one parent who came from another country and spoke a second language at home alongside German: Zhaabiz spoke Persian, Onur spoke Turkish, Ibrahim and Karim spoke Arabic, Amalia spoke Greek, and Yeon-hee spoke Korean.[1] Like Olga, Zhaabiz, Onur, Ibrahim, Karim, Amalia, and Yeon-hee had German citizenship. And yet they all called themselves "foreigners." In the United States, Onur, for example, would have described himself as Turkish American: the citizenship, American, as a noun, the parents' culture of origin, Turkish, as an adjective. Primarily American, then Turkish, and the two identities would have got along very well.

It was, as I said, the year 2000. The topics of migration and nationality had been on everyone's lips for over a year. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's "Red–Green" government (a first-ever coalition at the federal level between the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party) had dusted off the German nationality law, which dated back to 1913. As of January 1, 2000, there were fewer obstacles to naturalization, and people aged up to 23 had the option of dual citizenship.

But there was resistance. In the Hesse state election of 1999, the conservative Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) top candidate, Roland Koch, won the vote with a signature campaign against dual passports. State elections followed in North Rhine-Westphalia in early 2000; with an eye on the green card introduced by the Red–Green coalition, CDU frontrunner Jürgen Rüttgers said: "We need our children at computers, not Indians."[2] His comments went down in history as the "Kinder statt Inder" (Children not Indians) election campaign. The "dominant culture" (*Leitkultur*) debate raged from October 2000, and continues to haunt the media. This debate was triggered by CDU politician Friedrich Merz, who called for immigrants to adapt to the "free democratic German dominant culture."[3]

So what was different about Berkeley? For one thing, in Berkeley there were not primarily demands, but offers – to engage, to feel you belonged to the country, to feel like you belonged at all. And the means were provided to do so. Shortly after our arrival late in the summer of 1995, Olga was assigned to an intensive "English as a Second Language" (ESL) class, which involved many hours of teaching per week. In Berlin, it was suggested she attend 45 minutes of remedial German lessons per week together with children with learning difficulties or dyslexia, a good dozen of them.

Clearly, Germany neglected to supply positive influences, either to teach the key techniques required to become a functioning member of society – particularly the German language – or to establish an emotional connection with Germany. Exclusion reigned on many levels: almost all the people shown in Olga's schoolbooks were white and blonde, the stories taken from a long-extinct world of family farms and fishing boats. And in day-to-day life, non-white Germans were asked how they had managed to learn such good German and when they would be "going home." Jewish Germans would be asked what nonsense their president had been talking now, usually meaning the Israeli Prime Minister, not the German Federal President. And all those who looked "different" – "visible minorities," as they are known in migration research – were described as foreigners.

That was the situation in the year 2000. In politics, a message to shed any additional cultural baggage and submit to the dominant culture. In real life, 45 minutes of remedial German for children experiencing very different problems with the language. And a great deal of exclusion.

More than 20 years have passed since then, and much has changed. My second daughter, Lisa, born in 2002, has never called herself a "foreigner." As soon as she was enrolled in school, she was entered in the statistics as a child with a "migration background."[4] In 2017 she was one of 19.3 million people, almost a quarter of the population, with a migration background.[5] This term has few fans – for good reason, as we will soon see – but, taken literally, it does allow a person to have a German passport in the foreground and migration experience in the background. The status of what the Germans call the "mega-topic" (*Megathema*) of migration has also changed since 2000. Since the 2015 refugee crisis, the whole of Germany has been talking – arguing – about asylum, immigration, integration. This was preceded by a decade and a half of continual development. While Germany dispelled the myth that it is not a country of immigration, and diversity became more natural, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism continued to spread, making their way onto the streets and into parliaments. But one thing has not changed in this time: what it means to be German remains a blank, is still missing something elementary – new terms, concepts, and stories.

This book is about migration, nation, and identity. It is a history of migration to Germany since 1945, inscribing into German history migrant groups that rarely appear within it. This history is both entangled with, and highly relevant to, the rest of the world. Germany, in other words, here serves as one European example that has wide implications for locales from Northern Africa to Turkey and Russia, from the Middle East to the United States and Canada, Latin America, South Asia, East Asia, and Australia.[6] The book narrates history based on people who have migrated to West and East Germany since the Second World War and who really do or did exist. The sum of their histories is the history of the Germans. Together they form a new collective, "the New We" (*Das neue Wir*, as in the original German title of this book).

For me, however, the New We means something else, something that goes beyond the sum of all Germans, including the immigrants ignored in the traditional historical narrative and thus historically invisible. The New We is a plea for a collective identity.

I work on the basic assumption that we all live countless identities and that these identities and how they relate to one another are constantly changing, depending on where and with whom we communicate and interact – and this is why I talk of "living" identities, rather than

"possessing" or "having" identities.[7] In Germany these lived identities include Rhinelander, Leipziger, East German, the Märkisches Viertel district of Berlin, goth, soccer fan, queer, Catholic, trans woman, Alevi, Alawi, often simultaneously and in rapid flux depending on whether people are interacting with a boss or colleague, a mother or son, in the sauna or in the synagogue. Migration specialists Steven Vertovec and Mark Terkessidis have respectively called this highly complex, fluid, forever changing state of multiple attachments "super-diversity" and "interculture."[8]

One of these attachments is to a nation. Almost all of us have a citizenship, and some of us have more than one. Germany is one of the countries that defines attachment to a nation not just according to citizenship. Particularly in everyday life, which is why my daughter and her friends described themselves as "foreigners" despite holding German passports. There is a notion that one cannot be German and come from another country – German *or* Russian, but not both at the same time. Or that you need to have been in Germany a very long time to be "truly" German. Or that you need to be Christian. Or that you need to look a certain way – visible minorities are suspected of not being German.

This book aims to establish an understanding of "nation" in which belonging to the German nation and other attachments, including origins in another country, go together rather than ruling each other out. German plus Russian origins, German of Russian origin. Turkish Germans, not German Turks. German Turks would be Turkish citizens of German origin, for example if Angela Merkel were to migrate to Turkey, give up her German citizenship, and take Turkish citizenship.

In this book, I suggest a collective term for all German citizens with additional cultural baggage: "German plus" or the synonym "PlusGerman." They are German plus something else. This term is self-descriptive and has been coined by, among others, Cologne's SPD politician Tayfun Keltek and the President of Gießen University and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Joybrato Mukherjee, both German citizens. "I feel German, I was born here and grew up here, and I feel most at home in the German language," says Mukherjee. He also says: "My family has a strong Indian identity, and I am a member of the Hindu faith." He therefore calls himself "German plus."[9]

Each person can describe themselves however they want – "We don't want any labels lumping us together as foreign. We ourselves want to decide how we are described," says the "New German Organisations" (neue deutsche organisationen) network, a project of the New German Media Professionals association (Neue deutsche Medienmacher, NdM): "We, that is people with

a migration background or foreground, migrants, bicultural people, cross-cultural people, Black Germans, People of Color, Turkogermans, German Kurds, and many, many more. Being German is complex. Ask us."[10] The three most common self-descriptive collective terms for German citizens plus are "New German" (*Neue Deutsche*), "hyphenated German" (*Bindestrich-deutsche*), and "post-migrant" (*Postmigranten*). "PlusGerman" has some advantages over these terms, which I will briefly explain.

The term "New German" emerged in the 2000s. NdM was set up in early 2009 to strengthen the position of migrant voices in the public sphere. At the same time, the term was taken up by the rapper Harris and migration scholar Naika Foroutan, followed by three journalists and later a series of migrant and anti-racism organizations. For all of these people, the term was an alternative to "foreigner," and they all had the same goal: to find a linguistic marker for the idea of belonging both to the German nation and to other cultures.[11] In 2016, Herfried and Marina Münkler adopted the term, no longer self-descriptively, for their book *Die neuen Deutschen* (*The New Germans*).[12]

"German plus" has the fundamental advantage that it is not a temporal term; it does not distinguish between "old" and "new" Germans. "Old" could be seen as having an unalterable quality; even in the year 2100, immigrated Syrian Germans who had fled the civil war in Syria, which started in 2011, and their descendants would still be described as "new Germans."

The self-descriptive term "hyphenated German" (*Bindestrichdeutsche*) makes no linguistic sense – after all, the German word *Türkeideutsche* (Turkish German) does not contain a hyphen. The term has been imported from English, "hyphenated Americans." Finally, the disadvantage of the self-description "post-migrant" is that it does not contain the word "German." The term reduces a person to their migrant status, linguistically excluding them from being German.

Compared with all these terms, "PlusGerman" has the additional advantage of openness: the number of plus-identities is unlimited, and the "plus" could even refer to a German federal state or region (such as Saxony or the Ruhr area). It could also refer to a migration that took place a long time ago (for example the Huguenots from France in the seventeenth century or the Poles who migrated to the Ruhr area from the late nineteenth century): "PlusGerman" signals that, at some time or other, we have all crossed borders, that all Germans were "New Germans" once upon a time. That, ultimately, we are all migrants.

As stated, "PlusGerman" or "German plus" is a self-descriptive term, and self-description is self-empowerment. But "migration background" is no self-descriptive term. It is an official term originating from research

that was first applied by the Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt) in the 2005 micro census. Following the increase in naturalizations from 2000 onward, the aim was to find another way of recording multicultural backgrounds in statistics (the term "foreigner" was no longer considered suitable); this seemed important to generate meaningful data, for example for education policy. A person has a migration background "if they or at least one parent is not a German citizen by birth."[13] The term then made its way from statistics to society, where a few welcomed it as an alternative to "foreigner." However, most criticized the risk it entails of making a person's background something biological – you will never shake off your migration background, particularly if you belong to a visible minority.[14]

No term is actually required for those designated in scholarship as autochthonous Germans and colloquially described by some as "BioGermans" (*Biodeutsche*). Invoking biology and blood, this resonates with a notion of the true, authentic German. "Despite" their citizenship, all others would be considered artificial Germans (admittedly, some people use this term ironically, playing on the word for, say, organic yoghurt, *Biojoghurt*).

Another term that should be scrapped is "integration." Usually, integration means assimilation or acculturation – giving up all other attachments and total absorption in the unitary culture. In the United States, this is denoted with the "melting-pot" metaphor that prevailed into the 1950s: give up your Italian, Swedish, or German origins and blend with everyone else to form a homogeneous American identity. Here I am making the case for something resembling the model that has prevailed in the United States since the 1960s, the metaphor of the salad bowl – the bowl as the national collective identity with space for many identities of origin, the leaves in a colorful salad. Applied to Germany, the salad bowl model means that multicultural skills and multilingualism – the knowledge of other languages in addition to German, "German plus" – should be promoted by the state and symbolically valued.

This is not a call for multiculturalism – if you understand multiculturalism as the sole existence of particular identities without a collective identity or, to maintain this imagery, the various salad ingredients without a bowl. Multiculturalism in this sense has plenty of charm, but seems to me impractical for at least two reasons. First, society is too heterogeneous – just look at the media landscape. In the past, the whole nation would gather in front of the television at 8 pm to watch forum media like the evening news, which simply do not have the same unifying power as they did 30 years ago. Today we move in digital echo chambers; social

media feeds bolster our existing, highly polarized opinions rather than confront us with opinions different from our own.

Second, the siren call of some countries from which "PlusGermans" originate is too loud. If Germany fails to offer alternatives to the attempted co-optation through ethnic/linguistic/cultural/religious propaganda (for example from Erdoğan's Turkey or Putin's Russia), if all national attachment to Germany has to offer is a blank space, then German society will be put under excessive strain.

We Are All Migrants aims to contribute to the current debate with historical arguments, as well as offering guidance by taking a look at society: what works, what errors should be avoided? I will illustrate abstract concepts by telling the stories of specific people while analyzing background information – specialists would describe this as actor-centered, narrative historiography, and this is what I shall try to provide.[15]

To do so, I draw primarily on migrant memory initiatives, attempts to make migrant voices audible from the past – first and foremost the oral history archive at Cologne's Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland, DOMiD). I also use the many first-hand migrant reports recorded in books, in press, radio, and TV contributions, and in gray literature – "ego documents." Second, I draw on the social history migration research of Klaus J. Bade in particular and in general the Osnabrück Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (Osnabrücker Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien, IMIS), founded by Bade in 1991.

However, this is no "general" history of Germany supplemented with the aspect of migration. No special lens filter has been used to incorporate the topic of migration into key events and processes such as the building of the Berlin Wall, the peace movement, and European integration. That would be a different book examining the role migration has played in these events and processes, how migrants have contributed, and how they have been perceived. A book such as this would have chapter headings like "The 1970s and the Rise of Postindustrial Society" rather than "Labor Migration to West Germany"; it would be organized by period or topic, not according to the migrant groups with the greatest numbers.

A narrative such as this has yet to be produced; migrants play practically no role at all in the traditional syntheses of German history. Where migrants have surfaced in overviews of West and East German postwar history – the older produced by Heinrich-August Winkler and the newer by Eckart Conze – they have appeared on 1 of 742 pages (Winkler) or 10 of 1,071 pages (Conze).[16] There is simply no synthetic study of German

history since the Second World War that consistently places migrants and migration at its center.[17]

If my book encourages others to write such a history, then it has fulfilled one of its purposes. If "PlusGerman" readers can identify with the people in the book and are happy that their story has finally been told for once, then it has fulfilled another. If other readers develop empathy for the people in the book despite the huge gulf in their lived experience – for example because they have been residing in Germany for a long time – then yet another has been fulfilled. These goals can be summarized in two words: empowerment and empathy.

However, I have deliberately chosen not to start the book with the topic of immigration. The first chapter is about the history of emigration from Germany. Before the twentieth century, Germany was a classic emigrant country – back then, German émigrés had similar experiences all over the world (primarily in the United States, Russia, and South America) to those of immigrants in Germany today.

This is followed by the first of two snapshots, outlining the image offered by Germany in 1945, when it became the hub of the largest migration movements of modern European times. The other snapshot comes later in the book and looks at 1989, the second major year of upheaval, when Germany opened up to Eastern European migration. These snapshots set the tone for the chapters that follow.

The first major migrant group after the Second World War was the expellees who arrived between 1944 and 1950. As the second chapter shows, they were initially far more excluded than the "myth of rapid integration" indicates.[18] In 1950, the Federal Republic's political sphere found an identity construct that would allow the expellees to maintain their Pomeranian or Sudeten German identity of origin and be recognized as "true" Germans. Many problems would have been avoided had this identity construct been extended to the "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*, the focus of Chapter 3) who arrived from 1955 as soon as it became clear that some of them would stay and adopt German citizenship. However, migrant workers moved not just to the Federal Republic, but also to the German Democratic Republic as "contract workers" (*Vertragsarbeiter*, the subject of Chapter 4). The fifth chapter turns back to West Germany, focusing on the asylum seekers of the 1980s through to the early 2000s and the debate about the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) that in 1993 led to the "asylum compromise" (*Asylkompromiss*). Chapters follow on the Volga Germans, Polish and Romanian (late) resettlers (Chapter 6), and the Jewish quota refugees (*jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge*, Chapter 7). These two migration movements from the former Eastern Bloc were set in motion by the fall of the Iron Curtain, captured in the snapshot of 1989.

The eighth and final chapter takes us from this point to the present day. By the time the book concludes, the migration questions that have occupied German politics and society since the turn of the millennium will, I hope, appear in a different light – particularly the "welcoming culture" (*Willkommenskultur*) of 2015. The book concludes with a plea for bringing together particularism and universalism, for radically diverse identities *and* a "New We."