fare organisations are "large and highly professionalised social service organisations", as Mayer (2017: 6) notes.

However, I also came across a couple of incidents when social welfare organizations took a critical stance towards governmental actors and their decisions. For instance, in September 2015, the heads of the social welfare organizations at the LEA in Ellwangen composed a "Warning letter" ("Brandbrief"). This letter was addressed to the state government of Baden-Württemberg and called for immediate solutions to the "crisis situation", which had led to deteriorating conditions that were "no longer bearable" and "risked escalating at any minute" (Warning letter: 18/9/2015). In other places, employees of social welfare organizations circumvented or actively boycotted governmental decisions in the reception of asylum seekers. In spite of these cases, I would still argue that the organizations' antipolitical effects dominated around the long summer of migration.

2.4. Concluding Remarks: Practices of Solidarity between Dissent and Co-Optation

This chapter scrutinized how the widely circulating image of a German 'welcome culture' played out on the ground; how it became appropriated by different local actors; and how it mobilized immediate practices of refugee support. Based on a case study in Ellwangen, I illustrated how the notion of a 'welcome culture' instilled *a moral imperative to act*, a feeling that action was morally mandated to alleviate human suffering, among residents in town. This moral imperative mobilized manifold practices of refugee support, including a public march and more long-term volunteering activities. Both examples revolved around a humanitarian imaginary that depicted the reception of asylum seekers in morally charged tones and generated feelings of compassion for those 'in need' – a framing that presented practices of refugee support as natural and ostensibly 'apolitical' 'expressions of humanity'. In late summer 2015, this humanitarian imaginary was given further impetus by the notion of an extraordinary emergency situation and the widely circulating image of a 'refugee crisis'. Such crisis metaphors had important mobilizing effects on local residents, many of whom sought to help and to be part of this 'historic moment'.

The practices of solidarity that I investigated in the course of this chapter brought together a wide range of local actors and individuals with differ-

ing positionalities and interests. They included left-wing political activists, local governmental actors and political representatives, social welfare organizations, religious leaders and established residents. All of these actors and individuals became involved in the mobilization of solidarities in one way or another. They all shaped the conduct of refugee support according to their peculiar interests and worldviews – thus, they participated in the contestation of migrant solidarity.

The practices of solidarity in Ellwangen came with diverse (anti)political meanings and effects. At times, volunteers became complicit in the governance of asylum seekers and formed a symbiosis with governmental actors. There were also moments, when practices of refugee support opened up new political possibilities on a grassroots level, possibilities to challenge the status quo, to voice dissent and to foster change towards a more inclusive and egalitarian alternative.

These findings raise questions and indicate avenues for the remainder of this book. In the following third chapter, I investigate in more detail how practices of solidarity became a site of governmental intervention and control. In Chapter 4, I then focus on how practices of refugee support opened up political possibilities to bring about change and transformation in migration societies.