

## 7. WORDS IN CONCLUSION: Lines of Contestation in Contemporary Migration Societies

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This book investigated the manifold practices of refugee support that emerged around the German ‘summer of welcome’ in 2015. Focussing on the perspective of *contested solidarity*, my aim was to step back from the ostensibly clear-cut distinctions between ‘humanitarianism’ and ‘political activism’, highlighting instead the political ambivalences of refugee support. My empirical investigation thus paid particular attention to the transformative relationships of solidarity that are forged between long-term residents and newcomers, relationships shaped by contested social imaginaries of living-together in an age of intensified migration.

This investigation revealed that refugee support is situated, embedded into differing, contested and at times conflicting imaginaries, subjected to manifold forms of claims-making, and infused with power struggles. Practices of refugee support bring together a wide range of actors who all attempt to shape the ‘proper’ conduct of solidarity according to their particular interests and world views. What crystallized in the course of this book is that refugee solidarity and questions of power are therefore intertwined in complex and ambivalent ways. There were moments when refugee support inspired *political* action and fostered a more egalitarian social alternative, blurring the line between those deemed legitimate citizens and those deemed non-citizens, and challenging dominant discriminations and exclusions within migration societies. At the same time, however, refugee support also proved capable of inspiring practices that had *antipolitical* effects and meanings, by becoming complicit in the reproduction of governmental discriminations or in the fostering of new forms of exclusion within migration societies.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that migrant solidarity forms a contested intersection at which actors and individuals with different back-

grounds and different imaginaries come together in order to elaborate the parameters of contemporary living-together. Refugee support might thus be read as a prism that sheds a new light on current social and political developments in European migration societies. Practices and discourses of migrant solidarity are revealing in terms of how people imagine the world around them, at the same time as they are also world building. They forge new relations among different groups and actors; produce collectivity and enact ideals of a 'better society'. Therefore, practices of refugee support should always be read in relation to the political and social context in which they take place.

The long summer of migration in 2015 epitomized strikingly how intensified global migration movements are profoundly altering European societies. Perhaps more than ever before, this situation led long-term residents to reflect upon their ideals, wishes and needs concerning living-together in an increasingly heterogeneous migration society. The contested solidarities of the migration summer thus responded to a desire to build new forms of collectivity and togetherness amidst migration movements.

In this concluding section, I draw together the findings of this book and discuss how they contribute to our understanding of contemporary migration societies. I suggest that the German 'summer of welcome' might be read as a telling case that sheds a new light on wider challenges, tensions and issues surrounding living-together in contemporary migration societies. In what follows, I conclude this study by highlighting three *lines of contestation* that crystallized in the course of this book. It was along these lines that actors disagreed with each other and struggled with the question of how to position themselves. These lines of contestation, in my view, mirror not only the differing and contested social imaginaries pertaining to migrant solidarity, they also point to the contested question of how an increasingly heterogeneous and diverse society should look like. Over the following pages, I scrutinize these three *lines of contestation* in more detail.

## 7.1. The Contested Line between Insiders and Outsiders

One issue that repeatedly inspired differing positions among those who participated in the contestation of solidarity was the question of where to draw the line between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum seekers; between those to be included and those to be excluded from relationships of solidarity and help; between victims and villains of migration. This categorization of newcomers