

belonging in migration societies are formulated and enacted, alternatives that revolve around the criterion of co-presence. These alternative visions, however, proved to be highly contested and debated among those who supported refugees in the area of my field research. As I will illustrate in sections three to five, people held differing and ambivalent standpoints in relation to a demand for equal rights (section three), a demand for a right to stay (section four), and a demand for a right to migrate (section five). In the concluding section, I summarize my findings on the political dimensions of refugee support around the long summer of migration.

## 4.2. Politics of Presence: Enacting Alternative Visions of Society

For the purpose of investigating the political dimensions of refugee support, I suggest to step back from clear-cut distinctions between ostensibly ‘apolitical’ forms of humanitarian volunteering and political activism. Instead, I look at practices of refugee support through the analytical perspective of a *politics of presence*. With this terminology I refer to the political possibilities that unfold when alternative visions of society and belonging in migration societies are formulated and enacted; alternatives to the exclusionary and discriminating effects of national citizenship that became increasingly pressing around the long summer of migration. I argue that these alternative visions centrally built on *presence*, i.e. the material act of being there, as the defining criterion for social membership. Nevertheless, as I will outline in more detail later on, these alternatives were highly contested among different groups and individuals and oscillated between a radical call for the universal inclusion of all those present on the ground to more conditional and hesitant views. In this section, I outline the conceptual contours of such a perspective on *politics of presence* in more detail. In the first part, I draw on works in the field of critical citizenship studies. In the second, I look in more detail at how ‘presence’ functioned as a (nonetheless contested) mode of belonging during the long summer of migration.

### 4.2.1. The Deficiencies of National Citizenship

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the nation-state has formed the primary locus for political belonging and it still determines how we think about the political today (see Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). In more traditional understandings, na-

tional citizenship was depicted as a “contract” between state authorities and citizens, while the latter were said to hold certain rights and obligations towards the state (Marshall 1950). Such a perspective focussed mainly on the *inclusionary* dimensions of national citizenship. More recently, however, works in the field of critical citizenship studies began to stress the *exclusionary* dimensions of membership based on the nation-state (see Isin 2008; Isin 2011). They argue that the legal inclusion of some goes hand in hand with the definition of others as aliens or non-citizens who, although present on national territories, are excluded from political processes (see McNevin 2011). Through this logic, the nation-state produces unequal rights-holders within its own territorial confines.

This is all the more so in times of heightened global mobility, when populations are becoming increasingly heterogeneous (see Castles & Miller 1994; Cresswell 2006). Migrants – such as asylum seekers and refugees – lack access to citizen rights and are therefore kept in legal limbo, neither fully included nor fully excluded from the nation-state. Many of the works in the field of critical citizenship studies take their cue from Giorgio Agamben (2005), who outlines how the nation-state governs through the creation of “a state of exception” in which migrants and asylum seekers are deprived of fundamental rights. Others have stressed how, in the context of migration, the exclusionary dimensions of citizenship produce an exploitable labour force that is rendered vulnerable to the operations of government and market capitalism (Shachar 2009; Goldring & Landolt 2011; Aliverti 2012). In consequence, the relationship between the subjects residing within a nation-state and the polity is becoming “deterritorialized” (see Sassen 2003: 42). In sum, these works suggest that, in a globalized world where people are highly mobile, national citizenship is increasingly incapable of integrating a large proportion of the population as equal rights-holders.

In the field of critical citizenship studies, scholars have also outlined how national citizenship is continuously reworked, altered or contested in order to cope with the new circumstances (Ong 1999; Torpey 2000; Ong 2005, 2006; Staeheli et al. 2012). Such works put forward more flexible conceptions of citizenship that go beyond legal definitions and emphasize that citizenship is also socially (re)produced and contingent on acts and practices. A major influence here is Isin's work on “acts of citizenship”. Isin emphasizes how subjects excluded from the dominant order nevertheless *enact* citizenship and, in doing so, make a claim to be counted (Isin 2008; Isin & Nielsen 2008; Isin 2012). Through such means, he argues, citizenship has historically become ever more

inclusive and, since the Greek polis, has gradually integrated minorities that were formerly excluded from the dominant order, such as slaves and women (Isin 2002; Isin, Nyers & Turner 2008). Isin and Nielsen (2008) outline how “acts of citizenship” thus open up important political possibilities, writing:

“Acts of citizenship [...] disrupt habitus, create new possibilities, claim rights and impose obligations in emotionally charged tones; pose their claims in enduring and creative expressions; and, most of all, are the actual moments that shift established practices, status and order.” (Isin & Nielsen 2008: 10)

According to Isin and Nielsen, such “acts of citizenship” point towards alternative, more egalitarian forms of society; they shift established orders and are therefore highly political. Soysal (1994), meanwhile, argues that citizenship is increasingly going beyond national parameters, due to the development of what she calls “postnational citizenship”. Such forms of citizenship, she reasons, blur the dichotomy between ostensible citizens and aliens through the multiplication of memberships:

“What is increasingly in place is a multiplicity of membership forms, which occasions exclusions and inclusions that no longer coincide with the bounds of the nation(al)” (Soysal 2012: ; no page number).

Possibilities for transforming national citizenship can stem either from above or below the national level. On the one hand, scholars have discussed how forms of “transnational citizenship” (Bauböck 1994; Sassen 2003: 56) might alter and supplement national citizenship, for instance through European citizenship (see Balibar 2004; Soysal 2012). On the other hand, an emerging strand of literature investigates the tendencies that rework and challenge national citizenship “from below” through forms of “urban citizenship” (see Bauböck 2003) or “subnational citizenship” (Bhuyan & Smith-Carrier 2012).

The manifold practices of refugee support that emerged around the long summer of migration, I would argue, opened up such political possibilities for transforming and contesting national citizenship ‘from below’. I will scrutinize these *politics of presence* that were opened up by practices of refugee support in more detail in the following section.

#### 4.2.2. Presence as an Alternative Mode of Belonging

“In the past year, something unbelievable happened: [...] When it became clear that state actors were not reacting adequately in order to provide the

most basic necessities to the newcomers, hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of established residents reacted spontaneously and, together with the refugees, built structures of solidarity and understanding [...] Beyond established institutions, a broad and transnational process emerged that pointed to *a future society in which issues of fair distribution, belonging and social rights are redefined.*" (Call for Contributions, Welcome2Stay Conference, 10-12 June 2016 in Leipzig; emphasis added)<sup>1</sup>

On a sunny Sunday morning in June 2016, somewhere on the outskirts of the eastern German city of Leipzig, I made my way from the tramway station to the abandoned fairgrounds where the conference "Welcome2Stay" had taken place over the past two days. "Solidarity" was one of the buzzwords I heard countless times during these days. They were packed with thought-provoking workshops, discussion groups, plenary talks and social activities. The event aimed to bring together all kinds of different groups and individuals actively supporting refugees across Germany, including those who regarded themselves as "political activists" and those who sought to help refugees for ostensibly humanitarian reasons. Indeed, my approximately 800 co-participants seemed to be from diverse backgrounds and age groups.

On the morning of the third and final day of the conference, I opted to attend the last session of the scheduled programme, which was entitled "Visions, Networking, Political Perspectives, What Should We Do?". As usual, we started well behind schedule. When I entered the tent around the appointed time, people were still chatting or having their breakfast, supplied by the self-organized "solidarity kitchen", which had served food to the conference participants over the past days. With almost an hour of delay, a middle-aged moderator stepped up and welcomed participants to the last conference day. After some words of introduction, he kicked off a discussion among the audience by asking participants about the lessons they had learnt in the course

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1 Translation by LF. German original: "Im letzten Jahr ist etwas Unglaubliches geschehen: [...] Als deutlich wurde, dass staatliche Stellen nicht angemessen handelten, um für die Neuankommenden das Notwendige bereitzustellen, reagierten Hunderttausende, vielleicht sogar Millionen Alteingesessene spontan und schufen gemeinsam mit den Geflüchteten Strukturen der Solidarität und der Verständigung [...] Jenseits der etablierten Institutionen entstand ein breiter und transnationaler Prozess, der auf eine zukünftige Gesellschaft verwies, in der sich Fragen nach gerechter Verteilung, Zugehörigkeit und sozialen Rechten neu formulierten." See also: <http://welcome2stay.org/de/aufruf-zur-beteiligung/> (last accessed 1/8/2020).

of the workshop and about their visions and ideas for future joint actions. After several people in the audience had shared their thoughts and ideas, the moderator took the microphone again and announced that he would like to put forward a proposition that, in his eyes, represented common ground for all of the participants. In a loud, confident voice, he asserted:

“Firstly, all of us here believe in the right to migration, no matter the origin – in a right to come, a right to stay and a right to leave! Secondly, all of us should have the same political and social rights! Including to education, housing and health.” (Field notes: 12/6/2016)

These closing remarks, I would argue, are an example of the alternative visions of society, belonging and citizenship that were enacted and formulated through practices of refugee support around the long summer of migration. It epitomizes an aspiration for a society that does not make distinctions among its members based on pre-established ethnic or national criteria but, instead, grants equal rights to “all of us”, i.e. to all those present on the ground.

The growing numbers of arriving asylum seekers made citizens more aware than ever that societies are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and mobile. This was due partly to the growing visibility of the cross-border movement of asylum seekers around the long summer of migration and partly to their accommodation in villages and neighbourhoods that had not previously received any asylum seekers. These developments, I would argue, led many volunteers to reflect on the deficiencies of national citizenship, to adopt critical positions towards them, and to enact alternative visions of belonging on the ground. Their practices of refugee support thus also responded to a need to incorporate newcomers with diverse backgrounds who were otherwise excluded from a membership based on national confines. Whether people considered their practices of refugee support as “political”, “somewhat political” or “apolitical”, questions of fairer distribution gained relevance for many during the long summer of migration. Quite connectedly, Schwartz and Schwenken (2020: 418) argue that “practices, relationships, and institutions of solidarity take part in renegotiating modes of inclusion and exclusion inherent to citizenship in multiple aspects”. Oosterlynck et al. (2016: 10) propose that “the growing ethnic and cultural diversity of the population makes it necessary to look for innovative forms of solidarity elsewhere, namely in the here and now of actual practices in particular places”. They thus propose to shift attention “to the relationally constituted places where diversity is encountered and negotiated” (ibid.).

In his monograph *Give a Man a Fish*, Ferguson (2015: 33) considers such alternative forms of distribution building on the notion of a “rightful share” of existing resources for all, including marginalized sections of society. What is required, he says, is a “process of discovery and invention” in order to be “attentive to the ways that new conditions may be opening up new possibilities for politics and policy alike” (ibid.). Ferguson thus emphasizes the significance of forms of social assistance and argues that such practices entail a new way of thinking that is “associated with both new kinds of political claim-making and new possibilities for political mobilization” (ibid.: 14). In his lecture “Presence and Social Obligation: An Essay on the Share”<sup>2</sup>, Ferguson (2017) proposed that such alternatives revolve around the theme of *presence*. They include whoever is ‘here’, present within a community, and thus focus on practical matters of distribution rather than on abstract membership based on the imagined community of the nation (cf. Anderson 1983). Co-presence, he suggested, comes with shared demands and provides the basis for more inclusionary forms of politics.

Building on Ferguson’s works, I would argue that the practices of refugee support that emerged around the German migration summer came with a *politics of presence* that articulated and enacted new forms of distribution in an environment incapable of providing the newcomers with a ‘rightful share’. As is the case for the mantra formulated in the closing session of the Welcome2Stay conference in Leipzig, these alternatives revolved around the theme of presence, i.e. the physical act of being there on the ground.

This emphasis on co-presence is in line with an emerging and growing interest in ‘the local’ as a spatial reference for political alternatives beyond the nation-state. For instance, Bauder has written extensively on the question of how political alternatives form ‘below’ the nation-state, on a local or urban scale (Bauder 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016). He suggests that a *jus domicile* principle might provide an emerging mode of imagining political membership beyond the national order (Bauder 2012). This principle would grant equal rights to all de facto residents in a community and thus enacts “a practical alternative for reconfiguring formal citizenship to include populations that are mobile across borders” (Bauder 2013: 3). Resulting forms of “domicile citizenship” would offer opportunities to decouple citizenship from the nation-state (ibid.). Writing with Austin, Bauder (2010: 12) emphasizes the significance of universality for such modes of belonging arguing that “*jus domicile* citizenship

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2 Dahrendorf Lecture at the University of Konstanz, 5/7/2017.

should be a right and should not be conferred selectively on some residents and denied to others". In his writings on migrant solidarity, Bauder (2019: 7) also stresses that "the solidarities that emerge from migration give rise to 'place-based politics' [...] these politics relate to the local presence of international migrants and refugees". Similarly, the volunteers in the area of my field research often stressed the significance of implementing a more inclusive alternative in *their* neighbourhood, village or region and, in doing so, placed an emphasis on the local level.

Yet, scholars have also pointed to the contested nature of alternative modes of belonging that form 'below' the nation-state. There is a fruitful strand of literature that scrutinizes differing understandings of belonging (see for example Yuval-Davis 2006; Pfaff-Czarnecka & Toffin 2011; Yuval-Davis 2011). For instance, Youkhana (2015: 11) emphasizes that modes of belonging are subject to manifold contestations, opening up "a politics of belonging": "Belonging is produced beyond ethnic or national boundaries but is contested on interrelated sites, scales, and networks" (Youkhana 2015: 14). This contested nature of social membership is also emphasized by Soysal's works on postnational forms of citizenship: "Postnational rights are results of struggles, negotiations, and arbitrations by actors at local, national, and transnational levels and are contingent upon issues of distribution and equity" (Soysal 2012: no page number).

In a similar vein, the alternative visions of belonging that were articulated and enacted through practices of refuge support in the area of my field research also proved to be highly contested among different individuals and groups involved. They oscillated *in-between* calls for a radical egalitarian society and more conditioned and hesitant views. It is these diverse positions that I aim to grasp with the concept of a *politics of presence*. In the remainder of this chapter, I scrutinize the contested alternatives to national citizenship that emerged around the German migration summer, arguing that they revolved around a demand for equal rights (section three), a demand for a right to stay (section four) and a demand for a right to migrate (section five).

### 4.3. Contestations around Equal Rights

In his closing statement, the moderator at the Welcome2Stay conference put forward a demand for radical political equality: "[...] Secondly, all of us should have *the same political and social rights!* Including to education, housing and