countries are enjoying new levels of popularity (cf. Jäckle & König 2017; Castelli Gattinara 2018). Nonetheless, this book is based on the premise that the spirit of summer 2015 produced lasting effects. My empirical investigation in the five subsequent chapters explores how the long summer of migration served as a laboratory of alternative socialities, how it shaped visions of a more egalitarian and inclusive social order, and how it created new ways of relating among different actors in migration societies.

1.2. The Political Ambivalences of Refugee Support

Building on the premise that refugee support can never be located 'outside' or 'above' politics, this book traces solidarity's complex and ambivalent entanglements with questions of power. Practices and discourses of refugee support are always embedded in a wider social and political context. Even if they are framed as purely 'apolitical' humanitarian or altruistic helping, they nonetheless come with ambivalent and contested *political* meanings and effects. This book investigates how the contested solidarities of the migration summer constantly *oscillated* between political possibilities to bring about alternative ways of living-together in an age of intensified migration, the fulfilment of personal needs and a complicity in the governance of migration. Before we look in more detail at these political ambivalences of refugee support, however, it is important to come to terms with what I understand as the 'political' and respectively, its antidote, the 'antipolitical'.

1.2.1. Refugee Support as Political Action

My reading of 'the political' throughout this book is inspired by the works of French philosopher Jacques Rancière (1998, 2001, 2009). For Rancière, political change occurs when the established order is interrupted and those who are not represented make claims to be counted. In his reading, "dissensus" or "disagreement" forms the essence of the political (Battista 2017). "Dis-agreement" goes beyond the mere confrontation between opinions and occurs whenever a "wrong" is voiced that challenges the partitioning of the dominant order. Rancière (1998: 11) puts this as follows: "Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part". In critical migration studies, asylum seekers or irregular migrants are often thought of as 'a part of those who have no part', since they

are excluded from the dominant order of the nation-state. As non-citizens, their rights are substantially limited and they are rendered vulnerable to the arbitrary operations of government (see for instance Vandevoordt 2020: 4f). Rancière also argues that what is conventionally understood as party politics usually constitutes the very opposite of the political, namely the consolidation of inequalities pertaining to the dominant order and the relegation of those 'who have no part' to a non-political place – something he describes as 'police' (not to be confused with 'police forces').

Building on Rancière's writings, I refer to *the political* as those moments when conditions of exclusion, domination and discrimination in migration societies are challenged, contested, interrupted, altered or reformed in favour of a different alternative (see also Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017: 6; Sinatti 2019). What follows from this is that practices of refugee support turn political when they – intentionally or unintentionally – challenge the exclusions and discriminations of refugees and asylum seekers and aim to foster change towards what those engaging in relationships of solidarity consider a 'better' alternative. During my fieldwork in southern Germany, I witnessed numerous instances when practices of refugee support came with such political meanings and effects. Many of those who sought to help around the long summer of migration were striving to instigate change, to transform the status quo and build a 'better society' (see also Schmid, Evers & Mildenberger 2019; Togral Koca 2019). Many also regarded their practices of refugee support as a means to counteract the rise of hostile and xenophobic attitudes in society. Others voiced a will to participate directly in political decision-making processes in order to bring about the positive change they were striving for.

The *political* meanings and effects of refugee support thus come in manifold shapes and in varying forms. Sometimes they crystallize more visibly and openly around disagreements and criticisms directed at governmental actors, asylum policies or laws. At other instances, they are hidden and implicit, taking the shape of practices that *enact* different alternatives on the ground, without directly making claims towards 'the state'.

On the one hand, thus, practices of refugee support can turn political when they directly contest the status quo, voice dissent and subvert dominant exclusions and discriminations of asylum seekers in migration societies. For instance, many of the volunteers I talked to perceived their actions as a means to take a stand against flawed European migration and border policies and the perceived lack of coherence among European member states (see Chapter 4). Shortly before the events of the summer 2015, a major focus of such criti-

cisms was the Dublin III Regulation[7] (for more information on the regulation see Kasparek & Matheis 2016). Volunteers often openly criticized the law and participated in nationwide campaigns calling for its abolishment. Some even deliberately blocked Dublin III deportations and, in doing so, openly counteracted governmental decisions in the handling of asylum seekers. The subversive potential among those seeking to help refugees also crystallized in the context of governmental distinctions between 'genuine' and 'bogus' asylum seekers. Most strikingly, volunteers in the area of my field research openly took a stand against governmental attempts to classify further countries of origin as 'safe countries'[8] that have asylum recognition rates of almost zero, such as Gambia or Afghanistan.

On the other hand, practices of refugee support can turn political when they strive to instigate change by *enacting* alternative modes of togetherness and belonging on the ground. In this case, changes are brought about not through acts of claims-making but through immediate hands-on interventions. Around the long summer of migration, many volunteers regarded their practices of refugee support also as a means to build a 'better' alternative in their village or neighbourhood, an alternative characterized by mutual support, togetherness and hospitality towards strangers (cf. Turinsky & Nowicka 2019). They often emphasized the act of being 'here', of an imagined personal connection among all those present on the ground, regardless of national origin or cultural belonging. Such imaginaries painted a romanticized picture of 'the local' as an antidote to the world 'out there' (see Chapter 6). However, they also represented an implicit challenge 'from below' to the nation-state's discrimination between aliens and those deemed legitimate citizens – and thus turned political in the sense outlined above (see also Chapter 4).

Seen in this light, volunteering – conventionally thought of as an 'apolitical' practice in the name of the public good – can function as a "politics by other means", as Thomas G. Kirsch (2016) puts it. In his case study on the

7 This EU law states that the country through which an asylum seeker first entered the European Union is responsible for processing the asylum case.

8 The German constitution defines a set of "safe countries of origin", "in which, on the basis of their laws, enforcement practices and general political conditions, it can be safely concluded that neither political persecution nor inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment exists" (Article 16a(3) Basic Law). Recognition rates for asylum seekers originating from these countries are approximately zero. For more information, see: http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/asylum-procedure/safe-country-concepts/safe-country-origin (last accessed 1/8/2020).

role of volunteers in crime prevention in South Africa, Kirsch outlines how temporal aspects determined the social imaginaries at play as well as their political consequences: "the volunteers' (re)interpretations of the past have a bearing on their present-day attempts to become 'moral citizens' and to create a better society" (ibid.: 203). Such temporal aspects also proved central for the volunteers acting in support of refugees in the area of my field research. Their imaginaries, however, were inspired less by the past than they were by an ideal vision of future society (cf. Vandevoordt & Fleischmann 2020). Practices of refugee support thus often go beyond the focus on the here and now that is associated with an urge to alleviate immediate suffering (Brun 2016).

Around the long summer of migration, 'the local' became an important locus for both openly contesting exclusions, injustices and discriminations and enacting alternative visions of future society in migration societies. Quite often, volunteers formulated their criticisms towards local politicians and local authorities. For instance, they wrote letters of complaint, called for mediating meetings or collaborated with the local press in order to voice dissent with the immediate governmental handling of asylum seekers. Many also asserted that they aimed to build a local alternative to the 'inhumane' European migration and border policies. Hinger, Schäfer and Pott (2016) point to the central importance of the local level for the reception, accommodation and governance of asylum seekers around the long summer of migration (see also Mayer 2017). In a similar vein, 'the local' also played an important role for those supporting refugees. It was often their neighbourhood, town or village that appeared most likely to be shaped or transformed through their immediate practices and criticisms (cf. Turinsky & Nowicka 2019).

Despite these meanings and effects of refugee support, which I would consider deeply political in a Rancièrian sense, many of my interlocutors claimed that they did 'not want anything to do with politics' and considered their actions 'neutral' or 'apolitical' (cf. Karakayali 2019; Parsanoglou 2020: 8). Most of those who set out to help openly distanced themselves from what they depicted as left-wing political activism. Such forms of overtly 'political action'[9] in support of refugees were often deemed 'destructive' and condemned for their empty criticisms and unrealistic demands. In contrast, many of my interlocutors regarded their practices as constructive 'hands-on'

9 In order to distinguish what my research subjects termed 'political' or 'apolitical' from what I analytically depict as political action throughout this book, I use single inverted commas to highlight the self- and other-attributions that I encountered in the field.

interventions that sought to build a 'better society' by practical means. Those who described their actions as 'political activism', on the other hand, often deliberately refrained from labelling their support as 'help' since they claimed that such a wording perpetuated dominant forms of marginalization and paternalism. As one of my interlocutors, a self-described 'political activist', told me, what all those who seek 'to help' are doing is 'having coffee' with asylum seekers.

In the course of my field research, however, this declared distinction between forms of 'helping' and 'political activism' was often not as clear to me or to my interlocutors. The boundary between these ostensibly contrasting types of acing in support of refugees often appeared rather blurred (cf. Feischmidt & Zakariás 2019). There were instances when 'volunteers' or 'helpers' combined with 'political activists' to form influential alliances (see Chapters 2 and 3) and moments when the political positions of volunteers or helpers did closely resemble those of 'left-wing activists' (see Chapters 4 and 5). At times, volunteers themselves were also well aware of the contradictions that arose between their claims to remain 'outside' or 'above' politics and their immediate practices in support of refugees. Some of my interlocutors openly reflected on these inconsistencies or acknowledged the difficulty of implementing an 'apolitical' stance in practice. Some asserted that they were somewhat 'political' or framed their practices of refugee support both as a means to alleviate suffering *and* as a political statement (cf. Schmid, Evers & Mildenberger 2019). Others started their commitment with an 'apolitical' impulse to alleviate suffering and, over time, developed openly critical and dissenting political positions towards the governmental handling of asylum seekers (cf. Kukovetz & Sprung 2019). Some also deliberately made use of an 'apolitical' positioning in order to conceal their political intentions and make them more effective (see Chapter 2).

Around the long summer of migration, thus, an ostensibly 'apolitical' positionality served as quite a powerful political position from which to explicitly or implicitly challenge, contest or interrupt dominant exclusions and discriminations in migration societies and to instigate change towards a different alternative. However, as I will scrutinize in the following section, there is another side of refugee support.

1.2.2. Refugee Support as Antipolitical Action

Refugee support is not simply about positive intentions and outcomes for those deemed its beneficiaries, nor does it always empower asylum seekers to take up a more egalitarian position in the dominant social and political order. Rather, as with many other ostensibly good things, there is also a 'dark side' to practices and discourses of refugee support. They can sometimes help first and foremost those who are 'doing good', and thus primarily serve the interests of those who are, as legitimate citizens, already in a privileged and more powerful position. At other moments, practices of refugee support (re)produce dominant exclusions or introduce new modes of discrimination, while relegating asylum seekers to a non-political place - something Rancière would describe as 'police' rather than as political.

In order to grasp these adverse effects of refugee support, I introduce the concept of *the antipolitical* as a necessary antidote to the political. My reading of the antipolitical is inspired by Ticktin's (2011) seminal work on *Casualties of Care*. In her study on the adverse effects of care and compassion in the context of immigration politics in France, Ticktin found that:

> "brutal measures may accompany actions in the name of care and rescue – measures that ultimately work to reinforce an oppressive order. As such, these regimes of care end up reproducing inequalities and racial, gendered, and geopolitical hierarchies: I suggest that this politics of care is a form of *antipolitics*" (Ticktin 2011: 5; emphasis in original)

Building on Ticktin's work, I consider practices of refugee support as antipolitical when they silence, intensify, consolidate or aggravate conditions of exclusion and discrimination in contemporary migration societies – and ultimately relegate asylum seekers to a marginalized and deprived position. This reading also connects with Ferguson's (1994) seminal work on discourses and practices of development aid in Lesotho. The resulting 'development apparatus', he argues, functions as an "anti-politics machine" that *depoliticizes* the reasons and effects of poverty. Rather than rendering their structural roots open for political discussion, disagreement and contestation, development aid reduces them to "a technical problem" and proposes "technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people" (ibid.: 256). This "anti-politics machine", Ferguson shows, comes with the side-effect of extending the power of the state, albeit in a hidden way. Similarly, I would suggest that practices of refugee support can also turn into an 'anti-politics machine' in

Ferguson's sense. They become a *depoliticizing* force when they silence the exclusion and discrimination of asylum seekers, while coming with a similar side-effect of extending state power over domains conventionally considered non-governmental (see Chapter 3).

In the course of my field research, I came across various intriguing moments that illustrated these antipolitical meanings and effects of refugee support. For instance, I soon realized that practices of refugee support responded to diverse interests and were not always and not only driven by a will to contribute to the 'public good' or to empower marginalized others. Instead, they often also served the helpers' own agendas, responding to self-interested motivations and personal ends. At times, refugee support functioned as a means for volunteers to establish new contacts to other residents in the neighbourhood or to counteract personal crises or feelings of isolation. In her monograph *The Need to Help*, Malkki (2015) suggests that helping is actually a primarily self-interested activity. She argues that acts of helping respond to the needs and desires of the helpers rather than to those of their ostensible beneficiaries. Similarly, for many volunteers in the area of my field research, refugee support also – but not only – functioned as a site of self-improvement and self-fulfilment.

In other instances, volunteering with refugees served the purposes and intentions of governmental actors rather than those of marginalized newcomers. I came across numerous instances when refugee support became a site of governance – and thus came with antipolitical meanings and effects (see Chapter 3). Similar to Ferguson's 'anti-politics machine' it extended state power over committed citizens and made them complicit in acts of governing. My reading of government and governance throughout this book is deeply inspired by a Foucauldian perspective. Drawing on his thoughts on the "conduct of conduct" (Foucault 1982, 1991), I interpret *government* as being "constituted by all those ways of reflecting and acting that have aimed to shape, guide, manage or regulate the conduct of persons – not only other persons but also oneself – in the light of certain principles or goals" (Rose 1996: 41). Through various instruments and programmes, governmental actors in the area of my field research influenced, shaped or intervened in practices of refugee support in order to ensure the 'right' kind of conduct (see also Fleischmann 2019). Refugee support thus also functioned as a new possibility to govern citizen-subjects through "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988) and to extend governmental control to the ostensibly non-governmental sphere of 'civil society'. In consequence, those who sought to help were made complicit in the

governance of migration, while practices of refugee support were stripped of subversive and dissonant and hence political potentials.

I employ the term *governance* in order to depict the very principles and objectives that guide acts of governing. With the terminology *governance of migration*, I refer to the particular techniques with which migrants are governed in contemporary European migration societies. One is the ordering of migrants into neat categories of victims and villains of migration. Such modes of governing draw a neat demarcation line between those who become the 'rightful' subjects of protection and those who are excluded, marginalized and rendered deportable (Papadopoulos, Stephenson & Tsianos 2008; Squire 2009; De Genova 2010; Scheel & Ratfisch 2014). Around the long summer of migration, this demarcation crystallized most strikingly in the discrimination between 'genuine refugees', who fled war and persecution, and 'bogus asylum seekers' or 'economic migrants' who ostensibly claimed asylum for false pretences. At times, volunteers in the area of my field research appeared to act as "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 2010 [1980]) who uncritically accepted and implemented such categorizations in the governance of migration. For instance, some of my interlocutors had quite clear preconceptions of who was deserving of their support and who was not, based on the asylum seekers' legal "perspective of staying" ("Bleibeperspektive"). As Agamben (1998: 78) aptly puts it, those who care for the marginalized can "maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight".

An 'apolitical' positionality can thus not only serve as a political position from which to explicitly or implicitly challenge, contest or interrupt dominant exclusions and discriminations. At the same time, ostensibly 'apolitical' forms of refugee support might also end up reproducing or aggravating exclusions and discriminations in migration societies. The five empirical chapters of this book shed light on these ambivalent and contested (anti)political meanings and effects of refugee support around the long summer of migration.

1.3. Conceptualizing Solidarity in Migration Societies

This book revolves around the concept of *solidarity*. I use this analytical term to describe the social dimensions of 'doing good' – the manifold social imaginaries pertaining to practices of refugee support. In social anthropology, 'solidarity' has long been neglected as a field of interest. As Komter (2005: 1) states, the term has traditionally been used in a highly descriptive and abstract way,