tices of refugee support also served as a means to enact an alternative to the heartless European asylum and border policies and thus to challenge the European Union 'from below'. Quite connectedly, Monforte (2020) argues that pro-migrants' protest movements mobilize alternative visions and counter-stories of Europe and its borders. I would argue that my field research clearly revealed how those who supported refugees for ostensibly 'apolitical' humanitarian reasons were often also driven by such an impulse to enact alternative visions of Europe and challenge dominant ones.

Summing up, many groups in the area of my field research did not hesitate to radically oppose the Dublin regulation and related deportation orders in their local communities. Kirchhoff (2020) observed a similar tendency in the northern German city of Osnabrück. These critical voices highlighted the deficiencies of the Dublin system months prior to what became known as the "refugee crisis", when it eventually collapsed and asylum seekers could more or less travel freely to and claim asylum in Central European member states (cf. Kasparek 2016). Many volunteers also regarded their attempts to subvert Dublin deportations as a means to contest the EU asylum policies in general. They emphasized the *presence* of asylum seekers on the ground over the policies of the European Union and, by so doing, demanded a right to stay, at least for the duration of the asylum process.

4.5. Contestations around a Right to Migrate

The *politics of presence* that formed among those who supported refugees around the long summer of migration not only revolved around demands for equal rights and a right to stay, but also around a demand for a right to migrate. In the course of my field research, I came across numerous instances when my interlocutors discussed the possibility of global freedom of movement. By doing so, they elaborated alternatives that would enable the free global circulation of people, alternatives that often went hand in hand with criticisms of fortified borders. However, this demand for a right to migrate was met with diverse and, at times, ambivalent positions among those supporting refugees. They ranged from a call to abolish all territorial borders to more circumspect and sceptical views.

Those who openly identified themselves as "political activists" often called for a universal right to free global movement. This was particularly evident when I attended a conference in Berlin organized by the "International Coali-

tion of Sans-Papiers Migrants and Refugees" in February 2015. This conference brought together around 200 participants from various European countries, including politically active migrants and their supporters. Topics that were discussed during this two-day workshop included the European border and asylum policies, forms of legal and social exclusion, discrimination and racism, and the situation of asylum seekers on the ground. Although these topics resembled those discussed at the regular conferences of the Refugee Council of Baden-Württemberg, not only were the participants at the Berlin conference younger on average, the tone of criticism was also much harsher. For instance, European border policies were compared to a "war on migrants" and national asylum policies were described as "persecution" (Field notes: 7/2/2015; see also CISPM: 2015)[19]. What appeared to be a common denominator among conference participants was the demand for an unconditional and universal right to free movement for all and the opposition to any policy restricting such a right (Field notes: 7/2/2015). For instance, the conference organizers instigated a protest march entitled "Stop War on Migrants", for which they prepared around twenty cardboard coffins that protesters carried on their shoulders as they marched through the streets of central Berlin. These cardboard coffins, as the organizers told me, represented the thousands of dead migrants who had drowned in their attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Through such means, they drew attention to the violent and deadly consequences of border protection. Other protesters carried banners calling for freedom of movement. During this "funeral march", as the event organizers described it, protesters also chanted their demands out loud: "No borders, no nation, stop deportation!" or "Brick by brick, wall by wall, make the Fortress Europe fall!" (Field notes: 6/2/2015).

The positions I encountered at the workshop in Berlin resembled what scholars have discussed as 'No Border Network', a loose, Europe-wide network of groups opposing territorial borders (see Hayter 2004; Walters 2006; Rigby & Schlembach 2013; Bauder 2015). As Walters (2006: 22) puts it, such groups "imagine a democratized mobility that encompasses autonomous movements of flight, circulation, settlement and unsettlement". Rigby and Schlembach (2013: 159) argue that actions revolving around a demand for no borders "develop a politics of equality autonomously from the categories of citizenship, sovereignty and the state". In a similar vein, many of those who supported

19 See: https://cispmberlin.wordpress.com/deutsch/samstag-7-februar-2015/ (last accessed 1/8/2020).

refugees for decidedly political reasons often strived for an alternative that established mobility as a democratic right and, in doing so, subverted territorial borders.

Volunteers who supported refugees through 'hands-on' interventions, by contrast, were often more reluctant when it came to demanding the abolition of territorial borders. Nonetheless, the possibility of global freedom of movement appeared to be something many volunteers in the area of my field research considered. I came across numerous instances when they positioned themselves in favour of a right to migrate. Such positions frequently arose out of their immediate practices of refugee support, which confronted them with questions of whether and under what conditions migrants should have a right to come. Many of my interlocutors told me that, through their personal interactions with asylum seekers, they had heard dreadful stories of flight and escape and were often quite shocked by the eyewitness reports of the asylum seekers' perilous illegalized journeys across the Mediterranean. Others told me that they struggled with the fact that the families of many asylum seekers were separated or stuck in war-torn countries due to rigid European border policies (Field notes: 6/3/2016). These personal stories often evoked critical positions in relation to the fortification of territorial borders among volunteers. Quite connectedly, in her study on practices of refugee support in Milan, Sinatti (2019) found that volunteers were often deeply affected by migrant stories, an experience that led them to take up more political and dissenting standpoints. She puts this as follows:

> "Exposed to the suffering of otherwise distant others […] they [the volunteers] read the human and social situations of migrants within an international geo-political vision, became sceptical about institutional responses, and nurtured the ambition to do more than help people in distress" (Sinatti 2019: 144)

Indeed, the situation at the external borders of the European Union often preoccupied those who were mobilized to help in the area of my field research. For instance, this was illustrated during an informal conversation with two elderly women actively supporting asylum seekers in a small town in Baden-Württemberg. As we discussed possible alternatives to the Dublin Regulation, I asked them how they felt about a situation that would allow asylum seekers to move freely to Germany without any restrictions. One of the women simply replied: "We need them!" (Field notes: 7/3/2015). She asserted that, due to the recent demographic change, Germany needed an additional 400,000

migrants per year in order to sustain its economic workforce, but was only having around 200,000. Thus, the woman put forward quite a positive attitude towards the possibility of free movement, which, to her, might even improve the country's economic situation. The second woman held a more sceptical or ambivalent view in this regards. She remarked that she was really unsure about the question of whether it would be beneficial to open all borders and worried that there might simply be too many wanting to come in. However, she asserted, the primary focus for dealing with the growing global migration flows should not be the fortification of borders but rather the implementation of measures to tackle global inequalities: "If we produce our t-shirts cheaply in India, then we should not be surprised about the rising numbers of irregular migrants from these countries" (Field notes: 7/3/2015).

This points to something I encountered repeatedly in the course of my field research: many volunteers discussed the reasons of flight in critical terms and articulated possible ways of tackling them. Although they claimed to act for ostensibly 'apolitical' humanitarian reasons, many would nonetheless embed their actions in wider questions concerning global inequalities and injustices, while adopting critical political positions towards them. In this context, some would even voice favourable attitudes towards the possibility of global freedom of movement.

Other volunteers, however, told me that they struggled to picture a world without territorial borders as a realistic alternative. For instance, Klaus Böhlen, a volunteer I interviewed in a medium-sized town in Baden-Württemberg, emphasized the moral conflict he felt in this regard:

> "So that means that it is only reasonable to take people in, other than just to drag them out of an emergency situation […] but there has to be a possibility that you might actually be able to integrate them and, to do that, many conditions have to be met. That's why – however difficult such images are for me, such as those from the border in Macedonia – I'm not able to come up with a good alternative. We won't be able to integrate one million here within four years […] We don't have the people for language classes, we don't have the housing … so many things are lacking." (Interview with Klaus Böhlen: 25/4/2016)[20]

20 Translation by LF. German original: "Das heißt es macht nur dann Sinn Leute aufzunehmen, außer sie aus seiner Notlage rauszuziehen, aber dann mit der Perspektive […] dass man sie tatsächlich auch integrieren kann und dazu gehören eben viele Voraussetzungen. Also von daher, so schwer mir selbst auch Bilder fallen, also von der

The volunteer thus admitted that he struggled with the injustices relating to the external borders of the European Union, while being unsure about possible alternatives. On the one hand, my interlocutor, who described himself as part of the generation of '68[21], problematized the situation of asylum seekers who were stuck in Idomeni, a border post between Macedonia and Greece, when the so-called Balkan route was blocked in the wake of the long summer of migration in late 2015 (see also Santer & Wriedt 2017). On the other hand, he argued that the capacity to integrate migrants was constrained by local circumstances and conditions. In other words, the right to come had certain limits. To him, it was the consideration of local circumstances and practicalities that took priority over the possibility of a global freedom of movement. This position, I would argue, epitomizes the significance of the local for many who supported refugees around the long summer of migration.

By contrast, my interlocutor Markus Bayer explained the significance of a utopian dimension for his practices of refugee support. Markus was a member of "Bündnis Abschiebestopp Konstanz" ("Konstanz Anti-Deportation Alliance"), a group opposing deportations and challenging asylum policies in Konstanz, a medium-sized town in southern Baden-Württemberg. In early 2015, the group consisted of around ten members with a variety of backgrounds and motivations, some of whom did not necessarily identify themselves as "political activists". When I asked Markus if the name of the group implied that its members opposed deportations of all kinds and if this, in consequence, meant they were in favour of freedom of movement and the abolition of borders, he replied as follows:

> "I wouldn't necessarily put my signature to such a statement. But I think that, sometimes, you have to be utopian in order to take small steps towards those aims." (Conversation with Markus Bayer, Field notes: 8/3/2015)

While my interlocutor Klaus Böhlen thus gave priority to practical matters, Markus Bayer stressed the importance of being "utopian" in order to change

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mazedonischen Grenze oder so, ich habe keine gute Alternative anzubieten. Wir werden nicht nach vier Jahren eine Million hier integrieren können […] wir haben nicht die Leute für den Sprachunterricht, wir haben nicht die Wohnungen … es mangelt an verschiedenen Dingen.".

21 He claimed that he was "politically socialised" in 1968, a time when left-wing student protests spread across Germany and many lasting changes to the social and political landscape were triggered, including denazification and the sexual revolution.

the status quo in favour of a different alternative. In his essay on urban possibilities, Bauder (2016) argues that 'utopia' always contains a certain impossibility of practical implementation. However, he suggests that a key function of utopian imaginaries is their criticisms of existing social relations and orders. This chimes with how my interlocutor Markus Bayer expressed support for the utopian ideal of free movement, knowing full well that it might not be practicable yet still seeing it as a means to achieve a 'better' alternative.

4.6. Concluding Remarks: Emerging Meanings of Political Action in Migration Societies

In the course of this chapter, I analysed the political meanings and effects emanating from the practices of refugee support that emerged around the German 'summer of welcome'. Scrutinizing my concept of a *politics of presence*, I argued that many of those supporting refugees were striving for social and political transformation within their local communities, while they did not necessarily describe their actions as 'political'. Even though many were mobilized by an ostensibly 'apolitical' humanitarian imperative, they did often not hesitate to contest exclusions and inequalities on the ground, denounce governmental deportation orders and take a critical stance towards the fortification of borders. Volunteers also *enacted* alternatives that challenged the nation-state 'from below' or counteracted the inhumane policies of the EU. In consequence, their practices of refugee support became *political*.

The alternatives that were formulated and enacted around the long summer of migration revolved around the criterion of *co-presence*. They often emphasized the material act of being there, of an imagined personal immediacy, over national origin or cultural belonging. 'The local', in this context, played an important role for the volunteers; it was *their* neighbourhood, town or village that appeared most likely to be shaped or transformed through their immediate practices of refugee support. I would thus argue that 'the local' became an important means of political claims-making around the long summer of migration.

The question of how these envisaged alternatives should look like in practice, however, triggered differing understandings among those acting in support of refugees. On the one hand, I encountered individuals and groups demanding the unconditional and universal implementation of a right to equal rights, a right to stay and a right to migrate and thus calling for a radically