

### 3.3. (Re)Shaping the Self-Conduct of Committed Citizens

The manifold programmes that intervened in citizen commitment around the long summer of migration also served as a means to gain governmental control over the self-conduct of committed citizens. They normalized a certain way of acting and being in relation to the ‘public good’ and produced volunteers as responsible citizen-subjects within ‘the state’. In the following sections, I explore these discourses and practices with which governmental actors intervened in the self-conduct of volunteers supporting refugees in more detail. To start off, I outline how governmental actors promoted an understanding of volunteering as a self-rewarding activity – a framing that laid the ground for their attempts to influence the volunteers’ self-conduct.

#### 3.3.1. “Volunteering Makes You Happy”: Promoting the Personal Benefits of Volunteering

Around the long summer of migration, governmental actors in the area of my field research put special emphasis on the personal benefits of volunteering with refugees. A striking example came up in my conversation with Johannes Mayer, the Deputy Secretary for Citizen Engagement at the “Städtetag Baden-Württemberg” (approximately “Association of Cities and Towns in Baden-Württemberg”). The Städtetag is a state-level governmental agency that holds an intermediary position between the state government and its city councils. My interlocutor’s job was to give advice to local authorities on how to foster an active ‘civil society’ on the ground. During our interview, he told me about a recent speech he gave in several localities across the state entitled “Ehrenamt [approximately volunteering] makes you happy”. He offered the following description of its content:

“The good within human-beings, you can call it Christian or atheistic or whatever ... but the key point is that people don’t just communicate with each other but also build relationships ... The “Ehrenamt makes you happy” speeches I give – in Biberach, I held one and more than 100 persons attended. It really does make you happy. Because when you engage as a volunteer, you also benefit yourself, and you should feel good in the process

and see that it can really change something.”<sup>17</sup> (Interview with Johannes Mayer: 20/4/2016)

This quote indicates how my interlocutor promoted the personal rewards of ‘Ehrenamt’ (literally ‘honorary office’) by asserting that volunteers become ‘happier’ in the process. In doing so, he put forward an understanding of volunteering that underlines how it makes those willing to volunteer “feel good”, rather than what it does for its ostensible beneficiaries.

Many of those who supported refugees in the area of my field research identified themselves as “Ehrenamtliche” (approximately ‘holders of an honorary office’) and were identified as such by governmental actors. Although I use the English term ‘volunteer’ throughout this book, it is important to note that this translation is unable to depict all the contextual meanings of the specific German term ‘Ehrenamt’ along with its counterpart ‘Hauptamt’ (literally ‘main office’) (for more information see for instance Krimphove 2005). Roughly, the term ‘Ehrenamt’ means a voluntary activity that contributes to the public good without monetary rewards and that is executed for the ‘honour’ that one receives in return. Traditionally, this spans a wide range of community work, for instance, offices at local sports clubs or volunteering with a local church. The term is often defined through its demarcation from what is understood as ‘Hauptamt’, vaguely referring to paid employees in the care sector, for instance, in social welfare organizations. Together, ‘Ehrenamt’ and ‘Hauptamt’ are often depicted as important pillars of the German welfare state (cf. Koch 2007).

A good illustration of how governmental actors framed the term ‘Ehrenamt’ can be found in the ‘Civic Engagement Strategy’, a strategy paper published by the state government of Baden-Württemberg in 2014, shortly before I started my field research in the area:

“The most traditional term is of course ‘Ehrenamt’. Its current meaning can be traced to the more than 200-year-old practice of local self-government. In its basic meaning, it represents a clearly defined task (Amt), which is to

17 Translation by LF. German original: “Das Gute was im Menschen drin ist – kann man jetzt christlich nennen, oder atheistisch oder ist mir wurst ... Aber hauptsächlich, dass die Menschen miteinander nicht nur kommunizieren sondern auch in Beziehung gehen. Meine Vorträge, die ich halte: ‘Ehrenamt macht glücklich’, da hab ich in Biberach einen Vortrag gehalten, da waren über 100 Leute da, das macht echt glücklich. Weil Bürgerengagement hat immer auch einen Benefit für ein selber und da muss er sich dabei wohlfühlen und dann muss er auch sehen, dass es auch wirklich was verändert.”.

be executed by a selected person who in return receives social recognition (Ehre). Historically, 'Ehrenamt' is the contribution of the citizen (in the literal sense) to the functioning of the common good."<sup>18</sup> (Civic Engagement Strategy: 2014, p. 9)

This quote outlines the historical dimensions of the term 'Ehrenamt'. It asserts that 'Ehrenamt' is directed at the "common good" ("Gemeinwohlorientiert") by contributing to its "functioning". The activities related to such 'honorary offices', however, are neither presented as altruistic acts of selfless giving nor as charity towards needy others. Instead, taking up an 'Ehrenamt' is regarded as engaging in a reciprocal process of giving and receiving, not in the form of monetary rewards but via "social recognition". Holders of such offices, the paper tells us, have a higher social capital than inactive members of society.

During the long summer of migration, governmental actors in the area of my field promoted these self-rewarding qualities of volunteering with refugees. Rather than as acts of selfless and generous assistance, they framed practices of refugee support as primarily benefitting those who offer the help and support. In other words, it is not the sake of refugees that lies, in this interpretation, at the heart of such voluntary work, but the personal self-improvement of those doing the volunteering. This conception of volunteering with refugees came through very clearly in my interview with Marlies Vogtmann, the Deputy Secretary for Citizen Engagement at the state government's Ministry of Social Affairs. She explained to me that there were two different understandings of volunteering or 'Ehrenamt', with the "old-fashioned" one now co-existing with a new one that has emerged in recent years. The more traditional understanding, she specified, followed a logic of "me for you" while the newer one was about "we together for us" (Interview with Marlies Vogtmann: 20/4/2016). This newly emerging understanding of citizen engagement, my interlocutor emphasized, creates social bonds and fosters relationships at a time when "families are no longer extended family networks" (ibid.). She thus stressed the social effects of this 'new'

---

18 Translation by LF. German original: "Der traditionsreichste Begriff ist gewiss das Ehrenamt, dessen heutige Bedeutung auf die mehr als 200 Jahre alte kommunale Selbstverwaltung zurückgeht. Von seinem Grundverständnis her bezeichnet es eine klar umrissene Aufgabe (Amt), die von einer ausgewählten Person zu leisten ist und für die diese im Gegenzug gesellschaftliche Anerkennung (Ehre) erhält. Das Ehrenamt ist historisch der Beitrag des Bürgers (im Wortsinn) zum Funktionieren des Gemeinwesens."

understanding of volunteering while suggesting that altruistic acts of giving were old-fashioned.

Works on the historical development of 'Ehrenamt' have identified a similar change in its more recent understandings (see Hacket & Mutz 2002). For instance, Neumann (2016) analyses how the common understanding of 'Ehrenamt' has recently shifted from an altruistic to a reciprocal definition:

"While, in the past, a voluntary activity had been understood mostly as an expression of charitable duty or family tradition, in surveys of volunteers conducted from the beginning of the 1990s, it developed into an openly communicated exchange in which volunteers, besides fun and social contacts, sometimes also expect an improvement in their professional employability."<sup>19</sup> (Neumann 2016: 10; Translation from German by LF)

This new conception of 'Ehrenamt' foregrounds the individual rewards of volunteering and does so not primarily in terms of its recipients but of those doing the volunteering. Corsten, Kauppert and Rosa (2008) also stress the social dimensions of citizen engagement in Germany. They argue that, through practices of volunteering, a "sense of community" ("Wir-Sinn") is generated and the volunteer becomes more socially integrated in the community or gains social recognition from it. The authors thus regard 'Ehrenamt' as a "form of social communitization" ("Form sozialer Vergemeinschaftung") (ibid.: 10).

Works in social anthropology have long emphasized the importance of reciprocity in acts of gifting (Mauss 1990 [1925]; Liebersohn 2011; Mallard 2011; Coleman 2015). These works take their cue from the writings of Marcel Mauss (1990 [1925]) who outlined how gift-exchange functions as a means to foster social coherence. Building on Mauss's conceptualizations, Heins and Unrau (2018) argue that volunteering with refugees around the long summer of migration in Germany had a similar function. They conceptualize practices of helping as a form of gift-exchange and outline how they came with an emphasis on reciprocity. Kolb (2014) also stresses the personal rewards of helping

---

19 Translation by LF. German original: "Während eine ehrenamtliche Tätigkeit in der Vergangenheit überwiegend als Ausdruck karitativer Pflichterfüllung oder familiärer Traditionen galt, avancierte freiwilliges Engagement in den seit Anfang der 1990er Jahre durchgeführten Freiwilligenbefragungen zum offen kommunizierten Tauschgeschäft, von dem sich die Freiwilligen mitunter auch eine Verbesserung ihrer beruflich verwertbaren Qualifikation erwarten."

in his monograph on victim advocacy and counselling in the US, something he calls “moral wages”:

“[Those] who don’t enjoy extrinsic benefits like pay, power, and prestige – are sustained by a different kind of compensation [...] They earn a special type of emotional reward reserved for those who help others in need: moral wages.”  
(Kolb 2014: title page)

During my field research, the self-rewarding qualities of helping were also stressed by the volunteers themselves, who often had quite personal motivations for their engagement around refugees. One of the most thought-provoking instances in this regard occurred during my field visit to a small town in southern Baden-Württemberg. At a meeting of a local citizens’ initiative supporting refugees, I met a middle-aged woman who had been volunteering with the initiative for several months. Giving me a ride to the train station after the meeting, she told me the very personal story that had led her to getting involved. She explained that she lost her husband, the father of her two children, in a car accident some years ago. After the tragic death, she decided to start anew and move back to the small town in southern Germany where she had grown up. She had, however, lost most of her personal contacts there. It was her involvement with the local citizens’ initiative supporting refugees, the woman told me, that allowed her to re-integrate herself into the local community, to forge new contacts and to process the loss of her husband.

Summing up, volunteering with refugees was not primarily presented as an altruistic but as a self-rewarding activity in the area of my field research. As I will illustrate in the following section, this emphasis on the wellbeing of the volunteers paved the way for governmental actors to gain influence over their self-conduct.

### 3.3.2. Shaping ‘Socialized Selves’

In the area of my field research, governmental attempts to intervene in volunteering with refugees were often based on the notion that there was a need to educate and train volunteers. Via the programme “Qualified.Engaged” (“Qualifiziert.Engagiert”), the state government of Baden-Württemberg spent millions of euros on the provision of training schemes for volunteers supporting refugees across the state. In addition, it provided substantial funding to third parties, such as social welfare organizations or the Refugee Council of Baden-Württemberg, in order to develop additional training schemes

for volunteers. I also came across numerous instances when municipalities organized and funded training seminars for volunteers on the ground. In a similar way, the “Handbook for Voluntary Help for Refugees”, which was published by the state government of Baden-Württemberg in 2015, included various examples of ‘best-practice’ and aimed to ‘educate’ committed citizens on the ‘proper’ way of volunteering.

Governmental actors rewarded committed citizens directly for their efforts to educate themselves. When volunteers successfully completed a training scheme, they often received certificates testifying to their successful completion of the training. I encountered a striking example of this in a small village in Baden-Württemberg in April 2016. The municipality organized a training day entitled “Asylum Driving Licence” (“Asylführerschein”) for volunteers willing to help refugees on the ground. According to its official description, it aimed to “provide a basic understanding of three areas: the legal situation of refugees in Germany; intercultural communication; the right degree of help plus support through social networks” (Arbeitskreis Asyl Affalterbach: 2016)<sup>20</sup>. At the end of the day, participants received their “Asylum Driving Licence”, which was formally handed over by the mayor of the village in the presence of the local press.

Through these manifold instruments encouraging the qualification of volunteers, I would argue, governmental actors sought to shape the conduct of committed citizens, employing a notion of self-improvement and self-management. By doing so, they normalized a certain way of acting and being in relation to the public good. These observations connect to Lessenich’s writings (2011: 315) on the activation of “socialized selves”. He argues that governmental actors increasingly attempt to foster “pro-active behaviour” among citizen-subjects: “Through social policies of ‘activation’, individuals are guided towards taking responsibility not only for themselves, but for society at large”. Lessenich conceives of these tendencies as mirroring a broader transformation in the workings of Western ‘welfare states’ (see also Evers & Wintersberger 1990). He summarizes this as follows:

---

20 Translation by LF. German original: “Dieser Führerschein vermittelt Grundwissen in drei Bereichen. Es geht um die Rechtslage von Flüchtlingen in Deutschland; um interkulturelle Kommunikation; das rechte Maß des Helfens und um die Unterstützung durch soziale Netzwerke”. See also: <http://ak-asyl-affalterbach.de/ehrenamtliche-helfer-gesucht-kostenlose-fortbildung-asylfuehrerschein/> (last accessed 1/8/2020).

“At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, however, a reformed, activating welfare state has been constituting itself as the new mode of political self-justification of society vis-à-vis its individual members, constructing active subjects as bearers not of social rights, but of social obligations – as *socialized selves* obliged not only to be responsible for themselves, but for society and its welfare as a whole.” (Lessenich 2011: 306 emphasis in original)

Instead of the welfare state, he argues, it is the citizen who is increasingly held responsible for actively contributing to the public good. In a similar vein, Rose (1996: 41) argues that ‘the state’ is seeking to govern “through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations of self-actualization and self-fulfilment”. This development, Rose argues, comes with new practices of governing that “seek to shape individuality in particular ways” (ibid.: 45). Dean (1996), meanwhile, proposes turning attention to the forms and practices by which our own conduct and the conduct of others is shaped. My observations during the long summer of migration, I would suggest, mirrored a similar development in the context of the reception of asylum seekers: through their attempts to educate volunteers, governmental actors sought to shape ‘socialized selves’. In this way, they increased their influence in domains commonly considered non-governmental, while governing migration societies through extended state-citizen networks.

Beyond training schemes, governmental actors used numerous other techniques for shaping and activating ‘socialized selves’. For instance, in 2014 and 2015, they directly facilitated the founding of local citizens’ initiatives supporting refugees via the organization of “kick-off events”. Another example of such attempts to activate ‘responsible’ citizens came up in my conversation with Daniel Hayat, a member of the Stuttgart Regional Council (Regierungspräsidium Stuttgart), whom I met for an interview in March 2016. He summarized the council’s attempts to facilitate the involvement of citizens through an open day in Ellwangen, where a new initial reception centre had been established, as follows:

LF: “So, you tried to promote citizen engagement from the very beginning?”

DH: “In October, when the decision [to establish the reception centre] was taken, we immediately organized a citizens’ gathering. In November, we had a second [...]. In January, we then organized an open day. I think it was very useful that we brought citizens on board early on. People were able to go inside as early as January, the facility then opened in April. Thousands of

people came, had a look around the premises [...] We tried to inform them and demonstrate transparency.”<sup>21</sup> (Interview with Daniel Hayat: 11/3/2016)

The Regional Council thus aimed to include citizens in the reception of asylum seekers from the very beginning. Through means such as an open day, it sought to instil a sense of responsibility among local residents and, thus, to activate ‘socialized selves’.

This focus on self-conduct and self-activation is also illustrated in the “Civic Engagement Strategy” published by the state government of Baden-Württemberg in 2014, even before volunteering with refugees appeared on its agenda. The paper stated that an active commitment to the public good presented a means for reintegrating those who have become “isolated” from society, for instance through unemployment:

“Civic engagement can help citizens to test themselves, restore their confidence and regain a visible place in the community. It is important, though, that they don’t miscalculate their own energies or expect too much of themselves and thus overextend themselves again.”<sup>22</sup> (Civic Engagement Strategy: 2014, p. 12)

The strategy paper thus depicts citizen engagement as something that cannot only contribute to the ‘public good’ but, at the same time, shapes the behaviour and conduct of citizens themselves. This is made even more explicit in the paper’s assertion that volunteering could “change outdated patterns of thought” and “correct societal images” (literally “Gesellschaftsbilder korrigieren”) (Civic Engagement Strategy: 2014, p. 12). For instance, the paper asserts, age-related

21 Translation by LF. German original: “LF: Also hat man da dann auch von Anfang an darauf geachtet, dass man versucht Bürgerbeteiligung dann schon auch mitaufzubauen?” DH: “Also im Oktober, als dann die Entscheidung gefallen war, hat man dann gleich noch ne Bürgerversammlung gemacht. Im November war dann die zweite [...] Im Januar haben wir dann Tag der offenen Tür gemacht. Ich denke das war auch gut, dass man da viele Leute schon recht früh miteinbezogen hat. Also schon im Januar konnten die Leute rein, im April hat sie geöffnet. Da waren tausende da, haben sich die Räumlichkeiten angeschaut [...] also wir haben versucht zu informieren und Transparenz zu zeigen.”

22 Translation by LF. German original: “Bürgerschaftliches Engagement kann dabei helfen, sich zu erproben, Zutrauen zurückzugewinnen und wieder einen sichtbaren Platz in der Gemeinschaft zu finden. Dabei ist darauf zu achten, dass nicht durch falsche Einschätzung der eigenen Kräfte und durch übergroße Erwartungen an die eigene Person erneute Überforderung entsteht”.



images could be “corrected” via citizen engagement: where old age had previously been “interpreted as a phase of passivity, of well-deserved rest or of impending infirmity”, it could now be seen “as a gainful time of life which is to be used actively” (ibid.: 12). This chimes with Lessenich’s (2011: 312f) writings on “socialized selves”: he argues that governmental actors portray the pro-active behaviour of citizens as being beneficial both to the individual *and* to wider society. Thus it is “self-interested” and “pro-social” at the same time (ibid.).

The sharp increase in citizens supporting refugees in 2014 and 2015, I would suggest, presented a means for governmental actors to institutionalize such an understanding of citizen engagement as simultaneously ‘self-interested’ and ‘pro-social’. This was most evident in the case of the proclaimed ability of volunteering to “correct” age-related images. Many of those seeking to help refugees in the area of my field research were retirees, people in their sixties looking for ways to take part in social life and spend their retirement actively and meaningfully. This development appears to be in line with what the state government asserted in its Civic Engagement Strategy of 2014, namely an activation of retired parts of society into volunteering for the ‘public good’ and a ‘correction’ of age-related social images.

In the following section, I will focus on one of the governments’ techniques to intervene in the self-conduct of volunteers in more detail, namely efforts to coordinate volunteering activities on the ground.

### 3.3.3. Coordinating Volunteers through Professionals

Governmental representatives in the area of my field research often told me that volunteers needed the guidance and supervision of professionals. “Ehrenamt is in need of Hauptamt” (Field notes: 14/3/2016) is a claim I heard countless times at state-organized conferences or meetings. Those professionally employed in the reception of asylum seekers would make the actions of volunteers “effective”, they argued. This notion came with an impetus to organize and coordinate committed citizens on the ground. Marlies Vogtmann, the Deputy Secretary for Citizen Engagement at the state government’s Ministry of Social Affairs, made clear reference to this drive to “coordinate” volunteers:

“When this big issue of helping refugees emerged, they [the state government] obviously said we need to make sure that municipalities intervene in a coordinating capacity. Citizen engagement always needs professional

coordination, professional partners. At the moment, there is nowhere near enough manpower behind it ... We can help there, we thought, set up a good support programme, so we set up our support programme.”<sup>23</sup> (Interview with Marlies Vogtmann: 20/4/2016)

In response to the rising numbers of citizens actively supporting refugees, the state government thus felt a need “to intervene in a coordinating capacity”. In consequence, new Volunteer Coordinator positions were established in 2015 and 2016 in almost all municipalities and district councils across the area of my field research. These coordinators served as a first point of contact for those seeking to help refugees on the ground, they formed a link between committed citizens and local authorities, and they influenced volunteering activities on the ground. Thus, Volunteer Coordinators were often in quite a powerful position. They acted as ‘gatekeepers’ when it came to accessing reception centres, and receiving funding or information concerning local developments surrounding the reception of asylum seekers. Although many municipalities in the area of my field research already had existing offices for facilitating citizen engagement, it was only around the long summer of migration that they began to establish dedicated offices for citizens supporting refugees. Such efforts to intervene in a coordinating capacity also occurred in social welfare organizations (see Chapter 2). Many organizations employed Volunteer Coordinators who, in a similar way, aimed to intervene in the activities of volunteers on the ground.

Professionals and governmental representatives often explained the need to intervene in a coordinating capacity by the psychological well-being of the volunteers. Without professional coordination, they asserted, volunteers would become ‘frustrated’ and eventually drop out. Many also claimed that volunteers were in risk of being ‘overburdened’ or getting ‘too involved’, a notion that was expressed by a Volunteer Coordinator I interviewed in a medium-sized town in central Baden-Württemberg. When I asked her about the significance of coordinating professionals, she replied:

---

23 Translation by LF. German original: “Da war klar, als das große Flüchtlingshilfe-Thema aufkam, sie gesagt haben, da müssen wir gucken, dass die Kommunen koordinierend eingreifen. Bürgerschaftliches Engagement braucht immer hauptamtliche Koordination, hauptamtliche Partner. Da ist im Moment viel zu wenig manpower dahinter ... ähm, da können wir helfen ein gutes Förderprogramm auflegen und da haben wir unser Förderprogramm aufgelegt.”

"This volunteering is a really sensitive thing. Put bluntly, *you have to keep people's spirits up*. That's just the way it is – because there is often a lot of frustration among the volunteers, because they say: 'We do so much and it's not really recognized, and now I'm fed up of it.'"<sup>24</sup> (Interview with Jana Farkas: 18/2/2016, emphasis added)

The Volunteer Coordinator thus highlighted the need "to keep people's spirits up". At the same time, she regarded it as her responsibility to ensure volunteers derived personal benefits from volunteering and did not succumb to an undesirable self-conduct leading to their frustration. Building on Foucault, Lemke (2002) argues that such an emphasis on "self-care" functions as a means of governing, an argument he sums up as follows:

"The strategy of rendering individual subjects 'responsible' [...] entails shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc. and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of 'self-care.'" (Lemke 2002: 59)

This, I would argue, is echoed by the way the Volunteer Coordinators portrayed potential frustrations among volunteers as a matter of their "self-care". Through such means, they placed an emphasis on volunteers' self-conduct and legitimized intervening in their activities.

Volunteer Coordinators also played a key role in co-opting potential sources of dissent towards governmental decisions among the volunteers under their supervision. My interview with the social worker Jana Farkas illustrated this strikingly. Since 2015, she had been employed as Volunteer Coordinator by a social housing association that was majority owned by the local municipality. In this position, she served as the first contact point for all those seeking to support asylum seekers at the two new reception facilities in the neighbourhood. She assigned tasks, moderated meetings and was thus a person of considerable authority for local volunteers. During our interview, she repeatedly referred to her "boss" when talking about her work. For instance, I asked her whether there were volunteers under her guidance who publicly voiced discontent with the governmental handling

---

24 Translation by LF. German original: "Diese Ehrenamtsgeschichte ist ne ganz sensible Geschichte, also salopp gesagt muss man die Leute bei Laune halten, es ist einfach so, weil es ist auch immer wieder eine ganz große Frustration dabei bei den Ehrenamtlichen, weil sie sagen: 'Wir machen doch so viel und das wird nicht richtig angenommen und jetzt hab ich auch keine Lust mehr was zu tun.'"

of asylum seekers. She replied in the negative and asserted that her “boss” would “not like that at all” (Interview with Jana Farkas: 18/2/2016). After I pressed her for more information on her “boss”, she told me that he was not only the head of the housing association but also the local mayor. This illustrates, I would suggest, how my interlocutor served as the ‘extended arm’ of the mayor, co-opting and depoliticizing practices of refugee support that took a more critical stand on local authorities’ actions. In many other places, the establishment of Volunteer Coordinators presented a means for local governmental actors to exercise control over potentially dissenting behaviour among volunteers supporting refugees.

And yet, governmental efforts to organize and coordinate committed citizens did not go uncontested. In the course of my field research, I came across many instances when volunteers voiced their dissent towards the perceived “mushrooming” of Volunteer Coordinators who set out to intervene in their actions. Some told me that they felt increasingly patronized by efforts to coordinate their activities. Others also problematized and questioned the notion that they were at risk of becoming ‘overburdened’ and ‘frustrated’ by their volunteering activities. I repeatedly witnessed such critical discussions among volunteers attending the regular conferences of the Refugee Council Baden-Württemberg, the non-governmental and independent umbrella association of local volunteer initiatives across the state. For instance, in November 2015, the introductory address to the convention reflected critically on “attempts by local administrations to intervene in volunteering” (Field notes: 21/11/2015). The speaker was the “Asylum Priest” of the Protestant church of Baden-Württemberg, the official “priest for refugees and helpers” (*Stuttgarter Zeitung*: 18/11/2015)<sup>25</sup>. His critical remarks on governmental interventions in volunteering activities eventually sparked a heated discussion among the volunteers present. Numerous others also voiced their dissent towards the manifold attempts to ‘coordinate’ their voluntary work, which they regarded as an erosion of their independence. For instance, a middle-aged man remarked: “That volunteers are overburdened is only ever said by professionals!” (Field notes: 21/11/2015). Another audience member argued: “Only agreeable activities are promoted while others are hindered” (*ibid.*). Evidently, these volunteers were upset about governmental interferences on their work and per-

25 See *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (18/11/2015): <http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/inhalt.asylp-farrer-joachim-schlecht-pfarrer-fuer-geflohene-und-helfer.419b8484-8eb9-46d4-a0db-52299ac2cfc.html> (last accessed 1/8/2020).

ceived them as a means to shape their behaviour in ways that were beneficial to governmental actors.

To sum up, the manifold programmes that were introduced around the long summer of migration sought to extend governmental control and influence over the self-conduct of new volunteers. They did so by shifting responsibilities to committed citizens while seeking to shape their self-conduct in a way that served the governments' interests regarding the governance of migration. These interventions, however, did not remain unquestioned. Volunteers continuously contested their ascribed roles and responsibilities, voiced dissent towards governmental actors and demanded space for disagreement. These dissenting potentials of 'civil society', in turn, triggered depoliticizing reactions among governmental actors, something I will illustrate in more detail in the following section.

### **3.4. Depoliticizing "Uncomfortable" Practices of Refugee Support**

Governmental representatives often emphasized that a smooth cooperation and meaningful division of responsibilities between 'state' and 'civil society' formed a prerequisite for the successful reception and social integration of asylum seekers. There was an aspect of refugee support that did, however, not sit well with this desire for meaningful cooperation. Certain groups and individuals also intervened critically, voiced dissent and highlighted deficiencies in the workings of 'the state' while calling for legal and political reforms in the management of asylum seekers. Such potentially dissenting behaviour among newly committed citizens, however, was "uncomfortable" to many governmental actors, as one of my interlocutors strikingly remarked. It presented a controversial element of 'civil society', one that put governmental actions, decisions and policies under critical scrutiny. In the following paragraphs, I illustrate how governmental actors in the area of my field research positioned themselves towards these 'uncomfortable' forms of refugee support and how they attempted to co-opt and depoliticize dissenting voices among citizens supporting refugees.

#### **3.4.1. The Dark Side of 'Civil Society'**

During my field research, I came across instances when volunteers uncritically accepted their ascribed role in the reception of asylum seekers and es-