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Negotiating urban solidarities: multiple agencies and contested meanings in the making of solidarity cities

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ABSTRACT

Many cities have adopted welcoming strategies, branding themselves as cities of welcome or of solidarity. Urban scholarship to date has interpreted these efforts either under the rubric of municipal governance reform or urban citizenship, frameworks which both sideline the role of civil society and social movements of refugees. Since these actors play crucial roles in negotiating the terms of solidarity, hospitality and inclusion, this paper brings together research perspectives from urban governance, civil society, and (migrant) mobilization literatures to gain a better understanding of the collaborative/competitive interactions between the key players engaged in this urban policy arena. This discussion reveals that the evolving practices and interrelations of municipalities, civil society actors and social movements of refugees imply opportunities, but also difficulties in building substantively welcoming arrival structures, highlighting the contested meaning of terms such as “solidarity city” in the contemporary constellation.

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Introduction

Today, in a context where most nation states in the global North/West have responded to rising numbers of people fleeing war, persecution or other threats to their lives with increasingly nationalist and exclusionary policies, cities have adopted explicit welcoming strategies, enhancing their integration programs, and providing urban solutions to the arrival, residency, inclusion and social protection of forced and other migrants¹ (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019; Darling, 2017). Various labels and concepts such as Sanctuary Cities in the US, Cities of Refuge in the UK and, more recently, Solidarity Cities in continental Europe reflect the expansion and diversity of municipal policies, initiatives, and urban-based movements to accept, shield, and include (forced) migrants (Foerster, 2019). They share a desire to contest national immigration laws and policies and to foster solidarity by – often creatively – (re)imagining different ways of urban life and living together

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(Baban & Rygiel, 2020). The idea and concept of solidarity is a central and inherent part of these policies and initiatives. However, it takes on different meanings, visions and practices for local policy making and the support of vulnerable migrants, depending on place-particular circumstances, national and urban contexts, political and administrative systems, actors, addressed populations, and policy goals (Bauder, 2017, 2020; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020). This raises the following questions: What privileges cities to facilitate the welcoming of migrants, and what specific material and political features allow for and result in urban “solidarity”, and in what form? Who are the factions and actors that participate in and negotiate the development of the solidarity city, and what interests do they pursue?

Such questions have mostly been addressed by research coming either out of scholarship in urban governance, local immigration and asylum policies and regimes (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019; Foerster, 2019; Scholten & Penninx, 2016; Werner et al., 2018), or under the rubric of urban (as opposed to national) citizenship (Bauböck, 2003; Bauder, 2017; Isin & Turner, 2007; Lebuhn, 2013). However, as the trope of the welcoming or “solidarity city” involves different types of agency and practical implications, these literatures are marked by blind spots and hamper a comprehensive and critical understanding of the sometimes cooperating, at other times conflicting actors in the making of solidarity cities (García, 2006; Jeffries & Ridgley, 2020). In particular, Bauder and Juffs (2020, pp. 46 f.) find that “in the migration and refugee literature, this multi-dimensional character of the concept of solidarity is not always acknowledged.” Consequently, a differentiated analysis of solidarity (cities) must not only pay attention to the complexity and dynamics of solidarity concepts and practices – their various tensions, antagonisms, and contradictions –, but also to the multiplicity of actors (including local governments, welfare associations, churches, private entrepreneurs, nonprofits, volunteers, activists and forced migrants themselves) involved in the effort of making cities hospitable to newcomers.

This article brings together research perspectives from urban governance, civil society as well as migrant mobilization literatures to gain a fuller understanding of the collaborative/competitive interactions between the key players engaged in this urban policy arena. To do so, it applies Agustin’s and Jørgensen’s (2019) typology of three types of solidarity (institutional solidarity, civic solidarity, and autonomous solidarity) and conceptualizes solidarity city projects as “zones of negotiation” (Pott & Tsianos, 2018). With this approach, we analyze the encounters of and negotiations between the actors from the realms of the local state, that of civil society, and from the people who fled their homes. We apply Berlin as primary case (with some references to other German cities) to contextualize and explain how solidarity is practiced in its different forms as well as to disentangle the various actors and interests relevant for and engaged in the solidarity city. The combination of these three actors and types shows that their respective organizations, institutions, (infra)structures, motives and goals manifest rather different concepts of solidarity and social justice, which is an outcome of the ambiguous and contradictory ways in which solidarity unfolds, is organized, negotiated and practiced by different urban actors – ranging from neoliberal diversity management to self-organized horizontal participation and direct democracy practices. Thus, our paper provides a basis for evaluating the scope and multidimensional meaning of “a city of solidarity” in contemporary Europe. Thereby, it contributes to those recent literatures in urban studies that

focus on the structures of migrant and refugee solidarity in European cities (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019; Bauder, 2020; Dicker, 2017; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020; Siim & Meret, 2020) as well as to debates in (forced) migration studies on the local settlement of forced migrants in urban environments at large (Glorius & Doomernik, 2016; Kos et al., 2016; Muggah & Abdenur, 2018; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

The article proceeds as follows. We first present our analytical framework in the context of a review of current scholarship in the field. After thus developing the conceptual approach for this study, we focus on three sets of actors relevant in the field – urban politicians and administrations, civic society actors such as the increasingly well-organized volunteers, and refugee activists – and their respective solidarity practices, highlighting their interactions and negotiations with each other. We conclude by discussing the role of these actors, their understandings of solidarity, and the challenges they face in making the solidarity city.

Solidarity cities as zones of negotiation

The literature about (forced) migrant solidarity pays a considerable amount of attention “to look(ing) beyond or below the nation-state to understand how such solidarities are generated and how they may be able to transform and invent social norms, political subjectivities, and even institutional frameworks” (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019, pp. 12 f.). The urban scale in particular receives dedicated attention as a space in which new forms of solidarity toward (forced) migrants emerge, are articulated and translated into particular practices (Baban & Rygiel, 2020; Jeffries & Ridgley, 2020). Here, we identify two major bodies of work that study solidarities regarding (forced) migrants in the urban context from different perspectives and research interests.

First, many urban scholars and political scientists “discuss the issue of solidarity in connection with citizenship and the making and unmaking of political communities” (Oosterlynck et al., 2016, p. 773). Using the idea of (urban) citizenship as a lens to understand urban solidarities, they study the efforts “cities” make to welcoming and including migrants with a focus on their ability to contest the exclusionary nature of national citizenship and to redefine citizenship in a more inclusive manner (Bauder, 2017; Isin & Turner, 2007; Lebuhn, 2013). In this body of work, the new policies of “solidarity cities” are interpreted as expressions of urban citizenship, which protect residents with precarious legal status and seek to expand their rights to access local services through policy innovations, new ordinances and regulations, and/or the creation of agencies (Isin & Nyers, 2014). In addition, a number of scholars in Europe concentrate on recent municipal governance reforms in the reception and integration policies of local authorities through urban governance perspectives including studies of local reception, accommodation and housing approaches (Adam et al., 2020; Kos et al., 2016; Lidén & Nyhlén, 2015; Neis et al., 2018; Seethaler-Wari, 2018; Steiner & Reinhard, 2018; Werner et al., 2018). These studies illustrate that urban solidarity and local accommodation/integration policies vary in different parts of the world and at the level of cities, because they are “embedded in rather different regional geopolitical situations, national legal regimes, local discourses of migration, and other place-particular circumstances” resulting in distinct political aims and diverse localized strategies (Bauder, 2020, p. 3). For example, sanctuary cities in the US focus mostly on illegalized migrants, whereas in the

UK and continental Europe policies pursue the goal of supporting forced migrants in the phase of arrival through local-level policies and practices (Bauder, 2017).

Sanctuary or solidarity city policies are “not the result of top-down policy making, but are put onto cities’ agendas by social movement actors and through strong bottom-up mobilizations” (Kron & Lebuhn, 2020, p. 92). Thus, a second body of literature looks into bottom-up solidarity movements, the rise of forced migrant-led politics and their impact on the situation of (forced) migrants and on urban policy making (García, 2006). This includes scholarship in social movement and critical citizenship studies analyzing migrant solidarity activism, social movements, and political protest as part of a “new era of protest” (Ataç et al., 2015; Della Porta, 2018; Isin & Turner, 2007; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020; Rosenberger et al., 2018). To different extents, this work is concerned with “acts of citizenship” in order to discuss migrant solidarity as a political act, the way it leads to the emergence of political mobilizations, and how migrants as political actors have changed the notions of citizenship, solidarity and city-making (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Siim et al., 2018). This literature also includes civil society mobilizations, forms of civic engagement and pro-migrant solidarity practices as it studies “the processes of ‘doing’ solidarity and practicing resistance” (Siim & Meret, 2020, p. 2).

These top-down and bottom-up perspectives and discussions imply different concepts and understandings of solidarity in theory and practice, leading Agustin and Jørgensen (2019, p. 25) to argue that “solidarity is overloaded and in that sense is a ‘floating signifier’, i.e. a signifier that is open to continual contestation.” Similarly, Bauder and Juffs (2020) find that solidarity escapes a single definition, as it depends not only on locally specific contexts and actors involved on the ground, but also on the perspectives and interests of those studying these processes. A number of scholars, however, seek to capture precisely this multidimensionality in the intricate contemporary engagements of solidarity. Oosterlynck et al. (2016, pp. 766 f.), for example, define four sources of solidarity, of which “encounter” and concrete interpersonal practices result in current innovative forms of solidarity, “which are located in relationally constituted places that become sites for everyday negotiation and agonism” (Oosterlynck et al., 2016, p. 777). Siim and Meret (2020) apply the concept of “reflective solidarity” for studying solidarity practices in Copenhagen and Berlin. Reflective solidarity conceives of solidarity “in terms of a process generated and continuously (re-)negotiated in a context of difference and multiple concrete particularities, rather than based on an ideal of pre-given agreement, shared views and expectations” (Siim & Meret, 2020, p. 3). Disagreement and differences are here seen as a basis of solidarity, mutual connection and inclusive dialogs on a collective level. Based on an intensive literature review, Bauder and Juffs (2020) use philosophical and conceptual underpinnings to develop a categorization scheme including several types of solidarity. The type “recognitive solidarity” is of particular interest to us, because it relates to practices of liberation (e.g. autonomist solidarity, volunteer and migrant activism, refugee protests) that challenge different forms of discrimination, domination and oppression and through which new political relations, subjectivities and progress emerge.

This overview of a select range of concepts currently applied in our field illustrates that solidarity may be understood as generative, inventive, relational and spatial (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020). Urban solidarity with forced migrants may take place on and connect different scales (from trans-local solidarities to city networks down to neighborhood and place-based activism), and it may generate relations between spaces and/

or actors (as, e.g. in alliance building). It can create political subjectivities and collective identities through the invention of new imaginaries and political relations and through spatial practices that connect different actors and transform or invent social norms and institutional structures (Siim & Meret, 2020). Most powerfully, solidarity may be a political project and an imagination, resulting from the engagements, intersections, tensions and negotiations of different actors involved (Kron & Lebuhn, 2020). Solidarity, thus, is the starting point *and* potentially the outcome of urban struggles, contestations, and negotiations among those actors.

To capture the interests and negotiations of diverse actors involved in solidarity city projects we turn to Agustin's and Jørgensen's (2019) actor-centered typology (institutional solidarity, civic solidarity, and autonomous solidarity) and conceptualize solidarity city projects as "zones of negotiations" (Pott & Tsianos, 2018). With this framework, we study the involvement, tensions and negotiations of local government, civil society, and forced migrant actors through which solidarity emerges – out of a "battleground" of colliding actors, interests and visions (Ambrosini, 2020). According to Agustin and Jørgensen (2019) institutional solidarity refers to the formalization of solidarity, the potential political action of solidarity and its regularization by institutions. It describes the capacity of enabling (infra)structures and policies to materialize solidarity maintaining the connections with civil society and (forced) migrant organizations. Autonomous solidarity includes autonomous and self-organized initiatives on the ground, often in the form of organized horizontal participation and direct democracy practices without a direct relationship to the local state. Civic solidarity encompasses civil society mobilization, forms of civic engagement and pro-migrant solidarity practices and activism – the "vast number of manifestations and actors, such as NGOs, local communities and individuals" that are "receptive to the idea that the vulnerabilities, which prevent people from participating on equal terms, must be eliminated" (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 41). These solidarity types and actors encounter each other and, through constant efforts to bring about, shape and establish (different forms of) solidarity, they produce the solidarity city. This takes place because of continuous and manifold *solidarity practices* through which the three types of actors and their specific interests, perceptions, and strategies determine solidarity. Solidarity practices reveal asymmetric power relations; the contestation and negotiations of these relations result in different outcomes and material and political features of solidarity city projects. On the one hand, the "solidarity city" undergoes progressions; it is not static, but changes in accordance with constant negotiations and changing power and actor constellations. On the other hand, solidarity is in itself a transformative power that can change infrastructures, practices and institutions (Kreichauf et al., 2020; Pott et al., 2018; Pott & Tsianos, 2018). In what follows, we employ this typology in presenting the field of migrant support, thus elucidating the role played by each of the actors in co-creating the solidarity city.

Negotiating the solidarity city

Obviously, municipal politicians and administrators and their respective departments and agencies play decisive roles in setting the parameters for a city's receptive climate. But in 2015, when thousands of forced migrants were suddenly present in cities such as Berlin, Munich or Hamburg without state agencies able to even register, let alone provide minimum standards of accommodating them, it became clear that municipalities are not

the only actors shaping the welcoming climate. With established welfare organizations being equally overburdened, a non-traditional form of civic engagement in the form of volunteer activism arose – next to existing human rights, refugee, anti-racist, or urban movements – playing a crucial role in making cities sites of hospitality. Further, various organizations of migrant groups and their actions also contributed to the formation of hospitable environments. Out of civic engagement and migrant groups’ activism a bottom-up Solidarity City movement has emerged in Berlin since 2015 with the aim to create safe and empowering conditions for forced migrants within their city, and to build support for the migrants’ demands for the right to stay as well as the right to move.

In the following sections, we apply the relational and actor-centered approach described above in order to identify and unpack these different sets of actors (local governments, civil society actors and forced migrants) and their approaches to making solidarity cities. While we focus in this paper on the practices and negotiations of actors in Berlin, we also present findings and literatures from other cases to contextualize the Berlin developments and to reveal the core actors’ abilities and practices for creating “solidarity cities”.

Solidarity as policy: Municipal governments and their leeways

To many, the city is a key site to counter the intensifying tendencies toward closure and for building an “open Europe.” As primary locations and agents for forced migrant reception and integration (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018), European cities currently represent forms of institutional solidarity in two ways. They “scale up,” articulate and formalize the generation of solidarity by building European-wide alliances in the form of city-networks, and they “scale down” the matter of migrant solidarity, inclusion and protection to particular local policy-making efforts at the urban scale by enabling (infra) structures and policies to materialize solidarity (often in cooperation with civil society actors) (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019).

In Germany, the majority of cities present themselves as open, welcoming cities. Freiburg, for example, portrays itself as “city of refuge,” while Hamburg highlights its cosmopolitan character by labeling itself “arrival city” (Schmidt, 2018). When the city of Oldenburg joined the EU-supported coalition of 10 European cities (URBACT-Program) called “Arrival Cities” (founded in 2015), its website referred to the goal of this network to “develop a community in which mutual tolerance and acceptance is being lived.”² Other German cities have joined the network “Solidarity Cities,” which was founded by the Eurocities Initiative in 2016. This alliance includes Barcelona, Naples, Athens, Thessaloniki, Amsterdam, Gdansk (i.e. initially port cities), and pressures EU institutions for a coordinated approach to what its founding document calls the “refugee crisis” (EUROCITIES, 2016). It sees cities as central for the reception and integration of forced migrants, and on that basis advocates for better – more effective as well as more humanitarian – reception of them across the EU. After a red-green-red coalition had come to power in Berlin in December 2016, its government also officially joined the Solidarity Cities network in 2019. More than 100 municipalities participate in the EU-sponsored *Intercultural Cities Programme* (ICC) in order to exchange and consult with each other about effective policy development in the area of refugee integration, Berlin’s district Neukölln among them. And as a reaction to stranded migrants at the shores of

Italy, who had been rescued in the Mediterranean by civil rescue missions, twelve German cities founded an alliance “Cities of Safe Harbours” announcing their willingness to invite more than their regular quota.³ Meanwhile, the mayors of 90 German as well as of other European cities such as Barcelona, Naples and Palermo have joined in declaring their willingness to take in more refugees directly, and their alliance continues to exert pressure on their national governments to support instead of blocking them (MiGAZIN, 2019, 2020).

Systematic evidence on the concrete functions played by such European (trans-) national city networks is still scarce. A comparative study of two Italian cities (Caponio, 2019) finds they play primarily symbolic functions, such as legitimizing local integration policy and positioning the city vis-à-vis other European cities and EU institutions. But locally, where politicians and administrations pledge – not least by officially joining such solidarity networks – to adopt a migrant-friendly policy vision, they often do enact protective and supportive measures, especially where they are held accountable by strong civil society actors insisting on making the “solidarity city” status real and meaningful (Kron & Lebuhn, 2020).

On the local level, cities have to navigate a “complex ‘tightrope-walk’, as they [city governments] share (and compete for) power with supralocal institutions, at the same time as having to respond to possible conflicts and demands emerging from below” (Bazurli, 2019, p. 344). As the “last instance of government”, their proximity to problems of exclusion places them in a contradictory role regarding the granting of access to and take-up of rights (Gebhardt, 2016). This positioning of cities implies, on the one hand, the *potential* that municipalities may provide people with unclear residence status with access to rights and services by exerting their relative autonomy. Local authorities may do so because they are usually more concerned with maintaining public order in their jurisdictions than they are with the legal status of their residents; and they have particular “urban capabilities” to react autonomously to special conditions at the city level and to problems of everyday organization (Kuge, 2019). Therefore, they may be inclined to take more reasonable, pragmatic and favorable positions toward their undocumented residents (Kratz & Nowak, 2017). Barber (2013, p. 71) even claims that cities generally “prefer problem solving to ideology and party platforms,” they have indeed frequently provided, in a kind of “logic of emergency,” some, at least temporary, partial, or improvised form of membership based on human rights.

On the other hand, cities are tied into the implementation of federal politics of migration control (through registry offices, social services departments, schools, etc.) (Bazurli, 2019). Consequently, they have hardly any legal competence regarding the rights of forced migrants and their access to state institutions. However, the “local turn in migrant integration policies” – stipulated by the increased arrival of forced migrants since 2014 – has catapulted cities to the forefront of asylum politics introducing reception, accommodation and social policies that often go beyond or even circumvent the thicket of EU and national laws and guidelines regulating how municipalities shall implement asylum policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Cities can exploit the contradictions, vagueness, and gaps in the laws governing the multi-scale system of asylum and immigration politics. They have broad leeway in how they interpret and implement the respective laws (Buckel, 2011). This leeway applies (as detailed elsewhere, see Mayer, 2017) not merely to areas where cities are able to work with greater flexibility and

creativity than higher government units – and thus may, for example, assemble refugee taskforces in a matter of days, rapidly launch pilot projects for forced migrant reception, or coordinate different city services and external stakeholders. It applies also to the prescribed mandated tasks for which municipalities are constitutionally responsible within the federal division of labor, such as the issuing of residence titles.

So, even in areas, where higher levels of government prescribe in some detail the substance and procedure of the task, and where municipalities aren't supposed to have any margins of discretion, the frame set by national and state policies can be stretched. Some asylum and residency laws contain numerous ill-defined legal concepts, which “the state ministry either cannot or does not want to concretize with state law or direction,” so that it remains up to local immigration offices to interpret federal or state stipulations (Schammann & Kühn, 2016, p. 11). Thus, for example, if an asylum request has been rejected, the staff of the municipal immigration agency in Germany, which is closely supervised by the Land government, can decide whether specific factors might prevent deportation of a rejected claimant, e.g. whether and for how long a temporary permit (“exceptional leave to remain”) might be issued. Also, vague legal concepts allow German states (Länder) and cities (up to now) to refrain from withholding services when asylum seekers have “violated” their duty to cooperate with the asylum procedure, have not taken up suggested “work opportunities,” or did not participate in an obligatory “integration class.” Bendel (2016) finds that if the municipal leadership wants, it can prioritize integration over regulatory/policing imperatives.

Berlin has been utilizing this leeway in varied ways. Contradicting German federal law on mandatory housing of forced migrants in mass accommodation facilities (AsylVerfG, §51(1)), Berlin allows refugees to rent apartments after three months in a reception or accommodation center. Since 2011, public housing companies and the Senate have cooperated in providing such apartments exclusively for forced migrants; and Berlin's agency for refugee affairs (LAF) has installed a department that supports forced migrants in finding apartments in the regular housing market (Kreichauf, 2018). Further, the current red-green-red government's “Master Plan” for Integration and Participation of Refugees employs the term “refugee” also for people “whose application for asylum was rejected or who do not fulfill their enforceable obligation to leave the country,” recognizing the variety of reasons that justify a right to stay (SenIAS, 2018, p. 12; cf. Endnote vi). In 2019, Berlin turned its foreigners' office (Ausländerbehörde) into a “welcome office” in the form of a state agency for immigration – the first of its kind in Germany –, heralding a “cultural change” regarding the reception and integration of migrants. However, at this point, it is unclear whether this rebranding actually has positive implications for migrants or serves merely symbolic politics (Amin, 2020).

Within the political science perspective of urban and local government and of public administration, the way municipalities make use of this latitude is primarily explained by factors such as the constellation of political parties in power, the financial wealth of the municipality, and the political will or orientation of its political leaders (De Graauw, 2016; Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017). The self-perception of a city is also recognized as playing a role for how creatively municipal autonomy is exerted: where open, cosmopolitan traditions are appreciated, even migrants with precarious legal status are granted access to public goods and services – be it through parallel structures via civil society organizations such as welfare associations, churches, and informal groups, or through

incorporation into regular systems, where citizenship status or residence title are simply made irrelevant (Bendel, 2016; Buckel, 2011; Heuser, 2019).

Important as these factors are, they do not exhaust potential explanations for the differential uptake of municipal leverage. Because this perspective basically ignores the dynamic recent development of civic engagement, it misses out on an important explanatory variable. Within this perspective, civic engagement becomes visible and its influence measurable only through the lens of municipal actors: only if they experience political lobbying by local refugee support organizations as intense, is it viewed as possibly contributing to the municipalities exerting their leverage (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019; Kron & Lebuhn, 2020). As a matter of fact, though, municipalities have over the last few years not only adapted and re-arranged their departments tasked with processing and integrating forced migrants but also developed new arrangements to direct and coordinate the civic engagement of volunteers, even where such civic groups were not intensely lobbying (e.g. Daphi, 2017; Gesemann et al., 2019; De Graauw, 2016). Against this backdrop, Verhoeven and Duyvendak (2017, p. 564) find that often “governmental players join[ing] forces with non-governmental players in contentious actions against policies they want to prevent or redress.” Many German municipalities by now operate as steering, coordinating and guiding players within the asylum policy arena, often by outsourcing to non-state actors the implementation of large parts of the functions that – within the multi-scale division of labor for governing the refugee situation – fall on them. After the voluntary activists initially had pushed – spontaneously and from below – into a relative void of state provision, by now a panoply of new administrative functions, along with newly created (intermediating and coordinating) positions, and a range of new (funding) programs have evolved. This complex web of public, private and civil society actors and institutions, which now governs the arrival and inclusion of the new migrants, has been examined primarily in local case studies (e.g. Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017). Such research finds that the new state strategies for furthering and coordinating the civic engagement for forced migrants are often contested, particularly with regard to an appropriate balance between support and regulation of that engagement, as will be discussed in the next section.

Summing up, we can say that cities do utilize the instruments and options at their disposal to constructively deal with the challenges that arrive with large numbers of newcomers, including options that improve the inclusion of disenfranchised migrant groups. They possess a “unique combination of representing a level of governance that is local and thus able to represent pragmatism, efficiency and legitimacy, but at the same time being able to learn from each other through horizontal networking” (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018, p. 92). However, the different ways in which cities make use of their relative autonomy produce rather uneven infrastructures of local service provision in cities across Germany. Also, the presence and strength of two civil society actors plays at least as large a role in shaping the welcoming character of a city as the municipality-immanent factors highlighted by urban policy research in determining whether and to what degree cities merit such titles.

Solidarity as movement: civic engagement for forced migrants

Civic forms of solidarity refer to the ways civil society initiatives work to include forced migrants in the host society. They are practiced by a vast number of actors (from well-structured NGOs to informal volunteers) that are not part of the local state, but that interact and often cooperate with it to push forward claims and strategies of solidarity. Civic solidarity thus forges “new alliances and collective identities in different kinds of spaces” – ranging from critical opposition toward government to efforts to influence policy-making (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 41).

While Germany has a long tradition of migrant support groups, organizations and initiatives, their number has exploded in the summer of 2015, when hundreds of thousands of forced migrants arrived and soon faced cities overwhelmed by registering and taking care of them. To fill in, more than 150 initiatives sprang up in Berlin alone, civil society initiatives *next to* established welfare associations, nonprofit service providers, voluntary agencies, NGOs, refugee councils, and church communities, all of whose volunteer numbers jumped up as well (Daphi, 2016; Karakayali, 2018; Karakayali & Kleist, 2016). Even though over the last five years, this engagement has diminished somewhat, it remains relatively stable in increasingly differentiated forms, in a variety of fields, and on a higher level than in other spheres of social engagement (Gesemann et al., 2019). Its forms range from individual, personal “adoptions” of one or several refugees, to guide and assist them in navigating the unfamiliar and often challenging territory, all the way to collective efforts, in some cases even city-wide networks, providing and mobilizing for solidarity. For example, a German writer couple started an intercultural housing project for forced migrants, the so-called Refugio, in cooperation with the Berlin City Mission, a welfare association providing support for homeless people, and since 2015, also operating asylum shelters in Berlin. The five-story building provides living and working spaces for 40 people with and without forced migrant background, thus allowing newcomers to connect with long-established residents and providing opportunities for their social and economic integration (Kreichauf et al., 2020). Another example would be the city-wide network “Netzwerk Berlin Hilft”, which describes itself as Berlin’s most important “helpdesk,” “information platform,” and “thinktank.” It works to coordinate and bring together forced migrants, volunteers, and administrative and governmental actors in the field.

While these grassroots initiatives differed significantly in their organizational culture from traditional volunteering in welfare associations and church groups, they have been and continue to be characterized by enormous heterogeneity, dispositions ranging from charity-based volunteerism to left-radical ambitions of *No border!* activism. At the same time, in this form of “recognitive solidarity” (Bauder & Juffs, 2020), the boundaries between what is often described as “apolitical,” humanitarian volunteerism (which frequently sees itself as doing the legwork for local government’s integration measures) and self-organized projects of state-critical activists (who connect their practical support for refugees with political demands for more rights for migrants, especially those with precarious legal status) are often fuzzy, shifting, or contested. Various studies find that even in the absence of ideological framing, politicization processes do take place (Daphi, 2017; Sinatti, 2019). Though politicized, these groups usually do not prioritize demands for open borders, but primarily seek to improve conditions of reception on the ground.

Such demands will, however, become more radical when refugees, who have been looked after by the initiatives and who have successfully “integrated,” are to be deported: then demands easily become extended to include the right to global free mobility and the right to stay.

The primary addressee of these initiatives is the municipality, as its agencies are more accessible than other levels of government, and the threshold for participation in and negotiation with local governments is lower. On many issues, the groups seek to collaborate with municipal political and administrative actors, but often they take on a watchdog function, reminding the municipal actors of promises made, thematizing deficits in the treatment of refugees or in the administrative structures, and urging remediation. Through their activities and the infrastructures they built, the initiatives have often also spawned a mobilization of local civil societies against nationalist and racist groups. Almost every district of Berlin has at least one such citizens’ initiative for the support of forced migrants within their area, often using the district’s name as a label as in “Moabit Hilft” or “Kreuzberg Hilft.” They offer direct help for forced migrants (language courses, escort to government offices, doctors or apartment visits, etc.), and they hold the authorities accountable for their actions (or the lack thereof) by constantly revealing the circumstances under which forced migrants live in Berlin.

As some of these initiatives provide services to which forced migrants are legally entitled (language classes, counseling, accommodation), their practice has created the same type of dilemma that has been encountered since the beginning of the withdrawal of the state from social reproduction in the 1980s. While the self-help and voluntary labor that pitches in where governmental agencies were supposed to deliver social services may indeed mitigate in emergencies, it comes with a series of problems in that necessary qualifications are lacking, the services cannot be provided in the necessary comprehensive, all-embracing manner, or governments use the unsalaried civic engagement as a pretext to reduce public services instead of adjusting the latter to the growing demand (Van Dyk & Misbach, 2016). Also measured by the intentions of the engaged themselves, their voluntary “helping out” sometimes has problematic implications: While their unbureaucratic aid may be better suited to meet the real needs and hardships of forced migrants, the really-existing disparities in power and resources have consequences. In an environment where social and political rights depend on citizenship status, volunteers (with German citizenship) and refugees cannot function as co-equals, no matter how much the volunteers want to realize equality. (Alas, not all volunteers strive toward equality: some helpers are over-keen, and refugees occasionally encounter lack of respect or get disempowered while being “cared for”). Particularly in conditions of mass accommodation, avoiding paternalism on the side of the volunteers often remains a theoretical desire, even where they attempt to operate on a level playing field (Cappiali, 2017; Jungk, 2016).

Under these difficult conditions, a variety of forms of cooperation have evolved in the course of the last few years between initiatives and local administrations. Their co-production of refugee services has tended to *consolidate* and professionalize the initiatives’ projects. *Consolidation* means that the initially informal groups now have more clearly defined responsibilities and goals, in many instances they founded (registered) associations, created (paid) positions, or tied themselves to umbrella organizations, so as to facilitate receiving and managing donations and grants. Some have signed explicit

cooperation agreements with local authorities and taken on the delivery of specific public tasks as mandatory, thus turning themselves into new agencies of nonprofit work. At the same time, *precarization* occurs because the new programs' expectations and requirements are oriented to the capabilities and resources of the established welfare associations and service providers, with whom the initiatives are now competing. Even though a variety of (primarily state-provided) funding opportunities have meanwhile become available for initiatives, the financial resources accessible to them are often inflexible and do not fit their concrete needs. For lack of sufficient funding and support, the initiatives thus often have to develop their own programs under uncertain and laborious conditions and cannot plan with any long-term perspective (Gesemann et al., 2019).

On top of all this, they often feel pressed to assert themselves “against senseless administrative action” (“Offener Brief,” 2015, p. 1; cf. also Berliner Initiativen, 2018). Even before the tightening of the immigration law with the so-called “Migration Packet” of June 2019,⁴ initiatives observed an increasingly restrictive interpretation of provisions in the law as well as illicit administrative action (from faulty rulings by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to erroneous Jobcenter decisions), forcing them to spend much of their energy on making sure forced migrants get treated correctly according to the law. Because of such experiences, some initiatives have intensified their function as “control agency” of the state, and they have developed a more pronounced political self-image: they publish critical statements, participate in Open Letters, and have even organized strike actions to protest against the instrumentalization of their voluntary work.⁵ Others have become practical: In some cities, groups have begun to organize “citizen asylum” to protect forced migrants threatened with deportation. They announce publicly that they are about to hide such refugees from the authorities and call for fellow Germans to sign such declarations of civil disobedience. At the same time, they build, with their activities around concrete protective spaces, practical structures of solidarity.⁶ They see their campaign for “citizen asylum” not merely as defending the migrants' right to stay, but also as part of the struggle for a “solidarity city”.⁷ Similarly, protests against deportations have frequently developed into practical solidarity, as for example, in the work of the *No Lager* groups and in coalitions against deportations. Case studies of such alliances in various cities reveal the productive opportunities for collaboration between engaged activists with secure residence status and migrants with precarious legal status (e.g. Hinger et al., 2018, on Osnabrück).

“Solidarity City Berlin” was formed in the fall of 2015 by different groups such as MediBüro Berlin (a group of medical professionals and volunteers seeking to provide health care to people without insurance since 1996), the local “citizen asylum” group, and migrant initiatives. Together with welcome initiatives, refugee councils, migrant organizations, church groups, leftist organizations and academics it launched the nation-wide network “Solidarity City” in 2017, which carries forward the grassroots struggle for social rights and urban citizenship of the new arrivals, connecting similar initiatives across many small and large cities. This network's goals go far beyond those of the network of city governments with the similar name (Solidarity Cities), as it seeks to develop “a city for all,” in which “everyone shall have the right to live and work”, “no matter what ‘legal’ and financial status they have.”⁸ Their concept of solidarity wants to extend rights and resources to *all* groups excluded from access.

As health care is one of those resources from which growing numbers of people, not merely illegalized migrants, are excluded, Medibüro pursues to provide free services to uninsured people in need of medical attention and it campaigns for political solutions (Medibüro, 2016). The story of its struggles reveals how, through persistent activism, voluntary engagement may achieve some success in and through its negotiations with the local authorities, while also shining light on some of the hurdles and blockages in the way of turning hospitality discourse into a reality: The initiative set up a network of about 130 medical professionals, who donate their labor and engage in fundraising for drugs, lab tests, surgeries, etc., thus performing about 1000 free medical treatments annually. But since such voluntary support remains insufficient to the needs, MediBüro proposed, already in 2005, an anonymous health card as a politically feasible way to establish health care access equivalent in scope to the services that forced migrants granted asylum receive (Neumann, 2019). For a long time, Berlin's Department of Health was not ready to support the health card model Medibüro suggested. However, the various stakeholders continued to lobby for the model, until, in 2018, the red-green-red coalition set aside €1.5 million annually to provide free health services to uninsured people, and established a Clearing Agency as a first stop for such patients (Kron & Leuhn, 2020). Given the fund's financial cap, this achievement remains limited, and Medibüro has publicly chided the delayed implementation of the model, the limited number of included health providers and the limited funding. Its members organized a strike action in June 2019, where they rallied together with other solidarity groups and health organizations in front of Berlin's Health Department for the universal right to access health services (Medibüro, 2019). This case illustrates that even with a left-leaning government, and even on the city level, initiatives pushing for practical realizations of solidarity with precarious migrant groups face institutional and political obstacles in their effort to co-create comprehensive solutions together with city officials.

To sum up the findings of this section, the civic engagement that has powerfully contributed to making cities welcoming has also consolidated an indispensable role within the urban policy field of forced migrant reception and integration. In the process of building and intensifying collaborative programs and structures of service provision to vulnerable newcomers, a novel policy field has emerged where municipal actors seek to encourage and simultaneously steer and control the civic engagement. The interactions between municipal authorities and administrations on the one hand and the initiatives, even if increasingly professionalized and incorporated, on the other, frequently reveal divergent concepts of what solidarity with precarious migrant groups should look like and what forms it should take.

Autonomous solidarity: the self-organization of refugees

Since the fall of 2012, European cities have seen an uptick in protest actions by (forced) migrants, which galvanized – with marches, demonstrations, encampments, hunger strikes and occupations – far more public attention than previously. Instead of taking on the role of needy victims and objects of aid organizations, they organized themselves in order to achieve access not only to human rights, but also social and political rights, as well as the right to free mobility (for an overview of these protests see Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018). Encompassing very heterogeneous people, these movements and

protests represent both “recognitive” (Bauder & Juffs, 2020) and “reflective” forms of solidarity (Siim & Meret, 2020) as they often take place in autonomous and self-organized ways, making claims to solidarity, participation and rights, and contesting their (ascribed) outsider positions within society and the forms of domination and oppression related to this position (McNevin, 2006). Their initiatives are often run on the basis of direct democracy and through assemblies (Agustin & Jørgensen, 2019). They are premised on the concept of solidarity, which “in each case appears to be based [...] on the explicit premise that the initiatives [...] are open to anyone in need” (Dicker, 2017, p. 78).

Through their acts of protest as well as claim and space making, politicized groups of forced migrants constitute themselves as political subjects and act as citizens, “even when the law does not recognize them as such” (Nyers, 2010, p. 142). Cities are “a crucial site for the mechanisms through which movements form, disband, transform, or fail to form in the first place” (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2016, p. 227; also see Dicker, 2017). Forced migrants use the urban space “as a ‘frontstage’ for their struggles over citizenship” (Swerts, 2017, p. 379), even though adopting this form of visibility enhances a variety of risks.

One of the most prominent mobilizations of refugees in Germany was triggered by the suicide of the Iranian Mohammad Rahsepars in Würzburg in 2012, and the way the state dealt with it. In response, refugees set up a tent camp in the center of the city, demanding free mobility, an end to deportations, to humiliating treatment, and to being housed in desolate container camps. After several demonstrations and a hunger strike by Iranian refugees in Würzburg, about 50 refugees together with supporters began a 600 km march to Berlin on September 8, in direct violation of the law forbidding them to leave the district they have been assigned to. A month later, they erected a tent camp at Berlin’s *Oranienplatz*, where about 80 refugees from Sudan, Macedonia, Iran and Afghanistan held out, with others living in a nearby squatted former school building. About 6,000 people joined their demonstration on October 13 to the German parliament. With the protest camp at Oranienplatz, the refugees succeeded to create both a communal space and a publicly audible voice. It also allowed them to forge social networks, alliances, and innumerable personal connections between refugees, supporters and residents (Ataç et al., 2015; Steinhilper & Ataç, 2019; Wilcke & Lambert, 2015).

In April 2014, the camp was cleared on the basis of an agreement negotiated with the city which was supposedly supported by all participants. It included the taking down of the tents at Oranienplatz and for the refugees to leave the squatted school building. But not all refugee groups had agreed to voluntarily leave, because the so-called “agreement” did not include housing options for the refugees cleared from the campsite, the redistribution of their asylum cases to Berlin, nor residence permits on humanitarian grounds, even though politicians had promised in the previous negotiations to grant these demands (Flüchtlingsrat Berlin, 2015). Thus, a few dozen refugees remained in the former school building with the intention of converting it into an international Refugee Center – already they were running language classes and arts projects, where new and old residents as well as locals could meet and cooperate. But in the face of a 10-day siege by massive police forces, a majority of the refugees left the school building. As these were gradually evicted from substitute accommodations that had initially been provided, and illegally exposed to homelessness (as the Social Court

would later affirm⁹), the remaining 24 occupants of the school building lost all faith in the authorities. As meanwhile many new arrivals were claiming public attention, and about 100 newly arrived Syrian refugees were housed in (the evicted) part of the school building (now run as emergency shelter by the welfare association Johanniter, which in 2016 signed an operator contract),¹⁰ the district government saw an opportunity to play out “new”, less battle-trying refugees against those that had become bothersome to the authorities.¹¹

Still, refugees in Berlin and all over Germany continued to alert the public to the degrading conditions in mass housing facilities and to the humiliating effects of the respective asylum laws – with protest camps in central squares, go-ins and occupations, social media campaigns and PR work, exhibits and conferences, and finally also hunger strikes (Ataç, 2016; Steinhilper & Ataç, 2019). With organized bus tours to reception centers, they reached out to new arrivals, informing them of the rights they are entitled to as well as about the protests, with the goal of recruiting more activists. Again and again, they converged from peripheral (rural, ex- and suburban) locations of mass reception centers onto urban central spaces, churches, and vacant buildings, which not only empowered and visualized the protesting refugees but also allowed access to resources and networks that helped in their mobilization. Their cause became publicly present, especially where they employed spatial strategies such as occupations and claiming of spaces that transformed specific – public as well as enclosed – locations into social and political spaces.

But the authorities’ response to refugee movements has been divisive and demoralizing in its effects. Especially where the movements have been strong, the strategy adopted by the authorities was to offer conditional concessions, which resulted in splitting and weakening the movement. Those who don’t pick up on the concessions can more easily be evicted and criminalized. Due to such tactics of attrition and division and because of the increasingly more restrictive laws governing irregular migrants, the spectacular forms of activism that unfolded at the height of German “welcome culture” have become rarer. However, even under most difficult conditions more and (mostly) less visible forms of self-organization of refugees continue to take place. For example, the residents of an intake center outside Osnabrück organized themselves in response to the state of Lower Saxony’s intensifying deportations: “with its own committee, its nightly patrol, and an alarm system of whistles” (Hinger & Kirchhoff, 2019; Maestro, 2017). The barracks housed about 300 Sudanese migrants, whose shared language and previous political organizing experience which made the mobilization of the blockades easier. When the police marched up in the night, the residents assembled in front of the former barracks, blocked the entrances with garbage cans and barricaded the gates with bicycles – and sang. Besides such actions designed to prevent the identification of the sought-after deportee/s, they also organized demonstrations in front of city hall to make their demands known: “Uninterrupted sleep! Better food! Reduced public transport fares!” Local authorities broke up this self-organization by changing their accommodation practices, eliminating the notice of imminent deportations, and arranging for a transfer of the Sudanese activists, thus deliberately undermining the organizing efforts of the refugees (Hinger & Kirchhoff, 2019; Hinger et al., 2018).

The particular mix of regulatory/repressive and social/humanitarian-oriented responses that have evolved in any particular city differs, of course, and as such has

been shaping the opportunity structures for the struggles of irregular migrants in different ways (Ambrosini, 2020). Even though the concerns raised by the refugees are generally the same as those raised by welcome initiatives and other NGOs active in this field, even the same as those formulated by the pertinent agencies in municipalities that brand themselves as “welcoming cities,” their deprivation of rights and thus their structural exclusion hampers equivalent recognition. But it is striking that almost everywhere strategies of “Divide and Rule!” have been employed: a few, usually short term and/or symbolic concessions are made to selected groups of protesting refugees, which is then used to ignore, repress, or criminalize the rest. In Berlin, even after a red-green-red government drafted an explicitly progressive plan for the integration and participation of refugees, the voices and demands of the refugees and many of their advocates continue to be ignored in important aspects, from ending the exclusion of those with limited residence permits from the entitlement to social housing, and stopping the ongoing deportations to countries such as Iraq, to the demand for uniform quality standards to be implemented across Berlin’s different refugee accommodations (Berlin, 2018, 2019; Berliner Initiativen, 2018; Memarnia, 2017, 2018).

The successes won despite such difficulties are likely attributable to the dense networks of self-organization of the refugees, and to their embeddedness in sustainable supporter networks in the respective cities. Strong cross-movement linkages have formed in the course of the last few years in joint struggles against austerity cuts and the affordable housing crisis. Such settings are conducive for a convergence of diverse urban struggles and for forming inclusive solidarity practices, as they have frequently materialized in right to the city actions and joint campaigns of tenants and migrants (Hamann & Vollmer, 2019).

The city as a place of solidarity?

This article explained the abilities and practices of three of the contributors to implementing forms of institutional, civic and autonomous solidarity relevant for making the city a site of welcome and protection. Our analysis shows that the constant negotiations within and between these actors allow solidarity to emerge, and that exclusionary state and municipal practices are intensely contested. By studying these practices and their interactions, we found that municipal institutions indeed play a vital role for the emergence of the “solidarity city”. Municipalities often use their own resources and leeway for developing pragmatic approaches, sometimes guided by humanitarian concerns. Most often they enroll diverse local partners and civil society actors in these efforts and attempt to steer and coordinate these to varying degrees (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017). However, it is civic engagement, grassroots and refugee movements – their persistent activism and frequently critical publicity – that push for solidarity and bring these issues to the municipal agenda and beyond. They are indispensable in creating the solidarity city (Kuge, 2019).

Our analysis of the struggles for and negotiations over solidarity also revealed the ambiguous and contradictory ways in which solidarity unfolds, is mediated, practiced and contested by these three distinct urban actors. Comparing the goals and practices of grassroots and movement groups to those of alliances and networks such as Arrival

Cities, Solidarity Cities or the *Intercultural Cities Programme* mentioned above (in the section on “Solidarity as policy”), important differences stand out. Civic and autonomous solidarity movements demand social justice, the right to free mobility and the right to be present/sedentary – regardless of any formal (urban) citizenship or residence status (Squire & Darling, 2013). Affiliated civic movements such as Solidarity City forcefully fight for equal rights, inclusion, urban citizenship, and for a “solidarity for all” (including the extension of rights and resources for all excluded and disfranchised groups). The Solidarity Cities network, on the other hand, describes itself on its website as an “initiative for managing the refugee crisis” and one of its primary activities is to lobby the European Commission to increase funding for social infrastructures particularly in those cities, where most of the migrants arrive and live.¹² Similarly, cities participating in the ICC Program benefit from the Council of Europe’s support, which provides experts for advice and exchange on “emerging issues” such as human rights, anti-discrimination, diversity, refugee integration, and urban citizenship, as well as possibilities for cities to learn from each other in these fields.¹³ Though the ICC Program deplores neoliberal austerity policies abstractly, it is silent on the slashing of allowances to refugees during their asylum procedure to below current welfare levels, pointing instead to the voluntary civic engagement as if that could make up for welfare provisions by the state. Thus, while the municipal governments joining these networks do advocate for migrant-friendly policies across the EU, they primarily seek to develop – and to garner EU funding for – locally effective solutions for “the refugee crisis.” Their primary interest is in regulating the presence of irregular migrants, securing their social rights is not their major concern.

Even where cities do strive toward expanding migrants’ rights through introducing novel local instruments that extend social participation rights to all residents, achieving social protection or social justice remains – under current conditions – unrealistic. This is because the material resources required for any substantive participation are usually not there. Implementing local ID programs as some U.S. cities have endeavored requires enormous expenditures, and even more is required to provide the material dimensions of participation, i.e. access to education and training, to the health system, to mobility and to affordable housing (Lebuhn, 2016, 2018). Given these conditions, it should not be surprising that even the most well-intentioned “welcome cities” explore and apply various differentiating categories for different groups more and less “worthy” of their hospitality. Besides the realities of austerity, there are also political realities, which Doomernik and Ardon point to, “cities can act in exclusionary ways too if electoral realities force them to” (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018, p. 93). With anti-immigrant parties and racist movements growing – also in large cities such as Berlin – “local policies of exclusion” may increasingly aim to exclude migrants and to separate them from the access to local social policy resources (Ambrosini, 2020).

For forced migrants, claiming rights and solidarity presupposes visibility, but this increases the risk of criminal pursuit, especially for those who do not (yet) have some form of residence status. Where refugees have appeared in public with collective actions or otherwise made their presence in the city visible, they were sometimes able to successfully employ this visibility as political strategy. But the local authorities’ counter-strategies of policing and controlling, and using negotiations to divide, individualize and demoralize the activists, and also the seemingly innocuous bureaucratic strategy of inventing more and more categories to differentiate them, have the effect that visibility

can become a great risk and an existential threat (Zetter, 2007). Even more so, since in the current political climate, where right-wing populism has become widespread, individual visibility intensifies the danger of becoming targets of racist aggression.

Not least for these reasons, the support and solidarity from welcome groups equipped with citizenship status is so crucial. But, as shown above, civic solidarity is not only made up of very heterogeneous groups, but also unevenly distributed. On top, their incorporation into the field of governing refugee arrival and integration has affected these groups and organizations in ways that make solidaristic support on eye level more difficult. The professionalization and monetization of volunteer refugee work that came hand in hand with its public recognition and appreciation have, in many cases, divested this work of its solidarity character. At the same time, many of these groups have experienced the incremental tightening of asylum politics and deportation practices as *lack* of recognition of their work and have reacted either with protest or retreat. To this day, the inclusion/incorporation of civic engagement in the provision of urgently needed services is celebrated by many sides as innovative solution. And this in spite of indications that the new state programs designed to strengthen civic engagement and to encourage and expand volunteer labor in refugee support, may be merely the latest variant of what Rose (1996, p. 328) has called “*governing . . . through . . . community.*” That means that a form of (austerity) governing that uses the “refugee crisis” as pretext for installing unpaid or underpaid local volunteer labor instead of trained, professional social workers, translators, nurses, doctors, and other skilled personnel – with detrimental effects for refugees: Their status as subjects with legal entitlements erodes as they morph into recipients of charitable aid and become dependent on the arbitrary cycles of people’s willingness to donate and their readiness to engage in civic and community action.

In sum then, looking at the agencies of three of the central actors in the newly evolved field of urban refugee politics revealed how, in their interactions and negotiations, the differences in power relations matter as much as larger constraints and forces, such as austerity pressures or the privatization and restructuring of welfare states. These constellations explain the rise of solidarity cities in reaction to urgent municipal problems and as a movement, as well as the limits to the potential of solidarity cities. In Berlin, where under a progressive government in 2019 1,003 deportations were performed and 5,767 refugees left “voluntarily” (SenInnSport Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport Berlin, 2020), some have argued that the litmus test for efforts to making Berlin a Solidarity City is its role in opposing deportations (Neumann, 2019, p. 29). Maybe the movements have not exerted enough pressure on local government to stop deportations, but the developments presented here make clear that without engaging in supra-local, national and EU level struggles, the realization of migrants’ rights can only go so far, the power of cities remains circumscribed. Against this backdrop, European cities and urban movements might learn from sanctuary city policies and movements in the U.S., where growing numbers of cities seek to protect their undocumented and vulnerable residents by Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) policies, refuse to cooperate with deportation procedures, or extend their rights through municipal I.D. cards (even though, in practice, these policies are not always successful and beneficial for migrants) (Bauder, 2019; Lebuhn, 2018). One thing our analysis has shown is that, in order to make the most out of the potential power of cities, it would be helpful to acknowledge how

concepts (and limits) of solidarity have themselves become a site of antagonistic political interests and practices.

Notes

1. In the current contribution, we use the term “forced migrant” in the context of the manifold causes and reasons that lead people to migrate (thus, going beyond the legal definition of “refugee”), and as a general notion for people who – as a consequence of economic, environmental, political, social drivers, or of their decision to migrate – end up in asylum procedures. Where we use the term “refugee”, this is less to denote the legal definition of a refugee, but to refer to a political identity and agenda linked to struggles and claims for space and rights.
2. Retrieved from <https://www.oldenburg.de/startseite/leben-umwelt/soziales/zuwanderung-und-integration/migration-und-teilhabe/arrival-cities.html>, translated by authors.
3. <https://seebruecke.org/startseite/sichere-haefen-in-deutschland/kongress-sichere-haefen/>
4. <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/geordnete-rueckkehr-gesetz-was-steckt-im-migrationspaket-a-1271323.html>
5. See, for example, <http://freundstattfremd.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Nicht-in-unserem-Namen-Ehrenamtlichen-Streik-11-11-2016.pdf>
6. <https://aktionbuergerinnenasyl.de>
7. <https://solidarity-city.eu/de/2017/12/04/faq-haeufige-fragen-zur-initiative-buergerasyl/>
8. <https://solidarity-city.eu/en/about/>
9. See the Decision of the Social Court of 28 August 2014: http://www.fluechtlingsinfo-berlin.de/fr/pdf/SG_Berlin_AsyLbLG_gekuerzt_und_Nachweis_Unterkunft_Oplatz_Lampedusa.pdf
10. <http://berlin-hilft.com/2016/08/gerhart-hauptmann-schule-wird-nun-doch-fluechtlingsunterkunft/>
11. <http://wer.oplatz.net/news-from-ohlauer-school-wer-13/>
12. See <https://solidaritycities.eu/>
13. See www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities

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