Article

Solidarity as a Field of Political Contention: Insights from Local Reception Realities

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Abstract
Reception realities are marked by contentious moves and a strong degree of politicization. Claims made for the inclusion/exclusion of asylum seekers frame the activities of local solidarity initiatives. Based on a set of data on newly opened accommodation centres since 2015 as well as comparative case studies conducted in small-scale and predominantly rural municipalities in Austria, this research explores the characteristics and manifestations of solidarity in the context of asylum. Results show how claims of solidarity are under pressure as they are deeply rooted in exclusionary frames of deservingness on the one hand and federal disputes about the adequate management of asylum systems on the other.

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1. Introduction

The organisation of asylum systems and the spatial distribution of refugees have been the subject of political conflicts across Europe over the past years. In the course of the events that have been discussed among researchers as the "long summer of migration", in order to oppose the dominant crisis narrative (Hess et al., 2017) actors from all political levels have struggled to determine their political agenda. On a local level, the antagonistic nature of responses towards the arrival of refugees can be best exemplified via the formation of the so-called "welcoming culture" on the one hand (Daphi, 2016; della Porta, 2018b; Karakayali & Kleist, 2016), and anti-asylum-protests and the rise of right-wing movements on the other (Haselbacher & Rosenberger, 2018; Jäckle & König, 2017; Rucht, 2018). Images of people on the move from Hungary via Austria to Germany and Sweden who were given passage by politicians and welcomed by citizens are illustrative for 2015. This short period of free movement through central Europe was followed by re-bordering activities and restrictive policy changes (Cantat & Feischmidt, 2019; de Genova,

2017). Discourses based on narratives of threat and fear (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, & Wodak, 2018) strongly challenged solidarity mobilisations and reinforced the backlash against multiculturalism (Scholten & van Nispen, 2015; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). The electoral success of right-wing parties in many European countries and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments, as well as illiberal policies and repressive state strategies, have been paradigmatic for the developments since.

In Austria, a country that was among those EU member states that received most asylum seekers per capita in 2015 (Eurostat), the events of 2015 have led to a further politicisation of the issue of asylum, the electoral success of right-wing populist parties, and a shift in government and policies (Gruber, 2017). Analogically to the European level, the time elapsed was marked by severe federal disputes regarding competencies, policy design, and the degree of flexibility of implementation practices (Müller & Oberprantacher, 2017). Accommodation policies are characterised by vertical and rather centralised decision and implementation practices leaving only a few competencies to the local level. In 2015,

the national level was confronted with protesting mayors and conflicting demands of citizens on the one hand, and the lack of accommodation on the other. With this momentum of "increasingly polarised public opinion, beleaguered government parties, and on-going uncertainty about the future management of refugee movements" (Gruber, 2017, p. 39), the number of municipalities accommodating asylum seekers more than doubled (Leiss, 2016, p. 7) making the topic of asylum and reception not only an urban phenomenon, but also one of rural and peripheral regions.

In most of these municipalities, the opening of an accommodation centre has encouraged citizens and local policymakers to become active and to establish local support initiatives that are often affiliated with the municipal administration. Differing regarding their nature, structures, and political intentions, these initiatives redefined the boundaries of the community. Unlike other research, this article approaches the question of local solidarity from a political science perspective with a focus on mayors on the interplay between accommodation and integration policies as well as local realities and demands (Careja, 2018). Based on a set of data about newly opened accommodation centres in small-scale municipalities and 9 case studies, this paper questions how predominantly rural municipalities have dealt with the arrival of asylum seekers in their community and analyses the characteristics of local solidarity. By investigating the ways local actors bridge the gap between solidarity claims and reception realities, different manifestations of solidarity will be discussed.

Theoretically, this research applies multi-level governance and a contentious policies perspective. It combines the literature on the so-called "local turn" with theoretical reflections on the concept of solidarity and migration as a field of contentious politics. By doing so, it is possible to explore the political implications of moves of solidarity and contextualise them in a multi-level governance structure. After theoretical reflections on local solidarity in Section two and a discussion of data and methods in Section three, the Austrian case will be introduced, and the margins of local solidarity moves will be discussed. In Section 5, the empirical findings will be presented. First, the character of local solidarity will be discussed against the backdrop of contentious politics and social movement studies (della Porta, 2018a; Diani & McAdam, 2003; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) focusing on actors, repertoires, and claims. In a second step, different manifestations of local solidarity are presented, revealing their rather exclusionary character and showing that its contentious character is strongly tied to local civil society configurations and political conflicts.

2. Theoretical Reflections on Configurations of Local Solidarity

Much has been written about the developments in and after 2015, nevertheless, researchers are still struggling to find a way to grasp and to analyse the many facets of the events and their social and political implications (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). In a time of "limited resources and unclear policies" (de Jong & Ataç, 2017, p. 28) asylum governance often appeared as emergency governance (Panizzon & van Riemsdijk, 2018). In 2015, volunteers and NGOs stepped in when state systems were failing to cope with the number of people arriving (Simsa, 2017). This shift of responsibilities out to the private sector and down to the local level (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2018) confronted municipalities and volunteers with a range of new activities that can be ascribed both to the camp of accommodation and integration policies as they range from the organisation of housing, donations, and language courses to the development of local integration paradigms and the lasting inclusion of new community members. Strongly tied to national paradigms, moves of solidarity define the degree of embeddedness of the accommodation centre in municipal structures as they are negotiated along the axis of inclusion and exclusion, of humanitarianism and political agency.

Most of the research in the field of local migration studies has been done in the context of cities and urban environments (Bauder, 2017; Doomernik & Ardon, 2018; Simsek-Caglar & Glick Schiller, 2018). However, in the past years, rural regions have increasingly been the focus of research projects (Glorius, 2017; Kordel, Weidinger, & Jelen, 2018; Whyte, Larsen, & Fog Olwig, 2018). In a small-scale and rural environment, effects of proximity and direct concern are even stronger than in cities, as potentially all citizens have direct contact with the facility and its inhabitants. Inclusionary and exclusionary claims made in the context of an accommodation centre are thus negotiated in the immediate neighbourhood. This nexus of local politics embedded in a multi-level governance structure, the contentious nature of acts of solidarity as well as conceptual ambiguities when speaking of solidarity will be assessed in the following three sub-sections.

2.1. The Local Level in Accommodation and Integration

The so-called "local turn" in migration management (Ahouga, 2017) as well as in migration research (Doomernik & Glorius, 2016; Scholten, 2013; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio, & Scholten, 2017) has shifted the focus of academics away from national paradigms towards local realities. It is the local dimension of migration policy-making (Caponio & Borkert, 2010) and the recognition of local actors as central agents in organising and shaping local reception and integration processes that are systematically being explored and questioned. Whereas some focus lies on the horizontal dimension—best described as local modes of governance—the remaining focus pertains to the vertical dimension, namely the connections and interactions with higher levels of government (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Recently, scholars have observed a process of decoupling and disentan-

glement that fosters the development of local integration paradigms (Geddes & Scholten, 2015; Scholten & Pennix, 2016).

According to the literature, the local level is driven strongly by a pragmatic approach to problem-solving and the interests in the well-being of the local community (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Furthermore, the locals are said to be potentially more liberal in their approach when negotiating the politics of inclusion and exclusion. In this context, municipalities have developed "practices to cushion and counteract aspects of…exclusionary national asylum policies…[and] thereby question the legitimacy of national policies and their execution" (Kos, Maussen, & Doomernik, 2016, p. 354). However, this is not always the case as some studies emphasise the exclusionary character of local boundary drawing that strongly resonates with national paradigms (Holloway, 2007; Hubbard, 2005). In a culturally homogenous environment, processes of othering are used as a strategy to maintain "white privilege" and to demarcate symbolic boundaries (Hubbard, 2005). In this context, supposedly liberal practices may employ disciplining aspects, a phenomenon that has been discussed under the term "repressive liberalism" (Joppke, 2007). The character of local integration paradigms thus also reflects the aforementioned vertical and horizontal dimension, as both the degree of interconnectedness with national paradigms and local boundary-drawing are decisive for its concrete structuring.

2.2. Political Contention

What exactly are contentious politics and what makes this concept so relevant for the field of migration studies? According to Tilly and Tarrow (2015, pp. 7–8):

> Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics.

Acts of solidarity have been particularly analysed with the concept of contentious politics (della Porta, 2018a; Feischmidt, Pries, & Cantat, 2019) but it has also been applied to anti-immigrant protests (Andretta & Pavan, 2018; Castelli Gattinara, 2018). The conflicting claims negotiating the "continuum between inclusion and exclusion" (Huysmans & Guillaume, 2013, p. 24) are highly present in reception and accommodation policies. Andretta and Pavan (2018) bridge this gap by looking at anti- as well as pro-immigration protest in one research design and analysing it as a field of protest. The focus on the contemporaneousness of both phenomena facilitates a discussion on the polarising effects one movement has on another and conclusions can be drawn about the degree of contention of a field. For this research, two aspects are considered as especially interesting: a) the interplay of contentious action mobilising for and against the accommodation and the support of asylum seekers, and b) the dimension of politics as claimants and recipients of claims at the same time. Whereas the first draws on the research of Andretta and Pavan (2018) and analyses the accommodation of asylum seekers as a field of contention, the second emphasises the role of mayors as they are located at the interface of politics and movements.

2.3. On Solidarity

Solidarity is here defined rather broadly as supporting asylum seekers and making claims for inclusion and belonging (Isin & Turner, 2002). In contrast to anti-immigration movements that are demanding the exclusion of asylum seekers, solidarity expresses an "enacted commitment…to assist others" (Prainsack & Buyx, 2017, p. 52) that is deeply rooted in the relations between people. Solidarity action in the context of asylum has been analysed from the perspective of social movement studies, critical citizenship studies, and on the basis of the Autonomy of Migration approach (Ataç, Rygiel, & Stierl, 2016; Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Mezzadra, 2010). This literature shares the implicit assumption that the actions under study have a "political nature" and those who enact them share "political motivations" (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019, p. 102). Most of the research carried out focuses on the self-organised protest of refugees and migrants as well as on advocacy networks, thus making the role of the persons concerned a potentially more active one claiming a right to stay. However, the political nature of these actions is not self-evident, especially when looking at support initiatives in the surroundings of accommodation centres or along refugee routes (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). Here, the character of solidarity and the set of repertoires changes and can be best characterised as humanitarian action with a focus on taking care of basic needs. Spahl (2018, p. 14) summarises this dilemma stating that solidarity is a "shiny concept, but its moral promise might conceal potential dark sides".

From a critical and postcolonial perspective, it can be argued that the politics of humanitarianism form part of the migration regime itself as the supposedly apolitical form of volunteering reaffirms dominant (national) paradigms (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Ticktin, 2014). In this context, the relationship between actors is characterised by unequal power structures and a social relation "without any possible reciprocity" (Fassin, 2012, p. 3). Humanitarian action is strongly embedded in the construction of a moral duty that is first and foremost directed at "alleviating immediate needs rather than criticising government policies" (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019, p. 103). Vandevoordt and Verschraegen open up this

field of tension between politics and morality by systematically exploring the multi-facets of humanitarian action and employ the term of subversive humanitarianism (Vandevoordt & de Praetere, cited in Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). By doing so, it is possible to show how morally motivated action acquires its political character implicitly as it stands in opposition to government policies. Solidarity activities thus may have two readings that both need to be addressed: are unequal power relations, dominant subject categories, and state policies reproduced and strengthened or are they challenged and transformed?

Summarising all three sections, some important conclusions can be drawn that have to be considered when analysing local support initiatives. First, the character of local solidarity actions may vary and has to take into account both local configurations as well as multi-level governance structures. Second, acts of solidarity in the context of 2015 cannot be considered to be genuinely independent of anti-immigrant protests but have to take into account the polarised and politicised environment they operate in. Third, the concept of solidarity is not as clearcut, as it might seem to underline the importance of exploring its various manifestations.

3. Data and Methods

This research builds on a set of data on all municipalities in Austria that have accommodated asylum seekers between May 2015 and March 2016. The data was provided by Jakob Weichenberger, a data journalist by the Austrian Broadcasting Company (ORF) and the Austrian Association of Municipalities (*Gemeindebund*). According to the research design, municipalities were selected by size (maximum 2500 inhabitants, which represents 72% of Austrian municipalities) and type of accommodation (municipalities that hosted less than five people). Additional information collected pertained to the political environment (e.g., the party of the mayor), the time of the opening of the accommodation centre, the size and type of the facility and information on the character of local support initiatives. Information was collected via Internet research on the webpages of the municipalities that usually list local news gazettes as well as via telephone calls to the municipal administration.

Based on this set of data, nine municipalities in three regions of Austria were selected for comparative case studies. Cases varied regarding the history of the accommodation centre (some had a history of anti-accommodation protest prior to the opening), strong and weak support ties (organised local support initiatives versus individual volunteers), and the degree of involvement of municipal actors (e.g., one person of the administration is part of the volunteer group). In each municipality, in-depth interviews with the mayors were conducted. This was supplemented by interviews with local citizens who actively engage in support measures, actors from the institutional context of the accommodation centre (e.g., operators or people working for the NGO responsible) and regional policymakers. Additional information for case reports was drawn from newspaper articles and via Internet research.

In total, 16 interviews with a total of 19 actors were conducted. The main focus of the interviews was on tracing the process of the establishment of the centre on the one hand, and the description of support measures and local strategies on the other. Furthermore, interviewees were asked to describe local tasks and their ties to other actors. Interviews were interpreted based on inductive and deductive coding. Following a social movement perspective on acts of solidarity, some categories were pre-defined, such as actors, repertoires, and claims (della Porta & Diani, 2006; Fillieule & Accornero, 2016). The sequences extracted here were then coded inductively in order to develop categories (Kuckartz, 2016) amidst the theoretical discussion on contention and solidarity. In the following section, the context of local solidarity initiatives is illustrated based on the data set before moving on to the characteristics and manifestations of solidarity.

4. Austrian Reception Realities: The Margins of Local Solidarity

The accommodation of asylum seekers has traditionally been a task of cities and urban regions with only a few centres in remote areas that had existed since the introduction of the system of basic care in 2004 (Rosenberger, 2010; Rosenberger & König, 2012). Austria had taken in large numbers of refugees before 2015 and prior to the introduction of the system of basic care. As a result, the organisation of accommodation was entirely different and marked by the relative absence of organised reception centres. In September 2015, an obligatory municipal quota was introduced at the national level, which defined a share of 1.5% of asylum seekers per municipal capita. If municipalities did not meet the quota, the federal state was able to open accommodation centres against the declared will of municipalities. Although it was only executed in ten cases within the first six months (Bundesministerin für Inneres, 2016), the introduction of this law reflected strongly on hierarchical vertical power relations and deepened federal disputes. Of the one-third of all municipalities that opened an accommodation centre within that period, roughly two-thirds were small municipalities with less than 2500 inhabitants.

What is the consequence of a small-scale and often rural environment? Rurality, periphery, and size are commonly used concepts that are usually imagined in comparison to their antonym: Rural regions are contrasted with urban regions, the periphery with the centre, and small-scale environments with densely populated communities. Stereotypical attributes are the idyllic countryside on the one hand, and the modern city on the other (Holloway, 2007). Yet to theorise the relationship between these settings as a mere dichotomy would be

a simplified view (Eder, 2019, p. 19) as multiple political and economic linkages result in a complex system of connections and inter-dependencies. When it comes to accommodation realities, there are some important differences between the two settings. First, rural regions have a comparatively smaller administrative infrastructure and had to develop new structures when confronted with the topic of asylum (Kordel, 2017). Second, the access to services, information, and counselling is rather scarce, as specialised NGOs and state organisations are located in cities (Kordel, 2017). Third, the relative absence of ethnic and religious diversity results in a lack of ethnic networks and intercultural strategies and the perception of difference is strong (Glorius, 2017; Larsen, 2011). To sum it up, the environment of asylum centres in predominantly rural regions is—politically speaking—conservative, as the vast majority of mayors are part of the conservative party or allied with it and it is–socially and culturally speaking–homogenous.

Societal reactions towards the opening of an accommodation centre differed significantly, ranging from protest, to relative ignorance, to support and solidarity. Austria is characterised by a comparatively moderate protest culture (Merhaut & Stern, 2018) but has a long history of anti-immigrant mobilisation, an electorally successful right-wing populist party, and public political debates that are dominated by restrictive frames and anti-immigrant sentiments (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Gruber, 2014; Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015). Protest, as well as the establishment of support initiatives, often occurred in clusters (Haselbacher & Rosenberger, 2018). While protest activities predominantly took place before the opening of a centre and stopped as soon as the first people moved in, the organisation of support activities usually started shortly afterwards. Local solidarity initiatives transcend the domain of accommodation policies and are active in the field of integration policies. Integration is a rather young policy domain in Austria that has only recently been institutionalised (see Gruber & Rosenberger, 2018). Focusing primarily on civic integration measures, meritocratic arguments, and a performance narrative (Gruber, Mattes, & Stadlmair, 2015), the target group defined by state actors is rather narrow and does not comprise asylum seekers.

Looking at the empirical evidence, it is important to note that regional politics have a significant impact on the local level and that there is a great variety of implementation practices. This concerns the regional distribution of asylum centres, the degree of cooperation between the regional level, the local level, and NGOs, as well as the organisation of the accommodation system in terms of the type of centres and access to services. Regarding the geographical distribution, substantial regional differences can be observed as the spatial dispersal is very balanced in one province (90% of the municipalities accommodating asylum seekers) but rather uneven in other regions (less than 50% of the municipalities

accommodating asylum seekers). Interestingly, there is a significant absence of individual housing in rural regions as organised reception centres run by private entrepreneurs (usually former hoteliers) or NGOs are the predominant form of living (in all of the regions, except the capital Vienna, this number is above 80%). Cooperation between involved actors was fostered only in some regions, where dense networks and sometimes even institutionalised regular meetings were established. There has been a general trend towards medium-sized centres (between 14 and 35 people) that are run by NGOs, as they have a significantly higher degree of supervision carried out by professionals. Finally, there is also a variation in terms of financial support as well as facilitation and access to services (such as the accessibility of German courses, public transportation, or childcare).

It is important to note that asylum seekers are assigned to municipalities involuntarily based on a national allocation key, making accommodation centres "spaces of forced residence" (della Porta, 2018c, p. 328) Throughout the period of accommodation, asylum seekers are governed by a set of rules that produce "stigmatised and excluded subjects" (Kreichauf, 2018, p. 10), which can be best summarised as systematic disintegration (Täubig, 2009). The daily routine in organised reception centres is shaped by inactivity and immobility, as people have no access to the labour market and live from small pocket money only (Haselbacher & Hattmannsdorfer, 2018). The region, type, and size of the centre, as well as access to services, become thus part of the asylum lottery. In the majority of cases, this converts accommodation centres in peripheral areas into places of transit instead of a final destination, as most of the people move to cities as soon as the procedure terminates.

5. Empirical Insights into Local Solidarity

2015, as I said, was the year of searching. We all searched a lot; for solutions that we didn't have…; for places…for personal…for structures…for cooperation….It was the support of the civil society that made many of those things possible. (Interview with the regional coordinator of an NGO; author's translation)

Summarising the theoretical arguments and the previous section, some important conclusions for the empirical analysis of the case studies can be drawn: First, solidarity activism is embedded in vertical power relations that leave little leeway to local actors, disempower people living in reception centres, and structurally inhibit integration measures during the asylum procedure. Second, solidarity activities have frequently been opposed by exclusionary and restrictive claims that together characterise the contentious field of asylum. Third, moves of solidarity in small-scale and rural environments have developed only recently and are embedded in a process of socio-demographic change and lacking experiences.

5.1. Characteristics of Solidarity: Actors, Repertoires and Claims

Actors of solidarity are citizens of the municipality who are either key actors in the community or have the time and resources to take on new tasks. The first group is closely tied to important institutions of the community such as the administration, associations, schools and kindergartens, or the church, which are decisive for the participation in social and cultural life and set the foundations for acceptance (Glorius, 2017). Mayors are usually not directly involved in the day-to-day activities of local support networks, but they play an important role as mediators in the phase of the establishment of the centre and shape the economic, institutional, and political opportunity structures of volunteerism. In all of the cases, a person of the municipal administration was directly involved in the local support group ensuring the information flow between institutional and non-institutional actors. In an interview with both the mayor and an administrative employee, this is described as follows:

> Administrative Employee: I have, so to say, agreed to get involved, also voluntarily, half-half…
>
> Mayor: During working hours and after working hours.
>
> Administrative Employee: Yes, overlapping. (Interview, author's translation)

When it comes to networks, the role of mayors is even more striking. Political ties are used to engage with other mayors and to advocate for the interests of the municipality at higher political levels. Social ties are used to encourage citizens to assume voluntary tasks and to find solutions for practical problems.

Interviewees refer to moral obligations and to pragmatic considerations when they frame their motivation to get active. Moral arguments are based on observations on the centre and its structures as they are perceived as insufficient and inhumane. The latter derives from practical considerations. Since asylum seekers are now part of the daily routine in community life, they simply cannot be ignored. Furthermore, fear of xenophobic and anti-immigrant activities is expressed. Often, pragmatic and moral frames interconnect as it is supposedly common sense that one has to help people in need and that this action can only be in favour of the whole community. Anti-migration activities have often triggered the establishment of a local support group. A mayor describes this momentum: "the [previously experienced] shock led to the establishment of a solidarity platform that said, stop, we are the other side of the coin, we are also there, and we are many even though you might not have heard or seen us until now, but we do exist" (interviews, author's translation). This closely reflects on the interplay of contentious moves for and against the inclusion of asylum seekers and their mutually polarising effects (Andretta & Pavan, 2018).

Repertoires are strongly tied to the accommodation centre as most of the activities are directed at supporting asylum seekers in their daily routine in organised reception. This includes the organisation of German courses, driving services, joint activities, as well as the collection of donations. As this set of activities is directed at providing practical support in everyday life, it can clearly be ascribed to the field of humanitarianism. Its aim is to alleviate suffering in the sense that it makes life in organised disintegration more acceptable. Consequently, the set of repertoires applied remains within the legal limits and does not transgress the line to explicit political activism. The only frequent exception is the organisation of (irregular) labour and the remuneration of auxiliary tasks above the legal limit and, although to a lesser extent, anti-deportation protest. Interestingly, both are based on emotional and social ties to particular individuals (see also Rosenberger & Winkler, 2014) as not everyone gets the possibility to work and there are no general manifestations against deportations or the asylum system as such.

Claims made in the context of solidarity can be clustered as follows: claims of deservingness (e.g., people who make an effort shall have a right to stay), claims on local autonomy (e.g., more flexibility for implementation practices and decision-making power), claims on citizenship (e.g., the expressed wish to grant people a right to stay) and permissive claims (e.g., as opposed to restrictive policies such as labour market access). The first and most dominant one revolves around frames of deservingness and, therefore, depicts a picture of "exclusive solidarity" (Lefkofridi & Michel, 2014). Solidarity is thus not meant to be addressed at everyone but is reserved for some people who publicly show their efforts. It is striking how dominant narratives and subject categories are reproduced throughout all of the interviews. The degree of "integration" of a person serves as the main indicator, without questioning the term or its political implications. Integration is constructed as a moral obligation of asylum seekers who, by showing their effort and performance, prove their gratitude.

The other three major claims identified express discontent with national regulations, as well as the wish for more leeway in developing local implementation strategies. While the autonomy claim is made predominantly by politicians, the permissive claim can be best understood as a critique of some elements of the asylum system that is based on practical observations. The citizenship claim reflects the wish of small-scale municipalities to be able to include newly arrived people as community members with a long-time perspective to stay. Often affected by emigration to urban regions, an expressed wish of municipal actors is the long-time settlement of people who usually come to stay only temporarily. The fact that "well integrated" people might be deported or voluntarily move to cities is incomprehensible and narrated as

discouraging voluntary action. Summarising the results of the interviews, it can be shown that solidarity has two dimensions: a political one among local actors that is constructed in opposition to the national level and an interpersonal one that is deeply rooted in frames of deservingness. Solidarity claims are, thus, to be located within conflicts regarding decision-making power on the one hand, and emotional ties to people receiving care on the other.

5.2. Manifestations of Solidarity: Local Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion

> A certain number can be tolerated in every municipality....But it shall not be in an excessive dimension, because it requires a lot of commitment and time to tell them how things are done here.

> Once again, I think it is necessary, when such situations happen, for municipalities to show their solidarity, to a reasonable extent.

> I always tell them, people, you are here with us in Austria, you can have everything from us, but you have to comply with the rules. And they do. (Interviews, author's translation)

These three quotes from different interviews with mayors are illustrative for local manifestations of solidarity that are based on multiple forms of boundary drawing reproducing narrow concepts of integration. Deeply embedded in the structure of the camp as a site of exception (Agamben, 2000), they serve "as a power to 'ban' from belonging" (della Porta, 2018c, p. 328). Solidarity claims do not express the general demand for people to stay, as claims of citizenship are rather scarce and reserved for individuals. Belonging is constructed to be temporary and transitional, as it is closely connected to the duration of stay and a limited set of repertoires. Some parts of community life thus remain inaccessible and restrictive national policies, as well as markers of difference, are reproduced. The aforementioned claims of deservingness, autonomy, citizenship, and permission depict a picture of exclusionary exceptionalism that resonates on the effort of singular recipients of care and follows an assimilationist approach (Joppke & Morawska, 2003). This conceptualisation of solidarity is based on hierarchical power relations that structurally impede reciprocity and agency and is deeply embedded in a multi-level structure that leaves little leeway to the local level and is based on restrictive state policies.

However, solidarity activism does reduce the constraints of life in organised reception realities and thus blurs the boundaries between the centre and its neighbourhood. Focusing on the shortcomings of the system of basic care, solidarity activism points out core deficiencies and develops its implicit political character through the construction of alternative reception realities. For those people who have successfully developed strong emotional and social ties, activism transcends the boundary to a more inclusionary notion of belonging. In those cases, manifestations of solidarity go beyond humanitarian action and intensely advocate for the lasting settlement of people. This is the momentum when socioeconomic arguments come into play as the accessibility of employment and housing are narrated to be decisive in the making of citizens.

Even though most of the solidarity repertoires may have a depoliticising character, at first sight, voluntary work can lead to the politicisation of individuals and implicitly challenge the political order. Integration is a parameter in asylum procedures and may enact a right to stay. Initiatives focusing on "the construction of a positive community life" (interview with a support initiative, author's translation); or those who advocate for the possibility to "integrate into community life as well as the peaceful coexistence of neighbours" (interview with a local support group, author's translation), do not publically criticise policymakers, but they do affect the outcomes of asylum procedures and facilitate a transition from recipient of care to community member. By doing so, voluntary action transcends the boundaries from the apolitical to the political, from conformism to the confrontational (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019).

Manifestations of solidarity are embedded in the field of tension between restrictive national policies on the one hand, and local requirements and needs on the other. Interviews depict a high level of dissatisfaction with national actors as well as the wish for more local autonomy. While actors hardly break with the socio-political order, they express harsh critique on national politics. Since 2015, restrictive policy changes have been objected to and perceived to be hindering local integration processes. In this context, institutional actors are both recipients and makers of claims who are caught in the middle of vertical and horizontal contention. Solidarity is thus expressed not only towards asylum seekers but with other community members (e.g., between the mayor and citizens) as well as other municipalities and local actors in general. It is enacted via joint activities and collective actions alongside the shared expression of discontent.

6. Conclusions: Contentious Solidarity

The process of the opening of an accommodation centre suddenly converts municipalities into sites where contentious claims are negotiated. Empirical insights into this field of tension show a clear prevalence of solidarity claims that overrule exclusionary claims. Nevertheless, manifestations of solidarity in small-scale communities follow a humanitarian approach that is exclusionary in its character and only implicitly political. This conceptualisation of solidarity can be best described as exclusionary solidarity that is based on the construction of in- and outgroups and exclusive rules of membership (Fassin, 2012). Civic engagement frequently counteracts restrictive and hostile activism demanding the exclusion of asylum seek-

ers and questioning the existence of the asylum centre (Glorius, 2017). In the interplay of inclusionary and exclusionary demands, solidarity activism has mediating effects on xenophobic attitudes and is often enacted in opposition to these modes of hostility.

Based on the reproduction of narratives on integration, deservingness, and performance, dominant subject categories remain unchallenged. Claims of solidarity—based on reflections and insights into the functioning of the asylum system—lead to the establishment of a local agenda that differs significantly from national paradigms and is primarily based on pragmatic considerations. The motivation to become active arises due to observations on the asylum system and the needs of people living in accommodation centres. In small scale and rural areas, claims based on deservingness are prevalent and reflect the wish to select new community members based on their integration efforts while human rights discourses and a discussion of the causes of flight are relatively absent. One of the main factors that impede local integration measures is the factor of time and the unpredictability of the outcome of procedures or the continued existence of the centre. Asylum seekers, mayors, and volunteers do not know how long the accommodation within the given municipality will last. The temporal and structural framework for support activities is thus very tight. Most of solidarity activism started in the context of narratives of emergency and due to the strong salience of the issue. Structures were developed rather incidentally following a learning-by-doing approach.

In small municipalities, the spatial proximity of citizens and asylum seekers results in the solidary engagement of people who have no history of political or voluntary activism but who observe grievances triggering their involvement. Nevertheless, policy changes on the national level have reduced local autonomy and (re)strengthened state control. Today, the trend of spatial distribution and decentralisation is reversed, as the number of asylum applications is declining, and centres are in the process of closing. The time of irregularity and emergency is thus over and four years after the summer of 2015, one of the core challenges for actors of solidarity is their continued existence despite restrictive policies and closed borders. As a consequence, solidarity activism is under severe pressure. This is mainly due to three factors: a) declining numbers of asylum applications and the closure of accommodation centres, b) the political-juridical framework that structurally impedes horizontally organised solidarity activism, and c) the character of solidarity in small-scale communities being rooted in exclusionary frames of deservingness and humanitarianism that only partially break with the socio-political order.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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