Hospitality contra exclusion?

Institutionalising Solidarity in Zurich in the Shadow of Humanitarianism and Border Violence

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the constitution of Zurich as a 'Solidarity City' in the context of manifestations of the European border and migration regime in urban spaces and institutions. It identifies a tendency towards a simplified understanding of the functioning of borders in urban spaces which ascribes to local hospitality the ability to act as a counterweight to restrictive national migration policies. This simplification can lead to an understanding of borders as 'walls' that either exclude or confine people. However, the thesis argues that borders actually function as dynamic regimes that selectively manage migration, regulating both inclusion and exclusion in complex ways that require urban solidarity efforts to navigate within these frameworks. This perspective reveals the deeper layers of state practices and the need for critical engagement with the complex functions and effects of borders in urban politics. The applied qualitative methodology of the study includes critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in the development and implementation of a municipal ID card known as the Züri City Card. The project's efforts are constrained by national and international laws and practices that deeply embed border mechanisms in everyday life and public space. While solidarity cities like Zurich can achieve important improvements in the quality of life for migrants, they simultaneously reproduce the logic and violence of state practices by adopting simplified concepts of borders. Such reproduction contributes to the consolidation of existing power structures and mechanisms of oppression. An effective solidarity strategy must therefore include both immediate humanitarian measures and long-term structural changes to address not only the symptoms but also the state practices that produce them.

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INTRODUCTION

Debates in Europe about state sovereignty and security are characterised by an obsession with the protection of national integrity. To justify the strict regulation migration, it is dramatised and staged as a state of crisis and transgression. Yet migration is a fact that has always existed, embodying a constant in human history of moving across cultures and times for the sake of survival, prosperity, and safety. The ambiguity between normality and exception reflects a complex dynamic in which migration, in its various manifestations, turns into an emotionally charged and politicised debate about national security, identity, and cultural proximity. Nicholas De Genova (2013) points to the key position that migrant 'illegality' plays in this obsession. The juridical and symbolic construction of 'illegality' serves as a powerful tool of political rhetoric and representation, transforming migration into a symbol of excess and crisis. This 'fetishisation of migrant illegality' creates a spectacle that both attracts public attention and sets the political agenda (De Genova 2013, 1189). 'Illegality' is portrayed either as a threat to social order or—in the figure of the 'victim'—as someone in need of aid.

Such juxtapositions of 'threat' versus 'victim' keep characterising much of the social and political debate in Europe, triggering reactions that range from a welcoming hospitality to protective isolation. This polarisation involves the demand for a broad spectrum of political measures, ranging from calls for stricter border controls to humanitarian interventions. Either way, migration is staged as a state of exceptional circumstances that requires humanitarian protection or restrictive measures to counter it. In response to restrictive national migration legislation, the concept of the 'Solidarity City' emerged and presented itself as a welcoming counter-narrative. These cities offer a rhetoric of resistance to the explicit violence at the external borders of the Schengen area, which is characterised by the high number of drowned migrants, the visibility of violent pushbacks and the erection of border walls. Here, media

images of suffering and vulnerable migrants fleeing wars and famine in overcrowded boats and reception centres contribute to this production, inscribing migrant vulnerability in the collective memory of progressive European publics.

In contrast to the security discourse outlined above, Solidarity City movements mobilise for humanitarian measures to protect and integrate migrants by foregrounding their humanity and vulnerability. City networks promote the coordinated reception and integration of migrants and call on the European Commission to increase funding for social infrastructure as a direct response to this 'humanitarian crisis[1]' (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019, 109–13). The distribution of images of migrants risking their lives in overcrowded boats act as a reminder of the need to find humane solutions. This has raised awareness of the role of cities and civil society actors in the struggle for a more welcoming environment of hospitality and protection.

By staging migration as a state of emergency that makes humanitarian intervention 'necessary', a double process of disempowerment is set in motion: On the one hand, migrants are portrayed as subjects in need, whose lives and stories are filtered through the lens of vulnerability. On the other hand, this representation legitimises a paternalistic attitude that places the acting subjects—often white Europeans from the 'Global North'—in a superior position, both morally and in terms of action. This constellation reflects a deep power asymmetry that characterises the relationships between migrants and Solidarity Cities.

Nevertheless, Christoph and Kron (2019) underline the importance of Solidarity Cities as discursive counterpoints to the rise of right-wing parties in Europe calling for the closing of

[1] The New Keywords Collective (2015, 7–21) emphasis that the multiplicity of 'crises'—be it the 'humanitarian crisis', the 'refugee crisis' or the 'migrant crisis'—often serves to justify 'emergency' measures and means of control on migrants. 'Migrant' as a label thereby includes all persons on the move on various stages of their journey until the completion of an asylum process. As emphasised by (New Keywords Collective et al. 2015, 7–21), the connection of the figure of the 'migrant' with a state of 'crisis' underlines an epistemic impasse in the representation of migration that points to a deep rootedness in global and postcolonial politics of class and race. Thus, the thesis follows The New Keywords Collective's (2015) understanding of the 'migrant crisis' as a complex phenomenon that emphasises both the ongoing effects of colonial pasts and the entanglement of migration with global inequalities in class and race structures.

borders and the criminalisation of migrants. In right-wing narratives, migrants are presented as threats to the security and stability of Europe to legitimise containment and surveillance. Solidarity Cities right-wing rhetoric and in turn emphasise the moral duty to protect migrants and alleviate their suffering. Following the partial collapse of the European border regime in 2015 and the blockade of harbours for civilian maritime rescue ships by the Italian government in the summer of 2018, the ideas and practices of the Solidarity City have gained momentum across Europe (Christoph and Kron 2019, 7f). This development goes hand in hand with an increasing visibility of the inhumane conditions under which people are fleeing and the associated high death toll on migration routes.

The mechanisms of surveillance and securing Europe's borders are often symbolised through the metaphor of 'fortress Europe' (cf. Bojadžijev & Karakayalı 2007; Pinos 2009) Imagining Europe as a fortress symbolises the protectionist rhetoric of sealing off and isolating non-European migrants, highlighting the increasing militarisation of borders and restrictive asylum policies. Thus, the use of this metaphor allows to highlight the discrepancy between the proclaimed values of the European Union, such as human dignity, freedom and human rights, and the real practice of its border and asylum policies. It makes it possible to argue that the 'fortification' of Europe embodies a policy of deterrence that deprives people in desperate situations of their most basic rights and exposes them to dangerous crossings and unsafe living conditions. However, the metaphor of 'fortress Europe' invites a critical reflection on the structure of the walls and the possibilities of tearing them down.

While the metaphor of 'fortress Europe' effectively expresses the harshness and restrictive nature of European border policy, it also harbours the risk of a simplified understanding of borders (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 7;165). By portraying borders as impenetrable 'walls' that are supposed to prevent migration, it narrows the view of their complex reality and multi-layered nature. Rather, Europe's borders should be understood as a 'regime' that includes all the political-economic and administrative mechanisms through which

states regulate and control migration at and across territorial boundaries. This web of policies and practices determines the conditions under which people are admitted crossing the border and how their rights are protected or restricted within the territory of the state. While physical borders play a significant role, the effect informs visa regimes, asylum procedures and a variety of surveillance and control mechanisms that extend both outwards and inwards the territory (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015, 73–77;79f).

Through border externalisation, the EU is increasingly shifting its border controls to non-EU states (cf. Vradis et al. 2018). Policies of externalisation include agreements with countries of transit and origin. With the aim of monitoring and limiting migration towards the territorial border of Europe, they often utilise dynamics of oppression and violence along migration routes. At the same time, an internalisation of border controls is taking place within the Schengen area, where identity checks and surveillance mechanisms are increasingly shifting away from the territorial borders between states into the realms of everyday life (Balibar 2004, 101–14). Border come to be inscribed on the bodies of the figure of the 'migrant' himself, who is constantly categorised and classified on the basis of his/her appearance, documents and behaviour (cf. Mbembe 2019). This leads to an intensification of the distinction between 'legitimate' citizens and 'illegitimate' migrants, whereby the latter are increasingly exposed to the risk of stigmatisation and exclusion. It illustrates the fluidity of borders, which are less intended to prevent the crossing of borders than to filter them according to the different conditions under which people can move and settle between and within state territories.

Understanding borders as fluid filters illustrates how migration and border regimes create selective mechanisms of differential inclusion and exclusion. It exemplifies the complexity of migration dynamics that go beyond simple dichotomies of either including or excluding and instead reveal belonging and incorporation as a continuum. These mechanisms lead to a hierarchisation of people and reinforce existing global inequalities, which requires an

examination of the intertwined relationship between the local and the global in institutional forms of solidarity.

The local-global nexus is evident in how local strategies are deeply situated in the international responses to the global flows of migration. Solidarity Cities therefore not only offer local responses to global challenges, but also act as sites where the impact of global policies and processes unfolds at the local level. Richa Nagar and Susan Geiger (2007) show how the situatedness of solidarity can provide a means of reacting to this interconnectedness. They understand acts of solidarity not in a power vacuum, but as deeply rooted in specific social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. For this reason, they argue for a 'situated solidarity' that emphasises the rootedness of global freedom struggles in local realities and expressions of global dynamics of oppression.

Building on the above, Katharine Rankin (2010) expands the discussion by emphasising an 'ethics of accountability' that includes a critical reflection on the position of cities within global power dynamics. Such an ethics calls on Solidarity Cities to not only seeking for places of hospitality, but also to actively address the global injustices that drive and regulate migration. The Solidarity City thus becomes an arena where global inequalities and local efforts for justice and liberation come together. In this context, Ananya Roy (2006) emphasises the importance of recognising the 'conditions of postcoloniality[2]' that constitutes today's 'present history'. This recognition helps us to understand that Solidarity Cities do not exist in isolation. Instead, they

[2] The term 'postcoloniality' (or just 'coloniality') refers to the persistence and impact of colonial power structures and ways of thinking in the present day, even after the official end of colonialism. This concept, centrally developed and discussed by Latin American theorists such as Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, sheds light on how colonial logics persist in modern social, political, and economic systems. Quijano's work "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" (2000) decisively coined the term by demonstrating how the global power structure was shaped by colonial rule and continues to operate through the control of economy, authority, gender, and knowledge. Mignolo (2008) extends this analysis through his concept of the 'coloniality of knowledge,' which explores how European epistemologies have been positioned as universal and superior, marginalising or suppressing non-Western forms of knowledge. In this thesis, 'coloniality' is applied in this broad sense to analyse the deep-rooted and enduring effects of colonial structures of domination in solidarity cities.

are closely intertwined with interlocking forms of oppression and the intersectionality[3] of freedom struggles.

European solidarity movements respond to the protectionism of repressive border management with the vision of cosmopolitanism, understood as the notion of an abstract humanity united in a global community (Danewid 2018, 20–44). In the context of migration, cosmopolitanism calls for thinking beyond national identities and borders and seeing the rights and well-being of migrants as part of a global responsibility. Such an understanding emphasises values of hospitality and humanitarianism in the formulation of solidarity strategies. It calls on the 'European public' to reflect on the possibilities of a more open and humane migration policy that prioritises the dignity and rights of migrants.

Thus, the thesis argues that there is a danger that cosmopolitan and humanitarian solidarity depoliticise the system of differential inclusion/exclusion, creating the notion that a humanitarian 'correction' of the border regime leads to more social justice and equality. The emphasis on abstract humanity in solidarity responses tends to neglect the actual power structures and systems of oppression that create differential levels of inclusion/exclusion. Thus, cosmopolitan approaches risk perpetuating a one-dimensional notion of borders that can be countered with an appeal to universal hospitality. Yet, the capacity of cities to bring about comprehensive change in dealing with migration and asylum is limited by national legislation and international agreements. Insofar, the question arises as to what extent institutional solidarity is actually able to counteract the framework conditions of 'fortress Europe'.

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[3] Intersectionality, a concept coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, highlights the overlap and mutual reinforcement of different forms of oppression. It is rooted in the Black feminist movement and was particularly emphasised by the activism of the Combahee River Collective (1977). The collective identified race, gender and class as interwoven axes of discrimination that are not detached from each other but deeply embedded in the logic of capitalism. This materialist interpretation emphasises the need to dismantle the entangled pathways of capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism in order to achieve true freedom. In this thesis, the intersectionality of discrimination is applied in such a radical perspective that goes beyond individual identity narratives and prioritises a collective struggle against a system of interconnected oppressive mechanisms. Although not every form of oppression, particularly those pertaining to gender and sexuality, is comprehensively analysed, their significant interconnectedness with the overarching systems of capital, empire and race is acknowledged (cf. Danewid 2018, 93–111).

Taking Zurich as an example of a Solidarity City, this thesis examines the interaction between solidarity movements, urban governments, and restrictive migration and border regimes. It examines the extent to which Solidarity Cities are able to counter the immediate effects of restrictive policies on the one hand and, at the same time, develop a long-term strategy for overcoming systems of oppression on the other. To this end, the study is guided by the following related questions: *How do Solidarity Cities negotiate and counteract their own situatedness in restrictive migration and border regimes to not reproduce the state's violence and logic? And in so doing, how can they transform urban spaces into sites of resistance against this violence?*

There is a gap in the literature on Solidarity Cities in terms of exploring the link between the institutional embeddedness of urban space in the national governance framework and the impact it has on institutional forms of solidarity. This thesis locates itself in the gap by connecting and examining the dynamics between the constitution of Zurich as a Solidarity City with the state practices, policies and mechanisms that operate in urban spaces. In other words, it scrutinises the possibilities of humanitarian solidarity under the conditions of the current migration and border regime. While Solidarity Cities attempt to resist the exclusionary and restrictive border framework of their nation-state, they also represent sites of its transformation and the development of new practices and mechanisms of surveillance (cf. Bagelman 2016). The aim is therefore, on one hand, to understand urban spaces as sites of resistance and emancipation. On the other hand, it also seeks to understand how these spaces reproduce and continue to develop state violence and rationales.

The institutionalisation of solidarity practices in Zurich offers valuable insights into the practical implementation of solidarity. As shown in *Chapter 2* of the thesis, the city has taken steps at various levels to position itself as a Solidarity City in recent years. A central element of these efforts in Zurich is the development of a municipal identity card, inspired by similar initiatives such as 'ID NYC' in New York. The card became known as the Züri City Card and is

to be introduced by 2029. It is intended to enable confirmation of residence and identity to city administrations and authorities[4]. Creating alternative possibilities for identification is particularly important for people who live in the city but do not have regular residence status. While the initiative represents the demands of many so-called Sans Papiers themselves, the process of institutionalising solidarity practices involves the translation of wishes and hopes into legal guidelines and regulations.

The social and practical significance of the study lies in analysing and discussing how cities of solidarity can simultaneously act as agents of change and of securing the status quo. Initiatives to introduce municipal ID cards like the Züri City Card project have a direct positive impact on the realities of migrants' lives[5]. At the same time, there are also significant structural limitations in the formulation of local 'corrections' within the context of an exclusionary migration and border regime. Embedding these practises in a broader theoretical framework enables a complex understanding of the intersectionality of border politics, urban governance, and social justice. By highlighting the dual roles of urban spaces as sites of resistance to restrictive migration policies and simultaneously as sites of state violence, the thesis reveals the complex interplay between urban solidarity initiatives and broader structures of oppression. These insights help to reassess the role of cities in migration management and to understand

[4] Cf. the website of the City of Zurich https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/Projekte/laufende-projekte/zueri-city-card.html (accessed on 10.04.2024)

[5] The direct impact of the card on the realities of migrants' lives is addressed in Chapter 3 of this thesis but is not the main focus. Instead, this thesis examines how the Züri City Card contributes to the integration of migrants in the context of broader institutional and urban strategies, and how such initiatives respond to both local and international legislation and practices. The focus is on analysing the institutional embeddedness and interactions between Solidarity City movements, city governments and restrictive migration and border regimes, with particular attention to the dynamics in Zurich. For a general examination of the direct impact of municipal ID cards on the realities of migrants' lives, see for example the work of Els de Graauw (2014), "Municipal ID Cards for Undocumented Immigrants: Local Bureaucratic Membership in a Federal System". The study by David Kaufmann and Dominique Strebel (2021), "Urbanising migration policy making: Urban policies in support of irregular migrants in Geneva and Zurich" provides detailed insights into the impact in Zurich in particular. In addition, the preliminary study by Sarah Schilliger (2020), "Vorstudie City Card Bern: Grundlagen für die Realisierung einer City Card Bern" provides an overview of comparable developments in another Swiss city.

how urban spaces can both favour transformational processes and support existing mechanisms of domination.

Thus, the thesis emphasises the need to consider solidarity practises not only as immediate humanitarian measures, but also as part of a larger struggle for social justice and against the oppressive mechanisms of race, class, and gender. It argues in favour of an approach to solidarity practises and policies that relates to freedom of movement and settlement and understands the global mobility gap as a continuation of colonial power dynamics. Freedom of movement is a fundamental principle in the discussion on solidarity in the context of migration. It refers to the right of every individual to move freely and to choose their place of residence. Situating it as a core principle of (institutional) solidarity poses a direct challenge to restrictive migration regimes that are characterised by the governance of both mobility and immobility.

Based on the above-identified research gap, three essential sub-questions are posed that form the core of the study. The first sub-question looks at the complex relationship between humanitarian needs and the call for social change. *How do Solidarity Cities navigate the tension between the humanitarian duty to alleviate immediate suffering and the demand for institutional accountability for state violence and the perpetuation of injustices and oppression through the border and migration regime?* It explores how cities reconcile humanitarian action with the need for long-term social change in the context of migration and borders.

The second and third sub-questions extend the scope of the study to a political-economic dimension and a call to engage in transformative justice. The second sub-question focuses on the effects of border policies. *To what extent does a political-economic understanding of the border contribute to the analysis of selective inclusion processes and what implications does this have for solidarity strategies aimed at overcoming differential inclusion/exclusion and promoting justice and liberation?* Finally, the third sub-question addresses solutions to the challenges posed by migration. *How can non-reformist reforms and solidarity policies centred on freedom of movement guide urban efforts to bring about both immediate improvements for migrants and*

long-term, profound transformations that challenge and reshape the structures of oppression within migration and border regimes?

These questions are answered following a systematic structure. Following this introductory presentation of the research objectives and the relevance of the topic, *Chapter 1* deepens the theoretical foundations and contextualises the role of Solidarity Cities within global power dynamics and economic relations. Through a systematic literature review, the study is situated within the current discourse on conditional hospitality, differential inclusion/exclusion and the political economy of migration and race to locate the research gaps in the study of Solidarity Cities.

The subsequent reflections in *Chapter 2* offer insight into the methodological approach of the study, which is based on a combination of close reading, case studies and expert interviews. These methods enable an in-depth examination of the complex challenges and opportunities associated with the institutionalisation of solidarity and allow a critical evaluation of the discourses surrounding the constitution of Zurich as a 'Solidarity City'. This is examined in *Chapter 3* below, titled 'The Possibilities and Limitations of Institutional Solidarity in Zurich' shows how institutional solidarity manifests itself in practice and the structural challenges and potentials with which it is associated. As we will examine, the investigation of specific initiatives and policies that characterise Zurich as a solidary city illustrates the extent to which it has successfully created spaces of support and resistance against restrictive migration regimes. However, it also highlights the limits of this solidarity – an important consideration that is discussed and analysed in *Chapter 4*, 'Navigating Between 'Humanitarian Duties' and 'Institutional Accountability' in the Solidarity City.' Dedicated to the areas of tension between the need for humanitarian interventions and the demand for institutional accountability, this chapter analyses how Zurich deals with these challenges and what strategic choices are made to address both immediate needs and more fundamental structural changes.

With this structured approach, it becomes possible to analyse in depth the complex interactions between Solidarity Cities and the overarching framework of migration and border policies, and to understand how urban solidarity practises both can bring about immediate improvements for migrants and promote long-term, transformative change.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Introduction

The following literature review navigates scholarship that examines the relationship between governance and power by interrogating the conditionality of hospitality in Solidarity Cities, the violence of border regimes, the political economy of migration and the call for 'non-reformist reforms.' Each section provides an essential perspective on the understanding of Solidarity Cities. Together, these strands of literature offer a comprehensive theoretical backdrop for exploring Zurich as a Solidarity City, focusing on how it leverages solidarity as a governmental strategy. It provides the foundation for examining the balance Zurich maintains among assimilation, incorporation, policy legacies, and the quest for social justice.

1.2. The city as refuge: From sanctuary to solidarity

Understanding the city as a place of refuge is a historical phenomenon that expresses a deeply rooted moral obligation to offer protection to those in need (Paik 2017, 6). Historically, the 'Cities of Refuge' represented six designated ancient cities mentioned in the bible. These cities are described as places where individuals could escape social retribution to ensure fair trial after killing someone accidentally (Ridgley 2013, 220). Religious sanctuary was later recognised in the European Middle Ages and in the early modern period where churches and monasteries served as places of refuge from conviction (Shoemaker 2013). These early sanctuaries rooted in notions of divine justice and compassion and often stood in stark contrast to prevailing state laws and authorities.

This historical backdrop set the stage for the revival of a sanctuary movement in the late 20th century, initially emerging in the United Kingdom and later gaining momentum in the United States. While drawing on the religious philosophies of biblical refuges and historical

resistance to state injustices, contemporary expression of the city as a space of sanctuary was adapted to address specific 'crises' at the time. Notably, the plight of refugees and asylum seekers from the former colonies has led churches and community groups in the UK to draw on the historical tradition of sanctuary and offering support and protection to those at risk of deportation or detention (Lippert and Rehaag 2013). Similarly, the US sanctuary movement re-emerged first as cities gave shelter to soldiers refusing to fight in the Vietnam War (Ridgley 2013) and later by offering refuge to migrants during the Central American 'refugee crisis' in the 1980s (Perla Jr. and Coutin 2013). As a result, US cities began to declare themselves sanctuaries, adopting policies that limited cooperation with federal immigration authorities (Lippert and Rehaag 2013).

In its contemporary form, the city as a refuge is commonly depicted as a response to the intensified securitization of borders and aggressive immigration policies infiltrating urban landscapes (cf. Bagelman 2016; Jeffries & Ridgley 2020; Paik 2017; Roy 2019). Movements that advocate for urban sanctuaries have evolved from religious origins to practices that address the challenges of state-imposed illegalisation and placelessness. In this context, Ananya Roy's argues that "sanctuary thus reveals the terms of protection through which liberal democracies recognize and include racial others" (2019, 762). This evolution represents a shift towards a framework that balances humanitarian solidarity against the constraints of liberal state practices. Jeffries & Ridgley (2020) note that while critics of sanctuary argue that it facilitates illegal immigration, sanctuary activists see their work as ethical responses to oppressive policies. By adopting a human rights language, they challenge the state's monopoly over rights recognition and offer a platform for demanding protection and equal treatment under the law (Paik 2017). Rather, it advocates for an alternative narrative of inclusion and protection at the municipal level, thereby questioning traditional notions of state sovereignty and citizenship,

Following the Sanctuary City movements in the UK and US, continental Europe has witnessed the rise of Solidarity Cities. Evolving from the Sanctuary City model, this concept

reinterprets the notion of urban refuge in the context of Europe's migration and border regime 'securing' the EU's Schengen Area. Solidarity Cities call for a comprehensive integration and rescue strategy in the wake of increasingly violent and lethal borders in the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea (Christoph and Kron 2019). The governments of the Solidarity Cities are positioning themselves as 'safe harbours' for migrants and refugees. In doing so, they are responding to what they see as the failure of national and supranational governments to deal with the suffering caused by what they call the 'refugee crisis' at Europe's 'external borders' (Neumann 2019).

Solidarity politics play a crucial role in building a movement against oppression and state violence with Solidarity Cities representing dynamic spaces where the concept of sanctuary becomes expanded to include active strategies for social inclusion and rights advocacy. However, tensions arise between the transformative potential of solidarity and its regulation by institutions. Thus, Kreichauf & Mayer (2021) describe Solidarity Cities as 'zones of negotiation', where municipal governments, civic initiatives, and grassroots movements debate and shape the forms of institutional solidarity. On one side, Solidarity Cities are staged as a welcoming and hospitable antithesis to the exclusionary and restrictive immigration policies of nation-states and the European Union. On the other side, they signify a governmentalization of solidarity practices, where sanctuary is not only preserved but also reconfigured within the framework of urban governance and strategic control (Bauder 2017b; Kron and Lebuhn 2020; Wenke and Kron 2019). This ambiguity of solidarity as a political concept allows it to be interpreted and filled with different meanings depending on the specific context and political agenda. In this sense, solidarity functions as a 'floating signifier' (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019, 25) that can be used as a rhetorical tool, allowing different actors to promote their agendas and interpretations of solidarity.

In the context of institutional forms of solidarities, it is important to acknowledge that while Solidarity Cities offer arenas for contesting state power and negotiating the politics of

belonging, they exist within broader systems of oppression. Therefore, the critical examination of local municipal policies that institutionalise solidarity is imperative to ensure that structural changes are made beyond symbolic gestures. Such an approach calls for a radical form of solidarity that actively disrupts classist, racist, and gender-based oppression while striving for transformative justice.

1.3. Humanitarian solidarity and the limits of cosmopolitan humanity

After discussing some of the ambiguities of Solidarity Cities above, the forthcoming section continues with an interrogation of the humanitarian engagement with migrant 'illegality' and conditional hospitality within Solidarity Cities. This exploration bridges the gap between the abstract principles of universal rights and the tangible experiences of differential inclusion/exclusion. Through an examination of the legal production of 'illegality', the paradoxical nature of deportability, and the conditional dimensions of hospitality, this section questions how the realisation of cosmopolitan ideals of a shared humanity often encounters limits imposed by oppressive legal, institutional, and social frameworks.

1.3.1. The conditionality of hospitality

When referring to the concept of hospitality it is critical to consider the inherent boundaries and conditions that define the interaction between the 'hosts' and the 'guests.' This is prominently emphasised by Jacques Derrida in 'Of Hospitality' (2000, with Anne Dufourmantelle), 'On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness', (Derrida 2005) and 'Hostipitality' (Derrida 2000). Derrida's exploration of the concept of hospitality takes up on Immanuel Kant's understanding of 'universal hospitality' as a 'cosmopolitan right', as outlined in his work "Toward a Perpetual Peace: A Philosophic Sketch" (Kant 2003 [1795] referenced in Derrida 2000, 3). Kant's approach situates hospitality within the realm of legal and sovereign frameworks, where the foreign visitor is granted certain rights but remains distinct from a citizen or resident. Derrida further argues that hospitality, once entangled with the language of rights and law, becomes a

conditional and negotiated space, fraught with the complexities of power dynamics and sovereignty which he refers to as ‘hostipitality’ (Derrida 2000, 14f).This perspective unveils a fundamental tension within the notion of hospitality, wherein the act of hosting can embody both a gesture of welcome and a display of dominance.

Such a duality uncovers the inherent dual nature of hospitality, portraying it as both inviting and authoritative. Derrida suggests that hospitality, while essentially “a right, a duty, an obligation” to welcome the “foreign other”, is contingent on the host’s position of power (Derrida 2000, 4). Derrida exemplifies this duality in the image of the door as a symbol of welcome that simultaneously signifies the limitation of hospitality - *“for there to be hospitality, there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality. (...) [A]s soon as there are a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no longer hospitality. This is the difference, the gap, between the hospitality of invitation and the hospitality of visitation. In visitation there is no door. Anyone can come at any time and can come in without needing a key for the door. There are no customs checks with a visitation. But there are customs and police checks with an invitation. Hospitality thus becomes the threshold or the door”* (2000, 14).

Hence, hospitality transforms from an unconditional gift into a contractual relation, governed by laws, duties, and conditions. The host, who provides lodging or asylum, assumes the role of the master, thereby establishing and maintaining their authority and control over the space of hospitality offered. Causing a fundamental power imbalance, hospitality represents a pivotal challenge faced by Solidarity Cities movements. While they aim to offer protection and rights (and in the dignity and self-determination) to migrants, they inadvertently reinforce the guest’s dependent and subordinate status (Squire and Darling 2013). This hierarchy can manifest in numerous ways, such as the imposition of conditions on the guest’s stay or the expectation of gratitude and compliance from the guest. It creates a situation where the guest, while being

offered refuge or support, also faces a form of subordination, potentially leading to a sense of indebtedness or obligation towards the host.

In the context of migration and asylum, hospitality becomes a tool of governance, where states and institutions act as hosts, extending or withholding hospitality based on political, and economic considerations (c Doty 2006; Shirazi 2018; Squire and Darling 2013). Thus, while Solidarity Cities try to facilitate access to basic services such as education and healthcare for illegalised residents, these are provided within a nationalised framework that enforces the constant subordination. Sanctuary cities incorporate migrants as guests, a status that confines their agency and subjugates them to the prevailing hierarchical social order. This hierarchy is further exerted by the intertwined forces of capitalism, patriarchy, and empire, which regulate access to privileges and rights (Vrasti and Dayal 2016).

By striving for inclusivity within urban spaces, Solidarity Cities often engage a hospitality framework that advocates for a universalist and cosmopolitan approach to humanity (cf. Hill & Schmitt 2021, 2023; Kron & Maffeis 2021). Doing so, they invoke solidarity as a universal ethic that encompasses all individuals, irrespective of their differences, within a singular, global moral community. Such a cosmopolitan perspective risks obscuring the lived experiences of the 'guests' who are subordinated to various interlocking oppressive systems.

While Solidarity Cities attempt to embody a form of hospitality that transcends national belonging, they face the ambiguity of legal frameworks that simultaneously produce precarious legal titles and promises of humanitarian protection. Solidarity only understood as an extension of hospitality simplifies the production and perpetuation of illegalisation and differential inclusion/exclusion through state practises. Rather than attempting to dismantle violent state practises, they often rely on renegotiating the terms of the hospitality of state institutions. This highlights the urgency for solidarity movements to manage the contradictions between the promise of hospitality and the reality of selective inclusion.

1.3.2. Contradicting cosmopolitics

The practical application of universalising cosmopolitan ideals within Solidarity Cities reveals inherent contradictions. While the intention is to transcend national borders and promote a sense of global connectedness, the actual implementation of such ideals blurs power relations and systems of oppression. It fails to acknowledge the perpetuation of economic injustices through race and gender, producing differential exploitability that manifests in lower wages and precarious employment conditions. It also struggles with barriers to accessing social services, healthcare, and housing for non-citizens or those without legal status, alongside racial discrimination and bureaucratic hurdles that significantly hinder migrants' 'full' incorporation into nationalised institutions. The resulting discrepancy underscores a critical gap between the cosmopolitan aspiration and the operational challenges faced by Solidarity Cities, such as policy and legal conflicts with national immigration laws that restrict local autonomy or institutional mechanisms that hinder the effective coordination and implementation of transformative policies.

In her work addressing cosmopolitan approaches to global solidarity, Ida Danewid (2017, 2018, 2022) argues that universalist conceptualisations often fail to recognize and confront the historical and material realities of coloniality and racial capitalism[6]. She points out that in the context of Europe's response to the 'migrant crisis', solidarity that refers to the universalist ideals of cosmopolitanism inadvertently reinforces the power structures that build on colonial legacies. Danewid shows that "by focusing on abstract – as opposed to historical –

[6] 'Racial capitalism' highlights how racism and capitalism are intertwined and mutually reinforce each other. This perspective is largely informed by the work of Cedric J. Robinson. In his book "Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition" (Robinson 2000 [1983]; cf. Kelley 2017), Robinson argues that the capitalist economic order has been shaped and sustained by racist structures from the outset. He emphasises that capitalism cannot be understood as a system detached from racial processes. Rather, racism serves as a constitutive element of capitalism that serves to legitimise and perpetuate differentiated exploitability. In this paper, 'racial capitalism' is used as an analytical term to refer to the entanglement of race and labour relations that is mediated through global migration and the border regimes regulating movements.

humanity, these discourses contribute to an ideological formation that disconnects connected histories" (2017, 1621). This highlights the limitations of a cosmopolitan solidarity that point to empathy and humanitarian concern without adequately addressing the systemic causes and historical context of global migration and inequality.

The humanitarian appeals for rescue and hospitality, while seemingly altruistic, often serve to inadvertently reinforce colonial-capitalist structures. By applying Sara Ahmed's 'stranger fetishism' (2000) and Lauren Berlant's 'sentimental politics' (2018 [2001]), Danewid (2017, 1681–1683) shows that this discourse emphasises the 'otherness' of migrants. The focus on an ethical or moral duty for integrating those 'others' into Europe depoliticises its own role in the production and perpetuation of global inequalities and instabilities that shape migration dynamics. The phenomenon is evident in left-liberal responses to racist rhetoric and veils the complex legacies of imperialism and racial capitalism. Such cosmopolitan notion of solidarity often fails to engage with the historical and material conditions that inform global migration and border regimes. Rather, it diverts attention from the need for systemic reform to a focus on individual acts of compassion (Danewid 2017). Such narratives disconnect the 'migrant crisis' from Europe's history of imperial dominance, reducing complex issues to simple acts of European generosity. This simplification turns migrants into mere subjects of suffering, ignoring both the historical accountability for colonial conquests and the anti-colonial struggles for independence.

Cosmopolitan approaches within European solidarity movements often masks a form of 'white innocence,' failing to acknowledge the privileged position from which these actions stem and their complicity in global inequalities (Wekker 2016). Danewid critiques this 'disconnection from connected histories', arguing that it contributes "to an ideological formation that removes from view the global history of empire, colonialism, and transatlantic slavery," thus transforming "questions of accountability, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform, into matters of hospitality, generosity, humanitarianism, and empathy" (Danewid 2018, 21). This

perspective is vital for highlighting how even well-meaning efforts can perpetuate a Eurocentric narrative that neglects the material realities and historical injustices at the heart of global inequality and the 'migrant crisis.'

The portrayal of migrants as 'others' in need of European compassion is reminiscent of the colonial mindset that portrayed non-European peoples as subjects to be governed and 'civilised' (Danewid 2018, 1625). Such a view can result in a paternalistic approach and policy demands that, while well-intentioned, reinforce power imbalances and fail to effectively address the needs and agency of migrants. It perpetuates a form of 'selective solidarity' in which only certain categories of migrants are deemed worthy of support, often based on criteria that align with European notions of vulnerability or merit (Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas 2012)..

1.4. Borders and the governance of the 'crisis'

The critique of cosmopolitanism that has been put forward emphasises the need for an approach to solidarity that goes beyond cosmopolitan ideals of empathy and abstract humanism towards a critical engagement with the functions of borders. This chapter aims to unravel the complex interactions between humanitarianism, crisis governance, and the functions of borders. The latter are examined in their functioning as instruments of regulation and partitioning, deeply embedded within local and global social structures. The first section looks at the 'humanitarianisation' of the border regime by showing how the incorporation of humanitarian logics into border controls reinforces the control and surveillance of migratory movements under the guise of humanitarianism. Furthermore, the problematic of the racelessness of the 'migrant crisis' is addressed, with Nicholas de Genova (2018b) interpreting the crisis as an expression of a deeper racial problematic in Europe resulting from a failure to address its colonial legacy. Such a perspective calls for a reassessment of legal production 'illegality' and its consequences for migrants and solidarity movements. Understanding 'illegality' as a legal category highlights the duality of exclusion and inclusion that characterises the modern border

regime and emphasises the role of borders in regulating labour relations. Finally, it is shown how border regimes intervene in social life and exert surveillance and control over people and their movements far into their daily interactions with state institutions.

1.4.1. The humanitarianisation of the border regime

Institutional spaces of solidarity emerge as sites where asylum seekers' behaviours are subtly directed to align with state policies. The implementation of solidarity into governance mechanisms places noncitizens in a 'state of suspension' (Bagelman 2016). Bagelman (2016) shows how this positions them to navigate self-governance under the guise of future integration promises, while their (full or 'unconditional') incorporation is indefinitely deferred. It recasts passive states of waiting as active compliance with state objectives and demonstrates the complex interplay between humanitarian aims and governmental control in migration management. This analysis underscores institutional solidarity as not merely providing protection but as a mechanism of migration control, reflecting a localised form of governance that intertwines with national immigration policies under the guise of humanitarianism (ibid.).

The increasing incorporation of humanitarianism into border regimes worldwide results in what Walters (2010) describes as 'the birth of the humanitarian border'. This phenomenon has given rise to hybrid formations where elements of humanitarianism and militarisation converge in the regulation of human mobility. It creates a paradoxical situation: While the border perpetuates a cycle of vulnerability and crisis it legitimises the presence of humanitarian actors. At the same, the integration of humanitarian actors into the border regime serves to justify the mechanisms and practices that produce vulnerabilities in the first place. While humanitarian actors depend on the recognition of migrants' vulnerabilities to identify them as its primary subjects, the alleviation becomes included in the same regime that produces it.

Integrating humanitarian actors into border enforcement is reflecting a broader trend towards the governmentalization of humanitarian reason, with humanitarian efforts becoming

subsumed under governmental and managerial logics (Mezzadra 2020, 427f). On one side, this phenomenon opens spaces for migrants to articulate their demands in the mutually recognizable language of human rights. On the other side, it anchors humanitarianism within strategies of governance and control. The European border regime, particularly post-2015's 'long summer of migration,' illustrate these complexities: Although it initially triggered an apparent 'welcome culture', the response to migrant movements became increasingly characterised more by xenophobia and political opportunism rather than by openness (Hess et al. 2016). As a result, the brief phase of support and welcome was replaced by a continuation of surveillance and control.

The border regimes inherent categorization of migrants as either 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of humanitarian aid and protection perpetuates a paternalistic view that echoes historical racial divisions and colonial narratives (cf. Walia 2014). As Didier Fassin (2011) highlights, this binary reduces migrant agency, framing complex socio-political issues within reductive narratives of vulnerability and benevolence. Moreover, under the guise of protecting vulnerable subjects, the co-option of humanitarian discourse to justify stringent border controls complicates the distinction between care and containment. Such a juxtaposition challenges the independence of humanitarian actions. It is entangling them with state security agendas in militarised border regimes and risks perpetuating the existing power dynamics of humanitarian interventions (cf. Walters 2010; Mezzadra 2020).

In Solidarity Cities, the paradoxical nature of humanitarianism becomes evident as the identification to be in need of 'protection' requires migrants to present themselves as vulnerable. To connect humanitarian responses with systemic transformation, solidarity movements need to shift the perspective from viewing migration as a crisis or migrants as caught in a crisis to recognising the productive use of the 'state of exception' narrative for political and economic ends (cf. Agamben 2004; New Keywords Collective et al. 2015, 7–21). This enables to understand solidarity as the participation in the political struggle against the state practices and

institutional arrangements that create and perpetuate oppressive structures through the governance of various exceptional situations.

1.4.2. Racelessness in the 'migrant crisis'

Nicholas de Genova (2018b) elucidates that, what in Europe is prominently termed the 'migrant crisis,' actually represents a racial crisis at the heart of Europe that stems from its failure to confront its colonial legacy. De Genova underscores the racial materiality of European border policies which he sees as a contemporary manifestation of Europe's coloniality. This reframing shifts the narrative from perceiving migrants as a 'problem' to be managed towards understanding their experiences as emblematic of Europe's unresolved postcolonial legacies and racial ideologies. The lethal nature of European border regimes exemplifies the selective permeability based on racial criteria, showcasing the "cruel (post)coloniality of 'new' Europe" (De Genova 2018b, 1766). Such analysis is pivotal for acknowledging the systemic coloniality at the core of the migrant crisis and advocates for policies and perspectives that are historically informed and transcendent of Eurocentric narratives.

There is a persistent absence of race as an analytical category in European debates on migration and borders. Such a 'political racelessness' facilitates an historical amnesia regarding Europe's colonial legacies (De Genova 2018b). Denying the ongoing significance of race in social relations not only undermines efforts to dismantle structures of racialized domination but also perpetuates a paradoxical stance of anti-racism without a critical engagement with race. De Genova (2018) emphasizes the necessity of recognizing race as a sociopolitical fact of domination, advocating for a discourse that adequately addresses the racial underpinnings of migration policies and their impact on migrants' lives. This necessitates moving beyond outdated notions of race as a biological determinant to understanding it as a manifestation of global systems of racialized domination. Such a reconceptualization challenges reductionist

views of migrants and fosters a reflection on the complexity of racialized categories produced by European imperialism and colonialism.

Such an approach aligns with David Theo Goldberg's (Goldberg 2006; 2009) insights on Europe's regime of raceless racism, where neoliberal policies subtly reinforce racial disparities under the guise of neutrality, thus exacerbating the migrant crisis as a racial crisis through systemic inequalities masked by economic and security measures. Goldberg's (Goldberg 2009) exploration of raceless racism in the context of neoliberal capitalism is instrumental in dissecting the Mediterranean crisis, revealing how ostensibly neutral economic policies, security measures, and humanitarian efforts conceal underlying racial hierarchies. This neoliberal emphasis on market-driven policies, while appearing unrelated to race, subtly perpetuates racial inequalities. The widespread absence of race in the crisis discourse manifests a raceless racism, whereby the categorisation of migrants tends to be expressed through its relationship to citizenship and status.

1.4.3. The paradox of confronting migrant 'illegality'

In their pursuit to extend humanitarian protection, Solidarity City governments are confronted with the challenge imposed by what Nicholas De Genova (2002, 229) terms "the legal production of migrant "illegality"" and the following condition of 'deportability.' In a later work, De Genova (2013) delineates the paradoxical nature of migrant illegality through its separation into the visible 'scene of exclusion' and the less apparent but equally significant 'obscene of inclusion.' In the 'scene of exclusion,' the state's power to enforce immigration laws and determine legal status is overtly displayed. This illustrates how exclusion is not merely a legal action but a performative assertion of state sovereignty, restricting who is considered an outsider. The visible dimension of state power operates through the legal categorization of migrants as 'illegal,' leading to their precarisation and vulnerability to deportation. The spectacle of exclusion taking place in border encounters is a public demonstration of state authority that

points to the demarcation of the status of belonging within the national public (De Genova 2013, 9f).

Conversely, the ‘obscene of inclusion’ refers to the more covert aspects of this process, where subjects rendered ‘illegal,’ are included within the socio-economic fabric though excluded from democratic recognition (De Genova 2013, 8). Inclusion therefore manifests itself in the exploitation of a precarious legal status and the associated vulnerability to poorly protected and insecure employment and labour exploitation. Taken together, while irregularity leads to precariousness produced by the legal system, it is integral to the economy, with illegalised individuals often performing essential but undervalued work (De Genova 2013, 14). This form of inclusion is ‘obscene’ in that it remains unacknowledged or hidden from public discourse, yet it is crucial for the functioning of many sectors within the economy.

Thus, the production of migrant ‘illegality’ represents a productive characteristic of modern border regimes that leads to a form of belonging that is simultaneously exclusionary and inclusionary. It serves more as a demonstration of state power in determining the mode of inclusion (e.g. labour, asylum, citizen) than a direct enforcement of strict laws governing inclusion or exclusion (De Genova 2002, 433). Connecting ‘illegality’ as a socially engineered category with the concept of ‘deportability’ underscores the state-produced precarity central to an irregular status. The interplay between exclusion and inclusion becomes a critical point of contention in Solidarity Cities. While these cities aim to provide sanctuary and protection, they operate within a larger context where migrants are caught in a paradox. This guides us to an examination of borders as regulatory instruments that govern not only the mobility of people but also the labour demands of states in a global capitalist system.

1.4.4. Borders as instruments of regulation and partitioning

Border regimes are not designed to completely prevent migration. Rather, they aim to make migration controllable and to exercise detailed levels of surveillance and police control over it.

As Danewid (2018, 123) notes, the function of borders lies in their subjection of migrants to a state of "permanent precarity, vulnerability and super-exploitability" that integrate subjects into precarious labour relations. Such strategies of controlled mobility serve a dual purpose: They fuel the global economy by ensuring a continuous supply of vulnerable labour and at the same time deepen the divide between ‘immigrants’ and ‘citizens’. Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) similarly consider borders in their ability to regulate the exploitability and precarity of migrants with their concept of the ‘border as method’. They understand the border as an active force that sustains global capitalism through the production and reproduction of labour relations.

These authors change the traditional view of borders from purely exclusionary barriers to instruments within a global capitalist framework that simultaneously include and exclude. Rather than outrightly preventing movement, borders operate through a complex system that partitions, which includes mechanisms of forced mobility while also functioning as a site of detention (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). They facilitate an incorporation regime based on the differential inclusion/exclusion of different subjectivities, where legal status, race and gender are strategically navigated. Extending the understanding of borders in this way emphasises the penetration of border regimes into social life and underlines the transformation of borders from purely physical barriers to omnipresent surveillance and control mechanisms that extend far beyond the territorial dividing line between states.

The pervasiveness of the border and its profound intertwining with social life is a central dynamic of contemporary migration governance. Étienne Balibar (2004, 109) emphasises that border control mechanisms increasingly reach “into the middle of political space.” This ‘ubiquity’ of the border manifests itself everywhere, from international airports and consulates to local authorities and urban spaces. Measures such as police checks and verification of residence status in public services or labour and housing markets make the border an omnipresent element in the life of a state.

In this context, Ananya Roy (2019) points out that the provision of institutional forms of support and protection in cities operates within the same continuum of power that governs borders. It produces a 'suspended state' of indefinite deferral, where migrants are caught in uncertainty about their 'full' incorporation into national institutions (Bagelman 2016). Thus, Roy (2019, 767) suggests that while cities seek to provide sanctuary and resist repressive federal immigration policies, they nonetheless reinforce the 'unending border' and the mechanisms of oppression through which it operates. Linking urban institutional solidarity to border mechanisms such as detentions and deportations, shows how profoundly border regimes intervene in social life. Rather than challenging borders, institutional forms of solidarity 'exist in relation to' the mechanisms of surveillance and control over people's movements (ibid.).

1.5. Towards transformative solidarity

Building on the border regime analysis, the following chapter shifts the focus back to 'acting in solidarity'. Solidarity Cities emerge as important arenas that challenge the border and migration regimes. However, as the examination of the connections between migration, borders, and race, as well as the links to processes of governmentalisation and humanitarianization shows, they encounter inherent paradoxes in combating deep-seated systemic injustices. Institutional solidarity practises often lead to a situation in which the very structural barriers that produce differential inclusion and precarities are unintentionally maintained. This dual role as agents of change and potential enablers of the status quo necessitates the need for transformative change in Solidarity Cities towards non-reformist reforms that challenge violent state practises. In the following pages, I argue that these paradoxes can be effectively countered by placing the principles of free movement politics at the centre of solidarity practises.

1.5.1. A politics of free movement

Drawing on Hannah Arendt's (1951) reflections on the paradox of statelessness, Charles Heller et al. (2019) advocate for free movement as an essential element in realising fundamental rights

and a dignified life for migrants. They situate freedom of movement in connection to a wide spectrum of human rights, pushing for a paradigm shift to view mobility as a universal entitlement. Kron and Lebuhn (2020, 83) frame such a right as the basis for Solidarity Cities. With this, it becomes possible to formulate pragmatic approaches that advocate for political frameworks under which there can be less oppressive and violent interactions between individual mobility rights and state sovereignty. This is not fundamentally a radical demand but is anchored in liberal philosophy and the principles of human rights, both of which centre on individual autonomy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) symbolises a critical normative stance, proclaiming every individual's inherent right to mobility. Yet, the ambition for unhindered global movement clashes with nationalistic immigration policies that prioritise security and economic interests over rights and dignity. Harald Bauder (2017a) highlights the discrepancy between ethical frameworks set by international treaties and the sovereignty of nation-states, which frequently impede the principles of free movement. Such obstacles deepen the global mobility divide by favouring certain nationalities and racial subjectivities.

By recognizing the inherent mobility of people as an existing fact, despite legal and political barriers, Charles Heller (2015) posits freedom of movement as the only viable policy that aligns with the ontological reality of migration. Heller (2015, 221f) further counters fears of migrant 'invasions,' suggesting that the possibility of staying, leaving, and returning makes migration more fluid in multiple directions, with the abolition of illegalised statuses offering greater territorial control by eliminating the need for clandestine movements. Moreover, he introduces economic redistribution effects through the potential of increasing remittances coming with the possibility for people from the Global South to work in the Global North. However, the blending of economic rationales with freedom struggles calls to remain wary of overly optimistic scenarios. Recognizing the complex array of beneficiaries within the current exclusionary regime cautions to integrate free movement advocacy with broader global systemic transformations. This vision aims for a future where 'equaliberty'—a concept by Balibar (1994)

that merges equality and liberty—forms the basis of autonomy at both the individual and community levels, redefining movements in terms of entitlement and liberation.

Taken together, Solidarity Cities stand at the intersection of aspirations for freedom of movement and the global racial mobility divide. They present a unique opportunity to critically re-evaluate and potentially reformulate the prevailing paradigms of l mobility justice. Yet, as Solidarity Cities navigate national and international migration policies, they face the paradox where efforts to dismantle exclusionary practices confront systemic barriers that limit their impact. This necessitates a strategic realignment, urging these cities to critically reassess their initiatives to ensure they do not inadvertently sustain the very barriers they aim to eliminate. In this context, Roy (2019) suggests moving from humanitarian to abolitionist solidarity. An abolitionist critique brings into focus the historical remnants of empire and the theft of bodies and land, particularly the legacies of colonialism, and the systemic violence of racial capitalism (Roy 2019, 771–75). Hence, abolitionism marks an epistemological shift that scrutinises the foundational premises of Western humanitarian ideals. It implies a deeper engagement with the history of racial capitalism and a critique of state violence and liberal inclusion. Roy's advocation for an 'abolition democracy', a concept she interprets as the necessary task of redistribution and reconstruction of humanism. refuses the violence of (white) nationalism while also challenging the conceits of liberal inclusion and cosmopolitan humanism.

1.5.2. Abolition democracy and the call for radical transformation

The call for an 'abolition democracy' represents a call to action that urges a radical rethinking of how societies address issues of race, migration, justice, and liberation. It suggests differentiating between traditional, reformist reforms that seek to alter existing structures and the more radical, non-reformist reforms that aim to overturn and reconstruct these very frameworks. The distinction is crucial as it sets the stage for a deeper exploration into how urban settings can embody principles of abolition democracy through transformative justice, thereby challenging

and dismantling the structures that fuel inequality and exclusion. As the thesis moves forward, it will explore the practical implications of this shift, examining how the principles of abolition democracy can be applied to reshape our understanding of solidarity, hospitality, and inclusion in contemporary urban settings.

In contrast to reforms that seek to improve or adjust existing structures, abolitionist notions of reformation represent a form of 'non-reformist reform'. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore articulated, non-reformist reforms "unravel rather than widen the net of social control through criminalization" (Gilmore 2007, 242). Such structural reforms are rooted in transformative justice, involving steps that fundamentally shift power dynamics and dismantle oppressive systems rather than merely adjusting them. Such reforms are characterised by the intention to subvert the foundations of oppressive systems, pave the way for more radical changes and reimagine care and coexistence (Jeffries and Ridgley 2020). In the context of Solidarity Cities, this means challenging policies and practices that perpetuate the hierarchical racial order. It involves critically examining how current border regimes reinforce global power and wealth imbalances, often rooted in colonial histories. This approach stresses the importance of building solidarity across intersectional freedom struggles, recognizing the interconnectedness of issues related to race, class, and migration.

As argued by abolitionist activist Mariame Kaba, genuine transformation requires moving beyond reforms that may inadvertently entrench oppressive systems. Kaba accents the need for reforms "that reduce the power of an oppressive system while illuminating the system's inability to solve the crises it creates" (found in Berger et al. 2017, para, 3). Kaba's stance against reforms that simply augment the strength of the police, often under the guise of technological advancements or increased funding, mirrors the necessity for policies in Solidarity Cities to go beyond superficial measures (Kaba 2014). Instead, there should be a focus on redistributing resources towards community resilience and tackling the root causes of migration. Fundamental to this approach is the involvement and leadership of the affected communities,

ensuring their voices and lived experiences are central in reshaping policies and practices. Applied to Solidarity Cities, this could mean going beyond policy changes that offer limited protection from vulnerability. Instead, actions should be sought that dismantle the ubiquity of borders and counter the perpetuation of oppressive systems through neoliberal policies and imperial exploitation.

The advocacy for an abolitionist approach within Solidarity Cities represents a critical departure from traditional humanitarian paradigms to a framework that seeks to dismantle the systemic structures of racial capitalism and colonial legacies. This shift, deeply influenced by the abolitionist tradition, confronts the spatial and power dynamics that perpetuate racial and economic inequalities, challenging both the mechanisms of federal immigration enforcement and local policing strategies that systematically disadvantage racialized communities. It builds on a of conventional humanitarian ideals by highlighting how these concepts, rooted in Eurocentric ethics, position the European 'free city' as the central bastion of refuge and protection, thereby perpetuating a narrative that reinforces Europe's perceived moral and civil authority over 'racial others' (Roy's 2019, 775). This narrative not only obscures the structural inequalities and historical injustices foundational to the European migration and border regimes but also simplifies the complex realities of displacement and asylum into a dichotomy of benevolence and victimhood.

1.6. Concluding remarks

This chapter presents a theoretical framework to analyse the multi-layered dynamics that underpin the role of urban spaces within the border and migration regime. It points to gaps that exist between the aspirational ideals of abstract humanity driving Solidarity Cities and the violent realities of migration governance. The discussions suggest that an exploration of solidarity within urban migration governance must be grounded in a profound understanding of the historical and material conditions of bordering. Understanding the border as a historically

informed partition mechanism reveals the limits of cosmopolitan approaches when it comes to confronting the deep-rooted structures of oppression resulting from the legacy of colonialism, racist capitalism, and global hierarchisation. This underscores the need to go beyond a rearticulation of state objectives of nationalised integration and hospitality frameworks to migration governance. Rather, Solidarity Cities must address the proliferation of borders in urban spaces and the structures of power and injustice that racially categorise and oppress people through border mechanisms.

Thus, while Solidarity Cities hold the potential to redefine paradigms of belonging and freedom, a critical and historically informed engagement with the concepts of hospitality, cosmopolitanism, and coloniality is imperative. These theoretical insights inform the study's objectives and methodological choices, guiding a deeper inquiry into how urban spaces can transcend hospitality models to address systemic exclusions and injustices. In conclusion, this thesis advocates for the adoption of non-reformist reforms as a framework derived from the abolitionist tradition. Abolitionist reforms posit a radical departure from prevailing humanitarian interventions towards dismantling the racial and economic underpinnings of migration and border regimes. To embrace it, this thesis calls for a rethinking of solidarity, not as humanitarian correction of an oppressive system, but as part of the intersectional struggle against the mechanisms and practises that generate injustice and crisis in the first place.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

2.1. Introduction

This study uses qualitative research with a mixed methods approach integrating discourse analysis, case studies and semi-structured interviews. It is underpinned by the principles of close encounter with the subjects and object of research as outlined by Sheppard, Leitner, and Peck (2020, 23), in a way that also recognises the interaction between overarching social and economic structures and their potential impact on the effects of solidarity policies and practices in cities. Together, these methodologies interrogate the ambiguities of integrating grassroots solidarity into the fabric of urban governance. In particular, these methods support our examination of institutional solidarity practices and policies in the city of Zurich, triggered by pressure from civil society organisations for the introduction of a municipal identity card. Such an iterative research process seeks to ensure that theoretical insights are grounded in empirical data and, conversely, that empirical findings can illuminate and deepen theory.

Taken together, by situating itself at the intersection of theory and empirical reality, the research aims to highlight the interaction between local efforts and structural conditions, and to offer an understanding of the negotiations faced by city governments on their way to creating a Solidarity City. In doing so, it foregrounds the crucial interplay between grassroots movements and institutional responses within Zurich's urban governance framework, offering an investigation that enhances our understanding of the forces that shape Solidarity Cities.

2.2. Critical discourse analysis

The application of discourse analysis methods in this study aims to analyse linguistic features such as narratives, metaphors, and analogies embedded in various texts that are related to the introduction of solidarity measures in Zurich, including legal documents, media, studies, reports,

and activist contributions. The focus is on the deconstruction of power dynamics in the discourses surrounding the constitution of Zurich as a Solidarity City and the presentation of such local expressions as hospitable countermeasures to strict national and European immigration policies.

Foucault's (1973) theoretical framework, which views discourses as networks of ideas, practices, attitudes, and beliefs that systematically shape subjects and their realities, underpins this analysis. This approach considers discourses as an important force in the construction of knowledge and the reinforcement of power structures. Simultaneously, Foucault (1977) acknowledges power as a productive mechanism where resistance and subversion is always already embedded within domination. Applying such a perspective allows to navigate the dichotomy between bureaucratic inertia and the potential for political action, carefully weighing the transformative prospects against the entrenched structural barriers that either perpetuate the status quo or facilitate marginal changes. By critically evaluating the processes of institutionalisation this study interrogates Zurich's solidarity policies as part of the regime that mediates borders and belonging through migration management.

Drawing on the framework of Jäger (2012), the study further examines how the historical contextualisation of discourses enables an analysis that accounts for continuity, ruptures, and shifts over time. Reconstructing the historical evolution of social knowledge concerning migration and belonging allows to illuminate the historical 'ground' from which current discourses have emerged. Such an exploration is critical for acknowledging the historical contingencies, including the idea of neutrality and humanitarian tradition as foundational aspects of Swiss national identity building. This offers insights into how historical trajectories inform and shape contemporary discursive realities surrounding hospitality and protection within the solidarity landscape of Zurich.

2.3. The Züri City Card project

Integrating a case study into the methodological approach enables an examination of the multi-layered processes involved in embedding grassroots solidarity into the fabric of urban governance. By taking a detailed look at the development of the Züri City Card from its conception to implementation, this study offers insights into the transformative process of incorporating grassroots activism into institutionalised practises. Analysing the development of the City Card project helps to understand how solidarity movements move into bureaucratic and legal landscapes. It shows how they negotiate with government processes to ultimately influence the understanding and development of urban citizenship and migration governance.

As highlighted by Wilson and Chaddha (2009), theoretical generalisations can be used to extrapolate the findings of the case study from the specific, localised phenomenon of, in this case, the Züri City Card to broader theoretical constructs of urban solidarity and governance. It emphasises the representative limitations of generalising from a sample to a population (Sheppard, Leitner, and Peck 2020, 25) and instead aims to complement the theoretical understanding of an issue through the examination of specific expressions and characteristics of said phenomenon. This methodological choice is crucial in making connections between the particularities of the experience in Zurich's solidarity efforts and larger discussions about the role of cities in reshaping restrictive migration and border regimes and the power relations that prevail therein.

Moreover, the intertwining of ethnography and theory, as emphasised by Burawoy (1998) greatly enhances this methodological approach and supports a symbiotic relationship between empirical observations and theoretical constructs. This perspective emphasises the importance of anchoring ethnographic studies on solid theoretical foundations in order to enhance their explanatory potential. In this context, it means reconciling the detailed empirical study of the City Card and related projects with overarching theories of urban solidarity, citizenship, and governance. Such an integrated approach ensures that the case studies do not

merely narrate individual initiatives but contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in the institutionalisation of grassroots movements within urban governance structures. In doing so, the research participates in broader theoretical conversations about the role of urban spaces in supporting or hindering transformative change.

2.4. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured expert interviews complement the methodological tools of this study through the incorporation of lived experiences and understandings of the effects and limits of policies on individuals and communities. The context-dependent knowledge gleaned from first-hand perspectives not only grounds the research in real-world phenomena but also bridges the abstract realms of policy formulation and their tangible impacts (Flyvbjerg (2006). This method illuminates the lived realities of navigating through Zurich's urban governance and solidarity initiatives, offering an authentic and immediate insight into the practical implications of policy enactments on the lives of those involved or affected.

The study particularly benefits from the contributions of two distinct expert perspectives. Firstly, Bea Schwager, the director of the Sans Papiers Anlaufstelle (SPAZ) and a board member of the Verein Züri City Card, offers an institutional and activist perspective on the challenges and opportunities within Zurich's solidarity initiatives. Her extensive experience, dating back to the 1990s and her instrumental role in establishing SPAZ in the early 2000s, provide critical insights into the evolution of support mechanisms for individuals without legal status. Schwager's dual roles also afford a unique view on the potential impacts of the Züri City Card on communities living with precarious legal status, blending her practical involvement with a strategic vision for inclusive urban governance.

Secondly, the perspective of Elisabeth (name changed for reasons of anonymity), who lives and works in Zurich without legal status, adds a layer of personal narrative and experiential knowledge to the study. Her lived experiences illustrate the practical realities of policies and

initiatives aimed at supporting individuals without regular status. Elisabeth's account underscores the day-to-day challenges faced by individuals navigating life in Zurich without legal recognition, providing a compelling counterpart to the institutional insights offered by Schwager. Together, these interviews enrich the analytical depth of this study by combining the macro-level understanding of policies and initiatives with the micro-level experiences of those directly impacted by them.

Additionally, the interviews serve as a platform for the articulation of critical reflections and counter-narratives that interrogate and challenge the prevailing discourses on migration and asylum in Switzerland. Through these narratives, interviewees offer alternative interpretations of the existing frameworks governing migration, presenting a potent critique of the systemic barriers and inequalities embedded within them. These perspectives not only enrich the understanding of the social and political landscapes in which solidarity efforts are situated but also underscore the transformative potential of such initiatives to challenge and reconfigure the broader narratives surrounding migration and citizenship.

2.5. Concluding remarks

The methodological framework integrates a combination of close readings, case studies, and expert interviews, facilitating a layered understanding of the interconnections between political agency and structural dynamics. Crucially, this methodological combination offers insights into the construction, negotiation, and practical enactment of solidarity in urban contexts. It uncovers how grassroots movements and city policies intersect with higher-level immigration laws. Additionally, it delineates the complexities of institutional and activist interplay in urban solidarity efforts. On a practical note, the study highlights the importance of emphasising and capturing the structural and institutional complicity of city administrations in the maintenance of border regimes in order to institutionalise effective solidarity practises and policies.

The distinct contributions of close reading, the case study of the Züri City Card, and expert interviews collectively deepen the research's insight into Zurich's solidarity dynamics. The close reading method illuminates the discursive landscape, revealing how written text constructs the understanding of solidarity and migration. This analysis exposes underlying power relations and ideological biases and provides a critical lens through which to consider political narratives and public perceptions. In addition, the case study method points to the tangible processes related to the transformation of grassroots activism into formalised urban policy. Engaging with the evolution of the Züri City Card's project shows the dynamic negotiations between civic movements and municipal authorities and demonstrates the transformative potential of community-driven efforts in shaping city governance. In addition, expert interviews embed the research in the lived reality of political impact. This inclusion of firsthand perspectives enriches the analysis with personal narratives and practical insights, bridging the gap between theoretical constructs and the tangible effects of policy implementation.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANATOMY OF INSTITUTIONAL SOLIDARITY IN ZURICH

3.1. Introduction

The (re) claiming and constitution of Zurich as a 'Solidarity City' is closely linked to the history of grassroots and community-led movements and actions in the city against nationalist and racist violence. Such interventions mark the departure point from which this study takes a closer look at the institutionalisation of solidarity within the city's administration. The reflections on institutional solidarity in Zurich outlined in the study are informed by this legacy of solidarity engagement and migrant-led initiatives.

In 2015, one year after the Swiss electorate adopted the popular initiative 'Gegen Masseneinwanderung' (against mass immigration), a national migrants' congress was held in Bern to commemorate the resistance against xenophobia. The congress organised by the trade union UNIA together with the migrant organisations 'Second@s Plus' and 'Colonie Libere Italiane' acted as a catalyst, triggering a broad, decentralised, and post-migrant[7] movement. Under the motto #WirAlleSindDieSchweiz, the movement offers a vision of Switzerland as a country of immigrants that provides space for democratic participation and the same rights for all its inhabitants. The movement manifests itself locally through autonomous offshoots such as #WirAlleSindZürich. These criticise traditional notions of urban citizenship and call for the

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[7] 'Post-migration' describes a state in which the experience of migration plays a fundamental role in social and cultural identity. Individual migration stories lose their distinctive explanatory power and become an omnipresent aspect of the social fabric. The term is often associated with Shermin Langhoff, a theatre director who became known in Germany in the late 2000s for her 'post-migrant theatre'. Her method aims to convey transnational experiences as a social reality that goes beyond traditional notions of migration. Scholars such as Naika Foroutan (2019) and Mark Terkessidis (2012) have introduced the concept into the academic context as an analytical tool that allows for the questioning of social phenomena and dynamics in an environment where migration is both ubiquitous and treated as an anomaly. Their approaches serve to overcome conventional characterisations of migration through a perspective of exceptionality, and instead to recognise migration as a continuous and normative force in society. This allows for deeper insights into the interactions between structures of oppression, social relations and cultural identities that go beyond staging migration as a transgression.

transformation of the city into a welcoming place. This is mirrored by the group's logo stating include *all* "those who are here and those who are yet to come[8]." This deeply resonates with the efforts by critical citizenship scholars to understand the transformation of cities into spaces of democratic engagement and resistance.

The art project Die Ganze Welt in Zürich, held from 2015 to 2016 at the Shedhalle (Morawek 2016) aligns thematically and conceptually with the movement. The art project was conceptualised by the two curators Martin Krenn and Katharina Morawek who aimed at merging the dialogical potential of art with political practice and administrative policy. This was to be realised through the involvement of a transdisciplinary working group made up of people from Zurich's political and activist milieu. The project sought to re-conceptualise Zurich as a 'safe harbour' for all its inhabitants, underpinned by the principle that all people living in Zurich deserve the same rights, regardless of immigration status. This emphasises the need to rethink citizenship and social participation in a so-called post-migrant society which represented a major content of the project.

In particular, the curators organised so-called 'Hafengespräche' – a series of discussions themed around either *freedom of residence*, *freedom from discrimination*, and *freedom of discretion* (Morawek 2016, 82). At one of the round tables discussing the subject of freedom of residence, Bea Schwager, head of the Sans Papiers Anlaufstelle (SPAZ), put forward the idea of a municipal ID card for Zurich. As she told me in an interview, she was inspired by similar successful initiatives in North American cities, particularly in New York. Bea highlights the potential of such an ID card to enhance the sense of security and inclusion for Sans Papiers in Zurich. Her engagement eventually led to the development of the Züri City Card initiative, designed to improve access to city services and democratic participation for individuals with

[8] https://wirallesindzuerich.wordpress.com/ (accessed on 11.04.2024)

irregular legal status[9]. The establishment of the independent association Verein Züri City Card was a direct outcome of these discussions, pushing for the institutionalisation of the card within the city administration. This initiative seeks to ensure that all residents can identify themselves without having to disclose their legal status or gender, embodying the project's aim to make Zurich a welcoming city for all its inhabitants (Arbeitsgruppe Sans Papiers 2020).

While the study does not present these developments as the official inception of a solidarity framework within Zurich's urban development strategy, it is clear that they have significantly influenced its goals. The Solidarity City framework is proving to be a powerful counter-narrative to restrictive national migration policies and growing anti-immigrant sentiment. This is being used by the governments of the Solidarity Cities. It is important to recognise that the struggle against racism and xenophobia is rooted in the grassroots resistance of negatively affected communities, represented by movements such as the National Migrant Congress and #WirAlleSindZürich, as well as grassroots solidarity movements such as SPAZ. Their activism marks a significant shift towards seeing migration as an intrinsic part of Switzerland's national fabric, advocating proactive engagement rather than defensive responses to demographic change.

The 'Die Ganze Welt in Zürich' art project and the founding of the Züri City Card association build on the debate this has triggered and represent attempts to institutionalise new forms of urban citizenship and inclusion. They use participatory and governmental instruments to exert pressure on the city council to develop progressive policies such as the introduction of a city ID. The introduction of such a card represents important progress towards inclusivity. At the same time, it also illustrates the complexity of introducing solidarity into local administrative

[9] Alongside the ID card, *Die Ganze Welt in Zürich* further spurred initiatives like 'Salon Bastard', a post-migrant platform to foster community building and cultural dialogue and the 'Allianz gegen Racial Profiling,' which has taken a stand against systemic discrimination, focusing on reforming law enforcement practices, and advocating for the rights of those subjected to racial profiling.

frameworks. The effort to integrate Sans Papiers into an anti-migration administrative framework reveals a significant compromise, translating broad systemic critiques into humanitarian protections.

Despite these limitations, Bea Schwager, director of SPAZ and board member of the Züri City Card association, has come to recognise the Züri City Card as a pragmatic tool for improving the lives of people without regular status. However, she explicitly emphasises that this shift towards urban inclusivity is taking place in the context of increasingly strict border controls and surveillance measures. Bea points to the introduction of a law in 2011 that made marriage without a valid residence permit illegal. This indicates an increasing acceptance of immigration control mechanisms in areas previously untouched by immigration authorities, such as the welfare system where authorisation is now linked to legal status. Such a development emphasises the inherent ambiguities and inconsistencies in working with state institutions. While apparently progressive in their acceptance of initiatives such as the Züri City Card, they nonetheless operate within a restrictive framework of migration policies. Thus, solidarity efforts in the form of the introduction of a city ID may not fully bridge the gap between immediate humanitarian responses and the necessary dismantling of the structural violence inherent in migration management.

Against this background, the following part explores in more depth the specific policies and practises through which Zurich is positioning itself as a 'Solidarity City'. It discusses how these approaches include both symbolic and practical steps to promote an inclusive and diverse urban society. In subsequent sections, we expand on this discussion and provide a deeper analysis of the challenges that Zurich faces in the pursuit of inclusion and hospitality. The aim is to provide a comprehensive and understandable picture of the multi-layered dynamics that comprise the city's efforts to establish a solidarity urban community.

3.2. A city for all? Policies and practises of a ‘Solidarity City’

Becoming a ‘Solidarity City’ is formulated as an objective of the city's urban development strategy, published in a report entitled ‘Strategien Zürich 2035’ (Stadtrat Zürich 2015). Achieving this goal involves efforts to improve the accessibility and overall integration of a diverse and heterogeneous urban society. The strategy aims to create a welcoming environment for all residents, which is also reflected in the city’s formulated integration policy goals for the 2019-2022 and 2022-2026 legislative periods (Stadtrat Zürich 2022; Stadtentwicklung Zürich 2022). The commitment to introduce a municipal identity card is an important step in this direction. Together with an increased emphasis on the willingness to tackle racism in city institutions, the city is paving the way for what it calls a ‘Solidarisches Gesellschaft’ (solidarity society). This includes measures to protect vulnerable people, who should be more involved in the city's services.

The issue of a municipal ID card was first brought to the attention of the city government in 2016 through the City’s Ausländer und Ausländerinnen Beirat (Foreigners’ Advisory Council). Two years later, in 2018, a coalition of left-wing political parties in the city parliament submitted a motion to the city council calling on it to develop a proposal for the implementation of the Züri City Card. At this stage, the City Council states scepticism about the project, mainly because of its limited scope in the context of national and European immigration and asylum law[10]. Nevertheless, the council supports the development of transparent conditions for the regularisation of “long-term Sans Papiers” and their “integration into the formal labour market,”

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[10] Despite these initial concerns, the City Council was nevertheless instructed by a parliamentary directive to prepare for the implementation and introduction of a municipal ID card in 2020. To this end, it applied for a credit line of CHF 3.2 million to finance preparatory activities and measures necessary for the introduction of the ID card. The decision was interrupted by a petition for a referendum in 2021 by an association calling itself ‘Bund besorgter Bürgerinnen und Bürger’ (Federation of Concerned Citizens), which was successful and led to a popular vote in May 2022. The vote passed by a narrow margin, so the framework loan was approved, and preparatory work began, which should be completed by around 2026. However, an additional mandatory referendum to secure funding for running costs of over 2 million will delay the expected implementation until 2029. (cf. the city’s website https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/de/index/Projekte/laufende-projekte/zueri-city-card.html, accessed on 16.04.2024).

as well as measures to ensure that they can “exercise their basic human rights without risk[11]” (Stadtrat Zürich 2018, 12, author’s translation).

The City Council's reaction to the motion manifested in a ‘position paper’ in which they present more concrete measures to improve the living conditions of Sans Papiers (Stadtrat Zürich 2018). The statement represents a response to parliamentary motions calling for a comprehensive review of the living conditions of Sans Papiers and ways to improve them. It emphasises a commitment to ensure smooth interactions with city services and law enforcement regardless of regular legal status and explicitly recognises residents with irregular status as an integral part of the city’s community. The principles outlined in the position paper guide Zurich’s policies and practices, including access to city services, healthcare, education rights, access to justice and identification procedures.

The institutionalisation of solidarity into Zurich’s urban development agenda triggered by the Züri City Card project underscores a strong commitment to extend and enhance support and protection towards the integration of all its residents. However, this commitment faces difficulties in addressing the structural production of precarisation, illegalisation, and assimilatory violence shaping the migration and border regimes. These challenges arise from the tendency of institutional reforms and policy innovations to offer surface-level solutions that, while providing needed support, may fail to address the underlying socio-economic and political systems that perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Moreover, the structural nature of these

[11] In view of the limited legal scope for action, the City Council sees the main potential of the Züri City Card in creating “a stable urban society (...), strengthening solidarity and coexistence in the city, and enabling the entire population to participate in the social, cultural and political life of Zurich to a greater extent than before”(Arbeitsgruppe Sans-Papiers 2020, 31, author’s translation). In a report published in 2020 on the introduction of the Züri City Card, the City Council notes that in order to achieve these goals, the card must be widely accepted by the general public (cf. Arbeitsgruppe Sans-Papiers 2020). The card should therefore be made as attractive as possible so that it is used throughout the population Thereby, the focus lies on approaches to the development of the card that allow for both physical and digital use. Several existing cards and services will be integrated and linked to the city's online services. In this way, the initiative not only strengthens social cohesion, but also offers the city council the opportunity to increase bureaucratic efficiency.

problems requires multi-layered, coordinated efforts that go beyond the local level to include addressing national and international policies, economic structures, and political practises.

The risk here is to rely too much on symbolic gestures that signal inclusivity but do not tackle the structural barriers faced when living in a situation of irregularity. This gap between commitment and effect and comprehensive action highlights the importance of being careful to not reduce solidarity efforts to become more branding than enacting meaningful, transformative change. The following sections analyse how Zurich is confronting these difficulties on its way of consolidating a solidarity framework.

3.2.1. Political and practical networking

Zurich's commitment to becoming a 'Solidarity City' involves participating in European networks, such as the 'City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe (C-MISE)' led by the University of Oxford, and the 'Solidarity Cities' initiative of Eurocities. These networks seek for collaborative solutions and knowledge exchange among cities facing similar challenges with what is termed the 'refugee crisis.'

The project C-MISE aims to establish a network for sharing best practices and developing common guidelines for dealing with 'irregular' migrants. Yet, its impact remains largely symbolic, with limited influence on policy making and migrants' living conditions (cf. Spencer 2022). Similarly, the 'Solidarity Cities' network, part of the Eurocities framework, advocates for coordinated responses to refugees' needs and increased resources for host cities' social infrastructure[12]. However, despite efforts to foster city-to-city collaboration, its influence mainly manifests through discursive and symbolic interventions. revealing the inherent constraints of such networks in effecting substantial policy changes or tackling the production of differential vulnerabilities. Both initiatives underscore the role of cities in migration policy and

[12] Cf. website of the network https://solidaritycities.eu/about (accessed on 16.04.2024)

the importance of transnational cooperation. While symbolic solidarity is important, there is still a significant deficit in translating these gestures into tangible actions that achieve meaningful material change at both local and international levels. (Spencer 2022).

3.2.2. Access to city services

In addition to participating in European networks, Zurich is introducing policies and practices to improve access to urban services. A survey from 2018 shows that the accessibility of services largely depends on the possibility of providing proof of identity (Arbeitsgruppe Sans Papiers 2020, 16–17). Services that are accessible to people with recognised documents are those that do not require personal details such as name and place of residence. These include socio-cultural offers, compulsory schooling, and basic counselling services. However, registration at the Personenmelderegiester (registration office) or social welfare services remain inaccessible to people without recognised legal papers. Thus, opportunities to improve access are only where overarching legal restrictions on identity verification are flexible. This includes services such as childcare, health services and education that go beyond compulsory schooling. Here, the introduction of a municipal identity card offers an important instrument for strengthening access for people without regulated residence.

3.2.3. Education rights

The right to education for children with irregular legal status in Switzerland has been regulated by guidelines since the settlement of people fleeing the war in Yugoslavia in 1991 (Arbeitsgruppe Sans Papiers 2020, 19). This obligation is recognised by the Federal Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It ensures that all children have access to compulsory education. In addition, the city facilitates access to subsidised daycare centres for children of pre-school age, which reflects a comprehensive interpretation of educational rights that goes beyond compulsory schooling. However, structural disadvantages and barriers in educational opportunities remain unaddressed in the city's internal evaluation of solidarity

measures in Zurich's education policy. These include restrictions on access to post-compulsory education programmes such as apprenticeships and tertiary education as they require work or study permits issued by federal agencies.

3.2.4. Healthcare provision

Alongside educational opportunities, structural barriers can also be identified in the healthcare system. Despite theoretical eligibility for mandatory health insurance, the fear of detection and financial constraints represents a profound obstacle for residents lacking a regular status. The resulting underservices in the healthcare provision for migrants with irregular status stresses the urgency of enhancing the access to medical treatment. In response, the city of Zurich has launched a pilot project aimed at providing low-threshold healthcare to people without regular status and other persons living in precarious situations (cf. Keller 2020). The introduction was intended to close the gap in access to healthcare, which affects an estimated 24,000 people in the canton, most of whom live in the city (Rissi, Marti, and Stalder 2020). According to the project description, it aims to reduce inequalities in healthcare by providing outpatient treatment, hospitalisation and social support based on ability to pay, ensuring confidentiality, and addressing the specific needs of the target population (Keller 2020). While the improvement of healthcare for people without insurance cover was initially separate from the City Card idea, these solidarity practices were integrated into a joint strategy as part of the institutionalisation process.

As outlined in the concept of the pilot project, it strategically integrates civil society actors such as Meditrina and the SPAZ into its framework (Keller 2020, 23–24). Meditrina is a contact point operated by the Swiss Red Cross of the Canton of Zurich. It provides essential medical services and multilingual advice for uninsured individuals to ensure that they receive necessary healthcare without fearing legal repercussions. The involvement of the SPAZ ensures that individuals without regular status are supported in coping with the Swiss health insurance

system. The association supports registrations and helps with applications for premium reductions. This reduces both financial and bureaucratic barriers to accessing healthcare. The city's decision to officially recognise and financially support these networks is an important step in drawing on the resources and expertise of the local community to promote a more accessible healthcare system.

In addition, the city commits to covering uncovered medical costs as part of the project (Keller 2020, 22). For this purpose, the two municipal hospitals 'Waid' and 'Triemli' have been set up as primary treatment centres, intended to directly tackle the economic barriers to healthcare to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent access to necessary medical care. Finally, the pilot project intends to reduce the fear of legal consequences by simplifying the registration process for health insurance for persons living in (Keller 2020, 24–25). Improving confidentiality and simplifying this process are essential steps in building trust and encouraging more people to utilise the health services available to them.

3.2.5. Access to justice

Removing structural obstacles in the justice system is another priority of the solidarity strategy. In order to clarify the restricted access to the justice system for residents with irregular legal status, the city administration has commissioned a series of comprehensive legal opinions. Regina Kiener and Danielle Breitenbücher from the University of Zurich have analysed how the current application of the law hinders access to legal protection and what potential incompatibilities exist (Breitenbücher, Kiener, and Schuppli 2020; Kiener and Breitenbücher 2020; 2019; 2018). The findings provide a comprehensive picture of the legal landscape, including an examination of the potential role that a municipal ID card could play in reducing these barriers.

The findings of the investigation by Kiener and Breitenbücher(2019, 359–360) show that people with irregular status often refrain from asserting their rights for fear of being discovered

and the possible consequences of deportation. This undermines the rule of law and individual freedoms. In this context, Kiener and Breitenbücher emphasise the fundamental importance of the right of access to justice and the right to data protection. Without the ability to enforce rights through court action, individual freedoms remain ineffective. They emphasise that the right of access to justice is enshrined in international conventions and national constitutions which also apply to people with irregular status. To strengthen the protection of these rights, they advocate the implementation of data protection measures to ensure that the processing of personal data, such as residence status, complies with the principles of proportionality and transparency. To minimise the risks of detection, it is thus crucial strengthen people's access to justice.

The collection and disclosure of data on residence status allows for considerable discretion in the application of the law (Kiener & Breitenbücher 2019, 366–74). Yet, the study emphasises that there is a discrepancy between the apparent neutrality of legal structures and their disproportionate impact on migrants with irregular status. This suggests an operational bias in law enforcement, with disclosure of residence status making access to justice considerably more difficult. For this reason, according to the authors of the studies, both the collection and disclosure of such information should be subject to strict legal principles and a careful balancing of interests, safeguarding the fundamental rights of individuals with irregular status. In an interview, Bea Schwager added a practical perspective to this by emphasising that the possibility of lodging a complaint goes beyond legal issues. Rather, she calls for a change in the practices that are possible under the legal conditions, while at the same time the laws need to be adapted. She points to the issuing of temporary permits for victims of human trafficking as an example of how, under the current conditions, there are possibilities for regularisation that depend on political will.

In this context, the "free in, free out" practice is a pragmatic instrument that can facilitate access to law and justice for people without regular residence status. The approach, which originated in the Netherlands, aims to build trust between people without regular status and law

enforcement authorities by reducing the fear of legal consequences. As detailed in the report, it allows reporting offences to the police without the risk of arrest or deportation (Breitenbücher et al. 2020, 4-6). So-called ‘firewall’ models further strengthen this goal by creating a clear separation between criminal investigations and immigration controls (ibid.). This ensures that information about the residence status of undocumented migrants who are victims or witnesses in criminal proceedings is not shared with immigration authorities. These frameworks help to create an environment in which people without legal status can confidently assert their rights and gain access to justice without fear of incarceration or deportation.

However, the introduction of a municipal ID card in Zurich does not allow to effectively implement a practice of "free in, free out" within the legal and structural framework in Switzerland(Breitenbücher, Kiener, and Schuppli 2020, 26–33). A municipal ID card therefore offers only limited potential to improve access to justice for persons with irregular legal status. While in theory such an ID card could reduce reluctance to utilise the justice system by providing a form of identification that does not reveal legal residence status, its actual impact is significantly limited by the deeply entrenched legal and administrative practices shaping the Swiss border and migration regime. The reports by Kiener and Breitenbücher highlight that—despite its potential to facilitate anonymity in legal proceedings and the possibility of favouring the securing of rights for people without regular status—communal, cantonal, and federal laws place greater emphasis on the disclosure of residence status, which has a deterrent effect on migrants in an irregular situation. This long-standing legal practice, which is unlikely to be changed by a municipal identity card, renders access to justice almost meaningless. The complex legal situation, combined with the risk of the card inadvertently becoming a marker for identifying people with irregular status, could lead to profiling and targeted enforcement. This undermines the intention of the card and further limits its usefulness in improving access to justice, leading to concerns about interaction with the police.

3.2.6. *Identification during police checks*

The impact of the City Card on the freedom of movement of people without regular status in the urban space depends on police power. This dependence underscores a critical dynamic in which protection from state violence depends on cooperation with the authorities perpetrating the violence. While the expectation that a municipal ID card could alleviate the risk of encountering law enforcement authorities is a convincing argument in favour of the introduction, Bea Schwager emphasises the limitations embedded in police practises such as racial profiling. During our interview, she mentions that recent discussions with representatives of the city police have raised further concerns that the card will only increase the safety of people with irregular status to a limited extent due to the adherence to police protocols that prioritise verification of residence status. The fact that the card cannot prevent the police from determining a person's legal status represents a key challenge of the project.

Identity checks during police operations are framed as pivotal for both investigating potential criminal activities and upholding public safety. The complexities in relation to issues of irregular residency status primarily concerns the proportionality and the consequences of a collection and disclosure of the residency status towards immigration authorities that may issue deportation orders or incarceration. The obligation to report disclosed residency status, as mandated by various legal regulations, plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance with immigration laws. This includes the responsibilities of police officers to pursue further investigations in the presence of sufficient suspicion of illegal residency (Breitenbücher, Kiener, and Schuppli 2020, 19f). Such investigations must navigate the fine line between legitimate law enforcement and the risk of encroaching on individual rights, particularly when residency status becomes a focal point, potentially veering into discriminatory practices. The essence of proportionality and non-discrimination is paramount, ensuring that checks are grounded in concrete suspicions. As preventive checks aim to deter crime and ensure order without direct

linkage to specific criminal activity, they are prone to racial profiling or unwarranted intrusions into personal freedom.

This discussion underscores the balance that cities must navigate when expanding rights and citizenship within the confines of existing law enforcement paradigms. It highlights the critical need for non-reformist reforms addressing the underlying issues of forced displacement and profiling in policing. Thus, while municipal ID may provide some forms of recognition and access to services independent of legal status, it also relies on and reinforces state power and control mechanisms, including police surveillance and enforcement activities. This dual nature of ID cards illustrates a dependence on police authority for their enforcement, which can exacerbate issues such as racial profiling, as they become a means of identifying and monitoring individuals based on perceived legal status or racial 'otherness'.

3.3. The City Card, Sans Papiers, and regularisations

Zurich's institutionalised solidarity practises and policies towards improving the integration of Sans Papiers lay the foundation for a deeper understanding of the complex challenges faced by people without regular residence status. These policies illustrate the city's efforts to institutionalise inclusion and diversity as key values. However, despite strategies to promote hospitality and integration, illegalisation and the exclusion of people remain largely untouched. Looking at regularisation initiatives thus offers an essential extension of the dialogue on solidary urban practises by considering the production of irregularity as a state category.

The primary demand from Sans Papiers and their supporting organisations is for regularisation. Regularisation is viewed as a foundational measure to mitigate the vulnerabilities associated with legal irregularity. This has also been expressed by Elisabeth, a member of the 'Colectivo sin Papeles' who is living and working without regular status in the metropolitan area of Zurich. Elisabeth's engagement with the collective, a self-organised group of about 30 members, provides her with a platform to share experiences and collaboratively navigate daily

challenges. The close affiliation with SPAZ increases its visibility and strengthens links with the wider political and civil society community.

As Elisabeth has told me, she views the Züri City Card with a mix of hope and realism. She recognises it as a symbol of progress towards inclusivity and a step toward acknowledging the existence and contributions of Sans Papiers within the city's fabric. However, she is also acutely aware of its limitations. For Elisabeth, the City Card cannot substitute for the need for regularisation; it is a temporary relief, not a solution to the systemic issues that push people without regular status into the shadows of society. While acknowledging that there is a partial relief the card offers to the Sans Papiers community, she emphasises that it falls short of addressing the fundamental challenges. This includes precarious work conditions and the constant threat of law enforcement encounters. These experiences underscore the necessity for a comprehensive policy approach that addresses institutional practises that create and exploit irregularities.

The strict regulatory framework of Swiss immigration policy contains various ways into irregularity, which is represented by the usual distinction between primary and secondary Sans Papiers. Primary Sans Papiers are individuals who enter and stay without being documented. Overstay visas or temporary permits and often go unnoticed by the state. Meanwhile, secondary Sans Papiers are registered Swiss citizens who have lost their legal status due to various reasons, such as failed asylum bids or other bureaucratic and policy-driven factors. The importance of differentiating between primary and secondary Sans Papiers has a crucial impact in relation to regularisation programmes. These programmes gate accessibility to regularity through conditions that often reinforce classifications within the 'group.' This results in a situation where some Sans Papiers are excluded, and others have access to regularisation, often leaving rejected asylum seekers outside these programmes.

The Operation Papyrus initiative, launched in collaboration between the canton of Geneva and the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration in 2017, exemplifies one of very few

successful regularisation programs in Switzerland (Stadt Zürich 2020; Ferro-Luzzi, Duvoisin, and Fakhoury 2019). It enabled the regularisation of a significant number of residents, approximately 3,000 of the estimated 13,000 individuals who then lived in Geneva. However, its eligibility criteria prioritised economic contribution and sector-specific integration and specifically targeted migrants engaged in labour sectors like domestic work for Geneva's international and diplomatic communities. This narrow economic valuation of migrants' risks sidelining those unable to demonstrate substantial economic contribution. It does not tackle the systemic roots of illegalisation and precarisation.

The economic focus of Operation Papyrus raises crucial questions about the nature of solidarity and the ultimate goals of regularisation initiatives. While successful within its operational parameters, the Geneva initiative invites a re-evaluation of regularisation practises to ensure they do not inadvertently contribute to the further marginalisation of disadvantaged communities. Notably, individuals with rejected asylum decisions were excluded from the operation, indicating that the initiative was primarily designed to smooth the governance of the working population rather than intervene in the broader migration and border regime. This selective inclusion reinforces existing hierarchies within migrant communities, distinguishing between those deemed economically valuable and those who are not.

In May 2017, the Zurich city council requested the cantonal government of Zurich to implement a regularisation project for Sans Papiers akin to Geneva's Operation Papyrus (Arbeitsgruppe Sans Papiers 2020). This proposal was rejected, grounded in the assertion that Zurich lacked a comparable population of 'well-integrated' Sans Papiers. Anyhow, findings from recent studies indicate that several thousand Sans Papiers reside and work within the canton of Zurich (Rissi, Marti, and Stalder 2020). The cantonal government dismisses to pursue collective regularisations, rather favouring individual hardship applications (Härtefallgesuche) directed to the State Secretariat for Migration for case-by-case consideration.

The planned introduction of a municipal ID card is becoming an even more relevant instrument in view of the canton's refusal to formulate a collective solution at the cantonal level. It should be noted here that the introduction of a municipal ID card may present similar pitfalls of selective inclusion. Rejected asylum seekers in particular face considerable obstacles that can prevent them from fully utilising the city ID card and the opportunities it offers. The high cost of living in the city, heavy police presence, work bans, and the inability to rent housing all contribute to their marginalisation. Added to this are the high costs of public transport and geographically isolated accommodation in emergency shelters, where many rejected asylum seekers are housed. Their daily lives are tied to these camps, as the distribution of emergency aid is dependent on regular checks, which further increases their isolation. This confluence of factors means that the potential benefits of the City Card can work selectively.

The selective benefit of state initiatives reflects the intertwined nature of urban displacement, educational disadvantage, housing and labour market discrimination and other systemic injustices faced by people with irregular status and communities labelled as racially 'other'. Studies have shown how racial discrimination in Switzerland, particularly in administrative procedures and the housing market, often disguised as race-neutral, severely affects the ability of marginalised groups to secure housing and integrate into urban spaces (Lavanchy 2014; Auer and Fossati 2019). For example, applicants with names that indicate a "non-European" origin are disproportionately excluded from housing viewings, pushing them to the outskirts of the city and reinforcing the spatial dimensions of social and economic exclusion (Auer et al. 2019). Furthermore, systemic racial inequalities manifest themselves in the education system and labour market, disadvantaging individuals perceived as 'foreign' or favouring those with 'Western European' sounding names, which hinders fair access to opportunities and exacerbates marginalisation (Haenni Hoti et al. 2015; Fibbi et al. 2022).

The geographical constraints of the City Card further compound these challenges, offering benefits largely confined to the city's borders and leaving those outside Zurich's

immediate vicinity in a precarious state. Elisabeth's critique highlights the necessity of broadening the scope of such initiatives, advocating for a concerted effort across cantonal and national lines to ensure a more inclusive approach that transcends municipal boundaries. This expansion is crucial for providing comprehensive access to rights and services for Sans Papiers, pointing towards addressing both the symptoms and root causes of their marginalisation.

Despite these significant constraints, Elisabeth told me that she perceives the City Card as a beacon of hope and a crucial step towards enhancing the visibility of Sans Papiers in public and political spheres. This view accentuates the card's symbolic value in transforming perceptions and advocating for a broader, more inclusive conception of citizenship that transcends legal status. The narrative she tells underscores the importance of comprehensive policy approaches that address not only the immediate issues but also the underlying systemic barriers.

Similarly, Bea places significant hope in the Züri City Card, viewing it as a pragmatic step towards strengthening the dignity and safety of all individuals. She points to the potential of the card to diminish the emphasis on nationality in daily interactions with authorities, thereby boosting self-esteem and confidence among people without Swiss passports. Bea's optimism extends to the card's potential influence, anticipating the introduction of similar initiatives in other municipalities. Bea's and Elisabeth's reflections on the symbolic importance of the Züri City Card illustrate the social and political tensions associated with migration and regularisation debates in Switzerland. Thus, looking at the situation of Sans Papiers and their efforts for recognition and justice in Zurich forms a bridge to the broader, often abstract discussions about national identity, belonging, and democracy in Switzerland. This connection emphasises the need to conduct political discussions and decisions in light of their real impact on people in order to derive an understanding of justice and accountability.

3.4. Erinnerungskulturen[13], racisms und colonial legacies in Zurich

The Swiss discourse on immigration oscillates between explicit xenophobia and abstract hospitality. The political right frames immigration as a threat to national integrity and social cohesion, while the political left invokes a tradition of humanitarianism and democracy.

The right's stance is characterised by a protective zeal, advocating for stringent immigration controls to preserve Switzerland's cultural and political power and the associated privileged position in the global value chain. This perspective, aligning with a broader European trend towards nationalism and protectionism, is framed as a need to safeguard Swiss identity and sovereignty against the pressures of mass immigration. In contrast, the parliamentary political left is trying to reframe the debate by focusing on redressing the democratic deficit with which it sees itself confronted. Rather, they point to the exclusion of a quarter of the population from democratic processes. Emphasising these trends suggests a declining democratic legitimacy of the state in the face of the growing proportion of people living in Switzerland without a Swiss passport.

In both narratives, migration is represented as a contemporary anomaly that constitutes an external element of European identity. In contrast, a post-migrant perspective emphasises the factual reality of migration and its fundamental influence the formation of a European identity in distinction to a non-European outside (Foroutan 2018; 2019).

In his exploration of Switzerland's history of immigration through a post-migrant lens, Kijan Espahangizi (2022) explores what he calls the 'migration-integration complex.' Linking these terms encompasses Switzerland's dual approach to immigration since the 1960s,

[13] The term 'Erinnerungskulturen' is used in its German form throughout the thesis, as it carries specific meanings in the German-speaking discourse that cannot be fully captured by translations such as 'cultures of remembrance' or 'public memory.' 'Erinnerungskultur' reflects the political and emotional dimensions of remembrance and refers to how the past is confronted, how historical events are interpreted, represented, and publicly integrated (cf. Assmann 2006, 2014). The term shows how memories are shaped by existing power dynamics that emphasise certain experiences and marginalise others. Using of the plural thereby emphasises the multiplicity and heterogeneity of memories, experiences, and stories in a society and reflects the pluralistic nature of dealing with the past that is often obscured by a dominant representation of the past and present.

combining restrictive admission policies with efforts to push the foreign population living in the country into assimilation. It aims to meet labour needs and address demographic shifts without giving in to what has been described as 'over-foreignisation.' Espahangizi argues that the migration-integration complex is maintained by a web of regulations, institutions, discourses, and practices that impact not only migrants but society as a whole. One result of this is that almost 40% of Switzerland's permanent resident population are represented through their 'migration background' and fall within the scope of integration monitoring.

By maintaining the juxtaposition of an open versus a closed Switzerland, left-wing parties are reproducing a methodological nationalism. Migration movements are thereby decoupled from Switzerland's own history of racialisation and exploitation through guest worker programmes and (post)colonial relations. This makes it possible to shift questions of responsibility for the perpetuation of violence and injustice from a global perspective of institutional accountability to a national question of belonging. In this way, the political left avoids creating a political counter-pole that questions national identification with its 'humanitarian tradition'. Thus, institutional solidarity that constitutes itself as a counterpoint to repressive and exclusionary immigration policies requires an examination of how the local regimes are embedded in global, regional, and national structural injustices. It includes aligning practises and strategies in a way that recognises and contests the coloniality of migration and border regimes deeply rooted in institutional frameworks and normative practises.

Addressing structural injustices and dehumanisation in racist narratives is of central importance for promoting solidarity in the context of violent migration and border regimes. The debate on racism in Zurich has developed from the perception of the phenomenon as an isolated case in a city that is seen as open and tolerant (cf. the city's first racism report, Interdepartementale Arbeitsgruppe Rassismus, 2009) to an understanding of racism as a systemic problem. By joining the European Coalition of Cities against Racism in 2007, Zurich committed itself to tackling racism as an institutionalised problem that requires systemic

solutions. The anchoring of racism in the city's governmental and social structures is, at least in part, recognised. Regular publications of reports on racism (Interdepartementale Arbeitsgruppe Rassismus 2009; 2013; 2022; 2017) have gradually deepened the dialogue and its institutional dimension[14].

This development highlights the increasing association of institutional racism with the city's colonial heritage and the importance of integrating diverse cultural expressions and histories into public memory. It points to a growing awareness of the multidimensional nature of racism, which requires ongoing structural solutions and a comprehensive approach that includes remembrance and commemoration. Social movements and affected communities have brought these concerns to the attention of the government, prompting the city to take measures such as the establishment of monitoring centres and the recognition of its problematic history.

The exhibition 'Blinde Flecken – Zürich und der Kolonialismus', curated by historians Manda Beck and Andreas Zangger along with anti-racism expert Anja Glover represents a critical step in Zurich's engagement with its past. Hosted in 2023 at the Stadthaus, it confronts Zurich's indirect yet significant involvement in colonial conquers and exploitation, highlighting the city's financial investments in slavery and the benefits reaped from the cotton trade. Such an introspective look may challenge Zurich's self-image by exposing its complicity in historical injustices that contributed to global and regional inequalities and its economic prosperity at the expense of human suffering in the colonies. The exhibition's accompanying side program extends the discourse, intertwining historical colonial participation discussions with its structural racism and colonial representations in public spaces (Beck et al., 2023).

[14] However, the paradoxical location of the debates on Erinnerungskulturen and racism in the city administration's Zentrum für Integrationsförderung illustrates how deep the discursive link between racism and migration runs.

Recognising Zurich's indirect involvement in colonial exploitation and the resulting socio-economic benefits raises questions of accountability. This also includes dealing with the legacy of the guest worker regimes of the late 20th century and the associated precarisation and exploitation of 'foreign' labour. The prevailing debates at the time about 'over-foreignisation' and cultural differences are based on colonial racist stereotypes and have reinforced social and racial hierarchies within Swiss society (cf. dos Santos Pinto et al., 2022; dos Santos Pinto & Boulila, 2020). An attitude of solidarity requires a profound reassessment of the figure of the 'foreigner' and the role of migration in shaping the identity and prosperity of Switzerland and Zurich. Such introspection can help to understand and address the interplay of history, migration and societal structures that have contributed to today's racial and social inequalities.

Building on these critical insights, the city council initiated a comprehensive study to reassess Zurich' and Switzerland's *Erinnerungskulturen*. It reacts to pressure from movements like Black Lives Matter, post-migrant organisations like the Institut Neue Schweiz and WirAlleSindZürich, as well as other initiatives and parliamentary motions (Huber, Lüthi, and Morawek 2023). The study confronts Switzerland's perceived neutrality, revealing a significant collective amnesia around its migration history (Huber, Lüthi, and Morawek 2023, 23). As pointed out by the authors, this can be illustrated by the largely absent public memory of the 'Schwarzenbach Initiative' of 1970 (ibid.). The initiative proposed a drastic reduction in the foreign population and established the explicit, publicly presented xenophobic attitude as part of the Swiss political landscape. A similar racist rhetoric has been taken up again and again since then, pushing the public discourse further to the far right.

Further, the study extends the confrontation with Switzerland's (missing) public remembrance to the country's involvement in colonialism. Through economic, scientific, and cultural engagement, Switzerland supported the transatlantic slave trade and contributed to colonial knowledge systems (ibid.). Local efforts, inspired by international justice and liberation

movements, seek to address these lingering effects of racism and colonialism, with initiatives like 'Zürich Kolonial' revealing the city's colonial connections through guided walks[15].

The hegemonial 'master narrative' of Swiss neutrality and humanitarianism hinders a nuanced engagement with its past, particularly its involvement in European colonialism and its relations with the Nazi regime in World War II (Huber, Lüthi, and Morawek 2023, 53ff). This narrative often embellishes history, ignoring Switzerland's complicity in historical injustices. It reveals gaps in the national public memory, such as the marginalisation of migration history and the contributions of women and the working class. Advocating for a pluralized remembrance culture thus calls for attacking Switzerland's self-image which urges a re-assessment of its historical stance towards justice and humanitarianism.

An examination of intersectional Erinnerungskulturen in Zurich represents an attempt to reinterpret the underrepresentation of women's and migrants' contributions to the community, as well as the bias of involvement in historical injustices (Huber et al., 2023, 91). This selective public memory emphasises the need to support efforts to integrate suppressed histories, memories, and voices into the city's identity and to advocate for a pluralistic culture of remembrance that resists conservative forces opposing transformation. Doing so aims to promote a more differentiated engagement with the historical narratives of Switzerland and Zurich that goes beyond Eurocentric history to include the complex recognition of the troubling past and its present continuations.

Discussions on colonial entanglement and contemporary structural racisms offer a critical lens on the institutionalisation of solidarity in urban administrations. Solidarity requires the integration of intersectional and pluralist historical memories into the contemporary discourse on migration and border regimes. In this way, a solidary response can proactively connect the current processes of illegalisation and racialisation with historical continuities.

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[15] Cf. the website of organisation https://www.zh-kolonial.ch/ (accessed on 03.03.2024)

While these elements were represented in the movements that laid the foundations for the Züri City Card project, they have lost visibility on the course of institutionalisation. A vivid example of this dynamic is the splitting of the art project Die Ganze Welt in Zürich into subsequent initiatives such as Salon Bastard, the Alliance Against Racial Profiling, and the City Card itself. This development reflects a separation of discussions on cultural representation and debates on structural racism from the City Card project. It has encouraged a 'humanitarianisation' of the violence at play, with deeper issues of social justice and institutional accountability being pushed into the background in favour of humanitarian concerns.

Relevant to this thesis, the evolution outlined above underscores the necessity of treating discussions on race, Erinnerungskulturen, and colonial legacies as integral components of a solidarity strategy. Neglecting these components leads to a narrowing of the understanding and practice of solidarity, primarily focused on current humanitarian needs while overlooking the underlying causes and contexts of oppression. Integrating them as structures of social domination and oppression into the solidarity strategy enables them to move beyond merely providing services and engage deeply with the historical and structural dimensions of exclusion and injustice.

3.5. Concluding remarks

The findings of this research examine the steps taken by Zurich's solidarity policies in redefining the migration and border regime. These measures reflect a broader trend towards hospitality in urban migration management. They attempt to counter restrictive national immigration frameworks with practical solutions that aim to integrate people without regular legal status more strongly into the city's existing systems of protection. This chapter problematises the discourse on humanitarianism by pointing to the limitations of cosmopolitan approaches in addressing the material realities of colonial legacies and racist capitalism, which underlines the importance of anchoring solidarity efforts in a deep understanding of historical

and systemic injustices. It highlights the tendency to 'humanitarianise' structural injustices through a focus on alleviating immediate suffering, at the risk of overlooking deeper, systemic causes underlying migration-related vulnerabilities. The complex dynamics between humanitarian responses and the imperative for comprehensive systemic change emphasise the need for solidarity to be framed in a resistance to the border and migration regime.

Reflecting on historical and systemic injustices is crucial for cities pursuing ideals of solidarity, as Zurich's engagement with its colonial past and efforts to address systemic racism demonstrate. The Züri City Card initiative, while a step towards inclusivity, reveals a gap in addressing these broader injustices. To move beyond mere humanitarian responses, initiatives must critically address the root causes of migration crises and the violence of border regimes and integrate a comprehensive understanding of systemic injustices into their framework. This call to action emphasises the need for continuous reflection and evolution in policies such as the Züri City Card and advocates a transformation that aligns with the principles of grassroots solidarity to ensure that urban governance not only meets immediate needs but also actively dismantles the structural and normative barriers that perpetuate injustices.

CHAPTER 4

NAVIGATING 'HUMANITARIAN DUTIES' AND 'INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY' IN THE SOLIDARITY CITY

4.1. Introduction

Building on the findings of the research, this analytical chapter immerses readers in the discursive and practical dimensions of Zurich's solidarity framework. It examines how the city's policies and initiatives navigate the complexities of a restrictive, nationalised immigration system through a framework of solidarity. It serves as a connection between the empirical findings and the theoretical explorations of conditional hospitality, borders, and the dynamics of race and migration. It interrogates how discourses of humanitarianism and raceless racism inform the city's policies and how this intersection produces a discursive and practical separation of humanitarian interventions from a systemic critique of structural injustices and violence embedded in the border and migration regime.

4.2. The dichotomy between humanitarian interventions and structural reforms

In the process of institutionalising solidarity in Zurich, the connected concerns of the migrant solidarity movement for humanitarian interventions to alleviate suffering and dismantle structural injustices are separated into different discursive strands. On one hand, there is a discourse focusing on humanitarian solidarity that stresses compliance with human rights, above all to ensure life-sustaining protection and basic human dignity. This discourse underscores the universality of human rights and the moral duty to provide protection and support for people in need. It triggers social and administrative responses that focus on the alleviation of immediate suffering and the improvement of living conditions for those identified as vulnerable.

On the other hand, there is the discourse on institutional accountability in terms of injustices arising from complicity in maintaining the violent and racist production of illegalisation and disenfranchisement through the migration and border regime. It fundamentally

critiques the current configuration of asylum policy and border enforcement, demanding a fundamental change oriented towards freedom of movement and residency.

Integration into healthcare programmes and city services significantly lowers the barriers for people without regular status to access social security systems and participate in social life. These measures represent a humanitarian expression of a practical commitment to improving immediate living conditions. At the same time, it also fulfils a symbolic function by acknowledging marginalised and precarious people within the city's jurisdiction as part of the population, thereby recognising their entitlement to protection and participation. This effectively introduces humanitarian principles into migration governance. At the same time, Zurich's commitment to remembering the past and recognising structural racism in the present signals a growing awareness of historical injustices and structural violence. Initiatives such as the exhibition 'Blinde Flecken - Zürich und der Kolonialismus' and the regular publication of racism reports are important steps towards creating a historically informed understanding of the city's past and its impact on contemporary social dynamics. These efforts allow us to challenge the long-standing narrative of Swiss neutrality and humanity.

Nevertheless, the link between historical injustices and current mechanisms that perpetuate oppression and exclusion through existing institutions – mediated through the ubiquity of borders - remains marginal in the urban solidarity agenda. Rather, the focus on individualised care and services, while critical for immediate well-being, reinforces the city's role as a provider. This gap emphasises the need to prioritise material change over symbolic action and to address the roots of migration-related precarity and systemic disadvantage. Following Nicholas De Genova's (2002, 2013) analysis of the 'legal production of illegality' and 'deportability' of migrants, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift towards an integrated approach that bridges humanitarian support with institutional accountability within Zurich's solidarity efforts.

This separation into a discourse on institutional accountability and one on humanitarian intervention is productive in the following ways: First, it effectively obscures institutional complicity in creating differential vulnerability. As argued above, it serves to distract attention from the structural injustices that underpin migration and border regimes, and most importantly, subdues those most directly affected by its policies. Their demands and resistance thus become silenced in public discourse. Second, it further entrenches the binary view of migrants: In simplifying the complex realities of migration into a binary narrative of victims in need of rescue on the one hand, and threats to be managed on the other, the discourse becomes seemingly depoliticized. In doing so, it presents migration as a series of interconnected discrete crises rather than a manifestation of broader interconnected injustices and conflicts at multiple scales, from the local to the global. Finally, it reinforces state power over freedom and justice, while inadvertently perpetuating the violent conditions migrants face.

Thus, governmental institutions are placed in the role of the protectors of the consequences of conditions that are produced by themselves. The separation of measures to mitigate immediate suffering from a systemic critique diverts attention away from the ways in which city administrations and urban spaces are integrated into the border regime. It conceals the production of differential vulnerabilities through border practises and shapes the narrative around migration and asylum in ways that favour short-term, visible interventions over addressing the causes of precarity and disenfranchisement. As a result, it maintains the status quo, where individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms depend on their legal and social recognition by state institutions. A dynamic becomes established that obfuscates accountability and ensures that migration remains within a framework of surveillance and control.

The separation of humanitarian interventions from discussions about historical and structural injustices also has productive effects in the city of solidarity. Local solidarity practises such as those in Zurich fit into this trend by focusing primarily on the facilitation of interactions between authorities and the population without regular status. This strategy improves living

conditions and simplifies access to city services, but alone it cannot effectively eliminate structural exclusion. Initiatives such as the Züri City Card operate within a framework that prioritises relief over systemic change. In this way, the discourse on migration remains within a crisis narrative that demands immediate emergency solutions rather than addressing structural conditions that perpetuate injustices and emergencies. At the same time, it silences the experiences and voices of those most affected by migration policies and reinforces a framing of the state as a provider of care and services rather than a contributor to migration-related vulnerabilities.

Such a narrative simplifies the production of migrant illegality and precarity and reduces it to a matter of humanitarian concern that is detached from broader socio-political and economic contexts. Sidelining state practises that produce and perpetuate violence and racist social stratification depoliticise the migration discourse, portraying it as a sequence of isolated incidents rather than manifestations of coloniality and racial capitalism. The focus diverts from structural solutions to the promotion of a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to counter the multifaceted border violence. Institutional violence is transformed into individual cases of suffering, framing them as singular stories of hardship rather than manifestations of the effects of colonial legacies, and neoliberal economic practises. This allows the adoption of a 'benefactor' role that casts migrants as objects of care rather than subjects with rights and agency. As a result, the recipients remain in a passive role.

The transition towards individualised care marginalises voices advocating for transformative changes. Debates about freedom of movement and residency are relegated to the background, overshadowed by immediate humanitarian responses that do not address institutional illegalisation and racialisation. It risks reducing complex social issues to individual tragedies that can be solved by humanitarian aid alone, without offering a materialist critique that reveals the intertwined oppressions inherent in the capitalist world system. Hence, it

hampers a comprehensive analysis and critique of the power dynamics driving migration and precarity, reinforcing stereotypical categories over multifaceted migrant subjectivities.

A paradoxical effect of local-level humanitarian framing in migration management is the inadvertent legitimisation of restrictive national and international migration policies. By concentrating on alleviating the symptoms rather than tackling the underlying causes, local initiatives inadvertently relieve pressure on broader governance structures, allowing them to sustain or even intensify restrictive migration controls. This dynamic maintains the illusion of manageable migrations, obscuring the violent reality of 'controlling' human mobility. Through this lens, the discourse not only perpetuates existing inequalities but also undercuts the potential for genuine, comprehensive reform that would prioritise human rights and dignity over border control.

4.3. Rethinking hospitality in the humanitarian solidarity discourse

The city council of Zurich situates the institutionalisation of migration-related solidarity in a narrative of openness and lived diversity, thus positioning itself as a centre of cosmopolitan hospitality. These appeals to abstract notions of common humanity often ignore the complicated political economy of migration and the deep-rooted history of racial hierarchisation. It obscures the structural conditions of economic disadvantages and labour market discrimination that sustain a system of racial capitalism. The city's reliance on cheap labour and a 'foreign' workforce necessitates a deeper engagement in solidarity practises with discussions on the intersection of racialisation with capitalist exploitation, residence status, and institutional discrimination that shape the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the urban fabric. Denying race perpetuates a colour-blind cosmopolitanism, failing to confront the structural inequalities and injustices at the intersection of migration policies and practises. The implementation of refuge in urban spaces often echoes many of the conditions of state mechanisms, thereby perpetuating the constraints of conditional hospitality.

In the humanitarian solidarity discourse, using the notions of ‘conditional hospitality’ and ‘differential inclusion/exclusion’ allows to uncover the systemic barriers in extending hospitality. Such a discussion integrates Derrida’s (2000) exploration of the paradoxical nature of ‘hostipitality’, where efforts to welcome can also impose conditions that subtly regulate and control. This reveals hospitality, traditionally considered a generous, altruistic act, as intrinsically woven into a web of conditions and negotiations once it enters the domain of legal and sovereign frameworks (Derrida 2005). Hospitality becomes transformed from an open, unconditional welcome to a conditional space, marked by a clear demarcation between the guest and the host – the ‘foreigner’ and the ‘citizen’. The essence of this transformation is captured by the dual nature of the act of hosting as one that encompasses both welcome and control (Derrida, 2000).

The duality of hospitality is deeply embedded within immigration law and policy, illustrating a complex scenario where sanctuary cities’ efforts to offer refuge and rights are intertwined with the very mechanisms of power and exclusion they seek to counteract. It creates a situation that sustains migrants’ dependency and precarity, which remains institutionalised within Solidarity Cities like Zurich. Initiatives such as the Züri City Card embody this duality by simultaneously serving as a symbol of hospitality and a surveillance and control mechanism. As the promise of increased inclusion requires registration, those who wish to benefit from it must reveal themselves to the authorities. This introduces a layer of surveillance, whereas the card has different and unclear effects on different groups of migrants, with significant restrictions affecting rejected asylum seekers in particular.

Derrida’s conceptualization of hospitality compels us to reconsider the ethical and political implications of institutional solidarity practises. Derrida himself contrasts the inherent conditionality of the ‘host’ – ‘guest’ relation with a vision of ‘unconditional hospitality.’ Eliminating the conditions of hospitality, Derrida suggests, requires a ‘radical openness’ to and acceptance of the ‘stranger’ without expectation of reciprocity. In a speech to the International

Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg (Derrida, 2005), Derrida developed this idea further on in the figure of the 'City of Refuge'. In this, he envisions urban spaces as places of refuge that make it possible to overcome the legal and ideological restrictions of the nation-state. This concept proposes cities as unique arenas that can facilitate such 'unconditional hospitality,' which places Solidarity Cities at a crossroads between operationalising the universal ethics of unconditional hospitality and the practical realities of migration governance within the framework of national borders and legislation.

By emphasising a significant difference in invoking historical rather than abstract humanity, Ida Danewid's (2018) hints towards gaps in Derrida's abstract universalism. Danewid points towards the need for an internationalism that is deeply attuned materialist understanding of global displacement and mobility conflicts. This critique underlines the complexity of implementing a vision of unconditional hospitality in a world marked by the very power dynamics and economic structures that precipitate the conditions of statelessness and racist and classist stratification. It suggests that Derrida's ethical stance towards a shared humanity risks depoliticizing the complex political economic and postcolonial injustices underpinning the conditions of refuge. Moreover, it overstates the autonomy and capacity of cities to transcend the state, overlooking how cities are embedded within the interconnected geographies of racial capitalism and state violence.

The realisation of an unconditional concept of hospitality in institutional forms of solidarity is therefore fraught with ambivalence. These are particularly evident in the limited possibilities to effectively reduce border violence in order to make mobility conflicts less abusive. The practice of differential inclusion/exclusion emerges as a critical aspect, illustrating how individuals are selectively integrated into societal, legal, and economic frameworks based on broader criteria of belonging and deservingness. It calls for a contextualised approach to solidarity that moves beyond abstract appeals to universal humanity. For Zurich, this necessitates a re-examination of its solidarity policies and practises under the prism of

accountability, scrutinising their capacity to either mitigate or perpetuate the structural conditions fueling injustice and violence.

The debates on hospitality and cosmopolitanism reveal the inherently pleading nature of liberal concepts of refuge. Therein, the granting of protection requires a process of determination that physically marks individuals with a symbol of vulnerability. Also in Solidarity Cities, those seeking 'protection' find themselves in a position where they must prove themselves deserving of receiving charity. A reflective critique of the role of Solidarity Cities requires a recognition of institutional accountability that goes beyond constituting themselves as rescuers and benefactors. This requires a historically conscious engagement that intertwines local solidarity practices with the global, regional, and local dynamics of racialisation, exploitation, and illegalisation. Addressing Zurich's historical and ongoing entanglement in practises of racial hierarchisation and exclusion simultaneously requires a thorough examination of how contemporary policies, social attitudes and practises contribute to the perpetuation of injustices.

4.4. The role of Solidarity Cities in humanitarianising the border regime

Zurich positions itself as a pioneer in the development of 'progressive' strategies aimed at supporting residents without regular status. Yet, it remains within the confines of existing administrative and legal frameworks governing migration, embodying a form of conditional hospitality. The reliance on specific criteria of vulnerability and assimilation for 'protection' illustrates the ongoing challenges of transcending the border regime partitioning functionality. This pragmatic approach, while seeking to humanise migration management within the limitations of restrictive regimes, inadvertently reinforces the logic of selective protection based on humanitarian assessments of vulnerability.

The city's solidarity initiatives can be integrated into a broader discourse on the humanitarianization of border regimes, as they build on practises of the extended border in the

urban space while offering a certain degree of additional support. In doing so, there is a risk that institutional solidarity becomes entrenched in a 'patchwork' approach that, while effective in the short term, is insufficient for transformative change. Such short-term approaches contribute to maintaining the status quo by creating the illusion of a possible mitigation of the consequences of state mechanisms of exclusion. Such a perspective risks viewing migration as a 'problem to be solved' or 'managed' rather than as a phenomenon closely linked to globalised political and economic systems and an expression of human agency. Thus, it reflects a concept of solidarity that focuses primarily on integration into existing structures without questioning or changing these structures themselves. The emphasis on administrative measures can lead to the discussion of migration being framed in terms of administration and control rather than as issues of social justice and liberation.

A dynamic is becoming visible where inclusion is compartmentalised by the protectionism of a nation-centred legal framework. That makes it difficult for the city of Zurich to promote its solidarity efforts at the cantonal and national levels. As a result, the effectiveness of local efforts for integration and support is significantly hampered by a national agenda focused on control and surveillance. The restricted space in which Zurich operates highlights the inherently conditional nature of its hospitality practises. Additionally, this is imbued with a narrative of vulnerability, whereby the worthiness of protection oscillates between a moral obligation to protect those fleeing persecution and a security approach that limits the permeability of national borders to potential threats (Ticktin 2011; Fassin 2010). The decision on who is allowed to stay and who is deported within the Swiss border and migration regime is characterised by an emphasis on procedural efficiency and control, reflecting a broader European trend that prioritises deterrence over justice (cf. Stünzi and Miaz 2020). As a result, the criteria for deservingness increasingly favour those who can successfully navigate the complex and accelerated asylum process, sidelining those whose stories do not align with the prevailing narratives of vulnerability and deservingness.

The call for a ‘more humane’ approach to migration governance as articulated by humanitarian demands often reinforces this narrative by prioritising reforms that make the existing border regime ‘softer’ to those deemed worthy, rather than dismantling the ubiquitous borders stretching into the urban every day. Efforts in this direction inadvertently support the mechanisms of differential inclusion/exclusion. In this context, Mezzadra and Neilson’s (2013) description of how borders have multiplied and shifted away from territorial demarcations to a selective instrument that stretches well into the social fabric is useful to embed and consider. It demonstrates the transformation of everyday spaces into potential arenas of governance and control that are fraught with the potential for exclusion and violence.

Borders have become to embody a ‘wherever’ of regulatory practises, serving to regulate access and (im)mobility in space through a complex interplay of social norms, administrative measures, and bureaucratic practises that converge to select and filter inclusion. This conceptual shift towards an understanding of borders as ubiquitous mechanisms is crucial for the analysis of institutional solidarity. Managing borders through a securitised policy approach inevitably leads to direct and indirect forms of violence in border encounters and exposes people to a state of insecurity. Failure to address the fundamental problems of border violence in the context of migration policies risks merely "humanitarianise" the effects of a system based on exclusion and control.

Within this framework, initiatives like the Züri City Card may inadvertently underscore the ongoing challenges of differential inclusion/exclusion. Rather than dismantling the border in the city, the implementation of the card should be understood as a subtle re-articulation of the filters and practises of exclusion. The integration of institutional solidarity mechanisms maintains a system of selection. One example of this is the economic obstacles associated with living in Zurich. While a municipal ID card grants access to specific services, the overarching financial challenges of residing in the city—from securing housing to engaging in social and cultural life—remain unaddressed. The isolated locations of emergency aid shelters for rejected

asylum seekers add a spatial dimension to this exclusion, exacerbated by surveillance mechanisms that tie regular check-ins to the provision of aid. These financial and spatial barriers restrict the mobility of rejected asylum seekers and other individuals with irregular status, thereby adding significant restrictions to benefiting from solidarity practises.

Furthermore, the implementation of a municipal ID card does not significantly shift the prevailing interactions between the police and those with irregular status. The card's efficacy is undermined by law enforcement protocols that remain influenced by broader national policies, which often disregard the card's protective intentions. This situation is exacerbated within the legal arena, where migrants face daunting challenges due to language barriers, a lack of legal representation, and their unfamiliarity with Swiss legal procedures. Such conditions not only prevent meaningful engagement with the legal system but also contribute to a wider atmosphere of exclusion. Interactions with law enforcement can deter migrants from accessing essential services, thereby stalling their integration and participation in community life. Moreover, the trust required for the effective implementation of a City Card is questionable when police practises like racial profiling do not align with the program's inclusive objectives.

Consequently, the challenge of countering restrictive national immigration policies lies *not only* in the implementation of solidarity policies that facilitate access to city services but also in addressing the underlying structures of exclusion and conditional inclusion that persist within the urban context. The complex interplay between societal norms, legal frameworks, and policy intentions reinforces a divisive narrative of deservingness, thereby upholding a system of differential inclusion/exclusion. This reality underscores the imperative for a transformative re-evaluation of how solidarity and support for migrants are conceptualised and enacted. Moving beyond incremental reforms to tackle the root causes of exclusion and inequality integral to the border regime demands a shift towards a more radical approach that dismantles the prevailing paradigms of conditional acceptance that perpetuate the marginalisation of those classified as 'racial others.'

4.5. Race as border infrastructure in a regime of 'racelessness'

In Zurich, the solidarity discourse is indicative of a 'regime of racelessness' – namely a racially-informed discourse that hierarchises human worth in a manner that also racialises those persons without explicitly invoking race in its discourse or practice. Racelessness is elaborated by Michel (2020) as a system in which the social implications of race are reframed as migration-related concerns. It embodies the social and institutional tendency to deny race as a decisive factor in oppressive mechanisms and social power relations. Michel highlights how it positions race and racism either as historical artefacts or as issues with relevance to the 'foreign,' advancing the idea of Switzerland as a society beyond racial hierarchies. Local institutions are thus released from having to deal with the deeply rooted institutional racism in Swiss society. Such narration maintains a façade of racial neutrality and undermines efforts to address the role of colonial oppression and the exploitation of 'foreign' labour in Switzerland's prosperity and wealth.

By strategically avoiding direct mention of race and using euphemisms such as 'cultural differences' or 'migrant background,' Switzerland maintains the illusion of being a post-racist society (Lavanchy and Purtschert 2022; Purtschert, Falk, and Lüthi 2016). Such a portrayal is made possible by Switzerland's alleged historical stance of neutrality and lack of direct colonial involvement. It allows the maintenance of a narrative that distances itself from the colonial legacies prevalent in other European contexts. The implications of this 'colonial amnesia' (Wekker 2004) are significant, as it obscures the reality of structural racism and hinders genuine anti-racist efforts. Projecting neutrality and racelessness on Swiss identity inadvertently perpetuates white supremacy and allows racial differences to continue unchecked, thereby reinforcing the hierarchies that are supposedly transcended.

In such a regime of racelessness, racism becomes detached from race and appears to manifest through dimensions of nationality and citizenship. However, De Genova (2018a) argues that the present-day world, more than ever, is divided by militarised and policed borders

which enforce a deep-seated interconnection between the nation-state and race. These borders serve as mechanisms for producing spatial differences, essential for the nationalist agenda of crafting a national identity conceptualization in the figure of a unified ‘People.’ The idea of a ‘People’ is central to the notion of modern sovereignty and forms the basis of democratic governance and state legitimacy. Sovereignty and national identity operate through borders as a means of racial differentiation, thereby essentialising the distinction between an imagined national ‘us’ and the foreign ‘them’ (De Genova 2018a).

Despite Zurich's recent efforts to address its historical involvement in colonialism and its legacy, the city's solidarity strategy fails to fully consider the intersections of race and borders. This has two consequences; on the one hand, it is maintaining a hierarchical system of inclusion, and, on the other hand, is portraying racism as a side effect of migration. However, the regime of racelessness not only characterises the reality of life for migrants, but also for residents in general through the labelling of non-Europeans. They wrestle with the double challenges of assimilation and racialization, with race often pushed into the background in favour of foreignness and integration. Such a view complicates the efforts to combat racism, underscoring the importance for Zurich's solidarity initiatives to dismantle the notion of racelessness and incorporate racial justice into their framework.

While borders exploit race productively, Tendayi Achiume (2022) shows that they also function as a form of border infrastructure themselves actively contribute to how borders are enforced and experienced. Achiume argues that racial privileges and disadvantages are deeply embedded in the mechanisms that determine who is allowed to cross borders and who is excluded. Thus, race serves as a crucial tool for states establish and justify their border security measures and migration policies.

Recognising race as an integral component of border infrastructure unveils how racial categorisations act as mechanisms of control and exclusion, delineating who is included and who is excluded. This infrastructural role of race manifests in urban space through practices like

racial profiling and the differential allocation of resources and opportunities predicated on racial difference. The raciality of borders is actively constructed and perpetuated by legal and social frameworks and institutional interactions. These dynamics are crucial to maintaining power relations, with borders serving as sites where the racial logic of capitalism is enforced through the governance of labour and belonging. Understanding race as a form of border emphasises the imperative for the city's solidarity practices confronting and dismantling the racialised dimensions of differential inclusion/exclusion as inherent part of the border regime.

In Zurich, the pervasiveness of racial profiling by law enforcement and security agencies starkly illustrates the operationalisation of race as a tool for surveillance and control (cf. Wa Baile et al., 2019; Michel, 2020). It underscores the urgent need for the city to embed anti-racist strategies within its framework of public safety and solidarity practices. The border regime marks racialised bodies as subjects of suspicion and places them in a system of surveillance and control that effectively limits their freedoms and opportunities. Thereby, it reinforces a demarcation between those perceived as legitimate members of the social fabric and those it cast as threats or outsiders. Addressing the challenge posed by racial profiling requires Zurich to reconceptualise its approach to public safety, moving beyond merely police reforms towards the implementation of independent monitoring bodies and extensive accountability mechanisms.

Race significantly influences police surveillance and access to services, job opportunities and housing. Numerous studies highlight the barriers faced by individuals marked as non-white Europeans in employment and housing markets. For instance, racial disadvantages in the Swiss labour market are highlighted in studies by Fibbi et al. (2022a) and Auer and Fossati (2019). Same for the Swiss housing market, as indicated by the studies of Auer et al. (2019) and Jann (2014). To extend solidarity beyond symbolic gestures towards material change, it is essential to dismantle these systemic injustices.

4.6. Towards solidarity with the freedom of movement

The institutionalisation of solidarity into administrative processes and governmental techniques includes the transformation of grassroot demands and practices into operations that align with existing administrative and political structures. This entails, for instance, the conversion of community-led demands for freedom of residence, freedom of discretion, and freedom from discrimination – such as those voiced in art project Die Ganze Welt in Zürich – into humanitarian interventions. It is here, at the nexus of systemic critique and pragmatic action, that the concepts of abolition democracy and non-reformist reforms provide a compelling framework for navigating the challenges of translating grassroots demands into governmental mechanisms.

Abolition democracy, introduced by Angela Davis (2005) who builds on W.E.B. Du Bois' (1998 [1935]) analysis of Black reconstruction in America in the wake of the abolition of slavery offers a political frame of reference that advocates for the dismantling of oppressive systems, extending from the prison-industrial complex to the border regime and the assimilatory violence migrant integration. It calls for a deep social transformation that addresses the roots of injustices and oppression. In this context, non-reformist reforms are identified as the strategic means to bridge the gap between systemic critique and pragmatic institutional change.

Working from this framework, a focus on non-reformist reform as political guidance in the discourse on Zurich as a Solidarity City allows practises to be anchored in a transformative approach. This allows an orientation towards experiences of oppression and violence, in the production of which state mechanisms are significantly involved. Unlike reformist reforms, which often perpetuate or marginally adjust existing conditions, non-reformist reforms seek to address the root causes of displacement, inequality, and differential inclusion/exclusion. They suggest rejecting policies that criminalise migration or embed integration in assimilation or economic subordination. Instead, it advocates for systemic changes rooted in the principles of

freedom of movement and freedom to stay, effectively challenging the racialized infrastructure of borders and the separation of humanitarian interventions from structural critique.

Understanding non-reformist reforms as a point of reference for Solidarity Cities allows us to situate institutional practises in direct relation to the principles of freedom of movement and the right to stay. A strategic shift like this requires going beyond humanitarianism and integration rationales and instead aiming to dismantle the structural barriers that hinder freedom of movement and the right to a respectable, self-determined life. This involves a thorough critique of prevailing strategies, scrutinising their efficacy in achieving transformative changes that surpass mere temporary relief from distress. It demands a departure from traditional approaches. Focusing on the eradication of systemic hindrances to movement and residence stresses, embrace a transversal and historically informed vision that encompasses both immediate needs and long-term structural reforms to foster material change.

At the core of this transformation lies the imperative for legal system reform to actualise the principles of freedom of movement and residency, thereby shifting the view of migration as a predictable event to the conditions under which it takes place. Doing so brings to light the critical need to address and mitigate the deadly consequences of state actions and racist border policies. Such calls suggest a focus on transforming the conditions under which people cross borders or are hindered from doing so. In this regard, the facilitation of access to services and municipal identification marks an initial step towards reducing institutional barriers. Yet, in order to achieve freedom of movement and residence, it is necessary to consider ways to dismantle state practices that affect both citizens and non-citizens alike and to align solidarity and support with broader efforts to end border violence. This may involve reconsidering collaboration with higher-level entities and actively opposing policies that criminalise migration while pushing back against neoliberal agendas and the coloniality of borders.

Embedding short-term pragmatic solutions in broader non-reformist reforms offers a pathway towards reimagining solidarity that is not confined by the current borders but seeks

their abolition, resonating with the political aspirations of anti-racist and no-borders movements. For cities like Zurich, this entails a pragmatic approach: Simultaneously working within institutional confines and offering humanitarian support and protection, while at the same time striving against the very institutions that perpetuate systemic barriers. Implementing such a dual strategy involves advocating for the abolition of detention centres and the decriminalisation of migration while leveraging institutional possibilities such facilitating access to city services and healthcare along the way to dismantling the border regime and other oppressive systems. It means to align institutional practises with the demands of community-led initiatives, supporting and expanding these initiatives that provide direct assistance to migrants based on principles of mutual aid and solidarity rather than charity, emphasising agency and self-determination.

4.7. Concluding remarks

In the above analysis, Zurich's municipal administration is analysed through its humanitarian efforts in migration management, juxtaposed with the theoretical ideals of hospitality and the realities of the border as a filter mechanism. This exploration revealed a fundamental paradox inherent in the city's attempts to provide sanctuary and inclusivity within the confines of legal and sovereign frameworks, elucidating the tension between the cosmopolitan aspiration for unconditional hospitality and the operational constraints imposed by national legislation and urban governance structures. Highlighting the critical limitations of these efforts reveals how they simultaneously support and survey the presence of migrants in Zurich.

Further, the investigation brought to the fore the critical role of race as a foundational yet overlooked element in the structural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, both globally and within the urban context of Zurich. The city's narrative of race neutrality—or a regime of racelessness—emerges as a significant barrier to acting in solidarity, concealing systemic racial differentiation, and undermining efforts to address the deep-rooted institutional racism within Swiss society. Against this backdrop, a reassessment of urban solidarity practises is necessary.

Moving from a colour-blind cosmopolitanism to a differentiated and historically informed approach urges us to recognise and combat the racist underpinnings of exclusion and belonging.

Eventually, the separation of humanitarian interventions from structural critiques of injustice and violence is identified in their productive functionality. This illuminates a critical tension within the discourse on urban solidarity, suggesting a compartmentalisation that serves to depoliticise the border regime. Separating it from the state's complicity in creating conditions of vulnerability and precarity risks reducing the complex interplay between oppressive structures and border encounters to manageable crises. The double role of state institutions in producing the violence and taking part in the alleviation of its effects emphasises the need for an integrated approach that goes beyond these dichotomies. Overall, by focusing primarily on immediate and visible support measures, there is a risk that existing injustices will persist, and the wider structural factors will not be addressed.

CONCLUSION: UNRAVELLING THE CONTRADICTIONS OF SOLIDARITY

Examining the role of Solidarity Cities in the context of restrictive migration and border regimes shows that while these cities create spaces of resistance, they can paradoxically also reproduce the logic and violence of state practises.

Using Zurich as a case study, the thesis shows how the institutionalisation of solidarity manifests itself in public rhetoric and various initiatives that portray the city as a protective and supportive entity. Interventions such as the Züri City Card and the provision of 'non-discriminatory' access to city services express a moral obligation to involve marginalised and illegalised residents more closely in the city's welfare apparatus and support structures. A critical examination of these urban policies often reveals that while they help to improve the immediate conditions of migrants, they often fail to address the deeper structural and systemic causes behind the processes of illegalisation and racialisation that produce varying degrees of vulnerability to precarity. While solidarity-based urban policies such as the provision of services, support for access to education and health care, or the introduction of a municipal identity card can facilitate integration into urban structures and provide a sense of belonging, they are also limited by existing urban structures. They are embedded within the limits of existing political and legal frameworks.

Although Zurich takes measures to support migrants, these often remain within the confines of the existing legal and political framework, which limits the possibility of fundamental change. The previous chapters show that hospitable and humanitarian responses aimed at immediate assistance are not fundamentally at odds with demands for restriction and closure. They do not directly abolish the principles of the border regime and the underlying structures of oppression and power. Rather, humanitarian hospitality and border securitisation are to be understood as the other side of the same coin. This is based on the argument that responses aimed at improving the immediate living conditions of migrants do not directly

challenge the structural conditions and historical causes of state violence in the regime regulating migration.

The critique is based on the observation that solidarity actions based on an abstract concept of humanity can inadvertently contribute to masking deeper structural inequalities. Such actions often focus on humanitarian aid and empathy without addressing the historical and political-economic underpinnings of borders as a device of partition. Focusing on abstract humanity can transform Europe's historical guilt and responsibility into feelings of sorrow, pity, and empathy, ultimately serving to obscure the deeper causes of inequality and exploitation. In this dynamic, the city presents itself as a supporter of migrants, thus concealing its complicity in a system of differential inclusion and exclusion. However, city institutions do not represent a neutral or even progressive actor. Rather, they must be understood as embedded in intersecting structures of oppression that are maintained by borders and the regulation of migration.

By recognising and identifying migrants primarily in terms of their need for humanitarian assistance, the political-economic and categorising functions and mechanisms of borders remain largely untouched. These systems are deeply embedded in globalised capitalism, which is based on racialised, unequal power relations and structures of exploitation shaped by the colonial past and the contemporary condition of postcoloniality. Humanitarian solidarity initiatives can therefore serve to mitigate the rough edges of the migration regime without challenging the fundamental mechanisms that drive and regulate migration. In this sense, humanitarianising urban migration policies can paradoxically contribute to strengthening the legitimacy and acceptance of the underlying restrictive and often unjust migration regimes by alleviating their hardships and thus ensuring their continued existence.

This is not to say that solidarity responses such as those in Zurich are not important in re-focusing the migration discourse on the hardship faced by migrants living in an irregular

situation. But hospitality and humanitarianism alone do not fundamentally challenge the violence and oppression embedded in the border and migration regimes. Solidarity can complement it, stabilising the system rather than transforming it. This is done by alleviating the symptoms without fundamentally addressing the causes—such as global inequalities, colonial continuities and racist exploitation of labour and resources. It maintains the existing integration paradigm and the illegalisation and racialisation of 'migrants' as an inherent part of the functioning of borders.

Presenting European Solidarity Cities as the antithesis of 'fortress Europe' and its harsh and restrictive policies gives the impression of a conflictual relationship between urban institutions and national border and asylum regimes. It appears that urban spaces are in conflict with restrictive national policies regulating migration and border security. However, the reflections in this thesis show that the city's solidarity strategy does not operate outside of state power structures but rather builds upon them. The research findings show that even in a seemingly solidary city like Zurich, police power, pressure to assimilate, and racist structures remain effective. Dynamics of oppression adapt to local conditions and manifest themselves in locally specific forms of differentiated inclusion and exploitation, which manifest themselves in the oppression of migrants or supposedly 'foreign' subjectivities.

Neoliberal urban development processes, characterised by gentrification and displacement, disproportionately affect migrant and racialised communities. Gentrification processes drive up rents, forcing original residents to move to less developed neighbourhoods or leave the city altogether, increasing social isolation, and limiting access to key resources such as education and healthcare. At the same time, racial discrimination in the labour and housing markets means that certain groups are systematically excluded from full participation in urban life, forcing migrants into precarious jobs and disadvantaging non-white tenants.

Moreover, the production of 'illegality' and 'irregularity' by border regimes is revealed in urban forms of border surveillance and control, such as racial profiling. Deeply embedded

in urban space, it contributes to the ongoing manifestation of state violence. Racial profiling is used to mark certain groups as 'irregular' or 'illegal' and thus make them publicly visible. This practice is closely linked to the staging of 'illegality' by the border regime, which deliberately generates emotional and media attention in order to reinforce political narratives that portray migration as a threat. Racial profiling thus not only reinforces spatial and social segregation within the city but also fosters an atmosphere of insecurity and fear among affected communities, which in turn profoundly influences the urban dynamics of oppression.

While simplifying the interaction between police and illegalised residents is a fundamental consideration behind the Züri City project, my interviewees expressed concern that the map will have a limited impact on the practice of racial profiling. Their assessment is also supported by the findings of the dissertation. Overall, the study offers a differentiated perspective on the relationship between urban and national policies. It suggests that the relationship is characterised less by direct conflict than by a complex web of cooperation, coexistence, and occasional tension. Cities may position themselves as opposing poles to national policies at certain political and rhetorical moments, but they are ultimately part of the same legal and political framework that characterises migration policy as a whole.

While Zurich articulates a cosmopolitan vision of global responsibility that recognises and promotes diversity and an inclusive stance, this narrative paradoxically reinforces the very structures it claims to challenge. The emphasis on humanitarian aspects and abstract cosmopolitanism tends to depoliticise the migration debate and obscure deeper structural causes and historical continuities of inequality and exploitation. By separating the creation of humanitarian support structures in the city from a fundamental critique of the border regime, it inadvertently legitimises national and European practises of violence. The moral emphasis on responsibility for alleviating suffering and helping people in need thus also functions to uphold one's own 'humanity' and the role that a humanitarian tradition plays in self-identification.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the city of Zurich's attempts to come to terms with its colonial past by pluralising public remembrance and commemoration. It also aims to combat institutional racism, which together reflect an important development in urban politics. In recent years, these issues have become increasingly visible in the city's administration and society, underscoring their growing importance. However, the integration of these historical and systemic considerations into the city's solidarity strategies also reveals significant gaps. There is a clear disconnect between the city's efforts to confront colonial injustices and contemporary racism and its engagement with violence in the regulation of migration and border encounters in urban space and beyond. This gap prevents the border and migration regime, and thus the coloniality of Swiss and European nationalism and cultural supremacy, from being transformed at its core. As long as these critical links between the colonial past and current migration policies and border mechanisms are not fully addressed and challenged, the possibility of profound transformation remains limited. The need to integrate these historical continuities into urban policy making is crucial to bringing about not just symbolic change, but real structural and systemic change that challenges the foundations of inequality and exclusion in Switzerland and beyond.

APPENDIX

RECONSTRUCTED INTERVIEWS

Interview with Bea Schwager

The meeting took place on 15 November 2023 at 15:00 in a meeting room on the premises of SPAZ in Kalkbreite in Zurich. The meeting was not recorded, but notes were taken during the meeting, which were then recorded in these minutes after the meeting.

It emerged from the conversation that the expectations and ideas of a city ID card in the context of the city of Zurich, as Bea brought them into the art project 'The Whole World in Zurich' and as they were discussed in the context of the project, were orientated from the outset on the discourses surrounding the Sanctuary City movement in North America and refer to the examples of successful municipal identity cards in US cities, above all New York. Bea Schwager, head of the SPAZ, brought the idea of demanding a city ID card in the city of Zurich to the project, based on experiences made in North American cities. In the run-up to the first 'harbour talks' in the context of the art project, a working group on security of residence in Zurich (referred to as a 'safe harbour') prepared content and discussions that were to be discussed as part of the project. Bea was part of this group and helped to determine the content of these harbour talks as part of this group.

In the first harbour talk, which took place on a boat on Lake Zurich, the then police chief Richard Wolff, who is a friend of Bea's, was invited alongside other people (who were not mentioned further), as well as (not noted whether former or not) sans-papiers, who reported on their living situation. According to Bea, the police chief reacted positively to the idea of a city ID card and showed interest. In the interview, Bea pointed out that the police's recognition of a potential city ID card as an identification card played an important role in the discussions about the project from the outset, as the impossibility of identifying oneself to the police means great insecurity and danger for undocumented migrants. The possibility of being

able to identify oneself to the city police is (at the time) seen as an important potential for ensuring greater security for undocumented migrants. In this context, one of the sans-papiers invited told how she is/was affected by domestic violence and, for fear of deportation, has no means of legally defending herself against it without the risk of being arrested and deported.

The idea of a city ID card for everyone was welcomed by the police chief at the time. The main point discussed was the danger that exists if parts of the city's population do not feel safe going to the police if they are wronged (physical violence, fraud, etc.) and that this ultimately has negative consequences for police work if parts of the population avoid co-operating with the police out of fear. In this context, we talked about racial profiling, whereby Bea sees racial profiling as a police practice that stems from a certain police attitude and culture, which will only partially disappear with the introduction of a city ID card for everyone. Bea mentioned that recent (and confidential, so she couldn't say more) discussions with the city police were sobering. The representatives of the city police emphasised in the conversation that due to established practices of city police patrols, a city ID card often does not prevent a clarification of residence status and can therefore only increase security to a limited extent. Unfortunately, it was not possible to find out exactly what these practices are during the interview because Bea was unable to say more. In this context, Bea seemed confident that political pressure could bring about a change in practice, not least because of the current Head of Police which is from a left-wing party, with whom Bea has the feeling that constructive cooperation will be possible. Bea does not assume that racial profiling will disappear with the introduction of a ZCC but hopes that it can promote/trigger a reduction in racial profiling.

In the course of the art project and the subsequent attempts to realise the idea in concrete terms, discussions were also held with other city councillors who generally reacted less positively to the project than Richard Wolff (police chief).

During the interview, Bea mentioned that the idea of a city ID card for everyone, modelled on North American cities, was her idea, which she introduced to the project and the debate. To her knowledge, there had hardly been any discussion about the concrete introduction of a city ID card in Switzerland or Zurich before that. Bea pointed out that she would never have thought of calling for an ID card, as her political stance or political utopia is orientated more towards the abolition of ID cards ('no ID for anyone') and the demands for a Züri City Card are a pragmatic means of strengthening recognition and security in a situation in which borders and exclusion are increasing more and more and are being extended to more and more areas of society. The Migration Office initially strongly rejected the work of the contact point for undocumented migrants when it was founded and today it is an important point of contact that is taken seriously for its expertise. Cooperation with the Migration Office is nonetheless difficult because the two organisations often have opposing goals and is therefore a constant negotiation process, for example regarding hardship regulations and practice, whereby it is important who heads the Migration Office, which when the SPAZ was founded was a management close to the SVP that categorically rejected cooperation. This is better today. In contrast, cooperation with municipal offices has been easier from the outset, but not always as good as it is today.

The positive feedback/reaction to a city card for all regardless of residence status must then be understood against the backdrop of an increasingly controlled and monitored migration and asylum regime, in which a city card further institutionalises exclusion through certain forms of recognition and inclusion. In this context, Bea mentioned and emphasised how shocked she was and still is that a new law was introduced in 2011 that made it impossible to marry without a valid residence permit. According to Bea, this shows a striking change in the practice of the authorities, in this case the Marriage Office, in their co-operation with the Migration Office. Bea said that in discussions with marriage offices at the end of the 1990s, she was still very clearly of the opinion that the task of the marriage offices was to

guarantee marriages and not to take over the work of the migration offices. This very clear change in self-conception reflects a general trend that border controls are increasingly being pushed to the centre of social debates and areas, which is being accepted by previously independent areas and offices by taking over the work of the migration office. The changed conditions for receiving social welfare, which were introduced with the new AIG 2018, also work in a similar way, with social welfare being linked to residence status and the social welfare office also taking on the work of checking residence status. The extent of the restriction and monitoring of migration is thus penetrating ever more areas of society.

The main demand of the Züri City Card is non-discriminatory access to city services, including the police (which Bea emphasised in the interview). The issue was brought to parliament by means of a petition by the Working Group on Residence Security (which later continued its work as the Zurich City Card Association), where the AL, Green and SP parliamentary groups submitted a motion to the City Council, which was clearly adopted and declared urgent. In the two years that the City Council then had to react to the motion, an interdepartmental working group was set up, headed by Christoph Meier, the head of integration promotion. People were recruited for the interdepartmental working group. In 2018, the City Council then addressed the city's population with a position paper in which it regretted its willingness to take responsibility and recognised undocumented migrants as part of the city's population. To this end, the city of Zurich has committed itself to exerting pressure on the canton to promote and facilitate the regularisation of undocumented migrants. The canton has repeatedly rejected collective regularisation in line with the federal government and also rejected a project similar to Operation Papyrus, citing hardship applications and the fact that there were no comparable cases of sans-papiers who were well integrated into the labour market in the canton of Zurich. According to Bea, a recently published study (a few years ago) painted a different picture and instead showed that several thousand sans-papiers live in the canton of Zurich and that the vast majority of them work. At

that time, hardship applications were hardly successful in Zurich, although this has changed in recent years and hardship applications now have a better chance of being approved. Bea told us about a case that she used as an example of common practice at the time, in which the criteria to be fulfilled against a person with whom they had submitted a hardship application were all easily met and this was used against the applicant on the grounds that if she was able to integrate well in Switzerland, then she would be able to reintegrate well elsewhere and if she had learnt German well, then she would be able to learn or relearn other languages more quickly.

Hardship applications are now much easier for the contact centres to assess. According to Bea, this also has to do with the fact that the regulations have been adapted to Operation Papyrus in Zurich and nationally. The difference to Operation Papyrus is that fulfilling the criteria definitely leads to regularisation (acceptance after individual examination of the criteria, i.e. not collectively) and in the case of hardship applications otherwise does not lead per se, but only to a possible acceptance, whereby the SEM makes the decision. The city's efforts to advocate regularisation have also been demonstrated, for example, by the fact that individual city councillors such as Daniel Leupi have always and repeatedly spoken out in favour of regularisation in media appearances such as columns or similar, even if they were not explicitly asked about it. Since the referendum was passed, the interdepartmental group has been continued and new people have been hired and other employment relationships have been continued. From December 2023, an advisory board consisting of representatives from the SPAZ, Züri City Card association, former sans-papiers from the Colectivo sin Papeles, community centres and neighbourhood associations will be involved.

According to Bea, the Sans-Papiers movement is hardly active in Zurich today (compared to other cities such as Basel, Lausanne, or Geneva, where the Sans-Papiers movement is more visible and active) and has never been as active as in other cities. For example, no churches were occupied in the city of Zurich during the time of the Swiss church

occupations, meaning that the Sans-Papiers in Zurich were less likely to come out of the shadows and demand their rights at that time. Bea sees reasons for the decline of the movement in the decrease in the energy of the supporters of the movement because no collective solution could be realised, and only individual handling was implemented with insufficient effect. Today, there is only the Spanish-speaking Colectivo sin Papeles in Zurich, which is affiliated with the Catholic Church. On the other hand, Bea also sees the creation of the contact points as a reason why the self-organised Sans-Papiers movement has been weakened, because this created a body that speaks for and represents the Sans-Papiers and could thus have a weakening effect on the (self-)organisation between Sans-Papiers (Bea noted here that she also means this as a self-criticism of herself, she helped to set up the contact point at that time in 2005).

With regard to access to justice, on which the City of Zurich had already obtained expert opinions from the City of Zurich at the beginning of the process, Bea emphasised that the possibility of being able to file a complaint is less of a legal problem than a political and ultimately practical one, i.e. a change to a practice and not a legal framework. This was confirmed by the expert opinion, in which the courts were given the leeway to prioritise ensuring the data protection of undocumented migrants over passing on residence status data to the migration authorities. Bea added the example that, for example, in cases of human trafficking in connection with sex work, toleration is granted for the period of a court judgement and that regularisations have already been granted for the willingness to report human traffickers. Bea emphasises that there are indeed ways and that these must be used, i.e. there must be the political will to use them.

Despite the relatively limited possibilities of a city card to achieve the actual goal of regularisation and non-discriminatory access to city services and authorities, Bea has high hopes for the Züri City Card. There are several reasons for this: 1. a city card should reduce the weighting of nationality in everyday life and dealings with authorities, which has a

positive effect on the self-image and self-confidence of people without a Swiss passport, which, as Bea said, reflects the reactions she has seen from undocumented migrants who visit the contact point to the acceptance of the referendum to finance the preparatory work for a city card for all. The strengthening of self-confidence through recognition by the authorities and also by urban society in general thus plays an important role in the hopes associated with the ZCC. 2 Bea is guided by the hope that the ZCC will have a strong impact on other municipalities and possibly even the canton of Zurich and that, if the experience with the card in the city of Zurich is positive, cantonal offices and authorities could also accept the card at a later date, such as courts, which could refuse their obligation to report data to the migration office and prioritise the exercise of a right to access justice without putting themselves in danger (of being arrested and deported). Bea is hopeful of this, as the city's practices in dealing with undocumented migrants have already had a positive impact on smaller municipalities around the city. The resistance to measures to improve the living conditions of undocumented migrants could thus be reduced through good examples, which made it possible to address the issue more strongly and forcefully without encountering additional rejection.

Bea thus sees the introduction of a city ID card for all as a pragmatic step towards strengthening the dignity and security of all people, including undocumented migrants, in which recognition has a symbolic impact in order to strengthen the self-esteem of undocumented migrants. In Bea's understanding, however, dignity also includes social justice for all, and this is not simply achieved with a city ID card, but requires the political will to stand up against injustice, discrimination, and exploitation, etc. When asked what Bea understood by dignity, she compared the treatment of undocumented workers in Switzerland with the treatment of harvest workers in southern Italy, most of whom also do not have a residence permit or are prevented from renewing it and who live and work without contracts

in extreme disenfranchisement and precariousness in Italy, which for her is an extreme situation of deprivation of dignity.

Interview with Elisbeth from the Colectivo sin Papeles

The meeting took place on 5 December 16:15 with a mask because Elisabeth was feeling flu-like, in a meeting room in the SPAZ premises in Kalkbreite in Zurich. Bea Schwager was also present as a translator at Elisabeth's request. Bea remained present for the entire conversation and translated quite a lot (in both directions), which meant that I only understood many of the answers through her. The interview was not recorded, but notes were taken during the interview, which were then written up in these minutes after the meeting.

Elisabeth came to the Colectivo sin Papeles via the SPAZ, where she has been a member for about 1.5 years. For Elisabeth, the collective is an important group that is open to all undocumented migrants and where people can help each other with everyday things and share their experiences. The Colectivo is closely linked to the SPAZ and many sans-papiers have learnt about the group through the SPAZ. There are around 30 people in the group, most of them sans-papiers, but some are also former sans-papiers who now have a residence permit but are still part of the collective. Elisabeth noted here that there were 'fewer people', without specifying exactly how it 'used to be' and how many people were part of the collective. She attributed the fact that there are fewer people to the fact that most people no longer actively participate in the collective after regularisation and that many people in the collective have also 'returned home' (whether 'voluntarily' or due to deportation was not clarified). According to Elisabeth, the collective works together with many different groups and organises protest, benefit, and food events in order to get to know politicians and other people from politics and civil society better (and so that these people get to know the collective better). Examples that she has mentioned in this context are the Women's Strike Day (feminist

strike) or the run against racism, where members of the collective helped to organise and carry out the events.

Elisabeth heard about the Züri City Card for the first time in the run-up to the vote, as the card gained visibility in the SPAZ environment and thus among sans-papiers in general. In the following two years, Elisabeth became increasingly interested in the project and contributed to the discussions (in the SPAZ environment and then also in the collective). Elisabeth emphasises very clearly and with conviction that the Züri City Card and the idea of a local identity card in general cannot be a complete solution for undocumented migrants and that the solution lies in regularisation and obtaining a residence permit. Local identity cards such as the Züri City Card can only support the lives of undocumented migrants as persons without regular residence status, but do not offer a solution to the lack of regularisation and do not change the actual causes of their living conditions. In addition, the Züri City Card only provides support for undocumented migrants living in the city of Zurich (or centre of life? clarify!), which according to Elisabeth is only a small proportion of the undocumented migrants she knows. Elisabeth repeats and emphasises this point in the course of the conversation and at the same time says that an extension of an ID card such as the ZCC to other areas beyond the city of Zurich is worth striving for, but can nevertheless only ever be a support and can therefore only represent a step in the direction she wants, whereby the (at least provisional) end point of this path is regularisation. Sans-papiers who work in other municipalities and cantons are still exposed to the constant risk of being checked (by the police) with the ZCC and thus live in constant fear of being discovered in everyday situations by police checks, being arrested and deported. Elisabeth emphasises here that sans-papiers are forced by the precariousness of their living conditions to accept almost any job that is offered to them and that they do not have much choice because there is usually too little work (ultimately, above all, too little money, as Elisabeth emphasises later in the interview). The places of work are often far apart, which means long distances and a lot of travelling. Most

sans-papiers move around in different cantons and municipalities to earn a living and a ZCC offers little protection. Elisabeth emphasises that she doesn't just have to travel a lot for work, but also because of the very limited support, information, and exchange services for undocumented migrants. For example, there are very few contact points and people from Aargau, Schaffhausen, Thurgau, etc. all have to come to Zurich to make use of the SPAZ's services. When asked why she doesn't live in Zurich, Elisabeth explains that she lived in Zurich herself for two years, but that life in the city is very expensive, especially the rents. She also talks about a very negative experience she had in Zurich, which was also a reason for her moving away: Elisabeth lived in a shared flat and was denounced to the police by a flatmate, whereupon the police came to the flat to take Elisabeth away. However, Elisabeth was able to hide in the cellar. She says that the police came to check the cellar, but that Elisabeth was able to hide in a box that was lying around in the cellar and thus remained undetected. After this incident, Elisabeth moved out of the flat share and moved to Schaffhausen. Elisabeth is less afraid in Schaffhausen, whether despite or because Schaffhausen is much smaller, she can't say, she thinks both facts have an influence on it, actually the danger of being noticed as undocumented migrants is greater when the place is smaller because you are less anonymous. However, sans-papiers as a 'phenomenon' are also much less well known, which can provide a certain security. Elisabeth also tells us that she lives in Schaffhausen with 2 children (16 and 10 years old). Elisabeth emphasises again that a ZCC can help with checks, as she had experienced in her own home, and a ZCC can, for example, make it possible to borrow books from a library, which means steps towards equality within the city. However, the actual effect of a ZCC in promoting equality still needs to be evaluated, Elisabeth notes.

A permit is Elisabeth's goal because it is better than an ID card, as an ID card can only take away a little of the fear she is exposed to in everyday situations. An ID card like ZCC is very localised. In principle, such a project is good and worth supporting; for Elisabeth, a city

ID card is an important tool for Zurich to support undocumented migrants and should definitely be extended to other places. Nevertheless, it is not a solution for her, not least because she lives in Schaffhausen herself. As she says, it is a big step but not a solution. When asked whether a ZCC can also represent a hurdle to the actual goal of regularisation, Elisabeth says that the politicians who are against a ZCC are also politicising against the interests of sans-papiers in general and are working towards deportation and 'voluntary return' instead of regularisation. Elisabeth is convinced that these politicians who support the ZCC continue to provide support on the way to the regularisation of undocumented migrants.

When asked whether the way people talk about sans-papiers has changed since the ZCC, Elisabeth says that the fight for the Züri City Card has been waged for many years by groups such as SPAZ and others. The fact that the card is becoming a reality, i.e. that it is being implemented, is a small light in a dark tunnel for Elisabeth and gives her hope in the fight for regularisation and a residence permit. Since the discussions about a ZCC, the concerns of undocumented migrants have become more visible and are increasingly being talked about in public. However, as Elisabeth emphasises here, the situation for undocumented migrants is generally very bad. Many undocumented migrants have had traumatic experiences, either in their country of origin or in Switzerland, and suffer from poor working conditions and the generally inhumane living conditions in Switzerland. Against this background, the ZCC represents a ray of hope that it is possible to obtain a residence permit in a different way than is currently the case. For Elisabeth, the ZCC is a symbol of hope that things are moving forward, even if the ZCC as such only represents support for the residents of the city of Zurich. It gives her hope that the concerns of undocumented migrants will receive more support from the population and that undocumented migrants will gain more visibility as part of the population rather than as 'undocumented migrants' who are marginalised in society. Here, as Elisabeth has noted, it is about the idea of equality in the population, that sans-papiers are seen as an equal part of the population as other members,

with the entitlement to have rights that they are denied in the current situation. Elisabeth notes here that she is not aware of any other Sans-Papiers living in Schaffhausen and that her network is mainly in the city of Zurich, because this is where the contact point is located. She draws attention to the problem that if a person is made invisible and is dependent on the invisibility of their own existence, contact, exchange, and participation with and in society is avoided in order not to stand out as undocumented.

Elisabeth believes that promoting participation in social life and cohesion, as the ZCC aims to do, is the best option for the city of Zurich. She thinks that this will lead to more visibility and equality, which is very important for undocumented migrants, especially if it makes them less afraid, which in turn can strengthen their sense of belonging and thus strengthen cohesion for all people in the city, not just undocumented migrants. Cohesion, Elisabeth hopes, can then also help to combat the problem of deportations, as well as the fear of controls, which Elisabeth feels are very numerous and omnipresent. Elisabeth is concerned with the right to a dignified life for all people, including undocumented migrants, although this dignity is often not being upheld at present and many undocumented migrants find themselves in inhumane living conditions. When asked how and where Elisabeth feels solidarity in society, she says that she receives solidarity from many people. For example, she feels solidarity from the people who make it possible for her to work, provide her with a flat, as well as from the SPAZ, which has helped her a lot with enrolling her children in school, registering for health insurance, and similar every day and important things that are necessary for a life in Switzerland. Elisabeth emphasises that she receives a lot of solidarity from many people. The resulting feeling of standing together gives her strength, as undocumented migrants are dependent on help and cannot do many things that are considered normal, such as going to school, without help, often because they don't even know what their rights and options are. Sans-papiers need support in finding a job where they are not exploited in order to take out health insurance. Elisabeth emphasises that life as a sans-papiers is very

complicated. For example, she describes how when looking for work, the first thing employers always ask for is a licence, so she has to worry that they will call the police if Elisabeth says she doesn't have a licence. Elisabeth also explains that the police themselves set traps by advertising jobs that attract undocumented migrants and then arresting them.

When asked where Elisabeth would like to see more solidarity, Elisabeth replies that she would like to see more solidarity where children are involved. As an undocumented single mum who has to support her children and herself, she should be able to work more and earn more because life with children is very expensive and she doesn't have enough even with several jobs. For these reasons, families need more solidarity, because it takes a lot of energy to work for two and there is often not enough work for them, which has repeatedly brought them into great financial difficulties. There should therefore be financial support for undocumented migrants with children, but such support is often linked to a residence permit, even with organisations that are not state-run. This means that undocumented migrants are left out of the equation.

When asked what would change for Elisabeth - and undocumented migrants in general - with regularisation, she emphasises that a permit would open all doors. With a permit, she would be able to get a permanent job with an employment contract, which would allow her to support her family without having to rely on support from other people. In the current situation without a permit, Elisabeth works on call, which means that she generally has too few opportunities to work and therefore earns little money for the many hours she works, also because she has to travel a lot and far for her jobs. Elisabeth says that she often receives no pay at all for the work she does because people take advantage of the fact that she doesn't have a licence and therefore can't legally defend herself against it. People then tell her that they don't have the money and give it to her later, which of course never happens. A ZCC can help here because it gives you the opportunity to defend yourself and, for example, to go to the police to make a complaint in such a case. Elisabeth thinks that a ZCC may even make it

possible to get a regular job. The ZCC is a small door that leads to regularisation. For Elisabeth, the acceptance of the referendum sends out an important signal to undocumented migrants and society in general. Elisabeth emphasises that she is criminalised by the fact that she has false papers, but basically, she is simply a woman with children who lives in Switzerland and is legal in San Salvadore. She has not committed any criminal offences in Switzerland. The ZCC can take away the fear of controls and strengthen self-confidence and self-determination, as well as take away fear. For these reasons, the ZCC is a latent, omnipresent, and lively topic at the Colectivo sind Papeles and Elisabeth emphasises that they will continue to fight until they receive a permit.

Elisabeth finds the term 'sin papeles' or sans-papiers just as bad as illegal immigrants. Elisabeth finds both 'sin papeles' and 'illegals' to be offensive words that make her feel sad and uncomfortable. They are discriminatory terms for Elisabeth, and she prefers 'not regularised' to describe her 'statuses. Both other terms are very emotionally charged and have a negative and bad connotation for her. At work and when looking for work, she is also usually labelled as illegal, which is very hard for her. She is not illegal, but legal in her country and she has no regularisation in Switzerland. After Bea explained the origin of the word "sans-papiers" as a self-designation from the sans-papiers movement in France in the 1970s (she drew attention to this), Elisabeth says that although illegal is worse than undocumented, she still prefers not to be regularised.

In response to the last question as to whether Elisabeth would like to add anything else at the end, she emphasises once again that undocumented migrants need more solidarity from other people in order to be able to live in harmony and dignity in Switzerland and to be able to work well here and not be seen as delinquents who have come to Switzerland to cause stress. Elisabeth wished that the ZCC was already a fact, and that rights and human dignity were respected for everyone, including undocumented migrants. She mentioned that a lot of work and time has already been invested in the ZCC project and that it has a lot of hope, precisely

because a lot of work has gone into it. She has now been in Switzerland for 6 years and hopes that she will soon be able to start training or further education so that she can work in the medical field again, as she did in San Salvadore. To do this, she needs to improve her German, which she had previously learnt without school and only recently started attending a Red Cross school, as she needs language certificates to be able to work in a medical profession. She also mentions that she has acted in a film, ‘Aber ich lebe hier’.

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