Black Box BAZ
The Invisibility and Violence of Federal Asylum Centers in the Canton Of Zurich

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Acknowledgments

1. Introduction

A year and a half after the new Swiss asylum law came into force in 2019, I was sitting with Şeref in a tiny park in Altstetten, Zurich. We were talking about his time in the BAZ[1] Embrach before his transfer to the city of Zurich for his extended asylum procedure. As a Kurdish activist who faced multiple politically motivated persecutions in Turkey, he knew all too well that the hardship and violence he endures as a refugee in European countries are not coincidental. These experiences are historically contingent, and known to those who have studied modern forms and logics of state-sanctioned exclusion. Behrouz, a Kurdish refugee he made friends with in a different BAZ he used to live in, had once compellingly explained it through the words of Foucault:«In the camp[2], you get to know the state, he introduces himself. It's like a ceremony of power». That is, the hardship and violence of Şeref and Behrouz's experiences as asylum seekers are the result of thoroughly articulated and realized state exclusion practices, rather than of the state's absence and the seeming disorder and arbitrariness that follow.

Despite the state's dominant role in controlling and determining the lives of refugees, the amount of both overt and fugitive acts of resistance indicate that other, less state-centered narratives exist through which asylum and migration can be told. Such stories include those told by Şeref who, through his knowledge, experiences and socialization in a politically active environment, connected with different activist groups along his route to Switzerland and continuously engaged in self-organized solidarity work. So too was his time in Embrach, where he met and joined the people of the «Wagon Cafe». As he recounted, it was a needed alternative to just sitting around and waiting, and the only chance to get to know Switzerland and its inhabitants. It was a means of escaping isolation and continuing his activism and solidarity with other people on the move[3].

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[1] *Bundesasylzentrum*; federal asylum center.

[2] The term camp usually refers to mass housings and other spaces built for people on the move. From personal experience, the term is more popular amongst those who stayed in on of the notorious refugee camps or hotspots in Greece and across the so-called Balkan route. For this reason, the federal asylum centers, too, are often referred to as camps. Sometimes, overlaps with and allusions to academic concepts of biopolitics are intended, particularly within the context of activist work in certain places.

[3] Gold (2019) and Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et. al (2019) address the legal, political, and mundane implications different terms such as migrant, refugee, or asylum seekers have. In my everyday work, I often deploy the German term Geflüchtete or Geflüchtete Menschen as it stresses the involuntariness of departure without excluding the possibility of agency behind the decision to flee from a place. The term people on the move as used by Cuttita, Häberlein, and Pallister-Wilkins (2019) has semantic similarities. Most importantly, the term does not play the legal, political, and mundane implications off against each other. However, in this study, I will deploy terms such as refugee, migrant, or asylum seeker in contexts where it is appropriate. For example, from a certain perspective, people who lodged an

The «Wagon Cafe», as Şeref referred to it, is a discarded restaurant train wagon located right next to Embrach train station. For the last two and a half years, the solidarity group I am part of called *Space of Solidarity* (SoS) has offered it as an open space for asylum seekers staying in the BAZ Embrach every Sunday afternoon. The solidarity group consists of different backgrounds, including activists who were or still are in their asylum process. Our main goal is to provide a place for whatever needs exist in a given week, from drinking coffee and playing games together, to offering general orientation for visitors' current situations, and basic legal assistance and other kinds of support. In doing so, we also gather insights and knowledge about the post-2019 asylum system and its infrastructures, which are otherwise carefully controlled and obscured by state institutions, despite the large involvement of the public in many issues concerning asylum in general. This activist work is part of a connected effort across different activist initiatives to document and mobilize against the Swiss border regime and build meaningful solidarity for and with people on the move.

The other place Şeref had mentioned, the BAZ Embrach, is one of the soon-to-be 18 federal asylum centers in Switzerland, and one of the two in the Canton of Zurich. They were built in the context of an asylum law revision Swiss constituent's voted for in 2016, replacing a dispersed network of smaller Cantonal asylum centers and the corresponding state institutions. The revision had at its core the goal of standardizing and accelerating existing migration and asylum laws and infrastructures, in order to adapt to new migratory flows as experienced in the so-called 2015 migration ‹crisis›, and to harmonize with EU laws and labour markets through the Schengen and Dublin Agreements. The BAZ Embrach is a federal asylum center without process function, which means that most asylum seekers living there have already been in the BAZ Zurich during their asylum application's processing, and now face deportation.

Together with other federal asylum centers across the nation, both BAZ have garnered increased public interest after incidents of violence and other human rights violences surfaced.[4] Through our direct contact with people on the move, our group was made aware of such conditions and incidents before the media reports. At the same time, we observed the ways in which the state departments in charge successfully seclude and control

asylum application and are staying in a federal asylum center are turned into asylum seekers. A range of discursive and material arrangements undergird this process. Thus, when writing about people in this situation, it seems appropriate to use asylum seeker when I wish to stress these conditions.

[4] Abazi and Sharon 2020 (BAZ Embrach); Endres and Vögele 2021 (BAZ Boudry); Jäggi 2021 (BAZ Basel); Tobler 2019 (BAZ Zurich).

access to the inside of the centers, rarely allowing information to leak out. For this purpose, they mobilize a complex apparatus of laws and rules, immediate tactics, spatial separation and exploitation of existing societal borders. As a result, the federal asylum centers are veritable black boxes that, by design, isolate asylum seekers from the public. It is therefore unsurprising that, in order for public to take notice of the systemic violence in the federal asylum centers, it required the involvement of various media and NGOs, some of them with considerable influence, as well as a large amount of visual material to corroborate the otherwise disbelieved oral testimonies.

In this thesis, I explore the functions of and lived realities in the BAZ Embrach and BAZ Zürich. As suggested by Behrouz's statement above, the federal asylum centers are undergirded by a historically contingent, carceral regime of biopolitical management. From this perspective, they are state institutions of control for deterritorialized state borders, as much as they are spatial manifestations and technologies of societal ordering. Moreover, the BAZ as part of a broader border regime are technologies of humanitarianism and securitization alike. These structures, hidden behind a humanitarian façade, reflect the actions of state institutions asserting sovereignty in an increasingly globalized and seemingly borderless world. To achieve this, the border regime produces a governable, faceless mass of ‹asylum seekers›, ‹migrants› or ‹refugees› through varying materials and discourses upon which figures of the helpless victim and the predator are projected.[5] As a result, various forms of violence in the federal asylum centers are naturalized and rendered invisible which, in turn, enables their daily reproduction.

In this thesis, I thus question the forces, discourses and logics that intersect at the core of the institutional apparatus core and have shaped it throughout history. In so doing, I seek to denaturalize the forms of violence endured by elucidating the enabling structural conditions. Furthermore, the thesis builds on Swiss post-colonial scholars' claim that the specters of coloniality persistently shape Switzerland's present.[6] To build on this work, I include my own observations of the blatant erasure of affected voices and the ensuing naturalization of violence in the Swiss border regime. Noémi Michel substantiates this observation through the concept of

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[5] Häkli and Kallio 2020, 11.
[6] Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi 2016.

racism without race, which illuminates how the Swiss public vastly disregards historicized, structural causes for racism. Here, constructions of Swiss neutrality and the hidden pretext of an imagined, white community play a central role.[7] Against this backdrop, it is of little surprise that most voices across the political spectrum fail to recognize the racial dimension of migration control. This blindness vis-à-vis the racialized histories of Switzerland and, presently, the border regime effectively complements state-sanctioned isolation practices that render violence in migration and asylum-seeking experiences unintelligible.

On that account, this study begins with an informed and mapped-out understanding of racism and racialization, and explores how they manifest in the Swiss context as central aspects of coloniality. Subsequently, I examine the ways in which racialized histories of decision-making, discourses, and biopolitical arrangements naturalize violent experiences of asylum-seeking. Through the concept of the border regime, I will use the BAZ Zurich and BAZ Embrach as devices to explore the multidimensional, multi-scalar space of negotiation in which they and their pertaining realities are embedded – the space I here call the Swiss border regime. Therefore, by framing the federal asylum centers as representations of various borders and as arrangements to enforce them, I set out to explore the sometimes dispersed spaces and fugitive moments in which border negotiations materialize – from the scale of embodied encounters to that of the territorial state border. Ultimately, as this study is based on the urgency to address the daily reproduced violences in the federal asylum centers, the goal of exploring bordering processes across scales and dimensions is to inspire cross-solidarity interventions.

1.2. Methods and Positionality

This research builds upon my work and experience as an SoS member and other related experiences with border struggles across Europe. The multi-sited and multi-method ethnography that elucidates the federal asylum centers' regimes thus departs from my own embodied encounters in Embrach. Included are the endless experiences and encounters with borders in everyday life, some of which only become visible in hindsight and through aggregation. These experiences span projects, meetings, and other informal settings with people engaging in realities related to border regimes, from educational events and campaigns to having meals, coffee and enjoyment together. The hours spent finding out which office to visit, what number to call or which person

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[7] Michel 2015.

to consult to support a person in their process of starting a new life here or the country they have been deported to. Accordingly, the talks, discussions, dead ends and celebrations that followed. And, ultimately, all the other moments that have rendered visible the borders that we inhabit and determine structure life in some way or another. This collection of moments, and others like them, make up the evidential basis of this thesis.

For this study, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews, researched in formal and informal archives, and pursued other activities in different places framed by the intention to perform ethnographic fieldwork – activities I largely engaged with before but complemented and revisited through the theoretical, methodological, and epistemological concepts of this research. For this reason, this research has an explicit auto-ethnographic element as I unravel these experiences, search for the tacit knowledges that developed unnoticed through them, and consider my prior experiences in touching and feeling the edges of this markedly uneven terrain.[8]

Inspired by Chiara Brambilla's exploration of a relational Space between theory and activism, I seek to embrace the fruitful exchanges between the two fields of practice and their overlaps in order to produce knowledge that is useful in re-orienting related material border practices.[9] As example, I deploy the border regime as a lens to understand how realities related to the federal asylum center are determined by borders constructed across multiple scales and dimensions, and negotiated by various actors and in different spaces. Identifying and exploring these scales, dimensions, actors, and spaces may serve to develop interventions and build solidarities in potentially surprising ways

Conversely, the above-mentioned border activism experiences are helpful in orienting the academic approach of this study, as I already explored sites and situations where borders emerge, and potential avenues to transgress them, prior to embarking on a specifically academic project. Language barriers, for example, often intersect with other boundaries set by socialization, education, values, priorities and other positionalities that differ between individuals. Therefore, mere translation often insufficiently establishes a mutually engaging basis for communication. However, most of the time, other means or resources towards overcoming this barrier are unavailable. In the context of our work in Embrach, we have therefore adopted a cautious approach to

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[8] Nagar 2019: 18.
[9] ibid., 217.

information conveyed through unclear exchanges. In such cases, we derive knowledge provisionally and with explicit reservations, and search for further clues that might verify or complete what has been brought to us.

Such was the case in our interview with Mohammed, for which we relied on telephone translation by someone who did not speak German or English well herself, and a smartphone app in addition. The quality of the interview suffered for different reasons, and despite the translator's work that made this conversation possible, I felt that her presence curbed the exchange in other ways. Therefore, large parts of information and the subtle meanings with extensive implications were undoubtedly lost in translation. Moreover, the informal exchanges before and after an interview that add notable depth unfolded only superficially.

On the other hand, where interviews in languages both parties are proficient in may convey a false impression of unambiguity, these circumstances encouraged me to read and analyse more carefully the things that may not have found the right verbal expression. In this field silence as a result of the absence of words can result from a myriad of reasons: social, cultural, and language barriers, academic and political agendas that obstruct my view, or the trauma and distrust inflicted by an asylum system that weaponized interview techniques to discipline asylum seekers and enforce a regime of deservingness. For alternative or complementary ways to access the «muted channels»[10] in interview contexts, I can draw from my experiences, friendships, and other resources that have helped me transgress barriers in the past years.

In her inspiring work *Undoing Border Imperialism,* activist and writer Harsha Walia powerfully expressed that as activists, «we undo power structures […] while prefiguring the social relations we wish to have and the forms of leadership we wish to support».[11] Her statement resonates with my understanding of activism as work that is contingent on positionality, continuous emotional and intellectual learning, material support, and direct, collective action. As I implied above, my academic knowledge and resources have offered me new ways and tools to conduct activist work and vice-versa. Here, feminist debates such as Donna Haraway's call for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating strengthen my position as activist researcher, rather than purporting a separation between activism and research that conveys a false sense of objectivity.[12]

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[10] Anderson and Jack 1998.
[11] Walia 2013, 14.
[12] Haraway, 1988, 587.

At the same time, I value the differences between both roles, and that the idea of an activist researcher results from an informed transgression of conceptual borders. In the ground-laying work *Border as Method*, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson[13] state the importance of their own experiences with border struggles through political activism, the resulting friendships and relationships that influenced their work and lives – and how these things connect to the idea of borders as epistemological devices to reflect the many borders they inhabit and potentially manage to transgress. Similarly, through researching the Swiss border regime, I seek to understand better the many borders I inhabit – borders that weaken solidarity and create blind spots and silences. In so doing, I hope to encounter hitherto unnoticed ways in which I reproduce hurtful ideas, languages, and practices associated with the markers and privileges of a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cis-man raised in a progressive middle-class environment in Switzerland.

Situating this endeavour in material border practices, the exploration and reflection of privileges also aim to find new ways to leverage them. There have been various occasions where the intentional use of privileges served as a tactic to reach an overarching goal. For example, in past mobilizations led by self-organized migrant and sans paper movements in Switzerland, white accomplices have registered demonstrations under their names. From experience, authorities behave more cooperatively under these circumstances, and repressions have less far-reaching effects. Furthermore, in the context of various activist projects, activists with precarious legal status have repeatedly brought up the immense waste of energy in managing daily life between humiliating bureaucracy, racist aggressions, and financial challenges. Additionally, in activist and self-organized migrant communities, care and emotional work is often left to migrant women. These are moments where privileges can be deployed tactically for immediate solutions. In the long run, however, structural transformations must be pursued. Ultimately, my own doing and influence rests on the labour of countless others. It blends with the mass of movements that relentlessly challenge and undo white supremacy and racial capitalism across spaces and generations. This work is but one humble contribution.

2. Constructions of Whiteness in Switzerland

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[13] Mezzadra and Neilson 2013.

Coloniality in Switzerland still lingers as «enduring racialized and racializing knowledge production [that] shapes historical subjects»[14]. Understanding coloniality's underlying logics of exclusion that undergird and reinforce the racialization of migrant communities in Switzerland makes evident how historically developed ideas, discursive fabrics and materials normalize suffering in federal asylum centers – suffering caused through both brute and slow, perpetual violence. Concurrently, the same logics undergird and reinforce the racialization of a superior Swiss citizen body whose privileged position enjoys a widely normalized status. In both cases, the production of imagined communities percolate into material effects, while the order it creates is obscured through a regime of invisibility and erasure.

In this chapter, I compare and discuss relevant scholarly debates on coloniality, and how it connects to forms of racism and racialization prevalent in European history. Following this, I develop whiteness as a conceptual lens for a situated examination of racialized social hierarchies and their stabilizing effect in the wake of shifting socio-political events in and around Switzerland. To this end, the histories of *Überfremdung* (‹overforeignization›) and Islamophobia provide a useful window into exemplifying these concepts and illustrating coloniality's innovations and reconfigurations throughout time. Furthermore, the critical interrogation of coloniality in Switzerland seeks to take the spotlight off conservative, right-wing politics and direct attention towards the inherently racialized and racializing exclusion of liberal democracies.

Explicating the roles of racism, racialization, and whiteness in their concrete historic concepts allows for an informed discussion of the manifold borders that intersect in the Canton of Zurich's federal asylum centers, and stabilize relations of exclusion and exploitation through delimited spaces of society. These borders are, among others, territorial borders and their global entrenchments, a loose and far-reaching set of societal borders, and their underlying epistemological and ontological borders that are variously mobilized and contested.

In an everyday understanding, circumstances in the asylum system tend to be loosely characterized as structural racism. With whiteness as a lens, I seek to spell out what, exactly, structural racism entails in this context: exclusionary practices justified by racialized discourse and knowledge production, and enforced by a complex blend of spaces, technologies, and actors that go well beyond the state apparatus. In contexts of

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[14] Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi 2016.

asylum and migration, race plays a central role if, as Picozza states, it is understood as a governmental practice rooted in colonial history that naturalizes the exercise of administrative power by Europeanized, ‹white› assemblages over non-Europeanized, ‹non-white› assemblages.[15] In this regard, post-colonial scholars Jain Rohit[16] and Francesca Falk[17] provide disturbing genealogies of the Swiss state's identification technologies whose origins lie in colonial experiments with population control. More familiar may be their maturation into the technologies used to identify and reject Jewish refugees and Roma during World War II. Since then, it remains unchanged that these technologies of racialized identification and movement control perform the bordering between a national Self and the foreign Other whose otherness serves to construct and maintain a cultural, economic and political standard.

2.1. Coloniality and Racism

Coloniality as a concept acquired prominence through the works of Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo. Developed as a tool to understand the material and spiritual continuities that outlived Western colonial projects and persist at present times, it

> «describes the hidden process of erasure, devaluation, and disavowing of certain human beings, ways of thinking, ways of living, and of doing in the world – that is, […] a process of inventing identifications […]»[18]

To understand how abyssal social hierarchies, such as those between wealthy colonizers and subordinated colonized communities, came into being, it is indispensable to consider coloniality's extensive ramifications upon which those hierarchies are predicated, and how these ramifications proliferate according to an enforced racial hierarchy – the logic of coloniality. Here, specific to the local and historical context in question, coloniality as a concept asks which racist logic was enforced by whom and by which means in order to establish a relation of otherness, the colonial difference, that secures an exclusionary, exploitable, and most importantly, a justified hierarchy.[19]

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[15] Picozza 2021, xvi.
[16] Rohit 2019.
[17] Falk 2012.
[18] Walter Mignolo in Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, 198.
[19] Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012.

As a global phenomenon with differing local manifestations, the colonial difference came into being in the process of debating the humanity of populations embraced by imperial endeavors, Mignolo and Tlostanova state.[20] These debates are inextricably bound to intellectual advancements of the Enlightenment era (and the geo-political, social and technical advancements of Modernity), as the Enlightenment's concepts of humanity emerged in relation to an ‹other› that is less human, or not human at all. In concrete examples, the colonial difference, being part of the broader logic of coloniality, manifested in various such relations: The ‹discovery› of barbarism was also that of the ‹civilization›; the ‹discovery› of the Orient was also that of the Occident; as there ‹existed› a Black race, a white race did so too.[21] As quoted above, these processes commonly narrated as discoveries are, in fact, hidden processes of erasure, devaluation, and disavowing of certain human beings, ways of living, and of doing in the world.

While the Western biology of race and other monolithic racisms invented for justifying colonial difference may have lost most of their old costume, racial hierarchies based on relations of otherness still persist today. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tukufu Zuberi write: «Race is not about an individual's skin color. Race is about an individual's relationship to other people within the society.»[22] Race, they further argue, is a social construct, yet it must be accounted for as a lived social relation in order to understand racialized inequalities. That is, inequalities that are justified or obscured by racial social relations and hierarchizations. However, as Xolela Mangçu cautions, it would be mistaken to assume that every racism is based on the perception of phenotypical difference, or that it is tied to a preceding scientific cast. Rather, distinctions could be «legislated to be hereditary, innate, and immutable» without such aspects, the author argues.[23]

Given such inconsistencies and the fact that the logic of coloniality which informs racial hierarchizations is not a unified one, situated research into particular racisms and their contemporary ramifications is essential.[24] Moreover, being a biological fiction and a social fact nonetheless,[25] the use of the term race is ambiguous. As a solution, Adam Hochman suggests deploying the terms racialization, racialized, and racial when describing a reality tied to racism and its effects while refuting race as a human category. The author defines

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[20] ibid., 5.
[21] ibid., 2012; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2009.
[22] Bonilla-Silva and Tukufu Zuberi 2008, 7.
[23] Mangçu 2016, 50.
[24] Danewid 2017; James 2008; Law 2016.
[25] James 2008, 32.

«racialization as the process through which groups come to be understood as major biological entities and human lineages, formed due to reproductive isolation, in which membership is transmitted through biological descent.»[26]

Described as a process instead of a fixed or essential characteristic, this definition stresses the historical contingency of racialization, as it «is done to a group, by some social agent, at a certain time, for a given period, in and through various processes, and relative to a particular social context».[27] Hochman further emphasizes the importance of situated research because racialization refers to a specific outcome, rather than a set of defined actions.[28] Within this framework, the exclusion of Jews in Europe since the Spanish Inquisition, and more recent, Muslims in Western countries *qua* essentializing constructs manifests as a racialized exclusion.[29] In this respect, if a social structure, institution or experience is racialized, it is because it reflects the racialization of a specific group.[30]

2.2. Whiteness as a Lens

Whiteness describes the characteristic of the imagined, Western community that constitutes itself vis-à-vis the racialized other as civilized, modern, secular, and superiorly human.[31] As stated above, the emergence of whiteness as a social category dates back to early European colonial projects during the Enlightenment era. Therefore, whiteness must be considered as concrete and historically contingent force intertwined with the logic of coloniality and racial hierarchizations specific to contexts of European colonization. As most notably Black authors and authors of Colour continue to stress, the question of who counts as human and who does not outlived the colonial period and translated into myriad economic, political, and cultural discourses, and material arrangements that perpetuate racial divisions and hierarchies.[32] Thus, whiteness has continually re-configured itself by adapting its practices for enforcing racial hierarchies and cementing white supremacy. As a notion, whiteness was developed by postcolonial authors such as Franz Fanon for translating the felt,

[26] Hochman 2019, 1246.
[27] Garcia 2003 in Hochman 2008, 1254.
[28] ibid., 1257.
[29] ibid.; Law, Sayyid, Merali et al. 2019.
[30] Hochman 2018, 1250.
[31] Michel 2015.
[32] Danewid 2017, 1680; James 2008, 34.

mundane experiences of a viscerally racist societal regime.[33] That is, how ordering and hierarchization through Western powers articulates in the mundane. Therefore, besides its violent and exclusionary outcomes, whiteness serves as an analytic to have an informed conversation about contemporary forms of racialized exclusion.

Departing from this novel antiracist epistemology, silence, in/visibility, and other spatio-sensorial expressions have become recurring and commonplace in describing the workings of whiteness.[34] Sarah Ahmed describes racial ordering and hierarchization as a concrete, felt force – the experience of racism – as follows:

«whiteness is invisible and unmarked, as the absent center against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation […]. Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn not to see it, even when they are not it […]. Spaces are orientated 'around 'whiteness, insofar as whiteness is not seen. We do not face whiteness; it 'trails behind 'bodies, as what is assumed to be given. The effect of this 'around whiteness 'is the institutionalization of a certain 'likeness', which makes non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different, when they take up this space.»[35]

The author's account ties up claims and observations previously stated about whiteness and what it does to certain groups and individuals on ‹both sides› of the racial division, rather than what it is. Therefore, in this study, I seek deploy whiteness as a lens to understand how experiences of exclusion are effects of the making and remaking of a white community in Switzerland.

In the following section, I will look at the concepts of colonialism without colonies and racism without race, and how their application sets the frame for developing Switzerland's history of coloniality. Afterwards, by examining the history of *Überfremdung*, I will unravel social, political and economic discourses in 20th century Switzerland as process of identity stabilization and economic adaption through racial exclusion. I will conclude this chapter by interrogating Islamophobia as the continuation of *Überfremdung* and renewal of Orientalist discourse. In so doing, this section asks the following questions: How and over whom did Switzerland develop superiority in order construct itself as a white, European community? How did race

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[33] Fanon 1986.
[34] Ahmed 2007; Bonilla-Silva and Tukufu 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018.
[35] Ahmed 2007, 157.

develop as a socially relevant category in Switzerland? How and through what means have differences been racialized, and what are the racialized representations emerged in these processes? How, and for what ends, have processes of racialization been justified, and thereby rendered invisible?

2.2.1. Colonialism without Colonies, Racism without Race

Switzerland has proven to be remarkably productive in reinventing itself as a detached island amid the overwhelming goings-on of constructed elsewhere.[36] As a landlocked country surrounded by dominant forces of globalization, constructions of the island's boundaries have been established, negotiated, and contested within shifting geopolitical and economic entanglements over and over again. In the past decades, however, the country's notorious neutrality has been the target of serious interrogations. Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi, for example, deploy the concept of ‹colonialism without colonies› to elucidate a «blatant ‹absence› when it come to questions of racism, its colonial genealogy and its impact on society».[37] The renewed interest in a postcolonial interrogation of Switzerland's colonial past was sparked by a 2007 political campaign of the right-wing populist *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party; SVP) showing an illustration of white sheep kicking a black sheep away from an illustrative representation of Switzerland. The SVP claimed that the black sheep merely refers to a metaphor, denying any meaning related to the racial exclusion of non-white people. Thus, Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi set out to discuss whether the ample display of such racial imagery remains widely unsanctioned because Switzerland is considered to be outside colonial constellations and thus not historically laden with any form racism. Moreover, the authors consider in what ways Switzerland's self-presentation as a neutral and humanitarian country relates to its perceived outsider position to colonial constellations. Examining scholarly exposure of Switzerland's complicities in the transatlantic slave and colonial trades and recent manifestations of racialized knowledge production, Falk et al. conclude that the specters of coloniality persistently shape Switzerland's present, obfuscated by long-standing efforts of claiming neutrality, if not innocence.[38]

In a similar conceptual fashion, the notion of ‹racism without race› expresses an absence of knowledge and language capable of addressing the ordering of society, space and discourse along racial lines. Deployed

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[36] For a more detailed account of Switzerland's island narrativ, see Tanner 2018.
[37] Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi 2016, 298.
[38] ibid.

by Michel, the concept addresses the vast disregard of historicized, structural causes for racism in Switzerland, because the corresponding debates rarely refer to Switzerland's colonial past, confining common understandings of racism to ‹explicit› occurrences on the individual level.[39]

The supposed absence of colonial entanglements and corresponding racialized hierarchizations nurtures discourses of exceptionalism in which the gruesome history of race has always been extraneous to Switzerland. These supposedly raceless spaces of imagination and discourse suppress how the Swiss community's alleged homogeneity depends on its positioning vis-à-vis an racialized other. And, subsequently, how othered groups and individuals are caught up in spaces of pre-defined racist meanings and representations. As a consequence, race, although rejected as socially relevant category, remains a forceful factor in determining a person's validity in regards to a white standard. Put differently, although Swiss institutions and citizens recognize the disadvantages and sufferings caused by supposedly individual acts of racism, they disregard any structural causes for differential treatment.

At the same time, Switzerland continues to defines itself implicitly and explicitly as a nation historically unified by its civilized, modern, and European whiteness,[40] and where «it is always worse somewhere else».[41] Ultimately, this explains why Switzerland's tradition of humanitarian attitude and response does not stand in contradiction to a societal order enforced by racialized hierarchies. On the contrary, the escalation of institutionalized humanitarianism supports Switzerland's self-presentation as neutral and morally superior, and perpetuates the representation of racialized groups as needy or dependent of Swiss intervention.[42]

2.2.2. Überfremdung - Overforeignization

Switzerland enjoys international esteem for its commendable model of multiculturalism. However, given that racialized outsider populations experience their linguistic, cultural and religious pluralism as superfluous, Janine Dahinden insists that Swiss multiculturalism is one constrained to the integration of the country's four linguistic groups and the corresponding religious pluralism. At the same time, the author observes a peculiarly normalized relation between the national self-image as multicultural *Willensnation* (‹nation of will›), and a long history of boundary work against ‹the foreign› and ‹undesired›

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[39] Michel 2015.
[40] Michel 2015, 413.
[41] Purtschert 2019, 88.
[42] Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi 2016, 2016.

multiculturalisms.[43] To this end, the discourse of *Überfremdung* offers a window into understanding how this apparent contradiction threads its way through the past 100 years.

In short, *Überfremdung* coins a socio-cultural code that «expresses the perception and exclusion of socially segregated groups that are culturally distinguished and demarcated», and cements the assumption of «homogeneity of ‹the others› who are cast in opposition to ‹us›».[44] Reemerging in parallel to major historic events, *Überfremdung* informed migration policy and debates across the whole political spectrum, and recast ‹the foreigner› into constructions that fit the needs of the current situation. Skenderovic points out that, at any point in history, neither significant demographic shifts, nor the occurrence of economic disruptions correlated with the supposed *Überfremdung* as evoked by political parties.[45] Rather, the author sees the discursive developments and their material consequences as attempts to reassure the national self and its boundaries, exemplified by Switzerland's collective self-imagination as *Sonderfall* (‹special case›) or island of neutrality. Skenderovic further asserts that the identity stabilizing belief of an external threat and a common historical experience must be reconfigured over time, hence its recurring appearance in the political landscape.[46] In a similar vein, Riaño and Wastl-Walter place emphasis on shifting economic policy and the politics of national identity as driving forces for *Überfremdung,* rather than a shifting demographic reality.[47]

The discourse first abounded in the period before World War I when Switzerland's *grande burgeoisie* accused liberal migration policies of holding the doors open for «spies, prisoners of war, military refugees, socialists, anti-militarists, deserters and even anarchists».[48] The resulting policy shift led the Federal Council to become the central authority for regulating migration. Around World War II, the discourse then served as justification for a restrictive refugee policy widely directed against Jewish refugees.[49] In the subsequent era of economic renewal, migrants, mostly from surrounding countries were represented as a temporary phenomenon in order to accommodate the need for low-skilled labour without sparking fears of *Überfremdung,* which paved the way for the highly precarious policy of the *Saisonnierstatut* (‹seasonal-worker status›).[50]

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[43] Dahinden 2014, 97.
[44] Skenderovic 2003, 187.
[45] ibid., 193.
[46] ibid., 197f.
[47] Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006, 1696.
[48] Poglia Mileti 2019: 63.
[49] Skenderovic 2003.
[50] Raño and Wastl-Walter 2006.

In the 1980s, the «culturalization of the migratory question» accompanied Switzerland's economic rapprochement to the European Union (EU), where stressed national categories and *Kulturkreise* (‹cultural circles›) stratified migration policy according to the racialized categories ‹culturally close› and ‹culturally distant›. This shift introduced the infamous three-circle policy.[51] The novel separation of foreign nationals sought to replace xenophobic attitudes and strict migration policy against nationals from EU countries, the USA and Canada with the concept of ‹cultural proximity›.[52] Conversely, ‹cultural distance› towards all other states implied little chances of integration and, thus, required stricter policy. The Federal Council explicitly justified the shift by explaining that it was necessary to formulate a migration policy that complied with the EU, Riaño and Wastl-Walter assert.[53] However, shortly after its inception, civil rights groups and even State actors criticized the policy as being racially prejudiced. The Federal Council responded with a reformulated ‹two-circle› policy in which the legal and discursive definition of EU nationals as foreigners was largely diminished, and migration restrictions for skilled labour force from outside the EU softened. With the the conclusion of the 2001 bilateral agreement, Riaño and Wastl-Walter observe the further conceptualization of EU nationals as superior, and labour market integrability as a favoured parameter and promise for citizen integration.[54]

In subsequent years, Switzerland's EU integration through the bilateral agreements enlarged the scales in which constructions of otherness were reinforced. For example, racialized figures such as «‹young Kosovars›, ‹Albanians from Kosovo›, ‹cross-border workers›, ‹new European migrants›, ‹Muslims›, or ‹Islamic extremists›»[55] referred to problems and phenomena now faced on a national and international level. Correlating with these shifting scales, *Überfremdung* started losing its explicit discursive relevance as a typically Swiss socio-cultural code. However, as Kury points out, strategies to codify, materialize and perpetuate discourses of *Überfremdung* started translating into discourses of Islamophobia.[56]

2.2.3. Islamophobia

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[51] Poglia Mileti 2019, 63.
[52] As Riaño and Wastl-Walter rightly point out, Spain, Portugal and Italy in particular considered the Swiss migration policy untenable for their emigrated citizens. Thus, it is worth noting that diplomatic pressure from EU countries played a vital role in this paradigm shift. Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006, 1701f.
[53] Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006, 1701f.
[54] ibid., 1703.
[55] Poglia Mileti 2019, 66.
[56] Kury 2010.

Aguilar states that in continuation of Islam and Muslims' persistent orientalist representation as inherently violent and threatening to the West, the events of September 11th, 2001, consolidated Islamophobic narratives in the form of ‹Islamic terrorism› across Western identifying states.[57] In the same period in Switzerland, the SVP had only begun to complete its populist transformation and secure its long-term success across the country's governments. In doing so, the party widely relied on the constant problematization of migration, particularly that which is associated with the ‹Islamization› of Switzerland. Indicative of the renewed reconstruction of colonial otherness across Western states, the SVP expressed their stance on "multiculturalism [as] a threat to the Western value system, ultimately leading to the decline of Swiss culture».[58]

As briefly broached above, part of their successful campaigning strategy was the setting up of simple, ambiguous, and stereotype-laden campaign billboards. For Scarvagleri, the billboards served to translate the SVP's political boundary-work between ‹us› versus ‹them› and ‹good› versus ‹bad›, and to make public space interventions that are characterized by a discriminatory and exclusionary symbolic regime.[59] Accordingly, Najib and Teeple Hopkins describe Islamophobia as a spatialized process not only occurring on the national and international scale, but also on the scale of the urban, neighbourhood, body, and emotion.[60] Debates around handshakes, minarets, and veils exemplify how these different scales play out in Switzerland, and how the SVP billboards function across scales. Discussing the 2009 Swiss minaret referendum billboards, Scarvagleri notes how the campaign prominently displayed an illustration of ‹burka›-veiled women, while the referendum itself concerned the ban of minaret constructions.[61] Therefore, it can be argued that the symbolic placement of the burka in public space aims at spatializing ‹Islamization› across scales; the scales of the body and emotion upon which debates on the muslim women's veil in the West are based; the urban scale concerning the ban of minarets and the preservation of an assumed Swiss landscape; and the global scale which encompasses a variety of discourses such as securitization, cultural essentialist perspectives on the integration of Muslims, and the negotiation of globalized trade and migration. However, the billboards ultimately materialize and reinforce colonial discourse that Muslims «do not belong in these countries»[62] if not to the same human

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[57] Hernández Aguilar 2019, 296.
[58] Skenderovic 2003, 1991.
[59] Scarvagleri 2017.
[60] Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020, 451.
[61] Scarvagleri 2018, 329.
[62] Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020, 452.

community altogether.[63] Within this discursive and normative framework, the differentiated treatment and exclusion of Muslims – and non-White migrants in general – appears as consequential.

A quantitative study conducted by Helbling indicates that in Switzerland, Islamophobia absorbed a whole range of older discourses, so to serve the racialization of a new ‹other›. Namely, discourse of welfare recipients, the unemployed, expatriate delinquents, and asylum seekers. Tellingly, the author finds that Swiss citizens «do not make a big difference between Muslims in general and those from specific countries and regions».[64] This observation aligns with other scholars' concern regarding the role of Islamophobia in stabilizing and reinventing Western identities vis-à-vis a badly managed concept of globalization,[65] and other continuities of Orientalism remade in relation to different socio-political events.[66]

Lastly, it is important to note that in Switzerland and elsewhere, Islamophobia has often been justified by direct democratic votes, whether the votes were successfully enshrined in law or not.[67] However, quoting Poglia Mileti, «a direct democracy system as Switzerland reinforces the introduction of new terms in the common language through initiatives and referendums that are discussed publicly».[68] The complicity of direct democratic instruments in reinforcing racialized discourse is nothing short of novelty throughout the longer history of direct democratic participation in Switzerland.

2.2.4. Citizenship: Exclusion through Inclusion in the Liberal State

Accounts of the national politics and discourse of othering as examined in this chapter tend to feature openly racist and xenophobic sentiments and their amplification by populist parties. Certainly, Michel,[69] Falk et al.,[70] and Poglia Mileti[71] pointed out how variously racialized discourses often times remain unsanctioned by the broader public thanks to the politics of racelessness and the justifying power of direct democratic institutions. The authors make clear how state politics on the whole inform restrictive policy on citizenship and migration, and the national identity formations in which policy making is embedded. Similarly,

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[63] Scarvagleri 2018, 338.
[64] Helbling 2010, 70.
[65] Profanter and Ureta 2011.
[66] Hernández Aguilar 2019.
[67] Profanter and Ureta 2001, Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020.
[68] Poglia Mileti 2019, 65.
[69] Michel 2015.
[70] Falk, Purtschert, and Lüthi 2016.
[71] Puglia Mileti 2019.

Skenderovic's[72] and Riaño and Wastl-Walter's[73] accounts on *Überfremdung* interrogated the pivotal role of Swiss governments and state institutions in the shifting discursive constructions of the other and the self. The state's role, in particular, was to balance and cater to altering economic and political interests, so to secure market growth and labour force requirements, and to remake the boundaries of an imagined Swiss community. Therefore, while anti-migration parties and movements recurrently dictate the framework in which citizenship and migration are to be debated, attention must be directed to further places, practices, processes, and institutions where the logic of coloniality plays out. To this end, in the following segment, I aim to veer my focus away from coloniality in right-wing politics and toward coloniality at the ‹center› of the modern, liberal state by examining different approaches to citizenship as a set of multifarious practices, processes, and institutions. As we will see, contesting practices perpetually make and remake citizenship and the imagined community it represents. These practices not only refer to explicit ‹us versus them› narratives in political discourse, but also to a range of institutionalized practices such as border enforcement, democratic citizen participation and other spaces and practices generally referred to as biopolitics.

Biopolitics refer to a mode of governing that relies on the use of power to regulate and preserve the ‹legitimate› lives of citizens – that is, to form a cohesive sovereign body and bind it to the modern national state. Essential to biopolitics are, as Michel Foucault[74] and later Giorgio Agamben[75] famously argued, spaces, technologies and practices where citizenship as such emanates and falls to constant reworking. Frequently, these are institutionalized spaces such as prisons, hospitals, or borders and their variegated migration interception facilities, which add to a vast legal and bureaucratic apparatus serving to administer life.[76]

Agamben in particular challenged conceptions of nationhood and citizenship that center national rights declarations as foundation stones for the modern nation state and the creation of a reproducing sovereign body. With the concept of the state of exception, Agamben disrupts the fiction of modern sovereignty by displaying how every modern political system, from mass democracy to totalitarian states, possesses the means to subjugate individuals to punitive laws, while decollating that individual from protection-offering rights. This perspective ‹from the border› helps to understand the relationship between citizens and the state by placing

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[72] Skenderovic 2003.
[73] Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006.
[74] Burchell, Davidson, and Foucault 2008.
[75] Agamben 1998.
[76] Davies, Isakjee, and Dhesi 2017, 5.

emphasis on the excluded and on the ways in which deviance is constructed, and exclusion enforced. For this reason, Agamben insists on conceptualizing biopolitical exclusion as inclusive exclusion because of its constitutive relation to nation state sovereignty and identity.

Rohit's rich account of Switzerland's racializing technologies of identification and control impressively illustrates how socio-political discourse, policy, democratic citizen participation and biopolitical state institutions converge to form and stabilize a homogenous cultural nation.[77] The author particularly examines Switzerland's history of policing and border enforcement as prominent and telling examples for practices that emerge from historically evolved and claimed imaginaries of ‹the Swiss citizen›. Moreover, Rohit includes into his analysis of state racism appearances of Western coloniality in popular culture, mass media and scientific debates in order to understand the extent of forces that culminate in said technologies; a loose but persistent hegemonic representational regime of the own and the other which continually arranges itself in historical assemblages to secure the prosperity, identity and legitimacy of Switzerland as a model for success.[78]

Technologies of identification and control are institutionalized biopolitical practices targeting the «mismatched, indefinable ‹stranger›» with the aim to regulate bodies and populations according to a constructed and contested national norm embodied by the sovereign citizenry. The systematic exclusion of stateless Jews, Sinti and Roma in the 19th and 20th century by anti-migration policing was such a biopolitical practice and expression of state racism justified by the normative, racialized politics of belonging at that time. The author also hints at the connection between the legal and material technologies invented for criminalizing, registering, detaining and deporting aliens in the 19th and 20th century, and more recent technologies such as the border policy repertoire of containment, police checks and biometric databases that are used today in the Schengen/Dublin system against criminalized border crossings.[79] However, both contemporary forms of state racism and their origins in antiquated racist ideology remain widely unacknowledged and unchallenged in Switzerland, wherein the afore mentioned regime of raceless racism displaces attention towards defused rationales of economic self-protection, securitization and cultural incompatibility. Moreover, criticism against racism, violent migration policy and Swiss colonial involvements is even met by the dominant, white supremacist society's determined resistance. Yet, as Rohit states, understanding Switzerland's state racism as

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[77] Rohit 2019.
[78] ibid., 61.
[79] ibid., 49. Author translation.

a dynamic network of dispositives and technologies is precisely what necessitates an exploratory framework of empirical analysis which retraces the coloniality of events that sometimes appear disparate.

2.3. Conclusion

Asylum and migration laws, federal asylum centers, the shifting politics of belonging and economic positioning in Switzerland are products and agents of Switzerland's coloniality and its underlying logics of exclusion. With whiteness understood as a historically contingent formation of coloniality and deployed as a lens in the Swiss context, I have shed light on the ways these logics play out in various discourses and materialize in political imagery, policy and institutional apparatuses of population control. These include the history of *Überfremdung* and its expansion into Islamophobia and other discourses, and how they served as devices for political and economic forces to negotiate their take on identity politics, and to mobilize power across the political spectrum. Meanwhile, race has been successfully obscured as a socially relevant category, so as to justify the differential treatment of the other in the form of socio-political exclusion, economic exploitation and humanitarian paternalism. This process which relies on a range of ideas, languages, policies, practices and state institutions naturalizes these relations of expulsions and the concomitant construction of a national self embedded in a supposedly white, civilized, European community.

The lens I developed here further addresses the concrete racializing boundary work in the form of biopolitical practices in Switzerland. This work maintains insider-outsider relations transversally to a historically developed and developing social hierarchy. That is, the shifting migration and asylum policies, infrastructures of mobility and population control, and other performances of sovereign power that manage populations according to an imagined, Swiss standard – which itself made and remade in the process. In so doing, I have shown the importance of borders; the construction thereof as well as the ‹who› for and against which they are erected.

Building on this preliminary exploration of different, intersecting borders and the ways in which they are mobilized, the next chapter explores different theoretical frameworks and tools that render tangible the multidimensionality and multi-scalar nature of the Swiss border regime, and the BAZ Embrach and Zurich as materializations thereof. As these theories depart from a constructivist perspective on borders, emphasis is placed on the practices that make and remake, yet also challenge and undo, borders. Therefore, borders stand

under constant negotiation. Approaches building up these frameworks are particularly well suited for attuning one's concrete, activist work and academic fieldwork to these nuances. The importance of these nuances is even more pronounced given that actors and practises never fully inhabit clear pro- or anti-migration stances and never fully exercise official state-sanctioned practices nor anti-state, anti-oppression practices. Ultimately, borders acknowledged as and observed across materials and abstract, societal spaces invite us to think about borders as epistemological devices that enable the interrogation of all kinds of naturalized borders, from the concepts we deploy to the roles we inhabit, and how they can be transgressed respectively.

3. What is a Border Regime? Framing the Swiss Border Regime

3.1. Introduction

The BAZ in the canton of Zurich represent and enforce a heterogeneous set of borders. They are state institutions of control for deterritorialized state borders, as much as they are spatial manifestations and technologies of societal ordering. Moreover, as will be further discussed, the BAZ and the asylum system are technologies of humanitarianism and securitization. They perform sovereignty in an increasingly globalized and seemingly borderless world on the one hand, and a humanitarian tradition on the other. To this end, the asylum system presupposes and produces a governable governable, faceless mass of ‹asylum seekers›, ‹migrants› or ‹refugees› through different material and discursive arrangements.[80]

In debates on the autonomy of migration[81], Border Studies scholars critically reflect on the variety of practices, including those carried out by migrants, that hold significant productive power in prompting, erecting, resisting and reproducing borders that create legal, spatial, and societal relations. In so doing, they decenter dominant perspectives on the state as central driving force in migration control, and place emphasis on migrant practices and political struggles that challenge borders controlled by states and constructed by historically contingent discourses and imaginaries. Thus, as a «radically constructivist approach to the studies

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[80] Häkli and Kallio 2020: 11.
[81] Heller, Pezzani, and Stierl 2019.

of border»[82] with the political and epistemic imperative to reflect on the borders we inhabit, Border Studies scholars speak of border regimes, rather than migration or asylum regimes.[83]

In this chapter, I evaluate and compare different conceptual layouts around the term border regime, and how they can be put into conversation with aspects of coloniality as previously elaborated. Regime analysis as understood here departs from the ontological and epistemological view on realities related to migration and migration control as embedded in a multidimensional, multi-scalar space of asymmetrical conflict and negotiation.[84] In these spaces, different actors, roles, interests, intentions, power positions and materialities act and re-act, but also crystallize, reify, and modulate. Regime analysis offers a way to see negotiation practices as spatio-temporally situated, relative to the structures that prompt and embrace them, and as productive forces. Thus, an agency-based regime analysis[85] presupposes ethnographic research in places identified or categorized as spaces of asymmetrical negotiation by the researcher.

Above all, however, by mobilizing the border regime concept I hope to consider the risks of epistemological, conceptual and methodological choices that are potentially antithetical to my positionality as activist researcher in solidarity with people on the move. Academic research, in particular, runs the risk of imposing a rigidity in the field that does not account for the field's messy and constantly changing conditions. Furthermore, as violent population management rests on biopolitically reinforced socio-legal categorizations, Migration and Border Studies scholars urge researchers to scrutinize categories and boundaries set by border institutions.[86] Mezzadra and Neilson's work has demonstrated the indispensability of their own experiences with border struggles, as well as the resulting friendships and relationships, in critically reflecting on the many borders they inhabit and finding ways to transgress them. Therefore, the concept of the border regime not only urges scrutiny of the roles and categories with which we, as activist researchers, navigate the field but also calls on us to put those reflections into action.

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[82] Casas-Cortes, De Genova et al. 2014, 69.
[83] Various works I attend to in this chapter operate with the terms asylum regime and migration regime as they are rooted in different disciplines and epistemic motivations which implicate certain nuances in their differentiation from border regime. Nonetheless, the concepts speak to each other on various levels. Therefore, in this chapter, if an author whose work speaks to the way I mobilize border regime although they originally operated with a slightly different concept, I use the terms asylum/border regime or migration/border regime in order to account for these nuances while focusing on the fruitful conversation between concepts.
[84] Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, De Genova et al. 2014; Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019.
[85] Rass and Wolff 2018.
[86] Rass and Wolff 2018, 43.

3.2. Doing Border Regime Research

Throughout my activist work for and with people on the move detained in different asylum centers and varying legal statuses, I have witnessed a magnitude of dissimilar border experiences. On the one hand, these experiences concern the immediate encounters with the gruesome materiality of border institutions and actors. On the other, they also include reflexive experiences that make visible socio-cultural borders, their construction processes, and the effects they produce on and between individuals. In this regard, the expression that we inhabit different borders is more than just an analogy. Individual actions and thoughts hold the potential to activate borders and amplify their effects, both immediately and in the long term. Picozza exemplifies this in her work where she describes the not-uncommon way in which volunteers reproduce segregation of refugees at the grassroots level through reconstituting the border between those who need help and those who provide help, and the relationality that comes with it.[87] In so doing, volunteers take part in maintaining the order of belonging and hierarchy by which state borders are conditioned.

Other recurring instances involve moments when different forms of racism, homophobia, and sexism multiply the barriers that emerge when individuals from diverse backgrounds interact. In 2018, I attended a workshop on paternalism in volunteer work, during which French-born activists and migrant activists discussed how tolerance towards racist, homophobic, and antisemitic statements and behaviors from refugees can be a form of paternalism. For instance, one woman shared an experience she had with a queer activist who consistently ignored a refugee's overtly homophobic comments because she perceived him as essentially uneducated, possibly uncivilized, and a victim of Western domination. This perspective prevented her from holding him accountable, leading to an increased emotional burden that eventually left her exhausted. However, many conflicts arising from such behaviors have resulted in productive confrontations that led to transformations on both sides. This is precisely because the tangible emergence of boundaries provides an opportunity to explore the underlying conditions of prejudicial beliefs. This exploration allows both parties to seek ways to transcend these beliefs.

Therefore, while the BAZ represents spatial manifestations of Switzerland's borders, inherently divisive in nature, struggles within the BAZ' context generate meaningful encounters and ignite critical reflection in

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[87] Picozza 2021, 24.

spaces characterized by difference, connectivity, and reflexivity. Hence, there is a necessity to employ a conceptual framework capable of navigating the multidimensionality of borders, whether they pertain to national border institutions or the operational concepts and language with which I navigate the field. ‹Borders› as understood by Border Studies scholars incorporate these reflexive arguments just as much as they account the materiality of border institutions, and the processual, deterritorialized and dispersed nature of borders under contemporary globalization.[88]

In any case, I mobilize the term ‹border regime› due to its potential to facilitate the understanding of border experiences in connection with experiences in and with federal asylum centers. There exists a broad variety of regime analyses and their applications within the context of ethnographic research. For Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, De Genova et al., the border regime constitutes a

«multidimensional multi-scalar space of conflict and negotiation and thus requires a multi-methods approach including not only the stock methods of ethnography such as participant observation and interviews, but extending to discourse and policy analysis and genealogical reconstructions of the contemporary while approaching the ever-shifting constellation of the aggregate of opposing forces which is the border through praxeographic research at the time and site of its very emergence.»[89]

With similar emphasis on borders as a site of constant encounter, tension, conflict and contestation, Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. center in their fieldwork spaces of asymmetrical negotiation where interactions between parties cause individuals to go beyond the realm of their seemingly predefined roles as state agents, civil society actors or migrants. The authors conclude that these spaces of asymmetrical negotiation are constitutive of the European migration regime[90] due to the way institutional and informal knowledge and seemingly opposing values, interests and positions oscillate and intertwine through immediate, embodied encounters. The productivity of these encounters render the European migration regime an inherently unreadable and unpredictable system where «power operates not in spite of but exactly through the

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[88] Brambilla 2015, 111.
[89] Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, De Genova et al. 2014, 70.
[90] The authors work is embedded in socio-legal studies of different European migration laws and institutions and thereby grounds their regime analysis within a ‹migration regime›. See Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019.

unreadability and unpredictability of law enforcement»[91]. Thereby, the authors make evident that even the structures of something as powerful and rigid as European migration/border regimes[92] are continuously developing through social performances depending on the actors' power to mobilize influence.[93]

As post-colonial scholar Edward Said reminds, complex power structures ought to be observed from a specific actor's point of view, regardless of their particular role within the power structure. Maintaining this focus disrupts the researcher's gaze fixation from supposedly mere subjects to the colonizing power itself.[94] Against this backdrop, Rass and Wolff propose an agency-based approach to migration/border regime that departs from the ontology of a complex and decentralized power formation of heterogeneous connections between actors whose practices reflect different standpoints within the power formation, and aggregate in different ways: «Sometimes their practices institutionalize, sometimes they modulate, and sometimes they turn out volatile».[95] Therefore, because actors enforce, reproduce or resist the border regime to different degrees and in conflicting manner and thereby blur prevalent categories such as ‹state-agent›, ‹civil society actor›, ‹activist› or ‹resisting and oppressed migrant›, an agency-based approach to migration/border regime suggests using practice as an analytical starting point to account for the duality of structure and agency.

In a similar vein, Picozza mobilizes regime analysis to understand aggregating connections between the material and discursive structures that determine and produce space, social relations and subjectivities, and everything that is produced in excess of the same structures.[96] This perspective provides a framework for understanding realities which conventional terms and thoughts fail to capture and, thus erase excessive nuances to make them fit. To this end, the author uses the lens of coloniality to analyse the production of racialized subjectivities, and how they engender categories such as ‹helpers›, ‹the civil society›, and ‹refugees› politically, socially and materially. Here, the logic of coloniality exposes how racialized categories emerge in a hierarchical, binary manner, (re-)producing a variety of relations between a specific Europeanness and its constitutive other. Thereby, the categories normalize, depoliticize and legitimize the realities attached to them.

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[91] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019, 6.
[92] The focus in this chapter lies on the way regime analysis has been mobilized across examples of various disciplines and fields. Thus, although researchers ultimately speak of ‹migration regimes›, ‹asylum regimes› or ‹border regimes›, I refer to migration/border regime or asylum/border in order to highlight the commonalities in regime analysis that equally speak to the conceptual sensitivies of ‹the border›.
[93] Rass and Wolff 2018, 37, 44.
[94] ibid., 44.
[95] ibid., 45.
[96] Picozza 2021, xvi.

Picozza's theoretical framework, with its fruitful combination of regime analysis and coloniality, offers several analytical advantages over the previously discussed concepts. First, instead of dismissing problematic and contested categories that research might risk reifying, the author is interested in exploring their productivity. In other words, if regime analysis concerns itself with the duality of structure and agency, Picozza attributes categories such as ‹refugee› or ‹civil society actor› a significant structural component, making them indispensable to consider. Second, by looking closer into the political, social and material production process of such categories, the author follows Chakrabarty's plea to provincialize Europe. She does so by understanding how ‹refugeeness› consists of concrete and situated realities, rather than of a set of universal attributes. Thirdly, by putting forward the lens of coloniality, the author advances an agency-based approach to the asylum/border regime with an anti-colonial spirit committed to a horizon of full political, material and social equality.[97] Because, as Tuck and Wayne Yang remind us, a comfortable adoption of decolonizing discourse reduces decolonization to a metaphor. Rather, decolonization should lead to material practice and mobilization against social stratification, political erasure, and uneven material distribution.[98]

3.4. Conclusion

The border regime concept urges us to identify and explore spaces of conflict and negotiation in which border constructions and transgressions materialize in laws, materials, discourses, roles, and practices. By centering the co-constituency of migrant struggles, the concept guides research in locating these spaces of conflict and understanding the multiple scales and dimensions to which they are related. Thus, by extending the notion of the border, the concept highlights how federal asylum centers, as state border institutions, represent and enforce a heterogeneous set of borders across multiple scales and dimensions.

The examination of Switzerland's history through the lens of whiteness already sketched out different borders that reconfigured the homogeneity of ‹the others› over time in order to stabilize an imagined national self as well as economic relations that favour a white supremacist hierarchy. *Überfremdung* discourse elucidated the forces, language and material practices at play, and borders' nature as inherently negotiated.

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[97] ibid., xvii
[98] Tuck and Wayne Yang 2012.

Although fiercely negotiated in public, border practices often materialize in policy, biopolitical institutions, and other practices that defuse exclusionary and racializing effects, such as those occurring under the name of economic self-protection, securitization and cultural incompatibility.

Against this backdrop, I seek to further explore the scales and dimensions of border constructions in Switzerland and how they interact. To this end, the following section further examines dominant perspectives and material practices with which Switzerland reconfigures its homogeneity and distance to its constitutive other. Emphasis will be placed on the power-knowledge-networks that structure the very ideas and languages in which asylum is thought, told, and debated. For example, how the conceptual borders that stabilize Europe's supremacist global position determined the way in which the increased migratory flows of 2015 were conceived of as ‹crisis›.

4. Instances of the Swiss Border Regime

Based on the previously outlined border regime concept, the following genealogical approach to the Swiss border regime sets out to dissect conventional perspectives on asylum, and to engage with alternative concepts that undermine the power-knowledge-networks articulated in conventional perspectives. This is to build a counter-narrative to the «historical knowledges and practices dedicated to ordering society for the purposes of enhancing the forces of the state»[99] in the domains of migration and population management, and to redirect the gaze towards colonial practices of othering and bordering in the everyday. To this end, I seek to highlight tropes of coloniality in dominant narrations and the particular order that leaves out some perspectives – commonly those of migrant struggles – while amplifying state- and civil society-centered perspectives. Furthermore, through examining the so-called ‹refugee crisis› in 2015, I will discuss how the crisis was, in fact, a crisis of border control and the dominant discourses that sustained it across European states, including Switzerland. For this reason, examining the 2015 ‹refugee crisis› will also serve to better situate arguments and motivations of the 2016 asylum law revision.

4.3.1. Writing Asylum in the 20th Century

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[99] Walters 2015, 13f.

In the 2019 edition of *terra cognita*, a magazine published by the Swiss Federal Commission for Migration, various scholars, journalists, legal practitioners and former officials take a look back on the «diverse history of refugee movements that reached Switzerland».[100] As such, it represents a cross-section of conventional perspectives and frameworks within which asylum in Switzerland is being thought and written. Furthermore, the magazine offers insights into conceptual and narrative strands against which historic developments are oriented. In so doing, it indicates the general sentiment of the power relations in hegemonic knowledge production.

Switzerland's ratification of the Geneva Convention on Refugees by Switzerland in 1955 represents a crucial departure and reference point for the country's history of asylum in the 2019 edition of *terra cognita*[101] and elsewhere[102]. The repeated referencing of the 1955 Geneva Convention on Refugees elevates humanitarian work and ideology to a privileged discursive framework for asylum in general, and centers asylum and humanitarianism in Switzerland's national identity building. Concomitantly, Switzerland's humanitarian tradition is subject to critical interrogations that pinpoint contradictions and failures grave enough to question whether that tradition in the conventionally thought form has ever existed.[103] In both perspectives, however, the ratification of the Geneva Convention serves as a reference point for constructing a particular regulatory linearity that continuously orients adapting institutional texts and reconfigures ideas about what asylum is, who refugees are, and what measures the state ought to establish to do justice to the former and care for the latter. These forms of narration commonly explain the production of such institutional texts as the results of negotiations between changing actors and interests, tipping either toward the benevolent or restrictive side.

For the most part, these actors and interests are limited to but Swiss governments, political parties, and state institutions. With the increasing relevance of direct democratic participation around the previously addressed *Überfremdung* debates, the votes of Swiss constituents represent another decisive role. Marginally, perspectives on the criminalization of solidarity with refugees bring into focus the role of forces that contest and shape asylum ‹from the outside›. Cases include the individuals that helped persecuted Jews cross Swiss

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100 Prodolliet, Simone, Gebremariam, Lupi et al. 2019.
101 Stöckli 2019; Prodolliet 2019; Piguet 2019.
102 Baumeister, Brückner and Sonnack 2018; Merli and Pöschl 2017.
103 Tanner 2018.

borders undetected during the Second World War[104], or the case of Anni Lanz[105], who was prosecuted numerous times for helping people on the move at and within national borders over 35 years.

It is conspicuous that the history of Swiss asylum is told on the basis of various ‹waves› which reach Switzerland from a specific external nation state, conflict or other catastrophic event. This perspective is largely justified by the fact that shifting historical contexts provoke different responses to and transformations in societies, geo-political and economic constellations, state institutions, subject positions and collective identities. The *terra cognita* magazine reinforces this image through confining several chapters to a particular ‹wave› of a certain time. Such ‹waves› include those of Jewish refugees in the Second World War, East-European and South-East Asian refugees from communist countries, Chilean refugees from the neoliberal military junta, Tamil refugees from the Sri Lanka civil war, former Yugoslavian refugees and later Bosnian refugees fleeing from different Balkan wars, Kurdish refugees fleeing from Turkish oppression, Eritrean refugees, Syrian refugees and those fleeing in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Within the perspective of a national humanitarian and regulatory linearity, historic accounts place emphasis on shifting legal innovations in asylum and migration politics and their ensuing state responses.[106] Only a few author that address asylum during the Cold War hint that the politics of asylum served as a device for negotiating and constructing boundaries between ‹us› and ‹them›, and for normalizing relations of exclusion and exploitation. Generally, however, attempts to deploy ‹asylum› as a conceptual nexus for a wide range of domains and stories often end up depicting asylum as an ever-changing narrative of a nation tasked with resolving the tension between the reception and repulsion of people pressured to migrate due to crises emerging elsewhere.

Here, Picozza would argue that by writing about the different ‹waves› of refugees and how they were received by Switzerland, the authors of such accounts largely ignore the political, legal, and social production of refugees.[107] Along with their production, also the mutual production of Switzerland's self-image. What is missing is a perspective ‹from the border› that interrogates how the racialized categories at play are a «governmental practice rooted in colonial history that naturalizes the exercise of administrative power by

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[104] Krummenacher 2019.
[105] Holenstein, Kury and Schulz 2018, 336.
[106] Freiplatzaktion 2018; Boškovska 2019; Lüthi 2019; Keller 2019; Walther 2019.
[107] Picozza 2021, 7.

Europeanized («non-white») assemblages over non-Europeanized («non-white») assemblages».[108] This is a prime example of an academic authors' complicity in erasing migrant histories, practices and subjectivities by reifying dominant categories and normalizing the associated experiences. An exception to this is Schulz's chapter in *terra cognita*, which focuses on the Sans Papier movement in Zurich and includes Schulz's encouragement for scholars to seek innovative approaches from spatial, discourse, and semantic perspectives.[109]

Concerning the relentless negotiations that characterize the domain of asylum, border regime and regime analysis theory remind us to be sensitive towards sometimes overlooked actors and practices, and the power positions from which they act within the power structure. Over-emphasizing political parties, democratic votes and the state apparatus of migration control produces reductionist representations of the Swiss border regimes. This raises the question of to what extent a linearly structured narration withstands the boundless amounts of actors, practices, and spaces that shape the border regime, let alone the high frequency with which they enter and leave its stage. Therefore, in the following part, I move to outline elements of the border regime and its outcomes. On an ontological level, these elements constitute the Swiss border regime, and on the epistemological level, they demonstrate how different perspectives on asylum and the border regime produce different discursive and material outcomes. To do so, I will dissect the ‹refugee crisis› of 2015 on various levels, from the language and discourse that dominated the public, to Switzerland's political and economic relations to the EU, to resistance in practice and in research. This provides a useful window into the landscape of interests and forces that engaged in the 2016 asylum law revision as to be discussed later.

4.3.2. Examining the 2015 ‹Crisis›

The ‹refugee crisis› of 2015 marked a series of unprecedented events of migratory movements in Europe, and the responses that followed on the local, national, international and supranational level. In vast quantities, spectacularized images of people on the move struggling to cross the Mediterranean, and suffering at Hungarian train stations, on Greek coasts and in Bosnian woods appeared across media. Across dominant societies of Western European states, they evoked sentiments ranging from helplessness, to fear of a slowly

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[108] ibid., xvi
[109] Schulz 2019.

approaching tragedy and threat.[110] Laden with stark emotional implications, the concept of the ‹crisis› has been employed to define migration as a critical juncture that requires management to preserve what is traditionally considered the normal social fabric, as noted by scholars in border studies.[111] Consequently, a variety of novel institutional and private industry ‹re-bordering› measures were brought to the plan on national and supra-national levels. Meanwhile, non-state actors either filled in the gaps of the state institutions' functions or enforced their decisions.[112] In contrast to the notion of crisis, other refer to this period as the long summer of migration. Here, emphasis is placed on the contrasting positionality of the autonomy of migration represented by collective efforts to reach individually desired destinations.[113]

For a better understanding of the events, it is well worth considering Switzerland's rapprochement to European laws, markets, infrastructures and identities which gathered pace towards the end of the Cold War. At that time, the Federal Council considered that relations between the so-called third World Countries and the industrialized nations of the North would soon replace the previous geopolitical dualism between East and West as the new dominant factor in global migration. The scientific and ministerial language of the 1990s, with its unabashed recurse to racist arguments that led to the creation of the two and three circles model discussed in the previous chapter, is well captured by Historian Pärli.[114] Switzerland's geopolitical realignment towards the end of the Cold War occurred in parallel to that of other European states, spurring the creation of a new European identity and political harmonization.

The 1990s saw the rise of the right-wing party SVP and its influence on migration and asylum policy through highly funded campaigns and popular votes that left their mark on legislation and discourse irrespective of the voting results. At the heart of their rhetoric were political slogans such as ‹asylum abuse›, ‹bogus asylum seekers›, and ‹foreigner criminality›, which had a lasting impact on migration law. The slogans also spilled over into other domains where, for example, the ‹bogus asylum seeker› and the ‹bogus disabled› (*Scheinasylant* and *Scheininvalide*) were uttered almost interchangeably. In the past 30 years, the SVP has been particularly successful in restricting state welfare provisions and expanding instruments of state

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[110] Collyer and King 2016.
[111] Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, De Genova et al. 2014, 59.
[112] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019, 194.
[113] Heller, Pezzani, and Stierl 2019; Picozza 2021.
[114] Pärli 2018, 54-57.

repression by introducing new forms of coercive measures (*Zwangsmassnahmen*).[115] Simultaneously, refugee solidarity movements broadly based across religious institutions, civil society actors, NGOs and intellectuals managed to register their own successes through different popular votes, yet saw their influence and public support declining by the end of the 20th century.[116]

In the same period, negotiations for Switzerland's accession to the EU started taking their course. As a full EU membership appeared to be close at hand, it was turned down by the Swiss electorate last minute in 1992, much to the dismay of the Federal government. Nevertheless, almost ten years later, the Federal Council drew up and carefully negotiated Bilateral Agreements with the EU in order to secure and intensify social, political and particularly economic relation. The Bilateral Agreements came into force in 2008 and included Swiss inclusion in the Dublin-Schengen area, a measure both fraught, yet successful in harmonizing the relationship between dispersed European countries, EU institutions and Switzerland through the Single Market, which was foundational to the European project.[117] Among a variety of legal, organizational and technological instruments, inclusion in the Schengen-Dublin area partially shifted national borders legally and materially to the EU's exterior borders. This introduced the EU as an additional administrational layer to those of Swiss Cantons and the Federal Government and increased the use of sophisticated technologies in border control.[118] Scholars generally refer to this shift as the securitization of migration.[119]

The function of the Dublin regulation to enable the free circulation of goods, services, capital and labour force is undergirded by the biopolitical will to control the movements of people, and to preserve the national body of citizens.[120] The regulation today exists in its third revision and assigns the responsibility of processing asylum applications to those EU countries which have registered the fingerprints of people on the move – turning them into asylum seekers – and stored in the EURODAC database. In so doing, the Dublin regulation intents to prevent «secondary movements» of asylum seekers.[121] Due to Switzerland's «convenient» landlocked location far off from EU borders, the Dublin regulation initially offered an attractive compensation

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[115] Holenstein, Kury, and Schulz 2018, 334f.
[116] ibid., 338.
[117] see Soysüren and Nedelcu 2020; Picozza 2021; Hess and Kasparek 2019.
[118] see Soysüren and Nedelcu 2020.
[119] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019, 44.
[120] Hess and Kasparek 2019.
[121] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019, 66.

for what seemed a partial surrendering of sovereign population control to the partially lifted border of the Schengen-Dublin area.[122] However, as statistics of 2015 and 2018 show, the numbers of deportations from Switzerland to countries of first contact often surpass the numbers of received Dublin transfers only by little. These numbers confirm how, in spite of the coordinated effort of EU states to maximize control over EU borders and interior secondary movements, a large amount of people on the move manage to bypass first country registration at the EU border, whether intentionally or not.[123] Therefore, the Dublin regulation did not prove to be an instrument of sovereign control as expected.

Moreover, both numbers are indicative of the overwhelming administrative and infrastructural provisions EU states install to ensure efficient and constant deportations, including those within EU borders.[124] However, the frequency of zero-sum situations shows that the Dublin system does not really provide central European states the means to shift their ‹migration burden› to the EU's external borders. Besides, the broader history of the Dublin regulations, which are found to increase violence and precarization of people on the move,[125] also shows how the totality of Swiss legal innovations that diversified a handful of asylum law articles into 144 articles by 2010[126] are not the result of successful nationalist and anti-migrant politics alone.

Statistically, the increased migratory flows of 2015 mostly affected Germany and Austria. Yet, in spite of the relatively unchanged numbers of people on the move arriving in Switzerland, a crisis-like climate spread throughout the Swiss public and the political landscape.[127] Here, several crucial, yet profoundly productive objections to the notion of ‹crisis› come into play, as well as how the notion stands in relation to the notion of the long summer of migration. To begin with, the 2015 events were in many aspects ordinary. Border control practices have never been absolute or thoroughly coherent, and people on the move and solidarity groups have been struggling at EU borders for decades.[128] Furthermore, what caused and intensified the sentiment of crisis was rather a temporal «collapse» of border control and, thus, a «crisis of the border regime itself»[129] and its

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[122] Pärli 2018, 92.
[123] see Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019. Their extensive research offers insights into how and why cracks, loop holes and informal practices crisscross the seemingly powerful, financially overwhelming and well organized Dublin system. People on the move manage to make use of these deficiencies, both intentional and by chance.
[124] See Walters 2018.
[125] Hess and Kasparek 2019.
[126] Schindler 2017.
[127] humanrights.ch 2015.
[128] Hess and Kasparek 2019, 14.
[129] Picozza 2021, xvii.

logistics[130]. Third, and closely related to the previous point, the 2015 ‹refugee crisis› was also rather a crisis for the traditional, Eurocentric humanitarian tradition, for whom

«the strangers are no longer distant geographically, nor are they abject or easily objectified and thus proximity unsettles the dominant modus operandi of humanitarian intervention that seeks to save distant strangers and keep them distant. The strangers are now within the borders of Europe and must be managed effectively for their own wellbeing and for the maintenance of European liberalism through the imposition of a range of techniques usually practiced elsewhere, in non-European, distant places. However, while the strangers are now not distant in a geographical sense, they must remain distant in the socio-political sense and thus the logics of effective disaster management remain and become entwined with wider, exclusive processes of bordering.»[131]

This comparison serves to highlight the productivity of the crisis, rather than invalidating it through arguments. Scholars and researchers who deploy the crisis as an analytical lens seize the ample opportunities the alternating discursive landscape of 2015 has to offer in order to understand how state borders are conditioned and activated. Examples include the work of Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. on Germany's shifting economy of NGO involvement and the everyday work of state agents. The authors forcefully demonstrate how meticulously elaborated laws, rules and roles are rarely deployed in the field as intended by their underlying legislative and procedural texts. Rather, they only come into existence in moments of embodied encounters and practice. In doing so, they raise the question what precisely constitutes the field of asylum and migration, if informal knowledge, embodied practices, and the agency of «many hands» have always determined state agents' work on one side, and people on the move's agency on the other. The ‹crisis› rendered visible the seemingly exceptional anomalies and chaotic reifications of border practice, yet also the unaltered, underlying dynamics that shaped those realities pre-2015.[132]

In a similar vein, the collapse reminds Hess and Kasparek of the multi-level complexity that sustains the border regime. They prompt readers to understand it as «an unstable ensemble, characterized by the heterogeneity of its actors, institutions and discourses, its shifting alliances and allegiances, its diverging

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[130] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019, 15.
[131] Pallister-Wilkins 2020, 999.
[132] Eule, Borelli, Lindberg et al. 2019.

interests and its practice of ad-hoc solutions and ‹quick fixes››.[133] In so doing, they raise fundamentally epistemological questions about the direction of perspective and, particularly, the centering of the sometimes hidden, sometimes highly visible struggles of migration that render European border regimes structurally ridden by moments of crisis.[134] These scholars help making clear that the ‹crisis› and the long summer of migration are mutually constitutive. Therefore, even though in 2015 the numbers of asylum applications lodged in Switzerland hardly paint a comparable picture to that of its neighboring countries,[135] the crisis as analytical lens prompts us to revisit our epistemological viewpoints and conceptual tools on which research on asylum in Switzerland can build.

Finally, from the standpoint of a post-colonial critique of the European humanitarian tradition and imagination, Pallister-Wilkins reminds us of the mutual dependency of humanitarianism and securitization that tragically manifests in the European hotspot approach, itself a drastic measure of re-bordering in the wake of the 2015 events. What seems like a paradox or contradiction to many, is in fact a co-constitutive relation between care, control and the modern state.[136] This is evidenced by a body of ethnographic research that explores the tension between care and control in migration realities,[137] and, among others, Didier Fassin's account on global humanitarian intervention.[138]

4.4. Conclusion

Conventional perspectives that structure the way we write and think about migration and asylum are themselves acts of border constructions that regulate the emergence of alternative stories. The erasure of stories and voices is directly related to the rigidity and relentlessness in which asylum stories are oriented toward conceptual centers such as humanitarian intervention, asylum as political agenda, or Europe itself as a geopolitical, ideological, and economic center.

In 2015, however, when the European border regime had lost its veil as a unified and rationalized system of governmental control, it surfaced how migration control arrangements were but a patchwork of immediate

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[133] Hess and Kasparek 2019, 2.
[134] ibid.
[135] Roth 2017, 7.
[136] see Pallister-Wilkins 2020.
[137] see Bibler Coutin 2010.
[138] Fassin 2012.

emergency solutions to people on the move's overwhelming, collective effort to cross the fortified borders of Europe. This exposure also challenged other structure-giving narratives, laws, and arrangements. Moreover, these events offered ample opportunities to better understand the border regime's constitutive elements and amplify counteracting perspectives, despite the swift and expensive re-bordering across European states.

Due to infrastructural and idea-historical integrations with Europe, the crisis was also mobilized as a political issue in Switzerland. Debates on national sovereignty vis-à-vis the apparent dissolution of state borders, and the highly spectacularized images of suffering had a significant impact on the Federal Government's plan to remodel asylum policy and infrastructure. In the course of the 2016 asylum law revision, seemingly benevolent humanitarian claims were thus negotiated inseparably from concerns about national security, precisely because the arrangements that sustained borders between various centers and their peripheries had to be revised not only on the level of state borders.

5. The Swiss Border Regime and the 2016 Asylum Law Revision

5.1. Introduction

I have thus far elaborated an understanding of the Swiss border regime as a multidimensional, multi-scalar space of conflict and negotiation. This chapters sketches out the contours of the places, actors, practises and discourses that make up this space of conflict and negotiation. It consists of different accounts resulting from 11 semi-structured interviews, archival research, countless conversations throughout two and a half years of activist work around SoS and other encounters that inform my understanding of the Swiss border regime.

The chapter starts at the 2016 vote on the asylum law revision, which gave way to a new form of neoliberal governance over migration. The revision had at its core a range of challenges, such as the reduction of costs and bureaucracy in the asylum system, adaptation of infrastructures in the face of migratory flows as experienced in the 2015 ‹crisis› and fostering harmonization with EU laws and labor markets through the Schengen and Dublin Agreements. As a solution, the 2016 revision to the asylum law proposed the standardization and acceleration of existing laws and infrastructures for which the State Secretariat of Migration (SEM) assumed the central managerial role. Similarly, federal asylum centers replaced a dispersed network of Cantonal asylum facilities. As the most recent major referendum, the 2016 vote thus offers a look

into the discourses, interests and shifting actors that currently mobilize influence in shaping the Swiss border regime.

The second part of this chapter involves personal encounters around the federal asylum centers in Embrach and Zurich, and other places and moments that connect to the Swiss border regime. The focus hereby lies on my own work and presence, through which I gathered other accounts from the perspective of people on the move in the asylum centers, local activists, state employees and other actors. Emphasis is further placed on the plurality of migrant struggles prompted by and as responses to arrangements of the border regime. These accounts show that knowledge production about the Swiss border regime, and more precisely the federal asylum centers, cannot be performed other than through the actors, places and practices that shape and are shaped by it. In the final part, I will reiterate insights about the precise moments and sites where border emerge and face resistance, and articulate initial propositions on how to make use of the border regime in order to dismantle the black box BAZ.

5.2. The 2016 Asylum Law Revision

In 2016 the Swiss electorate voted on the new asylum law revision. The revision itself dates back to a parliamentary motion from 2012 to reduce costs in the domain of asylum and was later developed by a member of the Social Democratic Party and the Federal Council. Acceleration of asylum procedures through standardization and centralization of actors and infrastructure, and overall ‹benevolent› commitments to asylum seekers in the form of civil society and NGO involvement formed the revision's argumentative hook and political impetus. Moreover, a perennial test-phase at Zurich's *Juch-Areal* preceded the revision, serving to evidence the legislative and administrative changes' efficiency as well as their potential to enhance cooperation between operative stakeholders.[139] At the same time, although less publicly communicated, the new asylum revision was part of ongoing negotiations with the EU to remain a member state of the Schengen-Dublin area for which legal and infrastructural alignment with the Dublin II (and later III) deportation system are a central requirement. As it seems, the long summer of migration and its conflict lines along the European border crisis, humanitarian intervention and neo-liberal state reform had significant influence on the 2016 vote.

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[139] Hruschka 2019.

At the administrative level, the asylum revision gave the SEM the role of receiving and processing asylum applications and supporting local governments in enforcement. This eliminates a point of government expenditure for the cantonal governments who priorly handled this responsibility. Meanwhile, cantons and municipalities retain responsibility over accommodation and integration of temporarily admitted asylum seekers, recognized refugees and asylum seekers in the expanded procedure, and enforcement of removal – deportation. Through a contract proposal competition, care and security services in Zurich were outsourced to the state-owned Asylorganisation Zurich (AOZ), and the private security company Securitas, and later Protectas. In other Cantons, the for-profit company ORS was contracted for care services. Furthermore, public procurement lays also down that the construction of each new federal asylum center will be decided by an architectural tendering process.

At the procedural level, people on the move entering Switzerland are allocated to one of the 18 federal asylum centers, where fingerprints are taken and initial orientation given. Afterwards, they enter a preparatory phase of approximately 21 days for which the state provides applicants free legal representation. In the initial «conversation», SEM officials evaluate whether the applicant falls under the Dublin Regulation, which reduces certain time periods and deadlines, such the process for lodging a complaint. Otherwise, applicants enter the ‹accelerated procedure› through which a decision in asylum status should take no longer than 140 days. If the SEM fails to decide within that period, applicants enter the expanded procedure. Up until this point, applicants stay in so-called federal asylum centers with process function. In the case of an upcoming deportation, whether it's because applicants fall under the Dublin Regulation or because they have received a negative decision, applicants are transferred to a federal asylum center without process function.[140]

The revision's reduction of costs and process periods enjoyed broad acceptance across the political spectrum. Center-left parties in particular welcomed urgent measures to reduce psychological strains caused by long waiting periods, and to reform the outdated and overloaded network of Cantonal asylum centers.

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[140] Staatssekretariat für Migration SEM, «Umsetzung der Asylgesetzrevision (AsylG) – Beschleunigung der Asylverfahren».

Constituents of the City of Zurich participated in an additional vote about the construction of a federal asylum center in the *Industriequartier* neighborhood, where the left-majority government negotiated greater involvement of city departments in the federal asylum center's planning. The focus was on «liberal, open house rules with local freedom in design and implementation […] which puts the asylum seekers at the center and corresponds to the principles of the City of Zurich in dealing with refugees in a humane manner»[141].

However, smaller left-wing parties, NGOs and activist collectives opposed the asylum law revision. The critics' main argument was that cost savings through centralization and standardization would happen at the detriment of asylum-seekers' access to basic rights and diligent processing of applications by legal representatives and state assessors.[142] Flat rate compensation for legal representatives could incentivize fast termination of procedures or discontinuation of a case if the case of poor prospects, they argued. As chances of success typically depend on availability of hard evidence, rather than the ‹validity› of the cause for migration, particularly vulnerable individuals could be put into additional jeopardy as hard evidence can be difficult to obtain. Moreover, short appeal periods of 30 days, and 10 days for Dublin cases respectively, would impede efforts to reorganize and formulate a strong appeal, particularly in situations where additional medical reports and other new evidence are required. Legal representatives would even be obliged to lay down a mandate if an appeal appears futile, critics warned.[143] Lastly, due to the linguistic uncertainty in formulations around the construction and organisation of federal asylum centers, critics expected further isolation of asylum seekers from civil society and migrant support networks. «If people never arrive at all, it is easier to get them out again»[144], stated a journalist during the revision's campaign, hinting at what will eventually be standardized and accelerated: the deportation of unwanted migrants.

The asylum revision reform received an overwhelming 66.8% yes votes on a national level, and the separate vote in the City or Zurich more than 70% yes votes. The results reflect the broad disregard of voices that draw attention to asylum's racialized history, and the extent in which the majority society understands asylum as a negotiating field of humanitarian motives, security policy, and public funds allocations.

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[141] Cuche-Curti 2019, 1. Author translation.
[142] Landolt and Surber 2016.
[143] ibid.
[144] ibid. Author translation.

5.2. The 2019 Border Regime in Zurich

5.2.1. BAZ Embrach Encounters

In late 2018, I was approached by two friends who have been active in various migrant solidarity collectives and initiatives. One of these initiatives is called the *Bündnis Wo Unrecht Zu Recht Wird* (WUZRW), a coalition of several smaller collectives formed at the beginning of 2017 in response to the growing repression against rejected asylum seekers in the Canton of Zurich who are commonly detained in remote, so-called repatriation centers. Such centers are mobile containers and former civil defence bunkers, formerly called emergency shelters or NUK. Under the former asylum law, people on the move with declined asylum applications were transferred to these places as part of their deportation process. Depending on various factors, deportations can only take place with the detainee's consent, and force may only be applied under specific legal and political circumstances. For this this reason, the deportation process consists of different measures attempting to incentivize ‹voluntary› deportation through payouts, but mostly through an array of repressive measures: Containment within rural municipalities, destitute accommodations and regular harassment by law enforcement, such as haphazard arrests and controls inside the accommodations at any time of day. Due to the individual reasons that make a ‹voluntary› deportation impossible, many live in these places for several years, if not decades. Their only legal way out are applications for a hardship case, which is demanding and difficult to attain, not least because hardship as legal negotiation tool and the state department that disposes over it have been under constant attack by politicians.[145]

In response to this legally legitimized, repressive regime, the WUZRW initiative established a group for each repatriation center with the goal to organize frequent, regular visits in order to break through isolation, offer legal support, establish meaningful relationships, monitor the spaces, actors and practices in these centers, and organize political action. Despite the rigidity of the regime, the collective managed to help win a few hardship cases and, together with detainees, improve lives materially and mentally. Furthermore, their consistent publicity work managed to draw attention to the lives under the repressive *Nothilferegime*

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[145] Wo Unrecht zu Recht wird, «Nothilfe und Zwangsmassnahmen gegen abgewiesene Asylsuchende».

(‹emergency regime›, a term coined by WUZRW that alludes to the administrative welfare provision under which rejected asylum seekers fall) and mobilize political action.

These positive experiences and the ongoing urgency to maintain solidarity structures motivated Lukas, one of the two friends and long-term WUZRW activists, to establish a new solidarity group in Embrach where in July 2019 one of the first federal asylum centers began its operation. Embrach is a small municipality in the north of the Canton of Zurich, and given its geographic location, it exacerbates isolation – just as anticipated by critics of the new asylum revision. At the time, it was unclear whether any dedicated and independent group, institution or NGO had plans to monitor operations and foster exchange with people on the move in Embrach, and, thereby document how the effects of the new asylum law would take shape.

The federal asylum center in Embrach lies in a peculiar enclave delimited by a small forest and river in the north and a motorway in the south. Detached from the rest of Embrach, most of the buildings in the enclave are facilities of the *Sozialamt Kanton Zurich* (the welfare office of the Canton) and the *Krankenheimverband Zürcher Unterland,* which operates a psychiatric ward and a nursing home, among others. «People are really being dealt with here, eh?», a member of our newly established group SoS cynically noted on our first visit.

In an interview with the municipality of Embrach's president, he talked about a long tradition around the former transit center for asylum seekers that stood there since 1989 and forms part of the new federal asylum center, almost in its original shape. The upgrade of the facility was proposed by the Canton of Zurich's Security Directorate Mario Fehr in 2015. «Then, everything proceeded quickly», Embrach's president recounted, hinting that in most other regions, such plans were met by fierce opposition. In his view, several legal and spatial circumstances helped secure consensus among residents and other stakeholders: First, the property already belonged to the Canton of Zurich and, thus, possessed certain freedoms in planning. Second, strategic placement could be justified by the transit center's already existing infrastructures, such as the geographic and administrative proximity to the Zurich Airport with its own deportation detention facility. Third, Embrach has no admission quota for refugees. This allows the municipality to keep the number of refugees with any kind of residence permit low which, in turn, makes the presence of refugees vis-à-vis local residents appear as a temporary phenomenon. Finally, the SEM had agreed and promised to build a bigger fence around the new building following experiences related to the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Springs. At that time, the amount of people on the move from North-African countries that awaited their deportation in

Embrach had increased dramatically, which strained local institutional capacities and the subjective sense of security of local residents. The president recounted how «sometimes, a bicycle or two went missing, and a few things in supermarkets» for which reason residents demanded more rigid security arrangements. This meant that the initial plan to re-use a range of existing buildings scattered across the enclave had to be modified, as it would have been difficult to fence in these buildings. Hence the construction of a new, single complex.

Individuals other than employees and registered asylum seekers are generally prohibited from entering BAZ Embrach. Moreover, from our own experiences, private security employees quickly remove people from the area, even if there is no obvious suspicion. Particularly in the first months when our group passed by the facility, Securitas employees would make it clear that we were trespassing on grounds belonging to the Federal Government before we could even introduce ourselves. In any case, it was evident to us that we would have to meet people from the inside and offer a space to escape constant supervision elsewhere. It took us only a few steps away from the Embrach train station to find an old train wagon parked on the sidings. It had attached to its outside a sign with the name *Flüchtlingstisch* (refugee table) – groundwork had already been laid, it seemed. A few days and meetings later, the train wagon's owner, together with members from *Flüchtlingstisch* who used to organize dining events, offered us their space to use for our activities every Sunday. We were finally able to start our solidarity work for and with people on the move detained in Embrach, and develop ways to fill in the gaps of social networks and institutions without creating another instance of dependence and subordination.

The embodied encounters I experience on Sunday afternoons in Embrach are themselves ways of knowing that inform my perception and knowledge of the Swiss border regime, its dimensions and scales, and how it manifests spatially in the Canton of Zurich. What I discern as being part of or connected to the Swiss border regime is heavily contingent on the factors that shape my personal experiences, from immediate, volatile encounters to subsequent reflection and other engagements – such as recent encounters in the context of my research. Researchers usually engage in this kind of reflexivity to understand how their intervention produces their research field, but it is equally present and important in the context of solidarity work in asylum contexts. More generally, I rely on the accounts of a highly diverse group of people with dissimilar experiences and ways of knowing to inform my own perception of the border regime because most of the conditions that shape the realities around migration and asylum often fall beyond the scope of what I can experience on the embodied

and emotional level. This will continue as long as the forces that maintain the privileges of white, cis-male, able-bodied Swiss citizens remain in place.

An array of other factors impacts these encounters and imbues them with a sense of volatility. Often, the factors that shape the outcome of the encounters in Embrach for all parties are language skills, tacit knowledge, or the mere presence of our Afghanistan-, Syrian-, or Kurdish-born group members who have refugee experiences. After all, with our solidarity work, we seek to offer meaningful support and build relationships that bring material improvement to the situation of people on the move, as much as we try to grasp the dynamics that put them there in the first place. It can be surprising, at times, how little it takes to improve one's situation, and how in other situations, every imaginable effort cannot change the slightest thing. Experiencing these insurmountable borders between me and others, but also the ones maintained violently by state-sanctioned practice, is harsh and dispiriting. However, enforced by the pragmatism required in these situations, and channeled by the manifoldly experienced people around me, I have learned to accept and employ my privileges in prevalent power systems strategically and accountably.

5.2.2. BAZ Zurich Encounters

The federal asylum center in the City of Zurich started operations in November 2019. As people from our solidarity group and I had expected, it attracted a lot of media coverage and public attention from its first days on. The difference between it and the Embrach facility was stark. Only little attention was paid to public criticism about the conditions in the BAZ Embrach and there were few news reports on violent incidents in the five months that had passed by that time. The reason that more attention was paid to the BAZ Zurich was certainly linked to the involvement of the public at an earlier stage, for example in the form of democratic votes which caused a higher demand for sustained media coverage. More media coverage and public interest was also garnered by the 2014 pilot project of the new, accelerated asylum system that was tested in old housing barracks on Zurich's *Juch Areal*. However, the number of varying and often opposing forces in Zurich's urban setting and the aggregation of friction produced by negotiations throughout each step in the BAZ Zurich's development ensured that public attention remained with the topic.

As the interviews revealed, The BAZ Zurich's location itself attracted many actors to the arena of negotiation. The land on which the complex is built is a public strategic land reserve and, according to local

architecture magazine *Hochparterre*, currently not available for a definitive use.[146] Due to the land's status at the urban planning level, its use had changed several times in the past and therefore attracted different political and economic interest groups with different ideas and demands. A Canton Council member and architect I interviewed who lives in the neighborhood has been working for two decades in a local neighborhood association that lobbied extensively for a new school building to be built on that land. Another interviewee, a local resident and cultural and gastronomy entrepreneur, hoped he could convince the City Government to build a mixed-use building that hosts space for cultural events and includes an asylum center. As unused lands in the City of Zurich are scarce, it can be assumed that countless other private sector actors have been lobbying for their own plans.[147]

Nevertheless, the City Government stuck to its plans to develop the lands provisionally. In a 2017 article from *Hochparterre* about the BAZ Zurichs' provisional character, an architect from the contracted architecture firm *baubüro in situ* stated that provisionality in planning is often motivated by political motives as stakeholders have little time to solve urgent situations and cannot afford too much resistance. In addition, in the case of the BAZ Zurich, provisionality materializes in the plans through the architects' use of specific materials and modular components to convey a provisional look to the public. Or, as the author of the article describes it, a technocratic looks for bureaucratic processes.[148] Thus, what the City of Zurich's public buildings department calls «functional and robust»[149] may equally serve to frame migration and asylum in the city as temporary phenomenon and to reassure the public that the City Government takes its administrative and humanitarian task seriously, while keeping expenditures low and protecting surrounding properties from devaluation.[150]

A short TV report about the opening with invited guests - politicians, residents, and business representatives – further reflects the range of diverging views on the BAZ Zurich.[151] In the report, a left-wing politician expresses the shock she felt upon entering the federal asylum center and how it resembles more a prison than anything else. A right-wing politician admits that the building is far from being welcoming but it lies «in the nature of an asylum center» that it is functional and not meant to invite longer periods of stay.

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[146] Hildebrandt 2017, 42.
[147] ibid.
[148] Hildebrandt 2017, 42.
[149] Stadt Zürich Hochbaudepartement n.d.
[150] Hildebrandt 2017, 42.
[151] Tele Züri 2019.

Two of my interviewees who had attended public information events between 2016 and 2018, too, recounted how the opening tour left them in shock. One of them, the Cantonal Council member and architect, had participated in different projects during the pilot project in the *Juch Areal* which left a rather positive impression on her. Although asylum seekers lived in barracks, the place seemed vibrant nonetheless. It had a lot of greenery and, as she described it, the regime was less rigid. Less rules, control, and no uniformed security personnel. Moreover, an NGO called *cuisine sans frontières* regularly cooked with and for asylum seekers, and there was a thrift shop where asylum seekers could work. To her, it was incomprehensible how that pilot project ended up with what the BAZ Zurich was at the time of its opening.

The BAZ Zurich has a semi-open activity room run by *Zürcher Gemeinschaftszentren* (ZG), a traditional, state-funded non-profit foundation that runs several community centers across the city. Its operation was one of the Social Department's central demands, aiming to better embed the federal asylum center into the neighborhood by creating a space that fosters exchange. Although the room is part of the same building, it signals a structural separation through its large glass door, which allows for a direct glimpse of the interior, in contrast to the main entrance with its inspection gates for official reception.

Jenny, a ZG employee and room organizer, explained the two main functions of the room. One the one hand, the room serves as an open space for everyone to come by. Her team noticed that, particularly for asylum seekers, there is a great need for space to rest or to welcome relatives, friends and other guests who sometimes travel from far away, where no one is obliged to do anything. A small kitchen is available, which is very well used. On the other hand, the room is used by her team and a few volunteer groups to provide activities, such as gymnastics and dancing for women, cooking for unaccompanied minors, yoga, and others. Some of these activities are explicitly addressed at local residents, too, so to pursue to goal of fostering exchange and include the asylum center into the neighborhood.

In my field research, I spoke with Chavi and Jennita, two women who were studying social work in the building next to the BAZ. They founded the volunteer group *Act2Unite* with other students in late 2019. They were concerned that their academic studies had taught them little about social work in the context of asylum, and what had found its way into the public with regard to Securitas and the prison-like conditions was no less alarming to them. Having a federal asylum center in front of them, they decided to take matters into their own

hands and contacted the ZG. A contract was signed rather swiftly, and they started organizing an open space every Saturday evening where people from the BAZ could cook, play, or engage in their own activities. Thus, their work is more focused on creating opportunities of joy and relief. Meanwhile, disturbing conditions inside remain difficult to address, Jennita and Chavi say. They once tried to protest, but the contract makes it difficult for them to voice criticism towards the SEM or the AOZ. They are therefore looking for other venues to use their position to promote sustained improvement in conditions, for example through political work outside the federal asylum center.

Several other established groups and NGOs are also active at the BAZ Zurich. The activity room allows new actors to seek exchange, even if under rigid conditions. This is in stark contrast to Embrach, where for the past two years SEM and AOZ officials have been deeming our group as irrelevant for their operations – if not a threat – and have categorically refused to allow access to the federal asylum center even through a highly restrictive contract. The BAZ Zurich activity room illustrates not only the importance of spatial relations, but also the functioning of different regimes, how they come into being and what consequences they can have in the everyday of people on the move.

The BAZ Zurich is a federal asylum center with process function. In most cases, as soon as people on the move are classified as a Dublin case, or when they receive their first negative decision, they are transferred to the federal asylum center without process function in Embrach. For this reason, the people we meet at the train wagon have usually experienced at least two or more asylum facilities in Switzerland. In conversation with them, we therefore found out a lot about the realities that people on the move experience across different spaces, particularly inside the BAZ Zurich, where it took some time until new solidarity groups in our networks had been established enough to gather insights of their own. That people on the move, too, would think of it as a prison was not necessarily a surprise. From our experiences in Embrach we knew that, for the most part, it was the house rules and the way daily operations were structured that made, and continue to make, people feel like they were put into prison. The omnipresence of security personnel and the architectural style further intensify these feelings. And because these asylum centers are rigidly organized on a federal level with similar base structures, we thought of the BAZ Embrach as a lens from which to extrapolate information to other places. Therefore, it was unexpected to hear repeatedly from people who visit us at the train wagon that they tend to prefer the BAZ Embrach as a place to stay, despite its rural location. Some mentioned that they

generally prefer the calmness of the nearby forrest, while for others it was the lower frequency of intense confrontations with police involvement that made the difference.

As we discovered in the course of our work, day-to-day operations are influenced by a myriad of factors, making the supposed federal standard vary from place to place. For example, we maintain a relatively direct contact with the new AOZ main supervisor in Embrach, whereas under the former supervisor, we were met with far more mistrust and latent threats. A religious caretaker who used to work in the BAZ Embrach confirmed to us that this change of personnel positively impacted operations and everyday life, while regulations remained the same. In our continued efforts to gain access to the BAZ, by referring to the federal regulation on visits, we encountered another case where such variations become apparent. Although we knew that solidarity groups in other cantons make use of the regulations on visits, the SEM replied that in the BAZ Embrach, the same regulations cannot be implemented.

These circumstances further multiply the plurality of experiences with and views on asylum-seeking realities, and continuously challenge knowledge that solidified and orients our own perspective. The arising tensions remind us to remain humble and responsive towards the ways in which border regime realities unfold. Since I started engaging with the sort of solidarity work I do, new bits of information and personal experiences come in week for week, adding to the way I comprehend and thereby inhabit a system of laws, categories, spaces, practices and actors I here conceptualize as border regime. It is because of this flow that I would rather talk of a complex and chaotic process of back and forth, both in the way knowledge compounds and the seemingly rigid, monolithic state apparatus functions and develops.

The following account seeks to represent the plurality of experiences people on the move make as asylum seekers in the two federal asylum centers. As I have mentioned earlier, even a significant amount of information that could be categorized as hard facts, such as the facilities' house rules and professional procedures, are only accessible for me through encounters with those who are allowed – or coerced – to go inside the federal asylum centers. However, the overall complexity and lack of transparency complicate the process of understanding not only for me as an outsider, but for everyone. Language and cultural barriers, exposure to constantly new information, frequent changes, inadequately staffed facilities and considerable

leeway with regard to implementation of protocols, rules, and laws contribute to what many conceive of as chaotic circumstances. Here, however, it becomes once more apparent how the act of describing the border regime also reifies it as personal accounts, statements, and rumors often produce a basis of knowledge upon which people decide and act, setting off a chain of actions that potentially alter circumstances on a larger scale.

5.3. Inside the Black Box BAZ
5.3.1. Reflections on the Carceral Regime

You still have to wait…

Ok

In that sense, the only thing that has changed is that you're not in that «prison» in Embrach anymore, but the risk that you'll not gonna get a permission to stay here still exists

:D Okay
Embrach it's a prison

Whatsapp-conversation between me and Alphonse, an asylum-seeking Cameroonian I met in Embrach,
after his transfer to a Cantonal asylum facility

«You say always camp... That's no camp. That's no recreation center." "What would you prefer to say?" "It's a prison.»

Conversation with an Afghan refugee who visited us at the train wagon regularly

From my own experience and in the course of my research, questions about life inside the federal asylum center are sooner or later rounded off with a comparison to a prison. Local media have also repeatedly picked up on such statements and confronted the SEM accordingly. They officials firmly reject the accusations, but

they usually do not deny the circumstances that evoke these feelings per se. As they state, the arrangements that may evoke these feelings are for the asylum seekers' own security.[152]

There are a variety of factors that evoke the impression of a prison. However, comparisons are ultimately grounded in the different biographic experiences of those making them. On the whole, people whom I interviewed and who experience the everyday of the centers from within usually start describing the house rules that disproportionally curtail agency and seem impossible to implement in the humane way they were intended. In official documents, such as the Accommodation Operating Concept (BEKO), harsh rules are legitimized by the fact that the organization of asylum collective housing must be specifically rigid in adhering to standards and order, so as to prevent harm towards asylum seekers, the personnel, the facility or the general image vis-à-vis the public. That the SEM implicitly assumes that asylum seekers inevitably cause chaos, mess and violence in the shelters is quite often made explicit and categorically advanced as a basis for management.[153]

In everyday life, this leads to the following regimen: Collective dormitories equipped with sparse bunk beds host between six and 15 people. According to the BEKO, dormitories are separated according to certain demographic factors, such as gender, families, and unaccompanied minors. However, apart from these circumstances and in practice, the allocation of dormitories seems relatively indifferent. Şeref, a Turkish Kurd who sought asylum in Switzerland because of multiple, politically motivated persecutions in Turkey, was forced to live in a 12-people dormitory along with several other Turkish asylum seekers. Situations like these where people with conflicting backgrounds are assigned to the same dormitory have been reported several times to our solidarity group. The reports are usually accompanied by grave concerns about the personal safety of everyone sleeping in the same room, even for those without a particular stake in the ‹imported› conflict. Frequently, the already prevalent tensions turn violent, which is why Şeref had requested the relocation to another dormitory without Turkish people.

Mandatory body searches are amongst the most controversially discussed measures. Private security personnel perform these every time an asylum-seeker enters the premises. The house rules state that hardly

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[152] Sturzenegger and Roth 2019; Tele Züri 2019, SRF 2019.
[153] Kde/Ker/Grd/Lim/Moy/Rdq 2019.

any items may be brought in. These include all foodstuffs that are perishable, canned or in glass packaging. For everything else, a receipt is required. For this reason, we have often heard of asylum seekers having gifted goods taken away at the entrance. Şeref recounted how one day, the absurdity of these body searches unveiled itself in a particularly blatant manner. He had left the facility for a round of jogging and realized a short moment after passing the main door that he had left his keys in his room. Upon re-entering, security personnel performed a body search despite the apparent impossibility to obtain any given prohibited item within the timespan of a few seconds and in plain sight of the person in duty. In a conversation with AOZ employee, she recounted that in the beginning of the BAZ Zurich, every item that might potentially be used to paint on walls and windows was taken away, including lipsticks and pencils with which children were supposed to do their homework. In Zurich, the SEM official in charge adapted this procedure after a public backlash following a news report in late 2019.[154] From then on, babies and children were no longer subject to body searches.

The BEKO obliges asylum seekers to partake in shared unpaid chores, such as working in the laundry. Limited opportunities are also provided to work for a low salary, only after going through an arduous process. In Embrach, asylum seekers receive a stamp card with 21 slots, whereby each slot corresponds to one hour of unpaid work. A full stamp card grants them the right to work for seven days and receive salary up to 30 Swiss francs a day or 300 per month. Afterwards, another stamp card has to be filled anew. Thus, in theory, asylum seekers can work every second week for a salary, given that there is enough work available for each day and that they are willing to work non-stop. In practice, each day social workers lay out full stamp cards on the ground and spin a bottle to determine who is eligible for work. The assignment of work may seem impartial, but it is inequitable, particularly in Embrach, where asylum seekers are dependent on expensive public transportation to reach the nearest larger city. Moreover, several single mothers have complained that they have not been able to go to work because of the lack of childcare for their young children. Given the importance of visits to institutions external to the BAZ, such as those providing free legal support, German classes, and other forms of support, the lack of funds to cover expensive travel costs thus affects single mothers more severely.

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[154] SDA/sep 2019.

By denying work, allowance, or the possibility to leave the center between curfews, the BEKO provides BAZ operators effective disciplinary measures. However, from what I have experienced numerous times, it is often unclear to asylum seekers in both federal asylum centers under what circumstances activities and services are available versus when they are denied to them. For example, asylum seekers from certain European countries do not receive weekly allowance. According to documents I have received, those countries are listed in a so called ‹Appendix 2›, which many activists in our networks have tried unsuccessfully to get hold of. It remains unclear whether and how asylum seekers have the right to consult them. As a consequence of this lack of clarity, asylum seekers sometimes cannot distinguish whether they are being denied activities and services based on a disciplinary punishment or whether they fall under a certain article in the house rules – not least because forms of punishment are frequently based on discretionary grounds. These are the first indications of the carceral and panoptic design that structures everyday life in the BAZ.

Blatantly violent repression also occurs. News coverage has been rife with reports of excessive force by security personnel, and during our Sunday visits, we regularly hear about similar incidents.[155] The SEM claims that security personnel are obliged to file a report after violent incidents so to process them and take appropriate measures.[156] As it stands, they have taken some time to admit that these reports are one-sided. Only by accident, journalists and an asylum seeker in Boudry managed to prove the arbitrariness in and abuse of reporting protocols through coincidentally recorded audio footage.[157] Moreover, federal asylum centers are equipped with what is euphemistically called *Besinnungsraum* (room of recollection): a small room without furniture and a reinforced door with a rectangular peephole. According to the BEKO, the use of the room is subject to strict rules. However, under the general conditions of intransparency and discretionary power, there is great potential for abuse. Power performances such as the omnipresence of uniformed personnel, the *Besinnungsraum*'s open display, and regular deportations where police officers lead away whole families in handcuffs – according to a social worker, handcuffs are taken off once inside the police car – are nothing short of disciplining carceral techniques.

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[155] Abazi and Sharon 2020 (BAZ Embrach); Endres and Vögele 2021 (BAZ Boudry); Jäggi 2021; 3 Rosen Gegen Grenzen (BAZ Basel); Tobler 2019 (BAZ Zurich).
[156] Endres and Vögele 2021.
[157] ibid.

In late 2020, a *das Lamm* news article covered everyday incidents in the BAZ Zurich from an AOZ social worker's point of view. He stayed anonymous, as per his contract, no information is allowed to go outside. «Many AOZ employees are dissatisfied and frustrated», the article quotes the employee. Instead of allowing him and his coworkers to do excellent care work, they «find themselves confronted with an operation that is not geared toward caring for the housed persons - but rather toward wearing them down».[158] The article lists a few incidents which sound very familiar to me, from fights between security personnel, detained asylum seekers in the *Besinnungsraum*, self-harm and attempted suicides, and house rules enforced in situations that seem to defy any logic. Dormitory windows cannot be opened, as the facility is built according to the *Minergie Standard*[159] and only allows for «controlled airing». During summer, the air in dormitories becomes unbreathable, yet asylum seekers are not allowed to move their mattresses to the corridors. Meal and snack handouts are severely limited in terms of time and quantity. As a consequence, many asylum seekers are reported to suffer from hunger late at night for which they smuggle food into dormitories and share with each other. A visitor at the train wagon once told us the same thing. A few months after the news article, a video report by the media outlet *Tagesanzeiger* seconds these accounts and makes apparent the trauma with which many social workers quit after a short time.[160]

The former religious caretaker at BAZ Embrach mentioned during the early months of its operation that security personnel seemed to be poorly trained and ill-prepared. She noted that they often overreacted due to their lack of knowledge on how to act. Additionally, their mere uniformed presence often evoked the feeling of being in a prison for the residents. At the same time, she pointed out that some women refugees, in particular, felt safer thanks to the presence of security personnel. This serves as a humbling reminder of the diverse experiences within the border regime and the intricate, difficult-to-grasp relationality that determines its reification.

5.3.2. Intimacies of Exclusion and Resistance

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[158] Tobler 2020. Author translation.
[159] *Minergie* is a protected Swiss building standard. As a certificate, it marks buildings with low energy consumption and high usage of renewable energy.
[160] Fäs and Sturzenegger 2021.

Federal asylum centers are infrastructural arrangements designed to enforce migration and asylum laws, underpinned by a carceral regime of biopolitical management and neo-liberal economization. They cater for less than basic needs, as asylum seekers are reduced to interchangeable body unit that does not belong. This status renders their removal a logical consequence and justifies the mobilization of limited resources in the first place. Unsurprisingly, the accounts I have been told during my solidarity work, the interviews I conducted in the course of my research and various news reports depict the stifling, depressive realities this regime creates. Nevertheless, despite all the material and discursive arrangements that forcibly curtail agency, there is always space for negotiation to be carved out. Every person I engage with to talk about their lives as refugee in Switzerland inevitably leads to intimate details and personal wisdoms and knowledge. These anecdotes, digressions and other biographic colorings present a challenge for translation between scales and places, from the unique history to the broader web of relations and condensed, situated elements. Persisting individual agency has become apparent throughout all conversations and interviews about live in federal asylum centers where seemingly objective descriptions and observations are usually inseparable from the accompanying personal stories.

In this regard, feminist geographer Alison Mountz makes clear that research on exclusion based on far-reaching analytical tools often silences the intimacies of exclusion and their racialized and gendered dimensions.[161] Mountz' prompt to embrace intimacies of exclusion resonates with my experience of being confronted with stories that cannot be broken down and translated into overarching truths. In these moments, the power of epistemological nihilation – «the inherent denial or total abjection of one's identity and beingness»[162] – reveals itself in a rarely evident way as stories vanish in plain sight. Working from this notion, because most of the intimacies that were shared with me do not neatly translate into abstract units of writing and analysis, the following section offers more space for the personal narratives to unfold – without purporting a detached gaze.[163]

Pir Baba is a SoS activist and a former asylum seeker. My interview with him was particularly rich with intimate anecdotes through which he described his experiences as asylum seeker in Embrach and elsewhere.

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[161] Mountz 2011, 382.
[162] Nagar 2019, 9.
[163] ibid.

As a born Afghan, Pir Baba endured several dreadful decades as refugee in Iran. He set forth for Europe in 2015 and like many others, his path through numerous countries and border control experiences exacerbated his traumas. Once arriving in Embrach, spots providing privacy and the possibility to retreat were inexistent, which sustained a fraught atmosphere that could turn into a conflict at any time. He pointed out that most people want to hide a little in their own apartment or room after an exhaustive day, which is particularly true for traumatized people. «And we didn't have that. We either always had to be with someone or be in the forest»[164].

Through that forest runs a shallow river where he and others from the asylum center would catch fishes and grill them on a fire. Everyone he knew wanted to avoid the asylum center at all costs. He particularly remembered one teenager who, one day, set out to build his own hut by the river in order to avoid going back inside. Overall, he struggled to recollect one positive memory that was left from his time the barracks which were later refurbished for BAZ Embrach. Playing ping pong used to be one of the few activities that fostered exchange between the people that spoke different languages. «But even that we couldn't do so often because we had broken balls.» He laughed before continuing: «There always had to be something missing. You know? I can't remember a day when everything was fine. There was always something missing»[165].

Describing his experiences of the BAZ Embrach, Şeref drew many parallels to the infamous F-type prisons he was detained back in Turkey. In Embrach, but also in other state asylum facilities, he experienced how the carceral atmosphere turned people more and more hostile towards each other, escalating many interactions into fights. Being treated like a criminal will eventually turn you into one, he stated. Before Embrach, he stayed for several months in the test center on the *Juch Areal* in Zurich which, in hindsight, was a comparatively positive experience. The wooden quarters were modest «but happy», he recounted. The Zurich's vibrant places offered pleasant alternatives to his living space, and life inside the facility was based on mutual respect. Security personnel existed, but they wore civilian outfits. Social workers had enough capacity to actually engage with asylum seekers, play chess, football, and pursue other activities. In Embrach, there was not much for him to do other than exercising in the forrest.

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[164] Author translation.
[165] Author translation.

Another person with whom I spoke is Mohammed, a Rohingya refugee who spent many days wandering around the city during his time in the BAZ Zurich. On one day, he discovered a restaurant that had a Bengali flag mounted next to its entrance. The restaurant owner, who helped translating our interview over the phone, told me how she would welcome him regularly and offer him free meals. After Mohammeds transfer to Embrach, visits became difficult due to the expensive train tickets. In the weeks after the transfer he was overcome by a numbing depression that tied him to his bed for whole days. Things changed when he found out about our weekly program and soon became the most frequent visitor. Thanks to a sponsor for his public transport tickets, he was even able to attend training sessions of a local cricket team and visit again the Bengali restaurant in Zurich again. After a few months, however, police removed him in handcuffs and put him into prison, so to prepare for his deportation. Due to the Dublin III regulation, he was brought back to Germany.[166]

Stories like Mohammed's demonstrate that access to informal networks of support gained amongst migrant communities are often subsumed in the noise of dominant discourses and narratives. Similar experiences of small acts of support among migrants were also made by Behrouz: «It's like that for foreigners. You just have a few shifts [in a shop] and then I'll go search for the next one». Lukas from our Solidarity Group who worked over a decade in the *Autonome Schule Zurich* knows of several stories of Sans Papiers and other migrants who managed to survive in the utmost precarious situations for decades thanks to tight knit migrant communities. Activist work like we do within the WUZRW, he said, contribute only little to the solidarity migrants rely on, and in many migrant biographies, what counts is being at the right place in the right time.

With our solidarity group, we seek to offer space to people on the move forcibly removed from their networks and places that enable their being. We are programmatically committed to giving space in a literal and metaphorical sense: Visitors often simply enjoy the inviting atmosphere of the old train wagon and the small garden that surrounds it, but most importantly, the change from everyday life inside a technocratic collective housing complex. The train wagon is a space of trust where people on the move seek the legal assistance they feel is not provided elsewhere, and establish new networks and relationships as was the case

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[166] I worked with and wrote about Şeref, Mohammed and Pir Baba in previous work, see Rearte, 2020.

with Mohammed. Above all, it is a space that lives through dynamic of space production, which makes it a volatile product of all the actors, practices and structures that enlace and shape it.

Şeref, throughout his visits at the train wagon, made several friendships that last until today. He appreciates the importance such a place holds for people in his situation. For this reason, he kept coming back, even after his transfer to a smaller asylum facility closer to the City of Zurich: «I help new friends, new people in the Embrach camp. Translating Kurdish, or Turkish, or a bit Persian, or Arabic. We understand each other. We are living together», he told me. More recently, a visually impaired, asylum-seeking Afghan frequently visited us to find out more about his rather complicated legal situation. After a while, he began bringing people to us who needed legal help, or at least some form of orientation. Sometimes, he would show up with five people in tow, and then proceed to translate in each case if none of our Persian speaking group members were present.

Situations like these fundamentally shape the way our Sunday activities take place. As a small, negligible solidarity group, we are barred from entering the premises. This makes us reliant on all sorts of people and strategies to raise awareness of our group among people inside. More importantly, the initiative of people on the move to collaborate is indispensable for the overcoming of barriers and borders. Tragically, in many cases, carefully established relationships of trust vanish after a few months as the people who have been working with us face deportation.

The stories of people on the move jogging and strolling in the woods, discovering neighbourhoods, seeking out local communities and building informal networks illustrate the individual ways people respond to their bodies and minds being disciplined within the Swiss border regime. With this, also revealed is how a complex system generates differently gendered and racialized realities. This is shown by the fact that within my exchanges with almost exclusively male migrants and refugees, completely different problems and their solutions take center stage than, for example, those entertained from relationships with women in our group. Another example are the violent attacks by security personnel on predominantly Algerian and Tunisian men

in the BAZ Basel as made public by the activist collective *3 Rosen Gegen Grenzen.*[167] Their accounts thoroughly evidence how the violent incidents were motivated and legitimized by the racialized images and discourse on ‹young, North African men› in Western Europe. Working towards intimate relationships is paramount to understanding the Swiss border regime because each person is facing different problems and, at the same time, possesses different agential means to challenge the regime. Plans and strategies developed collaboratively in border spaces are more sustainable and effective than those emanating from democratic spaces whose stabilization rests upon the borders they seek to challenge. Furthermore, a clearer view on the gendered and racialized dimensions lead to further questions in regards to the logics and power-knowledge networks that shape the border regime. I consider particularly urgent, for example, the lack of visible institutions and solidarity initiatives that support and provide safe spaces for those affected by the afore mentioned violent, racialized images. This absence raises questions regarding white, patriarchal structures entrenched in Switzerland and the apparent paralysis across the majority society and social institutions to properly address the challenges many young, North African men face here. Meanwhile, the unabashed circulation of these racialized images not only affect young, North African – and everyone who can be made suitable for this category – but also legitimize full-coverage disciplinary punishment and Islamophobic, cultural essentialist discourse.

In this study, I can only draw limited conclusions on gendered realities as there were no women among my interviews with asylum seekers of the federal asylum centers. As a person not directly affected by a range of forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, and their different intersections, I am better at establishing intimate relationships with some than with others. This limits the exploration of the border regime's different dimensions from my standpoint. However, such moments where the borders I inhabit become tangible offer ample opportunities to critically reflect my positionality and to let actions follow. On the one hand, because I can better understand hitherto unchallenged practices and behaviours that potentially reproduce violence, if the response of the affected counterpart or the intervention of others happen in the immediate moment. Linked to this is the lack of knowledge, emotions and other sensitivities that stem from embodied experiences unexperienceable to me, and the responsibility to

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[167] 3 Rosen Gegen Grenzen, «Securitas-Gewalt im Lager Basel».

compensate for this lack in other ways. On the other hand, where inaction of the privileged is complicit in reproducing violence, I can think productively about the ways in which to mobilize the privileges that come with my position. Unlearning one's own socially and educationally adopted practices and knowledges that reproduce oppression are fundamental for building solidarity. Yet, to undo power structures, one's privileges potentially hold significant power that can be translated into concrete practice, whether those be the privileges and power that comes with academic attention, the excess time, monetary and emotional resources a life with negligible oppression brings, or the simple but integral privilege of unrestricted movement and.

5.4. Dismantling the Black Box BAZ: Making use of Swiss border regime

This study is based on the urgency to address the daily reproduced violences in the federal asylum centers in way that identifies potential avenues for intervention. Speaking of and attending to structural violence is a categorical act that frames a set of effects and practices as violent. Categorical as it interrogates and shifts intelligibility norms that render violence visible or invisible.[168] In Switzerland, these norms are directly related to the norms that have normalized administrative power in racialized border institutions throughout time. Against this backdrop, suffering in the context of asylum-seeking processes is either misrecognized or seen as the regrettable yet inevitable consequence of a set of factors. In both cases, however, as there seems to be no perpetrator under prevalent intelligibility norms, violence seems not to be the cause of suffering.

This research approached these challenges from various sides. I illuminated the processes and means that racialized difference in Switzerland, and to what ends. In doing so, specific racialized representations were examined and their essentialist assumptions challenged, as well as the justifications that serve different relations of exclusion. The agency-based approach to the border regime was deployed to focus on lived realities in the asylum system and the conditions that cause suffering to various degrees, precisely because various justifications erase the voices of those who speak up. The accounts of people on the move, activists, reporters and, recently, even state employees provided an unequivocal testimony of the grim realities in federal asylum centers.

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[168] Winter 2020.

Through a multi-method approach that built upon my previous work and established relationships, I contrasted these accounts with dominant discourses and narrations and the actors that mobilize migration and asylum in their own ways. The blatant absence of migrant and refugee voices suggests the extent to which these discourses and narrations exist in a historically contingent order that determines whose voice is being heard and whose erased. This order presupposes and shapes a plethora of intersecting discourses, materials, practices, and logics where the federal asylum centers assume a pivotal role; as material arrangements to enforce a particular order, and as results from the intersection's historic developments. In doing so, I sought to illustrate how violent practices result from socially constructed borders and, in the process, determinants in the further development of these borders. Therefore, violence in the federal asylum centers must be categorized as structural due to the various borders – legal, spatial, material, and societal – that obscure violent practices necessary for enforcing a biopolitical order and stabilizing relations of superiority and oppression.

Within the concept of the border regime, the BAZ Zurich and BAZ Embrach served as devices to explore the multidimensional, multi-scalar space of conflict and negotiation in which they and their pertaining realities are embedded – the space I here call the Swiss border regime. Extending the conceptual depth of borders and bringing to the fore the relations they structure, the exploration leads to encounters with border constructions in different places and events that sustain and challenge state border enforcement. Therefore, in order to dismantle the black box – to challenge the dominant epistemic order, making the variously reproduced violences intelligible, and ultimately deprive border enforcement technologies and materials of their basis for justification – all borders must be unravelled and challenged. Transformative resistance will only be possible if its practices and ideas are developed in struggles at the various borders and the resulting spaces of difference, connectivity, reflexivity and relation.

The agency-based approach to the border regime's nuanced and extended ontology offers further productive potential for research as well as border activism. Where the state and state borders are understood as monolithic, ubiquitous, and yet difficult to reach, the border regime concept can help identify moments where borders and their construction become tangible.

As I sought to illustrate, border constructions occur on various scales that interact transversally. Constructions of a national self embedded in a supposedly white, civilized, European community construct

borders that proliferate and modulate in other scales. Examples here included the language and imagery in SVP campaigns, economic and migration policy formulations, humanitarian action, and the discursive fabric that persistently defines whose humanity is valued more than others. Interactions between, as well as resistance against these border constructions, ultimately resulted in the federal asylum centers' establishment. The proliferation and modulation of borders thus materialized on the urban scale where an entirely new space for border enforcement and reproduction emerges, as well as the struggles that negotiate them. Finally, the development and activation of borders can be observed on an embodied and intimate scale. Such as the practices that reveal themselves as acts of bordering, regardless of the person that enacts them. Individuals and grassroots movements can start by engaging with the acts of bordering in their immediate moment and incrementally increase the scale in which these acts connect to other borders. The undoing of power structures as a process oscillates between challenging the power structures within a movement, and those on a larger scale that prompted the movement to act in the first place.

Having laid out the different scales and dimensions of borders in Switzerland in their situated context, critical interventions and direct action can be carried out within a defined frame. The border regime is neither an abstract entity lingering over Switzerland, nor a set of laws and institutions controlling state borders. For this reason, it is not coincidental that, in Switzerland and elsewhere, border activism strongly builds upon solidarities and collaborations across different groups and domains. In the work we do, we rely on the work, education and resources of others who deal with borders in their own ways. Primarily, this includes direct collaboration with queer, racial justice or migrant activists. The most recent surge in Black Lives Matter protests has shown that these struggles also interact on a broader scale, as the increased public engagement with anti- and decolonial discourse helped bring attention to the historical connections between colonial extraction and the European border regime. The mass of movements, each with different core issues as they are located at and along different border spaces, help each other pursue their goals.

6. Conclusion

Through exploring moments and sites where borders in Switzerland emerge, as well as the perspectives themselves that orient their exploration, this research offered new ways to grasp border regime realities in the

Canton of Zurich and other parts of Switzerland. In the course of this process, I was struck by the lack of meaningful research on the contemporary Swiss border regime or the practices and epistemologies that challenge its inherently violent infrastructures.

There are several productive starting points future research should consider. As previously discussed, Switzerland has a long and visible tradition of resistance in the context of asylum. Although these movements' overall influence declined, few actors still deliver important and direct actions. Examples are the interventions of church-based organisations which, occupying a powerful position within the public sphere, are able to mobilize widespread influence, and provide diverse resources to people on the move through their vast social networks. As I discussed in this study, informal migrant communities in Switzerland provide people on the move with considerable resources, although they are mostly hidden from view. Future research could examine these forms of solidarity structures separately or in comparison with each other in order to further understand practices that challenge the Swiss border regime, irregardless of their intentions. This study contributed to a preliminary idea of the ways in which practices on the immediate and intimate levels connect to the border regime, including in antagonistic ways.

Another point of departure concerns the neoliberal inclusion of NGOs and civil society initiatives to the Federal Government's approach to asylum and migration control. Since the 2016 asylum law revision, this topic has gained importance as the planned increase in civil society participation was mobilized as argument by the Federal Government to create acceptance of its proposal. Future research could depart from this study's examination of asylum's productivity in determining notions of citizenship, civil society, and democratic justification. Centering its perspective on the recent neoliberal inclusion of NGOs and civil society initiatives, this research could further elucidate how governments and state institutions create controlled «invented spaces» of participation in order to delegitimize the alternative «invented spaces» of grassroots initiatives.[169] A more in-depth understanding of this tensions could, as a result, offer insights into possible strategies that allow grassroots initiatives to mobilize within both spaces in the context of Switzerland.

Ultimately, as the Swiss border regime represents and enforces a heterogeneous set of borders, researchers in Switzerland are urged to advance their research in all fields where practices to reinforce superiority institutionalized throughout history, and intersect with each other in potentially surprising ways.

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[169] Miraftab 2009.

As was made clear by Rohit, indispensable for such inquiries are the collective, polysonic and embodied archives of migrants, second@s, Roma, Jews or People of Colour.[170]

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[170] Rohit 2019, 62f.

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