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Article

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Abstract

This article focusses on the relationships between volunteers and refugees in the German "welcome culture". I highlight the continuities between historical and colonial notions of feminine charity and contemporary volunteering efforts in support of refugees in Germany. The "welcome culture" is conceived here as a charitable space that is historically sedimented by specific understandings of gender, racial and class difference. In particular, the difference between the modern emancipated female volunteer and the female oppressed refugee plays a central role. The question of female self-determination, then, becomes an important social arena in the German "welcome culture", through which the rate and terms of participation of refugees in social life are negotiated. Thus I draw on decolonial thought as well as theoretical insights from post-development scholarship and critical studies of humanitarianism in order to consider the multitemporal and transnational character of current "welcome culture" as well as to gain a better understanding of the entailed power relations. These are more contingent than might first appear. Presenting findings from my ongoing fieldwork I conclude that the notion of "welcome culture" allows for the emergence of new forms of sociality.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Since the summer of 2015, a new way of dealing with refugees has emerged in Germany. Falling under the broad label of "Willkommenskultur" or welcome culture, there has been a marked increase in new volunteer and charitable associations dedicated to assisting refugees (Karkayali & Kleist, 2016). Due to the large numbers of refugees arriving in a relatively short time period, the existing state infrastructures—both in terms of personnel and accommodation—became overloaded (e.g., van Dyk & Misbach, 2016). With refugees waiting at train stations or housed in temporary locations while the bureaucracy sought out accommodation, volunteers began to show up to help. This outpouring of volunteerism—including the setting up of soup kitchens and the finding of private accommodation for refugees—was largely spontaneous and only loosely organized, building on neighborly commitment and involvement. Yet, as many have argued (e.g., Hess et al., 2017) there was at the same time a considerable re-constitution of both the European and local border regime (Hess et al., 2017), with the overall aim of reducing refugee arrivals.

Many of the emergency shelters that were first run on a volunteer basis have since been taken over by local governments responsible for refugee matters and transformed into permanent formal structures (Hamann, Karakayali, Höfler, & Wallis, 2016). That said, volunteers still assume responsibility for a large part of the administrative tasks that were previously the remit of the government (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016). Because of their involvement in the material and political support of mi-

grants, volunteers have become significant actors both in their active participation in consultative round tables and advisory councils as well as in their role in providing public care and welfare. As this suggests, this new 'culture of help' (Haubner, 2016) has lead to a reorganization of local communities, involving the transformation of existing care infrastructures as well as everyday relations within such communities.

This article takes these processes of social transformation as the starting point. It is based on ongoing ethnographic research in the north of Germany, where I have participated as a volunteer in emergency shelters and community centers in affluent districts since August 2015. These efforts are largely organized by elderly, female volunteers with a bourgeois background, though as I discuss below, the participation of Germans with immigrant backgrounds within these spaces is increasing. While my own initial entry into this field was driven by a humanitarian and political commitment to assist arriving refugees, I was struck by the contested nature of these places, and began to use my tools as an ethnographer to document my time there with detailed field notes, and formalized my role as both researcher and volunteer. In addition to participant observation of the day-to-day affairs of these organizations, I conducted 15 biographical and expert interviews with volunteers, interpreters, and employees of the social service and immigration office. I complement these with a discourse analysis of media and policy representation of the so-called 'refugee crisis.' Following Clarke (2009), I take a situational analysis approach, in order to attend to the discursive, material, human and non-human constitution of situations. In this way, situational analysis considers power relations, different interpretations, spatial and temporal arrangements of a given situation as well as the situational negotiations of social practices. Situational analysis, I argue, allows for the consideration of the transnational and trans-local conditions of a situation, as well as for an attention to the contradictions, ambivalences, and conflicts it encompasses (Braun, 2016). As I will show, spaces of assistance are deeply beset by power imbalances related to the differentiated positionalities and expectations of the actors—volunteers, interpreters, and refugees—that come together within them. In this article, I consider the conditions for the production of these spaces and practices, as well as the contestations and possibilities that result from the constitution of these new socialities.

In my approach, I draw on decolonial thought as well as theoretical insights from post-development scholarship and critical studies of humanitarianism. I argue that these approaches allow us to consider the multi-temporal and transnational character of current "welcome culture" in order to gain a better understanding of the power relations entailed in, and the patterns of meaning and social imaginaries (Laclau, 1990) that shape

charitable space, particularly as these relate to the interactions between helpers and refugees. By using concepts from critical development and humanitarian studies (Kapoor, 2005; Ticktin, 2012) in my analysis of charitable spaces in Germany, I argue that there are important parallels between "third world aid" and current welcome culture. Both rely on hierarchical and inegalitarian structures of "help" and are connected to particular ways of seeing and understanding both "self" and "other". In these social imaginaries, there are clearly (and dearly held) scripts of who is to be helped and in what way. These structures and imaginations are deeply shaped by gendered and racialized logics where the difference between the modern, emancipated female volunteer and the female, oppressed refugee plays a central role. In the German case, it is not possible to understand this trope of the helper and the helped without first considering the particular form of bourgeois femininity (*bürgerliche Weiblichkeit*)—which values education and takes a classically humanist view of what it means to be modern—on which it relies. The question of female self-determination, then, becomes an important social arena through which the rate and terms of participation of refugees in social life are negotiated (Clarke, 2009).

The article proceeds as follows. First I provide a short overview of the "welcome culture" (*Wilkommenskultur*) and explain my theoretical approach and the meaning of multi-temporality in relation to helping structures. I then provide a genealogy of charitable practices and spaces in Germany, in order to identify historical and colonial sedimentations that are affected in certain spatial and temporal settings. I trace the development of such charitable spaces, focusing in particular on the notion of feminine charity. I show how the emergence of feminized charity built on Lutheran principles relating to the gendered division of labor, and later, the German colonial project. I then show how contemporary charitable spaces continue to be shaped by this history, by exploring two moments from my fieldwork in refugee accommodation centers when ideas of charity were hotly contested. I conclude by highlighting the possibility, within the notion of "welcome culture", to allow space for the emergence of new forms of sociality.

2. Welcome Culture

The term "welcome culture" took center stage in German public life in the wake of the summer of 2015 when thousands of refugees began crossing into Europe. But neither the term nor the idea of actively welcoming newcomers in Germany was new. In fact, discussions regarding welcome culture originate from a wider debate on labor-related immigration after new policies were seen as being ineffective in addressing the country's demographic change and the shortage of skilled workers (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Heckmann, 2012).[1]

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[1] Braun and Matthies (2017) highlight the selective logic of current "welcome cultures". They connect cultures of reception to the "economization of human rights".

The postcolonial German scholar Maria do Mar Castro Varela (Gonzalez Romero, 2014) points out that the debate on welcome culture is foremost one in which economic perspectives prevail over other immigration related concerns—as is evident by the omission of any measures to address discrimination against former guest workers. Migration scholar Klaus Bade (2014) highlights that the term "welcome culture" entails foremost institutional techniques (p. 37) and argues that its emergence can be understood as a reaction to a long-overdue revision of the German national self-image as a country of immigration. As he shows, at the same time that local and federal governments began promoting "welcome culture", they were not adequately addressing increases in racist incidents and far right attitudes

Yet welcome culture was not only defined by local and federal government policies and officials. It was also taken up and given new meanings by those who were active in various volunteer efforts supporting and advocating for migrants and refugees. Indeed, as recent scholarship has shown (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Haubner, 2016; Kleist & Karakayali, 2015; van Dyk & Misbach, 2016); volunteer and support structures are central to the public meaning of "Willkommenskultur". Some migrant activists have criticized "welcome culture" for being paternalistic (Omwenyeke, 2016) while others have focused on non-remunerated work by volunteers as contributing to a further neo-liberalization of the welfare state (van Dyk & Misbach, 2016). Some activists have noted that through recourse to the idea of "welcome culture", much of the care-work is being transferred from state welfare institutions onto volunteers, and highlight its de-politicizing effects. Haubner (2016), likewise, is critical of this "new culture of help" which demonstrates a marked socio-political instrumentalization of voluntary commitment to engagement with refugees, in what Steinhilper and Fleischmann (2016) have described as the emergence of a particular humanitarian-charitable dispositif.

Hamann and Karakayali (2016), on the other hand, point to the possibility of an opening in relation to charitable work with refugees. They show that volunteers are willing to learn from refugees and open up to get in touch with "the other". They see here the potential for a much-needed long-term shift in the dominant integration paradigm, which is assimilationist in orientation and calls for migrants to adapt to German "values" (Mecheril, 2011). The work of Karakayali and Hamann underline volunteerism in support of refugees is linked not only to a commitment to refugees rights as such but also to the need to counteract right-wing populist movements at the local level.

As Kleist and Karakayali (2015) report, elderly, literate and affluent women of the bourgeois milieu make up the majority of those involved in refugee support efforts. Yet, they note, there is also growing involvement in these volunteer efforts by individuals and their children who were themselves forced to flee their countries as refugees. They argue that a "new sense of community" is emerging in response to, and as a result of the "long summer of migration" (Kasparek & Speer, 2015). Yet, as I will show, this "new sense of community" engendered by the discourse and practices of welcome culture is highly contested, and therefore comes with considerable work and conflict. While Karakayali and Kleist highlight the ways in which welcome culture is gendered, the question of how this intersects and is informed by racialization and class has yet to be addressed, highlighting the need for a decolonial approach that considers both the various positionalities in the social field of charitable volunteering and its historical formation.

3. Decolonial Perspectives on Charitable Spaces

Decolonial approaches take a critical stance in relation to Western theories and epistemologies, by focusing on the question of how such histories, politics, and epistemologies are imbricated in particular (hierarchical) relations between the "West" and the rest (Hall, 1992; Mignolo, 2000). As such, a decolonial approach is particularly fruitful in analyzing relations and interaction between predominantly German volunteers and the refugees they seek to assist, insofar as the practices and subjectivities of volunteering are informed by such epistemologies. Anibal Quijano (2007) describes this hierarchical cognitive perspective on the western "other" as the coloniality of power and knowledge (Quijano, 2007). Likewise, Walter Mignolo (2000) defines this as Occidentalism which, he argues, frames the West as a progressive, rational, and civilized space and thus legitimizes and enforces the hegemonic position of the West as a global power model. In the German context, for example, Gabriele Dietze (2010) following Mignolo (2000) refers to Occidentalism as a subjectivizing neo-racism historically intertwined with colonial desires and projections. This is closely interlinked with the hierarchical classification of populations, and systems of knowledge (Quijano, 2007), which, as cognitive perspectives, become embedded in subjectivities (Castro-Gomez, 2005). Yet, the notion of power here is a relational and multilayered one. As Grosfoguel (2011) specifies, a decolonial approach takes an heterarchical perspective on the entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous historical formations, which are themselves organized in distinct sexual, political, economic and epistemic forms of dominance. Here, coloniality refers to persistent, colonial sedimentations, which become effective in certain spatial and temporal settings and contribute to the construction of perceptions and relationships. This "persistence" underlies a non-linear temporality (García Canclini, 2008, p. 46). History is thus not understood as a chronological succession of past, present, and future; rather, it is described as a simultaneity of various time-spaces: "multitemporal heterogeneities" (Braun, 2016; García Canclini, 2008, p. 46f.; Massey, 2005). As Mignolo (2000) contends, colonial difference emerges in this multitemporal and multilayered web of power relations. Fol-

lowing Gloria Anzaldúa (2012), spaces of colonial difference open us up to situational forms of subjectivity and "border thinking"—that is a mode of thinking *from* dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world *in* dichotomies (Mignolo, 2000, p. 85). A decolonial approach, then, takes as a starting point that actors embody multiple and distinct geopolitical positionalities, epistemic perspectives and subjectivities, and attends to the ways in which these pluralities are contested and negotiated in a given situation.

Returning to the case at hand, I argue for an analysis of current welcome culture and the associated charitable practices in Germany that considers the central role such differing positionalities, forms of knowledge and temporalities play in shaping spaces of assistance. While theoretical insights of decolonial thought emerged in a distinct geopolitical context, I contend that they are useful here as they allow us to critically address the ways in which voluntary assistance efforts in Germany reflect hierarchical relationships as well as to explore continuities with more global charitable and political efforts, including development and humanitarian aid, as well as (liberal) international feminist movements.

There are important parallels to critical analyses of international development that date back to the 1990s. For example, Escobar (2012) critiqued the persistence of a colonial gaze in the ways in which international aid has long been discursively constructed as helping the 'third world'—coded as pre-capitalist, underdeveloped and uncivilized—develop along a path towards the modern, and secular West (Escobar, 2012). Building on this analysis and bringing in insights from psychoanalytical approaches, Ilan Kapoor (2005) examines the question of why these "neo-imperial and inegalitarian relationships" are still so persistent (p. 1204). He identifies the ways in which the "desire to empower the other" reflects a glorification of the benevolent "self" in relation to a colonial "other" (p. 1207)—a stance he labels "narcissistic samaritanism". He goes on to argue that this reflects a "psychical transference onto Third World Communities of the perceived inadequacies of our own democratic political system" (p. 1208).

The treatment of female refugees as taken up by international feminist solidarity movements follows a similar pattern. As Ticktin (2012) and others[2] point out, refugee women are constructed solely as the "damned of the earth"; victims of authoritarianism and bearers of the trauma of flight who are in need of saving (Ticktin, 2012, p. 49). In this political and social imaginary, not only are the actors robbed of their own voice, but there is a parallel process of rendering invisible the structural connections between migration, racism, and nation that enable this imaginary in the first place, a process Ann Laura Stoler (2011) characterizes as "colonial aphasia". Racism is consequently seen as an "aftermath" of the empire rather than as a constitutive part of it (Ticktin, 2012, p. 50). As I will later show, these tendencies are alive in negotiations between volunteers, helpers, social-workers and refugees within German spaces of refugee "welcome".

4. Temporalities of Helping in Education

I have discussed how a decolonial approach highlights the desire to civilize and empower 'others' that is inherent in the idea of development aid. Furthermore, I have also shown why this is relevant to forms and practices of assistance at 'home'. However, in this section, I want to explore the specifically German valences that this desire takes. In the German context, refugee assistance efforts cannot be divorced from broader discourses surrounding 'Leitkulur'. In these discourses, conservative political parties clearly articulate their belief in the supremacy of (supposedly secular) "German" values: cultural norms such as reliability, education and female emancipation (among others) must be transmitted to newcomers. The National Plan for Integration (Nationaler Integrationsplan) regarding refugees (BAMF, 2017a), for example, highlights the perceived need of female Muslim refugees for education, not only in relation to language learning, but also as way to emancipate them from what is assumed to be patriarchal family structures which might, it is presumed, bar them from attending German courses. One of the main goals of integration courses, as outlined by BAMF, is the emancipation of immigrant women and their protection from gender-based violence in their homes (BAMF, 2017a, p. 2). To that end, the German government offers special training on gender to volunteers working with refugees (BAMF, 2017b).

This perspective on the need to support migrant women's emancipation is not solely the purview of the government. In my interviews, female volunteers linked their own charitable practices of assistance to an "educational and emancipating mandate" in relation to refugee women. In this way, the German women with whom I spoke often understood themselves not only as volunteers offering help but also as mentors for the "correct way" of living in Germany. Following a decolonial approach, we must then ask: to what extent does this understanding of charitable assistance reflect persistent patterns derived from a colonial desire to help?

Historically, in Germany care work and practices of charitable assistance have been an expression of a particularly Western, civil gender order and division of labor (Notz, 1989). Contemporary charitable practices point to historical and colonial sedimentations regarding relations of gender and class that are entangled with Protestant forms of subjectivization. Yet, these charitable practices are also inherently linked to an ideal of femininity, tied to Lutheran teachings on women's role within the institution of marriage and in the raising of children. As Wunder (1988) points out, the coding of charitably moti-

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[2] See for example Lisa Malkki (1995) and Rajaram (2002). Both discuss how humanitarian politics often work to reduce refugees to silence, dehistoricizing and depoliticizing their experiences and the reasons for their flight.

vated social service as a specifically female and bourgeois arena had already emerged in the 16th century. Thus, the emergence of this specific form of bourgeois feminity can be traced back to Lutheran teachings on gender complementarity and what constitutes a "Christian way of life" (e.g., Spory, 2013). As a result, women were increasingly excluded from public life due, their place in society relegated to the "home"—*Küche-Kirche-Kinder*, kitchen, church, or children—where the work of parenting and caring were to be done (Wunder, 1988). In this context by virtue of their connection with care, charitable spaces came to be coded as an extension of the private sphere, and thus constituted a safe haven for bourgeois women from motherly and marital obligations (Wunder, 1988). They were thus one of the few spaces where women were allowed to act (Notz, 1989). By the beginning of the 20th century, such spaces became the location of bourgeois female revolt and hotbeds of women's emancipation movements (Notz, 1989).

The constitution of bourgeois femininity within Germany—which persists up to today—should therefore be read through this genealogy, which was reworked once again in relation to German colonial policy in the late 19th and early 20th century. Within the colonial discourse at the time, the to-be-colonized were framed as deficient beings, while Europeans were viewed as helpers and saviors (Habermas, 2016, p. 139). In this formation, the white respectable bourgeois woman became a benchmark for civilization and an index of development. As Walgenbach (2005) notes, the transfer of knowledge and culture was seen as central to the German colonial project and reflected notions of white supremacy. The colonial project envisioned educated women as a vehicle for such transfer as purveyors of culture and values (Walgenbach, 2005). As a result, the colonies offered educated women from the bourgeoisie "room for free development" in a way that was unavailable to them in Germany due to their status and gender (Walgenbach, 2005, p. 139). Yet, it is important to recognize that the motivations of the women involved were not homogeneous at all; charitable motives were intermixed with economic and population policy goals in the emigration to German missions (Walgenbach, 2005). The immigration of women to the colonies was understood not just as a means of civilizing, teaching, and caring for the colonized (Habermas, 2016; Mamozai, 1982; Walgenbach, 2005) but also as a necessary demographic strategy critical to the maintenance of German rule, given the increasing frequency of 'mixed marriages' among colonial civil servants (Habermas, 2016; Walgenbach, 2005).

While it is important to understand the deployment of women to the colonies as a way to foster the cohesion of colony and "home" economically as well as cultur-

ally, we must also consider the way in which this process worked on the cognitive perspectives of the women involved, and shaped notions of German femininity more broadly. This took place in the arena of colonial education, a space reserved primarily for bourgeois white women. If the primary aim of the civilizing mission was "cultural exploitation" and "colonization of the mind", it also produced a profound "internalization of white supremacy" for the purveyors of colonial education (Walgenbach, 2005, p. 127f., translation by the author).[3] In the context of German colonial education, conversion to Christianity formed only one part of the transfer of cultural values, the inculcation of Protestant values relating to self-discipline and work were seen as being more important. Colonial women stepped into this role—in a direct parallel to their role in the care and education of children, what Walgenbach (2005) terms the "politics of mental motherhood."[4] The educational policy, then, was rendered an instrument of the civilizing mission in order to help solidify a colonial-racist gender order in which the role of the bourgeois woman was a model of moral stability and the bearer of civilization (cf. Habermas, 2016).

Reading these historical sedimentations together, we can see that the "politics of mental motherhood" persist in the social interactions, lived practices, worldview and self-conception of bourgeois female volunteers in the context of contemporary welcome culture. A decolonial approach renders visible the way in which these historical and colonial sedimentations surface in contemporary welcome culture, which as I will show in the next section, are alive in contemporary female bourgeois desire to "help".

5. *Visiting Bullerbü:* Welcome Culture as Conflict Zone

In this section, I build on my decolonial reading of German bourgeois feminity by considering how it is manifested in contemporary welcome culture. I do so by unpacking the ways in which everyday charitable practices in sites of "welcome" became sites of conflict. In a close analysis of two distinct moments of contention, I trace the ways in which the "politics of mental motherhood" (Walgenbach, 2005) surfaced in feminine spaces of refugee assistance and explore continuities with colonial "desires to emancipate the other" (Kapoor, 2005), especially in relation to access to education. At the same time, both situations show the ways in which refugees and interpreters contest these desires, and how they have appropriated the spaces of care for their own purposes.

The first conflict situation took place in October 2015 in an emergency shelter for refugees. The second occurred nearly a year later in September 2016. Both took

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[3] Original wording in German: "kulturelle Erschließung", "Kolonisierung der Köpfe" and "Internalisierung weißer Dominanz".

[4] "Politics of mental motherhood" refers to the exercise of social and political influence of bourgeois women on family and society through charitable work in the late 19th century, and took place in the field of social work in Germany as well as in the colonies (Walgenbach, 2005, p. 139). The aim of this politics was not only to augment the relevance of bourgeois women in society but also to foster a certain German identity, promoting the idea of a German nation and "German values". This politics acted as a scaffold for the hierarchical relation between proletarian women in Germany and women in the colonies (Walgenbach, 2005, p. 140).

place in a well-situated neighborhood on the margins of a city in the north of Germany, labeled in the local press "Bullerbü" after the quaint village of children's stories. Indeed, the residents often refer to the neighborhood as a village. The Protestant community hall is a central meeting point for neighborhood residents, the majority of whom are typical of the German bourgeoisie and petit bourgoisie—professionals, teachers, civil servants, architects and retirees.

My field site emerged spontaneously in the Autumn of 2015. At that time, up to 2,800 people seeking protection were arriving at the local Central Station daily, as they made their way towards Norway and Sweden. Following a nation-wide trend, volunteers had gathered at the main train station and its direct vicinity in order to provide new arrivals, exhausted by months of flight, with food, clean clothes as well as medical care. As mentioned previously, I joined this spontaneous volunteer effort at the main station distributing food to refugees and helping them to coordinate their route to the north of Europe. Besides a few tents at the main train station, no formal accommodation existed at the time. As a result, local mosques and increasingly private citizens and volunteer associations began to take on the mantle of providing basic assistance in an unprecedented way. In addition, an increasing number of first and second generation migrants played an active role in refugee support, in particular, because their skills as interpreters were in high demand. Facing their inability to cope with the large numbers of people arriving at the station every day, a group of women from *Bullerbü* village repurposed an empty building owned by the protestant church to house the refugees on a temporary basis. This emergency shelter provided accommodation for up to 60 people every day for eight weeks. In addition to the emergency shelter at the Protestant community hall, the neighborhood also hosted a follow-up accommodation center, a result of ad-hoc municipal efforts to house the more than 20,000 refugees who arrived in the city in 2015.

5.1. The Pretzel Issue

The first conflict I wish to discuss centers on a moment of distress and contestation relating to the rejection of a pretzel by a refugee woman. The incident took place shortly after the first bus filled with refugees arrived at the emergency shelter. I happened to be at the shelter to donate bed linens and towels and I became part of a group 30, mostly female neighborhood residents, who welcomed the exhausted families as they arrived. Volunteer interpreters, drawn from newly active first and second-generation migrants to Germany, were then tasked with accompanying families to the dormitories, located on the upper floor.[5]

During this process, one of the volunteers who was a retired teacher was handing out fresh pretzels to the women who were arriving. The conflict emerged when one of the refugee women declined to take the pretzel offered to her. Instead of smiling politely or nodding sheepishly as the volunteer had expected, she rejected the pretzel and instead asked, in a mixture of Farsi and English, for خبز (*khubz*), the flat bread that she prefers. The volunteer distributing the pretzels reacted strongly, frowning and dramatically returning the pretzel to her basket. The refugee, now looking visibly stressed, walked away, retreating to the dormitories upstairs. At this, the volunteer yelled incredulously in the direction of the kitchen, "I can't believe it, she doesn't want the pretzel!"

It is clear that, in this situation, the pretzel became more than a bit of food that had been declined. Instead, the act of refusal was read and understood by the volunteer as a rejection of the welcome gesture itself. Some of the other volunteers joined in the outrage, with one commenting "you shouldn't be picky in such a situation" and another chiming in "that is not decent behavior."

Noticing the noise in the kitchen, two of the interpreters decided to approach. So far, their role in welcoming the refugees had been to explain the location of various amenities within the building, and to solicit from them any particular needs So that the community volunteers could address them. Both interpreters were young women who had previously arrived as refugees in Germany, and so were familiar with the experience of flight. Up to this point, within the social landscape of the volunteers, the interpreters had been peripheral to the community center's kitchen, which acted as an informal hub for the neighborhood volunteer association's planning and organizing efforts. The kitchen space was coded as exclusively the terrain of a core group of neighborhood volunteers. Even I, as a researcher, was not permitted to enter.

So, when one of the interpreters took notice of the fuss in the kitchen, she was at first nervous to intervene. However, she then seized upon the 'pretzel question' and interjected into the discussion forcefully. Loudly, she asked, "So what is the problem with the pretzel?" Continuing on in the same tone, she argued with the neighborhood volunteers that they should not get so focused on the pretzel in the situation. Then in a more conciliatory tone, she added, that whatever happened with the pretzel didn't mean that the refugee women were ungrateful. She explained that most likely the refugees were tired, exhausted and traumatized and that their behavior should not be judged.

The situation surrounding the pretzel is thus illustrative: here a small but uncomfortable interaction led to more general irritation among the neighborhood volunteers. One way to read this interaction is to consider it a reflection what Kapoor (2005) labels "narcissistic samar-

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[5] To protect the confidentiality of the volunteers, translators, and refugees involved, I refrain here from describing them in specific detail, except as it relates directly to the analysis. Of the people named here as volunteers, the majority were German nationals, though there were also nationals of USA, Spain, and Japan among them. The volunteers had lived in the neighborhood for 5–30 years. Those labeled here as interpreters had generally arrived in Germany as children, had relevant language competencies and had lived in the city for several years. Because of inherent sensitivity of the issue as well as the specific context of arrival, I did not feel it was appropriate to inquire as to the origins of the refugees.

itanism", where the rejection of the pretzel ruptures the volunteers' social imaginary of their actions as benevolent and deserving of gratitude, thus provoking a conflict. But it also led to something else. For a moment, the kitchen, which had up to this point been a terrain for the expression of German feminine bourgeois values was opened up for dissent as the interpreter offered another reading of the interactions. This opening subsequently led to a long discussion about the interactions with refugees and divergent understandings of "decency" between the interpreter and the middle class neighborhood volunteers. The conversation continued throughout the evening, and in the morning a decision was taken to amend the list of foods accepted for donation to exclude the traditionally "German" dark rye bread and pretzels to avoid further conflicts.

The second conflict situation arose one year later. By this time, the Protestant community hall was no longer being used as an emergency shelter and was now the primary meeting place of the local "Refugees Welcome Initiative". The mood had likewise shifted away from the euphoric energy of the first days and weeks of refugee arrivals. In the media, the mood had also changed. No longer did empathy- and pity-inducing pictures of fleeing children and women dominate the media. Instead, these gave way to photos of (groups of) male refugees lingering in public places which, in a not-so-subtle undertone, presented them as being (sexually) threatening. This shift followed the much publicized (and later debunked) "sex attack" incident that occurred at New Year's Eve celebrations in central Cologne. In the aftermath of the media storm, many in the media proclaimed "the end of welcome culture".[6]

Even before the construction of the follow-up accommodation center was finished, volunteers had organized supply and support structures for the refugees. Over 30 working groups were constituted as part of this effort, including setting up play groups, a bicycle repair workshop and multiple offers of German language courses. Most of the volunteers in these groups were German women between the ages of 40 to 80. As part of the research, I attended the meetings of several of these working groups observing the interactions between volunteers and taking notes about their internal debates and discussions. Most of these planning discussions took place in the absence of either the volunteer interpreters or of refugees themselves. Some of the common topics of conversation in these internal conversations were volunteer's own experiences abroad, as well as discussions relating to current political events, like the Cologne "sex attack". With these events in mind, a recurring point of concern to the volunteers was how they might address the issue of (assumed) patriarchal family structures and the specter of sexual violence.

Far from being an abstract issue, these concerns manifested themselves in the ways that volunteers organized their work, and how they framed their own roles in the ongoing support of refugees. One of the venues where volunteers' concern over confronting patriarchal norms played out was in relation to the German language courses which they offered at the accommodation center. Even in the planning stages, the topic of providing safe spaces for women and children became a focus of considerable discussion and concern. Of particular concern was a worry that refugee women would have to gain permission from their husbands to attend classes, who (the volunteers imagined) might not allow them to join in. When this prospect was raised at a planning meeting (even as a speculation), it elicited a strong response from many of the volunteers: an elderly volunteer proclaimed "we want to offer all women and children the possibility of education! Education is key to integration" while several other women in the room nodded in agreement.

Then later, when the first week of German language classes was offered at the community center, the volunteers were dissatisfied with the turnout. In the regular working group meeting, volunteers complained that residents did not attend consistently, and this was especially true of the women. In one of the classes I observed, volunteers spoke to some of the male students exhorting them to "allow" their wives to attend the language courses. They talked to the male refugees not only as German teachers, but as moral authorities, who taught them how women should be treated in Germany, and in doing so exercising their mental motherhood. Over the course of about a month, concerns relating to language class attendance prompted more complaints about refugee behavior to surface in informal day-to-day conversations among volunteers, both at the accommodation center and around the neighborhood. Some volunteers griped that the refugee students took advantage of the courses for other purposes, for example, by bringing their homework from the integration courses along and getting the volunteer tutors to complete them. These simmering tensions between the volunteers and the refugees later came to a head when it was discovered that some of the bicycles that had been given to the refugees at the bike shop were later sold to other refugees. The volunteers' compassion then turned to outrage.

As this moment of heightened tensions, once again the volunteer interpreters we called in to help facilitate a conversation between the old and new neighbors. However, at the initial meeting, which was supposed to be a preliminary discussion, the situation continued to escalate. The interpreter, drawing on her work with volunteer initiatives elsewhere in the city and with political federations sought to reframe the situation, offering a distinct perspective. Rather than focus on the actions of the

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[6] Reports about sexual assaults during the night of New Year's Eve 2016 dominated the media in particular. There were media reports from a several of European cities of large numbers of sexual assaults by "Mediterranean-looking men". The assaults in Cologne were the most widely publicized among these, serving as a cipher for the "end of the welcome culture" to many (taz.de, 2016); for a critical view see Dietze (2016), as well as Neuhauser, Schwenken and Hess (2017).

refugees, the interpreter turned the discussion to the actions of the volunteers, pushing them to reflect on their own sense of purpose and self-conceptions as volunteers. Following Carolina Moulin (2012) we can interpret the interpreter's questioning of hierarchies as a form of subverting the framework and implicit "laws of gratitude" (Moulin, 2012, p. 61). The selling of the bicycle disturbs this law and shows that the receipt of the bicycle (or pretzel, or German course) is conditioned on the acceptance of the helpers' terms. Through retelling their own experiences of flight, the interpreter offered a new narrative and contested the existing "topology by questioning the place of authority" (Moulin, 2012, p. 64). The interpreter instead overcomes her position as "former refugee" and her "supplementary status", contesting the given order of the place.

Once again, we see how the sedimentation of Protestant and colonial notions of charitable femininity surface in spaces of contemporary "welcome culture". Reflecting this sense of "mental motherhood" (Walgenbach, 2005), the anger of the volunteers was tied to their frustrated desire to emancipate refugee women through German language courses and the failure of their mentorship efforts in transmitting the codes of proper German behavior (in relation to the homework and the bicycles). Yet, as with the pretzel issue, the increasing participation of first and second generation migrants in these charitable spaces meant that these subjectivities did not go unchallenged. Instead, interpreters and refugees themselves pushed the volunteers to reflect on their own positionality, rather than to blame others.

After the discussion that came to a head in relation to the German courses and the bicycles, not only did they open up the process of program planning and design to include the interpreters and the refugees, but volunteers also took the collective decision to undergo anti-racist training. Furthermore, as volunteers gained a more intimate understanding of the effects of family separation and deportation as time went on, they became more explicitly political. What had begun as an explicitly "nonpolitical" effort to support needy people shifted, as volunteers increasingly felt the need to take more public and political stances in relation to migration policies, including securing funds to pay for refugees' lawyers. As this suggests a large number of previously "nonpolitical" volunteers became politicized through their experiences in the accommodation centers. And as time wore on, interpreters and refugees assumed greater leadership roles in organized refugee support work, transforming previous hierarchies. One interpreter and two refugees earned places on the neighborhood council, for example, while two male refugees took over responsibility for running the bicycle repair shop.

These situations, I argue, changed not only the volunteers but also the social position of the refugees and interpreters. When these conflicts surfaced, it prompted reflection on behalf of the volunteers on the social scripts charitable assistance that informed their actions—

a bringing to consciousness of what Kapoor (2005) has called the trope of the "benevolent self" and "colonial other". This is not to say that there are no longer any conflicts between refugees and volunteers; different notions of help, education and especially emancipation remain points of dispute. But it is precisely by means of such conflicts and the dissent they elicit that charitable spaces of hierarchical care are transformed into spaces where subjects with differing histories, geopolitical locations, and social positions interact with one another. These everyday interactions in the situation, in turn, destabilize the hierarchical relations embedded in the feminine and bourgeois desire "to help" and to "emancipate" leading to new ways of understanding both the self and the other. While it is clear that global and local processes of racialization, gendering and the remaking of class difference intertwine in the community center to produce experiences of colonial difference, interactions in these situations also open up this process to new configurations of embodied geopolitics (Mignolo, 2000). Thus, it is as a result of the contested socialities in such charitable spaces that participants are reworking both practices and subjectivities surrounding charity as they become aware of and negotiate the historical and colonial sedimentations that have and continue to inform charitable practices of assistance. The emergency shelter and the community hall become a social arena in which effective relations and previously non-existent connections are made. These connections give place to forms of convivialities that are shaped by what Yuval-Davis (2006) names *transversal politics*— a politics that recognizes power relations, but is neither based on universalistic principles, nor on the grounding of fixed identities and homogeneous groups.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to show how relationships and interactions in the charitable spaces of "welcome culture" are shaped by historically sedimented understandings of gender, racial and class difference. Through a decolonial and multitemporal approach it is possible to highlight the continuities between historical and colonial notions of feminine charity and contemporary volunteering efforts in support of refugees in Germany. I have examined the mutually constitutive role of charitable practices in the definition of the female bourgeois subject as well as in the constitution of charitable space as the product of a particularly Lutheran gendered division of labor. Thus, we can see how the colonizing "desire to emancipate" (Walgenbach, 2005) refugee women which played out in the interactions between refugees and volunteers in accommodations centers in Germany, actually harks back to a long history of colonial encounters between western bourgeois women and "colonial others" (Kapoor, 2005). Taking into consideration the role of bourgeois women in the German colonial project in this analysis, allows us to better see the power relations that inform voluntary charita-

ble work—described here as a "politics of mental motherhood." This is a politics which defines not only who is to be "helped" and the scope of such help, but also which decides who is to be included in German society. A decolonial approach also highlights the necessity to consider the usefulness of cases of "colonial difference" even when these are moments of dissent and conflict. As I have shown in my account of some conflicts arising within spaces of "welcome culture", colonial sedimentations persist in the ways in which assistance has been organized. But, I also show that such power relations are always consistent and are more contingent than might first appear. It was, then in the process of negotiating dissent between the middle-class women volunteers, refugee women, and the interpreters—new volunteer actors who historically hadn't played a major role (or weren't allowed to) in charitable spaces—that everyday openings were made which lead to the transformation of practices, subjectivities, and power relations. Such acts of transformation arise within common practices and in relation to specific situations. What my analysis suggests, then, is that combining a decolonial approach with situational analysis allows us to ask how the multitemporal sedimentations of race, gender, and class are actively contested, and how these spaces of conflict and encounter re-shape subjectivities.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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