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Disrupting Borders?: Migration, Political Activism and Social Work[1]

Andrea Schmelz[2]

Abstract

The article explores the role of social work between the poles of migration control and activism by refugees and migrants. On the one hand, the question is raised how the processes of externalization and internalization of borders by migration politics affect the action framework of Social Work and contribute to a (permanent) exclusion of refugees and migrants, particularly in camps. On the other hand, the question is posed how refugees and migrants express their right(s) to inclusion, participation and freedom of movement in protests and activism, and how they are supported by solidarity movements in countries of refuge and along the migration routes. The organization Social Workers without Borders exemplifies how social workers might become activists of unconditional solidarity and defenders of human rights. The example of Women in Exile shows how refugee women can resist against the border-making in the asylum regime by raising their voices for human rights activism. Hereby, their critical reflection on refugee womens' experiences with social workers underlines that these often times risk to play an depoliticized role in social work practice, not applying the political mandate of social work as a human rights profession. Additionally, the claims of refugee and migrant activists provide knowledge to social workers in applying radical social work practice.

Key Words:

borders, migrants, refugees, activism, social movements, international social work

1. Introduction

Social work with migrants and refugees is framed by policies of migration control and exclusion, whereby also social workers become actors in border and mobility politics.[3] Samaddar has highlighted in his book „The postcolonial age of migration" multiple forms of boundaries and borders towards unwanted migrants as a key issue, and he accentuates the coloniality of today's migration:

> „What are the meanings of the boundary-making exercises ordaining the lines of inclusion, differential inclusion, and exclusion? … borders, border management, and border controls, jails, camps, jails, slums, or detention centres, all … are shaping migration today" (Samaddar, 2020: 5).

As legal migration routes to EU member states are largely absent, the Mediterranean Sea emerged as the most dangerous border in the world. However, similar policies and

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[2] Dr. Andrea Schmelz is a professor in the Faculty of Social Work and Health at the University of Applied Sciences Coburg, Germany.

[3] Border regimes in international politics describes the institutional arrangements of border demarcation and control that, following border studies, have an impact on social structures.

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practices of defence against migrants can be observed at the Mexico-U.S. border or in Australia (Ferguson et al., 2018; Briskman, 2019), which were intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis (Triandafyllidou, 2022; Behrmann et al., 2022; UN, 2022, 2021). These developments have resulted in new challenges for social work along migration routes, in contexts of deportation and forced immobility, and across borders. According to Boccagni et al. following the European refugee protection crisis of 2014-2016, social work increasingly faces a "complex and hard-to-address demand for social protection" (Boccagni et al., 2020: 378), which has also to address a growing number of mobile migrants.

On World Refugee Day 2022, the German Institute for Human Rights has again highlighted that protection against refoulement, access to a fair asylum procedure, decent housing, and medical care are rights of all people seeking asylum at the external borders. In March 2022, the EU Member States have shown in the reception of Ukrainian protection seekers that they are able to support a high number of refugees in an unbureaucratic und solidary action plan and grant them the rights they are entitled to on the basis of the Geneva Refugee Convention and European directives. But the same rights are systematically ignored to protection seekers at the external borders of the EU (DIMR, 2022). A few days after the World Refugee Day 2022, 37 people died at the Spanish-Moroccan border by police shootings while trying to cross the Spanish exclave of Melilla. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) accuses therefore state authorities in Spain and Marocco for the murder of migrants at the external borders of Europe (IFSW, 2022).

The International Federation of Social Workers (Human Rights Commission) stated on the International Migrant Worker Day, December 18, 2021, that exclusion characterizes the everyday life of a growing number of migrants and refugees in host countries internationally. The Transnational Platform Europe (TMP-E), an association of networks for migrant and refugee rights, describes the related experiences of exclusion, racism and criminalization as follows:

> „Despite the fact that we as migrants and refugees, make an enormous contribution with our work and remittances to the economy and development of our home countries and also to the European economy and society, our working and living conditions have become dramatically worse. We are confronted with criminalization, racism, discrimination and islamophobia on a daily basis. Especially the undocumented among us are very heavily affected by the daily reality of exclusion, mass raids and deportations“ (TNP-E, 2021).

Based on selected examples, the article explores the role of social work between the poles of migration control and activism of refugees and migrants.[4] On the one hand, I raise the question how processes of externalization and internalization of border politics affect the action framework of social work and moreover contribute to a permanent exclusion of refugees and migrants, e.g., in camps and mass shelters. On the other hand, I pose the question how refugees and migrants express their right(s) to inclusion, participation and freedom of movement in protest movements and how they are supported by solidarity movements in countries of refuge and along the migration routes. The organization Social Workers without Borders exemplifies how social workers might become activists of unconditional solidarity and defenders of human rights. The example of Women in Exile

[4] The article summarizes selected findings of a project on social movements and activism in international social work at Coburg University of Applied Sciences and deepens the reflections on (un-)doing borders, activism of migrants and Social Work.

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shows how refugee women can defend themselves against the border-making in the asylum regime by raising their voices in human rights activism. Hereby, a critical reflection regarding refugee women's experiences with social workers underlines that social work often times risks to play an unpolitical role in practice, not applying the political mandate of social work as a human rights profession.

2. Externalization and Internalization of Borders

In the global migration and refugee regime social work has been operating for more than 30 years within the shrinking asylum spaces of the postcolonial world order and increasingly unequal mobility opportunities (e.g., Mitsilegas et al., 2020; Mau, 2021). At the EU level, the Fortress Europe is symbolically represented by barbed wire, military operations, surveillance technologies in border spaces such as, e.g., at the Southern Mediterranean Sea or the "Jungle" in Calais and at the Belarusian-Polish, the Aegean or the Balkan borders (e.g., Galis et al. 2022; Hudson et al., 2022; UN, 2021, 2022). Furthermore, migration management has been developed, which implies, on the one hand, the partial opening of the respective national labor markets based on the welcomed economic benefit of migrants and, on the other hand, measures to prevent so-called illegal migration (cf. Ogg, 2022; Buckel, 2014).

To control and prevent migration, the EU has once again tightened border security plans beyond its own territory since the refugee protection crisis of 2014-2016: militarization of the Mediterranean, increased border security in West Africa, agreements with autocratic and dictatorial regimes to detain people in countries of origin and transit, and finally, poverty reduction in the classical developmental sense (cf. Ceccorulli et al., 2022; Calabrò, 2021). This demarcation of borders by EU migration policies of externalization has impacted on the scope of action of social work far beyond a national border that can be imagined as a cartographic line. In this context, the following mechanisms of making boundaries have been contributing to the internalization and normalization of borders:

Ubiquity of borders: Border studies unveil that by securitization and externalization of migration control in Europe, borders have become detached from their territorial location and are present everywhere. This insight prompts the French philosopher Balibar to conclude that "the border is everywhere" (2002: 80). In these processes, mechanisms of border making have expanded and border spaces/borderlands/borderscapes have emerged that no longer correspond to geographically located territories (Mezzadra et al., 2013). Border spaces have expanded into "complex social institutions" that include "legal, cultural, social and economic components" (Monforte, 2020: 48). As part of complex surveillance mechanisms operating at many levels, the EU delegates migration control policies to public service providers. These are, e.g., hospitals, schools, universities or private security companies and airlines to enforce border controls within the whole society (e.g., Schweitzer 2022). Social workers are involved in these processes as actors who can (re-)produce or overcome borders.

Selective, stratified rights: Migration management has produced "civic stratification" for different groups of migrants (Morris, 2002). A distinction is made between, first, migrants with access to citizenship (citizens), second, migrants with secure residence status (denizens), and third, those with no or insecure residence status (margizens) (cf. also Buckel, 2013: 160-161). This stratification of rights means that migrants' access to rights is restricted or denied entirely. This formal classification according to different residence

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status positions has an effect in multi-layered processes of partial inclusion and exclusion, whereby social work with migrants and refugees faces discriminatory and racializing regulations, depending on the respective residence status (Schütze, 2021: 398-399). At the same time, processes of "filtering and selection" (cf. Mezzadra et al., 2013; cf. also Mau, 2021) normalize the absence of rights for certain migrant groups such as the undocumented.

De-/serving humanitarianism: The security and border paradigm of migration control is accompanied by a specific form of humanitarian regulation of immigration and asylum (Fassin, 2011: 213, cited in Monforte, 2020: 49). EU institutions and member states as well as NGOs and international aid organizations, replace the discourse on (universal) rights of migrants and asylum seekers with a moral discourse of protection forms based on discretionary powers of humanitarianism, understood as the protection of humans from existential threats. The main criterion for assessing who can enter EU territory is vulnerability and the extent of sufferings experienced. In this perspective, border policies act as a filter that serves to distinguish between people who deserve compassion and others who are deemed undesirable. These border-making processes have exacerbated intersectional exclusionary dynamics based on hierarchies of race, class, and gender that are legacies of the colonial history of European States (Fassin, 2020; Bhimji, 2020). Furthermore, globally many camps constitute a form of permanent territorial exclusion of refugees and migrants.

Camps as a form of existence: This postcolonial present includes camps that the sociologist Bauman (2005: 44ff.) has described as a consequence of unequal globalization. As an instrument of control towards populations, camps were implemented for the first time during colonial rule (Briskman, 2020). Camps shape the lives of a growing number of migrants and refugees around the globe (Agier, 2011; 2019). There are many names and forms of camps, such as camps for refugees and displaced persons, anchor centers[5], migrant camps, waiting zones for people without residence status, transit camps, deportation centers, initial reception centers, ghettos, and jungles. Camps, for all their diversity, have three characteristics in common: Exterritoriality, the regime of exception, and exclusion. As spatially demarcated special zones they are "non-places" that are usually not marked on any map. The camps are administered according to their own laws and the freedom of movement of the "residents" is arbitrarily regulated. The social exclusion of this form of accommodation marks that refugees and migrants are superfluous as a population group (Baumann, 2005: 81-82). Camps in the many border spaces worldwide serve to (im)mobilize population groups (cf. Lutz, 2017). In her study of German refugee activism, Bhimji (2020: 26) interprets the institutional and everyday racism - as mentioned above - in camps as colonial legacy and postcolonial present. The domination and control mechanisms of the camp continue to operate in restrictive asylum legislations that solidify exclusions along race, class, and gender lines.

Immigration Detention: The everyday life of many asylum seekers is characterized by "Living with Deportability and Detainability" (Bhimji, 2020: 27), a perseverance of life perspectives that are characterized by deportation and detention due to illegalised and

[5] *Ankerzentren* can literally be translated as anchor centres. In Germany, these are admission centres for refugees. The word anker is an acronym made up of the following words: "*An(kunft)*" (arrival), "*k(ommunale Verteilung)*" (municipal distribution), "*E(ntscheidung)*" (decision) and "*R(ückführung)*" (return).

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residence status. On a global scale, this experience is shared by an increasing "global deportspora" (Nyers, 2019: 4), a global "underclass" for which deportation has become the "way of life". In response to the 2014-2016 refugee protection crisis, a study by the Global Detention Project examines the criminalization of migrants and refugees through detentions in European countries. Exacerbated practices have been observed regarding the frequency, reasons, duration, and treatment of children and families in detention (Majacher et al., 2020). In resistance to criminalization and exclusion, protests were mobilized by refugees. However, they are insufficiently supported by social workers, where they do not know or use their professional ethics and human rights orientation - as Burzlaff et al. (2018: 346) have shown by the example of the Berlin refugee protests in 2015.

3. Protests, Human Rights and Solidarity

„We are here because you were there." With this slogan Ambalavander Sivanandan, activist and director of the Institute of Race Relations in London, explained in the 1980s the connection between European colonialism and migration from former colonies to Europe (Bendix, 2018: 247). Since the mid-1990s, refugee activists in Germany slightly modified the slogan: "We are here because you destroyed our countries." In doing so, they point to global interconnections and postcolonial structures of exploitation and deny to think the right to stay limited to nation-state borders. In Germany, refugees have become visible as subjects of political action, especially in protests since 2012 (Bendix, 2018: 248).

In the German refugee movement, four central human rights demands are recurring: abolish camps, stop deportations, end compulsory residence, and the right of refugees to work and study (Bendix, 2018: 249). Refugees moreover demand simplified family reunification, certified interpreters, and free legal counselling services (Burzlaff et al., 2018: 347). Refugees also articulate structural causes of flight that are often overlooked and invisibilized in social work. Networks such as The VOICE or the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants also draw a direct comparison between the asylum system in Germany and colonial rule (Bendix, 2018: 253). Refugee activists, such as the network Afrique-Europe-Interact, advocate for the right to self-determined development, the right to stay, and the right to global freedom of movement and settlement, and denounce structural causes of flight such as land grabbing, the destruction of farmers' livelihoods, unfair world trade policies and climate crisis (Bendix, 2018: 253).

In response to European migration and asylum policies in the 1990s, activist alliances of migrants and refugees have developed across borders, which until then were primarily organized locally and nationally. In social movements migrants - both documented and undocumented - have developed transnational collective actions, such as the "European march of the sans-papiers and migrants" (2014) from Brussels to Strasbourg, the "European day of struggle for regularization and for the closure of all detention centers for foreigners" (2004) or "A Day without Us" (2011) with demonstrations and strikes across Europe (Monforte, 2020: 51). When migrants express their protest publicly, they articulate demands of inclusion and belonging (Nyers et al., 2012). Critical citizenship studies interpret these as resistive enactment of their citizenship rights, claiming "their right to have rights" (Isin et al., 2008; quoted from Monforte, 2020: 53). These protests challenge the exclusionary and divisive logic of (European) border demarcations. The universalist claims of migrants and support networks undermine European border policies:

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"citizenship for all" "no border", "no one is illegal", or "we are all foreigners". A radical, universal and post-national or post-colonial "citizenship" (Stierl, 2018) is demanded, which calls for equal rights for all and wants to overcome exclusions.

Without networks of supporters, however, the articulation power of these movements remains limited (cf. Carney, 2021). Therefore, social movement research emphasizes that especially migrants with precarious status (in particular regarding work and housing) and those without paper have a lack of material and symbolic resources, which makes their mobilization more difficult. Moreover, by participating in protests, they expose themselves to the public, and risk being arrested and deported. This danger has been exacerbated in the last decade by right-wing parties in Europe and anti-migration social movements with their media campaigns in many countries in Europe and worldwide (Steinhilper, 2021).

Forms of collective solidarity and structures of self-help have also been developed in places where people from Europe are forced to return (Kilian et al., 2021). In Bamako, for example, the Association des Refoulés d'Afrique Centrale au Mali (ARACEM) was founded to improve precarious situations of lack of housing, food, medical and psychosocial assistance. In Lomé, the Togolese Association of Deportees (ATE) was established to provide psychosocial support for the failed migration project, which is accompanied by stigmatization in the societies and families of origin (Jacob, 2020: 43). Also mothers joined together to cope with trauma and grief regarding missing children, applying activism with others and working on structural causes of migration. The "Caravan of Mothers" and relatives from Latin American and African countries came together to demand the right to search for and receive information on their missing children (Stierl, 2020: 96-97).

As European countries failed to guarantee social rights for refugees from above, solidarity grew from below to fill existing gaps in social assistance systems and support structures. In the wake of the 2015-16 European refugee protection crisis, however, refugee activists and their mobilizations in solidarity for newly arrived refugees faded into the background. What emerged in the media was the so-called welcome culture, which became visible as "white" and "helping" (Bhimji, 2020: 9; Bendix, 2018: 256). In the middle of the European refugee protection crisis (2014-2016), migration sociologist Pries interpreted the organizing of refugees and their supporters as an empowering, collective social movement. He perceived in the refugee migration movement an "emergent, transnational, civic-social movement comparable to the national labor movements of the 19th century, which aimed to solve the social question in the struggle between capital and labor" (Pries, 2016: 23; translated by the author). Policies of migration control yet, in particular the so-called EU-Turkey Deal (March 2016), have almost completely stopped this movement at the EU's external borders.

Civil society engagement for the support of illegalized, tolerated and recognized refugees is developing into a controversial field of tension for social work: On the one hand, civil society assistance and forms of action are significant for the provision of social support and involve political activism for the rights of migrants. On the other hand, voluntary engagement might be instrumentalized as a substitute for non-provided assistance and insufficient welfare state services. This implies the danger that unavailable government social services and disadvantages are accepted as normality (Scherr et al., 2019: 95). To the extent that European countries failed to guarantee social rights for refugees from above, solidarity grew from below. Existing gaps in social assistance systems and support structures were partially filled in this way. Three strands of solidarity movements emerged

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that are able of expanding the scope of action of state-funded social work (cf. Hill et al., 2021; Bauder, 2022):

First, the broad welcome movement in 2015/16 has been interpreted as a Europe-wide citizens' movement that seeks to promote the reception, arrival, and inclusion of refugees in cooperation with local actors (Feischmidt et al., 2019; Fleischmann, 2020). Migration researcher Werner Schiffauer estimates that there were 15,000 refugee projects (2016) in Germany where more than five million people were involved - often side-by-side - with social workers. These initiatives demonstrated everyday solidarity, willingness to help, and provided support to improve access to information, housing, education and health care, work, and community life (Scherr et al., 2019).

Second, in many European cities, the concept of Solidarity Cities/Sanctuary Cities is also gaining momentum for social work. Municipalities and cities are a microcosm of social demarcations between desired and undesired immigration (Schmelz, 2019). In 2017, "Solidarity City" was founded as an activist network of refugee councils, migrant organizations, leftist movements, urban policy NGOs, church groups, social workers, and academics working internationally with sea rescue initiatives by thinking together EU border policies and social rights in communities. Direct reception of refugees and ban on deportation are linked to the democratic structures of urban social spaces (Schmelz, 2019; Kron, 2020: 45).

Third, along the external borders, new forms of solidarity with protection seekers are evolving. Non-governmental organizations have succeeded in saving tens of thousands of refugees from drowning with their ships since 2014. A broad protest movement emerged in Europe against the criminalization of this private sea rescue, fighting to ensure that maritime rescue is not a crime. (Stierl, 2020: 47) Alarm-Phone runs a unique project of political solidarity. Activists from Europe and Africa are available around the clock to respond to distress calls from refugees, preventing state actors such as the coast guard from failing to provide assistance in distress at sea. This intervention represents a radical form of solidarity that transcends national borders and humanitarian motivations for aid (Stierl, 2019: 105; cf. also Hill et al., 2021).

Social workers can broaden their perspectives of action through alliances with solidarity movements and they can become activists themselves, what the example of Social Workers without Borders (SWWB) shows. The claims of refugee and migrant activists provide knowledge to social workers in applying radical social work practice.

4. Social Workers without Borders: (Un-)Doing Borders?

SWWB International was founded in Australia (2014) within the International Federation of Social Workers. In the UK, an independent national organization was founded in the context of social work in the "Jungle" of Calais (2016). The Jungle of Calais refers to a "slum tent city" of temporary accommodation in the French town of Calais, where 9,000 migrants were waiting to continue their journey to the UK in 2016. Although the camp was evacuated in October 2016, the "slum" was reorganised again a short time later (cf. Tyerman, 2022; Agier, 2019).

Programmatically, the founders of SWWB (GB) summarize the political, critical reflexive positions in an anthology based on case studies (Wroe et al., 2019). The case studies cover a broad spectrum of social work areas, ranging from support for unaccompanied

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minors and single-parent families to the work with victims of torture and detention pending deportation. SWWB opposes the distinction of the deserving-undeserving nexus in social work with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. To their opinion by this juxtaposition, State support is made dependent on a humanitarian, determined "vulnerability". This is responsible for the demarcation between refugees who deserve protection on humanitarian grounds and other refugees who are declared to be migrants not worthy of protection. The organization SWWB, furthermore, advocates for an unconditional social work based on human rights and professional ethics, committed to the principles of solidarity, protection and allyship. Grounded in the International Social Work Ethics Standard (IASSW 2018), the initiators of SWWB (GB) (Wroe et. al., 2019: 19) see the social work profession as having a responsibility to promote social justice and equality, to confront discrimination, and to express and defend its professional integrity through its actions.

The involvement of social work in welfare state restrictions, which at the same time serve as instruments of migration control, are (for SWWB) incompatible with principles such as the "promotion of human rights", "respect for diversity" and "access to equal resources". Defending the rights of migrants should rather be the main indicator for defending the autonomy and integrity of the social work profession:

> "Defending the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, then, is just as much about defending the autonomy of our profession to deliver services to all who need it, as it is about opposing immigration control" (Wroe et. al., 2019: 21).

In this context, the task of disrupting and transcending borders is not limited to migrants and refugees, but relates to all target groups in social work given neoliberal policies:

> "[...] social work without borders means not only working across national borders, or those imposed by immigration control, but also transcending those borders imposed by liberalist ideologies and market-led approaches" (Wroe et al., 2019: 276).

Based on Kessl et al. (2010, quoted from Schütze, 2021: 404) social work can establish and (re)produce existing borders and boundaries through its actions, or change and undermine them through a critical-reflexive practice. Borders are reproduced in everyday life through exclusion, marginalization, and criminalization of the "migrant other" (Schütze, 2021: 397) or they are determined by unequal material living conditions through stratified rights (Schütze, 2021: 397). Another dimension becomes evident in access to welfare state benefits, which is linked to vulnerability and need for protection. At the intersection of migration control and social policy, social work can become a crucial actor that confirms borders, destabilizes and changes them (Atac et al., 2019).

In order to radically change structural conditions that violate human rights of migrants, however, the micro practices of undoing borders in social work, according to Ferguson et al. (2018: 104-110) have to be flanked by political demands of a human rights-oriented social work at the macro and mezzo level. In particular, this includes holding governments accountable to ensure safe migration routes, ending detention and criminalization, realizing the right to family reunification, protecting unaccompanied minors, and enforcing the right to dignified work in recognition of refugees' abilities. As guiding principles for practice, Ferguson et. al. highlight in particular the need to promote agency, initiative, and self-help, and to resist social workers' collusion with discriminatory laws. Thus, social work should unconditionally refuse to cooperate with institutions that undermine the social,

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political and civil rights of migrants.

To redeem such demands, social work cannot act uncritically within a framework that remains limited to legal requirements (Briskman et al., 2018; Mapp, 2022). Instead, social work professionals and organizations are called upon to influence politics and legislation in order to translate human rights standards into applicable law and to maximally expand solidarity-based support for refugees and (undocumented) migrants - if necessary by using forms of civil disobedience (Prasad, 2021; Staub-Bernasconi, 2019). Social work can thereby make greater use of the opportunity to engage and act as allies with refugee self-organizations in order to open their voices to political advocacy and establish independent, well-financed self-help structures.

In this context, social work can use human rights as its professional, ethical compass and has an independent mandate to invoke and to contribute to structural transformation in the context of the triple mandate, bridging the gap between individual assistance and social control by the professional autonomy of social work (Staub-Bernasconi, 2019: 83ff.). In doing so, human rights and ethical professional standards become the frame of analysis and reference for social work in the context of flight and migration. The triple mandate enables social workers to reject illegitimate and discriminatory mandates and to formulate an independent political mandate for social work practice. (Prasad, 2021: 227).

5. Women in Exile (WiE) and Breaking Borders: Gender Perspectives on Human Rights

Women around the globe are raising their voices against injustices suffered in the context of refugee migration and human trafficking. They stand up for women's and human rights and against gender-based violence. Nevertheless, sexual assault, sexism and racism remain largely invisible as an everyday structure, they are normalized and they are rarely prosecuted. The example of Women in Exile (WiE) can show how women seeking refuge and protection oppose against exclusion and fight for their rights to inclusion. In the anniversary publication "Women in Exile - Breaking Borders to Build Bridges" (2022), WiE documents and reflects on the experiences and knowledge of a two-decade struggle for the right to self-determination and freedom of movement. WiE continously insists on the abolition of the "camp system", denounces the violation of women's and human rights, racism and intersectional discrimination, and calls for resistance and protest against injustices suffered. WiE fights for a "world without borders", highlighting two demands: On the one hand, WiE calls for overcoming the consequences of colonization and the ending of the exploitation as well as pillage of the countries in the Global South; on the other hand, they champion "the right to come, the right to go, and the right to STAY!" (WiE, 2022: 33).

WiE organizes a safe space of learning and living, exploring the new possibilities where the personal becomes political, and self-empowerment can be experienced (cf. WiE, 2022: 48 ff.). The organisation positions itself as an activist space where experiences of violence and human rights violations as well as togetherness and hope can be shared in view of exclusionary and harmful living conditions in camps and beyond. As refugees, women live forcibly with their children in cramped, remote mass shelters, entitled to just a few square meters of living space with shared kitchen and sanitation facilities. Without any protection of privacy, women and their children feel particularly exposed to the dangers of sexual, physical violence and daily harmful stress. In the campaign "No camps for women and

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children! Abolish all camps!" (translation by the author) WiE has been fighting for the abolishment of camps, organizing for many years a bus tour to various camps throughout Germany (WiE, 2022: 50-51).

WiE expanded in 2011 to Women in Exile & Friends by involving solidary activists without a history of flight. Since then, women with and without a history of flight have been working together for political change strategies and protesting loudly against the inhumane housing and living conditions of refugee women. Together, they fight for the realization of equal rights for all people (WiE, 2022: 13). As a safe space, WiE stands for intersectional solidarity and empowerment of other asylum seekers. Applying peer education and the opportunity to become a mentor themselves, women explore creative action space as well as self-empowerment:

> "We develop and exchange synergies to fight for our rights in the asylum process and to defend ourselves against sexualized violence, discrimination and exclusion. Through peer education, we have encouraged and helped many refugee women not only to stand up for their rights, but also to organize themselves into groups in the parts of the country where they live to be vocal and bring the problems they face in the asylum process to the public" (WiE 2020: 12, translation by the author).

While WiE in the anniversary publcation describes fellow activists without refugee histories as bridge builders in solidarity, refugee women have often times experienced their relationship with social workers and refugee volunteers as apolitical and paternalistic. Social workers in the camps have rather discouraged refugee women from political engagement and instead encouraged them to get involved in cultural events. For instance, they made the women cooking food typical of their origins as means to integrate into the German society. Whereas social workers had not once addressed the living conditions in the camps and the residency requirement (WiE, 2022: 28). WiE also criticizes that social workers often tend to victimize refugee women and tend to the white saviour syndrome where mental decolonization is required (WiE, 2022: 66). Refugee women from WiE also reprove the fact that they are involved in social work as voluntary, unpaid project workers, while at the same time they have to make a living in dirty jobs of the low-wage sector (WiE, 2022: 67).

A particular focus of WiE's work refers to the mental and physical health of refugee women. WiE continuously highlights that a large proportion of female protection seekers have experienced sexual violence and multiple traumas prior to, during and after their flight. Moreover, due to accommodation in German camps and an uncertain outcome of the asylum procedure "a constant re-traumatization takes place - the situation of 'being on the run' continues." (WiE, 2020: 20, translation by the author). Nevertheless refugee women encounter structures in the German health care system that systematically undermine their right to adequate health care - a situation that has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (WiE, 2020: 23f.). The human right to health (Art. 12 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) stipulates a highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for every person: On the one hand, this includes the right to determine one's own body and health as well as the right not to endure medical interventions without consent. On the other hand, conditions should be created so that all persons have access to adequate health care (Krennerich, 2020: 25). The central UN criteria for the right to health are availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health care. In the case of availability, access to medical facilities and

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treatment should be non-discriminatory for all. To this regard, WiE denounces a three-classes health care system that promotes institutional discrimination along the lines of residence status. In particular, health facilities and medical professionals should take into account gender, age and cultural specificities in order to meet the criterion of acceptability. WiE women hence take their right to health into their own hands because acceptable and quality health care is not available, recognizing the stress- und harmful living conditions of refugee women in a culturally sensitive and non-discriminatory way.

6. Conclusion: Towards Politics of Inclusion

Refugee and migrant protests and solidarity movements are interpreted as social movements of growing importance in search for global justice (cf. Weber, 2022). Social workers can broaden their perspectives of action for social justice through alliances with solidarity movements and they can become activists themselves together with refugees and migrants. The claims of refugees and migrants and their critical reflection on paternalism or white saviour complex brings critical knowledge to social workers. It urges social workers for critical self-reflection and decolonizing social work curricula and practices based on human rights. However, social work with asylum seekers who have been granted international protection status, e.g., after a successful asylum application or as a result of resettlement programs, and who have access to state welfare programs, differs from forms of popular social work in which social workers form alliances with solidarity movements and refugee activists (Lavalette, 2019). Together, they build self-help structures for all and provide social support beyond state social work. Furthermore, in allyship with refugee and migrant activism social work can open new corridors for political advocacy and potentials of social transformation. In doing so, the political mandate of social work with refugees and migrants can start through networking on different levels and can be applied in human-rights based practice.

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