Racializing Homophobia:

Tracing Sexual Political Discourse within Europe's "Refugee Crisis" in Berlin

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Abstract:

Discourses relating to gender and sexualities have long been a tool for the perpetuation of racialized "othering" and have contributed to the strengthening of national identities and boundaries as they reproduce binary constructions of "us" and "them." As the German nation-state reinvents itself as multicultural, tolerant, and sexually liberated, these discourses serve to mark the racialized body as a site of backwardness, sexism, and homophobia, and thus justify its segregation and exclusion exemplified in the restrictive practices of housing, mobility restrictions, and deportation of asylum seekers and migrants. This paper aims to trace the unfolding of discourses in and between some dominant organizational structures in Berlin that advocate for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers. It argues that the claim for citizenship of some formerly excluded sexual others is contingent on the promotion of a very specific notion of sexual identity and participation in the orientalisation/ethnicisation of homophobia.

Introduction

> When I consider what it means today, to accept such an award, then I believe, that I would actually lose my courage, if I would simply accept the price under the present political conditions […] For instance: Some of the organizers explicitly made racist statements or did not dissociate themselves from them. The host organizations refuse to understand antiracist politics as an essential part of their work. Having said this, I must distance myself from this complicity with racism including anti-Muslim racism (English translation of Judith Butler's speech at the CSD in Berlin in 2010).

At Berlin's Christopher Day Parade (CSD) in 2010, Judith Butler declined the "Award for Civil Courage" from the organizing committee. As reasons, Butler cited the vehement objections raised by queer(/)of colour activists and organizations who critiqued the organizing committee and members of the parade for participating in racist discourses. Butler's refusal of the award should be recognized as a way to build alliances with and support those objecting the normalization of racist logics by the organizers. Indeed, the incident marked the beginning of a newly-found interest in and discussion on racism in Germany's LGBT-rights activist scenes. However, it was also witness to a reproduction of the very same racial and class hierarchies Butler objected to, whether this was intended or not. Butler mentions several organizations located in Germany/Berlin such as GLADT, LesMigraS, SUSPECT, and ReachOut, that, according to her, have successfully and historically worked and mobilized against racism as well as sexual and gender discrimination. Nevertheless, it seems symptomatic that her speech garnered mass attention in Germany and beyond, even though she was merely commenting on what queers and people of colour had already critiqued for years. Butler's white, class, and educational privileges thus gave her speech more legitimacy and audience.

That discourses/politics of race and sexuality are intertwined and that LGBT organizations reproduce racist discourses are not novel critiques; rather, they were established by queer(/)of colour activists and scholars before Butler's speech at the CSD in 2010, and have continuously been developed, discussed, and challenged, in Germany as well as globally. In order to further this discussion, this paper attempts to trace these discourses since 2015 using policy and media reports that focus on the city of Berlin and to critique the portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees within them. One of the main shortcomings of this article is that it is not based on empirical research or ethnographic fieldwork, but is rather an analysis of media and policy publications of some of the dominant actors such as the LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) and MANEO (Gay anti-violence project) in Berlin. I recognize the problem behind leaving out the views and opinions of queer refugees and asylum seekers, around whom the mentioned discourses revolve.

As a white German citizen and university student, I do however recognize that even thoroughly conducted "field work" would not legitimate me narrating refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences or speaking on behalf of them. It would rather reproduce the same epistemic hierarchies or violence I attempt to point out throughout this paper: white, German voices dominating public discourses revolving around queers of colour.

While I do not think that this paper is immune to similar critiques, I aim to discuss some of the dominant institutional and organizational structures and discourses in Berlin that are often dominated by people whose positionality is very similar to my own. Simultaneously, it is important to acknowledge that I do not share or necessarily understand the lived experiences of queer refugees and asylum seekers. However, I aim to critically assess the institutional foundations that give legitimacy to racist and xenophobic discourses from my own positionality, as well as the politics of some well-known advocates of queer refugees and asylum seekers. Ultimately, I hope to discuss these politics and discourses in relation to wider tendencies prominent in German LGBT advocacy and state narratives.

The contemporary politics of population management in Germany rely on a series of identifications, categorizations, and boundary drawings, such as classifying people into a variety of legal statuses that entail different restrictions and rights. Terms such as "migrant," "illegal migrant," "refugee," and "asylum seeker" classify and hierarchize people (who move) according to racist, classist, and sexist criteria. I am aware that the use of these terms might reproduce the same discourses I am critiquing. However, I will be referring to this terminology in order to correspond to the language prevalent in various discourses and to clarify the ways in which populations are treated as different. Similarly, sexual and gender identity categories are constructed in specific socio-political contexts, and are inherently exclusionary and marginalizing. For example, the widespread use of the acronym "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans) is often critiqued for being a mere politically correct term for lesbian- and gay-rights politics,[1] while it contributes to the hierarchisation and erasure of non-conforming sexualities and genders within this collective term (Murib, 2014). I will be using that language in order to reflect groups' and organizations' self-depiction, as well as to indicate the discursive and material effects of the mentioned exclusionary tendencies.

The White Gay Saviour and Germany's "Refugee Crisis"

In her paper on the emerging discourses after the New Year's night of 2015/16 in Cologne, Gabriele Dietze (2016) points to a shift in the focus of the orientalising German public discourse. While previous public discussion focused on the long-term effects of the integration of Muslims, who are often born or have lived in

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[1] Dominant and mainstream lesbian- and gay-rights politics are often critiqued for primarily taking place within liberal discourses on human rights and for being shaped by homonormativity. This term was coined by Lisa Duggan (2003): "Homonormativity: a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions — such as marriage, and its call for monogamy and reproduction — but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan, L. (2002) "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." In Russ Castronovo and Diana D. Nelson (Eds.): *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press. 179). In the German context, members of the queer group SUSPECT have argued that lesbian and gay politics have focused on the " achievement of equal rights, the legal decriminalization of homosexuality and legal acknowledgement of same-sex partnerships" while leaving "immigrants out of the conversation" (SUSPECT (2010) "Totally Normal: The Story of Homonationalism in Germany." In Migrationsrat Berlin Brandenburg (Eds.): *Leben nach Migration*. Retrieved from http://www.migrationsrat.de/dokumente/pressemitteilungen/MRBB-NL-2010-special-Leben%20nach%20Migration%20english.pdf)

Germany for decades, it now turned to the newly arrived asylum seekers (Dietze, 2016, 95). Instead of the Muslim family and the Muslim and veiled woman, unmarried young Muslim men became the new "problem group" that served as justification of racist sentiments (ibid.). Drawing on Margarete Jäger (2000) who identified an "ethnicisation of sexism," Dietze further sees an orientalisation/ethnicisation of homophobia, both of which serve not only to signify the liberation and emancipation of women and homosexuals as completed in German society, but also act as proof of the self-perceived superiority of the (white) German "culture" (Dietze, 2009, 44). When racialized young male asylum seekers become constructed as potential or likely perpetrators of sexist and homophobic behaviour, white Germans have the opportunity to establish themselves as tolerant, open, and acting as liberators or saviours of the victims of such discrimination. Organizations and advocates for LGBT-rights have seemingly taken up this opportunity and consciously or not reproduce the racist and binary logics described above, especially as they are considered "experts" on homophobic hate crimes in refugee accommodations. Simultaneously, these organizations and the discourses they partake in acknowledge and promote only a very specific and narrow idea of non-normative sexual identities and genders, such as monogamous and state-sanctioned relationships, which is very much entrenched in the sexual histories of northern America and parts of Europe.

Before discussing the interventions and discourses of LGBT organizations in relation to asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin, it seems necessary to sketch the living situation of these populations of migrants. Since the beginning of what is mostly known as the "refugee crisis"[2] in Germany, Berlin, just as any other region in the country, has seen the influx of asylum seekers and other migrants who have been mostly directed into mass accommodations where they await the end of the slow German bureaucratic process and decision determining their legal status. In December 2015, 38,000 out of 46,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin lived in mass accommodations (Flüchtlingsrat Berlin e.V., 2016). These accommodations are often called *lager* by those inhabiting them and among solidarity activist groups, which can be roughly translated as "camps." This term seems more suitable for describing the living situation than "accommodation," as it captures the provisional, hazardous, and securitized nature of what is migrants and asylum-seekers' long-term daily reality.

Due to Germany's federal system, asylum seekers are distributed throughout the country and find themselves in small villages as well as major cities. Their living conditions are often extremely poor, isolated, and securitized, as *lager* are mostly located at the edges of cities or in areas with poor infrastructure and connections to the outside. Not only does this spatial distribution effectively segregate asylum seekers from

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[2] The term "refugee crisis" is mostly used in reference to rising numbers of people who entered Europe since 2015, most of them through illegalized modes of travel. It does obscure the mostly long-term, ongoing, and insidious crises (economical, political, or climate-related) and wars in the places of origin of refugees and migrants as well as Europe's role in bringing about these conditions, crises, and wars. This Eurocentric use of the term "refugee crisis" does also not account for the majority of displaced persons and refugees who remain in their countries of origin or live in non-European states (such as Turkey). An overwhelming majority of asylum applicants in the EU in 2015 and 2016 had Syrian citizenship (363 thousand and 335 thousand respectively), followed by Afghanis and Iraqis (Statistical Office of the European Union (2017) "Asylum statistics." *Eurostat.* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics).

German society, but it also forces them to live in very tight spaces that do not offer any privacy. Since the passing of the "law for an accelerated asylum procedure" in March 2016, federal states created "special accommodations" for asylum seekers from "safe countries of origins" (Pro Asyl, 2016). Nationals of these countries (including the West Balkan states, Ghana, and Senegal) are thus segregated from other asylum seekers in order to facilitate and accelerate their deportation, as their asylum claims are already presumed to fail. While asylum seekers from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are often not granted refugee status either (common are for example "subsidiary protection" or a "ban on deportation"), they are not as quickly and easily deportable by the German state (even though deportations to Afghanistan have taken place since the end of 2016).

The mobility and choice of place of residence for immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is controlled and restricted in various ways through German laws that prescribe mandatory residence (*Residenzpflicht*), domicile requirement (*Wohnsitzauflage*), and practices that segregate and isolate people in often precarious living situations. These mobility restrictions variously prohibit people to leave the regions they were assigned to, and are enforced through racial profiling on Germany's (internal) borders and in everyday life im/mobilities.[3] For example, at various nodes and inside public transportation, profiling is based on normalized and socially accepted "racist knowledge" so that black people and people of colour are continuously forced to prove their legality or innocence (Schwarz, 2016). The new law passed in 2016 further stipulates that leaving the "special accommodations" would result in a suspension of people's asylum claims (Pro Asyl, 2016). These systems represent an internalization of border practices that no longer clearly differentiate between "inside/outside;" rather, they have to be conceptualized as dispersed and complex efforts by diverse actors to identify and control the mobility of individuals and groups in various ways (Balibar 2002 and 2004; Vaughan-Williams 2016). Even though Germany's immigration policies and practices have not significantly changed since before the "refugee crisis," there has been an increase in (mainstream) media, activist, and academic attention around the treatment of refugees generally and the situation of homosexual refugees specifically in the German immigration system. The surge in public interest in this subject can of course be attributed to the large number of people who arrived in Europe in 2015/16, but it should also be analysed in relation to the "crisis" discourse, populist and right-wing tendencies in Germany and Europe, and a critical assessment of Germany's "welcome culture."

Mainstream LGBT organizations and advocates have taken up this issue and mostly highlight the precarious situation of homosexual asylum seekers in these accommodations, during which the homosexual refugee is painted as the ideal "victim" in need of saving by (white) German LGBT rights advocates from the "other" refugees, the perpetrators. The TAZ, a popular left-leaning German newspaper, published an interview with

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[3] As the campaign "Ban! Racial Profiling - Gefährliche Orte abschaffen!" (translation: abolish dangerous places!) highlights, racial profiling in Berlin is also made possible and justified through the demarcation of certain places as "places with high levels of crime" (*kriminalitätsbelastete Orte*), which allows the police to stop, identify, and search people without suspicion. Many of these places are at central nodes of public transportation and in areas with higher percentage of populations of colour such as Kottbusser Tor, Hermannplatz, and Leopoldplatz (Klein, J. (2017) "Gefährliche Orte für Schwarze in Berlin." *Neues Deutschland*. Retrieved from https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/1054229.gefaehrliche-orte-fuer-schwarze-in-berlin.html)

social worker Joanna Hassoun who was born in Lebanon and now works for the prominent Lesbian and Gay association Berlin (a branch of the national association, usually referred to as LSVD) in which she comments on homophobia in refugee accommodations. She is quoted saying that "[t]he perpetrators have a very traditional image of how men and women are supposed to be" (my translation)[4] and that those living in overcrowded accommodations and not conforming to this gender binary are easy targets (Laugstien, 2016). She adds that "especially the youth of Arab or Turkish families grow up with homo- and transphobia" (my translation), but also qualifies that these views exist in German society as well (Laugstien, 2016). Despite this last sentence, it seems clear that Hassoun acts as an advocate of mainstream sexual rights organizations and contributes to a discourse that casts the racialized refugee as perpetrator of "hate crimes" and other discrimination due to "his" traditional and conservative religious and cultural beliefs.

In another article in the Tagesspiegel, the manager of LSVD Jörg Steinert problematizes that many hate crimes experienced by asylum seekers are not reported to the police, and again sees feelings of shame as a prominent reason for this (Bachner, 2016). The LSVD is here painted as the protector of the homo- and transsexual refugee who experiences discrimination and violence by other asylum seekers, translators, and also German bureaucrats. We see in this discourse the construction of a homosexual subject who is always "out and proud" as the right and only way to live, experience, and proclaim one's sexuality. This seems closely connected to the obsession with a mostly individualized notion of "pride" in U.S. and European LGBT activism. It seemingly advocates for an alienation from all possible sources of shame such as one's family or community – to leave the shadows as Jörg Steinert implies and join the always proud and tolerant German LG(BT) community. The homophobic "others," then, need to be adequately reported to and prosecuted by the police.

While levering a critique of actors participating in discourses that portray certain populations as homo- and transphobic, this should not dismiss the violence and discrimination that queer asylum seekers and refugees face on a daily basis, which is exacerbated through their precarious legal status and living situation. Here, critiques of carceral feminism are especially insightful, as they problematize a widespread form of advocacy that advances an increase in policing, prosecution, and incarceration as solutions to gender-based discrimination and violence. In the U.S. American context, critics (see for example Bernstein, 2010; Bumiller, 2008; Law, 2012; Sweet, 2016) highlight how these policies and practices over-proportionally affect migrant populations and other minorities and legitimize racial profiling. They further argue that carceral feminism ignores the different vulnerabilities of women and hierarchies within this category (based on race, class, sexuality, legal status…); rather, it conceives them as a homogenous group of "victims." Instead of focusing on institutionalized and endemic (state) discriminations, this form of feminism expands the state's ability to "reproduce violence" and shifts resources to the identification and policing of "victims" and "perpetrators" (Bumiller, 2008, xv). Carceral feminism also fits within the neoliberal version of a state guaranteeing individual rights which becomes constructed as the protector of "women's rights" and enables the shifting of funds from social welfare systems to the criminal justice system and prison expansion. Groups such as INCITE (2001)

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[4] The original article in German can be found here: Laugstien, F. (2016) "Coming out of the Heim: Neue Unterkunft für queere Geflüchtete." *TAZ.* Available online: https://www.taz.de/Archiv-Suche/!5276160&s=lgbt+fl%C3%BCchtlinge/

further stress the importance of community-based and grassroots responses to sexual and gender-based violence instead of the individualistic approach advanced through carceral feminism and highlight the violence inherent in incarceration and its negative effects on individuals and communities. Activist and blogger Nadia Shehadeh echoes these critiques in her reflections on public discussions concerning intersections of sexism and racism, and a change in the law governing sexual offences in Germany after the incidents in Cologne (2016). In light of historic and persistent racialization, racial profiling, criminalization, and structural violence by state institutions and police, she questions the possibilities and limits of alliances and cooperation with these same institutions on topics such as sexual violence.

In relation to the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Berlin, a critique of state institutions and the German immigration system should be the starting point of any intervention. Some of the issues that people within the immigration system repeatedly raise in Berlin are run-down and overcrowded accommodations, having to live on the outer edges of Berlin and in areas that are particularly known for right-wing extremism and racist incidents, and being harassed or abused by the security personnel in their accommodations. Further, the persistent insecurity concerning their legal status and family reunification, and consequent isolation and immobility, should be considered as structural violence and discrimination towards asylum seekers and refugees. A critique of these state-created and sanctioned conditions is absent in dominant LGBT organizations such as LSVD and MANEO. Instead, they focus on building alliances with exactly these institutions (i.e. the police, the federal office for migration and refugees (BAMF)) and encourage queer migrants and asylum seekers to cooperate with them, for example by adequately reporting "hate crimes."

Similarly, the same organizations and advocates problematize the unwillingness or inability of homosexual asylum seekers to proclaim their sexual identity during their asylum interview and further process, as well as their mistakes in not reporting hate-crimes to the authorities. The lack of "pride" and feelings of "shame" are identified as main factors in this. In an interview for VICE, Claus Jetz from LSVD in Cologne claims that feelings of shame and consequent hesitation and incredibility while relating the reasons for their asylum applications and their experiences of homophobia in their countries of origin are the reasons why homosexual asylum seekers might be facing deportation (Dammers, 2016). While he does mention that this is partly due to "bad experiences with administrators, police and interpreters *back home*" (Dammers, 2016, my emphasis), he does not lever any critique of German police and bureaucracy who systematically doubt asylum seekers' statements and reasons for seeking refugee status. Flaws in the bureaucratic processes and other reasons for distrusting this system are not considered and the violent and racist deportation practices are normalized – they are the logical consequence for those who are not properly and proudly queer.

The perceived and real need for protection of asylum seekers and refugees of non-normative genders and sexualities culminated in the establishment of a "queer refugee accommodation" in Berlin, which was supported and achieved by a number of LGBT and migrant and refugee-rights organizations. I am neither questioning the intentions and efforts that went into opening this accommodation, nor negating the need for and usefulness of it. I rather want to situate its establishment within wider discourses and highlight it as a limited and reformist intervention in the current immigration system in Germany. Comparing the queer accommodation to others in Berlin, which are often in old and unused buildings such as gyms and a former

airport, this clean, modern, spacious, and newly constructed building offers queer asylum seekers 29 shared flats to live in while their application is processed. The location of the accommodation is officially undisclosed and it is under close supervision by the police, and thus the physical embodiment of a German state and NGO-apparatus that protect and save queer refugees from the "other others." As a kind of "rainbow-colored" *lager*, it does not question the general immobility, isolation, and de-sensibility that marks Germany's accommodation practices for asylum seekers and other people. Instead, it gives it a human face, since after all a system that protects (an insignificant percentage of) homo- and transsexual refugees cannot be that bad.

The issue with this kind of discourse is twofold: first, it relies on imagined civilizational binaries and essentialising cultural racisms while projecting previously mentioned ideal "victims" and "perpetrators;" second, and more importantly, it contributes to a normalization of Germany's racist immigration system and thus a dehumanization of (non-homosexual) asylum seekers and refugees. While continuously evoking the image of the homosexual refugee in need of saving, these organizations abstain from a general and much needed critique of Germany's policies and practices of isolation, incarceration, and deportation. These discourses should be read in relation to a growing literature on sexual citizenship,[5] which in itself is a diverse area of scholarship that emerged as a critique of the heterocentric bias that "underpin[s] constructions of citizenship" (Richardson, 2017, 212). Diane Richardson (2017) emphasizes that the sexual citizen is constructed based on western models of neoliberal citizenship that privilege individual choices and rights over wider social inequalities and collective justice. While the notion of sexual citizenship succeeded in questioning heterosexuality as the underlying norm of citizenship, it did not challenge the western classical notion of citizenship, an orientalised construct at its roots (Isin, 2002, 2005 in Sabsay, 2014, 53). Advocating within the framework of liberal citizenship allowed for the normalisation and integration of certain former sexual "others" as "sexual rights-bearing subject[s]," while sexual diversity and rights become understood as a stage in the narrative of democratic progress (Sabsay, 2014, 55-56). Leticia Sabsay highlights the links between sexualities and border making, as claims for sexual citizenship have become complicit in reinforcing national boundaries by performing essentialising binary constructions of "modernity" and "backwardness:"

> The current sexualisation of western modernity against its 'others' and the demarcation of national frontiers in sexual terms constitutively require the disciplining of sexuality in accordance with its own liberal, either multiculturalist or pluralist terms. (Sabsay, 2014, 57)

Whether in Berlin or globally, it is thus important to analyse how claims to sexual citizenship rely on various forms of othering, as well as racialized and orientalising discourses. It is equally important to recognize that some LGBT-organizations participate in these nationalist constructions through uncritical cooperation with state institutions (such as the police), which are then enabled to portray themselves as protectors or saviours of sexual citizenship. Besides normalizing distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, these organizations

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[5] The term "sexual citizenship" is in fact a complex and versatile concept which is understood and theorised in a variety of ways. For a comprehensive review of literature on this topic see Diane Richardson (2017) "Rethinking Sexual Citizenship." *Sociology 51*(2), 208-224.

also seemingly advocate for a narrow conception of sexual citizenship (i.e. productive, monogamous, and secular).

The Other Others: how the State Re-imagines Itself

The organization MANEO, "the gay anti-violence project," has already been identified by Jin Haritaworn (2010-11) as one of the main actors involved in advocating the hate crime discourse in Berlin and has since then become active in responding to Germany's "refugee crisis." According to their 2015 annual report, the organization offers counselling for gay and bisexual men and teenagers who became "victims" of hate-crimes or discrimination, documents and publishes hate-crime statistics, and aims to foster dialogue with the police and public prosecution (Finke and Konradi, 2016). They also significantly contributed to the creation of two full-time positions for LGBT-contact persons in the Berlin police and Berlin public prosecution offices. This strategy, namely the close cooperation with police and state officials, has been termed the "Berlin Model" and has been adopted by other European as well as Israeli cities in order to tackle homophobic hate-crimes (Kosharek, 2010). MANEO's current involvement in "refugee relief," as documented in their 2015 annual report, shows how hate-crime discourses are also applied in relation to the refugee population. Instead of the (assumed) white homosexual citizen, the "victim" in this discourse is the exceptionalised queer refugee.

In the section dedicated to this aspect of their work, the organization relates two case examples of refugees who experienced homophobic violence and sought help from the organization (Finke and Konradi, 2016, 24). Throughout these examples, the perpetrators become clearly marked as racialized "others," while the victims are successfully saved through MANEO's services and become integrated into Berlin's (imagined as white) "LGBT community." Their story is one of progress; they leave their homophobic surroundings, embrace their gay identity, and become integrated into Germany's tolerant and multicultural society. In one case, the article narrates how the organization's financial aid "saved" one refugee from "prostituting himself" so that he instead found happiness in a monogamous homosexual relationship, started learning German, and is becoming financially independent (ibid.). Without trying to undermine the agency of any individuals involved or associated to MANEO it seems necessary to indicate how the case examples and the way they are narrated play into earlier mentioned discourses. They also serve to position the organization as aiding in the establishment of very particular queer subjectivities that do not conflict with European standards of productive and heteronormative citizenship and individual rights; rather, these subjectivities exist in an amicable relationship with the German state. Haritaworn (2010-11, 78) sees the exceptionalised Muslim and queer body as symbolizing a border crossing in this discourse, which is conditioned on it becoming part "of us" – the out and proud "queer community." When queer Muslims are portrayed in MANEO's publications, this does not blur the imagined distinction between homophobic Muslims and sexually liberated, secular, and white Germans. The border crossing does not negate but rather reifies the existence and function of the border. Queer bodies of colour thus come to symbolize "the exception to the rule" and seem to attest to the homophobia of the racialized others (ibid.). The earlier mentioned case studies also project the journey outlined by Haritaworn; Muslim queer bodies eradicate their connection to any possible sources of shame such as family or community and embrace their new identity.

It becomes clear from MANEO's annual report that it is also aimed at existing and potential donors of the organization, and the authors of the report repeatedly indicate that MANEO would be able to offer more and better services and broaden their involvement if they had access to more funding. Hate crime discourses and the sudden interest in "refugee relief work" by groups and organizations should be discussed within a broader critical engagement with the so called German "welcome culture"[6] that is repeatedly and proudly referred to by Germany's politicians and media. Critics have argued for example that the proud celebration of Germany's "welcome culture" obscures the large-scale occurrence of right-wing attacks against asylum seekers' accommodations and racialized populations, and speaks of a privatization/ "neoliberalisation of refugee policy" as volunteers take up roles that the state and private companies (for example those in charge of accommodations) should fulfil (Bahar, 2015; Bröse und Friedrich, 2015). Volunteers are thus in a paradoxical situation: they become complicit in maintaining financial profits and rigid hierarchies as they oftentimes facilitate the capitalist exploitation of asylum seekers as cheap workers; furthermore, they enable companies that run accommodations to operate at minimal costs, and construct an image of asylum seekers as dependent on outside help without questioning the hierarchies and inequalities within the support structures they build (Arbeitskreis Kritische Soziale Arbeit Berlin, 2015; Bahar, 2015). Funding and donations for organizations that support refugees and asylum seekers also become contingent on the production of vulnerable (and in the case of MANEO, homosexual) subjects who have to be helped, protected, and integrated. Adopting an "intersectional" approach and language and integrating "marginalized" communities into their services thus allows MANEO and others to attract a variety of potential donors and to maintain competitiveness in this field. While asylum seekers and refugees might undeniably benefit from having access to a variety of services offered, the consistent use of homonationalism as a central organizational strategy in their bid for sexual citizenship, by organizations such as MANEO and LSVD, has to be analysed in terms of its central exclusionary tendencies and homonormative standards. The market value of "diversity" in this project becomes clear in relation to the increasing professionalization and neoliberalisation of activism and rights-advocacy, which leads organizations to compete for funds

In "Gay Imperialism: The Role of Gender and Sexuality Discourses in the 'War on Terror" (2008), Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem ask why and how queers of colour are increasingly integrated and depicted in public discourses. They contend that these queer bodies of colour are mostly either exceptionalised or portrayed as "faceless victim[s] without agency" (Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdem, 2008, 72) which ultimately fits into their imperialist and Islamophobic contexts. These kinds of portrayals enable white queer people to once and for all establish their equality vis-à-vis the heteronormative society as they assume the role of civilizer/saviour/representative of tokenized queer bodies of colour that are endangered through Muslim homophobia (Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdem, 2008, 78-80). The authors further revisit debates in the German public in early 2005, which coupled questions of immigration, gender, and sexual freedom. Platforms

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[6] The term "welcome culture" (*Willkommenskultur*) is used to describe the response of parts of German society to the increased influx of asylum seekers and other migrants in 2015. It is often used in relation to Angela Merkel's speech in which she famously proclaimed "we can do this!" and Germans waiting at train stations holding "Welcome" signs. It is further used to refer to the widespread engagements in voluntary work and support for asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants.

given to women of colour served to legitimize and authenticate gendered and sexualized discourses, which contributed to building a case for stricter immigration policing and the enforcement of a "Muslim test" for prospective citizens (Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdem, 2008, 84). Similar strategies are employed in current discourses that often highlight and publish the voices of queers of colour and queer asylum seekers. This is exemplified in the persistent narrations of the experiences of homosexual and transsexual asylum seekers by MANEO and LSVD in order to authenticate and legitimize their interventions and advocacy. As described by Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdem (2008), these portrayals seemingly deny the agency of those whom they seek to represent. The narration of their experiences are not used to advocate for or support the self-organization and independence of asylum seekers and refugees, but rather supposedly indicate the need for more funding for professional, "German" organizations. This seems representative of racialized hierarchies within activism and knowledge production: the voices and opinions of white voices are continuously given more legitimacy and value than those of people of colour.

In many of the interviews and other accounts of the struggles of non-heterosexual asylum seekers in mainstream German press, focus is mostly on their experiences of homophobia and other discrimination in their countries of origin, during their journey to Germany, within the asylum process, and within the refugee/migrant "communities" and accommodation. However, their analysis of homophobia or transphobia in Germany's normative and dominantly white society seems to be unimportant to most of those "giving a voice" to queers of colour/queer refugees. In the special annual publication *Life After Migration: Homophobia and Racism* published in cooperation between the Migration Council Berlin and Brandenburg (MRBB) and SUSPECT, a group of queers concerned with the intersections between homophobia and racism, the authors problematize how white privilege and European pride erase and deny the existence of people of colour, particularly when they attempt queer interventions that make visible and critique heteronormativity and racism in Germany's society (SUSPECT, 2010, 6). While queers of colour are thus asked to speak about homophobia, transphobia, and sexism in communities of colour, the interpretative authority on gender and race has to always be reserved for white voices. Otherwise, the assumed moral superiority and self-image that constructs Germany as the protector of the out and proud gay subject would crumble, and the constructed border between the progressive "us" and the backward and homophobic "other" would ultimately be revealed as a racist fabrication.

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