Contingent Conjunctures and Infrastructures of Racial Capitalism: Activating and Confining Refugees after the 'Summer of Migration'

Mouna Maaroufi
University of Hamburg, mouna.maaroufi@uni-hamburg.de

Recommended Citation

Contingent Conjunctures and Infrastructures of Racial Capitalism: Activating and Confining Refugees after the 'Summer of Migration'

Refugees[1] have not always been thought of and included as members of the workforce. In a repressive and deterring asylum regime laid out in Germany since the 1990s labor market participation of asylum seekers was restricted if not prohibited (Carstensen et al. 2018). Thus, the asylum-deterrence regime had long discouraged refugees from claiming the status of workers. It deprived them from recognition as equal, free, and productive members of society. This persistent stigma has been taken up and challenged by the slogan "refugee is not a profession" promoted by the labor market integration project Arrivo Berlin since 2015. This statement that aligns with other recent campaigns and claims in favor of refugees' labor market participation contains dominant and problematic tendencies toward a narrow focus on waged work and its crucial disciplining function in shaping "social and political subjects" and citizens and classes (Weeks 2012: 7). As such, work has a socially mediating role, illustrated well by the political discourse in the wake of the summer of migration, emphasizing that work is the key to integration or that, without waged work, participation in society remains sealed.

In recent years, we have seen a move from prohibition, through enticement, to finally, coercion to work. This move does not follow a linear and coherent approach, however. Access to work remains unequal and contingent on political-economic interests and "conjunctures of racism" (Bojadžijev & Demirović 2002). While the workfare state began to call upon refugees as potential (skilled) workers, a tendency of considering their work as not yet or less productive remains. By constantly needing to prove their value for the German economy in a context of uneven exposure to precarity, refugees are still deprived of equal labor market participation.

Sociologist Gargi Bhattacharyya associates the attribution of a status of non-worker to racial capitalism and to a process of "erasing and/or subordinating some populations" (2018: 64). Recently the term "racial capitalism" introduced by authors such as Cedric Robinson in the 1970s has resurged in light of world-shattering events (Kelley 2017). A global pandemic has rendered the racializing inequalities of capitalism evident. Movements inspired by the Black Radical Tradition such as Black Lives Matter made racist police violence visible. But to what extent can this

---

[1] Due to the multiplicity of legal statuses with different implications, I will mainly indiscriminately employ the term refugees for people in the procedure of acquiring a protection title and people having acquired a title and only distinguish between legal titles when I consider it necessary to comprehend particular divisive regulations.

admittedly broad concept be operationalized and rendered specific to the asylum regime after the 'summer of migration'?

In my opinion, the concept of racial capitalism is helpful to understand that ways in which capitalism exploits differences have been and continue to be justified through racisms. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore puts it, "capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it" (2020). Yet, transformations in the "racial fabrication" of others for purposes of expropriation and exploitation must be interrogated further in dynamic and conflictual conjunctures of capitalism, which undergo constant economic restructuring and social struggles (Robinson 2000; Balibar & Wallerstein 1991). In this article, I focus empirically on labor market integration policies and infrastructures for refugees having arrived in Germany around 2015. My analytical question is: What can refugees' activation and navigation within a workfarist labor and migration regime tell us about current conjunctures of racial capitalism? I seek to grasp evolving conjunctures of racial capitalism based on an analysis of logistified migration and labor regimes and argue that the differential inclusion of refugees into workfare and work relies on and reproduces racialization.

Although the concept of race is not used in the German context due to historical and political reasons, I consider it important to examine migration regimes in terms of the racialized differentiations and divisions they drive. As Martina Tazzioli argues, "the socio-legal production of 'migrants' is a constitutively racializing process" with "highly flexible and constantly changing racializing criteria" (2021, 107, 111). Accordingly, multiple malleable racialized differentiations proliferate within groups of refugees, migrants, and the society at large. To manage the resulting conflictual and contingent differentiations and subjectivities, migration policies have recently been approached logistically as "the art of constructing a seamless administration of circulation across space" (Krifors 2020). That endeavor relies on functional infrastructures that access and discipline, confine and circulate living labor. Current infrastructures of mediation on heterogeneous labor markets consist of state administrations, staffing industries, civil society organizations, education projects, and volunteers who in their conflictual relations with refugees and each other constantly negotiate unstable compromises. This analysis corresponds to a conceptualization of "migration infrastructures" as "interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility" (Xiang & Lindquist 2014, 124). I approach such infrastructures as potential actors of racialization as they mediate differences and in their act of providing access to

valuation, recognition, resources, and rights perpetuate more or less exploitation, precarity, and inequality.

In the first section of this article, I argue that recent legal and political transformations express trends toward differential and coercive workfare politics. In a second part, I suggest framing these political-economic evolutions as expressive of a current contingent conjuncture of racial capitalism. I do so by exploring everyday conflicts around the constitution of logistified politics and infrastructures across different administrations, localities, and time regimes. I pay particular attention to the infrapolitics that refugees practice to evade and refuse logistified coercions and to counter racialized inequalities and divisions.

Methodology

In this article, I discuss interview material and participant observation that I collected as part of my PhD research and a part-time job in advisory services on labor rights since 2016 in Berlin and Brandenburg. In their different ways, these places represent relevant locations of the refugee movement. While Berlin illustrates Germany's contentious transformation into a (post)migrant society over the course of decades, Brandenburg has constituted a conflictual space of struggle around arrival, accommodation, and anti-racism since reunification. The empirical enquiry relies primarily on accounts of refugees who began working as vocational trainees or temps between 2016 and 2019, but also on interviews with frontline employees in infrastructures of asylum and workfare. I addressed the interview participants as everyday experts whose counter-knowledge on the encountered infrastructures serves to conduct a careful infra-politics of evasion and subversion (Scott 2012). I consider their accounts counter-narratives as framed by Paul Apostolidis in his militant research with migrant day laborers (2019: 44). Situating my research in proximity to workers inquiries, I focus on conflicts and subjectivities observed from a workers' perspective that capitalist regulation seeks to rule over (Malo de Molina 2004). Seen from this perspective, workers' subjectivities and struggles are a driving force of change. As Kathi Weeks says, "Resistance precedes and prefigures developments in capitalist production" (2011, 93).

Transcending the workplace and considering spheres of reproduction of workers and relations of production as connected, I retrace the forging of racialized inequalities and precarities among workers through the means of mediation of labor. Workers'

position and power is not only negotiated in the labor process but is prescribed and contested *before* the engagement in labor relations throughout processes of reproduction, mediation, and mobility of workforces. Thus, implications of differentiations, dependencies, coercions, and contingencies shaped through the asylum and workfare regime lie at the center of my analysis. I examine the role of migration and race in capitalist regulation by incorporating the autonomy of migration approach and insights from the Black Radical Tradition. I think that bringing these traditions in a debate with each other can point us to the historical legacies and ruptures that pervade the way migrants are regulated and racialized. The emphasis on autonomy in past and present migration regimes helps recognize the incomparable dynamics of historical conjunctures – especially when facing such violent ones as the Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath, which has engendered the concept 'racial capitalism'. However, as an analytical approach Cedric Robinson's Black Marxism taught us that it is through radical traditions and struggles that we can learn about the structures that we are facing (Bourne 2022). To me, the strength of analyses of racial capitalism lies in how they transcend a focus on technologies of capitalist domination by being perceptive of the manifold subjectivities, solidarities, and imaginations that refuse and resist racial capitalism by surviving beyond its reach. By shaping and sharpening awareness for invisible stories and struggles, I seek to pay tribute to those radical traditions that have tackled oppressive regimes and representations and built alternatives in the past and continue to do so in the present. The autonomy of migration approach argues similarly that it is in the confrontation with autonomous migrations that border, migration, and labor regimes reconfigure – as the 'summer of migration' amply illustrates.

Differential and Coercive Activation

Refugee politics serve to define "deserving and undeserving citizens" based on neoliberal ideas of human capital as well as racial hierarchies (Ong 2003: 10). In that sense, refugee policies used to draw a rather strict line between citizens eligible for welfare and waged work and others who are not. One way in which this neoliberal process of differentiation translates in the spheres of labor market politics is activating workfarism. Workfare as the prevalent mode of regulation replacing the welfare regime since the early 2000s in Germany has been widely discussed (Cooper

2012). Instead of socially ensuring a population of permanently employed (male) citizens and their dependents against unexpected unemployment, workfare uses conditionality of social benefits to ensure the constant employability of jobseekers for an increasing amount of precarious and temporary jobs (ibid). Such contingent and transitional labor relations presuppose that always available and adaptable workers move between phases of circulation and confinement. Accordingly, the line between excluded and included populations has become more permeable and flexible, as I argue by retracing such a process of redrawing and redefining lines since 2015. Given that a "multiplication of labor" becomes ever more ubiquitous as labor markets and processes and the composition and fragmentation of workforces cannot be grasped by rigid dualistic divisions of labor any longer, I consider the mediation of heterogeneities a major feature of the current workfarist mode of labor regulation (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). In the following, I analyze how a contingent consensus around workfarist activation of refugees has evolved since the summer of migration, how it has been institutionalized, and which effects it has had. I begin by demonstrating the institutional and discursive interlocking of civil society and state infrastructures for asylum and workfare. In the subsequent sub-sections, I portray administrative and legal mechanisms that function to differentiate and coerce refugees through activation politics.

After having subjected refugees to a slow and second-order access to the labor market for decades, the first indications of a growing convergence of activating labor market and asylum policies were noticeable in EU regulations since the 2000s (Scherschel 2016). This process came about progressively in Germany through the persisting efforts of civil society actors. It accelerated in the wake of the summer of migration when the Integration Law entitled asylum seekers – except those considered to come from "safe countries of origin" – to apply for a work permit three months after submitting an asylum application and to receive employment promotion in the form of activation and education measures from the employment agencies and Job Centers[2]. Until 2016 however, it appears that employment agencies did not consider themselves responsible for asylum seekers at all as noted by an employee of Berlin's network for the right-to-stay, Bridge. When the network found out in 2010

---

[2] Reforms in the early 2000s split labor administrations and their implementation of workfare into employment agencies, which provide unemployment benefits and qualification to formerly employed people, and Job Centers which provide basic social benefits to long-term job-seekers and recognized refugees.

that "the employment agency is responsible for all those who are not entitled to financial benefits from the Job Center, insofar also refugees", they began sending refugees[3] there. However, "people were rejected at the employment agency with the note: Not in charge" (Bridge 2017). In this sense, civil society actors advocated for the consideration of refugees for activation before 2015. Only in the aftermath of the summer of migration, were asylum seekers more widely addressed as workfare recipients, though.

New alliances between a civil society fighting for people's right-to-stay, trade unions, workfare institutions, and economic lobbies emerged after 2015, which identified labor market participation as a common goal. The so far progressive claim of the right-to-work for refugees began to resemble a mainstream integration discourse in which working not only appeared as the key to integration but as an obligation for newly arrived refugees. This appropriation of integration infrastructures by neoliberal policy makers may owe its part to existing economistic tendencies that have long prevailed in the attempt to justify refugees' right-to-stay through successful integration into work (Scherschel 2016, Carstensen et al. 2018). Yet, workfarist activation is still not available and applied equally to all, as I will show. In a first part, I exemplify racialized differentiations drawn among refugees according to nationality and gender. In a second part, I illustrate to what extent refugees' activation proceeds in general in more coercive and confining ways than that of other jobseekers.

Differential prospects

The inclusion into workfare is not equal or consistent, for different factors play a role in who is entitled to activation and to what extent and therefore whose abilities and value as a worker are seen and supported. In practice as I show, this differential approach means that persons assumed to have the highest chance for legal residency and most promising and proximate labor market potential are granted more resources than others who are already disadvantaged due to their class, gender, race, and nationality. The resulting legal, social, and educational infrastructures for labor market integration entail an unequal yet contingent distribution of resources and power relations as they seek to flexibly consider group-related and individual

---

[3] Employment agencies ought to grant employment promotion to persons who receive benefits from social welfare offices as stipulates the asylum seekers benefits act (AsylbLG).

characteristics among refugees. In consequence, intersectional inequalities among individuals and nationalities are reinforced by impacting who ends up in adequate and better jobs. Based on the particularly precarious situation of all refugees and further racialized differentiations among them, I argue that "differential inclusion" into the benefits and constraints of workfare contributes to a multiplication and racialization of labor (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

As the employee of Bridge told me the Integration Law from 2016 introduced "this idea of a good prospect to remain" to limit entitlement to support from the employment agency so that only "people from these five countries[4] should be able to benefit" (2018). It was the management-consulting agency McKinsey that suggested to the German government to select countries with a protection rate[5] over 50%, fast-track their asylum applicants, and grant them early access to employment promotion – such as qualification measures. The largest national group of beneficiaries have been Syrians who were portrayed both as genuine refugees and valuable workforces since before the summer of migration and thus deserving of quick labor market access. Afghan citizens who are likely to be associated to less educational and cultural capital are the group that most suffered from prolonged asylum applications and reduced access to support. As Brücker et al. argue for the sake of speeding up asylum procedures – and arguably to gain fast access to workforces considered as valuable –, "chances for labor market integration amongst different country groups were unequally distributed" (2020: 25).

The flexible combination of national criteria and racializing categories in heterogeneous legal and administrative practices that pre-determine asylum procedures and prospects is also increasingly pervasive in the hierarchical production of migrants on the EU's external borders (Tazzioli 2021). The distinction between good, insecure, and bad prospects-to-remain prescribes who is likely to get a protection status and thus contributes to differentiations between 'genuine' refugees in need of protection and other 'undeserving or bogus' asylum-seekers. These differentiations illustrate well that rather than strictly selecting refugees according to nationality and in terms of labor market potentials, asylum and activation

---

[4] In 2016 these countries were Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria. Since 2019 only Eritrea and Syria qualify.

[5] The protection rate refers to the granted asylum claims. NGOS have contested these numbers as they ignore further factors such as the high number of people who succeed in appeals against their refused asylum case

regulations produce differences among refugees of different nationalities and genders that can then be exploited to divide, channel and control workforces. The resulting differentiations predetermine future racialization by defining which nationalities can access the labor market quicker and under better conditions and by rendering others prone to isolation and precarity. Refugees with "insecure prospects to remain" risk responding by quickly beginning a job or vocational training to secure a stable status and therefore end up in more precarious and unpopular jobs in shortage sectors. Even if at a later point, refugees can obtain a secure legal status, the system of classification and discretion has real consequences for processes of racialization and gendering on the labor market in the meantime. Group-related differentiation is also noticeable for people in the asylum procedure and perceived as unfair as Noor describes. As an Afghan citizen with a declined asylum case living in a communal shelter, he perceives disadvantages in comparison to people from other countries.

> "I wanted to do a German course, but first we did not have the authorization, only people from Iran, Syria, Iraq and two more. Since last summer there is a new court ruling that people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and few other countries, who have a preliminary residence title, are not allowed to move from a shelter to a flat." (Noor 2019)

An asylum lawyer I interviewed confirmed this change in regulations, which now require from asylum seekers in Potsdam to present a legal residence status which amounts at least to a year to the housing office, to move out of communal shelters. But such a status is not granted to asylum applicants without a "good prospect to remain" or so-called "tolerated" asylum seekers with an "exceptional leave to remain"[6]. This new administrative regulation goes along with other recent legal reforms such as the law for an ordered-return from 2019 that isolate refugees with "bad or insecure prospects-to-remain" in shelters of first arrival. The role of accommodation and housing policies in preventing social interactions and integration that may later contribute to securing a right-to-stay thus continues to be important. By condemning some refugees to "structural and protracted uncertainties" as well as

---

[6] A status of toleration refers to refused asylum seekers who cannot be deported due to reasons such as health conditions or lack of identification and receive repeatedly exceptional leaves to remain for three months according to §60a AufenthG (Residence Act)

"legal and material subordination", such an uneven categorization enhances precarities as well as potentials for coercion, exploitation, and division (Artero & Fontanari 2021: 11, 14).

Unequal treatment does not only result from administrative and legal categories, but pre-established identities and societal inequalities concerning reproductive responsibilities also play a role in who is considered apt for which support. In the following, I exemplify the concrete consequences of such contingent exclusions based on gender and nationality that impact female refugees' access to activation. Two women I interviewed in Brandenburg were carrying out three-year long vocational trainings. They were both appealing against their rejected asylum claim and suffered from reduced access to financial and educational support. Both are mothers and struggle to make ends meet with the little money they receive from the training and the social welfare office. Nora, an Afghan citizen who had been living in Iran since she was a child, carries out a vocational training as a nurse. Since the refusal of her asylum application, she did not receive financing of her B2 language course prompting her to study and pay for her exam on her own. Despite having gained potential access to a secure status for the time of her training, she did not receive financial support. With her salary around 700€ and without support for her rent, her work equipment, and most importantly her daughter's food, schooling, and hobbies, she told me that she would sometimes eat less and could not participate in breakfasts with colleagues. Another interview partner, Nerges, had to escape with her family to Iraq when she was young and did not have access to public education there. Despite her 'good prospect to remain', her asylum case was rejected and during the lengthy appeal, she is less eligible for support. She receives social assistance from the municipality, which denied her a B1 language course and told her to start either a job or a vocational training. Consequently, Nerges began an introductory training[7] at a hairdresser with a monthly wage of 265€. Having experienced health problems at work, difficulties in the vocational school and the mental burden of not caring enough for her sick daughter as a single mother, she decided to quit. This experience was unsettling to her on top of feeling unfairly treated in her access to education.

---

[7] Einstiegsqualifizierungen (EQs) were introduced in 2004 as a programme for young people not considered mature for a vocational training yet so that they intern for 6 to 12 months for a subsidized monthly wage of €247

To what extent access to language courses is contingent on personal attributes is illustrated by the fact that the newly introduced law for "foreigners' employment promotion" enables access to integration courses and profession-specific language courses three months after submitting an asylum case for people for whom "proximity to the labor market" can be assessed. Being a woman and a (single) mother who due to her gender, a long history of forced migration and the "wrong" country of origin has had less access to education all her life, may render it all the more difficult to access protection, further education, and financial support in a workfarist regime that relies on assumptions as to potential productivity. These stories tell us not only about how access to workfare is differentially accessible and negotiable but also about how it reflects and reproduces intersectional categories. Not being activated constitutes a lack of recognition of one's (labor) power and potentials. At the same time, being included into workfare can further racist and sexist divisions of labor. Refugee women with a good "prospect to remain" are forcibly activated which reproduces gendered stereotypes, as a teacher of an integration measure for female refugees criticizes:

> "This fundamental attitude may not be written literally in the concept but constitutes the entire purpose of this project: That 'these are all women and because they are women from the Arabic and Persian region, they must first learn that you work as a woman in Germany!' […] I read it and hear: 'Foreign women do not know how it works here and they must first be emancipated to be able to take up a profession'. Always with this idea in mind, which partially corresponds to reality, that women are responsible for the household and childcare." (GSM 2017)

This quote, which attempts to grasp racist and sexist representations underlying the activation approach of labor administrations also points to the "contradictions of capital and care" that are outsourced to women (Fraser 2016). Newly arrived parents in a German reproductive economy characterized by a lack of infrastructures and investments find it particularly hard to find childcare, which would allow them to carry out allegedly more productive and paid labor. Such a formulation of measures can contribute to a devaluation of capacities and coercive activation that answer to gendered divisions of labor. It can be concluded that differential treatment through the administrative category "prospect to remain" and gendered and racializing approaches to activation produces long-term and racialized inequalities, precarities, and divisions.

Unfree activation

Activation refers to the exertion of pressure on jobseekers to adapt to precarious labor relations through the buzzwords 'employability' and 'self-responsibility'. As discussed, being included in workfare is not equal or consistent, but several factors determine who is activated to what extent and under what conditions and coercions. By referencing the debate on unpaid reproductive work, Bhattacharya associates the attribution of the status of non-worker to a process of dehumanization in racial capitalism (2018, 64). The role and relations of reproduction are also considered central in other analyses of the contiguity of coercion and docility in capitalist expropriation and exploitation. According to Ince, colonial property and power relations produced "subjects whose land, labor, and knowledge could be expropriated with impunity" in a process of primitive accumulation that "forcibly establishes capital's mediation of access to the conditions of social reproduction" (2018, 893, 899). The contiguity of being considered a non-worker and becoming an unfree worker deserves further interrogation, though.

In the following, I explore this contiguity based on the coercive and confining features of the workfare regime. I do so by referring to an understanding of unfree and expropriated labor and examine its relation to evolving migration and workfare regimes. While the existence of unfree labor is often related to race and racism, Lisa Carstensen argues that the reproduction of racism should also be analyzed based on an understanding of unfree labor (2020). I find this perspective insightful and seek similarly to analyze to what extent evolving forms of coercion to be constantly available and employable reproduce racializations that thereby become concretely articulated and practiced. By questioning expectations toward refugees to adapt and perform despite uneven and confining conditions, I show how racialized hierarchies materialize and are justified. I argue that based on the efforts that refugees' arguably need to exert to adapt to the German labor market, the coercive conditions of their integration are disguised or even normalized. In this spirit, a union official elaborates her opinion on the use-value of pressure to not let refugees retreat to a life of social benefits and self-segregation. While she is aware of the legal barriers and constraints that refugees face, the negative consequences that such compulsions can have on working conditions remain obscure:

"Once the status is secured and the subsistence, then many […] are not so proactive anymore. So, when there is such a pressure, it can also be helpful. If they have pressure, there is still a family to be reunited with or I can improve my status, if I put effort in or I just need to earn money, that is not so bad at all." (Ver.di 2018)

Though this quote cannot be seen as representative of all unionists, the major trade unions have largely supported the focus on early and efficient labor market integration after the summer of migration, while to a certain extent overlooking the coercive policies that underlie it (Bergfeld 2017). The quoted justification for why it is necessary to exert pressure on refugees so that they do not "sink into the same lethargy" – as other job seekers – illustrates the consensus around disciplining workfare for all unemployed members of society (Ver.di 2018). As the unionist correctly points out, refugees face a range of further coercive factors though as their entitlement to family reunification, long-term residence papers, or even short-term protection relies on their employment status. Such legal precarities then co-act with pressures exerted by labor market institutions.

Employment promotion through the employment agencies is voluntary yet differentially available for asylum seekers. In contrast, the relationship of recognized refugees with the Job Center is one of dependence. Since 2015, Job Centers conceived a range of new so-called "integration measures" such as "Perspectives for Refugees" (PerF). They fund, coordinate, and enforce these measures that are implemented by educational institutions and intend to prepare immature jobseekers for the labor market. Rather than providing the needed language courses, criticizes a counselor for Bleibnet - the network for the right-to-remain in Brandenburg - "everybody was grabbed, that somehow based on formal criteria could fit, and they were all thrown in one pot" in sweeping measures such as PerF (2018). The compulsion to participate or else having benefits reduced points to another central component of activation. Infrastructural actors frequently mentioned to me that having refugees participate in classes at regular times helps discipline them to maintain an active, self-responsible, and regulated lifestyle.

On the downside, interviewed refugees describe a perception of wasting their time in ever more measures, counselling, and coaching. Cooper describes unemployment framed within the workfare regime as a mutual obligation contract, which amounts to

a full-time job (2012: 646). Marwan who struggled to repay the debt that he accumulated toward the state by receiving social benefits despite having come to Germany through a sponsor shares this interpretation. In his experience, the interaction with the Job Center corresponds to the negotiation of a bargain, resulting in "a contract" the ends of which each side must respect. Alluding to the so-called integration agreement he explains that the Job Center employees "write it in a paper that: Do that for us, we do that for you!" (Marwan 2018). For Marwan, as a recognized refugee from Syria whose labor market prospects are rather promising it may indeed be possible to negotiate such an individual agreement rather well. Various accounts and assessments of the Job Center point to important variations among employees though as well as their differential treatment.

As was discussed, the formulation of measures by the Job Centers reproduces racist assumptions that accuse particularly female refugees of a lack of willingness to work. Unlike the previously quoted teacher, who refused going along with that discourse and sought to appropriate the measure for the participants' purpose, another teacher of a measure explained that they report back directly to the Job Center. Accordingly he sees his role in contributing to "motivate and orientate them, so that they want to enter the first labor market" (GBA 2018). This portrayal of his work incorporates a workfarist discourse which presupposes that the major hindrance for people to join the labor market is their motivation or the lack thereof. A further statement by him illustrates the divisive and coercive features of such discourses. He recommends that the social benefits of people who refuse to comply with the Job Center "should also be sanctioned more purposefully", if they miss classes for example. That way, they "notice that they cannot do entirely what they want" – which in his perception is less so the case than for German jobseekers. He claims that refugees had imagined that they receive a house and a great job once arrived thereby confirming the stigma that refugees chose to come to Germany due to the easy income and benefits that they expected but do not deserve (GBA 2018). Accordingly, chauvinist and racializing stigmas are not only furthered by state institutions but extend to a surrounding infrastructure of educational and civil society actors. The perception and attempt to counter racializing conceptions toward welfare recipients and migrants is articulated clearly by another interview partner. David, whom I met through the counselling he sought, tries to gird himself against accusations of abusing social benefits which he relates to rejection of migrants:

"I hate being supported by the government, and I think that is one of the issues that have been brought about by the anti-immigration crusade: That these guys come out here and they rely on money, taxes, support, and what not. Yes, at first you rely on that support, but […] someone who is determined to write their own script out here must come off that support". (David 2019)

David's aspiration to write his own script pushes him to seek autonomy by evading the workfare regimes' coercive rule but can also be interpreted as an internalization of self-responsibility. While the experienced pressure first made him work as a service worker for a temporary work agency – despite his qualification in IT – he soon decided to quit and refuse working "if the conditions are not really befitting" (2019).

As an Afghan citizen of Brandenburg in the process of appealing against his rejected asylum case, Karim faces even more pressing coercions and constraints exerted by the social security office. As he elaborates, the only period in which he was not forced to be productive were his first six months in Germany, during which he did not have access to a German course. "Afterwards, if I count all these months, I was never free" - he explained to me. Karim attended German courses and various measures, which placed him in internships in sectors such as gastronomy and crafts that do not interest him. What appears to circumvent his freedom the most however is the fact that he cannot freely look for employment as long as he requires a work permit from the immigration authorities. The procedure which checks the contractual conditions of the job offer takes a few weeks to months. Yet, Karim is expected by the social security office to be permanently employed. They obliged him to carry out so-called non-profit job opportunities by cleaning in his shelter for 80 cent an hour while awaiting a work permit. These measures referred to as 1-€jobs were first introduced for long-term job seekers who are difficult to place in employment (Knut 2016). In 2016, they were expanded for refugees while lowering the income from 1€ to 80 cents. Such measures, which allegedly increase employability, are encouraged while their productive and profit-generating output are disguised. The double movement of coercion and confinement created through pressure of the social security office and dependence on the immigration authorities represents the conflicting workings of a workfare regime, which significantly limits freedoms.

To conclude the first part, let me recap the presented analysis so far. I showed that the current differential mode of inclusion does not rely on rigid hierarchies and

exclusions as much as in the past. Rather, it drives a multiplication of coercions, differentiations, fragmentations, and inequalities which are variously justified through disciplining workfarism which presupposes refugees' lack of motivation, capability, and productivity. Coercions – that are exerted not only on refugees but on all wage workers – are exacerbated for all refugees due to their manifold legal and financial dependencies and precarities and the societal discourses that feed into the anticipated and alleged inferiority of refugees' productivity. In the following sections, I illustrate more broadly and concretely how these societal and racialized inequalities manifest and materialize in intermediating infrastructures and are evaded and refused. I bring perspectives on a logistification of migration and labor regimes and transformations of racial capitalism together by examining if and how local infrastructures of asylum and workfare drive the reproduction of unequal and precarious labor. As hierarchies and divisions are more contingently governed, I argue that an unequal distribution of precarities is concretized in current conjunctures and infrastructures of racial capitalism.

Logistical Conjunctures and Struggles in Racial Capitalism

The functionality of racism to capitalism is "historically specific", contradictory, and contingent on class positions and interests (Miles & Brown 2004: 118). Scholars such as Stuart Hall have retraced historical conjunctures of racism through articulations that connect ideological, economic, political, and cultural aspects of social formations and struggles (Hall 1986). Hall's understanding of conjunctures has been taken up by Manuela Bojadžijev and Alex Demirović by examining how social contradictions and dynamics come to be articulated together thereby determining transformatory moments (2002). I argue that 'the summer of migration' constituted such a moment in that both anti-racist struggles and racializing policies were re-articulated and re-configured. This re-articulation is contiguous with prior racial and colonial regimes and discourses subordinating "guest workers" and later refugees to the needs of the German economy while presenting politicians and citizens as benefactors – if not saviors. Currently, racial divisions and exclusions follow a more contingent and dynamic logic which manifests in attempts for logistification of migration regimes. In the following section, I embed the prior observations on refugees' differential inclusion in workfare within a broader analysis of evolving, conflictual, and contested

conjunctures in racial capitalism which I present as characterized by contingency and logistification.

Logistics has been analysed as a technology for the governance of labor that traces back to the Atlantic slave trade which as the major planned expropriation and re-distribution of labor constituted "the birth of racial capitalism" (Moten & Harney 2013). As Deborah Cowen emphasized, the co-relation between logistics and states descends from a complex and interwoven history of corporate, legal, and political entanglements and infrastructures (Cowen et al. 2018, 401). Recent analyses of the role of logistics bring up diverse features of infrastructures for labor mediation such as their functions in facilitating bureaucracy and translation; extracting and processing precise data and information; and exerting logistical power over workers and their mobilities (Krifors 2020; Altenried et al. 2018). I suggest the notion of logistification to explain that current racializations and contingent regulations serve to logistically confine and circulate labor and subject it to specific economic needs. The concept of just-in-time and to-the point emphasizes what has come to matter most and can be applied to the production and distribution of products as well as to the reproduction and circulation of workers (Altenried et al. 2018). With the proliferation of global supply chains, having the right labor power available at the right place and time becomes ever more important. Yet, the attempt to integrate according to a just-in-time logic is in many ways a logistical fantasy (ibid). Nevertheless, the logistical operations of private and public infrastructures can enhance competitiveness of certain economic actors, unevenly distribute opportunities and risks, and outsource precarity (Tsing 2014, Azmanova 2020). Being exposed to and having to cope with contingencies, precarities, and dangers is central to the distribution of racialized inequalities. Uneven exposure to precarity is attributed to individuals' characteristics and histories as (forced) migrants, which seemingly justify and quasi-naturalise the unequal distribution of hardships and risks. The concrete changeable characteristics of asylum, migration, and labour regimes that cause these injustices seem then merely incidental and insignificant.

By arguing that logistification of migration regimes is not a coherent process but is disrupted by conflictual tendencies and interests, I emphasize contingency as a crucial feature in current conjunctures of racial capitalism. Such contingencies reflect flexible economic interests and conjunctures as well as conflictual relations between state agendas for migration and local institutional interests and implementation. The

conflictual evolution of infrastructures results from competition and compromises between civil society claims for migrant rights, economic interests in the inclusion of mobile and flexible labor, and nationalist conservation of control and exclusion (Altenried et al. 2018). The latter nationalist trends have seen a revival since the summer of migration and are expressed in increasingly restrictive, rejecting, and racist interpretations of regulations – especially on a local scale in Eastern Germany.

Finally, subversive tactics of navigating current contingencies and conjunctures of racial capitalism are explored. As elaborated, the Black Radical Tradition allows for an understanding of 'racial capitalism' and its failure to durably suppress subjects and dominate through division. It reminds us that even under the extremely coercive and violent conditions of the Middle Passage, the cargo consisting of objectified and oppressed humans retained consciousnesses as Robinson argued (Bourne 2022). As Ince adds, it is the "ever-present resistance, active or latent, […] which renders this extensive infrastructure of coercion necessary in the first place" (2018, 903). Accordingly, attempts of state power and local infrastructures to logistically circulate, compose, and confine labor can be considered a conscious effort to control the disruptions, refusals, and evasions of subversive subjects (Bojadžijev 2019: 43).

In a first part, I examine the frictions in infrastructures that answer to political-economic, institutional, and regional interests in particular as to the implementation of the 3+2 rule. In a second and final part, I discuss interview material that reveals some of the tactics that refugees pursue to navigate the produced racializing precarities and inequalities in migration and labor regimes and their uneven spatial and temporal infrastructuralization.

Conflictual and contingent infrastructures

The power and violence entailed through the local governance of migration through ambiguous regulations and arbitrary administrative implementation has been highlighted in recent years (Artero & Fontanari 2019). Rarely does such research in a European context account for the racial and racializing inequalities reproduced thereby, though. In the attempt to operationalize the workings of racial capitalism in the US, Jodi Melamed addresses the role of administrations in taking front-line decisions that racially and violently differentiate while masking them behind a language of bureaucratic neutrality and necessity (2019). Taking the debate around

institutional racism seriously, caution should be exercised when judging front-line decisions, however. Institutional racism as explained by Taylor manifests not through the intentions of employees but as the outcome of their administrative work (2016). The theorization of institutional racism in Germany since the early 2000s has been criticized for not being able to explain how institutions come to incorporate racist ideologies and how state and society are connected (Karakayali & Tsianos 2006). It is argued that institutions rely on pre-existing racism-discourses which cannot be reduced to intentional functions and consequences (ibid). Instead of determining intentions in state institutions, I seek to develop an understanding of them as coordinating and constituting infrastructures that – in their materiality – represent resources, their distribution and extraction. Strauss argues that an infrastructural approach can bring together the "materialist, ideological, and historical frameworks" of racial inequality (Strauss 2020: 4-5). In the same spirit, I find it fruitful to add an infrastructural layer of analysis by focusing on local infrastructures of migration, education, and work which materialize and mediate political interests in a way that entails an unequal distribution of precarity and power. At the same time, I point to conflicts and contingencies that underlie the formation of such infrastructures and frame them as a characteristic feature of contemporary racial capitalism.

The intermediaries of labor that my analysis focuses on act as infrastructures of circulation, (de)valuation and extraction of labor power in their diverse informational, logistical, and disciplining functions. My research examined infrastructures for the placement in vocational trainings which oftentimes forego to consider prior experiences and capacities, future aspirations, and freedom of choice. Existence and equipment of infrastructures answer to contingent economic interests. By materializing political-economic interest as infrastructures, mediators toward these labor relations concentrate and confine options for refugees' labor market participation. The range of the before-mentioned activating integration and qualification measures corresponds to labor market shortages and tends to reproduce sectorial and racialized divisions of labor. By concentrating on logistics, care, technical and manual work, the availability of measures reflects which actors and sectors are most involved and invested. The interest of the Chambers of Craft[8] to

---

[8] Professions in a German system of vocational trainings dating from the end of the 19th century are split into professions represented by the Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the Chambers of Crafts which bring together employers in manual

recruit refugees as vocational trainees translates into targeted measures that reproduce the visibility and value of refugees' manual labor power for shortage sectors. As Karim points out the option of a vocational training was conveyed to him through the Chambers of Crafts despite him saying that "if I am honest, I do not want to do a vocational training in the crafts" (2018). The strong promotion of manual labor may be discouraging for people who aspire to other sectors or to university studies but do not perceive these options.

These uneven and contingent infrastructures for labor market integration unequally affect refugees' prospects and precarities. Infrastructures of the immigration and workfare institutions differ though. Conflicts between their approaches witnessed a re-configuration and intensification after the summer of migration. As a BleibNet counsellor observes, treatment of "customers" in the labor administration differs immensely among employees whereas the immigration authorities' decision making varies across districts. At the same time, he describes that the conjuncture has swung back to a more restrictive approach – possibly due to the political-societal atmosphere that emerged as a backlash to the summer of migration.

> "At the labor administration it depends rather on the person, and it is at times random who you turn up with, while at the immigration authorities the differences are dictated from above. There are immigration authorities where tolerated persons in principle get written in their papers: 'Employment prohibited'. […] Although one has the feeling that generally it has become more difficult with the immigration authorities. Before, when I began here [July 2016], there was a scope for such creative solutions. Very often there are case which are not according to the book, but a bit more complicated and then the employees were at least open, you could talk to them and find a solution. That does not really exist anymore. […] I think it is also due to the 'Zeitgeist' that arose. No one wants to be caught having been too generous towards refugees." (BleibNet 2018)

The summer of migration seemed at first to have triggered a successful cooperation of asylum and workfare institutions and accordingly a flexible combination of tools for racial differentiation and logistical power. As time and societies moved on, it became

---

and mechatronic domains such as mechatronics, masonry, metal work, sanitation as well as hair dressing and baking

clear to what extent Germany's racial regime can contradict and clash with an intended smooth and logistical labor market integration. Drawn differentiations and divisions as well as societal and institutional rejection, quickly overshadowed a flexible workfarist approach and led to a re-configuration of an exclusionary racial regime – particularly in rural and Eastern German regions. This is not to say that workfarism has been abandoned, rather it is contingently implemented and infrastructuralized. While regional interests and rejections play a crucial role in the decision-making of immigration authorities whose employees tend to act in-line in one district, refugees are increasingly expected to improve their "prospect-to-remain" individually.

New possibilities such as the 3+2[9] rule ought to enable all tolerated refugees to secure a right-to-stay by doing a vocational training – at least in theory. A so-called "change of lane" from the asylum procedure to titles based on a labor relation is presented as a pragmatic way to expand the right-to-remain. But it risks perpetuating intersectional inequalities as well as informal and indirect power relations. The 3+2 rule is an incentive for a vocational training not only for refugees with a tolerated status but also for refugees who are still unsure about the outcome of their asylum case. The 3+2 regulation is widely considered in line with economic interests and to have resulted from employers' lobbying and lack of vocational trainings. As an employee of the rights-to-stay network Bridge – affirms, "The 3+2 rule would not exist if the economy had not worked flat out for it" (2017). She considers it "a very strong regulator if people only do a vocational training because they are afraid that otherwise they would have to leave Germany". In consequence, she observes that "then they come to firms who are deploringly looking for vocational trainees, and that is then not necessarily a free choice". An asylum lawyer I interviewed in Potsdam argued that the prospect to remain is henceforth "individually produced" through one's CV (2019). Yet in the neighboring more rural and right-wing town of Werder, the immigration authorities' approach is fundamentally different than in Potsdam. She goes on to criticize that this rule is laid out as a lure for people to perform at their best even though the option is in fact not equally available everywhere.

---

[9] As per §60c AufenthG the 3+2 rule grants a tolerated status for the length of the vocational training (Ausbildungsduldung) and consecutively for two years of employment in the corresponding sector

"In Potsdam it is handled very tolerantly at the immigration authorities. In my experience, they cooperate a lot and even advise people to get a vocational training and bring the proof for the training, so that they can give this tolerated status. While in Werder, it was said very clearly by an employee: 'We don't want these people to stay here at all!'" (Lawyer 2019)

A she observed, in some regions the 3+2 status is denied to persons who ought to clarify their identity. Despite an instruction of the Ministry of Interior which leaves scope for the duty of cooperation in one's identification, it is handled differently according to location. As explained by the employee of Bridge, the justification for not granting the 3+2 status is the expected cooperation in providing identity papers. With no legal insurance of being granted the 3+2 status, "one would have to prove complete cooperation with one's own deportation" to potentially receive a more secure status (Bridge 2018). Immigration authorities which apply their margin of discretion restrictively are also governed by the influence of regional interest groups. They may seek out employers to process their potential employees' papers or employers may interfere directly or through an economic lobby to speed up the process. According to an employee of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in Potsdam they have "a direct contact to the immigration authorities" to support their firms' interests (IHK 2018). Consequently, employers can influence the speed and outcome of decision-making. That the implementation is quite opaque is reflected in Karims' decision not to pursue a right-to-stay that way but to wait for the appeal in his asylum case.

"Some say a vocational training can help me, but others say no; […] if I do a vocational training and I go to my interview and I get negative, […] maybe then I get deported." (Karim 2018)

A lot of uncertainties can be observed as to the implementation of new regulations. Ghassan explains that contingent regulations seem arbitrary or up to individual discretion. He points to a collective sense of insecurity caused by a reality in which "from institution to institution, from one employee to the next the laws change, it changes, everything changes" (Ghassan 2018). Insecurity and ignorance over one's future then make it hard to concentrate on learning as Karim explains: "if you are calm and don't have problems, you can learn and do a German course or a training. If you are not calm, it is difficult" (Karim 2018). Despite their precarious situation,

refugees are pressured to perform perfectly, so that few can benefit from accelerated and qualified labor market integration and many are sought to be logistified as stopgaps for shortages. The resulting balancing act of providing for the moment and for the future, of securing legal and financial stability, and of learning and working needs to be continuously cared for individually.

Accordingly, I suggest to adapt an established understanding of institutional racism as contained in administrative structures and rules to reflect a more recent and contingent infrastructural racism containing heterogeneous trajectories and potentials. Heterogeneity in titles and entitlements and their contingent implementation has led to a situation in which infrastructures are provisioned with flexible tools, measures, and mechanisms. These are then not only applied differentially according to personal attributes but also according to conjunctures of racism present in a certain person, place, or time. These processes result in an under-valued and unfree inclusion of refugees in shortage sectors and precarious labor relations and durably affect their living and working prospects. Despite the inability to logistically govern and move people, contingencies and risks are increasingly allocated "to society and its weakest members" who risk being racialized in the process (Azmanova 2020: 113). The conflictual infrastructuralization of migration and labor regimes furthers precarization of living and working conditions which are difficult to navigate and negotiate.

Infrapolitics of Autonomy and Anti-Racism

Migrants' attempts to fight for autonomy and the betterment of their conditions have been described as precursory and prefiguring for struggles against precarity (Mezzadra 2007). The situation of refugees in Germany since the "summer of migration" illustrates well that precarity is not only the result of, "an unequal distribution of protection within society" but is shaped and imposed as a consequence of laws, politics, and infrastructures that withdraw autonomy, stability, and prospects (Alberti et al. 2018, 449). Claiming asylum comes with a connotation of nonchoice and vulnerability that seems to enable the protectionist, patronizing, and logistical power exerted over refugees' lives (De Genova et al. 2018). Constant autonomous attempts to claim better and fairer conditions challenge assumptions about submission or powerlessness, though. However, these attempts may not appear in easily perceptible forms but rather – as a history of oppressed and

marginalized struggles has taught us – remain below the surface or beyond the spotlight (Kelley 1994). In approaching and negotiating infrastructures according to their purposes, I argue that refugees conduct imperceptible politics or "infra-politics" which rely on an appropriation of (counter)-knowledge and infrastructures (Scott 2012). They may not appear as visible and collective forms of subjectivities and struggles but rather constitute attempts to navigate or evade existing infrastructures. However, in reference to the Black radical tradition, I consider these infrapolitics in line with historical forms of refusal and escape, which proved in the long-term to be so powerful in disrupting and transforming unequal systems.

Though most people spend their first years in a state of disorientation and isolation, the length and endurance of this phase differs according to one's time of arrival, location, 'prospect to remain' and individual circumstances. Different time regimes and thresholds constitute, according to Elena Fontanari attempts to slow down the movements of people and thus render migration more governable and, I would add, logistifiable (Schäfer 2019). Whilst the asylum procedure has indeed been speeded up significantly for people with 'good prospects to remain', an insecure prospect considerably slows the process down. Finally, a bad prospect condemns to confinement in shelters of first arrival for up to two years of isolation without access to schools, encompassing medical care and work – a situation only rendered direr by a pandemic. The years spent in shelters can be perceived as a theft of time and compared to the storage of surplus labor as analyzed in the context of the prison-industrial complex in the US (Gilmore 2020). As Apostolidis argues in "The Fight for Time", precarious workers' "daily lives routinely involve lack and loss" as they struggle to organize and control their time (2019, 50). I argue that this struggle reflects attempts to evade and counter the experienced logistification, racialization and precarization. Ghiath who arrived in Berlin from Syria in 2013, waited for two and a half years until getting a residence status due to ambiguities about his nationality. During this period, he remembers having to organize everything on his own and not being subject to the later activating infrastructure.

> "Back then, it was not so exhausting with the measures, 1€ jobs or integration courses. I did everything on my own, I found the school and so forth. I had no support. Actually, all the people that did not receive a residence permit, could not do anything. They get help now, but I do not know how. But before they were simply in refugee shelters [...]. That was at the beginning, now I heard that

people with a tolerated status or so, they do vocational trainings, can stay in Germany and blah-blah. But now it does not interest me anymore. I have my place and whatever happens with integration, I do not care!" (Ghiath 2018)

In Ghiath's attempt to retrace conjunctures of integration, a lot of frustration transpires. He is frustrated about the new trend of forcing refugees into German classes and measures, such as the notorious 1€ jobs as well as about the state of affairs when he arrived in 2013 and while being freer than refugees later on was not able to access any infrastructures or resources. His account also reflects recent observations of migration regimes which, rather than excluding migrants from rights and entitlements, exert structural violence, coercion, and contingency through an "excess of administrative rules" (Artero & Fontanari 2019: 3). While Ghiath acknowledges that options for people with a tolerated status have expanded, he seems to refuse to engage with such contingent politics any longer.

Besides appearing as a coping mechanism, withdrawing from the evolving integration policies could signal a retreat from a sense of acceleration, agitation, and urgency around constantly changing situations. Distancing oneself, delaying decisions, and gaining time and calm seems to be a tactic pursued by many. That tactic seeks according to Schäfer to reclaim lost time and autonomy throughout the waiting process associated with the bureaucracy and power relations of claiming asylum (2019: 116). And rightfully so, one may be able to spare oneself some agitation over introduced measures such as 1€ jobs which were loudly proclaimed and then quickly reduced again faced with the impossibility and refusal of frontline employees to widely apply and impose them. In fact, the multiplication of short-lived integration projects and measures stands in contrast to the prolonged periods of insecurity asylum seekers undergo. Nevertheless eventual temporal evolutions need to be considered. So, though Yasser was receiving social benefits at the time of our interview, he was aware that he cannot rely on that support and that it comes at a costly price of giving up autonomy.

> "I look forward to working independently and not receiving from the Job Center anymore. […] I must keep in mind that the Job Center gives me money and someday eventually it stops giving me money. And this moment, why do I wait for this moment? […] Thus finally, it is good when one works independently and

earns money and is not with the Job Center, because they are like: 'Where are you, what are you doing, why are you late? This bureaucracy.'" (Yasser 2018)

Yasser seeks to be alert to the unpredictability of workfare and thus to anticipate logistics and evade the logistical power exerted over him. Ghiath had similar experiences with the Job Center constantly enquiring "what are you doing? What is your aim?" and finally "why are you not so motivated" (2018). Accordingly, he declares that "I had to get away from Job Center as they always pressured me". Scholars of the Black Radical Tradition have long observed the role of mobility as a working-class infrapolitics (Kelley 1994). As Kelley states, "The most pervasive form of black protest was simply to leave" (35). Repeated mobilities between employment and social benefits illustrate Ghiath's struggle for autonomy. His tense relationship with the Job Center is also due to a prior conflict as he proceeded without his case manager's approval to resign from his vocational training as a car mechanic.

> "I resigned, thus she was very disappointed […]. It was a bad experience simply and I knew how the company was like. She said 'in fact, we could help you'. Ok, how could you help? She said, we could have talked to your boss and you should have spoken to us, but I really did not want to. They always fool me, […] the Job Center is always like that: Yes, we will do this! And then they do not. […] I just wanted my peace of mind! I also once had a problem with the rent and a lawyer who is specialized on affairs with the Job Center helped me." (Ghiath 2018)

What we can learn from this quote is that repetitive problems not only drove Ghiath to decide autonomously and then confront his case manager with accomplished facts, but that he is ready to judicially defend himself. His decision also shows that despite legal, societal, and institutional pressures to conduct a vocational training, Ghiath is unwilling to accept his bosses' downgrading treatment. But even if defiance does not evolve to that extent, it can be ascertained that many anticipatory and evasive dealings with institutions impede the state's logistical management of refugees. Such tactics have been observed in the context of highly unequal, segregated, and racialized societies in the US in the form of "individuals and communities of people who render themselves unavailable for governing" (Quan & Willoughby-Herard 2013, 112). In logistical conjunctures of racial capitalism, I argue that subjects resist not

only by rendering themselves ungovernable but also unlogistifiable, and they do so by relying on collective counter-knowledge.

Ungovernability as part of a repertoire of resistance is of course not new to people on the move against border regimes - nor is what De Genova et al. call "spatial disobedience" (2018: 254). By choosing the place where they will apply for asylum and evading confining spatial politics, refugees impose their mobility during their forced migration as well as afterwards. At times, the sharing of counter-knowledge can entail a form of counter-logistics for example by mapping uneven contingencies and chances. As the 3+2 rule was not granted to him, an inhabitant of Brandenburg chose to resettle in Bremen as his lawyer told me. Accordingly, living conditions can be refused or improved by moving as she elaborates:

> "In the countryside, the less population there is, the more one would think it is possible to accommodate and integrate the few individuals quite well, to take care of them and provide for them. Besides the difficult infrastructures there, […] but the willingness is simply lacking. […] I had a case, where a young man applied to a school in Bremen, and then we applied for relocation to Bremen. I am certain that he will get the status for the training there, and I am also absolutely certain […] that he will do the training successfully, and I say I am also absolutely certain that it is actually a very big loss for Brandenburg, if he is gone." (Lawyer 2019)

Focusing attention on workers' autonomous movements allows recognition of where and when capital and states fail to control mobility and temporality in their own interests and where it is achieved "to have reversed logistics and overturned it" (Andrijasevic & Sacchetto 2016, 222). Such counter-logistical choices sometimes contain calculations that cater more to protecting one's autonomy and dignity in the moment than to pursuing the best chances and may come with costly consequences. Even though he was made aware repeatedly that his tolerated status in Germany does not provide long-term security, one of my interview partners affirmed that he would rather risk needing to return to Italy where he has a residence title than doing an unjustified preparatory training for an exploitative employer. Moussa is aware of the implications of this drastic decision, which went against the advice of his support network by proclaiming that "I decided myself, even if I have to leave Germany, it's fine. I prefer not to, but working for nothing? No, that will end today!" (Moussa 2018)

Navigating workfare in a way that allows for autonomy involves a careful weighing between engaging in precarious jobs, remaining, or returning to social benefits, and ensuring long-term prospects. Accumulated experiences of individualized and racialized differentiation and precarization may contribute to a transformation of subjectivities and the concept of citizen. As describs the phrase "worker-citizens", one's labor productivity becomes central in obtaining citizenship, but new options and subjectivities for claiming citizenship rights also become available (Anderson 2015). Being interpellated as a potential worker enables bargaining for democratic citizenship rights citizens in return for joining the workforce and thus enacting subjectivity as a worker and valuable citizen as Amer's argument illustrates.

> "We do not have conditions, if we work like Germans, then we are ready. But that these offers are for all and not that there are certain offers where Germans apply, and we apply, and they prefer the Germans over us. They say it needs integration, but how should we achieve integration, if we find racism in these matters? We only want democracy, only!" (Amer 2018)

Based on the observation of racism on the labor market, Amer formulates criticisms, claims, and conditions for joining the workforce; namely democratic and equal participation. In line with Engin Isin's conceptualization of "acts of citizenship", he turns around and ruptures the hegemonic discourse that integration is to be achieved by refugees by saying that they cannot do so when racism and a lack of democracy in the society prevails and prevents it (Isin & Saward 2013). The differential inclusion of refugees in constant and forceful activation pursued by the state and its infrastructures can lead to awareness and confidence concerning the labor market's need for their labor power and consequently the formulation of arbitrage and claims. In this spirit, Marwan who also attempted to bargain with the Job Center, addresses the workfare state by arguing: "You want to get rid of people at the Job Center? Give them a better deal, make it worth it! And this country has money" (Marwan 2018). While not necessarily articulated collectively, refugees' autonomous decisions and acts are based on common interests, knowledge, and infrastructures and constitute powerful forces in disrupting and countering the logistified operations of racial capitalism on an everyday basis.

Conclusion

The article examined evolving conjunctures of racial capitalism by proposing an analysis of a reconfiguration of migration and labor regimes based on the differential, coercive, and logistified inclusion of refugees in a workfarist labor regime. In the first section, I analyzed the narratives and regulations behind workfare which conceives of individual motivation and abilities as the main obstructive factor for labor market participation. I showed that the differential and coercive activation of refugees relies on and reproduces racialized and gendered perceptions of productivity. In the second part, I analyzed logistical conjunctures, constraints, and struggles in infrastructures of asylum and workfare that unevenly provide resources and distribute contingencies.

The resulting divisions of labor are characterized less by rigid racist hierarchies than in the past and more by logistical calculations and contingencies. The current differential mode of inclusion multiplies hierarchies, divisions, and inequalities through logistified migration and labor regimes, complex gendered and racial differentiations, and individual navigation and negotiation. While these inequalities are disguised behind seemingly neutral migration-related administrative practices, I showed that they manifest and materialize in intermediating infrastructures. Such infrastructures can thus further racializations by rendering refugees and their deficiencies visible; by enforcing and reinforcing coercions and dependencies provided by the state; by attributing resources, rights, and requirements unevenly; and by dividing into distinguishable groups. Ways in which infrastructural contingency and racism are exerted are illustrated by educational measures and their concentration on shortage sectors, institutions' uneven exertion of pressure and granting of titles, and differentiation in refugees' rights and entitlements based on their assumed proximity to the labor market and "prospect to remain".

Through my analysis of the workfare regime and its conflictual and differential activation of refugees, I portrayed a current conjuncture of racial capitalism which is characterized by contingency and precarity. Recently, the asylum regime's confining and coercive elements have become more important (once again). Particularly in rural areas, a backlash is noticeable and stands at times in confrontation with the federal state's laws, agendas, and economic interests – as the implementation of the 3+2 rule for vocational trainees exemplifies. Accordingly, there remain large discrepancies between discursive objectives and infrastructural implementation,

between immigration authorities and labor market institutions and between overlapping conjunctures of racial capitalism. The evolving infrastructures of asylum and workfare are contingent on the involvement and interference of economic and civil society actors whose role in shaping conditions and conjunctures of working and resisting should not be underestimated. The encountered contingency in infrastructures also leads to new infrapolitics based on an autonomous appropriation of counter-knowledge, counter-logistics, and citizenship claims. Anti-racist and autonomous struggles for equal participation will continue to affect the implementation, outcome, and further constitution of asylum and workfare infrastructures and concretization of conjunctures of racial capitalism.

Literature

Altenried, Moritz, Manuela Bojadžijev, Leif Höfler, Sandro Mezzadra, and Mira Wallis (2018):. „Logistical Borderscapes". *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117 (2). 291–312.

Amer (2019). Interview conducted and recorded on the 6th of January 2019 in Arabic. Translated by the author.

Anderson, Bridget (2015): Immigration and the worker citizen. In: Bridget Anderson and Vanessa Hughes (eds.): *Citizenship and its others*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Andrijasevic, Rutvica, and Devi Sacchetto (2016): "From Labour Migration to Labour Mobility? The Return of the Multinational Worker in Europe." *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 22 (2), 219–231.

Apostolidis, Paul (2019): *The Fight for Time. Migrant Day Laborers and the Politics of Precarity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Artero, Maurizio & Elena Fontanari (2021): „Obstructing Lives: Local Borders and Their Structural Violence in the Asylum Field of Post-2015 Europe". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47(3): 631–48.

Arrivo (2019). Interview conducted and recorded on the 22nd of February 2019 in German.

Azmanova, Albena (2020): *Capitalism on edge*. Columbia University Press.

Bergfeld, Mark (2017): Germany's Willkommenskultur: Trade Unions, Refugees and Labour Market Integration. In: Global Labour Journal 8(1).

Bhattacharyya, Gargi (2018). *Rethinking racial capitalism: Questions of reproduction and survival.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Bleibnet (2018). Interview Conducted and recorded on the 12th of December 2018 in German.

Bojadžijev, Manuela (2019): Die Logistik der Migration: Ethnographische und epistemische Perspektiven. In: Reinhard Johler & Jan Lange (eds.): Konfliktfeld Fluchtmigration. Historische und ethnographische Perspektiven. 31–48.

Bojadžijev, Manuela; Demirović, Alex (eds.) (2002): *Konjunkturen des Rassismus.* Westfälisches Dampfboot: Münster.

Bourne, J. (2022). Out of the cauldron: lessons from Cedric Robinson. *Race & Class*, *63*(3), 3-21.

Bridge (2017). Interview conducted and recorded on the 30th of October 2017 in German.

Brücker, Herbert; Fendel, Tanja; Guichard, Lucas; Gundacker, Lidwina; Jaschke, Philipp; Keita, Sekou et al. (2020): Fünf Jahre „Wir schaffen das" Eine Bilanz aus der Perspektive des Arbeitsmarktes. Hg. v. IAB (IAB-Forschungsbericht, 11/2020).

Carstensen, Anne Lisa (2020): Unfree Labour, Migration and Racism: Towards an Analytical Framework. In: *Global Labour Journal* 12 (1).

Carstensen, Anne Lisa / Heimeshoff, Lisa-Marie / Riedner, Lisa (2018): Der Zwang zur Arbeit. Verwertungslogiken in den umkämpften Regimen der Anwerbe-, Flucht- und EU-Migration. In: Sozial. Geschichte Online (23), 235–269.

Cooper, Melissa (2012): Workfare, Familyfare, Godfare: Transforming Contingency into Necessity. In: South Atlantic Quarterly 111 (4). 643-661.

Cowen, Deborah, Glenda Garelli, and Martina Tazzioli. 2018. "Editors' interview with Deborah Cowen." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117 (2), 397–403.

David (2019). Interview conducted and recorded on the 25th of January 2019 in English.

Employment Agency (2018). Interview conducted and recorded on the 6th of December 2018 in German.

Fraser, Nancy (2016): Contradictions of Capital and Care. In: New Left Review (100).

GBA (2018). Interview conducted and recorded on the 13th of February 2018 in German.

Giath (2018): Interview conducted and recorded on the 14th of October 2018 in German.

Tsing, Anna (2014). "Ordinary Catastrophe: Outsourcing Risk in Supply-Chain Capitalism." In *Futures of Modernity*, edited by Michael Heinlein, Cordula Kropp, Judith Neumer, Angelika Poferl, and Regina Römhild, 51–64. Bielefeld: Transcript

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson (2020): Geographies of Racial Capitalism. Antipode Foundation Film. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CS627aKrJl.

Hall, Stuart (1986): "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (5), 5-27.

Harney, Stefano; Moten, Fred (2013): The undercommons. Fugitive planning & black study. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.

IHK (2018): Interview conducted and recorded with an employee of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce on the 29th of January 2018 in German

Ince, Onur Ulas (2018). Between Equal Rights: Primitive Accumulation and Capital's Violence. *Political Theory*, 46 (6), 885–914.

Isin, Engin F.; Saward, Michael J. 2013. *Enacting European Citizenship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Job Center (2019): Interview conducted and recorded on the 15th of April 2019 in German.

Karakayali, Serhat; Tsianos, Vassilis S. (2006): Knietief im Antira-Dispo oder Do you remember Capitalism? In: *Grundrisse* (6).

Karim (2018): Interview conducted and recorded on the 17th of August 2018 in German.

Kelley, Robin D. G. (2017): What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism? In: Boston Review, 12.01.2017. http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism.

Kelley, Robin D. G. (1994): *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: Free Press.

Knut, Matthias (2016): Arbeitsmarktintegration von Flüchtlingen. Arbeitsmarktpolitik reformieren, Qualifikationen vermitteln. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (WISO Diskurs).

Krifors, Karin (2020): Logistics of migrant labour: rethinking how workers 'fit' transnational economies. In: Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. 1–18.

Malo de Molina, Marta (2004): "Common Notions, Part 1: Workers-Inquiry, Co-Research, Consciousness-Raising." *Transversal*, http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en.html.

Marwan (2018). Interview conducted and recorded on the 14th of December 2018 in English.

Melamed, Jodi (2019): Operationalizing Racial Capitalism: Administrative Power and Ordinary Violence. Lecture at Yale University.

Mezzadra, Sandro; Neilson, Brett (2013): Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor. Durham.

Miles, Robert; Brown, Malcolm (2004): Racism. 2. ed. London.

Noor (2019). Interview conducted and recorded on the 27th of March 2019 in German.

Ong, Aihwa (2003): Buddha is hiding. Refugees, citizenship, the new America (Vol. 5). Univ of California Press.

Quan, H.L.T.; Willoughby-Herard, Tiffany (2013): Black ontology, radical scholarship and freedom. In: African Identities 11 (2). 109–116.

Tazzioli, Martina (2021). The making of racialized subjects: Practices, history, struggles. *Security Dialogue*, *52*(1). 107-114.

Robinson, Cedric J. (2000): *Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Schäfer, Philipp (2019): Umkämpfte Zeitlichkeiten. Temporale Bedingungen und Effekte des Regierens von Flucht und Geflüchteten vor Ort. In: Reinhard Johler und Jan Lange (Hg.): Konfliktfeld Fluchtmigration. Historische und ethnographische Perspektiven . Bielefeld: Transcript. 105–120.

Scherschel, Karin (2016): "Citizenship by Work? Arbeitsmarktpolitik im Flüchtlingsschutz zwischen Öffnung und Selektion". Prokla 138, 46(2). 245-266.

Scott, James C. (2012): Infrapolitics and Mobilizations: A Response by James C. Scott. In: Revue Française d Etudes Américaines 131 (1), 112–117.

Strauss, Kendra (2020): Labour geography III: Precarity, racial capitalisms and infrastructure. In: Progress in Human Geography 44 (6), 1212–1224.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta (2016): From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation. New York.

Verdi (2018). Interview conducted and recorded on the 4th of January 2018 in German.

Xiang, Biao; Lindquist, Johan (2014): Migration Infrastructure. In: International Migration Review. 48 (1). 122-148.

Weeks, Kathi (2011): *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries.* Durham: Duke University Press.