Lea Rzadtki

"WE ARE ALL ACTIVISTS"

Exploring Solidarities in Activism By, With and For Refugees and Migrants in Hamburg

[transcript] Social Movement and Protest

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Lea Rzadtki worked on her PhD at Leuphana Universität in Lüneburg until 2021. Her research focus is on social movements and political activism. She is particularly interested in the intersections between academia, activism and professional contexts – all in their way spaces with the potential to question and transform power structures.

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1. Introduction

> "We have made ourselves visible to say that we are here, to say that we are not in hiding but we're just human beings. We are here and we have been here a long time. We have been living and working in this country for many years and we pay our taxes." (Cissé, 1996)

Who is taken into consideration when we talk about *the* citizens, about *the* people or *the* activists? Often it is a rather unquestioned privileged positionality, which is taken to be the standard that most of the time it is actually not. In this quote, the activist Madjiguène Cissé, from the transnational *Sans-Papiers* movement, raises that just because someone or something is not visible—to the broader public or a particular public—it does not mean that they have not been there for a long time. Migrant rights activism is not a new phenomenon but has intensified and become more networked and visible over the past years (Eggert & Giugni, 2015). This study explores group contexts of activism by, with and for refugees and migrants in Hamburg, the claims, interactions, challenges and processes that activists experience, discuss and deal with. I have approached activists experiencing political organizing in this context from a constructivist grounded theory perspective. This allowed me to develop conceptual perspectives grounded in activist groups' realities and was advanced through existing literature on this social movement but also theories from other research fields. *Solidarities* emerged throughout the research process as a more concrete focus. This research sets out to answer the questions: *What does solidarity mean in social movements, and how do migrant rights activist practices result in negotiating, enacting and challenging it?*

This publication is a revised version of my dissertation thesis. Although I only began my PhD research in 2016, the relevant time frame, shaping my research, starts at least in 2015. Similarly, while particularly my data generation only

took place until 2019, the writing process still included all of 2020—which certainly shaped it. Finally, the publication is happening in 2022, adding a yet altered context. This overall period covers many societal events and tensions that centrally concern and impact migrant rights activism today but that are not all explicitly part of my data generation and analysis. Since 2015, the so-called "refugee crisis" has been yet another way of framing migration as a threat, especially to Northern, in this case, European countries. However, this does not mean that migration or the often racist and xenophobic motives for problematizing it are new phenomena. To acknowledge this means accepting that the circumstances that make people leave their homes, that solidify borders, that turn landscapes into graveyards and that categorize people into more or less deserving, more or less citizenship-worthy, more or less fitting, are not a temporary crisis, which politicians try to handle. Instead, they are a historically built condition. This condition has been shaped by European imperialism and colonialism, intensified by capitalism and globalization and decided upon by politicians and societies over many years. Just as long as these dynamics exist, there have certainly also been people organizing and struggling against them. This book wants to explore a glimpse of such activities and how activists experience them.

All of this general societal atmosphere has intensified since 2015. The year 2020 is not formally included in my data generation anymore but has undoubtedly brought up further significant circumstances that I want to mention as they have importantly shaped my writing process. Among the globally most significant ones is that we have been facing a global pandemic, which shook up everyone's lived realities and is on-going. I will not address it further, but it is essential to point out that it has certainly intensified all existing structural inequalities people experience (Hermisson, 2020; Kohlrausch et al., 2020; UNHCR, 2021). In 2020, we also witnessed another chapter in the long line of racist and xenophobic violence in Germany through the murder of nine people in Hanau on February 19: Ferhat Unvar, Gökhan Gültekin, Hamza Kurtović, Said Nesar Hashemi, Mercedes Kierpacz, Sedat Gürbüz, Kaloyan Velkov, Vili-Viorel Păun, Fatih Saraçoğlu are remembered, and a growing movement is calling for justice. We also witnessed fierce *Black Lives Matter* movements that powerfully spread from the United States all over the world by calling out one more time, ever-so-loudly, the historical deathly racism and inequalities that Black people and People of Color (BPoC) are facing on a daily basis. In the first few weeks that the war in Ukraine is lasting while I am preparing this manuscript for publication in March and April 2022, this clearly constitutes

a further relevant circumstance. The war has already forced above 4.5 million people to flee their homes and the country (thus not considering internally displaced people) (UNHCR, 2022). The geographic proximity, a supposed cultural similarity and, quite bluntly, the fact that most of these refugees are white seem to already result in a different involvement for them on the part of European politicians, border regimes and societies than before. Infrastructures are quickly built, legal regulations enable easier procedures, while BPoC refugees, even from Ukraine, are kept from passing the EU's borders.[1]

Both in 2015, throughout 2020 and in 2022, there seemed to be a resurgence of the concept of solidarity. However, it also applies to all of these periods that, especially in government-proclaimed crises, the understanding of solidarity is a limited and contradictory one. The *Long Summer of Migration* in 2015 re-intensified and broadened the fight for the equal rights of migrants, which is facing the societal and political dynamics mentioned above. 2020 also exemplifies how, while calling for solidarity, it was just after exhausting mobilizations of many societal actors that the implicit "Who is involved in it?" was sometimes being questioned. Similarly, 2022 raises critical questions about the importance of solidarity at the face of its clearly selective practices along racist structures. This research explores migrant rights activism in Hamburg in a more limited temporal window. Nevertheless, all these circumstances underscore the ongoing relevance of conceptualizing solidarities. This study aims to offer a reflective, challenging insight into a lived movement reality that is bound up with the historical and contemporary dynamics we continue to face.

The focus is explicitly on mixed group contexts where activists with various legal statuses organize together.[2] Therefore, it is also referred to as activism by, with and for migrants and refugees. I do not claim to have researched *the* migrant rights movements, especially not self-organized and exclusive group structures that undoubtedly are their heart. Of course, my own positionality—including my white, German, cis-gendered, able-bodied, academic and other privileges—shapes all my exploration and analysis. Many knowledge forms that this thesis is centrally based on, to a large extent, come from activists and scholars with lived experiences that I do not share. That

1 Various news articles discuss such dynamics (see e.g. Ferris-Rotman, 2022; Howard et al., 2022; ProAsyl, 2022; Schleiermacher, 2022).

2 Yet, it will become clear throughout this book that the complexity of identities in these groups certainly goes well beyond that of legal status.

can create a gap or tension between recognizing and amplifying while not appropriating or using such knowledge forms and fights. It is an act of balancing that I have experienced and been learning from throughout this research project. I try to address this by including self-reflection, giving credit and focalizing how I have conducted and am presenting my research. Surely, this cannot solve such tensions altogether, and all this is far from flawless, but it represents an immense learning process, which I hope can offer valuable insights.

In this introduction, I briefly delineate the context of this research and the general approach I have been taking to it. I also shortly make two terminological remarks and introduce the structure of the thesis.

Situating this doctoral thesis

> "With collective public actions that take on a variety of forms (including marches, hunger strikes, occupations of public sites, and protest camps), refugees, migrants, and those working in solidarity with them, demand advocacy for human rights, freedom of movement, a fair asylum process, and access to labor markets." (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 527)

Migration certainly represents an increasingly crucial topic in many societies worldwide (Eggert & Giugni, 2015; Rother, 2016). The intensification of globalization and growing numbers of people migrating is often discussed as a challenge both for the countries receiving migrants and those losing more or less significant numbers of their population (Cole, 2016; Mikuszies et al., 2010; Solimano, 2010). Over the last years, European and Northern countries have increased their practices of deterrence and tightening border and migration policies, which also applies to people fleeing war zones and people who risk their lives when moving (Friedrich, 2008; Johnson, 2014; Oberndörfer, 2016). The initial quote by Ataç and colleagues shows that borders are present everywhere and shape people's lives. Migrants and refugees, being the most affected by these border practices, stand up for their rights, often together with their allies (Fadaee, 2015; Grove-White, 2012; Nicholls, 2013a). And they do not only meet civic response, for example in terms of so-called "welcoming culture", but also face increasing Right-wing and racist rhetoric, politics and violence referring to migration as a threat (Daphi, 2016; Hann, 2015; Häusler & Schedler, 2016).

Migrant rights activism has existed for a long time. Still, scholars observe that over the past couple of years it has solidified in terms of active groups all over the world becoming more visible, coordinating themselves and organizing on a new scale (Ataç, 2013; McGuaran & Hudig, 2014; Tyler & Marciniak, 2013). While political rights are still dominantly framed as intrinsically linked to citizenship, thus, membership in a nation-state, the institution of the nation-state is increasingly being challenged (Schütze, 2016; Young, 2010). Nevertheless, political scientists have mainly paid attention to migrants' institutional integration (see e.g. Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2009; Mikuszies et al., 2010; Schulte, 2015), and especially Northern social movement scholars still seem to predominantly take the supposedly homogeneous citizen for granted as *the* activist (Stierl, 2016; Zajak & Steinhilper, 2019).

Refugee and migrant activists challenge this. In the dominant view of more traditional perspectives, this results in a conceptual puzzle: People who are not conferred any political rights by the state and are therefore institutionally unexpected as political actors still start constituting themselves as such, enacting political agency (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). Critical border, migration and citizenship studies have, over the last years, built an academic perspective on migrant rights activism that, conceptually and normatively, underlines this agency of migrants: their active positioning and interacting, as opposed to an often-depicted passive being affected by actions of others (see e.g. Borri & Fontanari, 2015; Hess et al., 2017; Isin, 2012; McNevin, 2006; Nyers, 2015). These research fields constitute the main approaches to academic studies of migrant rights activism so far.

This study builds on this emerging body of literature but aims at developing a conceptual take explicitly focused on social movement studies as a field and at contributing to address some identified gaps. Although there is some engagement with migrant rights activism from this field, it lacks consolidated perspectives (Bloemraad et al., 2016, p. 1648; Eggert & Giugni, 2015, p. 167; Steinhilper, 2017, p. 76f.). Eggert and Giugni observe that while academia is starting to bridge migration and social movement research, "much more work is required in order to better understand under which conditions social movements by, for, and against migrants mobilize and through which processes and mechanisms." (2015, p. 168) Furthermore, Southern, post-colonial or indigenous theories, as well as those coming from disciplines that emerged from movements themselves, seem little regarded in mainstream social movement studies. Feminist and BPoC perspectives, post- and de-colonial theories are generally too little considered (Bayat, 2010; Fadaee, 2015; Nicholls

& Uitermark, 2017). Finally, this research contributes to perspectives on local, contextualized, internal dynamics and dimensions of movements that, according to some scholars, need further development (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008; Farro, 2014; McDonald, 2002). While scholars have distinguished studies on "pro-migrant solidarity groups" and "the subject of migrant and refugee struggles" (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 530), these groups often still seem to be implicitly assumed as relatively homogeneous. Rather few studies engage with the internal dynamics and categorizations more in detail (Ataç et al., 2015; Fadaee, 2015; Ünsal, 2015).

Focusing this research project

> "The solidarity called for is a solidarity that recognizes and respects their action as political participation, and as a radical demand for change. It enables a relationship of mutual support and protection that uses the security of the citizen, but does not reduce or subordinate the power of the migrant. Such solidarity is not easy; it requires a rethinking of protection, equality, and of protest itself." (Johnson, 2015, p. 16f.)

My research aims to offer new perspectives by exploring migrant rights activism in Hamburg, focusing on developing a conceptual take from a social movement perspective. It was shaped and guided by constructivist grounded theory approaches. This philosophical and methodological perspective allowed me to move into the research process with an open view on what might emerge and to do this while also acknowledging the expectations, perspectives and experiences I brought with me. Interpretive philosophical groundings and practical methodological approaches to self-reflective, iterative, activist scholarship have guided me through this enormous learning process and thereby focused my research. That also means that the concrete focus on filling the concept of solidarities with meaning based on activists' lived experiences only emerged throughout the research process itself.

This book explores migrant rights activism in Hamburg as experienced by diversely positioned activists. In this endeavor, I accompanied several activist groups and conducted twelve in-depth interviews throughout a time frame of roughly two years. The research develops a conceptual take on this activism through the generated data presented in six analytical categories. These and the codes composing them do not always explicitly raise solidarity. However, *Negotiating Solidarities* is developed as the overarching storyline,

capturing what emerged from them. The activist groups fighting for migrant rights in Hamburg engage in continuous processes, discussions and interactions around what solidarities might be, how they are being challenged and aimed for. This empirical-analytical storyline is informed by existing approaches to this movement, mostly from critical research fields, and developed through the scholarship of intersectional feminists, BPoC and power-sensitive activists themselves.

While I do not pretend to produce any generalizable explanations, I believe that many of the contextualized insights have relevance for a broader range of social movements. I claim that solidarities are constantly being negotiated, challenged and enacted in implicit and explicit, individual and collective processes. Many of the dynamics that become visible through this exploration of local activist groups might thus have value for broader social movement studies. They might potentially be more visible in this particularly diverse context, but they most probably emerge in other social movements as well. Finally, I want to acknowledge that what informed and shaped this research goes way beyond the *formal* data generation and therefore makes this described setting and time frame confined and endless simultaneously. All of my own experiences—beyond the time frame and local field of my data generation—find their way into this research. I try to make it explicit and give credit while also acknowledging that it is impossible to keep track of all the interactions, experiences and learnings that shape my analysis.

Terminology

> "[T]erms such as activism, creative space, cultural activism, critical consciousness and others are not subject to one objective standard. Readers are advised not to see the use of these terms in a strict context, rather they are more flexibly put forth as commonly used within the local communities explored." (Graham, 2019, p. 285)

This quote aptly points out a challenge of research that is not just claiming to be *about* social movements or activism but that also engages *with* these movements. Even though Graham's examples might not completely apply to my research context, I want to similarly emphasize that, due to my methodological approach and my research setting, my goal is not to develop clear-cut, mutually exclusive and objective terminology. Parts of this are explored more in-depth in Chapters 3 and 4. Nevertheless, throughout this publication, I try

to indicate and substantiate my terminological choices, some of which I want to raise here already.

As mentioned, I explicitly focus my research on activist groups with people of various legal statuses. This potentially distinguishes it from research focused on different constellations, such as self-organization, refugee movements or non-citizen struggles (see e.g. Bhimji, 2016; Johnson, 2014; Klotz, 2016; Moulin & Nyers, 2007; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018) but also pro-migrant mobilizations, solidarity movements or "refugees welcome" initiatives (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2016; Every & Augoustinos, 2013; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Koca, 2016; Kwesi Aikins & Bendix, 2015; Siapera, 2019).[3] Some groups are mainly and sometimes exclusively organized and led by refugees and asylum seekers themselves. Simultaneously, many (activist) groups, especially in the most immediate context of the Long Summer of Migration, are often dominantly constituted by Germans trying to support newly arriving people. Yet, often they are also merely framed as such while actually collecting a variety of people. Of course, these kinds of groups regularly overlap and cannot always be distinguished. However, I think this makes it even more important to explicitly delineate my research focus.

My focus on *migrant rights activism* is also grounded in that such a broader term as *migrant* is more embracing. It does not imply the absence of asylum seekers and refugees or a normative judgment of who is or should be a refugee or a migrant.[4] Increasing attention is being paid to the pitfalls of using terms, such as "economic" vs. "political migrants", "refugees", "asylum-seekers", "illegals", "undocumented", "regular" vs. "irregular migrants", "aliens" or "non-citizens" (James, 2014; Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2014; Schulze Wessel, 2016). Most of these designations share that—intently or not—they involve a negative connotation or devaluation of the persons they are ascribed to and often reduce people to this *one* identity (Fleischmann, 2015; Kewes,

3 Some of these publications do not specify the constellations in the context they study.

4 This is not to say that a distinction between various forms of migration cannot be significant on a human rights basis. But it raises that the distinction is often arbitrary. Some activists deliberately use the term refugee to emphasize their disagreement with existing asylum laws, thereby re-appropriating the term. Some reject such terms of assigned legal categorizations because they are too often used to essentializing or creating differences among them. Importantly, legal status is not a never-changing characteristic and it is not neutrally assigned. It is not on me to judge so I use the broader term, include controversies on various terms and try to be open to debate.

2016b; Schwenken, 2006). Based on such reflections, I early-on decided to approach my participants as *activists* to do justice to their mixed constellations and each person's complex personal history and identities. However, because dominant societal structures categorize people in the ways mentioned above, these are obviously shaping people's realities. How these societal inequalities operate within activist groups is an essential part of what I explore. Using such broader terminologies in general does not mean that, where necessary, insightful or meaningful, I do not distinguish between migrant or refugee or German activists, among others. Nonetheless, staying vigilant concerning these categories and ascriptions is a task that has been running through my whole research process (Bakewell, 2008, p. 445; Brubaker, 2013, p. 11; Spivak et al., 2011, p. 11).

Moreover, I mostly refer to *activism* when discussing the local forms of political organizing that I researched. However, as further discussed in Chapter 4, I consider the overall activities, including all the above, as part of a social movement. Another terminological remark concerns gender. I use the female form as the generic one when there is not a specified gender. That means that, for example, I refer to *the* researcher justifying *her* methodological choices. For my research participants and activists referred to in field notes or by interviewees, I use "s*he" and "her*him/ her*his" to further anonymize their identities. As apparent, "I" explicitly appears as a situated researcher throughout the whole thesis. This mirrors my philosophical belief that, even when made invisible in the written presentation, a researcher is never neutral or objective and can, therefore, appear explicitly in the text.

Furthermore, I try to avoid using the denomination "Western," for example concerning research fields. What is usually referred to as "Western" results from a historical polarization that is not necessary here and gives the illusion of a geographic clarity. Nevertheless, it is generally, at least roughly, understood which countries tend to be referred to as "Western"—most often these are European (at least EU) countries, the United States, Canada and Australia. Especially when criticizing the dominance of these perspectives in academia, it can be important to be able to label them explicitly. The most apt description of such dominance might be to state that they are strongly shaped and thus dominated by the white supremacist structures in society and academia.[5] While I will name this where fitting, I finally chose to use the

5 Openjuru et al. detect "an international academic publishing universe dominated by scholars from the global North." (2015, p. 226) Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains

terms "Northern"/"Southern," in reference to Global South and North. While it continues to be an inappropriate seemingly geographic description, it enables a finer differentiation. A research field can be dominated by Northern perspectives and it does not have to mean that Southern perspectives in the Global North are not still marginalized (Openjuru et al., 2015).

Structure

> "Required formats often presuppose a traditional logico-deductive organization. Thus, we need to rethink the format and adapt it to our needs and goals rather than pour our work into standard categories. Rethink and adapt a prescribed format in ways that work for your ideas rather than compromise your analysis." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 290)

As may have become apparent through this introduction and is nicely captured by this quote, I approached my research context through some not so traditional ways. That also shapes its form and presentation and is very centrally so because of its constructivist grounded theory perspective and its aspiration of exploring meeting grounds of activism and scholarship. After this introducing chapter, the thesis therefore partly continues rather unusually.

Chapter 2 further accompanies the reader into the research setting. Firstly, this consists of a thick description of an activist scene. Secondly, it contains a self-reflection and positioning of myself as a researcher. Chapter 3 follows up on this by explaining the methodological background of this study more in-depth. This is because the philosophical and methodological choices shape all other parts of the research design so explicitly that it is reasonable to introduce this to the reader early on. In turn, this means that the literature review only follows in Chapter 4. Constructivist grounded theory's take on the engagement with existing literature brings some specificities that result in a lack of what is usually referred to as a conceptual framework. Thus, the chapter, firstly, contains a literature review organized by relevant research fields concerning the study of migrant rights activism. Secondly, it identifies

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how already the term *research* is bound up with European imperialism and colonialism and states: "It appalls us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing […], and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations." (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 1)

gaps in the existing literature, introduces the sensitizing concepts (developed at the beginning to orient the further research process) and focuses my own conceptual approach by introducing solidarity.

It might also seem untypical for a qualitative research presentation that I present my empirical findings in Chapter 5 without explicitly relating it to extant theory and literature yet. The chapter is structured based on the six analytical categories. This does neither mean that I only descriptively present my empirical data nor that I pretend to introduce entirely new insights never reflected in any publication. Due to constructivist grounded theory's iterative logic, the form in which I present my empirical findings was developed through multiple stages of data analysis and confrontation with existing theory and literature. Therefore, the categories are already a central part of the analysis. Yet, to give the empirical data and the emergent nature of the analysis the space they deserve, I decided to follow Birks and Mills' recommendation to first isolate and only later link my findings to the literature (2011, p. 134). The latter then takes place in Chapter 6 in the form of three contributions my research makes. This chapter develops the main insights from my empirical findings together with existing literature to more explicitly engage with and answer the research questions. In Chapter 7, I attempt to summarize the results of my research in a more practical way, acknowledging they should not be limited to academic audiences. The conclusion summarizes my findings, addresses limitations and points to recommendations for further research.

2. Activism by, with and for migrants in Hamburg

Firstly, this chapter entails a depiction of an exemplary scene: The We'll Come United Parade that took place in Hamburg on September 29, 2018. It offers the reader a glimpse to better understand my research setting. It is a personal account of the day and I should add that I have myself been involved in the organization. I hope to transmit some of the difficulties, hopes and strengths of this political fight. The parade was organized by a nation-wide network of self-organized, anti-racist and antifascist initiatives, which brought 35,000 people to the streets, making it one of the biggest demonstrations by, with and for migrants in Germany until then. This description is not meant to be representative or exhaustive neither of the activist groups I researched nor of this particular day.

Secondly, this chapter contains a reflection of my own positionality, which deals with my position as a researcher and a person in and beyond this research project. I agree with Bryant's conviction that at the beginning of a research project researchers should "try to articulate their motivations and relationships to the research and its key issues" because "[c]laiming that one has no preconceptions is not convincing, nor is it defensible." (2017, p. 152) Given my multiple roles of involvement in the research setting and my privileged positionings, I consider positionality even more relevant than it is anyways.

2.1 We'll Come United—Anti-racist parade in Hamburg (September 29, 2018)

> "We turn on the light and turn up the sound. The mics are there for those who need them, to tell it like it is: The history of our society is the history of migration. It is just as unstoppable as the solidarity of the many. So, call us

> storytellers. We are here. We are coming. We are staying. On Sept 29, 2018 the streets will be ours." (We'll Come United, 2018)

It is a crisp Saturday morning in late September in Hamburg. The sky is of a bright blue, the air is still cool from the night, and the big square in front of the city hall is almost empty. It's is too early for the tourists. The offices are empty because of the weekend. The shops have not opened yet. Only a few police vans are parked at the side of the square. Looking more carefully, I see that there are two bigger groups of people standing on the other end of the square. Otherwise, everything is silent. Suddenly, a truck enters the street beside the square, a few seconds later another one follows, and yet another one, and so on. All at once, something is getting started here. The trucks line up along the sides of the square and in the streets right next to it, as if pulled by invisible but clearly organized threads. People immediately start to prepare with those who are already here. Groups of people start to assemble next to each truck, forming a busy buzzing all around. People climb up on trucks' sides, rolling up the tarps, others unpack banners, build sculptures, draw posters or make other decorations. The trucks are starting to transform—from gray uniform transport vehicles they turn into something more lively: colorful monuments, airplanes, dream statues, safe spaces, playgrounds, clubs, rooms of education, boats, memorials.

Walking from one to the other, it is almost impossible to take in all the messages that are only starting to be put up: *knowledge is not white; women breaking borders; decolonize!; we'll dance UNITED; Freedom of Movement; Migration ist die Mutter aller Gesellschaften; Familienleben für alle; Smash Racism and Borders; Our Love is louder than Fear; Kein Mensch ist Illegal; Laut gegen Nazis*. The square is filling up with colors, noise and people. Some women are sitting on the ground painting more slogans on balloons and cloth. Nearby two people are holding a third one installing a sign on top of a truck. Kids are jumping on and off the loading ramps. And then, the square is full of people. It is hard to pass through the crowd and reach the stage where just the brief presentation of all the trucks takes more than an hour. Women, Black people, children, queer people, refugees, men, white people, People of Color, migrants, Germans, Sans-Papiers and many more—they all hand each other the microphone on this stage, claiming the day, the city, society. It's easy to tell that it's not a normal day, not the usual German demonstration, by the diversity of people present on and around the stage. People speaking up, standing hand in hand, showing a society of the many that already exists.

I stand next to the group of people who jointly make the closing statement of this opening by the We'll Come United network. Despite all joint conviction, there are also tensions. A young woman who is part of the group makes a very short statement and is not allowed to add something later on when she recalls better what she wanted to say. The whole process is sharply planned. The speeches had to be in German and English because it would have taken too long to interpret. Someone being overwhelmed by this situation of speaking in front of thousands of people is not planned. No time to give time.

When the program on stage is finished, the procession of trucks is already moving. Getting through the crowd of smiling, busy, chanting people around each of them means moving slowly. Moving from one truck to the other is a passage from dancing on the street to careful listening to experiences of flight or political demands to clouds of whistles or words of remembrance, grief, rage but always also of hope. It's impossible to grasp the whole of emotions, activities and faces that move through the city in this never-ending call for visibility, solidarity and future. No one can understand all the languages spoken on the trucks, in the audience and on stage. But everyone gets the message that one activist puts into words: "Love is the only solution." But anger and determination are part of this too: "The fight has to continue, if we want to continue dreaming and hoping," says someone, and: "You cannot fight for us without us." A reminder of the importance of standing together, claiming the fight and acting in solidarity. Speaking up are those who too often are not heard nor seen, those who are creating their own future, even though others keep destroying it.

When we reach the water by the harbor, the sun is setting. People sit down on the street, by the trucks, on the harbor walls. They talk, eat, nap. Ironically, all this takes place in the area of the city where racism is especially present and oppressive on a daily basis. The special task force of the police has made the St. Pauli Hafenstraße its main site for showing active about drug criminality. Black people and People of Color are controlled and harassed here every day. Some do not come here anymore because they cannot move freely. For others, it's the area they know, where they meet people and where there is also a lot of solidarity and support. Because this is also one of the areas that historically and symbolically most clearly stand for Left organizing, resistance and struggle in Hamburg. Today, maybe the crowd allows to move more unnoticed and might offer recognition. The realities overlap and dreams and claims are weaved into them. The clouds that had accompanied the parade during the day have disappeared, leaving an almost cheesy evening sky on the silhouette

of the harbor. Despite the pugnacious demands and the serious experiences, the atmosphere is exuberant. On the top floor of a building near-by the press group offers an impressive panorama perspective to media representatives, trying to help transmit the feelings and claims of the day to those not present. In another organized space close-by some groups already do a direct evaluation round. In a stuffed room without much air, we discuss what went wrong, what to improve, what to do next, when to meet again. Outside the crowd disperses into their multiple realities.

2.2 Positionality

What follows is a personal account of how I see what brought me to where I am now: topic-wise, methodologically, normatively, ethically, politically and socially. As such, it is not typically included in most academic publications at all. Still, as part of my epistemological and methodological decisions, I see it as a sign of respect and transparency to share these reflections with my readers.

In a way, I have always had an intense fascination with civil society activities from my early studies onwards. Certainly, my own political views have always been close to many of the movements I read about. I think that I always felt respect for those who dedicate so much of their time to a specific cause. Seeing people give their lives—sometimes literally—to improve the world, not just for themselves but for everyone, has surely inspired me to aim at using the resources I have to also work on this. This account shares my personal development throughout the last years from mainly looking at social movements from an outside perspective toward being involved in them. The feelings while working on this research have often been inspiration—by all the people I was allowed to meet and learn from—, anger—given the unbearable and unjustifiable situations people have to deal with—, indignation—because I am part of the small portion of people that has privileges to (not) do whatever they want—, powerlessness—when seeing how little things change and how small I am—, but also hope and joy—when being so warmly welcomed in groups and being able to live moments of empowerment and solidarity.

The Long Summer of Migration is often depicted as a turning point in the perception and presence of flight and migration in the European and German public discourse. I must admit that I was also not particularly engaged with questions of migration before. For a long time, the right to move was a taken-

for-granted privilege for me, which I had and used since birth, but which I only later started to reflect on critically and question more. I witnessed the opening of the inner-European borders, heard about the tightening of the outer ones. Of course, while living in Sicily I came across the situation in the Mediterranean, also given that migration has always been an obvious and visible part of everyday life on this Southern island between Europe and Africa. However, I was not too much involved in doing something about it.

The part of the summer in 2015 that nobody in Europe could have missed I was in the US. The following half-year, I followed what was happening from afar. As for many, this led to a strong urge to finally *do something*. When I came back to Germany, I got involved in an alliance in Hamburg organizing the International Conference of Refugees and Migrants[1]. I joined the assemblies and was actively involved in a working group. Strictly speaking and apart from demonstrations, this was probably my first real activist experience altogether. And it certainly was very significant for me. I learned so many things I wasn't aware of before: topics, backgrounds, experiences, framings, assumptions taken for granted. Given my social movement background as a student, it was invaluable to confront my theoretical knowledge and my own white German perspective with these groups' realities. The focus of my PhD research clearly originates here.

One strong notion that I took from the conference and that, I think, is very embedded in my research, methodologically and in terms of prior knowledge about the field, is finding a more equal footing: trying to work and talk with instead of about people. I started to reflect more explicitly on how I was positioned as a white German cis-female academic within these activist groups engaging for migrant, precarious, BPoC life realities. That involved evident notions, as well as, for me, at that point, not so obvious ones. Being advantaged and privileged in so many ways I did not know about before—being used to speaking in public or in English, having experience with group discussions, but also having a warm home to go back to, a financially stable situation, being at home, etc. Especially addressing my own internalized racist socializing, learning about anti-racism and exploring what my role as a white person can be in these struggles have been significant developments throughout these past couple of years.

Positionality involves the process of reflecting one's perspective and position within the research setting—how it impacts what and how I perceive

1 http://refugeeconference.blogsport.eu/.

and interact with it (Wilkinson, 2014, p. 403). For me, continuously reflecting on my position as a researcher, and thus as a person, in the research setting and in relation to the research participants has been incredibly valuable. On the one hand, it is essential to reflect on these things for myself. For example, because my assumptions have implications on my methodological and theoretical choices. Additionally, I could not put on paper how much I have personally learnt in the last six years in this process. On the other hand, it is crucial to make these choices and assumptions visible to others, to enter into dialogue and to make my positions and perspectives transparent. I would say that reflecting on and addressing racism, learning about post-colonial perspectives, feminist notions, socio-economic inequalities but also plain and simple human and relational issues have found their way into my methodological choices and the analytical focus of my research in general. However, it is never finished, and this publication probably includes and reflects different stages of this very process.

Constructivist grounded theory is a research approach that allows the researcher to integrate these reflections into the process explicitly. As an approach, it is open enough to let me as a researcher give up some control and take the time to explore while also following certain methods to give direction and guidance to the whole. Both the underlying philosophical ideas and my methodological choices imply that this can never be a closed chapter. Rather, it must be an ongoing process and task for me to keep reflecting on the issues, questions and positions I encounter. It includes challenging myself, "solving" some or revisiting them later-on, re-engaging with them when they emerge at other points in time or being able to let them go for a while when they prove less relevant in certain situations.

As is evident by now, when it comes to my research context, activism by, with and for refugees and migrants in Hamburg, I entirely share the general claims that this movement is making: for the rights of migrants and refugees, against borders, deportation and racism. With my research, I got back in touch with some people and groups in Hamburg that I still knew from organizing the conference. I generally approached them as a researcher and an activist from the very start. I reflected this double role from the beginning, as the following memo excerpt shows, which also raises the uncertainties that come with this:

> "Of course, this is an extremely important issue that will not stop coming up. I do have a double role and I still have to figure out, or better I have to

> continuously and with every single group, figure out what my roles exactly are. There is no either-or but very blurry lines that I have to be as open as possible about." (Memo *Joining meetings in a double-role* from 17/01/18)

For me, participant observation does not mean that I am only silently observing. I got actively involved, in some groups more and in others less. Generally, these years have been a process of personal development in terms of political engagement—though as always certainly not a linear one. Within and beyond these groups and even this movement, I became increasingly active and involved but through the writing stage and paid labor also disengaged again. This also means that, to some extent, I was becoming part of my own research subject. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea interestingly refer to this as "enhanced reflexivity," describing the double role of the researcher as "sense maker" in the more classical sense and, at the same time, as "primary data source" in terms of her own experience (2014, p. 391). In fact, writing field notes for example certainly takes the perspective of who writes them. Sometimes, especially with memos, my feeling was that I was interviewing myself just as I was interviewing others, only more frequently and analytically.

This also comprises that I got to know people on a more personal level, had drinks with them, was invited to birthday parties, made friends. I am aware that all of this can lead to me having too much of an insider view, for instance, meaning that I could romanticize things or have a one-sided view of them. At the same time, I will always be an outsider in certain ways: I am not the one most strongly suffering the consequences of colonialism and racism, I hold a passport that lets me travel wherever I want, I went to school and university and can find work—or even allow myself not to for keeping to learn—, I am white, and I am at home here (and this could go on). Throughout the years, all this has made me continuously reflect on if and how I am entitled to research a fight where I am not part of the groups of people with lived experiences. I think that this reflection is critical—not just but, of course, centrally because it is at the core of my research. I have to ask myself why I, as a white, German academic, should be the one to document, interpret and analyze migrant rights activism (L. T. Smith, 2012, p. 17f.). That is one reason why I focus on mixed group contexts that I was myself involved in. Aiming at taking the claim "Nothing for us without us" serious is not just essential within activist struggles and daily life, but it is also, maybe especially, necessary in academia. Thus, I am an outsider *and* an insider to my research context in various ways.

Engaging with complex constellations of positionalities is part of this process. I tried to do this through methodological tools, such as memo-writing and the field diary, which means that I was constantly engaging in a dialogue with myself, trying to take steps back, asking myself critical questions and not shying away from these topics. It also meant engaging with ethical concerns regarding my interaction and relationship with groups and people, being as honest and transparent with them as I am trying to be with myself without giving up my research position. Sometimes the groups themselves addressed these topics and reflections. I explicitly talked to activists about my role and position as a researcher or about being white and German in the groups. As will become clear in the empirical and analytical parts of this book, questions of privilege, inequality and perspectives centrally also come up within the groups themselves. These have therefore been very fundamental questions for my research in multiple ways. All these thoughts and discussions have been defining in shaping my research and they re-emerge throughout this dissertation.

3. Methodology

This chapter contains a detailed account of my methodological approach, constructivist grounded theory[1], its background and the related choices of this research. Rather than merely displaying a technical toolkit, I see the methodology as the basis of my research, shaping its whole process. For this reason, this is a central chapter, which addresses philosophical, practical and ethical questions. Constructivist grounded theory is an approach that enables me to use and include elements of different relevant philosophies and methodologies in my research design. Salazar Pérez and Canella underline that GTM is especially useful in critical qualitative research projects concerned with marginalized positions:

> "To construct a critical social science that would reconceptualize what we can know and how we take actions in solidarity with/ for those who have been traditionally marginalized, research methodologies are needed that do not require restricted boundaries. Rather methods are called for that are emergent, reflexive, and malleable in order to mirror the complexity of the issue, structure and/ or system being studied." (Salazar Pérez & Canella, 2015, p. 216)

Firstly, I give some background information about the philosophical groundings of my research and discuss methodological approaches that it draws on. Subsequently, I introduce constructivist grounded theory as my main methodological approach. This contains some history of the approach and the practical procedures of data generation and analysis. Later, I also discuss how I implemented this methodological approach during the different stages

1 Hence referred to as GTM (Grounded Theory Methodology), which underlines it as equally a method ("a distinctive and clearly articulated research approach") and a methodology ("includes explicit justification for the approach or method being used") (Bryant, 2017, p. 16f.).

of my research process, including more details about my field and case selection. Finally, I add some ethical reflections.

3.1 Philosophical background and relevant methodologies

This study aims to develop theoretical concepts on activism by, with and for refugees and migrants in Hamburg, grounded in activists' own perceptions. It attempts to explore the understandings they have of their acts, claims and visions and, based on this, conceptualize what takes place. The explorative nature of this research interest and the aim of working *with* the research participants make constructivist grounded theory a particularly apt research methodology. It enabled me to gather insights and develop exchange among the data that would remain invisible to other approaches. At the same time, it allows for combinations with other research traditions.

Interpretive research is quite a natural complement to, if not constitutive of, constructivist grounded theory. It shares the ontological beliefs and offers the tools for a more in-depth exploration of the philosophical grounds of this research project. In ontological terms, interpretive approaches are generally open to more relativist perspectives. They also tend to constructivist or subjectivist epistemologies that question the possibility of objective knowledge and the existence of *one* truth. Lisa Wedeen points out how such epistemological perspectives impact methodological choices and also varying areas of study and research interests. She discusses that an epistemological commitment "to uncertainty, ambiguity, and messiness" lets interpretive researchers "to focus on social movements, political resistance, and modern power in ways that are irrelevant to rational choice theorists." (Wedeen, 2002, p. 726) This underlines the importance of transparently reflecting one's philosophical background. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea even differentiate interpretive from qualitative research approaches, saying that the latter are increasingly unable to entail all forms of non-quantitative methodologies. They see the main difference in the "philosophical umbrella" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. xvii). They underline:

> "In interpretive research, we seek to understand what a thing 'is' by learning what it does, how particular people use it, in particular contexts. That is, interpretive research focuses on context-specific meanings, rather than seek-

> ing generalized meaning abstracted from particular contexts." (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 23)

All of this speaks very clearly to a research project aiming to explore the perspectives of activists and partly marginalized groups of people through participant observation and interviews while critically reflecting the researcher's positionality. Generally, interpretive research is much more focused on (self-)reflection than other approaches (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2017, p. 4). Indeed, constructivist epistemologies are particularly apt for research projects that are interactive with their research participants. The way that Yanow and Schwartz-Shea discuss data generation raises another example of the impact of adopting interpretive methodologies when they underline that this research step is "understood less as [data] being gathered or collected by the researcher as if they had some ontologically prior, independent existence." (2014, p. 147) Instead, they refer to data as being *generated*, "at the very least by the researcher, interacting conceptually, mentally, with her documentary materials and observed events." (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. 147) It might be seen as problematic to take a clear normative stance as a researcher, but it can be equally wrong to pretend to be neutral and objective (de Laine, 2000, pp. 25–28; Hale, 2008, p. 2ff.; Milan, 2014). All positionalities, relations and emotions can create problems, yet, they can also be opportunities:

> "[E]motional engagement can supply a powerful motivation to get one's explanations 'right' and an essential means for accomplishing this goal. Emotions are storehouses of knowledge, compasses for navigating the world, and basic expressions of the meanings we attach to political objects and events." (Soss, 2014, p. 180)

Identification can mean overlooking problems, but involvement can also be the only way of noticing them. These are tensions that have to be dealt with and brought together. Furthermore, they show that we should not get stuck with simplified insider/ outsider distinctions (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017; Nowicka & Ryan, 2015).

3.1.1 Activist and participatory methods

Nowadays, there are various research approaches that explore the interaction between researchers and research participants in new ways and build their methodological perspectives on that. I want to mention two that helped

delineate the methodological development of my research project: While activist research emphasizes the political positioning and responsibility of the scholar, participatory research takes a step further in *involving* participants in the whole research process. They both emerge from qualitative and interpretive research perspectives that as global justice research, aim at having a practical impact beyond academia. Hale describes this characteristic as "activist scholars work[ing] in dialogue, collaboration, alliance with people who are struggling to better their lives." (2008, p. 4). He claims that taking responsibility for results relevant to these people "redefines, and arguably raises the stakes for, what counts as high-quality research outcomes." (Hale, 2008, p. 4) According to Hale, rather than being a clearly delineated approach, activist scholarship entails various approaches and procedures that, however, have common grounds. For him, these consist in the explicit political positioning of the researcher, a qualitative methodology and the approaching of research subjects as "knowledgeable, empowered participants in the entire research process" (Hale, 2008, p. 4):

> "Perhaps the only easily and usefully agreed-upon connotation of the term activist research, in relation to the others, is an acute awareness of all these fault lines and a commitment to work on them, without any expectation that they will go away. This broad and pluralist approach should then free us up to formulate and explore a general proposition: research that is predicated on alignment with a group of people organized in struggle, and on collaborative relations of knowledge production with members of that group, has the potential to yield privileged insight, analysis, and theoretical innovation that otherwise would be impossible to achieve." (Hale, 2008, p. 20)

This broad understanding emphasizes that activist scholarship plays a role throughout the whole research process and allows researchers to see it as an ever-ongoing learning process. Wadada Nabudere mentions another interesting characteristic of activist scholarship: He points out that such perspectives challenge the continuously produced polarization between theory and practice in academia (Wadada Nabudere, 2008, p. 62). A reflexive and open interaction with social movements and activists can be an interesting starting point in bridging this gap, particularly, when taking critiques of the field of social movement studies seriously. In fact, according to some authors, the field should be more inclined to develop "movement-relevant theory" (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p. 186). Activist research also wants to embrace that there are multiple forms of knowledge that are often not depicted or even

considered in traditional research designs, as the following quote by Lipsitz displays:

> "In the process of struggle, activists develop new ways of knowing as well as new ways of being. They discover nontraditional archives and generate nontraditional imaginaries as constitutive parts of mobilizations for resources, rights, and recognition." (Lipsitz, 2008, p. 91)

Routledge and Derickson discuss such acknowledging various forms of knowledge. They also argue that scholar-activist knowledge should be "tied to a material politics of social change" and refer to their more detailed discussion of scholar-activist practices as "situated solidarities" (Routledge & Derickson, 2015, p. 393). Participatory research goes beyond this, in the sense that it aims to balance the power relation between researchers and participants by making the latter "co-researchers" (von Unger, 2014, p. 35). In the most advanced forms, this includes all stages of the research process—from design and topic choice to writing (Payne, 2018; Wadada Nabudere, 2008, p. 70).

This goes way beyond what I have tried to achieve in my dissertation research, for instance because such projects are even more time-intensive than other qualitative or interpretive approaches (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p. 85).[2] Nevertheless, it has been very helpful to explore the steps that these researchers take to obtain a more equal footing with their participants and find ways of involving them in the research process. As Block and his colleagues point out, participatory methods "are explicitly oriented to reducing power differentials" (2013, p. 72). Sörensson and Kalman also mention participatory methods as a way of dealing with asymmetrical research relations (2017, p. 1f.). Following Patricia Hill Collins, they pick up this aspect especially regarding the importance of dialogue as a way of assessing knowledge claims (Sörensson & Kalman, 2017, p. 4). From my perspective, this means that even when only taken into account as an additional source of methodological inspiration, participatory methods can be valuable for a research project with such goals.[3]

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2 In fact, one could say that, in a way, participatory methods contradict the very nature of a dissertation, which is a means of academic qualification in the career of an individual.

3 This research project does not fully embrace either of these approaches. Therefore, I do not discuss here to what extent they can actually lead to a political empowerment of the participants or what challenges and limits are (see e.g. Krause, 2017, p. 18; Marmo,

3.1.2 Ethnomethodologies or ethnographic research

Concerning the positioning as a researcher in the field, ethnomethodological and ethnographic research are approaches that also should be mentioned. According to de Laine, ethnomethodological approaches, such as fieldwork, have finally increased in importance and acceptance (2000, p. 1f.). Traditionally, these methods were not necessarily complying with current, more common constructivist ideas, which underline more attention to researchers' roles, positionalities and relationships as well as the methods used (de Laine, 2000, p. 208f.). When used within other research designs, it is sometimes described as a way of looking at things or a sensitivity rather than a methodology of its own (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 4; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p. 153f.). Abbott defines ethnography as follows:

> "Ethnography means living inside the social situation one is studying and becoming to some extent a participant in it. One's participation can range from mere observation to *going native*, from occasional afternoons to round-the-clock immersion. One can augment this participation with interviews, guidance from key informants, and review of official records." (Abbott, 2004, p. 15f. [Emphasis added])

Consequently, it is again very much linked to the researcher's relation to participants but also more centrally with her own perceptions. Emerson et al. claim that "[t]he ethnographer seeks a deeper immersion in others' worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important." (1995, p. 2) Palmer and her colleagues sum up that ethnographic research "aim[s] to learn from the voices and experiences of community members." (Palmer et al., 2018, p. 417) Nevertheless, the language used in the previous couple of quotes also reveals the problematic roots of this research tradition in European colonialism (e.g. see the added emphasis in the quote above). For instance, even though she immerses herself in the field, the researcher is not expected to be part of the community she is researching (Chatterjee, 2004, p. 37). Therefore, it is essential to engage with critical developments within these methodological approaches. These clearly share many philosophical groundings with the previously discussed approaches and can therefore be coherently combined

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2013, p. 98; von Unger, 2014, p. 94f.). However, many reflections, particularly in this chapter, are based on insights from them.

through constructivist grounded theory. Because the methodological proximity also shows that my research is related to these methodologies. I have learned a lot from ethnographic research perspectives concerning topics such as entering or defining the research setting, interacting with research participants, participant observation as a tool of generating data, ethical reflections and dealing with my feelings throughout the research process.[4]

3.2 Constructivist grounded theory

This research project has been implemented following the constructivist grounded theory methodology proposed by authors such as Kathy Charmaz, Antony Bryant and Adele Clarke (Bryant, 2017; Bryant & Charmaz, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; A. Clarke et al., 2015). GTM can be defined as follows:

> "The method is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses. Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other. The GTM builds empirical checks into the analytic process and leads researchers to examine all possible theoretical explanations for their empirical findings. The iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis successively more theoretical." (Bryant & Charmaz, 2011, p. 1)

Grounded theory is therefore treated both as a methodology and as a process of theory development and today entails various approaches, methods and assumptions (Charmaz, 2014; Equit & Hohage, 2016). Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser originally developed it as an inductive approach to qualitative research, applying rigorous interpretation and analysis to develop theory grounded in the data (Glaser et al., 2010). However, both authors had different understandings of the basic assumptions and priorities of the approach, so that each developed an own school of GTM. While Glaser emphasized its inductive nature and developed the method for it to be "an objective and neutral instrument" following positivist assumptions (Equit & Hohage, 2016, p. 24),

4 Hence, as with activist and participatory research, I do not fully count my research into ethnomethodologies, but I gained relevant methodological and practical insights from them.

Strauss was more influenced by American pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. With Juliet Corbin, he developed an approach acknowledging that a researcher *cannot* be neutral or objective. Therefore, they introduced an interplay between inductive and deductive elements to embrace the researcher's subjectivity (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

As in the research philosophies displayed before, neutrality and objectivity in the classical sense are rejected for assuming the possibility of an unpositioned speaker (Hale, 2008, p. 11). Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke are two students of Strauss who shaped an explicitly constructivist strand of GTM. They see GTM more in the tradition of interpretative social research, asserting that data and analysis are socially constructed and context-specific, and thereby do not aim at objective, generalizable theory (Hildenbrand, 2011, p. 556). Charmaz underlines three central characteristics of her understanding of GTM—it being a systematic, abductive and comparative methodology:

1) GTM is a systematic approach in that it consists of a precise series of activities. This is not to be understood as mechanical procedures but, instead, as "rules-of-thumb" that are made explicit in the research project (Bryant, 2017, p. 90). These activities include for example the generation of rich data and data analysis through various coding techniques throughout the research process. The decisions and steps of data generation and analysis are always transparently reflected.
2) GTM is abductive: Constructivist grounded theory involves both inductive and deductive elements. Thus, it is not assumed that the researcher can start her research without preconceptions but, in contrast, she is assumed to have a certain knowledge of the issue in question. Concerning this "abductive reasoning," Charmaz refers to Charles S. Peirce who first introduced the notion that for her is "a mode of imaginative reasoning researchers invoke when they cannot account for a surprising or puzzling finding." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 200) This abductive logic is the basis of the constant shifting between data and theory (Bryant, 2017, p. 278).[5] Hence, abduction stands for the moving between these emerging concepts, empirical data and other literature:

5 This is closely intertwined with the use of sensitizing concepts, which are derived from existing literature and the researchers' prior experiences (Charmaz, 2014, p. 200). They are further introduced in Chapter 4.

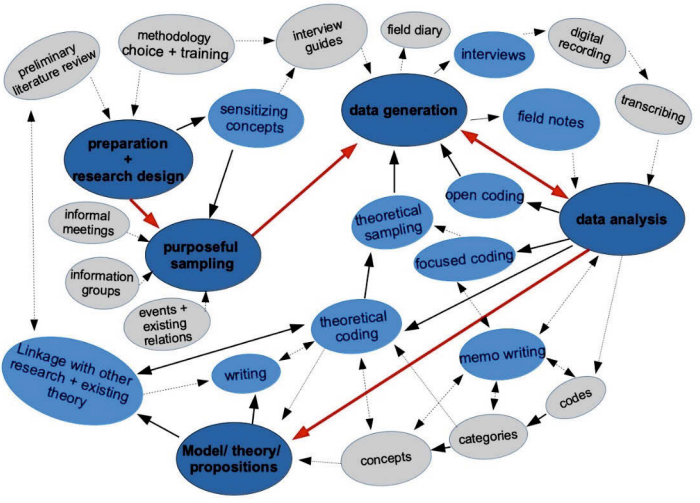
"In this puzzling-out process, the researcher tacks continually, constantly, back and forth in an iterative-recursive fashion between what is puzzling and possible explanations for it, whether in other field situations […] or in research-relevant literature." (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 27)

3) Finally, GTM is comparative: It is often referred to as a method of "constant comparison" (Bryant, 2017, p. 200), which takes place at various levels. First of all, the back and forth between empirical data, developed analysis and existing literature enters this notion. Simultaneously, the generated data are continuously compared with each other through the various stages of coding. Finally, the abstracted categories and concepts are confronted with new data and validated through that. Theoretical sampling is a relevant tool in this context. It implies that data generation and data analysis are not two subsequent and separate steps of the research process. Data analysis starts together with and later even informs data generation: "Analysis leads to concepts. Concepts generate questions. Questions lead to more data collection so that the researcher might learn more about those concepts." (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 144f.)

Illustration 1 shows my adaption of an exemplary illustration of a GTM research process displayed by Bryant (2017, p. 89). I made my own version at the beginning of my research. It should mainly emphasize the three characteristics just discussed here.[6]

6 The dark blue bubbles are the main research phases. The light blue ones are the main activities. The grey ones are additional steps. This illustration is not meant to be complete or exhaustive.

Figure 1: Research process illustration, based on Bryant (2017, p. 89), adapted by the author.



3.2.1 Data generation

> "A method provides *a* tool to enhance seeing but does not provide automatic insight. We must *see through* the armament of methodological techniques and the reliance on mechanical procedures. [...] *How* you collect data affects *which* phenomena you will see, *how*, *where*, and *when* you will view them, and *what* sense you will make of them." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 26 [Emphasis in original])

This quote by Charmaz exhibits how complex data generation is.[7] Already the sample selection in GTM is tricky because, as has been discussed, it uses theoretical sampling, which is based on the analysis of the previously generated data. Of course, this is not possible for the initial sample. It is agreed upon

7 I follow Yanow and Schwartz-Shea in referring to this process as data generation, emphasizing the interactive process, as opposed to the researcher plucking data as "some exotic fruit" (2014, p. 147).

that the initial sample can follow a purposive sampling approach together with the snowball principle, as is common in other qualitative research designs (Bryant, 2017, p. 251).

GTMs aim for gathering rich data that enable the researcher to develop new and grounded analysis: "Rich data are detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 23) In-depth interviews and fieldnotes are classical data sources for GTM. Especially the first interviews should be conducted quite openly, meaning that researchers give interview partners as much space and as little guidance as possible to be receptive to their perspectives. Charmaz refers to this as "intensive interviewing" (2014, p. 56). She points to the combination of flexibility and control that it offers, leaving interactional space for ideas to emerge between participants and researchers. The data are, in line with this, understood to be a co-construction. An interview guide can be a flexible tool lending assurance to less experienced researchers without being an entirely rigid structuring device (Charmaz, 2014, p. 62).

There is no exact endpoint to the process of data generation. Instead, the researcher estimates when "theoretical saturation" is reached, "meaning that all categories are sufficiently developed in terms of their properties and dimensions." (Peters, 2014, p. 11) This addition is significant as otherwise this already contested term is easily taken to refer to "the new data fail[ing] to add anything to the data already gathered." (Bryant, 2017, p. 253) Just as Peters, Bryant underlines that saturation concerns the theoretical development of the analysis, not the data. Given the continuous dialogue between data and analysis, the whole process is understood as flexible and open-ended: "We can add new pieces to the research puzzle or conjure entire new puzzles while we gather data, and that can even occur late in the analysis." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 25)

3.2.2 Data analysis

> "Codes emerge as you scrutinize your data and define meanings within it. Through this active coding, you interact with your data again and again and ask many different questions of them. As a result, coding may take you into unforeseen areas and new research questions." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 114)

As has already been pointed out regarding the characteristics of GTM, the data analysis does not take place when data generation is finished but starts simultaneously. Therefore, the analysis directly impacts further data generation and has to be very structured and well-documented. If possible, the transcription of interviews is directly followed by inductive coding. Charmaz differentiates between open or initial, focused and theoretical coding in GTM data analysis (2014). Coding is also the process through which the analysis of the generated data is step-by-step raised in its level of abstraction.

Initial coding, also referred to as open coding, is the most explorative coding technique applied to the first generated data (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 116–120). At this stage, the researcher should not have fully clear ideas in mind and instead be "receptive to all the clues and hints that the data might provide." (Mattoni, 2014, p. 30) An additional technique that helps remaining open and that I applied is line-by-line coding. According to Charmaz, it "goes deeper into the studied phenomenon and attempts to explicate it." (2014, p. 121) It means that "[i]deas can occur to you that had escaped your attention when reading data for a general thematic analysis." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 125) Open codes are short, active, provisional and stay close to the data.

Focused coding is applied later in the process and involves the identification of central or focused codes. There is also the first abstraction through building categories of focused codes and paying attention to the interaction between different codes and categories (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 138–147). Focused coding does not involve line-by-line coding anymore and thus enables the researcher to move more quickly through larger amounts of data. Through this step, the researcher explores the adequacy and conceptual strength of initial open codes and engages in a first round of comparing and revealing patterns:

> "Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through and analyze large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138)

The third stage, building on focused coding, is theoretical coding, which is the most sophisticated type of coding that moves from categories to concepts. It substantiates certain categories to concepts by showing relationships and enhancing theorizing. Furthermore, it is the stage when the emerging theory is confronted with existing literature (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 150–155). According to Charmaz, not all research projects realize theoretical coding. Even though it "can add precision and clarity," it also risks to impose a framework on the

data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 151). Ideally, even this most abstract level of analysis remains grounded in the data because it is continuously confronted with further generated data.

Generally, Bryant and Charmaz both recommend coding "in gerunds". They argue that from the very start this moves the analysis away from merely focusing on themes and topics and enables the researcher to highlight processes (Bryant, 2017, p. 113f.). Charmaz emphasizes that "[s]tudying a process fosters your efforts to construct theory because you define and conceptualize relationships between experiences and events." (2014, p. 245) "Invivo" codes are named after formulations of a participant and hence "symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 134).[8] They can be valuable in grasping notions best described by the participants themselves. For Charmaz, the different types of coding are the central activities of GTM in working but also playing with ideas gained from the data: "Through coding we make discoveries and gain a deeper understanding of the empirical world." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 137)

3.3 Practical implementation

While GTM offers rules-of-thumb for realizing a research project, it does not provide clear-cut rules and linear procedures for any stage and situation. Given this and the fact that I integrated elements of other methodological perspectives, I additionally discuss my own experiences with and implementation of GTM in this chapter.

3.3.1 Field and case selection

My research focuses on activist groups engaged for migrant rights in Hamburg, Northern Germany. Hamburg has the second-biggest European port, making it an important center of economic power and historically also one of migration.[9] Despite its partly very rich society, Hamburg has traditionally

8 These can then also move to the more abstract analytical levels. When focused codes or categories are in quotation marks, they are grounded in invivo codes. This is most visible in Chapter 5.

9 The colonial roots of this economic wealth and the cosmopolitan image are essential to point to but will not be discussed further in this dissertation.

been a social-democratic city and is known for radical Left neighborhoods. The city's about 1.8 million inhabitants and its being a city-state make it a relevant urban metropolis, which "spatially concentrates" the resources and relations that movements draw on (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 8). In fact, Nicholls and Uitermark especially underline the relevance of such a context of resources of relations for migrant rights struggles, which in such a setting can turn into bigger mobilizations (2017, p. 227). Furthermore, even though refugees in Germany are distributed according to the "Königsteiner Schlüssel" for instance, big cities are clearly a magnet for migrants as they are for people generally (Alscher, 2015).

In a rather recent publication, Donatella Della Porta uses a differentiation of various localities in the context of migration. From a Northern perspective and with a research focus on Europe, she organizes them along the route of many refugees and migrants and distinguishes between places of first arrival, places of passage and places of destination (Della Porta, 2018b, p. 1f.). In that sense, Hamburg can be seen as a place of passage and a final destination, as opposed to places of arrival. Above 30 percent of Hamburg's inhabitants are statistically captured as "with migration background," compared to roughly 25 percent in the whole country (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). Therefore, Hamburg is a research context that makes sense to look at: It is a relevant urban setting with a potentially high density of migration and political activism. Additionally, my personal background of living and being active here provided me with a certain knowledge of the field, which was a valuable starting point (Bryant, 2017, p. 105; Charmaz, 2014, pp. 155–160; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 26). While it might seem more representative to compare activist groups in different contexts, the groups involved in these movements are mostly organized or connected in various cities or regions, often also transnationally and thus transcend delimited local contexts anyways (Kewes, 2016a; Klotz, 2016).

For my research, I accompanied several activist groups in their meetings and activities: four on a more regular and a few more on an occasional or singular basis. The period that involved the most active academic involvement spans roughly two years (2017-2019). My data consist of fieldnotes from this participant observation and twelve in-depth interviews with activists.[10]

10 When referencing my data, the systematization works as follows: "IDI" stands for an in-depth interview, followed by the participant (e.g., "IDI_P02"). The number does not necessarily indicate when an interview was conducted but is based on the moment

Groups and interview partners were selected purposively, based on the sensitizing concepts and my own political involvement. Groups and interview partners will not be described more in-depth as singular cases. Firstly, this is a step to enhance anonymity and confidentiality. Secondly, I did not regard them as cases in the classical sense and did not aim to systematically compare them to each other. Instead, the general setting and interactions enabled me to focus on movement dynamics as such.

I started my empirical research in autumn 2017 by approaching groups and individuals. I began accompanying activist groups and writing fieldnotes after presenting myself as a researcher. Activist groups are understood as collectives that meet regularly with a more or less fixed constituency (although fluctuant presence is common and explicit exclusivity varies) and that are part of social movements. The frequency with which groups meet differs. Some meet weekly, others every two weeks or just once a month. Additionally, there have always been occasions beyond the regular meetings, such as demonstrations, events, etc. The size of the groups cannot be determined with precision. There were usually between five and fifteen people for regular meetings—the size varied by group. The groups also differ in their concrete topical focus, forms of organizing[11] and core activities. However, they all engage for migrant rights, are or aim at being mixed in (part of) their meetings, especially with regards to the legal status of the people involved, and consider themselves political. They mostly focus their activities on current refugees or illegalized people. The actual composition varies too: a group might focus on women*, another one might be predominantly white German, most groups involve activists of multiple legal statuses and with all kinds of lived experiences.[12]

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of contact. "PO" means participant observation, followed by group and fieldnote (e.g., "PO_G03_12").

11 Most groups are no legal entity and run through political engagement. One is a registered association, meaning it could potentially involve paid positions.

12 Following Bakewell or Brubaker, I try to move "beyond categories" because when sorting and approaching people by categories, e.g. nationality, they are easily reduced to one ascribed identity (Bakewell, 2008, p. 445; Brubaker, 2013, p. 6). According to Holston, citizenship was established as a most dominant categorization (1999a, p. 1f.). I mostly refer to people as "activists," not to reduce them to their legal status. This does not mean that I ignore such categories' existence or significance in lived realities. I try to take a critical view when using them.

I captured the accompanying of the groups, which generally falls under participant observation, through writing fieldnotes.[13] These fieldnotes of activist meetings and events have become a central part of my data, so that I treat them with the same attention as my interviews. I was not aware of this equal weight from the very start, but with advancing in the research process and a method workshop I attended I realized their centrality and value for the analysis. Even though my fieldnotes are not classically following ethnographic provisions because of being more focused on a discursive rather than a situational description, they capture perspectives that can add a dimension to individual activists' accounts. They can offer a more detailed picture of what takes place in the groups, including elements that participants might not perceive as important or they might not feel so comfortable talking about. Nevertheless, fieldnotes are clearly always biased by my own gaze.

The selection of the interview partners was mainly based on the involvement in the activist groups and quite naturally spread throughout the whole research process. Especially in the beginning, I approached activists as participants whom I already knew from my previous involvement. Later on, in line with theoretical sampling, analytical and theoretical concerns also played a role. It was important to me to take time to get to know the people, give them the possibility to learn more about me and my research as well as building a more equitable and trustful relationship. For example, all interviews were conducted only after at least one preparatory informal meeting, which I did not record, and the interview partners' explicit written consent.[14] Those meetings were often very intense, and my experience is that most people only

13 Fieldnotes differ both from memos and a research diary. A research diary is a tool for the researcher to deal with her own experience throughout the research process but especially in the field. Therefore, it is not part of the research itself, although, of course, there can be topical overlaps with memos. Memos are written at any stage of the research process and capture the current state of whatever is going on in terms of research praxis. Bryant writes: "Memo-making is a form of reflecting and learning; memos themselves are evidence of that process. Thus, publishing one's memos indicates not only the ways in which the research developed at a variety of levels-empirical, procedural, and conceptual-but also how the researcher employed and, we hope became more adept in terms of theoretically sensitivity." (Bryant, 2017, p. 210)

14 It is relevant to mention here that Mackenzie et al. problematize standardized informed consent (2007, p. 301f.). Such an approach ignores vulnerabilities, compromised autonomy and other issues. Therefore, they propose "iterative consent" as a way to deal with it (Mackenzie et al., 2007, p. 306f.).

openly ask questions about the research after such more extended personal conversations. For most of the interview partners, I can say that we had arrived at some level of familiarity once the interviews were conducted. I generally transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after they took place.[15]

The interviews were conducted in different places depending on the preferences of the participants. They were also conducted in different languages. Certainly, my selection of participants was influenced by my own and people's language skills, among other factors—though many of the activists regularly involved in mixed groups tend to speak either German or English. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that many of my participants did not speak to me in their first language, which is partly true for myself too. The approach I am taking to this is thus certainly pragmatic. This is not to downplay the role and importance of language. In a research project with more resources, more ways of using interpretation or translation should be considered.[16] I ended my formal fieldwork in late 2019. Regarding the activists involved in the groups and those interviewed, there is a rather balanced range of legal status, age, race, home countries, activist experience, gender, religious and educational background, but I do not claim representativity. Some of these categorizations only emerged during the research process. They were not equally rep-

15 Some remarks on how to read quoted transcriptions: I did a verbatim word by word transcription of all the interviews (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 211; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 207). In my transcription, I followed Boje (2001). I roughly included pauses and filler words but did not transcribe intonation. Sometimes I add comments about non-verbal expressions in [square brackets]. "[…]" signals an omission, while "…" within a quote means a pause in the phrasing of the participant. "-" is used when there was an interruption within a sentence. That happens frequently and can compromise the comprehensibility of what is being said so that direct quotes are partly smoothened for a better reading flow without changing participants' language and tone. *Italics* indicate when a word was expressed with particular emphasis. I used "[Name N°]" to anonymize the mentioning of activists and groups in interviews or fieldnotes.

16 Of course, language can result in a potential further power imbalance between the researcher and participants (Sörensson & Kalman, 2017, p. 13). It might also mean that the analysis of these data contains an additional interpretive level, which I am not exploring more closely. It gains more importance in such contexts to pay attention to simple and comprehensive language and to ask for clarifications in interview settings (Charmaz, 2014, p. 96f.). While it can be argued that any interpreting of people's perspectives involves an act of translation, it would still be promising for academia to more explicitly engage with the role of multi-lingual interactions for research (Kruse et al., 2012; Kruse & Schmieder, 2014).

resented or used in any systematic way, which, as Curtis and her colleagues discuss, is quite normal in an open process (2000, p. 1011).

3.3.2 Constructivist GTM

Until May 2018, I conducted five interviews as my first round of data generation. Those interviews were conducted very openly. While I used an interview guide (Weiss, 2014)[17], I would not go as far as calling them semi-structured since it was up to the participants to set a focus, expand or leave certain issues aside. But I started all interviews with a narrative question on participants' daily life, for instance, and later on asked for their involvement in groups, in case it did not come up. Following Weiss, I generally tried to ask as little as possible completely pre-formulated questions (2014). Instead, I used what had already been said by participants—for example, in previous meetings—as prompts for further questions.[18] I used open coding, more specifically line-by-line coding, for these initial interviews and about six months of fieldnotes. This resulted in an extensive amount of codes, which was not sorted or developed in any way since the process was supposed to be spontaneous.[19]

Moving from open to focused coding was challenging, especially given the amount of open codes I had. It already took a lot of time to go through all open codes to erase doublings and get some overview. Following Charmaz and Bryant, I decided to focus on approximately 35 codes that, in substance and quantity, seemed promising to look into more in-depth (Bryant, 2017, p. 100; Charmaz, 2014, pp. 138–147). I went through all the sequences where I coded these, thereby delineating them more clearly and, finally, differentiating them from each other. Based on these focused codes, I also developed preliminary categories that I subsequently used for analytical structuring and for focusing the following data generation. The newly generated data were then coded based on the emerging scheme. I went back to include my sensitizing

17 I developed an interview guide based on the sensitizing concepts (that are explained in Chapter 4).

18 Given the iterative nature of constructivist GTM, this could be seen as a pilot phase in which I addressed initial methodological, practical and ethical challenges (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 135).

19 I used the software program MAXQDA. This program was developed from a GTM perspective, which made it particularly suitable. I transcribed and coded my interviews directly in the program.

concepts at that point to have a first confrontation of my analytical developments with existing literature. To give a sense of this stage, I quote from a memo I wrote at the time:

> "This is where I was absolutely overwhelmed and panicked a bit because I felt it was impossible to go through all these codes, clean them up, re-fine them and then end up with those that seemed most promising. Letting it all sink in a bit, I then understood or decided to interpret what Charmaz and Bryant write in a certain way: Namely, I figured that to arrive at focused codes, I don't need to reduce all my codes and arrive at having only the focused ones left. Even though it might be ideal to have worked through all my initial codes to have them straight, not overlapping or contradicting each other, etc., I feel like I cannot achieve this at the moment. When puzzling the codes, I wrote memos and noted which ones needed considerable revision. This made exactly 100 initial open codes. This still seemed way too much to realistically get through […]. I then re-read parts of Charmaz' chapter again where she underlines to be courageous enough to follow one's gut feeling when a code seems interesting regardless of the quantities of its being coded. […] This helped me clarify the role of focused codes in relation to theoretical sampling to some extent. Because in a way, in my mind, the focused codes were mainly used for focusing the research in general and guiding further interviews. I think for Charmaz it is also about having a certain number of focused codes to go through larger amounts of data quicker. So it's a confrontation of the initial codes with more data…" (Memo *Moving from open to focused codes* 08/06/18)

Later, I came across perspectives that confirmed me in these decisions and interpretations (Saldaña, 2009, p. 194ff.). Based on the analysis of the first round of data, I conducted another five interviews until December 2018 as a second round. I also had another seven months of fieldnotes by then. These interviews were already more focused because they were based on the analytical insights from the first round. Given the more focused nature of the second round of interviews, they helped me contrast my analytical, focused codes and categories with new data and substantiate them in terms of depth. Initially, the categories were rather groupings of focused codes. Subsequently, I developed these groupings more explicitly into categories by writing narratives about what they contained. After the second round of interviews, I went through all sequences of all the focused codes again to align but also confront them with these narratives. This made the categories more settled in the data

and, additionally, more coherent and substantive internally.[20] Coding new data in these later stages also made me add or revise certain focused codes.

In 2019, I continued to accompany and be involved in groups and was in close exchange with activists. But I also got more involved personally, shifting the weight of my double role within the groups toward the activist, as opposed to the researcher. In this stage, I conducted two more interviews in which I more explicitly engaged with the conceptual development of my analysis so far. The fieldnotes became a more occasional tool, as well, in the sense that I did not write fieldnotes for all meetings or events I attended but only selected those occasions that seemed to add substance to my analysis. For me, theoretical coding as a coding technique was not entirely distinguishable from focused coding because the further development of the categories, the exploration of their relations and the resulting development of concepts are not merely a linear process. This stage also contained coding bigger units of data (multiple sentences or paragraphs) and confronting the previous analysis with new data. It mainly involved further developing the narratives of the analytical categories, also by going back to involving existing literature and theories. It centrally meant that I worked on finding and focusing an overarching storyline that engaged with the relations among the analytical categories but also aligned with existing theory:

> "This process is about needing an overarching frame for my analysis. The categories for themselves are fine, but they need to be bound together somehow. […] The recommendation was to sit down with a blank page, and just start writing. Since that also quite well fits some grounded theory approaches and I found it reflected in strategies for theory integration and development of a storyline (Birks & Mills, 2011), this is what I tried to do this week. […] The process was really valuable. […] I'm time and again surprised how helpful writing is for analysis. I really just wrote and wrote, and then with one line of thought figured this potentially could be developed further." (Memo *Finding the Storyline* 23/01/20)

Writing plays a crucial role in developing analysis and, thereby, theory. The fieldnote above references Birks and Mills, who propose *storyline* as an analytical technique with double function and call it "a means and an end in itself"

20 These categories are the ones that I discuss in-depth in Chapter 5. In some cases, a category's name comes from a focused code and is called the same (e.g., feeling the need to be political).

(Birks et al., 2009, p. 407). They emphasize that it "assists in production of the final theory and provides a means by which the theory can be conveyed to the reader." (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 118) In fact, it helped me move through the difficult stage between focused and theoretical coding and has been the frame for the presentation of my empirical findings in Chapter 5. At this stage, I was also much more explicitly engaging with existing literature and theories again. How I relate my empirical data and analysis with these is presented in Chapter 6. The final overarching concept that I am presenting there only emerged after this thorough linking with existing literature and writing as a general technique.

3.4 Ethics

Ethical reflections are a central part of interpretive research because, with a specific set of philosophical assumptions, the self-reflection of the researcher's position, interactions and responsibilities are crucial (Milan, 2014). They become even more essential when a project is as clearly concerned with power relations—as this one is by centrally engaging with potentially vulnerable and marginalized communities of people without (clear) legal status (Brounéus, 2011; Krause, 2017; Refugee Studies Centre, 2007). So, while ethical reflections also appeared in the philosophical groundings, this explicit subchapter is essential to further underline this project's particular research setting.

Hale names three assertions of *good* research when discussing activist collaborative scholarship: methodological rigor, scholarly privilege and theoretical innovation (2008, p. 4). Methodological rigor implies "includ[ing] systematic reflection on the positioned and intersubjective character of the research process." (Hale, 2008, p. 13) This is also ethically relevant because it makes a non-linear and intuitive research process at least somewhat comprehensible to others. In my project, this links to the different principles and tools delineated in the previous subchapters. Scholarly privilege means to critically reflect that generally, "privilege [is] associated with ultimate authority and control over the process of knowledge production." (2008, p. 15) Privilege plays a particular role in this research project as I am not only privileged as a researcher but in many more senses, as discussed in Subchapter 2.2 concerning positionality.

Finally, in Hale's understanding theoretical innovation stands for using "the potential to yield privileged insight, analysis, and theoretical innovation that otherwise would be impossible to achieve." (Hale, 2008, p. 20) For me, this also entails that I have a responsibility to my research participants. For instance, in using the data I am generating with them respectfully. Or in producing an output that does not only have academic relevance.[21] When researching social movements and acts of resistance, this also links to being aware that one's research might make "flaws in the states' system visible to the latter," which can be not in the interest of the movements and research participants, as Piacentini emphasizes (2014, p. 178). From a further angle, Howse refers to "vigilant epistemologies" when it comes to consciously reflecting colonial power structures in knowledge production (2019, p. 201f.).

Such ethical reflections directly concern the relationships with participants. In their official ethical guidelines, the Refugee Studies Center in Oxford underlines that it is about protecting research participants, honoring trust, anticipating harm and avoiding intrusion (Refugee Studies Centre, 2007, p. 162f.). They discuss topics such as informed consent, anonymity, fair returns and intellectual property that partly have been addressed in previous (sub-)chapters. This shows that ethical reflections have to be very broad, involving power, forms of knowledge (production), outcomes, risks, remuneration and so on. Informed consent and other seemingly standard steps in the research process should be reflected even more carefully and practically and might need different approaches (Block, Riggs, et al., 2013).

Protection of identity, in particular, is difficult to fully obtain in qualitative research in general. It relates to anonymity and confidentiality but cannot be limited to that because, especially in small research contexts, complete anonymity is almost impossible to obtain (Mackenzie et al., 2007). People involved in or familiar with the research setting could likely be able to identify groups or participants. This should not result in abandoning the aim to provide anonymity and confidentiality, but it is important to communicate its limits transparently: it is "an ongoing working compromise" (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 627). Anonymity is aimed at, carefully "removing any names of people,

21 The latter can include addressing questions that they voice as relevant, making results accessible and understandable for a non-academic audience or producing non-academic output.

locations, places or specific information that may reveal the identity." (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 216) It is controlled before publication.[22]

It is very clear that the main benefit of the dissertation is my own in that I build my career on it. This cannot be equated with any reward I can give to participants. I am not paying my research participants but tried to find other ways of giving something back. A respectful, not time-bound relationship is one way of working on that. Palmer et al. have interestingly explored time as a factor that can work to re-balance power imbalances, at least to some extent:

> "The waiting is not simply a space between actions, nor at the margins of work in the field or community; waiting is at the centre of the work and throughout all of it. It is a necessary duration, a patterning of time, power and grace in which researcher and another construct and share their space." (Palmer et al., 2018, p. 430)

Taking time, of course, also means trying to support people with issues and problems they have whenever possible and attending to their doubts or curiosities regarding the research. On the collective level, I participated in the group activities in a way trying to contribute my skills and knowledge where possible. Producing knowledge that is not just academically relevant but also accessible and potentially valuable for groups was reflected on with other activists. As Chapter 2.2 on positionality has shown, I cannot, nor aim to, get rid of my own perspective. Nor am I able to fully compensate my own benefit and privilege as a researcher compared to my participants—in fact, even if there was for example the financial possibility, this would not abolish power differentials either, which highlights that in this whole context it is not about a one-to-one exchange deal. However, I hope to have shown through this chapter that I take the responsibility I have very seriously, see it linked to the philosophical, methodological and practical elements of my research and continuously reflect on these issues and learn from the situations I encounter.

22 Data security is another standard affirmation that is only partly in the researcher's hand. I attempt to ensure it through pass-word protected server saving of all the data to which only I have access.

4. Migrant rights activism as a research subject: Conceptual approaches and relevant literature

The literature review is a contested part of the research process for grounded theorists. Firstly, because it differs from the role literature reviews usually fulfill in research projects (Charmaz, 2014, p. 308). Secondly, because even among grounded theorists, there is disagreement concerning the position it should take (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019, p. 210). Generally, a literature review is a state-of-the-art. It summarizes the existing research in the relevant fields and is typically used to point out the gaps and embed one's research agenda before starting data generation. Based on this, a study's conceptual framework is developed and delineates the theoretical frame within which it will move. This is less clearly definable in GTMs. The classical grounded theory even requires the researcher to only consider relevant literature once having generated and analyzed the data. However, this purely inductive approach is by now being rejected as unrealistic and undesirable in its pure form (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019, p. 212). In contrast, constructivist grounded theory explicitly emphasizes the balance between being conceptually oriented but still open to what emerges from the data.

Thornberg and Dunne propose that the literature review in GTM takes place in multiple phases of the research process. They distinguish between an initial, an ongoing and a final literature review. These are located at different points in the process and serve distinct purposes. At the initial stage, the literature review serves to become broadly familiar with the field. The ongoing one is already informed by the generated data and thus increasingly focused. The final literature review then locates the developed grounded theory within and across disciplines (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019, p. 211). This chapter is not limited to one or the other of these different kinds of literature reviews but, instead, contains a condensed essence of all three kinds. In fact, I understand Thornberg and Dunne's different literature reviews as a methodological tool

that enables the engagement with existing literature throughout the research process.

In this chapter, I mainly focus on offering an overview of existing research on migrant rights activism. This contains the rough depiction of relevant disciplinary fields and the delineation of their most common approaches regarding this research subject. Subsequently, I identify gaps, particularly in the social movement literature, and develop the focus this study is taking on migrant rights struggles. This includes briefly introducing and contextualizing the sensitizing concepts, which I used as conceptual starting points of my research. Finally, it also involves some anticipating remarks on the conceptual frame that eventually emerged from the research, bringing together my own findings with existing literature and theories by introducing the concept of solidarity.

4.1 State-of-the-art: How migrant rights movements are being studied

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in academic interest in migrant rights activism. It might, therefore, seem that these political struggles are a relatively new phenomenon. However, Nicholls and Uitermark argue that in the European context, there have been such protests and organizing at least since the 1970s, starting with working-class immigrants (2017, p. 38). Rosenberger also claims: "As early as the 1980s, migrants, citizens, and advocacy groups were siding with migrants and asylum seekers, promoting inclusion and legal and social rights." (Rosenberger, 2018, p. 3) Nevertheless, it is also being asserted that in the 2000s and especially 2010s, "the scale and nature [of these protests] are unprecedented." (Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 199) Marciniak and Tyler even refer to a "global explosion of 'immigrant protests,' political mobilizations by irregular migrants and pro-migrant activists." (2014, p. 5) While this is a common observation, there is disagreement as to what extent these protests form *one movement*. Nyers and Rygiel describe:

> "Considerable social movements of migrants of differing legal status (refugees, seasonal workers, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants) have formed globally. The related forms of migrant activism are very diverse and consist of conventional practices, such as public campaigns, researches and petitions, as well as newer tactics. Part of the latter are, for example,

> resistance against deportations (Nyers 2003), border camps (Walters 2006) and creative art projects (Padgham 2005)." (Nyers & Rygiel, 2014, p. 206 [Translated])

It is important to acknowledge differences between past and contemporary movements and between different geographic contexts of such mobilizations. However, I would argue that there are also relevant continuities and similarities among them. The structural factors contextualizing most of these struggles have to do with nation-states and colonialism, with models of citizenship, borders, exclusion, mobilities, political community and rights. Thereby, they build a frame that, in my eyes, justifies a reference to such struggles as a social movement. I also consider this necessary because it is part of taking the actors, forms and claims of these movements seriously. All these struggles by and with migrants and refugees, for the right to move, to stay or to leave, have a common basis that is neglected when discussing each site as an individual protest event. Nevertheless, the struggles are indeed very diverse regarding various factors and do not necessarily directly connect to each other, making it hard to see one consolidated movement (Rosenberger, 2018, p. 6; Schwenken, 2006, p. 20). Therefore, I mostly refer to activism when speaking about individual groups or activists' political activities, while still considering them as part of bigger movements.

Just as the migrant rights movements are global in nature, the academic discourse around them is a transnational one. Many studies explicitly compare them in a number of different countries and the main disciplinary and conceptual approaches to migrant rights movements display a transnational academic discourse (see e.g. Chimienti, 2011; Della Porta, 2018b; Giugni & Passy, 2004; Johnson, 2012; Laubenthal & Leggewie, 2007; Monforte & Dufour, 2013; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). Simultaneously, as Hess and Lebuhn point out, there is an increasing focus on the local dimension of these protests (Hess & Lebuhn, 2014, p. 11). This results in many of the more recent studies being much more directly involved with the movements, among others by employing constructivist and qualitative perspectives and focusing on local contexts (see e.g. Ataç, 2016; Benigni & Pierdicca, 2014; Borri & Fontanari, 2015; Erensu, 2016; Philipp, 2016; Piacentini, 2014; Rigby & Schlembach, 2013; Rygiel, 2011; Wilcke & Lambert, 2015). Apart from some exceptions, the German academic debate about migrant rights struggles gathered speed mainly from the Long Summer of Migration onwards (see e.g. Ataç, 2013; Benigni &

Pierdicca, 2014; Hess & Lebuhn, 2014; Josten, 2012; Laubenthal & Leggewie, 2007; Schwenken, 2006).

After this rough state-of-the-art overview, in the following subchapters I discuss the most prominent disciplinary approaches to migrant rights movements. Based on the previous discussion, it should have become clear that this is quite a complex task. I do not pretend that this literature review is in any way exhaustive. Nevertheless, I hope to give a comprehensive summary of the most common theoretical and disciplinary approaches. Migrant rights movements are an inherently interdisciplinary research subject. They are approached from various disciplinary and conceptual backgrounds, which—partly explicitly, partly implicitly—engage with, but sometimes also remain relatively ignorant of, one another.[1]

I first focus on some conceptual approaches from migration and citizenship studies. They have shown most directly engaged with the study of migrant rights movements and contribute especially relevant research perspectives (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 532). I do not give an overview of these complete research fields but rather of their most common conceptual approaches to migrant rights movements: *Border Regime* approaches, *Autonomy of Migration* literature, *Acts of Citizenship* and sub- and supra-national models of citizenship. The field of social movement studies would seem to be naturally involved in studying these struggles but have long been rather absent (Eggert & Giugni, 2015, p. 168). Still, much research focuses on the local and spatial dimensions of migrant rights struggles through political practices. This approach is not exclusive to the field of social movement studies but might bridge it to the other relevant fields. Developing a social movement perspective seems valuable to engage with the various relations, dynamics and activities of migrant rights everyday practices, which might complement the important research, focusing on border regimes, political agency or challenging citizenship. Therefore, I display the conceptual history of social movement

1 While political science is a disciplinary background that makes a lot of sense with regards to this research subject, the perspectives from this discipline are often conceptually limited given its problem-oriented approach to migration in terms of who constitutes the demos and its often narrow understanding of the political (Earnest, 2008, p. 139; Rother, 2016, p. 2). As a result, most traditional political science research would focus on institutional politics and migrants' representation and inclusion in (or exclusion from) it.

studies first and then address political practices as a potential starting point for bridging the field with other disciplines.

4.1.1 Migration studies

For some time now, most social sciences have been confronted with the intensification of globalization impacting their research subjects (Beck, 2005; Chandler & Baker, 2005; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). The nation-state as the primary unit of analysis is being challenged by very practical issues, such as interacting domestic and international spheres concerning certain policy fields and, generally, given increasing interdependencies (Schmidt, 2008, p. 280). Typical examples are issues that do not stop at nation-state borders, such as climate change. Migration studies are the field that focuses on human mobilities, mainly across nation-state borders, in its multiple forms and consequences. People increasingly have experiences, backgrounds and perceptions of different places—identities are clearly multiple and not mutually exclusive (Held, 2007, p. 75f.). Human mobilities lead to complex constellations, relations and positionalities. As a result, there are no clearly distinguishable binaries between inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider, citizen and non-citizen.

Still, even before the most recent polarizations, migration has often been mainly discussed as an issue that democratic nation-states face and need to deal with (Rother, 2016, p. 3). The focus has often been on how migration could be limited (Earnest, 2008; Hammar, 1990) or on how (democratic) home and receiving countries could handle its consequences (Benhabib, 2004; Schulte, 2009). There has also been much research on different kinds of mobilities and factors supposedly leading to or preventing migration. Furthermore, research on integration policies has explored collective and individual levels, particular ethnic migrations and diasporas or explicit linkages to democratic societies by focusing on migrants' participation (see e.g. Alt, 2006; Linden & Thaa, 2009; Rother, 2016; Schulte, 2009).[2]

Critical approaches to migration, including those that I discuss more in-depth, share a broader view on migration as an important and natural human phenomenon that should be discussed—but not by defining it mainly through

2 Migration studies themselves are a naturally interdisciplinary field, bringing together political science, sociology, ethnology, history, geography and social work, among others.

taking for granted the supposed neutrality of nation-states and borders. According to Wilcke, looking at how migration studies have historically focused on the reasons for migration shows how closely entangled the field traditionally has been with states' migration controls (2018a, p. 22). Scholars criticize that generally, the nation-state is not only taken as a given but also continuously reproduced, resulting in a predominant "methodological nationalism" (Schwiertz, 2016, p. 238):

> "As a result of methodological nationalism and the ethnic lens, researchers often approach the terrain of the nation-state as a single homogeneous national culture, while defining a migrant population as a community of culture, interest and identity." (Glick Schiller, 2012, p. 29)

Migration is then easily framed as a problem because it challenges the long-established routines (Schwiertz, 2016, p. 239). The growing body of critical literature is questioning the supposed inherent linkage of territory, cultural and political community. This linkage assumes nation-states as "bounded, autonomous and decontextualizable units," (Calhoun, 1999, p. 218) which leaves them unquestioned as the unit of analysis and defining empirical frame (Castles & Davidson, 2001, p. 15; Cohen, 1999, p. 249). Faist et al., for instance, explore the multi-sitedness of migration, which, according to them, entails a more dynamic and less state-centered view:

> "[M]igration is not an irrevocable process but may entail repeated movements and, above all, continued transactions—bounded communication between actors—between migrants and non-migrants across the border of states." (Faist et al., 2013)

Such moving away from the nation-state as the central unit of analysis can result in different directions for further research. A growing body of literature focuses on transnational or cosmopolitan models, another on the various sub-national levels (see e.g. Beck, 2005; Giddens, 1990, p. 178; Grugel, 1999, p. 157; Schlenker & Blatter, 2016, p. 109; Young, 2010, p. 13). Especially at the overlaps of migration and integration research, the local and municipal levels have emerged as potentially more open sites of experimentation and *successful* "integration" regarding voting rights or other forms of political participation (Schmidtke, 2016, p. 99).

4.1.1.1 Border and Migration Regimes

> "[M]any of the researchers focus on the practices of regulation and knowledge that try to 'manage', controlling, governing, categorizing and representing migrations. This perspective led to an emphasis in the context of migration and border regime studies that critically analyzes the 'doing border' in various regions in Europe and worldwide." (The Critical Migration and Border Regime Research Laboratory, n.d. [Translated])

This description by the *Critical Migration and Border Regime Research Laboratory* in Göttingen summarizes an essential perspective of border and migration regime studies: the constructed nature of nation-states and borders. Instead of researching specific ethnic or geographic groups and contexts of migration, such perspectives recognize the importance of exploring how the current phenomena in the context of migration result from specific forms of governing. Therefore, focusing on migration regimes instead of migration as such means shifting the spotlight to the mechanisms and forms of governing migration (Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 186). This also explains the frequency of such perspectives exploring migrant rights struggles as they make the governing mechanisms and their contestation more visible:

> "On the one hand, we investigate the practical management of migration aside from public declarations and formal regulation. On the other, we analyse how migrants react to this management with attempts to cross borders and settle in the country they have chosen for building a new life." (Fontanari & Ambrosini, 2018, p. 589)

This underlines the constructed nature of borders. Fontanari and Ambrosini discuss borders as "a dynamic process of power relations rather than a fixed and material entity" (2018, p. 588). Such emphasizing the dynamic nature is especially important when it comes to the border because it is often treated as a fixed materialized location. Instead, Heimeshoff and Hess state:

> "We understand border regime as contested territorial and a-territorial social space that is defined by tensions, conflicts, and negotiations among multiple actors for rights and social participation and which is (re-)produced, fixed, challenged, moved, re-interpreted or newly inscribed through continuous performative acts" (Heimeshoff & Hess, 2014, p. 18 [Translated])

They also observe a general process of "deterritorialization, informatization and digitalization of borders" on a global scale (Heimeshoff & Hess, 2014, p.

14 [Translated]). Migrant rights activism takes place in bordering spaces, be it at materialized territorial borders or less visible internalized ones. Spaces such as Calais and the Mediterranean Sea are sites where border regimes become particularly visible but are also being challenged (Rigby & Schlembach, 2013; Rygiel, 2011; Stierl, 2016; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Yet, borders similarly produce struggles in other spatial settings beyond the physical border where people fight for their right to stay, as Yuval-Davis discusses:

> "[E]veryday bordering processes are multilayered and overlapping and are experienced at work, at home, and in educational institutions, so that at different times an individual may be a border guard or may be the subject of the border work of employers, landlords, educators, and others. […] these everyday state bordering processes affect everyone in different ways and to different degrees." (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019, p. 127)

The reason why such conceptual approaches to migration and borders have widely been used to analyze migrant rights movements is that by seeing migration and border regimes as ubiquitously and constantly contested spaces, the very acts and sites through which this contestation takes place become central. So when researching current migration and border regimes, the agency of the subjects crossing and challenging rigid notions of borders is an important phenomenon to look at.

4.1.1.2 Autonomy of Migration

The agency of subjects crossing borders is at the center of another approach, which can be located in critical migration studies and is often used to analyze and explain migrant rights movements. From this perspective, migration is understood as a social fact and as preceding its control (Nyers, 2015, p. 27f.). In a similar argumentation, Manuela Bojadžijev importantly links structural racism with migrant and labor fights in her international study, including the US and various European countries (2008). The expression "autonomy of migration" was coined by Yann Moulier-Boutang. Scholars deduce the importance of not treating migrants as victims of bigger circumstances but instead acknowledging and exploring their agency. In this way, "borders are not understood as mere obstacles because they are indeed crossed on a daily basis" (KRASS kritische assoziationen, n.d. [Translated]). Ataç et al. highlight:

> "Abandoning the conception of migration as objectifiable processes and mere reactions to economic and social pressures, the AoM literature empha-

> sizes the 'autonomy' of migration, understood as the primacy of (migratory) mobility over (border) control and governance." (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 533)

This also indicates the shift from referring exclusively to migration towards seeing all acts of human mobility as relevant. According to Nyers and Rygiel, mobility is then understood as a resource and a strategy of autonomous actors. They underline that from this methodological view, it is central "that space is produced and shaped by movements of people, goods, and services as well as interactions among them." (Nyers & Rygiel, 2014, p. 203 [Translated]) The result is that in the constellation of the moving subject and states' migration regimes the power of agency is not exclusive to the state. According to these approaches, states are even the ones who are reactive to the power of mobility of migrants (Nyers & Rygiel, 2014). Migrants are seen as "actively acting subjects and migration as social process" (Wilcke, 2018a, p. 30). Therefore, scholars using Autonomy of Migration concepts often focus on the political struggles of migrants where this autonomy is most visible (Rygiel, 2011). Indeed, given the dominance of perspectives that objectify migrants, these approaches offer an extremely valuable perspective, enabling researchers to capture an agency and focus on a relationality otherwise often ignored.[3]

4.1.2 Critical Citizenship studies

> "It is useful, I think, to theorize migrant struggles in terms of citizenship because the language of citizenship invokes agency with respect to subjects who are frequently depicted in the popular imagination, media, and government policy as being something other than political beings (e.g. as victims, criminals, or simply rendered in dehumanized terms as unwanted or dangerous masses or floods). The lens of citizenship draws attention to the ways in which migrants assert themselves as political subjects by making claims against certain perceived injustices and inequalities and through collective action, articulating a vision of a different future (often in the name of equality or justice)." (Rygiel, 2011, p. 6)

As this quote reveals by emphasizing the agency of migrants, Critical Citizenship studies have many common elements with the previously discussed

3 Yet, scholars also criticize Autonomy of Migration approaches for romanticizing migration and the agency that is possible, particularly in formal or external border spaces (Nyers, 2015, p. 30).

critical Migration and Border Regime approaches. Citizenship has long been a central issue of concern to researchers.[4] Citizenship debates are closely intertwined with migration studies, even when this link is not named. Because just as the nation-state, citizenship has long been taken as a neutral concept. Traditionally, there has been the main distinction between formal and substantive citizenship (Bottomore, 2002).

Formal citizenship generally being associated with the intrinsic link of political membership and the nation-state already mentioned. It is concerned with legal and political institutions conferring a membership status, associated with rights and duties, to individuals within a specific geographic territory, generally the nation-state (Rygiel et al., 2015, p. 4). Classically, this has been explored through the study and comparison of different existing models of citizenship, the most dominant of which are *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli*. The former confers citizenship by descent, the latter by *soil*, so the nation where someone is born (Giugni & Passy, 2004, p. 57; Hammar, 1990). In turn, substantive citizenship is "the substantive distribution of the rights, meanings, institutions, and practices that membership entails to those deemed citizens." (Holston, 2008, p. 7) Since it is generally understood to be based on formal citizenship, this distinction mainly stays within the realm of traditional notions of citizenship developed with the modern nation-state.

This inherent taking the nation-state for granted is described by Calhoun as follows: "The assumption has been widespread […] that these cultural categories address really existing and discretely identifiable collections of people." (Calhoun, 1999, p. 226) So with a nation-state comes a passport and comes an identity. Many scholars have challenged this assumption in various ways. Discussions that emerged around Black civil rights and feminist struggles have shown that substantive citizenship does not necessarily coincide with formal citizenship. In the context of migration, Hammar introduced the category of "denizens" to the debate to conceptualize those who more visibly emerged as a relevant group in the second half of the 20th century due to labor migration in Europe. Because many labor migrants stayed, by the 1990s, they were often long-term residents who lacked basic (political) rights because they were not citizens of their state of residence, while contributing to its economy and paying taxes (Hammar, 1990, p. 13). Another challenge of this kind is dual citizenship. There is a whole research strand dealing with the potentials of

4 Certainly, much longer even than modern academia and the nation-state, which are mainly referred to here (Bayer et al., 2021, p. 8f.).

revising formal institutional citizenship regimes and the political integration of migrants (see e.g. Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2009; Earnest, 2008; Schneider, 2009; Schulte, 2009).

With increasing numbers of scholars criticizing the inherent methodological nationalism of the social sciences, more critical perspectives on the dominant concepts of citizenship have also been developing. Questioning the unit of the nation-state as the dominant analytical frame is relevant for the study of citizenship because such lenses take its linkage to the nation-state for granted and conceptualize actors solely through their positioning in this setting. Ataç et al. describe the field of critical citizenship studies as the "re-imagination and progressive possibilities of citizenship" (2016, p. 532). Isin underlines how recognizing such fluidity in the concept accounts for its inherent instability, shifting attention "from fixed categories by which we have come to understand or inherit citizenship to the struggles through which these categories themselves have become stakes." (2009, p. 383) Indeed, such approaches also resulted in research on migrant rights struggles all over the world increasingly being addressed through critical citizenship perspectives. They capture the political agency and relations mostly ignored by traditional views on citizenship, emphasizing citizenship as an unfinished transformative process (J. Clarke et al., 2014, p. 177). Mikuszies et al. summarize that the unquestioned linkage of "citizenship and ethnically-founded nationality, going hand in hand with modern statehood, contributes to migrants being excluded." (2010, p. 99) For them, this results in the "need to develop new forms of citizenship to do justice in more inclusive ways to this changed situation." (Mikuszies et al., 2010, p. 99)

4.1.2.1 Sub- and supra-national models of citizenship

One way in which citizenship studies have started to move the debate beyond the nation-state has been by getting involved with different geographic levels where citizenship and citizenship models are or could be developed further. For instance, closely linked to the consolidation and development of the European Union are discussions about supranational citizenship (see e.g. Borja, 2000; Reed-Danahay & Brettell, 2008; Shaw, 2003) or the cosmopolitan visions of it (see e.g. Beck & Grande, 2006; Benhabib, 2004). The former can be both legally linked to the existing institution of European Union citizenship and to normative claims (see e.g. Kochenov, 2012; Shaw, 2003, p. 296; Ward, 2009, p. 269). The latter are mainly normative commitments to global society

without concrete steps of formal realization. More recently, some attention is also being paid on the sub-national level, evolving around urban studies and the city as a relevant political level (see e.g. Hess & Lebuhn, 2014; Kewes, 2016a; Lefebvre & Schäfer, 2016; Purcell, 2003; M. Smith & McQuarrie, 2012).

Such foci are, in fact, opening fruitful debates on more inclusive models of citizenship. In existing research on migrant rights movements, a considerable part employs such sub- and supra-national approaches to citizenship in exploring such struggles, their realities and claims. In particular the general integration of spatial dimensions of migrant rights movements, prominently including *Right to the City* perspectives (Lefebvre & Schäfer, 2016), receives increasing attention (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 227), coining terms such as *city-zenship* (Buikema et al., 2019). According to Ataç et al., particularly in the urban space, illegalized refugees can take over public space to visibly and controversially discuss their topics and claims (2015, p. 4). Dziewulska et al. point out how local spaces offer "more room for maneuver to acknowledge claims by groups that are formally excluded." (2012, p. 155) At the local level, the realities of illegalized migrants are more visible and gain more urgency through existential necessities, such as access to the health care system or the labor market. Such tensions between national laws and local realities result in urban spaces potentially offering solutions (Schwenken & Ruß-Sattar, 2014, p. 111).

Such perspectives are in a way less directly concerned with migrant rights struggles in themselves but very clearly with their claims and sometimes consequences (Heuser, 2017). However, while these research strands start to decouple citizenship from the nation, many mainly differentiate between different levels or shift the debate to other policy levels. In contrast, critical citizenship studies stand for questioning state-centered perspectives as such (Holston, 1999b, p. 157; Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014). They move beyond citizenship as a legal status by shifting the attention to migrants struggling as political agents and therefore to processes and practices of citizenship (Holston & Appadurai, 1999, p. 1f.; Lazar & Nuijten, 2013, p. 3; Nyers, 2015, p. 34). This brings me to one of the most widely used conceptual approaches when discussing migrant rights struggles.

4.1.2.2 Acts of Citizenship

Engin Isin is one of the leading proponents of critical citizenship studies and introduced the notion of Acts of Citizenship. He takes note of the fact that

citizenship inherently needs the "other" to challenge its assumed pre-existence: "The dominant groups and the subaltern are not mutually exclusive groups that preexist each other, but their presence is interdependent, mutual, and symbiotic." (Isin, 2002, p. 267) Hence, both are taken to be socially constructed. By introducing Acts of Citizenship, he moves beyond the mere distinction between formal and substantive citizenship by decoupling citizenship from the state. Isin distinguishes three kinds of citizenship: status, habitus and acts (Isin, 2008).

For him, citizenship as a status is the traditional legal reading, close to formal citizenship. It is defined by the membership to a nation-state and is based on the existing laws and rules. This first notion of citizenship is historically entangled with the nation-state as such (Isin, 2008, p. 17). It is based on the equation of nationality and citizenship as well as their linkage to a supposedly shared cultural-linguistic background (Abizadeh, 2002, p. 495; Hammar, 1990, p. 27). The different kinds of citizenship regimes all inherently need the distinction between insiders and outsiders, thus, constructing the exclusive categories of citizens and non-citizens.

Citizenship as habitus is based on the previous legal definition but focuses more on the related political activities (Isin, 2012, p. 110). It is at the heart of what is discussed as substantive citizenship, including the social, civil and political rights and obligations of citizens. It is closely intertwined with debates on political participation and links to different forms and meanings of civic involvement in decision-making processes of representative democracies (see e.g. Nanz & Leggewie, 2016; Nève & Olteanu, 2013; Pohl & Massing, 2014). Often, this also involves normative notions of what the ideal citizen ought to be (see e.g. Norris, 1999; Putnam et al., 1993). Isin introduces citizenship as habitus as the "long-term making" of citizens through education and development (2008, p. 17). Yet, it is rather passive because the rights and duties are ascribed to the subjects based on their legal status as citizens of a certain nation-state (Isin & Nielsen, 2008, p. 2).

Finally, acts of citizenship challenge these previous two understandings because they focus on the agency of the subject. Isin mentions civil rights and feminist movements as examples because they "transformed subjects into claimants of rights over a relatively short period of time through various acts that were symbolically and materially constitutive." (2008, p. 17f.) He also emphasizes that "the difference between habitus and acts is not merely one of temporality but is also a qualitative difference that breaks habitus creatively." (Isin, 2008, p. 18) Acts of citizenship are not bound to legal status, and they

go beyond political habitus. They shed light on how people constitute *themselves* as political subjects and citizens. As a concept, it is related to Rancière's understanding of politics as the formation of subjects: "To become a subject is to make oneself appear, to create oneself as a subject, to impress oneself on the scene" (May, 2008, p. 70). Of course, this is where those who are not legal citizens are conceptually added to the picture of citizenship.

Acts of Citizenship as an approach is frequently used to conceptualize migrant rights activism (see e.g. Della Porta, 2018b, p. 2; Hess & Lebuhn, 2014, p. 22; Nyers & Rygiel, 2014, p. 119; Schwenken & Ruß-Sattar, 2014, p. 3). It accounts for migrants' political agency in the context of struggles over citizenship and, thereby, offers a very appealing way of putting the seemingly impossible agency of non-citizens at the center of attention: "*Non-citizen* migrants enact themselves as political beings and thereby, *de facto* as *citizens*, irrespective of the fact that they are lacking the legal status, the formal political membership and/or identification documents." (Nyers & Rygiel, 2014, p. 208 [Emphasis in original]) Such an approaching of generally *othered* subjects as "activist citizens" is certainly a conceptually enabling perspective, which draws particularly on their own struggles (Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014, p. 187). McNevin particularly depicts this becoming active concerning illegalized migrants:

> "When irregular migrants reject their status, they place a dint in the logic and legitimacy of the territorial state and in the framework of belonging it represents. They question whether the citizenship practices carried out by state agencies can be considered a matter of 'common sense'." (McNevin, 2006, p. 142)

In that sense, it is in fact an opportunity to link or bridge migration and social movement studies, which, however, is mostly built on rather implicitly. Hess and Lebuhn also emphasize that next to moving beyond formal citizenship, this perspective "repoliticizes the drawing of borders itself" (2014, p. 22 [Translated]). While in 2007 Lister still observed an "empirical void" in the study of citizenship (p.58), I would argue that, not least thanks to Acts of Citizenship, this has continually been filled throughout the last years. Many scholars are drawing on and developing Isin's concept in the empirical study of migrant rights movements. Ataç discusses refugees' rights-claiming activism in Vienna and notes how it is not just about "drawing attention to problems but also having the aspiration of offering solutions in the form of concrete claims." (Ataç, 2013) Nyers and Rygiel aim at redefining citizenship,

linking it to "practices, daily living and subjectivities related to and constitutive of being political" (2014, p. 3). Oliveri applies and expands the concept to the Italian context, where the economic crisis and general labor situation call for seeing acts of citizenship happening in complex and multi-dimensional contexts (2012, p. 799f.).

Nevertheless, the approach or its applications have also been criticized for romanticizing non-citizenship and being too focused on the visibility of disruptive acts. This might limit the perspective in terms of capturing the complexity of actors and internal practices going on in these movements (Johnson, 2016; Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014, p. 191). Another criticism is that using the concept of citizenship reproduces the dominant categories of the nation-state. Yet, migrant activists face the ambivalence of simultaneously fighting for and against citizenship anyways, which, according to Erensu, "[exposes] the impossibility of a political form of life outside of citizenship." (2016, p. 664) She discusses how refugees in Turkey make claims to UNHCR asking for care from this institution, thus seeking recognition, while, simultaneously, defying its status of authority in giving access to refugee status. Notwithstanding such ambivalences and tensions, Nyers and Rygiel point out that Critical Citizenship perspectives are the closest that concepts so far have moved political subjectivities beyond the nation-state (2014, p. 210).

4.1.3 Social movement studies

Social movement studies are broadly concerned with socio-political participation and protest. A core feature always associated with social movements and activism is collective action directed to social change (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). At the same time, collective action is naturally always constituted by a multitude of individual actors. The collective prominently emerges already in the Marxist focus on the class movement, where it is more than the sum of its parts. Indeed, the movement's identity becomes the identity of participants (Marx & Milligan, 1988). In the 1950s, the dominant research perspective on social movements was coming from behavioralist research traditions. They mainly conceptualized the individual participants of protests as irrational deviants carried away by manipulative mass dynamics (Morris, 2004, p. 234). What follows subsequently can be seen as the development of a distinct field of study focused on social movements, as opposed to it previously merely being a research subject and as indeed emerging from the historical context of social movements being more positively—maybe more confi-

dently—addressed from within (Buechler, 2000, p. 33f.; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 30). In the Northern mainstream of the field, the 1960s and 1970s can be distinguished into American approaches, building on bounded rationality and structural circumstances, and the European ones often referred to as New Social Movements (NSMs) (Crossley, 2002, p. 10; Farro & Lustiger-Thaler, 2014, p. 1f.).[5] I briefly discuss their contemporary forms, which are not as clearly geographically confined but among the most dominant approaches in the field.

In this subchapter, I first try to delineate what I perceive as the Northern mainstream in social movement studies. This includes the contemporary approaches derived from North-American research traditions (4.1.3.1) and the European ones (4.1.3.2). Instead, in Subchapter 4.1.3.3, I expand the field to what I summarize as perspectives approaching social movements through local, everyday political practices. Especially concerning research on migrant rights activism, it is a very relevant perspective. Additionally, it seems to be one that starts to tackle some of the limitations of the most dominant social movement research traditions.

4.1.3.1 From Political Opportunities to Contentious Politics

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) is one of the dominant Northern conceptual approaches to social movements in the 1960s and 1970s and firmly based on rational-choice research traditions. Thus, it emphasizes the mobilization of different kinds of resources as the key to movements' ability to act (Hellmann, 1998, p. 13). However, critics emphasize how this perspective fails to capture dynamics of identities and interests and point to the existence of movements that had very few resources and were successful anyways (Buechler, 2011, p. 133; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 105; Edelman, 2001). Political Process Models (PPM) are conceptual approaches grounded in the RTM tradition, still giving a lot of weight to the available resources.

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5 Of course, there is no clearly delineable mainstream. What I want to stress is that the field emerged from a specific historical context. The white dominance in most academia and the fact that this field's most known approaches still seem very shaped by this historical context lead to its *mainstream* being predominantly Northern and white. There certainly is research not fitting into this mainstream but it is mostly more marginalized in and beyond this research field. Among others, Fadaee also criticizes the mainstream of social movement studies for being "Northern-centric," while underlining that this does not call for abandoning all mainstream approaches but for acknowledging and critically acting upon it (2017, p. 56).

Political Opportunity Structures as one particular approach expand this theoretical model by adding the structural political dimension. The central claim is that political structures can be open or closed, depending on various factors, such as the political system, policy cycles, agenda-setting, etc. According to this model, even a movement with few resources can manage to add a topic to the political agenda or reach a policy goal when it rightly makes use of the political opportunity structures (Buechler, 2011, p. 123ff.). As Crossley observes, PPMs are "persuasive, insightful and well supported by evidence and research," (2002, p. 119) which certainly explains their success in the field. At the same time, Crossley, among others, points out that by focusing on a narrow understanding of the political and its institutional structures, the approach does not address underlying structural conflicts of society, which are at the heart of social movements. According to him, PPMs move beyond RMT because they do not merely ignore agency. Nevertheless, he stresses that they still do not offer a compelling conceptualization of it (Crossley, 2002, p. 125).

While there has been a lot of criticism of these rational-choice-based approaches, they are still among the most broadly applied ones in the field. At the beginning of the 2000s, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, three leading social movement scholars, published "Dynamics of Contention," which became the basis of an approach often referred to as Contentious Politics (McAdam et al., 2001). A principal goal for the authors was to broaden the gaze from social movements to revolutions and processes of democratization or contention. They also try to bring together PPMs with conceptual approaches focused on *cultural* elements of social movements, namely framing and action repertoires. According to the authors, this makes their approach more dynamic, able to capture multiple actors at the same time and to analyze actions within and across different world regions: "We have insisted on the uselessness of choosing among culturalist, rationalist, and structuralist approaches to contentious politics but adopted insights from all three where we found them helpful." (McAdam et al., 2001, p. 305) In fact, Contentious Politics is regularly used when analyzing migrant rights movements from a social movement perspective (see e.g. Della Porta, 2018b; Laubenthal & Leggewie, 2007; Nicholls et al., 2016; Rosenberger, 2018). Ataç et al. display why they see it as the most promising conceptual approach:

> "A contentious politics approach is preferable for studying refugee and migrant protests because it does not isolate the dynamics of movements, such as organizational aspects, resource mobilization, and framing strategies of

> actors, from contextual factors. This is important because these factors – in this case, border and rights regimes to name but a few – have an impact on the political and social context of migrants and refugees and at the same time represent significant targets of their activism." (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 536)

According to them, social movement literature has made few proper links between external and internal characteristics of movements. Giugni and Passy have a similar reasoning for employing Contentious Politics when researching migrant mobilizations. But they, as also Laubenthal and Leggwie, see the need for integrating further emphasis on culture to the approach (Giugni & Passy, 2004, p. 52; Laubenthal & Leggewie, 2007, p. 38f.). Hence, while Contentious Politics is a generally dominant approach in the Northern mainstream of social movement studies and is used to study migrant rights activism, it is also criticized. According to Buechler, this conceptual approach is still quite focused on state-centered political activism and strengthens "a hierarchy rather than producing a genuine synthesis": RTM and PPMs providing the core, Framing approaches serving as "a junior partner," finally, NSMs and cultural approaches being "marginalized despite nods in their direction." (Buechler, 2011, p. 190)

4.1.3.2 Cultural approaches to social movements

The conceptual approaches more focused on accounting for the agency in social movement dynamics are often referred to as cultural approaches. They are less clearly delineable as they contain different approaches that are sometimes combined with others. As mentioned above, New Social Movements are the European research tradition that emerged during RMT's dominance in the United States. This perspective generally observes a shift from old (class) movements to new (identity-based) ones. The latter are associated with the so-called identity politics where the identity of the participants comes more to the fore and shapes the movements emerging (Buechler, 2011, p. 158). Typical examples of movements that have been identified as NSMs are student protests, feminist or LGBTQI* movements. This approach, therefore, puts more emphasis on the individuals involved but also addresses the cultural components of movements, including identity as well as emotions, discourse and framing (Buechler, 2011, pp. 161–166). Crossley, however, also points out how this shift is very concerned with structures:

> "They entail a view that contemporary western societies have outgrown the model of capitalist society suggested by Marx, rejecting the priority he af-

> fords to class struggle and to classes as agents of historical change. New social movement theorists attempt to identify the central conflicts and movements definitive of the new era." (Crossley, 2002, p. 11)

Precisely this conceptualization as *new* has been criticized because it creates a discontinuity with chronologically previous movements, which might overplay the differences while ignoring similarities among these movements (Buechler, 2011, p. 188). Crossley points out that NSMs do not so much present *newness* as a "particular empirical feature of those movements" but rather "a thesis about the shift in the central struggle of those societies." (2002, p. 151) Hence, NSMs can be a useful perspective offering insights on the link of social movements in their historicity, as West discusses:

> "In a number of ways, the new movements set the scene for contemporary politics, both institutional and extra-institutional. In the first place, they politicize previously neglected but now unavoidable issues, including gender, sexuality, ethnicity or 'race', environment and nature. They also contribute substantially, secondly, to the distinctive mood and style, strategies and tactics of contemporary political activism. At the same time, thirdly, the appearance and successes of these movements have encouraged theorists and commentators to reassess the importance and value of extra-institutional activism." (West, 2013, p. 54)

But while potentially insightful on such a macro level, NSMs do not offer a clear conceptual approach. To my knowledge, they have not been broadly applied to migrant rights movements. Kern proposes to see them more as "a melting pot of diverse approaches," (2008, p. 56) calling for not seeing them as competing with but as a way of complementing other approaches. Anyways, the issue remains that in its application, the differentiation between *old* and *new* movements often puts too much emphasis on the supposed empirical discontinuities. Armstrong and Bernstein point out that this approach mainly underlines certain social movements' *cultural* character, as opposed to others' political one, instead of actually broadening the cultural perspective on social movements in general (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 79).

Ironically, this results in a confrontation that identifies anti-capitalist struggles as *the* main social movement, devaluing all other fights, such as women's rights, Black civil rights, etc., to mere *cultural* sideshows that are mainly important for those focused on their own identity. While this might be an over-simplification of both NSMs and identity politics, it underlines

a crucial difficulty of these approaches. This becomes particularly visible once a social movement is not clearly *either* anti-capitalist, grounded in class struggles, *or* concerned with whatever kind of seemingly homogeneous identity. Polletta and Jasper phrase this problem as follows:

> "New social movement theories proved better at raising questions about the sources of movement identities than at answering them. Their explanations for how shifts in material production have affected social movements were not entirely clear and sometimes risked tautology, with new social movements taken as both evidence and consequence of a new social formation (see Touraine 1981 and Cohen's 1985 critique). Empirically, moreover, most new social movements have combined political goals with more culturally oriented efforts." (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 286f.)

This might be one reason why I have not found much literature that tries to approach migrant rights movements from an NSM perspective, whereas concerning other movements, it is still a broadly discussed approach (see e.g. Bennett, 2005; Blackledge, 2013; Koca, 2016). In a similar spirit of underlining the importance of cultural components in social movements, over the past decades there have also been several attempts to develop conceptual approaches that pay more attention to these. Framing approaches and other theories focusing on the cultural elements of movements have gained prominence in offering valuable ways of analyzing movements' discursive positioning, the importance of movements and (partly) successful claims both to society and institutional politics (Crossley, 2002, p. 139; Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 136; Touraine, 2002, p. 95). Other scholars have tried to develop more overarching frameworks generally considering the role of emotions and relations within movements (Flam & King, 2005; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; Jasper, 1997).

Such research strands have gained additional attention with even *newer* movements. Supposedly, these put the individual much more at the center, display less clear common identities and appear more diverse regarding organizing, topics and constitution (Farro & Lustiger-Thaler, 2014). Common examples of this are the worldwide Occupy movements. Indeed, this wave of new protests around austerity, gentrification and global capitalism have sparked a returned attention to economic and class-based social movements—this time linked to an awareness that these movements are more heterogeneous and thus more complex struggles than one-issue perspectives could account for. Nevertheless, it remains an issue that many of these dom-

inant social movement approaches do not seem able to grasp the complexity of many contemporary social movements in terms of heterogeneity, forms of action and addressing state and society, among others. Armstrong and Bernstein consider how women's and lesbian/gay movements, for example, are "[m]ovements that challenge cultural (as well as material) systems of oppression and authority" but that "have often been dismissed as mere 'identity politics' in contrast to 'real' politics of state-oriented activism." (2008, p. 79) Discussing women's leadership in the Latino migrant rights movement in the United States, Milkman and Terriquez illustrate how much sense a more open perspective on social movements makes:

> "It is a civil rights movement, seeking a path to legal status and other fundamental rights for the nation's unauthorized immigrants. But it is also a labor movement, in the broadest sense of the term, promoting economic advancement for immigrants and their children." (Milkman & Terriquez, 2012, p. 724)

This quote hints at the need to involve further perspectives in the field of social movement studies. As mentioned above, rather than a proper research tradition in social movement studies, I next want to add a focus that has emerged over the last years and that here I refer to as Political Practices.

4.1.3.3 Local everyday Political Practices

What I subsume as such approaches here are research perspectives that seem to be much more naturally intertwined with social movements' perspectives themselves. First, in terms of involving those academic traditions more explicitly that emerged from movements themselves, such as feminist, Black or post-colonial theories (see e.g. Bayat, 2010; Fadaee, 2017; Martin et al., 2007). Second, in the sense of researchers' own positionalities as more or less explicit scholar-activists (see e.g. Routledge & Derickson, 2015; Ünsal, 2015). Political Practices can be seen to be opening up the range of what is referred to as *political*, by focalizing everyday, informal and small-scale practices (see e.g. Goldfarb, 2006; Shove et al., 2012; Wagenaar, 2014). Such perspectives explore to what extent small-scale activities are involved in contributing to large-scale political transformations. Goldfarb observes in such a spirit:

> "The power of the politics of small things was described, and, crucially, its potential as a normative alternative to the politics of discipline and coercion was highlighted. It is not that all small-scale political activity provides a normative alternative. The normative alternative appears when a space is

> opened in human interaction for a freedom that creates power." (Goldfarb, 2006, p. 136)

Particularly in a setting where political practices are not necessarily about visibility, the role of everyday activities, which are inherently less visible than more collective and protest-oriented ones, is promising to consider. Martin and her colleagues discuss the contribution that feminist theory offered in starting to conceptualize everyday activities as political (2007). Beck also argues for such an opening when claiming that "[t]he forms of political involvement, protest and retreat blur together in an ambivalence that defies the old categories of political clarity." (2007, p. 21) As Ataç and his colleagues emphasize, these aspects are evidently meaningful regarding migrant rights movements. On the one hand, because everyday practices should receive more attention: Invisibility can be a goal or strategy in situations where political actors are illegalized and criminalized. On the other hand, because even everyday activism often involves "becoming visible as political subjects" (Ataç et al., 2015, p. 7).

The dominant understanding of what is political is traditionally linked to the state and its formal institutions: Civil society is understood as all social life outside of these institutions, together with the economy, the state's opposing parts (Young, 2010, p. 157). Buechler points out that social movements were long "denied" a political status (2000, p. 165). This also refers to the development of what historically has been considered political participation. While traditionally this only included institutional mechanisms, such as voting, by now social movements are generally referred to as a legitimate form of political participation (van Deth, 2014, p. 17). However, many of the discussed approaches of social movement theory, in fact, explicitly define social movements as political only when they target the state or its institutions (Buechler, 2000; Crossley, 2003). Armstrong and Bernstein summarize this tendency as follows:

> "To qualify as political, activity must be related to formal governance by nation-states. Collective action is not considered political unless it targets the state. […] Politics is not conceived of as a general social process occurring in multiple arenas of society." (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 77)

They contrast this to the cultural—but only cultural—interpretation of the NSM approach and argue that both of these perspectives in the end link the political to state institutions. This critique can be related to Rancière's broader

understanding of democratic politics as "disruptive of order, particularly of any order that allots people to places or alternatively, allots places for people to fill." (May, 2008, p. 43) Politics of the people is then centrally concerned with "a process of declassification […], a process of abandoning the identity one has been given." (May, 2008, p. 50) Isin also builds on this understanding by aiming for a balance to avoid making everything, so nothing, political: "Becoming political should be seen neither as wide as encompassing all ways of being (conflating being political with being social), nor as narrow as restricting it to being a citizen (conflating polity and politics)." (Isin, 2002, p. 276) This is a basis on which the political might be redefined. Johnson argues:

> "I understand political agency to be the capacity to decide, and to exert control over the conditions and spaces of being in which we live and through which we move. It does not, therefore, always take the form of vocal demands—it can also be quiet refusal. Agency is the capacity to be political: to contest and demand participation in the practices that shape a life and the meaning-making discourses that shape a world." (Johnson, 2014, p. 29)

This is highly important because, particularly for people without (clear) status, street protests with potential contact with the police might not always be a viable option. But migrant rights activism challenges a traditional notion of the political on another level too. As diverse as the protests are, they are not all *only* addressing state institutions (Ataç, 2016). Even though the central concern predominantly is naturalization and rights, claiming societal attention and solidarity is a part less reflected but still important. Schwiertz refers to this situation as a "radical democracy," which forms through the multitude and which emerges "before a juridification and representation within the state (Lorey 2012, S. 45f.; vgl. Demirovic 2013)." (2016, p. 247 [Translated]). It also links to Wagenaar's observations on resistance in the city that "does not express itself as protest, obstruction or upheaval" but rather "follows the more pragmatic road of designing a workable solution to a wicked problem." (2014, p. 231) Indeed, such political practices taking place in people's everyday life realities point to what could be linked to the local or spatial turn in other disciplines. Nicholls and Uitermark, for instance, discuss a "trend in recent theories of protest […] toward the micro rather than the macro" (2017, p. 237). They state:

> "We consider movements as complex assemblages emerging from local interactions. […] It is for this reason that social movement scholars and not

> just urban scholars should be attentive to the local: it is a crucial site for the mechanisms through which movements form, disband, transform, or fail to form in the first place." (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 227)

The trend to the local and micro-level as well as the trend to everyday practices both can be found in many recent publications on migrant rights activism. The circumstances of migrant rights activism are often mentioned as improbable to actually result in continuous social movements. Cited reasons are internal fluctuation, heterogeneity, legal situations and few participatory rights (Klotz, 2016, p. 63). However, increasing attention is being paid to the forms that such struggles develop anyways, representing an altogether visible and central movement of the current times (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2015; Borri & Fontanari, 2015; Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014; Marciniak & Tyler, 2014; Piacentini, 2014).

4.2 Identifying gaps and consolidating my own approach

The previous sections have shown that while migrant rights struggles are far from an understudied research subject these days, the field of social movement studies does not show as very relevant. As a grounded theory study, at this point, I present two components that constitute the development of this research project. One lies in the sensitizing concepts that I developed principally based on the previously discussed state-of-the-art, existing research on migrant rights movements. The second one is, to some extent, anticipating the conceptual framework that emerged from my empirical study. This points to the fact that the conceptual framework for this thesis is simultaneously its result and its starting point.[6]

4.2.1 Four sensitizing concepts sorting the field

The use of sensitizing concepts goes back to Herbert Blumer and is a means of organizing previous theoretical knowledge before starting empirical data

6 These anticipatory remarks are part of this chapter due to the literature review's ambiguous nature in constructivist GTM, so I ask the reader to remember that they are not developed in-depth here nor do they offer a clear-cut conceptual framework. Rather, they can be seen as guidance, "setting the stage" for what is to come, as Charmaz nicely labels it (2014, p. 308).

generation (1954). This has two functions within this research. The first was internal to the research process as I developed the sensitizing concepts while gaining a first orientation. The second function is more external and realized in this chapter, namely making the conceptual starting point of my work transparent to the reader. Starting my research back in 2016, after conducting an initial literature review, I developed four sensitizing concepts that would serve as starting points of my data generation. These sensitizing concepts are not a conceptual framework in the classical sense because they are *expected* to change throughout the research process.

Blumer contrasts sensitizing concepts with *definitive* concepts, which are meant to be strictly defined, operationalized and measured. Opposed to this, *sensitizing* concepts rather "function as a starting point for the analysis, since they guide it; those concepts […] are filled with meaning through the careful examination of empirical data." (Mattoni, 2014, p. 24) From the very start, sensitizing concepts are expected to change, develop or even be dropped throughout the process of data generation and analysis. This is what happened to my sensitizing concepts as well. While parts can clearly be identified in the analytical categories that emerged from my data, others became less visible or even disappeared. For understandable reasons, the four sensitizing concepts that I started with are linked to the research fields relevant to the study of migrant rights movements. Indeed, in a way, they might be my early take on sorting the state-of-the-art as presented in this chapter.

The first sensitizing concept is "Citizenship," which captures the seemingly contradictory situation of people who—from various perspectives—are not expected to and not very probable to become politically active and still increasingly do so all over the world. As a concept, citizenship unites all the contradictions and challenges that this situation contains by emphasizing and questioning the linkage between political community, identities and participation. This ambivalence led me to focusing particularly on struggles over citizenship where all kinds of people and citizens organize jointly.

The second sensitizing concept is called "Collectivity and Subjectivity". It emerged from the observation that a lot of classical social movement literature focuses either on the macro-level of big mobilizations or on the micro-level of individuals participating in these. Hence, especially concerning social movements where the two constantly meet, it seemed important to focus more on the meso-level of activist groups.

Eventually, I called the third sensitizing concept "Political Practices". This is rooted in the fact that I was my PhD at a political science and study of

democracy department, while my interest of study was rather on social movements. Especially in the beginning, this led to a re-orientation when I realized that neither political science—with its focus on institutionalized forms of political participation—nor social movement studies' sets of action repertoires were actually able to capture many practices that I observed in migrant rights activism and that I partly saw discussed in the literature on it as well. As the previous sensitizing concept, this one contributed to focusing on activist groups and their daily activities and negotiations too.

Finally, the fourth sensitizing concept is termed "The Nation-State and Beyond," pointing to the fact that even within migration studies and concerning social movements, research approaches most of the time still presuppose the nation-state as the natural unit of analysis. This sensitizing concept led to focusing on a local space without losing sight of its entanglement with national politics, transnational realities and moving across levels.

It should be conveyed in this summary that the sensitizing concepts are not limited to preparing a conceptual framework. They are clearly intertwined with methodological choices. I used the sensitizing concepts in preparing my data generation conceptually but also practically. It involved acknowledging various dynamics I was interested in and taking them, together with the first observations in the research context, as starting points to the otherwise open-ended, in-depth interviews. My perception is that throughout the later data generation and coding, the sensitizing concepts took a backseat.[7] Through focused coding, which contained sorting and abstracting from the initial codes, the sensitizing concepts re-emerged more explicitly.[8] The most visible continuity of the sensitizing concepts can be seen in the analytical categories *Experiencing Self through Collectivity* and *Making the Social Political*.[9]

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7 Unconsciously, they were certainly still there. However, given that initial coding especially uses various techniques that make the researcher stay very close to the data in very small units of analysis, it is not surprising that the sensitizing concepts were not present at this stage.

8 It was an interesting step to confront what I had expected to see before data generation with the initial codes. I am quite sure that the sensitizing concepts at this point impacted the way that I moved from initial to focused codes (see Subchapter 3.3.2).

9 "Citizenship" turned more into an ongoing approach towards different topics. "The Nation-State and Beyond" centrally informed and shaped the development of my ethical positioning in terms of methodology.

4.2.2 Identified gaps in the literature

This chapter has so far offered an overview of how migrant rights movements can and are currently being approached from various disciplinary fields. As with all topics that have a daily societal relevance and that are thus moving and changing at a very quick pace—especially for an academic sense of time—it is a huge challenge to keep track of all the on-going research over the course of a long research and publication project. The different components of the literature reviews in this chapter point out which research fields and specific approaches have framed and been relevant to my research from 2016 to 2020. Based on my literature reviews, I see social movement studies simultaneously as an auspicious disciplinary background for studying migrant rights activism and as the field most obviously lacking conceptual engagement with it.

This might mainly concern what I previously referred to as the Northern mainstream of social movement studies. Goodwin and Jasper observe the field to be divided between "a dominant structural approach" and "a cultural or constructionist tradition" (2004, p. vii). In fact, a growing body of scholarship criticizes that this does not do justice to the diversity and complexity of most social movements. The internal dynamics of movements are, as discussed before, often reduced to the cultural components of social movements. These still represent a more marginalized part of the discipline, and even these perspectives are often focused on the external functions of discourses, emotions and identities (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). From a conceptual social movement perspective, approaches on internal practices that link subject and collective are still lacking (Farro, 2014; McDonald, 2002).

A related criticism is the broad lack of movement-relevant literature that takes perspectives of generating insights closer to movement actors themselves (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p. 189). As Luchies claims, such perspectives would also be more open to the analyses, critiques and perspectives of activists themselves on their activities (2015, p. 525). Importantly, beyond these conceptual and methodological criticisms, like other research fields, it seems to lack integration of theoretical approaches from the Global South. Fadaee criticizes two considerable gaps in social movement studies with regard. First, an ignorance or marginalization of Southern social movements and their specific contexts. Second, she identifies a gap in recognizing and involving Southern and post-colonial perspectives in general (Fadaee, 2017, p. 47).

These conceptual gaps might complicate analytically capturing particularly diverse movements—such as migrant rights struggles that directly link structures and agencies through the very issues they are facing. This might be a reason why for quite a long time, the field has remained relatively silent about this specific movement (Ataç et al., 2016, p. 530; Bloemraad et al., 2016, p. 1648). Steinhilper even goes so far as to seeing political migrants as the blind spot of, especially the German, social movement studies (2017, p. 76f.). Stierl similarly criticizes:

> "Literatures and theories revolving around collective political action and social movements have long proven to be limited in their ability to analyse the uncountable border struggles and migration mobilisations that we witness in the world today (Stierl 2012). Often remaining within the scripts of (formal citizen) movements seeking to achieve particular (visible, audible, countable) political and policy ends, they have been unable to offer an adequate conceptual framework to account for the struggles, the politicality and transformative potential of migratory subjects and communities regularly perceived as unpolitical, marginal and voiceless (Atac, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016)." (Stierl, 2016, p. 562f.)

As has been discussed in the previous sections, many of the studies on migrant rights struggles negotiate and conceptualize new forms of political agency and underline the contestation that is taking place concerning migration and border regimes. These are often implicit hints that these *struggles*, *political activisms*, or *mobilizations* can well be addressed as a social movement. Indeed, with the growing interest in this phenomenon over the past years, the direct involvement of social movement perspectives has increased. Interestingly, scholars also acknowledge how this in turn now challenges existing approaches in the field:

> "[W]e see our contribution to social movement studies not only in the empirical investigations of a social movement that has rarely been studied through its toolkit of concepts and theories but also in addressing the ways in which this particular movement introduced challenges to those concepts and theories." (Della Porta, 2018a, p. 343)

As I have shown concerning the conceptual approaches around the notion of political practices, there is a growing body of scholarship addressing some of these gaps by focusing, among other things, on the diversity and internal complexity of most social movements. It is also an example of how various

fields that do not explicitly engage in social movement research contribute very promising theoretical approaches to contemporary movements. This becomes even more curious when considering that there is and has always been a wide variety of theories and conceptual approaches directly concerned with social movements without positioning themselves in the field of social movement studies or being considered as relevant by it. These are research fields such as feminist, Black and post-colonial studies and theories. Simultaneously, several scholars call on social movement studies to "break down barriers between specialized subfields across disciplines" (Buechler, 2011, p. 212; see also Kastner, 2012, p. 59). Thus, this seemed to be a direction to explore further.

Therefore, a central goal for this research is to build more explicit bridges from these fields, which have acquired and documented experience and knowledge of marginalized struggles over decades, to social movement studies. Thereby, I aim to address some of the aforementioned gaps, while certainly not pretending to close them. Migrant rights activism might be a movement that, to some extent, moves at the intersection of various research fields more naturally or visibly than other movements. Given the multidisciplinary research community engaged with this movement, it seems a particularly promising case to explore with the goal of integrating activist-scholarship emerging from movements more explicitly into social movement studies. I hope to point to new fruitful directions to study migrant rights activism but also other kinds of social movements from conceptually rich and deep perspectives.

This might also be a valuable contribution because while, as depicted, there is a lot of attention from various disciplines concerning migrant rights struggles, there are not so many studies that explicitly deal with their internal dynamics. Most publications in this recently growing body of literature focus on finally acknowledging the existence of these struggles and delineating their goals, strategies, diffusion, as well as linking this movement to others (see e.g. Bloemraad et al., 2016; Borri & Fontanari, 2015; Chimienti, 2011; Cook, 2010; Klotz, 2016; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017; Nyers & Rygiel, 2014). Given the prominent Critical Citizenship perspective, many studies focus on the subjects constituting themselves as citizens through disruptive claim-making acts (Ataç, 2013). While such research is essential, I would claim that it frequently ignores the internal complexity of these struggles.

One example is that there is relatively little published work on the interactions between activists with various legal statuses within the movement. A

few publications mention the tensions between refugee and non-refugee activists and problematize it with regards to domination, exploitation and dependence (Della Porta, 2018a, p. 14). Glöde and Böhlo point out the difficulty inequalities pose to joint political action, observing that "it is a challenge to have a joint discussion when the ones have their own apartment and the others do not have a place to stay, […] when some do not know what the next day will bring." (2015, p. 79 [Translated]) Ataç observes resulting tensions but underlines the role external pressure, such as through deportations, plays in increasing them (2016, p. 642). Both Kewes and Steinhilper emphasize problems of dependence and patronization. Kewes observes that a recurring question within the movement is "who protests in the first place, who predetermines the ideas, and whose topics are treated." (2016b, p. 264) Steinhilper underlines the "precarious" nature of interactions due to the differing power positions (2017, p. 81f.). Cappiali goes one step further but refers more to institutionalized Left allies when claiming that there should be more reflection about how these can actually "obstruct" migrants' mobilizations due to their own priorities (2016, p. 1f.).

Most of these publications mention but do not further explore these dynamics. Simin Fadaee goes more in-depth in critically reflecting on the different and even contradictory goals within the movement. She addresses that there are different aims and observes a dominance of European activists' priorities (Fadaee, 2015, p. 734). Ataç et al. observe that the only categorizations usually addressed concern legal status (2015, p. 10). Nadiye Ünsal also addresses existing power relations but scrutinizes the lack of critical reflection and awareness of intersectionality in this regard. She claims that there is a need for more self-reflection and understanding of the fact that "people are not only 'supporters' or 'refugees'" (Ünsal, 2015, p. 15):

> "I argue that the prevailing (dis)privilege categories 'refugees' and 'supporters' do not reflect the intersectional power structures – the nexus of class, race, gender and other power relations – in the movement and prevent us from dealing with them." (Ünsal, 2015, p. 1)

Odugbesan and Schwiertz explicitly address internal conflicts within the movement that they see as resulting from the hierarchical legal system dividing migrants' positionalities: "[M]igratory and refugee struggles often differ according to their particular and short-term goals of claiming rights based on their specific positionalities and legal status." (Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 187) According to them, this can particularly result in tensions of self-

organized migrant and refugee groups with German Left groups because the latter do not have the same urgency of change and can therefore aim at more structural claims (Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 198).

Such perspectives show that there are gaps in how migrant rights movements have been studied so far. Hence, in this study, I set out to develop a perspective aiming to integrate significant insights from current approaches from critical migration and citizenship studies on this research subject and activist-scholarly explorations of such internal dynamics from other social movements. For this reason, while engaging with current debates in various fields, I mainly focus my contributions to social movement studies. This endeavor goes beyond what this publication alone can obtain. I point to relevant perspectives while not always being able to discuss their whole conceptual depth in the details they would deserve. I focalize my perspective through the concept of solidarities.

4.2.3 Setting the stage: Conceptualizing solidarities

As a constructivist grounded theory study, my research process involved a constant iterative process of moving between the empirical data and existing literature. In Chapter 3.3, I display the details of my research process more in-depth. At this point, it is important to emphasize once again that, with the central goal of GTM being to develop theory, the idea is not to apply any given conceptual frame to a research field. Instead, the aim is to develop theory through the interaction of empirical data and existing research. With coding techniques that step-by-step raise the conceptual level of the data analysis, Negotiating Solidarities emerged as the overarching storyline of my data. This storyline is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Essentially, it conveys that migrant rights activism in Hamburg, as I have researched it, is a heterogeneous movement with complex internal dynamics and relationships that activist groups actively engage with. Negotiating emphasizes that solidarities are not an idealistic concept of harmonious joint action but, rather, an idea that emerges through discussions, practices and relations, which are not necessarily always just positive. Therefore, the research questions further focusing my research have been: *What does solidarity mean in social movements, and*

how do migrant rights activist practices result in negotiating, enacting and challenging it?[10]

In fact, concerning existing research, solidarity appears to be a buzzword and under-theorized at the same time. Especially but not only concerning migrant rights, it is a keyword that can be found in many publications (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2016; Castro Varela, 2018; Della Porta, 2018b; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Johnson, 2012; Omwenyeke, 2016; Philipp, 2016; Rygiel, 2011; Toubøl, 2018).[11] Simultaneously, since the 1990s and up until more recent times, scholars claim that it is over-used, lacking broader conceptualization (Bayertz, 1998, p. 9; Dean, 1996, p. 7; Nowicka et al., 2019, p. 384; Scholz, 2008, p. 3). For example, Agustín and Jørgensen criticize this by observing that it has been used "as an attempt to force an (inexistent) political common goal and cover up the internal disagreements which impede it." (2019, p. 28) I cannot pretend to solve this or to fill the gaps discussed in this chapter. But my aim is to delineate the take on solidarities that emerges from my empirical material on migrant rights activism in Hamburg and to develop it by linking it to further existing research. Even though this does not include an exhaustive exploration of existing research on solidarities, the last part of this chapter points to some helpful remarks from research on solidarities.

Bayertz states that a dominant definition of solidarity is that it is "a mutual moral responsibility between individual and *Gemeinschaft*."[12] (1998, p. 11 [Translated, emphasis added]) To what extent this is limited to the particular group or it is a universal moral norm is at the heart of the complexity which, according to him, causes the poor conceptualization of solidarity (Bayertz, 1998, p. 13). Bayertz discusses how with the emergence of the nation-state, solidarity was increasingly framed as limited to the collective of one society

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10 While the term *enact* might seem to suggest a more theatrical or performative connotation than *practice*, this is not intended here. For example, Köster-Eiserfunke et al. explain that they use *performance* in the sense of "experienceable action" and in opposition to the *act*, which is analytically constructed "through observers" (2014, p. 186).

11 As particularly visible in the current times of a global pandemic or differing treatments of refugees from Ukraine, it seems clear that this is not limited to academia but is also prevalent in public discourse. Castro Varela refers to Spivak's "double bind" notion when claiming that concerning the supposed solidarity of many European people with refugees, those latter are confronted with being told to be welcome, while also facing "a violent, racist registration and order regime as well as racist attacks in their everyday life." (Castro Varela, 2018, p. 6)

12 Community.

or nation. Often, this culminates in mainly understanding solidarity as what takes place among one people in the welfare state (Bayertz, 1998, p. 34). However, he also approaches solidarity as "a political resource" for justice, "especially where institutionalized mechanisms to build and maintain justice do not exist or fail." (Bayertz, 1998, p. 45f. [Translated]) Among others, Scholz focuses on solidarity as "the cohesiveness or commonality of a group or population" (Scholz, 2008, p. 6). But it is important to stress that Scholz does not limit solidarity to supposed collective identities—not concerning the nation-state sense nor identity politics. She distinguishes between social solidarity (based on shared characteristics), political solidarity (build around group responsibility and collective action) and civic solidarity (focused on the relationship between state and citizens) (Scholz, 2008, pp. 21–35).

When exploring how solidarity can take form in relationships beyond differences, inequalities or privileges, in Scholz' terms, it is political solidarity that is relevant. Kabeer also stresses that this kind of solidarity "may be on the basis of the shared experience of oppression, or it may be in response to perceived injustice to others." (2005, p. 8) This cannot be taken for granted, neither in public nor academic understandings, as Dean points out: "[Solidarity] has been assumed to require that we repress our differences and give up our identities for the sake of a larger group." (Dean, 1996, p. 16) According to her, this is problematic because it homogenizes groups that are not actually that homogeneous. This is also explored, for instance, by bell hooks, who moves beyond a pure insider/outsider dichotomy by claiming:

> "Radical groups of women continue our commitment to building sisterhood, to making feminist political solidarity between women an ongoing reality. We continue the work of bonding across race and class. We continue to put in place the anti-sexist thinking and practice which affirms the reality that females can achieve self-actualization and success without dominating one another." (hooks, 2000a, p. 17f.)

Lister also stresses that a feminist citizenship praxis calls for politics of solidarity in difference (1997, p. 199f.). Considering my empirical data, it is particularly interesting that several publications also explore the role that not just differences but conflicts play in solidarities in movements. Marciniak and Tyler address how migrant rights activism highlights "the forms of solidarities and alliances that are possible and impossible between citizens and noncitizens." (2014, p. 5) Agustín and Jørgensen discuss solidarity as contentious, producing "new ways of configuring political relations and spaces," also in-

cluding ruptures (2019, p. 30). From a Black feminist theoretical perspective, Hill Collins significantly raises that solidarity is particularly central between groups or people with differing power positions and involves a never-ending process of being in the making (Hill Collins, 2010, p. 25). According to Rancière, solidarity is, indeed, not about what the interaction is but what it can produce:

> "The issue is not one of how those who are oppressed and those who stand in solidarity with them are to relate to each other. It is how people can form a political subject of democratic action that undercuts the particular oppression itself." (May, 2008, p. 56)

I argue that to capture how this forming might take place requires an exploration of the relationships shaped by these oppressions. In fact, Scholz underlines how hard it is for groups to address internal exclusions as "[u]nlearning the abusive patterns" by renouncing "privilege that comes from the oppression or injustice inflicted on another." (2008, p. 142) This difficult and certainly not always conflict-free process might be essential to solidarities. Kwesi Aikins and Bendix, among others, very clearly distinguish between help and solidarity by identifying dialogue as what needs to be worked toward, opposed to "self-congratulatory paternalistic help" (Kwesi Aikins & Bendix, 2015). The next chapter sheds light on how solidarities emerge in the context of migrant rights activism through my data. Chapter 6 takes a step further and develops my data together with extant literature.

5. Negotiating Solidarities: Empirical findings

In this chapter, I give a detailed summary of my empirical findings, so that the reader can gain insight into my analysis of the data. The subchapters present an in-depth discussion of each of the six analytical categories and the codes that most essentially sustain them in the overall storyline. I use direct quotes from interviews and fieldnotes as well as further references to the empirical material. The conceptual storyline emerged from and was developed based on the empirical material from my fieldwork. Throughout the later analytical techniques, this also involved engaging with existing literature. However, I do not systematically engage with it in this chapter yet. Especially in constructivist GTM, it is key to give data space and depth, accounting for emerging theoretical development. But certainly, I do not pretend that these observations have never been discussed. The previous chapter underlined the relevance of existing research and how it frames my data. Furthermore, in order to make relevant links to extant research visible in this chapter already, I include what Dunne and Üstűndağ refer to as *flags*:

> "[T]he reader […] may be frustrated with an apparent lack of theoretical discussion as they progress through the contextualization and findings chapters, [so] this technique of flagging connections between your own emerging themes and extant theoretical concepts can be very useful" (Dunne & Üstűndağ, 2020).

These flags are hints to but not in-depth elaborations of existing literature. A more thorough integration follows in Chapter 6 where I link the condensed contributions of this chapter to existing literature and theory, focused by the contribution to social movement studies.[1] The following graph represents a vi-

1 Therefore, I flag the references relevant for this integration within the text, while only including other necessary references, which will not be explored further, in footnotes.

sualization of the overall storyline: Negotiating Solidarities. The gerund form underlines its processual character as neither its components nor their interaction are totally clear-cut or rigid. They partly move at different levels (more focused on the individual or the groups), but are linked to each other in the development of answers to the research question. In the visualization, the research question is at the center and around it there are the six main analytical categories that emerged from the multi-step data analysis. Next to their name, I note a more conceptual dimension each category takes within the storyline and toward the research question. Altogether, the storyline offers an abstracted summary of the data that anyways stays close to them.

Figure 2: Visualization Storyline, by the author.

Feeling the Need to Be Political basically discusses *why* and *how* people are involved, so rather the individual dimension of lived everyday activism. Experiencing the Self in Collectivity still explores the individual dimension but by taking it as accessing the experience of the collective: *who* builds solidarities? "We Are All Activists" discusses *how* the very notions of solidarities and joint action are constantly being challenged within activist groups themselves. Making the Social Political looks at *what* kind of activities are taking

place, distinguishing them from others and thereby framing how political action is referred to. Solid Fluidity of Alliances focuses on *where* these solidary actions take place, meaning moving beyond single activist groups, negotiating solidarities at different levels simultaneously. Finally, "We Have Not Finished" is the category that contains the *when*, as in a time dimension of how groups sustain their activities through the constant practicing of solidarity. While there is a sequence in how these categories are presented through the storyline, this does not mean that this should be taken as a clear sequential logic or a life cycle—either of activists or activist groups. There might be occasions where a certain sequence applies, but generally the various components can also happen simultaneously or some parts may take place while others do not.

5.1 Feeling the Need to Be Political

This category captures the individual level of how activists experience being and becoming political in the context of migrant rights activism in Hamburg. It emerges from the interviews with individual activists but also regularly comes up as a topic in group activities.[2] The category entails motivations and backgrounds of being politically active as well as reasons for not being active (anymore). It captures structural and seemingly more individual reasons, which are collected in some patterns. Some activists suffer themselves from the circumstances they are fighting, while others are not as directly affected by current migration policies. Nevertheless, many patterns emerge with people in very diverse living situations. Feeling the Need to Be Political is a complex category that might seem contradictory in capturing plural and shifting perspectives. It is the first category presented because without politically active individuals, there are no groups and there is no claiming, feeling or practicing solidarities.

2 Many activists are involved in multiple groups or have been political for a long time, so their experiences are not necessarily confined to migrant rights activism or the groups I have been involved with. Additionally, all the activists I conducted interviews with or met in groups were, at that moment, actively involved in some way. More than the other categories, this one is centrally based on how participants interpret others' experiences, especially in terms of stopping political involvement. Nevertheless, also active people face the factors that lead to people not being active.

Being and becoming political

> "I'm just a person who is into politics" (IDI_P04, l. 912f. [Translated])

Similar to this statement, many activists regularly reflect about their be(com)ing political. Being political is framed as a personal characteristic, a natural part of one's life (IDI_P01, l. 524–528; IDI_P07, l. 231–234; IDI_P16, l. 1415–1422). One activist refers to her*his "cause" (IDI_P15, l. 138f. [Translated]), another one even states: "I think I couldn't live without political work." (IDI_P03, l. 1136f. [Translated]) These examples show that activists reflect on their own being political. They often emphasize the importance they attribute to it, even defining themselves through it. Some refer to how they have always been political, many delineate how they *became* political (IDI_P01, l. 689–695; IDI_P08, l. 7–13; IDI_P11, l. 474–481; IDI_P14, l. 410–420). These political biographies are often building around decisive events, youth and family (IDI_P03, l. 128–131; IDI_P04, l. 81–84; IDI_P06, l. 35–43; IDI_P15, l. 117–127).

While there are overarching patterns that can be identified, there is also a wide variety of backgrounds, understandings and forms of being political. Activists differ in ways and intensities of involvement (IDI_P08, l. 639–648; IDI_P11, l. 554–565). Not everyone sees it as the center of their lives or discusses a linear development of *politicizing*. This chapter captures some such patterns without aiming at exhaustively representing how activists experience their being political. The focus is less on reasons for *becoming* political[3]. It is more about how people experience their be(com)ing political—including reasons but not as causal links.

Feeling the need to be political

> "I always felt like… 'Oh, I need to do something'. I always knew a sense of guilt. Now I feel like- I'm trying to do something. It's not to- only for the sake of appeasing me but I think because it's right and also enjoying it and I think that people around me appreciate… what I do." (IDI_P05, l. 616–621)

3 However, it is interesting to note that a topic that social movement studies seemingly have always been focused on is exactly this dimension of *why* people become political (see e.g. Buechler, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 5f.; Kreisler, 2010; Norris, 2002, p. 201; Raschke, 1988, p. 124).

One defining pattern of this category is that activists feel the need to be political. This urge is differently composed and contextualized but frequently expressed—both by activists who are fighting for their *own* rights very directly and by activists who have the privilege of choosing this political fight over others because they are not directly affected (anymore) by German and European migration policies.

Many activists express that they feel like they have to engage because the overall situation is so unbearable, for others or themselves to live or witness. Often this involves a clear reference to the current political situation or the importance of standing up against racism, discrimination, borders or the rising Right (IDI_P06, l. 50–58; IDI_P14, l. 341–346; IDI_P16, l. 221–230). One activist says, "[it is] necessary to do anti-racist work." (IDI_P05, l. 471–473). Another one stresses that "[i]t is unacceptable that people are systematically deprived of their rights." (IDI_P06, l. 309–310 [Translated]) Often these notions are also related to activists' own privileges or capacities that they feel a responsibility to use. In a meeting someone says that "s*he wants to do something against this situation where s*he can move more freely than others in this society." (PO_G01_24, l. 7–10) Sometimes, such responsibility is also ascribed to privileged groups, for instance, a refugee activist appealing to Germans' obligation "to counter the current situation and developments." (PO_G01_10, p. 27; PO_G09_1, p. 54) Even when not expressed so explicitly, such a feeling seems to emerge in the following quote too:

> "And being politically active for me means that I can simply… that I know, I have the possibility to change things or… like, shift things- I can contribute to a specific topic moving in one direction rather than another. … This gives me the feeling of not being powerless." (IDI_P11, l. 483–489 [Translated])

Another person describes how s*he does not want difficult living conditions let immobilize her*him: "[W]e have to get out, we still have to walk, we have to learn many things in life. We can do many things." (IDI_P17_1, l. 675–688 [Translated]) Indeed, these two quotes stress the linkage between the sense of *having to* act and the possibilities that come with it. The felt need to act positively emerges as building a society or future "that I want to live in," (IDI_P06, l. 19–28 [Translated]) overcoming borders, including the ones in one's own mind (PO_G01_24, l. 10–14). Some scholars similarly observe activists' "felt necessity," (Bang & Sørensen, 1999, p. 331) "responsibility," (Day, 2005, p. 200;

Young, 2006) their feeling "drawn in," "compelled" or even "morally obligated" to act (Scholz, 2008, p. 52).[4]

"We were forced to be political"

> "It came up that it was important to make clear: The people are made into refugees. We have to be political as a logical consequence from this." (PO_G02_12, p. 43)

This quote captures the specific situation of people who are personally and directly affected by the circumstances this movement is fighting against. In this context, these are most of the time migrants that aim at or apply for asylum or a residence status in Hamburg and live or have lived in camps. Many people do not get or fight long years for a legal status, they are threatened by deportation, they live isolated in camps, do not get access to education, health services, work or normal housing. Of course, these life circumstances give a specific texture to the necessity to act (IDI_P05, l. 933–942).

The notion of "we were forced to be political" is voiced by several activist (IDI_P03, l. 430–434; IDI_P08, l. 599–606; PO_G02_06, p. 68). While responsibility can play a role in this as well, indignation and anger seem central in its context, as shown when one activist talks about the situation in a camp, explicitly expressing her*his anger: "[U]p to now [specific camp] is… full of people. Up to now… people arrive and are there. They are not… transferred because they [do] not have asylum." (IDI_P01, l. 418–422) Activists underline that they are denied basic rights and live in unbearable situations and, therefore, have to stand up and organize themselves (IDI_P17_1, l. 604–611). They did not choose this struggle, but they try to own it, as shown in this note from a meeting: "[N]o one [came] here with the plan of making a political group. Instead they had used certain conditions and an opportunity." (PO_G02_14, p. 90) Migrants with a (by now) secure status, who have (partly) experienced the oppression of migration policies and discrimination, or BPoC, who daily

4 Flacks even addresses that activists cannot be interpreted just by their situation, calling for a more differentiated exploration (2004, p. 146). But he, as others, focuses on those acting in solidarity. Maybe because the activity of those affected are, indeed, interpreted mainly through their positioning. Nevertheless, they all call for these more complex motivations to be further explored.

experience racism, have direct links to these struggles (IDI_P11, l. 20–47). One activist describes such an experience:

> "And [there] suddenly I'm not a teacher anymore, I'm a […] worker. And how they treat you badly… how they belittle you, how they devalue you… just for how you look… or, well, they treat you as inferior to them, you know. […] Then I come here to Hamburg and the situation in this sense doesn't change much." (IDI_P17_1, l. 728–740 [Translated])

Such situations force people to become active, as is raised when a person, discussing her*his living situation shaped by institutional barriers, is told that nobody was going to become political for her*him: "'I know you don't want to do it and I understand it but you have to connect, unite and mobilize.'" (PO_G05_11, l. 23–28) Facets of this notion are reflected in some research on migrant rights activism (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2015, p. 8; Bayat, 2010, p. 15; Kanalan, 2015, p. 1f.).[5]

Nicht-Ankommen-Können[6]

> "[Y]ou know, you can feel the segregation that you are immigrant, you are refugee. Even though you hold a passport… you hold a German passport […]. [B]ut you could still know that it's just a ceremonial and bureaucratic right that you could get but in the reality you cannot connect to the reality. […] Because I think […] it's also connected to the fact of if you really belong… to this city, to this system, to the culture and also… to how the system works. But when you already feel like… the system excludes you […]. If you could miss this, the reality part, you could really feel like the future does not sound really good in the context of how you feel, you know." (IDI_P08, l. 812–827)

This description of experiencing a discriminatory, racist society and state shows how hard it is made for people to actually arrive. This is true for the most immediate experiences of arrival but expands to when people, as depicted in this quote, already have legal documents. Understandably, this can

5 It also links to perspectives focusing on identity politics or grievances (see e.g. Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 20; Crossley, 2002, p. 14; Rosenau, 2008, p. 64). However, it is too easy to ascribe becoming political mainly to activists' positionings, as is often done in such perspectives.

6 Not being able to actually arrive or settle.

cause a sense of hopelessness, which can lead to people not becoming active or stopping their engagement (IDI_P04, l. 405–408; IDI_P05, l. 806–813; IDI_P15, l. 592–602). It also raises an ambivalence present in this whole analytical category. Factors that for some people, or at a certain point in time, are central reasons why they are or become politically active, for others, or at a different point in time, can be the very cause for not doing so. The very conditions—the isolation in the camps, criminalization, discrimination, living conditions, lack of perspectives and, not least, the immense effort it takes to move through the asylum procedures—are structural causes why people do not have time or energy for rising against these very circumstances (anymore). Far-off camps, daily struggles or deportations very directly prevent people from building a life (IDI_P06, l. 745–749; PO_G01_18, p. 19).[7]

Giving reasons for not acting

> "One refugee said that s*he had been in Germany for a year only and felt like s*he had to gain more experience before s*he could actually do something. Then some others said that it was only through doing things that you could actually gain experience." (PO_G06_06, l. 82–86)

The whole setting described above also results in many migrants living in the camps lacking knowledge and confidence to become active—yet, while it clearly does not apply to all since there are many who become active despite this. Nevertheless, not knowing about one's rights, concrete possibilities of acting, or the people to address, but also just feeling like not having much to contribute, are mentioned as factors (IDI_P05, l. 1087–1103; IDI_P07, l. 6–13). The very real and partly externally produced fear of negative consequences for one's life, especially for people's asylum procedures, is even more fundamental (IDI_P01, l. 673–684; PO_G08_01, p. 97).[8] Additionally, of course, there are also activities or contexts that indeed can involve risks for people without (clear) status (IDI_P03, l. 531–535). This can also be grounded in intersectional

7 Steinhilper refers to "demobilizing circumstances" (Steinhilper, 2017, p. 78 [Translated]).

8 Multiple people report that camp employees discourage people to leave the camp when there are activities outside, telling them it will be bad for their asylum procedure or giving wrong information about activists.

forms of discrimination, affecting how free or comfortable people feel to be politically active.[9]

Not being political

> "Someone said this explicitly: 'I don't have any problem because- it's not nice where I live. It is a camp. I didn't say it's nice. But it's… still part of the right time. It is a phase that I have to stay in this camp, then come the Folgeunterkunft[10] and after Folgeunterkunft comes the apartment.' And this is what they all experience: Why should I rush and demonstrate?" (IDI_P07, l. 257–266 [Translated])

Especially concerning people in such living situations, it is important to point out that not all people living in and being affected by European migration policies are, see the need, or want to be political about it. This is particularly important to take into account when it comes to some people in vulnerable situations getting in touch with activist groups, at least partly often seeking individual support:

> Because the people don't go there to suddenly become politically active. No. They talk about their own problems […] not with the background of wanting to problematize something: 'For this I will get more rights or less rights or…' No. These consequences are not always there or not… intended." (IDI_P07, l. 312–317 [Translated])

This quote points to the fact that there are different perceptions of which situations really require becoming active in the first place. Such perspectives, for example, can build on seeing the situation as a temporary part of the normal procedures, as described above, or on not having any political experiences, having lived through worse situations or being better off than others (IDI_P01, l. 556–560; IDI_P07, l. 169–173; IDI_P15, l. 209–220). All these observations do

9 Examples (lack of childcare or the choice of meeting places) are raised in Subchapter 5.3. Some political participation research explores why certain groups of people are not getting involved in different forms of participation—more or less conventional, for instance (see e.g. Edwards, 2004, p. 97; Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 253; Streeck & Schäfer, 2013, p. 13).

10 These are the camps which mostly people are transferred to from "first reception centers".

not mean that people are necessarily not political at all or that they cannot eventually become it. But it indicates diverse positions within groups. These can include dependencies, making people do something for groups because they need support. Such aspects are raised by fewer activists and are often hard to recognize, as one activist describes: "that… people just accepted and endured their living conditions, no matter how difficult they were… eh, yes, I found this really hard" (IDI_P14, l. 126–129 [Translated]). Nevertheless, some activists very clearly call for being aware of and acknowledging this (IDI_P08, l. 251–266). One activist highlights that people should accept that, just like medicine, politics is not the right thing for everyone: "Not all people can do politics. Alright? … And this is very ok." (IDI_P15, l. 353–357 [Translated]) These notions around respecting not being political and awareness of certain emerging power imbalances seem rather marginally voiced and discussed. However, I think that it is a potentially important dynamic that should be given its place.[11]

"Doing something for oneself"

> "[S]o, you know, this is also part of my daily life so but at a certain point it changed because I was less involved in all those activities and things changed. And I tried to get some black job, then stopped because the situation is very precarious and… at a point also I get in process of also getting legal status which also… was a very turning point in my life, also trying to do some other thing." (IDI_P08, l. 61–66)

This quote raises another reason that comes up concerning activists stopping to be involved—for a certain time or altogether. Firstly, it contains the notion of migrants beginning to "[start] a life" (PO_G02_07, p. 80): through school, Ausbildung[12] or work (IDI_P01, l. 412–418; IDI_P04, l. 737–742; IDI_P06, l. 189–203; PO_G02_22, l. 85–90). One activist describes how being transferred to another camp but also getting her*his papers, enabling her*him to start a German class, led to not being actively involved anymore: "When I want to do… Politik[13], I cannot focus at the same time for learning." (IDI_P01, l. 947–952)

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11 Various positionings and resulting power relations are discussed in Subchapters 5.3 and 5.4.

12 Apprenticeship.

13 Politics.

"Doing something for oneself" means shifting one's focus and energies—circumstances (positively) changing can keep people from (further) organizing politically (IDI_P01, l. 588ff.). That is not always a conscious choice but can be induced, for instance by getting a job taking more time or not being flexible, or starting a family[14] (IDI_P06, l. 911–920; PO_G02_32, l. 38–55). From different positionalities and life situations, this dimension also resonates with activists in legally secure circumstances. So secondly, doing something for oneself can refer to conscious choices to put oneself before the political struggle, at least at a certain point (IDI_P11, l. 146–162; IDI_P16, l. 345–352).

Being tired/fed up/exhausted…

> "Then I thought: 'Well,… [laughs] the laws worsened and no one listens to us'. … And… there is no danger, or the politicians simply… don't take us seriously and they think that we don't put pressure. So they will never do anything for us…." (IDI_P15, l. 572–579 [Translated])

I already raised hopelessness before. A related pattern is that people describe having "no energy," (IDI_P04, l. 1182f.) feeling "fed up," (IDI_P07, l. 486f.) "exhausted," (IDI_P06, l. 423f.) "tired" (IDI_P08, l. 771f.) or "frustrated" (IDI_P14, l. 123–126). Sometimes this is due to the general political situation or lack of positive developments or changes. Other times, it can relate to internal dynamics, disagreements or personal issues (IDI_P03, l. 256–261; IDI_P08, l. 210–227; IDI_P11, l. 146–162; PO_G02_22, l. 90–96).[15] People do not necessarily always stop but even when they are still or eventually remain active, these notions emerge frequently.[16] One activist intervenes in a meeting claiming that "the way we are doing this is not working," referring to energy being lost in arguments: "Try to be positive. If you're not positive, you're not helping us. […] We have a lot of things to do, we need energy." (PO_G02_15, p. 10) An aspect receiving less attention but linked to this is how activists deal with this.

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14 Interestingly, in my experience, it was rather new fathers who would be less involved. Many mothers who were active before giving birth would still come with their babies afterwards as well. Of course, this also relates to the forms that groups take and to structural factors, such as childcare discussed in Subchapter 5.3.

15 Lack of change is explored in Subchapter 5.6, internal dynamics in Subchapter 5.2.

16 If anything, exhaustion comes up in publications as a general collective phase in protest cycles (see e.g. Ataç, 2016, p. 636; Kreisler, 2010, p. 98; May, 2010, p. 149; Tarrow, 2011, p. 206).

Balancing things

> "No, but I really think this is also a topic how people who are doing a lot politically actually have a balance, you know. I often ask myself- well, I think some people… are more like, doing sports or… I don't know go out dancing or things like that. But I believe that you need some kind of a balance." (IDI_P03, l. 1193–1200 [Translated])

This indicates how activists continue to stay involved when many of them experience a strong sense of tiredness and exhaustion. Balancing emerges as a strategy of "[engaging in a way] so that I'm fine" (IDI_P11, l. 177–179 [Translated])—which, however, of course, not everyone has the full choice of using. This can mean limiting engagement time-wise, but sometimes also just involves awareness of its intensity. It can mean taking time for holidays, seeing friends or having other hobbies (IDI_P03, l. 1182–1189; IDI_P15, l. 176–185). Activists also focus on building a life by finding a job or doing a German course (IDI_P01, l. 950–953; IDI_P08, l. 606–619). Many activists consciously reflect about how many capacities they have. Some claim that when being convinced of what one is doing, it is possible to make time for it, even though in principle there is little time and energy (IDI_P07, l. 62–67; IDI_P11, l. 412–426). One activist in a group meeting stresses how the living conditions of refugee activists leave more responsibility to act with Germans (PO_G05_05, p. 51). So balancing can go in a direction of individually limiting political activity or collectively distributing responsibilities very consciously (IDI_P16, l. 221–230; IDI_P17_1, l. 669–676; PO_G01_33, l. 12–21). What is usually referred to as a work-life-balance, in this context might become an activism-life(-work) balance (IDI_P01, l. 950–953; IDI_P03, l. 157–161; IDI_P08, l. 61–69; IDI_P16, l. 461–470). Part of this balance is that activists also address how they gain through their political involvement.

Gaining (energy) from politics

> "I thought that I could never do it, you know? Unfortunately, in the society we're living in they keep telling us that we cannot do it […]: 'It's complicated, you won't be able, it will not work'. But when you enter a group, as I entered [group's name], I suddenly see that they are doing workshops. And, additionally, that they offer me to do it as well. At first, I refused, I thought 'No,

> no'. But then I said 'Why not? I won't die if I try'. So from then on I could do it and, of course, I can still improve but I made the first step […] and this also fills me with personal satisfaction." (IDI_P17_2, l. 50–61 [Translated])

Many activists describe feeling happy, satisfied, proud at times, getting energy and hope from their political activities (IDI_P03, l. 177–185; IDI_P04, l. 853ff.; IDI_P08, l. 141–150; IDI_P14, l. 635–644). Personal relationships and sharing joint experiences are an important part of this (IDI_P03, l. 1199–1209; IDI_P16, l. 564–571). One activist calls the emotional support among activists "enriching," (IDI_P14, l. 342, l. 549–559 [Translated]) another summarizes: "[I]t's making friends in the end, of course." (IDI_P05, l. 517f.) Gaining energy can involve not feeling alone, experiencing positive collective moments and also just having fun (IDI_P11, l. 195–198; IDI_P15, l. 198–205; PO_G01_27, l. 120–129): "And actually for me it's very important that […] political work is fun. Of course, it doesn't always have to be fun. But it's an important part." (IDI_P11, l. 389–393) It can mean receiving emotional or material support (IDI_P08, l. 676–688). Examples can be forgetting one's daily problems or possibilities of improving life through activism (IDI_P17_1, l. 638–644; IDI_P07, l. 96–104).[17] That can also cause challenges in terms of relationships of power and dependency as well as of potentially unequally distributed benefits (IDI_P07, l. 522–533; IDI_P08, l. 241–251). Yet, it also puts the positive side of feeling this need to be political into perspective:

> "I would always continue because in my daily life it gives me good experiences and good feelings. So I would say without it, it would be, on the one hand, stupid not to do it anymore cause… I would- could only sit at home and look outside and see that nothing is changing but everything is worse. So it would make me really sad I guess. And, on the other hand, it's also something with- for my personal life… where I just gain more positive attitude from." (IDI_P16, l. 1415–1422)

Gaining recognition sometimes comes up and expresses a wish to contribute something (IDI_P03, l. 1291–1295; IDI_P04, l. 885–897; IDI_P05, l. 142–149; IDI_P07, l. 722–733). Networking, energy and political agency sometimes appear in existing literature about migrant rights activism focused on politi-

17 It should not be ignored that next to people living in camps this can also apply to privileged people (materially) benefitting from activism, even when this is not often explicitly addressed.

cal practices (see e.g. Johnson, 2014, p. 29; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 16; Steinhilper, 2017, p. 81). This last aspect of *contributing* links to where this category started, exploring that many activists see being political as a natural, necessary, central part of their lives.

Summary

> "I would say that… in the beginning I had […] the idea […] that politics is something which is done by politicians […]. I'm basically there to elect them and that's all. And step by step you get to know or you, well, you realize that there are many problems where the politicians are not giving you any solution […] And… so I developed the idea that it might be pretty smart to do something on my own." (IDI_P16, l. 205–216)

This quote shows how such an understanding of one's own be(com)ing political can develop over time.[18] This category captures the complexity of people's involvement in political groups fighting for migrant rights in Hamburg. People come from different backgrounds and are in various life situations, but share notions of strong commitment, at times experienced as inescapable. The category shows that this can result in positive and negative experiences. Activists think about ways of balancing. I would argue that the category interestingly shows that positionings are not necessarily the main or only factor for political involvement. This makes reasons that make people stop an essential part. Individual positions and situations are reflected and shifting, also because necessities and priorities change. Identities might sometimes be as much a result of as a reason for political activism. In a way, this category is the basis of the storyline Negotiating Solidarities. What solidarities can and should be is such a personal figuring-out process. In addition, for collective negotiations to take place, joint capacities need to be explored and reflected. The next analytical category takes off at the linkage of these individual and collective positionings.

18 Yet, there is no linearity from not being politically conscious to being politically active.

5.2 Experiencing the Self Through Collectivity

This category captures the role relations, emotions and the multiplicity and fluidity of identities play in how activists experience political activity. The category explores how activists reflect on their own involvement and how groups are in a continual process of self-defining.[19] Individual and collective identities are often addressed as something surprisingly rigid when it comes to social movements because as participants' identities (most often seen as equal to positionings) are often assumed as the core reason for movements' existence. The previous subchapter raised that identities might partly be a product of political involvement because people change through it. This category explores this a little further in terms of individual and collective identities emerging as fluid, overlapping and controversial parts of activism. Neither on the individual nor on the collective level is this a simple or purely positive process but one of constant negotiation. That stresses the meeting of self and collective as the interesting focal point, rather than either the one or the other. This is the reason why I describe the notions in this category as Experiencing the Self Through Collectivity, underlining the centrality of experience and relations.[20]

Perceiving oneself (within a group)

> "At the moment it's less- well, I also don't really know what my place is, maybe, but… something always comes up then where I can contribute." (IDI_P04, l. 955–958 [Translated])

Many activists reflect very (self-)consciously about their involvement in groups and how they are experiencing it. That can involve insecurities and doubts, as in the previous statements (see also IDI_P05, l. 1087–1103;

19 Groups consist of individuals and can only be approached through their perspectives. This includes my participants and myself. This category strongly builds on observations from group activities I have been part of, which means that these collective instances are captured through my own experience. My participants vary in experience and involvement in political groups. Some are involved in many groups, some mainly in one. Some have been active for a long time (in Hamburg), some just started (here). Some have doubts about their place within activism.

20 The category is an example of how my empirical data developed in dialogue with existing theory, as its name was inspired by McDonald's concept of a "public experience of self" (2002, p. 125).

IDI_P17_1, l. 742–756; PO_G06_06, l. 82–86). But other feelings are also raised, such as happiness, frustration, support, love, anger and many more (IDI_P01, l. 281–284; IDI_P03, l. 177–185; IDI_P11, l. 114–117; IDI_P15, l. 268–272). The wide range of emotions suggests that these experiences are promising to look at. One activist states: "I'm here because I care…" (IDI_P05, l. 111–113). While not being specified further, this is a strong entangling of personal feelings and relationalities, both to other individuals and to a collective. Someone highlights that even though sometimes it is really hard, s*he takes time for the group because it is important to her*him: "[W]hen you're convinced by the contents then… eh… you take the time and make it possible." (IDI_P07, l. 65–67 [Translated]).

Interestingly, the process of finding one's place seems to be experienced both when starting to get involved and in contexts where people have been active for some time (IDI_P14, l. 560–566). Some scholars explore the role of emotions in movements particularly (see e.g. Flam & King, 2005; Goodwin et al., 2001; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; Polletta, 2006). Barker and Cox discuss how activists are often presented as very strong and clear about their position and goals, while, according to them, they "do not always *know* what needs are driving them, but […] are engaged in finding out, through struggle and through solidarity." (Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 22 [Emphasis in original])

"I try to do my small parts"

> "In the beginning I was very, very insecure what my role in the group is but at some point I realized, well, that this feeling I have… really works a bit. … So that sometimes you feel ready to do more, like in this [activity] we did I managed to speak a little bit and I also felt like a legitimate speaker." (IDI_P14, l. 560–566 [Translated])

This quote interestingly shows a core of experiencing the self in collectivity because it is a personal reflection about one's own involvement that is not only concerned with the individual but that also aims at strengthening the collective through whatever might be needed (IDI_P05, l. 550–554; IDI_P06, l. 595–604). Nevertheless, it is very closely linked to what feels right, comfortable or desirable to an individual (IDI_P08, l. 639–648; IDI_P14, l. 1016–1026;

PO_G02_32, l. 16–26).[21] This expression, "I try to do my small parts," at once raises a sense of wanting to contribute and taking responsibility (IDI_P05, l. 613–618). It also points to the processual and fluid nature of this category because what the small parts are depends on oneself, on the point in time and on the group. For instance, one activist claims: "I just do whatever is needed" (IDI_P05, l. 445). Another activist positions her*himself as a "Klein-Aktivist*in"[22]: S*he describes that with a child and exams s*he didn't manage to participate at times and how it was a good feeling that this was accepted by the group (IDI_P07, l. 24–28).

Feeling part of the group is a very personal process that takes time and figuring out. Sometimes people might explicitly look for identification and belonging in specific groups—and, clearly, there can be direct links between categorized positionings and certain political fights (IDI_P16, l. 588–592). But other times, someone's personal characteristics or previous priorities might actually be put aside (IDI_P05, l. 160ff.). People are strongly shaped by being part of a group, by interacting with others and by finding a place for themselves. There is not necessarily a direct causal link between individual positionings and involvements. Identities are not mainly understood in terms of mutually exclusive identity categorizations here, but. they are constantly being figured out.[23] All this underlines that it is about processes of collective involvement and negotiation, which also includes that difficulties can emerge in various forms.

Lacking joint decision-making and a sense of collectivity

> "Because I still feel there is… two, three people that have their own friends, they know that… they still control anything. It's not still… democratized to a certain extent." (IDI_P05, l. 1225–1228)

21 This is where this category closely relates to the one discussed in the previous Subchapter 5.1. That such processes can be affected by structural inequalities is explored in Subchapter 5.3.

22 Small-activist.

23 There is research acknowledging such processes, discussing identities as multiple, fluid, context-dependent and criticizing dominant approaches (see e.g. Farro & Lustiger-Thaler, 2014, p. 3; Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 395; McDonald, 2002, p. 125; Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 294f.). Yuval-Davis' distinction between positionings, identities and values (2011) is helpful and introduced in Chapter 6.

This impression of individuals dominating processes arises, for instance, when decision-making is not perceived as a collective process but as non-transparently dominated by few people (IDI_P07, l. 250–270; IDI_P16, l. 740–756; PO_G01_32, l. 57–63). Often a lack of joint decision-making does not only go back to individual activists taking the lead on something. It also seems to emerge in settings with time pressure—which in one way or the other is most of the times. An example can be a young activist who is too nervous to speak in front of many people on the first attempt and later on is refused to try again by organizers (PO_G01_27, l. 111–118). Such situations show a lack of taking care of an individual activist's needs. It might also contain a lack of joint decision-making and sense of collectivity that often happens when there is time pressure (which might explain but not excuse dynamics). Of course, it also links to existing power relations, gender in this case.[24] In some cases, this can result in situations where people feel pressured or even used (IDI_P07, l. 273–285; IDI_P15, l. 225–242).

Specifying the atmosphere

> "There was a lot of small discussions among one or two people so that it got quite chaotic. Some people got a bit annoyed and pushed for moving on." (PO_G02_17, l. 63–65)

In activist groups, just as in any other social setting, interpersonal issues exist, at times erupt and often consume time and energy. This has a lot to do with relationships between individual people but also with a general atmosphere that can be shaped by interruptions, fights, power plays, tensions, rushing or impatience (IDI_P06, l. 761–765; PO_G01_31, l. 59–69; PO_G01_32, l. 111–116; PO_G02_21, l. 26–30; PO_G05_06, p. 2; PO_G06_06, l. 86–92). This is captured in a fieldnote from a meeting: "The tone, the dynamic, the discussions were quite exhausting." (PO_G02_31, l. 29–30) This can link to groups often acting on urgencies and being under time pressure, moving from one action to the next (IDI_P04, l. 1002–1018; PO_G02_22, l. 117–123). This can impact individual experiences of a certain setting, which can of course lead to people being frustrated or even leaving groups (IDI_P04, l. 1128–1132; IDI_P08, l. 251–266; PO_G06_07, l. 10–15). It can also result in instances where nobody

24 Structural exclusions play an important role and are explored further in Subchapter 5.3.

feels responsible, individuals withdraw or stay passive (IDI_P05, l. 1167–1170; PO_G01_30, l. 35–42; PO_G06_02, p. 14). So far, I mostly explored how groups impact individuals. However, there are also occasions when it rather seems to be the individual level impacting the collective one.

Taking the lead

> "I would describe myself also as a quieter person. And these people are the ones who are making it really difficult for new people and not that self-confident people to do something in a group… because they have a really clear idea and they are verbalizing this clear idea of what is right and what is wrong and therefore a sort of feeling can occur within the group that you're afraid of saying something wrong. And when this situation exists and in my experience it's existing in many groups […] yes, it can… it can destroy a lot, I would say, or make… make the whole group relation more difficult, even more complex than it's already." (IDI_P16, l. 510–524)

As described here, individual activists can dominate group contexts. It can be rooted in individuals having been involved for a long time and therefore having set priorities that they share during meetings. An activist points out how, especially for new people, this can be intimidating (IDI_P06, l. 796–812). This can be continually reproduced when others keep seeing the same people taking over certain tasks, addressing them as the relevant (spokes)person of a group (IDI_P04, l. 799–802; IDI_P05, l. 1225–1230; PO_G01_27, l. 107–111). Actually, such a focus on individuals can be experienced as too much of a responsibility by these people themselves (PO_G02_06, p. 66).[25] But there can be little space left for the collective. This can be caused by the differing possibilities and positions in groups or it might depend on personalities and people placing themselves at the center of attention (in)advertently (IDI_P06, l. 734–744; IDI_P08, l. 279–287; IDI_P16, l. 524–541; IDI_P16, l. 972–980).

Especially processes concerning finances, which require specific knowledge and often language skills, are often discussed as non-transparent (IDI_P06, l. 990–1001; PO_G01_32, l. 57–63). "Information is crucial, and it is what we are often missing" is how one activist describes this problem of

25 Additionally, this does not have to be only negative. Of course, there is a need for people to speak for groups, take care of things or potentially even take quick decisions (IDI_P16, l. 489-510).

centralizing knowledge in individual people (PO_G06_02, p. 16). This links to lacking joint decision-making. What I want to point out here is that, as destructive or unnecessary as many of these dynamics are, they are also a normal part of groups *figuring out* who they are or want to be and might even lead to necessary internal change.[26]

Self-defining as a group

> "And then […] I asked the question: 'Who is the group?' […] And everyone said 'We'. Ok but if it is us then we have to look at the context. I don't want to be called a refugee. […] And then we thought of migrants. […] And now it is about women*." (IDI_P07, l. 653–662 [Translated])

Given that all of these dynamics exist, groups are in a constant process of negotiating, agreeing or disagreeing on their self-defining as a group, which most of the time is never completely finished. This quote recounts a situation where this was addressed very directly. Many activists describe how the goals and directions of their groups are a process that is negotiated among those involved at different points in time (IDI_P04, l. 1128–1132; IDI_P06, l. 796–812; IDI_P08, l. 90–99; IDI_P16, l. 524–541). Groups continuously do this along with other activities they realize: "I have the feeling that we… well, for a long time didn't really know: Who are we? What do we want to do? What is our work? Where should we start? This… somehow wasn't quite clear." (IDI_P11, l. 356–360 [Translated]) In fact, just as individuals, activist groups are defining and developing themselves, their identities.

The question "Who are we?" is not always addressed this explicitly. Sometimes it emerges through more specific topics: Discussions dealing with how open a group is, should be and to whom, or just about who is present, about who decides things or represents the group, sometimes even through what other actors ascribe to a group (IDI_P03, l. 1377–1381; IDI_P05, l. 150–159; PO_G01_28, l. 25–30; PO_G02_19, l. 71ff.; PO_G02_36, l. 25–43). All this makes

26 There is social movement research dealing with the (lack of) leading figures in movements (see e.g. Castells, 2015, p. 132; Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 395; Schaumberg, 2013, p. 279; Young, 2010, p. 19). It might be interesting to link the difficult nature of these processes to critical perspectives on deliberative democracies in terms of equal access (see e.g. Medearis, 2005; Young, 2001).

it evident that these processes involve having and dealing with disagreements. With as many positions, experiences and interests coming together, things can be controversial at times (IDI_P14, l. 495–510; PO_G01_32, l. 80–96; PO_G02_33, l. 7–17; PO_G02_31, l. 7–12; PO_G06_02, p. 15). The importance of acknowledging and capturing such discussions and diverging opinions is sometimes stressed, for instance, in Black feminism (hooks, 2000a, p. 58; Lorde, 1982). Nevertheless, *together* is a key word here because to engage in such processes, there is the need for a level of trust and familiarity that allows for certain issues to be raised.

Getting to know each other

> "So but in general that, for example, in group meetings or something you have the possibility to eat together and so on is a really important part of groups and the activism itself because otherwise you don't get to know people personally, you don't develop any, or not as much, sympathy. And if you want to work together on a long-term I would say it's only healthy to work on your relationship to the different people and that's only possible if you get closer together. But it doesn't mean that you need to be like- act like best friends or something. That could happen and it's fine but I would not say that it's in any way necessary." (IDI_P16, l. 470–480)

Of course, this does not always happen as consciously, but quite some activists underline the importance of building relationships in political contexts. For many, this involves meeting personally as opposed to mainly communicating digitally (IDI_P03, l. 711–717; PO_G06_02, p. 12f.).[27] Taking the time for getting to know each other and spending time together beyond the *business* of political activism shows the importance of relationalities for these very political activities (IDI_P16, l. 524–541; IDI_P17_1, l. 879–887; PO_G06_02, p. 12f.): "And this eating together I really liked. Even though often we have to try really hard and don't really have time for it." (IDI_P15, l. 202–204 [Translated]) Some groups try to create such spaces within meetings, others create further opportunities to sit, talk, eat and get to know each other: "[I]t's supposed to be an occasion for people to come together without a working agenda and just spend time together, get to know each other and talk." (PO_G02_27, l. 12–22)

27 This stresses just one level where the pandemic certainly impacts activist groups and it is important to remember that my empirical data stem from before the pandemic.

Yet others underline the importance of sharing political and private activities with people, which eventually can add a dimension of friendship or even family to group contexts (IDI_P14, l. 682–695; IDI_P17_1, l. 638–644; PO_G01_14, p. 74):[28] "[I]t [activism] is a very nice way to, to make friends, and to know people and actually learn a lot of new things." (IDI_P05, l. 514f.) Even when differentiating it from friendship, another activist stresses the relational dimension of activism: "They are not my friends, they are not my colleagues but they are my comrades. It's nice to have comrades." (IDI_P11, l. 434–437 [Translated]) Learning from each other points to a certain degree of curiosity, trust and reflexivity that individuals and groups build (IDI_P04, l. 318–321; IDI_P06, l. 927–941; IDI_P14, l. 658–665; IDI_P16, l. 329–335). Political practices and intersectional feminist theories discuss the importance of building personal relations for movements (see e.g. Hill Collins, 2010, p. 24; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016, p. 422; Lin et al., 2016, p. 308; Martin et al., 2007, p. 79; McDonald, 2002, p. 116f.).

Experiencing collectivity

> "This was once… shortly after I came to Hamburg. There was a big demonstration… for refugees I think and with a lot of support. And I gave a speech. And… somehow I really had the feeling, well, like they hear me and… something will happen." (IDI_P15, l. 585–590 [Translated])

This is a powerful quote which points out how collectivity can be experienced. Other instances highlight that organizing can create something that goes beyond a group as just the sum of its parts. For instance, through going beyond the people who take part or are present (IDI_P01, l. 239f.; IDI_P03, l. 430–434; PO_G02_28, l. 53–58)—"it's about us together, not someone individually, that we try together and mutually" (IDI_P07, l. 525–527 [Translated]). Such feelings of collectivity emerge in groups when there is a joint sense of experience, highlighting relations and emotions again. Even when there are disagreements or tensions, the aspect of working on them together seems to be central in all these debates is (IDI_P06, l. 289–299; IDI_P08, l. 251–266; IDI_P11, l. 342–348; PO_G05_11, l. 5–8). *Together* as in reflecting oneself, one's position-

28 Yet, I also want to point out that one activist explicitly raises that s*he also sees risks in this.

ing, one's behaviors within groups settings, "considering other people's ideas and [not] hav[ing] a ready-made concept" (IDI_P06, l. 691–696 [Translated]).

These are examples of positive emotional experiences of the collective.[29] Such emotions often appear when groups organize events or demonstrations, preparing them sometimes for months, and then experience the realization of their plans together (IDI_P16, l. 618–623; PO_G01_21, l. 36–41; PO_G01_24, l. 17–21).[30] But on a smaller scale, it also comes up when activists just feel comfortable together, can empower each other or found new ways and solutions through jointly reflecting and acting (IDI_P14, l. 712–723; IDI_P17_1, l. 902–911; PO_G06_06, l. 70–79; PO_G01_33, l. 78–85). This brings us back to taking time on individual and collective levels equally.[31] Such contexts can constitute situations when collectivities develop a certain drive, carrying joint actions and individual involvement (IDI_P08, l. 141–150; IDI_P16, l. 638–643; IDI_P17_1, l. 695–700). Lister's exploration of the "relational self" is an interesting reference here as well as, for instance McDonald and others, differentiating between personalization and individualization (Carrillo Rowe, 2005, p. 18; Lister, 1997, p. 37; McDonald, 2002, p. 118). Yuval-Davis discusses constructing identities not as individual or collective processes but as an "in-between perpetual state of 'becoming'" (2011, p. 22).

Summary

> "Even though, they never get involved again in political struggle. And I think there are also some people that they never show the interest in political struggle but because they were forced… and they [explored], you know, the movement, lot of them also changed in their mind. They meet lot of people, they experience a lot of thing and, before you know, I think their mind exploded and … they developed totally different kind of life and they now see that it's important for them to be maybe somehow political active or to be… very much aware about what's going on." (IDI_P08, l. 619–636)

29 This nicely links to the previous Subchapter 5.1 because such experiences of collectivity are what is often referred to in terms of gaining energy from political activism.

30 Certainly, it is also linked to experiencing success which is explored in Subchapter 5.6.

31 Nevertheless, as mentioned before, it undoubtedly needs to be acknowledged that in these settings and living conditions often there is no time.

Experiencing the Self Through Collectivity captures the complex relational and emotional interaction of individual and collective. Individuals form collectives, shape them and are themselves shaped by being part of them. This takes place through various positive and negative dynamics. The category calls attention to the fact that the activist groups are in on-going processes of figuring out their multiple identities and places, individually and collectively. These experiences can only be captured through individuals' reflecting them, which makes the category's title even more fitting. Self-defining as groups is an on-going process of figuring out who they are, what they do and how they work together. Relations are important in terms of affective bonds and a general sense of collectivity, but they also involve emotions, such as caring, trusting and feeling in place. Individual experiences in collective settings are a central part of how and by whom solidarities might be negotiated in migrant rights activism. Exploring social movements in-between individual and collective is addressed by some scholars, researching political practices or diverse contexts (see e.g. Bhabha, 1994, p. 1f.; J. Clarke et al., 2014, p. 54; Scholz, 2008, p. 41; Schwenken, 2006, p. 143). The next subchapter dives deeper into collective dealing with difference and inequality.

5.3 "We Are All Activists"

This category is concerned with how inequalities manifest in activist groups and how groups deal with them. It addresses the aim of many groups to fight united and on equal terms and how this very goal can lead to reproducing power dynamics. But the category also includes that most groups somehow reflect on and try to improve acting together. When starting such a reflection, inequalities, differences and categorizations have to be named—already this is delicate as especially regarding grids of power, people are put into categories they do not choose (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 22f.). This idea, "we are all activists," is invoked regularly by multiple activists, even though not always in this very expressive wording by one activist (IDI_P05, l. 150–159). The categorization especially central in migrant rights activism most frequently referred to distinguishes between "refugees" and "supporters".[32] Legal status differs

32 The activist groups explored here differ in constellation: one is self-organized but also has a mixed group form which is, of course, the part I have been involved with, one group is mixed, another one is mainly white-German. However, it is central that mi-

from other social categories, such as race, gender or class in its potentially more temporary dimension, but it intersects with them and sometimes they are mixed up (IDI_P05, l. 262–283).[33]

In my data, gender mainly emerges concerning men and women facing different kinds of discriminations and exclusions.[34] Religion does not come up very often, which could be interesting to look into elsewhere. Of course, lists of such structural inequalities could go on forever as once starting to look and reflect about these, ever finer ones emerge.[35] Addressing more than one of the mentioned inequalities makes their practical and conceptual handling more complex. This empirically emerges in parts through the notion of acknowledging while challenging differences. Similarly, this tension applies for the analytical capturing of dynamics and discussions in activist groups. Thereby, it is at the heart of what negotiating solidarities is about: what can solidarities even look like when inequalities are so overly present and how are they being negotiated?

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gration policies diversify legal statuses: asylum seekers, illegalized people as well as a number of in-betweens, all present in groups. These are often subsumed as refugees or on the contrary referred to as migrants, actually disregarding human rights (Münch, 2018, p. 318f.). Some very practical consequences of these differentiations were addressed in Subchapter 5.1.

33 Central social categories are race, class and gender. There are more that intersect with these three: sexual orientation, ableism, age, education, religiosity, etc. Finally, there are elements which result from these grids of power, like living situations, types of knowledge or language skills. I follow Yuval-Davis' distinction between social categories and identities: While the former are the social positionings of people along intersecting "grids of power relations operating in society", the latter are narratives, retaining some more self-defining (Yuval-Davis, 2011, pp. 20–22).

34 Trans, Inter, queer and non-binary gender identities, but also sexual orientation have come up little in these groups, which surely does not mean that they do not exist and organize themselves.

35 A number of scholars raise the issue that movements are more heterogeneous than often discussed (see e.g. Andersen & Hill Collins, 2013; Barker & Cox, 2014; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lorde, 2007; Weldon, 2011). With regards to migrant rights activism, some address internal heterogeneity (see e.g. Benhabib, 2004; Dauvergne, 2008; Kwesi Aikins & Bendix, 2015; Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2014; Pehe & Misetics, 2015; Schulze Wessel, 2016). Few scholars engage with internal consequences (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2015; Fadaee, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Nicholls, 2013b; Ünsal, 2015). Critically-engaged perspectives in various movements seem to offer more accurate views, especially BPoC feminist theories (Fadaee, 2015; hooks, 2000b; Barker & Cox, 2014).

Overcoming categories and working on equal terms

> "At the same time, s*he explained very impressively that and why s*he doesn't want to be called a 'refugee' because such a categorization is a downgrading […]. S*he especially criticized the reduction to this one aspect, as if a taxi driver would forever only be 'the taxi driver' or a cardiac patient who might at some point not be cardiac anymore would always be 'the cardiac patient'." (PO_G01_4, p. 36)

As raised in this group setting, activists aim at overcoming differences for various reasons.[36] This comprises working together on equal terms and moving beyond differences, at least in the context of the groups, as a common and central goal. Many groups want to be inclusive to everyone and diverse (IDI_P06, l. 897–911; IDI_P08, l. 439–443; IDI_P16, l. 815–824). One activist stresses how important it is to "concretely work together with people, […] see them as equals, [not] work *for* but *with* them." (IDI_P06, l. 182f. [Translated]; see also IDI_P05, l. 896–899) As mentioned above, the distinction refugee/supporter is the one most often referred to both in groups and academia. Of course, this is rooted in the defining aim of the movement, setting out to fight inequalities rooted in migration policies. It is a recurring notion in these activist groups that they want to overcome categorizations and inequalities. Some researchers reflect the scholarly use of categorizations (see e.g. Bakewell, 2008; Brubaker, 2015; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Rostock, 2014).

Reproducing categories

> "[I]n my opinion most of the supporters don't even get what they are doing or from which… point in the society they are arguing. So I don't think they want to harm anyone or do something bad, but by acting how they are acting, they are supporting the racist… system itself, like the society, the rules which are there and who are putting other people under pressure. So it's sort of a paradox […] that these people go into groups, I mean now the white supporters

36 German or non-refugee activists often challenge their being labeled as "supporters" with the reasoning that they do not want to just support but *work together*. Another example are some groups that consciously re-appropriate the categorization refugee for themselves.

> go into groups… try to… fight against racism, but reproduce the racism at the same way." (IDI_P16, l. 719–728)

As this quote shows, despite all efforts to make inequalities not matter within activist groups, differences do exist, of course. And it is not just that these, often structurally imposed, inequalities are present and visible within groups but they are also—inadvertently—reproduced. Reproduction can take place by emphasizing differences as well as by not naming inequalities as structural patterns. But even more critically, they can also be reproduced by dynamics that are shaping how accessible and safe group contexts are for various people. Reproducing racist dynamics is one example, mentioned in the quote above. Other dynamics that have to do with privileges and power include not properly involving the people who are actually affected when doing political work supposedly *for* them (IDI_P06, l. 725–734). One activist stresses that "already when the people that, ehm, want to see themselves as active for migrants, I would like them to look into what they [migrants] actually need" (IDI_P07, l. 186–190 [Translated]). According to her*him, this could be figured out by speaking to them about their general exigencies and political actions.

Another way that inequalities are being reproduced is language, for instance by not providing interpretation or having certain parts of a discussion in German (IDI_P08, l. 279–287; IDI_P17_1, l. 742–756; PO_G01_31, l. 59–69; PO_G02_09, p. 108). Even when interpreting is organized, it can for example result in "a symbolic mechanism of exclusion" when people are put in a corner not to "disturb" the group as a whole (PO_G02_09, p. 110). It might be hard for people to follow certain discussions for reasons at the intersection of language, interpretation and knowledge:

> "And sometimes they don't understand. Well and, eh, when I was in the group translating each time I… thought 'Why do I even have to translate? They don't get me, even in [language]… when I translate in [their language] they also don't understand because they simply… don't have any political experience." (IDI_P15, l. 209–220 [Translated])

These examples show how easily people are left behind or excluded: "[I]f you don't… understand or get a chance to speak and be understood then you don't exist at all." (IDI_P14, l. 860–862 [Translated]) Another example of how certain people are basically excluded from activities is the lack of childcare or the choice of meeting places and times. Especially female refugee activists with children are prevented from participating in many activities in the first place

(IDI_P05, l. 818–825; PO_G06_02, p. 14). Further exclusions mainly become palpable through absence.

(Not) depending on others

> "[U]sually these meetings are pretty much… 'Oh, we have these problems.' And then how can we fix it, and usually- are the Kartoffel or the… so-called supporters, activists that have their contacts. And it's really important that they do… but I would like to get to a point where as [Name 9] said […] there's a finance- I don't need to ask [Name 7] to write the application for me." (IDI_P05, l. 867–874)

Dependency is a very strong dynamic, which exists in activist groups and which particularly reproduces the inequalities between activists of different legal statuses. Yet, how much somebody depends on others can centrally concern more differentiated inequalities. One activist describes how official and free German classes are only provided to some groups, establishing a hierarchy of "first refugee, second refugee, third refugee," which according to her*him also leads to some being less dependent on alternative activities (IDI_P01, l. 511–520). Indeed, the opening quote raises dependencies that have to do with knowledge and experience but also language. Activists note that often people have to ask for interpretation themselves or they might attend whole meetings without understanding:

> "This is super stark! It just leaves you aside. And if nobody notices it there is always someone who is out. … And it is not self-evident that everyone says 'Hey, I don't understand. Please translate,' you know. It is not self-evident at all." (IDI_P14, l. 871–883 [Translated])

This vividly shows that, if in need of interpretation, either way people are very dependent on others.[37] That can be the dependence on an interpreter or on someone explaining certain terms or knowledge taken for granted (IDI_P03,

37 It might seem like such dependencies work centrally along power structures of legal status, but it is significant to emphasize that especially interpretation or specific knowledge are in fact frequently provided by migrant and refugee activists. Similarly, migrant activists are very often multi-lingual and still it is usually them that interpretation is organized for, as opposed to Germans not speaking English, which often impacts the language choice for a whole meeting.

l. 892–905; PO_G02_09, p. 109). It means that "those who don't know are silenced," which "shows dominating dynamics" (PO_G02_09, p. 109). Similarly, both through factual knowledge—for instance, about legal regulations—and more experience-based activist knowledge, dependencies are often solidified (IDI_P05, l. 1215–1219; IDI_P08, l. 180–190). One activist says that refugees are systematically made "non-independent" by the political system (IDI_P03, l. 576–586 [Translated]) and questions her*his role in it: "I do see the danger also in the support of refugees that you… do the things that they would have to learn." (IDI_P03, l. 602–604) This visibly emerges because many groups are also concerned with supporting individual activists (IDI_P01, l. 673–684; IDI_P03, l. 892–905; IDI_P06, l. 841–858; IDI_P15, l. 76–79).[38]

Activist experience is based on more localized knowledge but can similarly reproduce inequalities. Examples are: Having networks, providing money to groups by writing applications or simply knowing where to go for specific information or things, such as loudspeakers or a truck for demonstrations (IDI_P03, l. 892–905; IDI_P05, l. 860–886). Of course, this kind of experience and knowledge can be acquired and passed on (IDI_P01, l. 205–208; IDI_P05, l. 1215–1219; IDI_P17_1, l. 949–963). But activists critically remark that through them some people have more power than others, which can result in further dependencies when not reflected (IDI_P06, l. 765–772; IDI_P15, l. 209–220). Dependence between refugee and supporter activists is addressed by some scholars concerning migrant rights activism (see e.g. Cappiali, 2016, p. 1f.; Della Porta, 2018b, p. 14; Steinhilper, 2017, p. 81).

Revealing power dynamics

> "[T]hey [supporters] want to contribute and their contribution in some ways might not be in the interest of the self-organized group, of the refugees group. […] I think it's not bad that they also give their own ideas, their own opinion, you know, on how to… motivate self-organized groups. But in most of the time what I discover is like their idea, their opinion, their Politik- is more stronger than the idea and the opinion and what the refugees themselves really [need]." (IDI_P08, l. 355–369)

Dependencies are certainly based on existing structural inequalities. But the ways they are being internally reproduced need further exploration. Because,

38 This is explored further in Subchapter 5.4.

as this quote shows, however well-intentioned or however inadvertent of their power positions (often as German, white, academic activists), these create an imbalance that can lead to not even seeing what needs and goals are. Such dynamics can result in interests and exigencies of white European activists having more weight because they have the experience and capacities to realize things that are more recognized (IDI_P07, l. 186–191; IDI_P08, l. 355–369). One activist recalls a situation when German activists used their experience and authority concerning German food and health regulations to make an argument against refugee activists' wishes: "I could really say that in some situation it's totally difficult to really change this narrative of the influence… their own idea on refugees." (IDI_P08, l. 395–402) Another activist recalls how s*he questioned her*his own judgment in a situation because others would insist on their preference from a similar power position:

> "I thought maybe they just know more than I do because they are here for a long time, because they grew up here and… they know… the situation better than I do. But later I found out: well, it's not about where you're from, it just has to do with… the people, you know." (IDI_P15, l. 547–553 [Translated])

The resulting feeling of not knowing enough or not seeming to have a kind of knowledge that counts, as well as actual lack of knowledge, can cause feelings of intimidation, desperation and fear (IDI_P01, l. 136–139; IDI_P15, l. 229–241). Some activists point out that it is really certain marginalized kinds of knowledge and experience, linked to having lived experience, that are often—sometimes very subtly—ignored, not considered or not understood as equally valuable: "I think, there's a lot of knowledge there that… we don't… pay enough attention or maybe we don't have the situation to make it come up." (IDI_P05, l. 880–882; IDI_P07, l. 250–270; IDI_P08, l. 462–473)

All these examples underline a tension: People with resources and capacities to take care of certain tasks potentially make people depend on them and in addition, certain knowledge counting more (IDI_P15, l. 225–242; PO_G02_09, p. 109). So while groups might try to overcome inequalities, they might simultaneously reproduce power dynamics in various different ways. Inequalities and dominating dynamics in migrant rights activism are addressed by some scholars (see e.g. Ataç, 2016, p. 642; Fadaee, 2015, p. 734; Glöde & Böhlo, 2015, p. 79; Kewes, 2016a, p. 264; Nicholls, 2013b, p. 615). Especially Black feminist theories offer critical insights into internal power dynamics in general (see e.g. Hill Collins, 2015; hooks, 2000b; Lorde, 1982).

Self-organizing and/or taking responsibility using privileges

> "It was also discussed about self-organization. On the one hand, people emphasized how important it is. On the other hand, [Name 24] also said that s*he simply notices how done and exhausted people are and that we [Germans] simply are the ones who have more capacities and because of that also a responsibility to create the structures and possibilities and not to shift everything onto self-organization." (PO_G05_05, p. 51 [Translated])

Self-organizing is mostly referred to as refugee and migrant activists, those with the lived experiences of the issues addressed in this movement, building their own structures and activities. These are partly exclusive spaces to protect people from the reproduced power relations just discussed.[39] One activist raises this as opportunities for refugees to "create their own platform of knowledge, their own platform of education," to address "what they really think are the topics, what are the issues that they really think is really important for them to talk about." (IDI_P08, l. 565–573) However, as shown in the quote, pure self-organizing alone is often hard to realize.[40] Nevertheless, it is important to give credit and do justice to the many forms in which especially marginalized groups and communities actively organize by themselves. Potentially complementing this, what also arises is the responsibility of privileged activists to not just acknowledge their power positions but to use them to back up independent, self-organized action (IDI_P05, l. 860–886; IDI_P08, l. 351–355; IDI_P16, l. 845–857; PO_G01_32, l. 42–50; PO_G02_31, l. 18–22). Self-organizing is explored by involved activists themselves (see e.g. Cissé, 1996; Emejulu & Sobande, 2019; Kanalan, 2015; Langa, 2015; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018; Transact, 2014). References to using privileges can be found in intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critical theories (see e.g. Day, 2005; Dhawan, 2007; Johnson, 2014, p. 192; Spivak, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 130).

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39 Self-organizing is also discussed concerning alliances in Subchapter 5.5.

40 Since legal status is not the only structural inequality, it should also not be assumed that in such groups there will be no power relations. However, this is not for me to explore here.

Enabling access and participation

> "[Many are] afraid to come in the street and say 'Oh, it's little bit difficult, we are refugees' and this. And I 'Yes, ok, refugee, refugee'. Then I have to explain too much. But yeah, I cannot say that people not have this kind of knowledge, yeah, lot of people have… and some, most of people not but I have to explain to, yeah, this is our right to go to the street." (IDI_P01, l. 678–684)

This quote raises that a basic level of enabling access can be explaining to people what rights they have. Thus, very basically it requires the involvement of or at least exchange with those who are facing all kinds of various inequalities—as one activist puts it addressing white European activists: "[G]et to know people! Talk to people! Get out!" (IDI_P05, l. 996–999) With this can come awareness in groups about needs and exigencies. Examples are the choice of meeting places and times that do not just fit the average white, German, Left activist.[41] Hence, through joint reflection and discussion and changing ways of doing things, many activist groups aim at improving access and participation in their meetings. Indeed, concerning some of the dynamics discussed above, I could observe constant learning and developing processes. One activist recommends offering childcare for meetings in general, saying that "often to find someone for taking care of the children and pay for it, you find that… for us… from our background it is difficult." (IDI_P07, l. 49–55 [Translated]) In some groups, it goes further in considering *who* is doing the childcare, involving men or solidary groups (IDI_P16, l. 957–962; PO_G01_33, l. 12–25).

A similar evolving can be observed concerning language. Of course, the first step to open up mainly German-speaking spaces is to provide interpretation.[42] At a bigger event, this was taken further by using technology for interpreting in a way that made everyone equally dependent on it: "[Name 9] said afterwards that it had been the first time s*he participated in a workshop

41 Emerging examples are: choosing cleaner or more neutral places than many Left-organized spaces; evenings might fit working people but not necessarily parents; there are neighborhoods where Black people are especially targeted by racist police controls; it can be helpful to be able to pay the tickets for people to get to meetings.

42 Switching to English might be an option, however, is not always fitting as some newcomer activists might learn German but not speak (much) English (IDI_P11, l. 180–185). Conducting bilingual meetings is possible, but still requires activists to speak either of these two languages.

from the start on a completely equal footing." (PO_G06_04, p. 17) However, this is also a strategy that needs resources, not too easy to provide. Sometimes it can be the easier option to split up in language groups for certain discussions to enable everyone to participate (PO_G01_31, l. 47–52). These examples highlight that it is not about pretending that any group could be able to eliminate all inequalities, but about capturing that groups are figuring out ways to deal with them.

Reflecting and enacting procedures and empowerment

> "I think for me it's again to being very... aware of the different... contexts and backgrounds of the people, which is difficult. But I think after you meet for [many] years, you tend to know the people and maybe work on improving things to a certain extent." (IDI_P05, l. 944–950)

The examples discussed so far have addressed how groups are challenging inequalities in terms of *infrastructural* measures, aiming at making groups more accessible for people. The quote underlines the processual character and raises that there are also strategies to enable more equal participation within meetings and group contexts. First of all, this requires questioning procedures and making collective choices in terms of working mechanisms. As many activists describe, this takes being or becoming aware, both as an individual and a collective process (IDI_P04, l. 476–479; IDI_P11, l. 500–509; IDI_P14, l. 552–557; IDI_P16, l. 845–857). It takes time and needs a certain level of trust that is often based on knowing each other (IDI_P03, l. 302–308; PO_G06_02, p. 16).[43]

A first step on the collective level can be becoming aware of a group's composition. In mixed or predominantly white German contexts, this often concerns whether migrant activists are involved but can also refer to any of the other categorizations, such as: engaging different political positions, people of different ages, gender identities or in general not having always the same people involved (IDI_P01, l. 602–606; IDI_P03, l. 1289ff.; IDI_P05, l. 574ff.; IDI_P08, l. 547–559). Explicitly procedural examples can include mediating group discussions more clearly, reflecting how groups communicate between meetings or distributing tasks in more deliberate ways, for instance on a rotating basis, to prevent the same people always taking care of things (IDI_P05, l. 860–886; IDI_P16, l. 541–550; IDI_P17_1, l. 1043–1051; PO_G02_03, p. 27f.;

43 These relational and emotional dimensions were explored in Subchapter 5.2.

PO_G06_02, p. 15f.). One group tries to give space to hearing all perspectives on a specific topic by making a whole round where each person speaks for a certain question, such that "we had a whole range of opinions, which would probably not have come up the same way otherwise." (PO_G01_32, l. 92–96)

In fact, what emerges as a concrete step is to improve things by finding procedures for taking decisions jointly, more transparently, more "democratic" (IDI_P05, l. 1231–1234; IDI_P06, l. 691–696; IDI_P08, l. 547–559; PO_G02_23, l. 58–64). Oftentimes, decisions are taken in smaller sub-groups or not properly discussed. Such dynamics reproduce the power imbalances that exist within a group. One group decides to establish a decision group, which decides urgent matters in-between meetings and includes a majority rule for migrant and refugee activists (PO_G01_32, l. 15–23). While reflection is a key part of these processes, it is not enough. Additionally, enacting and trying measures as well as taking time to jointly work on this are notions at the heart of this category that in a way indicate starting points toward lived solidarities. Research on internal democratic procedures and prefigurative politics could be interesting to explore further with regards (see e.g. Juris, 2008, p. 6; Lin et al., 2016, p. 312; Weldon, 2011, p. 5; Yates, 2015, p. 12).

Taking time to share experiences and knowledge

> "There were very deep discussions and especially exchanges of experience that I think were extremely valuable and empowering for a lot of people. I remember one scene in particular in our […] workshop where we eventually spent a lot of time talking about experiences concerning speaking in public more in general. Two very young people shared bad experiences they had made at school and got a lot of encouragement and support from the older activists in the group. They also shared bad experiences they had made and talked about how they moved beyond them." (PO_G01_33, l. 57–66)

Taking time for sharing experiences in shifting constellations centrally emerges in this category. Activists claim that distributing roles or ascribing clear responsibilities can be important to involve everyone but also have more transparency and stability (IDI_P07, l. 722–733; IDI_P15, l. 505–509; IDI_P16, l. 541–550; IDI_P17_1, l. 1067–1075). Working groups are discussed as a means to share responsibility, involve people more equally and enable exchange (IDI_P05, l. 1225–1230; PO_G01_18, p. 21; PO_G02_09, p. 109). Another group tried to share experiences and knowledge by giving speeches

together, empowering inexperienced people facing this potentially upsetting situation (PO_G01_31, l. 10–24).

Taking time is an important element here because these attempts to balance inequalities often involve whole groups and mean explicitly enabling spaces where mutual learning and sharing of perspectives is encouraged (IDI_P17_1, l. 1101–1103; PO_G01_33, l. 57–66; PO_G02_08, p. 89). It is an ongoing learning process for both individual activists and groups, which takes time and taking the time to move on. Simultaneously, as mentioned before, time is controversial to call for in a setting where many people face existential and urgent living situations that do not allow taking time. Indeed, as the opening quote has shown, especially with the urgency and pressure defining many group contexts, this is easily left aside (IDI_P06, l. 454–469; IDI_P08, l. 676–688; IDI_P11, l. 412–426; IDI_P14, l. 712–728).

Sharing experiences does not necessarily have to be about solving certain situations or problems but can centrally be about *sharing* itself (IDI_P07, l. 273–285).[44] It can be incredibly powerful to talk about lived experiences, discovering shared elements or learning about others' perspectives (PO_G01_33, l. 57–66). In fact, it also contains a notion of taking care of each other and building trust (IDI_P01, l. 142–149; IDI_P08, l. 287–295; IDI_P17_1, l. 848–856). It can involve having the possibility to give feedback, talking about what is normally not visible or "speakable" (IDI_P04, l. 115–122; IDI_P16, l. 857–862). It is essential to underline that this is not understood as one-way from German to refugee activists (IDI_P07, l. 209–212; PO_G06_02, p. 12). Migrant knowledge and peer-to-peer learning are particularly valuable and empowering (IDI_P01, l. 163–168; IDI_P14, l. 635–644; PO_G02_35, l. 21–25).[45] Feminist practices and theories offer insights into such practices of mutual learning and empowering (see e.g. Combahee River Collective, 1977; Hanisch, 2006; hooks, 2000b, p. 57; Schwenken, 2006, p. 146).

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44 A lot of the knowledge transfer concerns, of course, topics of learning how things work in Germany, where to get information or how to find ways of getting through in asylum and migration bureaucratic processes (IDI_P01, l. 787–790; IDI_P03, l. 658–666; IDI_P14, l. 652–658; IDI_P15, l. 290–303; IDI_P17_1, l. 924–944; PO_G06_06, l. 38–42).

45 In this context, it can also be important to create exclusive or safer spaces (IDI_P08, l. 731–735).

Summary

Acknowledging the existing inequalities and how they are simultaneously being reproduced and challenged in activist groups is the principal notion of this analytical category. It contains acknowledging power and knowledge differentials, avoiding domination and paternalism. Mutual learning, sharing experiences, taking time, making space and taking care of each other all need to be constantly and consciously promoted and claimed. The existing inequalities need acknowledgment. At the same time, they should not be regarded as too rigid or be reduced to legal status alone. Such learning processes are not automatic or linear. Groups all engage in this in some ways, but there is no *ideal* model. A continuous balancing seems to be key to negotiating solidarities and how they might be enacted through reflections, discussions and actions—sometimes succeeding, often failing. Theories embedded in movement experiences most promisingly reflect on how categorizations and inequalities are concretely dealt with (see e.g. Barker & Cox, 2014; Hill Collins, 2010, p. 25; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016, p. 418). The next analytical category explores what kind of activities groups are involved in and how they frame them.

5.4 Making the Social Political

The groups I have been involved with consider themselves *activist* and *political* in one way or the other. They can mostly be distinguished from, on the one hand, formalized political parties or institutionalized organizations (e.g., of social work or political education) and voluntary or cultural associations, on the other (see also Della Porta & Diani, 2006, pp. 22–27). Still, there are ongoing negotiations within the groups about what political action and organizing is in their own understanding.[46] These negotiations take place implicitly and explicitly, in a way moving between the two poles mentioned above. Groups use them to define themselves as distinct from those, while, simultaneously, negotiating elements that overlap.[47] This analytical category explores the dif-

46 Groups vary in the activities they mostly engage with—meaning for example that some very explicitly engage in internal dynamics, while others are more focused on public activities.

47 Groups' interaction with other actors is further addressed in Subchapter 5.5.

ferent dimensions that negotiating (self-)definitions of the political has in activist groups for migrant rights.

Being addressed by/addressing institutional politics

> "I think what motivated the struggle is because the people want to live a respected life. And if the [national or local] authority, eh, have given us… the right to stay or allow a document to work, you can imagine that there won't be such a movement… maybe, you know. So and I think that… it's also interesting how […] this bad situation […] [motivated] political movement." (IDI_P08, l. 599–606)

In whatever concrete way the groups define themselves, all of them are directly addressed by the state in one way or the other—through individuals or specific groups of people being treated in a certain way or through the constituted groups being addressed directly.[48] The quote emphasizes the basic wish to live a normal life, which can result in political action when experiencing inequalities and injustices and people start to organize to *simply* live. In fact, state institutions are perceived to address groups of people or political activists in ways that impact their addressing of authorities but also their capacities to organize. In a meeting, it is discussed that "the development of the struggle was totally determined by the attacks of the state in various forms." (PO_G02_06, p. 67)

One dominant identified state strategy is the division of people by creating differences among them through granting some more rights than others (IDI_P01, l. 511–520; IDI_P03, l. 1334–1343; IDI_P05, l. 1356–1362; IDI_P08, l. 195–204).[49] Part of this racialized addressing of migrants are deportations—even *only* the threat—and the tightening of migration laws (IDI_P03, l. 892–905; IDI_P06, l. 745–749). Another strategy is the isolation of refugees and asylum-seekers, in a very direct spatial sense through the imposed accommodation in camps (IDI_P15, l. 453–462; PO_G05_05, p. 51). Finally, this contains being criminalized, delegitimized or pressured more in

48 Subchapter 5.1 showed that many people struggle daily to survive and obtain legal perspectives.

49 The most recent example for this would be different treatment of refugees from Ukraine (even among them, depending on their documents, nationality or race).

general (IDI_P03, l. 1244ff.).[50] Because of this opposition to institutionalized politics, but also because structural changes are linked to it, the interactions with authorities play a role in the process of negotiating political action in activist groups.[51]

Sozialarbeit[52]

> "[It is] more this idea of which projects do I want to do, this total humanitarian aspect in order to just make sure not to encounter resistance, to not make, somehow, well, yes, political… statements and trying to push for them. It's more on this nice and friendly level." (IDI_P06, l. 649–656 [Translated])

This other defining feature that continues to come up in negotiations over political action is that activists often distinguish it from Sozialarbeit. Some activists have very urgent necessities due to their acute and desperate living conditions. This results in a setting where Sozialarbeit arises in various forms in order to alleviate such necessities. Coming together in political groups fighting these very conditions, it often is part of them to address specific individual situations. This is one dimension of what is often referred to as Sozialarbeit. Such individual support can take many forms: providing legal support, organizing accommodation, accompanying to authorities, translating or interpreting, writing job applications (IDI_P01, l. 312–316; IDI_P03, l. 594–598; IDI_P04, l. 299–302).

People and groups who do *just that* supposedly lack political positioning and are what many activist groups distinguish themselves from. According

50 These mechanisms are well researched and analyzed in works on migration and border regimes. Such research reveals how migration policies are permeating daily life realities, both at state borders and way beyond borders. The way in which borders take immaterial forms that shape everyday reality everywhere, creates a setting that treats migrants as "disposable" subjects to be managed (Oliveri, 2012, p. 794; see also Carmel & Paul, 2013; Hess & Lebuhn, 2014; Täubig, 2009).

51 This is opposed to classical social movement theories where the addressing of institutional actors is often seen as the only way activist groups act politically (see e.g. Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 42; Hellmann, 1998, p. 23), whereas my data show it as merely one part of negotiating the political.

52 "Sozialarbeit" is the German word for social work. It is used in varied meanings even by individual people, explored in this subchapter.

to them, pure "humanitarian" work is mostly uncritical of structural problems (IDI_P06, l. 136–144; IDI_P08, l. 689–697). One activist claims that it "moves 'within the limits of the laws,'" while seeing political work as going "way beyond" because it "also questions these laws and structures." (IDI_P03, l. 999–1002 [Translated]) Sozialarbeit in this second dimension is seen as *wanting to help* as opposed to "doing politics together" (IDI_P11, l. 331–334 [Translated]; see also IDI_P14, l. 778–784).[53] One example mentioned by some activists is the role more institutionalized actors and volunteers play.[54] Nevertheless, activists also recognize that this is not fixed and that both individual and collective actors shift their positions in general or with regards to specific questions (IDI_P06, l. 561–573). Despite the fact that many activists and groups clearly use both Sozialarbeit and institutional politics as distinguishing poles when discussing and negotiating their own activities, there are clear linkages of both to their meaning-making.[55]

Defining political action

> "[Sozialarbeit] I see as accompanying people to the authorities or… helping them to find a flat or things like that. … So less these political… explicitly political things." (IDI_P04, l. 299–302 [Translated])

One way that activists negotiate definitions of political action is through *negatively* distinguishing whatever takes place in their contexts from other activities. Because at first sight, as this quote shows, there is the same distinction

53 This seems to be reciprocated to some extent from "support" initiatives through explicit reluctance to take political positions (IDI_P06, l. 483–505; PO_G05_04, p. 33f.; PO_G06_02, p. 15). Some publications reflect problematic consequences of supposedly unpolitical initiatives (Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Pehe & Misetics, 2015).

54 Churches are sometimes referred to as very active in humanitarian support of refugees but also as supposedly hesitant to more political claims—according to one activist because they could lose the political system's tolerance of church asylum (IDI_P03, l. 483–491). Someone else raises bigger NGOs' fear to lose donations when taking more radical positions (IDI_P06, l. 649–656).

55 This polarization arose early on in my data. Yet, at closer exploration, it is not consistent or shared by all. To some extent this moves into the analytical dimension, while not implying that it cannot also be analytically criticized. and is not necessarily how I would conceptually frame it. This tension certainly illustrates a challenge of constructivist grounded theory's abductive practice.

between Sozialarbeit and political work *within* the activist groups themselves. In fact, as discussed, some part of groups' activities involves the support of individuals. In *what* is done, it might not differ that much from what is otherwise referred to as humanitarian. Also within activist groups, these activities are often discussed somewhat dismissive as Sozialarbeit but also as *support* or "Kleinkramarbeit"[56] (IDI_P03, l. 515–522). Thus, political activities are often framed or understood as more central. Nevertheless, these activities are also underlined as absolutely necessary—for example, "to sustain our fight" (IDI_P08, l. 676–688) and to "[help] people get on firm ground" (IDI_P04, l. 1013–1018 [Translated]). It is also presented as the "concrete," "practical" and "effective" part of groups' work (IDI_P07, l. 508–518; IDI_P03, l. 1047–1066), which shows "humanity" (IDI_P15, l. 402–411).

And despite this differentiation, they are even often explicitly seen as political. Activists sometimes refer to this as "micro politics" (IDI_P14, l. 475-484 [Translated]) or "small-scale activism" (IDI_P07, l. 580–585 [Translated]). These remarks show that, next to more negatively approached definitions of the political distinguishing it from pure Sozialarbeit or institutional politics, there are also more positively constructed definitions of the political, in and beyond social activities. Political practices and post-colonial perspectives on social movements, as well as some research on migrant rights struggles, address such broader understandings of the political (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2015; Bayat, 2010; Goldfarb, 2006; Marciniak & Tyler, 2014; Piacentini, 2014; Wagenaar, 2014; Wilcke, 2018b).

Practicing small-scale solidarity

> "[S*he said:] 'We need to be patient' but [we] also have to figure out: 'How do we fit together? […] I want to find ways to work together'. For her*him, solidarity is bridging differences and working with differences." (PO_G02_22, l. 117–123)

The quote links the earlier developed distinction of Sozialarbeit inside and outside of activist groups. This is also captured in the notion and aim of working *with* as opposed to *for* refugees (IDI_P11, l. 342–348). Individual support or care work are then understood as political because while individual issues are addressed, they also involve questioning and taking into account

56 Expression similar to "penny-ante stuff" work.

the structural level (IDI_P03, l. 999–1002). One activist says: "Well, because […] if you don't get food, [you can't do anything].". S*he goes on explaining that when groups start providing such basic things, "*then* one starts and says: But I have rights. My rights are not being respected." (IDI_P17_1, l. 911–924 [Translated]) This also makes childcare, translation or cooking together further activities that are explicitly framed as political actions (IDI_P05, l. 1115–1120; PO_G01_03, p. 18; PO_G06_04, p. 17).

Social and interpersonal dimensions are part of many groups' political activities (IDI_P16, l. 1014–1029). Small-scale solidarity practices can mean individual support but they happen in specific collective settings. So organizing politically involves acting in solidarity, which has to bridge but also acknowledge differences. Indeed, phrasing certain activities as *solidarity* instead of Sozialarbeit might be the connecting link in that "solidarity is daily life." (PO_G02_35, l. 37; see also hooks, 2000b, p. 65) The whole notion of making the social political or, more classically, making the personal political, is a central step that feminist theories have contributed to, developing a broader understanding of the political (see e.g. Brisolara et al., 2014; Dean, 1996; Emejulu & Sobande, 2019; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2004).

Saying that something is not right

> "And [Name 76] also said this, s*he said […] that cooking also is politics. Right? S*he said then, now I remember: The human being eats… the human being needs friendships, build relationships… and the human being needs to realize itself, right? So all of this is in it. And all of this is politics. All that you do in life is politics" (IDI_P17_1, l. 880–887 [Translated])

The main point to be taken from this is not to conflate anything into politics but to understand the underlying realization that individual issues and needs have structural roots. It is mainly their contextualization that makes such activities political within activist groups. It can mean "not accepting the way that the system is working and treating people." (PO_G02_06, p. 68; see also IDI_P05, l. 536–544) Similarly, another activist claims that it should not matter "what the institutions say what a status you have, what a paper, what rights." (IDI_P14, l. 129–136 [Translated]). At the center of this understanding of the political is not to take a situation as given. It contains notions of self-organization, resistance and empowerment, for instance, when people stand up and act against their living situation or problems in camps (IDI_P01, l.

329–344; PO_G01_05, p. 49). It underlines the relevance that is attributed to revealing structural issues, which often comes up as a core feature of the political. It is about pointing out that a matter might appear individual but is actually caused by a structural situation (IDI_P11, l. 500–509). The following quote links different of these dimensions, talking about a personal experience while stressing the structural roots:

> "I have […] learnt during these years that in Germany you have to put so much effort into everything, that you […] have to work and do so much until you really get a perspective. And sometimes you will not get this perspective. When, for instance,… you don't have light skin or, I don't know, blond hair or whatever, if you have a weird accent. Yes, […] whenever I meet migrants or so… they complain that… they are always underestimated. And for long time already. Not today. It has been long, it has been years, long years. … Yes." (IDI_P15, l. 592–598 [Translated])

Therefore, already realizing and not accepting this can be a significant part of political action. Trying to support a family to move out of a camp becomes political as it can contain figuring out the systematic context and revealing who benefits from it. In this sense, political action can take place at small-scale, even individual levels. It means speaking up and being aware of the bigger picture but does not necessarily contain a public dimension yet.

Making the struggle visible

> "[I]t's the situation also that motivated why the people became politically active. Because when the people discovered that with [these] documents they cannot… find a work here, then they have to think about how to make the situation more public, how to give an awareness about the situation. … And I think that is how… the issue […] became public and with the support of [a group]… and some other local… German political groups, anti-racist groups then… the group started to get more attention and lot of people started to give a donation, giving more humanitarian support." (IDI_P08, l. 113–123)

Surely, an important element of political action is to make the own issues, claims or visions visible. So *going outside* and formulating demands (IDI_P08, l. 141–150; PO_G01_27, l. 38–45) are concerns classically aimed for through demonstrations, events or conferences. This dimension is centrally about societal attention and public discourse (PO_G01_05, p. 49; PO_G02_06, p.

66). For the groups this entails wanting to "[hold] up a mirror to society" (IDI_P04, l. 596–604 [Translated]) and "[transport] things publicly," (IDI_P06, l. 496–508 [Translated]) but also mobilize people and raise political pressure. Groups make direct demands to politicians, work with or against certain parties and take issues out into the streets demonstrating (IDI_P01, l. 858–865; PO_G01_06, p. 76; PO_G01_17, p. 99; PO_G05_05, p. 50f.): "'We need to give a sign. Many people think they are alone and don't know what to do. […] And we also need to do something about the political development.'" (PO_G06_05, l. 25–32) This contains a more traditional understanding of political action. In some sense also in groups such actions are often seen as the *real* political work (IDI_P04, l. 299–302; IDI_P15, l. 389–401).[57]

Acting and developing together

> "[W]e should bring people from different category, like new refugee, old refugee, migrant, all people, together, to share together our idea to make together something." (IDI_P01, l. 888–893)

This quote emphasizes another essential meaning that many activists associate with the political—acting together and exchanging with one another. This partly encompasses *social* activities, such as listening to each other, getting to know each other, eating or spending time together (IDI_P07, l. 574–579; IDI_P17_2, l. 15–18). It also endorses having political discussions with each other, organizing together and sharing experiences (IDI_P03, l. 525–530; IDI_P14, l. 682–695).[58] One activist summarizes the value of this dimension for building trust and working politically by emphasizing that "you need to think collectively" (IDI_P16, l. 1240–1244). Activists focus on sharing skills or doing tasks together and thus try to enable ongoing learning processes of individual activists but also collectively develop as a group (PO_G01_32, l. 42–50). Such aspects show political action as centrally concerned with itself, aiming at realizing internal democratic procedures as a goal in itself, which is sometimes picked up in theories of radical democracy or prefigurative politics (see e.g. Heil & Hetzel, 2006; Lin et al., 2016; Yates, 2015) While so far it might have seemed as if there was relative consensus

57 This is mirrored in much traditional research on social movements as discussed in Chapter 4.

58 Subchapter 5.3 showed functions of such activities in these diverse activist groups.

about these understandings, it does not mean that all activists share these perspectives.

Speaking about problems is not political

> "Right:… these people have to become stronger, they have to, eh, be active, they have to find their own way and so on. But:… well, they need support. They don't need pressure. And that's what we have been doing with them. And… they are simply overwhelmed and some didn't come to the meetings anymore […]. Maybe… right now I need support… nice people, maybe knowledge. And then I can really become active. But like this, without knowledge, without support, without an apartment—some of them don't have an apartment! What is this about?" (IDI_P15, l. 225–241 [Translated])

This activist strongly raises that involving individual support in political activities too unreflectively can create dependencies and pressure. A person in need of support might feel like she has to give something back in return. This is especially critical when she might not be convinced of or fully understand a political action she is involved in (IDI_P07, l. 904–916; IDI_P15, l. 384–389).[59] Another activist raises that when someone speaks about a specific personal problem in the group, it might mainly be about sharing her situation with others, maybe hoping to address it together with the group. But it does not necessarily mean that this person sees the need or wants to politically, collectively organize against this issue in general (IDI_P07, l. 273–285). I have encountered such perspectives mostly from migrant and refugee activists. These opinions might be marginalized, maybe even silenced, within activist contexts. For instance, this can happen to people who are involved in groups and yet express gratitude to the German state for having received them (PO_G01_13, p. 60):

> "Really, one of them told me: 'Well, actually I don't want to do an action against the German government.' I asked why and s*he answered: 'Well, they are the only government that accepted us […].' And I responded: 'You know, all these governments, also the German government, they brought war to our countries. They caused the poverty in our countries. And so on and so

59 This is equally true for activism and academia.

> on. Why are you grateful? Come on.' S*he couldn't understand it. S*he said: 'At least we have a room.'" (IDI_P15, l. 324–339 [Translated])

This activist criticizes this, according to her, uncritical perspective, while also criticizing how groups deal with it, mainly by ignoring it or pressuring people into anyways participating in actions. This topic shows that there are differing perspectives on which situations require political action in the first place. An activist recalls a politically active refugee who stressed that the mere fact of living in bad conditions in a camp does not require political action because it is an acceptable, since provisional, situation (IDI_P07, l. 487–501). In the end, these perspectives do not necessarily contradict a political reading of social practices. Groups can and are doing political and social work simultaneously. Rather, it is about becoming aware of the mentioned risks and about explicitly framing social action *also* as political—for instance, by indicating that it would be a state task to provide language classes, but since it does not: groups take care of it (PO_G05_04, p. 33).[60]

Summary

> "And I do think […] that as a political group… you always have to move on both, or on three, four different levels. On the one hand, the concrete practical daily issues. On the other hand, also… perspectives of what we are actually claiming." (IDI_P03, l. 1053–1059 [Translated])

This category captures activists' understanding of their activities and notions of *the political*. It clarifies that understanding socially labeled activities also as political eases the apparent contradiction introduced in the beginning of this chapter. Besides, it raises a tension that groups juggle, which also concerns allocating limited resources, setting priorities and dealing with power relations (PO_G01_22, l. 50–58). I argue that the emerging ambiguities emphasize processes of negotiating solidarities within activist groups and might capture the complexities of co-existing, contradictory or overlapping definitions of political action and how it is framed. Feminist theories have shown that such a broader view on political activities is valuable, but it anyways needs further

60 This is not to downplay the power dynamics at play. That such perspectives are mostly dismissed as not seeing the structural level of things highlights the many positions within groups but also the power dynamics that impact on negotiating processes, as discussed in Subchapter 5.3.

integration with other research traditions (see e.g. Dean, 1996; Hill Collins, 2010; hooks, 2000b; Martin et al., 2007). The following analytical category moves one level up in focusing on where interactions beyond the internal processes of groups take place.

5.5 Solid Fluidity of Alliances

While the activist groups I have been working with are clearly collective actors, they are mostly involved at a relatively small scale of action. I mean this in the sense that they have limited numbers of actively involved people and mainly work rather locally in the city of Hamburg. Nevertheless, all of them are continuously interacting and working with other actors. The everyday reality of migrant rights activism in Hamburg emerges as a broad composition of more or less fluid alliances that involve all kinds of actors, relations and durabilities. Thus, this analytical category captures *where*—in the sense of in which constellations rather than physical places— solidarities are negotiated, enacted and challenged.[61] While the previous subchapter focused on the kind of activities groups engage in, internal and external, here I concentrate on groups' interaction with the *outside* in its various shapes.

Nach außen gehen[62]

> "[Name 28] got a letter with a Anzeige[63] because s*he had filmed the police when they were controlling […]. Apparently, s*he had mainly filmed one police man's face who then said s*he should stop filming. The group agreed that politically it was their right to film the police when they did controls. [Name 9] said that these things were their 'only arm' to show people what they had to face every day." (PO_G02_03, p. 26f.)

61 When talking about alliances, it is important to underline that it is not the working together of differently categorized groups of people mainly focused in this category. Instead, I am looking at how all of these differently composed groups build alliances among each other and beyond.

62 Literally, going outside, but also in terms of speaking up about something publicly.

63 A filed complaint.

This situation from a group meeting shows how speaking up in public is often an important way to act about an issue. Indeed, one thing that groups are centrally concerned with is getting in touch with the *outside*, the rest of society. Especially in terms of migrant rights activism, this can also be about becoming *part of* society (IDI_P03, l. 658–664; IDI_P06, l. 276–284; IDI_P07, l. 834–841). Simultaneously, it is very centrally about challenging a society that continuously excludes and discriminates people (IDI_P08, l. 812–829; IDI_P15, l. 592–602). In both of these ways, "the public" is an important addressee of groups' claims (IDI_P04, l. 115-122; PO_G02_12, p. 42f.). While openly fighting injustices, often, this is also aligned with an eye on how to transmit them or on who will be "taken serious" when talking about something (IDI_P15, l. 456–462).[64] The relation to the media can exemplify this further. Groups need their attention and try to position themselves through interviews, press conferences and public actions (IDI_P01, l. 802–807; PO_G01_06, p. 76f.; PO_G05_07, l. 78–81). However, placing topics and keeping media attention is a big challenge, especially for smaller groups (IDI_P14, l. 539–546; PO_G01_05, p. 49; PO_G05_08, l. 49–59). Especially concerning self-organized groups, public reach is a key part of making struggles visible.

Self-organizing

> "So, I think… phh… this is also something that is a little bit complex in the sense like … I have discovered so far like it's difficult for most of the self-organized groups to survive without the existing local groups or without the… supporting structure of… people in the city, like German supporters." (IDI_P08, l. 351–355)

Self-organization commonly comes up as a term, a distinction and a priority. In the context of migrant rights activism, self-organization refers to refugees or migrants organizing themselves, potentially exclusively (IDI_P01, l. 334–345; IDI_P03, l. 317–325; IDI_P08, l. 141–150).[65] The quote raises that

64 As referenced in Subchapter 4.2.2, Odugbesan and Schwiertz contextualize this (2018, p. 198).

65 More broadly, it can be about people organizing against structural inequalities directly affecting them and creating safer spaces for their exchange, strengthening and organizing.

particularly for self-organized groups collaborating with other actors can be crucial. Concerning alliances, especially the further networking *between* self-organized groups is regularly raised as important (IDI_P03, l. 336–347; IDI_P04, l. 779–784; IDI_P05, l. 1322–1327). Self-organizing can emerge from specific situations and places of oppression—for example, the people who are living in a certain camp organize against the circumstances they face there (PO_G01_05, p. 49). Or concerning a specific group of people, sometimes ethnic or national—such as, Roma or Afghan people fighting that they are constantly threatened by deportations (IDI_P01, l. 193–198; IDI_P06, l. 745–749).

The notion is significant because it involves a notion of ownership, putting an emphasis on who speaks for whom or becomes visible (PO_G01_36, l. 49–60). Self-organizing emphasizes the strength and agency of refugee and migrant activists (PO_G02_11, p. 25). As mentioned above, these groups often need the joint forces with others, for example because of local knowledge, language and financial resources (PO_G02_36, l. 70–79; PO_G05_11, l. 35–49).[66] This links to acting together with other actors as the core of this category. It's important to give credit here to existing scholarship by self-organized activists (see e.g. Kanalan, 2015; Langa, 2015; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018).

Building from scratch and/or using existing structures

> "What also came up, especially underlined by [Name 9], was that the [event] should be used to share and exchange experiences with other refugees. S*he said: 'We keep our experience, we didn't share it' and that instead it was crucial. It would be about sharing their own experience as a group and learning from others. [Name 9] underlined that s*he wanted 'not to do something and then it's finished' but to do something that works together with the [event] and other groups." (PO_G02_10, p. 6f.)

As shown above, groups form in specific places, for specific reasons, in specific constellations. This does not mean that there are no other groups working on something similar(ly). Not even in a local context groups are necessarily all aware of one another. The important aspect of this notion of getting started,

66 Difficulties and risks of domination and dependencies are discussed in Subchapter 5.3.

building something from scratch, is that it does not have to stand in contradiction with using existing structures. Groups need one another, for the overall struggle, for their own fights, for exchanging experiences and learning from each other (IDI_P05, l. 1180–1188; IDI_P08, l. 329–336). This can be particularly important for newly formed groups. Additionally, networking is generally raised as important not to waste resources by doing the same things (IDI_P11, l. 604–608; PO_G02_23, l. 35ff.; PO_G05_03, p. 104). This emerges as a problem most visibly when groups compete for attention or resources. In one group setting this came up when discussing several demonstrations planned in a short time period and which, according to some, concerned similar topics or addressed the same people, raising doubts if mobilization would work well for all those demonstrations (PO_G05_07, l. 69–83).[67]

Joining forces

> "Well, like, exchange of positions. Also discussing hard, yeah, but on a level where one is not getting hurt, that I find important, where you still take the other serious. […] And you might say at some point 'Ok, we go separate paths, we don't get together on this. But we're not enemies because of this.' It is about certain points and concerning others maybe eventually we work together again, you know. […] And this is so much … where I think it's so important to stand for differing positions and to see where the commonalities are." (IDI_P06, l. 712–725 [Translated])

This quote raises the balance that defines this category in terms of the need to work together and the difficulties it can bring. Groups are in constant interaction with others—it makes them stronger, louder or simply quantitatively more (IDI_P08, l. 251–266; PO_G02_10, p. 6f.). It can also internally strengthen groups. As mentioned above, they can benefit from each other's expertise and resources, for instance when bigger groups take over specific fundraising tasks or because they do not have to do everything by themselves (PO_G01_03, p. 20; PO_G02_36, l. 70–79; PO_G06_01, p. 71). It can also be useful for exchanging experiences, knowledge and perspectives (IDI_P11, l. 611–619; IDI_P16, l. 1255–1264; PO_G01_20, l. 70–79). An activist states:

67 Differentiating group and movement level is referred to in terms of urban contexts and emerges for collective identities (see e.g. Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 400; Scholz, 2008, p. 69).

"Dream—If you have, you know, the people… in the camps and they work together." (IDI_P05, l. 1360–1366) This stresses the importance of joining forces. In a group's meeting, it comes up that at a certain point networking seemed to start happening to some extent "automatically" through becoming more known and being approached by others (PO_G01_18, p. 21). As another activist puts it, working together is "the only answer to a system which is based on individualism and which brought us where we are." However, s*he also cautions that "you should [not]… step back from your basic ideas and aims… or principles" (IDI_P16, l. 1228–1246)—which links back to the initial quote.[68]

Multiple levels of joining forces

> "And there is a lot in this. There is Libya in it, there is Dublin in it. There is… borders. There is, well, asylum laws and so on. So there is a lot of national and transnational politics combined." (IDI_P03, l. 334–342 [Translated])

This activist is talking about a particular group here, making a point that concerning migrant rights activism might seem obvious: Even when looking at locally engaged groups, they are active in a transnational setting. Not just because individual activists migrated themselves. The issues and structures these activists are facing are intertwining transnational, national and local policy levels, and, additionally, activists are transnationally networked (IDI_P03, l. 44–50; IDI_P06, l. 1068–1074; PO_G05_07, l. 45–51). Thus, working together with others takes place at multiple levels simultaneously. While this research is mostly concerned with the local level, other levels do emerge. Next to local interaction, there is quite a lot of regional working together, which in the case of Hamburg means collaborating with groups from the neighboring regions (IDI_P15, l. 205–209; PO_G05_10, l. 67–79). But there is also national networking—be it in explicitly formed alliances or more loosely in terms of regularly meeting somewhere (PO_G01_33, l. 3–8). In this particular movement, the transnational dimension is relevant in personal, topical and networking terms, yet in my data arises less centrally. One activist talks about transnationality as "a central part of today's local activism." (FN_P03_01, p. 8) The awareness of the importance of such networking, not just in terms of

68 Gaining visibility through alliances is raised in some research (see e.g. Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 22; Oliveri, 2012, p. 801).

building something bigger but in linking various local struggles, seems particularly intriguing (PO_G02_09, p. 110).[69]

Interacting

> "[E]ither you fight… or, well, call for each other's actions—which is important but you don't need to be [group name] for this. If we do something that, on the one hand, is [group name]'s issue but, on the other hand, also involves others. That is good I think." (IDI_P03, l. 463–468 [Translated])

This quote touches upon that groups broadly speaking interact and cooperate with many institutions and professional actors. Classically, this can be organized civil society actors, such as churches or unions.[70] These actors are or can also be part of movements in the broader sense. Although, as potentially bigger institutions, they often have a broader range of societal issues they are involved in. This can make such interactions challenging because it also becomes a balancing between political positionings and power rather than merely differing foci (IDI_P06, l. 523–539; IDI_P08, l. 245–251). One activist expresses this doubt about *trading* cooperation, based on the chance of being supported with resources or gaining visibility, with a group's own focus: "We are losing… the real roots of the problems and the real causes why these problems are there, if we are going into too many alliances." (IDI_P16, l. 1209–1226) Nevertheless, activists underline how important such contacts are to explain

69 The interaction between local and transnational levels of political organizing is famous through the slogan "think globally, act locally" (see e.g. Juris, 2008, p. 11; Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 8; Tazreiter, 2010, p. 211). Generally, there is quite some research focusing on the international comparison of local migrant rights struggles or sometimes also their transnational nature and networking (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2016; Della Porta, 2018b; Erensu, 2016; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017; Rother & Piper, 2015; Schwenken, 2006; Steinhilper, 2017).

70 Other actors that have come up in my data are parties or individual politicians, schools, sports clubs, theaters, NGOs or universities. I summarize another part of groups' interactions as cooperations with professionals. This includes lawyers in particular, which makes sense given the centrality of legal status, but also involves doctors, social workers, graphic designers, researchers, sometimes even camp employees. These are individuals who might also be involved activists, but they are also addressed in their professional capacity.

and transport positions "not just to radical left people" (IDI_P11, l. 316f. [Translated])—in building visions of society or becoming "the answer" to societal challenges (PO_G06_05, l. 9–14).

Bringing struggles together

> "[I]n front of this, we have same problem that- about the learning for all. We make together and say, ok, this student say 'Lernen für Alle'[71], we also say 'Deutschkurs für Alle'[72] and we make Demo together. Yeah, when… in some place… my problem is the same, I come there and… we make together." (IDI_P01, l. 822–827)

The notion that is raised here could involve any of the above-mentioned actors or another activist group. I think that part of joining forces is about bringing struggles together—be it between places, specific communities or in yet other forms. In fact, many of activist groups' cooperations aim at a temporal collaboration of two or more groups concerning a certain issue, moment or goal. In this notion, it is less about *whom* it is with but about its intensity.[73] So seemingly different struggles can (occasionally) be brought together. In a way, this also occurred on a demonstration for March 8, when feminist, migrant feminist and care workers' actions were brought together (PO_G01_31, l. 35–38). Yet, this seems to be occasional, as an activist observes that the feminist scene in the city is "pretty… white" and that "it would be very enriching for all" to have more migrant perspectives (IDI_P14, l. 972–976 [Translated]).[74] Nevertheless, despite many instances when struggles are brought

71 Learning for all.

72 German course for all.

73 Intensity not meaning that they merge or that such cooperations necessarily last over time. It is more about the intentionality and awareness of intrinsically intersecting social and political issues.

74 Similarly, Black rights groups have very direct intersections with migrant rights struggles. There are also attempts to link environmental with migrant struggles (IDI_P06, l. 369–374; IDI_P16, l. 765–790). Sometimes this takes the form of solidary supporting as well, which a group offers to another. This can be less content-based but aimed at, for instance, collecting donations or supporting with a certain activity (PO_G01_33, l. 12–21; PO_G01_30, l. 26–29). Some scholars raise that overlaps of and interactions between movements should receive more attention (see e.g. Kenshiro & Lawrence, 2010, p. 26; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 230; Reitan, 2012, p. 2).

together, activists also very clearly point out difficulties that emerge, for instance, when the various experiences, interests or goals are not given enough space and disagreements appear (IDI_P03, l. 458–468; IDI_P05, l. 1274–1283; IDI_P16, l. 1264–1273; IDI_P17_1, l. 770–784; PO_G02_33, l. 19–27).

Building alliances

> "We are all somehow involved in some projects and do things together as some kind of bigger compound, you know. […] But you don't have to necessarily be together under a certain umbrella, […] but everyone does their own thing and sees where to temporarily work together. You choose the things, join, realize projects together and, well, then it also falls apart and something emerges at another level. I think this is how refugee work functions here in Hamburg, very flexible and not so stuck I think. […] I find it quite dynamic I have to say." (IDI_P06, l. 776–791 [Translated])

As shown throughout this subchapter, groups are continuously building alliances—on multiple levels, with various actors and about numerous topics. More activists echo the Hamburg setting as described in the quote. One says that at some point s*he saw that "the meetings are all connected and at the end you realize […] that the scene is quite small" (IDI_P05, l. 406–411). Sometimes it just comes up as knowing that people will join anyways because everyone knows what is going on and will show up (IDI_P01, l. 600–606; PO_G02_31, l. 22–27). One activist describes how it might be difficult for groups to come together, even if working in the same field. At the same time, due to the specific mobilization and fight of a group, "they have to come together, because they see… the situation." (IDI_P08, l. 148–161) This loose nature of many alliances is not always perceived positively because it can also be a sign that the scene is quite limited.[75]

Of course, there are also alliances that are much more explicitly and intentionally concerned with networking, bringing experiences and resources together to join forces and make a more powerful point (IDI_P01, l. 888–893; IDI_P05, l. 1336–1338; PO_G05_02, p. 58). An activist refers to the "unity in diversity" image (IDI_P03, l. 1334–1349 [Translated]), claiming that it does

75 Although Nicholls and Uitermark discuss that in cities movements interact much more naturally than is often depicted (2017, p. 232).

not necessarily mean "everyone has to go under three slogans" but "everyone can have different slogans but under a common denominator" (IDI_P03, l. 1351–1354 [Translated]). Similarly, another activist underlines that there might be various ideas and positions among groups, but "on a political level I think we agree, with the demonstrations we go together to the street." (IDI_P08, l. 190–195) Yet, especially these more consolidated alliances also take a lot of resources. People need capacities for participating in multiple settings, explicitly linking them, thus engaging in potentially effortful transfer activities (IDI_P11, l. 611–619; IDI_P17_1, l. 742–756; PO_G01_18, p. 20; PO_G02_06, p. 66; PO_G05_03, p. 105).

Summary

> "[T]his is a pretty good example where you see actually really politics happening in social movements. Because different groups are dealing with each other. Each of them, they have their own goals, their own ideas- hopefully at least the groups have a strict idea or direction where they want to go, but I mean that's not really that common but… some have that. … So they are dealing with each other and talking to each other and sort of finding compromises in the end." (IDI_P16, l. 1187–1194)

I think this quote points to the heart of the ambivalent status of solid fluidity described here. It seems to apply to groups, to their interactions and might just be the defining nature of what migrant rights activism is altogether as a movement. Negotiating solidarities on this collective scale is the delicate process of positioning, coming together, arguing, re-aligning, splitting and powerfully moving together. I would argue that this is one of the reasons why, even when networking has a defined form, it is characterized by what I call solid fluidity. The ways in which these activist groups join forces are stable and fluid at the same time. Fluidity means that cooperations take various forms, endure for differently long periods of time, can and do fall apart. Stability refers to the fact that there still seems to be a certain basis which, broadly speaking, is present when needed. This base does not really have a fixed place or shape: in some sense it is the local, potentially urban character of loose knowing each other. In other ways, it can be topic-specific or group-

specific networking beyond locality.[76] All these interactions bring insecurities and challenges because in order to know how to interact with each other, groups often have to figure out what they want. This is explored further in the final analytical category, looking at how groups negotiate goals and success.

5.6 "We Have Not Finished"

Groups aim for change. This might seem obvious but is actually already more complex at a second sight—which change exactly? And how does the way, leading to this change, look like? Like other aspects, activist groups are continuously figuring this out. Additionally, a recurring challenge is that it does not seem like anything is changing at all. What particularly emerged in my data and is explored in this category is how activist groups deal with this situation. They are constantly juggling ups and downs, groups falling apart, others starting anew. My impression is that the fact that they anyways *move on* is promising to look at more closely. This also involves a time dimension. What success is or should be, how short-term and long-term goals are addressed and the lack of change all shape groups' negotiating solidarities. In these included elements, these negotiations link past, present and future activities.

Defining aims

> "And I would say this is the really crucial thing of each group but also a really difficult one… to say, ehm, where… … where do we want to go, what do we want to reach and, therefore, how many compromises are we willing to do and where is maybe- […] which line do we don't want to cross?" (IDI_P16, l. 1194–1199)

This quote nicely links this category to the internal negotiating processes in groups that were highlighted in the previous subchapters. Groups are con-

76 There is increasing attention on the role of the urban space for social movements (see e.g. Hess & Lebuhn, 2014; Kewes, 2016a; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017; Steinhilper, 2017). And of course, I want to give credit to a whole section of social movement studies specifically focusing on transnational networks of movements (see e.g. Castells, 2015; Juris, 2008; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Kenshiro & Lawrence, 2010; Khagram, 2002).

stantly figuring out who they are and what they want. In fact, they try to find and develop "the same sense of direction" (IDI_P08, l. 287–295). So goals or aims do not appear pre-established or always stable over time (IDI_P11, l. 356–360). Big-scale goals aiming for societal and political change are very clearly at the core of most social movements. Activists organize for a society clearly positioned against the far-Right, one with more equal opportunities where human rights are respected (IDI_P05, l. 536–544; IDI_P06, l. 19–28; PO_G01_24, l. 6–10). They want to reach a situation where migration is not the main societal issue linked to every problem anymore—a state of "post-integration," as one calls it (IDI_P07, l. 794–804 [Translated]).

Among others, formulated goals are about stopping all deportations, ending the accommodation of migrants in camps, freedom of movement, equal rights for all (IDI_P01, l. 250–254; IDI_P06, l. 539–550; PO_G01_27, l. 38–45). Yet, what my data reveal is that there are many more goals that groups are working toward. They might be part of the previously mentioned ones but are less slogan-like and in some ways evolve on different levels. Notably, even one group's goals can contradict each other, for instance resulting from differing positionalities of various activists (PO_G02_31, l. 7–12; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 198). Some scholars raise such internal debates and the complex nature of aims concerning migrant rights activism (see e.g. Cook, 2010, p. 147f.; Fadaee, 2015, p. 734; Klotz, 2016, p. 63; McNevin, 2006, p. 146; Monforte & Dufour, 2013, p. 83f.).

Living a normal life

> "I need to have a… to calmly live here in Hamburg, I need to have a legality, you know. Because it is also my right to live where I want to live […] You have the right to be here, right?" (IDI_P17_1, l. 924–947 [Translated])

Very concretely, this quote shows that migrant rights activists are constantly working toward enabling "normal" lives for people, enable them(selves) to "work… and live a decent life" (IDI_P08, l. 90–99; IDI_P04, l. 378ff.; PO_G05_10, l. 55–66). *Calm* or *normal* often means to find some way of obtaining a legal status, even if that might (first) be a precarious one (IDI_P06, l. 911–920). While these might seem individual problems and even self-centered goals, this is where the linkage of the categories Feeling the Need to

Be Political and Making the Social Political[77] builds the bridge to the essence of this category. Migrant rights groups want to better lives for everyone. In order to even be able to work toward this, they first need to find ways for themselves and each other. Even more basic than obtaining a legal status, it is often about being "treated as humans" (IDI_P15, l. 618–622 [Translated]):

> "There were four new people at the meeting. They live in an accommodation in [street name] and the situation is very bad. It is cold and rain enters the rooms. To go to the toilet, they have to leave the building and the kids are sick very often. They have been working together with [group name] in order to get a transfer but so far only the 'real' refugees got that. They have certificates from a doctor and so on but nothing helps." (PO_G01_30, l. 8–17 [Translated])

Even though working on such individual situations is not a fully agreed upon part of the political organizing and goals of groups, aiming for living normal lives certainly is. In fact, changing life realities as a goal of migrant rights activism is sometimes specifically addressed in existing research (see e.g. Johnson, 2012, p. 125; Josten, 2012, p. 169; Klotz, 2016, p. 63; Marciniak & Tyler, 2014, p. 170; McGuaran & Hudig, 2014). There is another more implicit goal emerging from my data.

"Wir machen zusammen Politik"[78]

> "Somebody once told me: 'It actually doesn't make sense what you do. You would have to address one person directly that can decide things and not just be in the streets… eh. But for me this person didn't actually get what it's all about. And that's this strengthening ourselves. And, of course, the other… you can also do. But […] it is really important to know that there are others that think the same and… with whom we can take these steps." (IDI_P14, l. 732–742 [Translated])

This code is centrally about organizing in the first place and finding ways of doing it well (IDI_P01, l. 854–860; IDI_P03, l. 523–530; IDI_P06, l. 236–243). The quote stresses the tension between supposedly *real* political work, aiming at politicians and institutions, and other activities. Yet, what this activist as well as the invivo code emphasize is the centrality that working *together* has for

77 See Subchapters 5.1 and 5.4.

78 We do politics together.

her*him (IDI_P11, l. 342-346). This raises the continuity that is involved when groups consciously reflect it as an explicit aim they set for themselves: bringing people together (IDI_P04, l. 792–799; IDI_P05, l. 1010–1017; PO_G01_03, p. 18; PO_G06_02, p. 12f.). Moreover, it is not only aimed at in the sense of doing things together. Sometimes it very explicitly means *developing* together, for example by addressing issues raised in Subchapter 5.3:

> "I think, against this backdrop [some people felt unsatisfied with an event], but also in general, we discussed more about a separate 'structural meeting'. This should be about how the group should develop in the future: Who is the group? Who takes decisions? How do we organize things? Who takes over tasks? And so on." (PO_G01_28, l. 25–30)

Some groups try to build spaces where there is time to work on themselves, to talk and exchange about the basics that often come up short in the everyday pressure of various urgencies and priorities (IDI_P11, l. 342–348; IDI_P16, l. 243–252; PO_G06_02, p. 12). Nevertheless, there certainly is the need to work toward the overall aims and goals in more visible and traditional forms as well.

Reaching public attention

> "[T]o have this political discussion, you know, that we try to talk to people from our position and try to work politically but also keep an eye on: 'How can I transport this to society?'" (IDI_P06, l. 496–500 [Translated])

This quote links internal topics to the need to externally positioning as well. Creating visibility by taking to the streets, raising awareness about issues, trying to capture media attention or directly addressing politicians bring in classical forms through which social movements aim for change. As one activist puts it, when there is "a big problem," there needs to be "big action" (IDI_P01, l. 606ff.). Especially since many of the situations migrant rights activists face are marginalized and pushed out of public attention—even though migration certainly is a constant topic—, it becomes ever more central to find ways of making them more present:

> "In the end they talked about the demonstration against the Abschiebeknast[79] in Glückstadt. Those who were there said that it wasn't very big but quite good. The prison will get started soon and mainly concerns people from 'safe countries of origin'. These people should be brought there early on and live 'a normal life' there over weeks which apparently was already referred to by operators and politicians as 'life minus freedom'. [Name 35] said that detention pending deportation has always been and continues to be a legal borderline, which is why they [politicians] try to get it through 'under the radar', so in a small town like Glückstadt. Altogether it was established that it is obviously quite a sensitive topic for the institutions and that [the group] should do more to make this [situation public]." (PO_G05_10, l. 67–79)

Of course, to work against these institutionalized and structural problems is difficult and often activist groups do not manage to obtain success.[80] It seems easy to look at this quote and state: If they did not manage to mobilize enough opposition to the deportation prison to make politicians shut it down or not open it in the first place, they have not been successful. However, considering the remarks concerning multiple scales of goals and the role time frames play, with success it might not be that easy either.

Negotiating success

> "What was mentioned as most important to communicate is that this was Black people who organized without the help of anyone, decided to fight, decided to go [outside], not knowing yet whether they would be supported or not." (PO_G02_11, p. 25)

This quote underlines that already the step of organizing and in this case going public can be considered a success, which underscores that there are multiple ways of looking at success. One activist asks "What is the actual success? Is there a success? How do I measure it?" to then answer her*himself: "it's something personal." (IDI_P16, l. 1343–1349) Actually changing life realities of people or individuals is, understandably, considered a success, some-

79 Detention center pending deportation.

80 While this is a goal and level of success which social movements are most of the time being evaluated on (see e.g. Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 77f.; Buechler, 2000, p. 163; Crossley, 2002, p. 139; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 232; Weldon, 2011, p. 3).

times but not necessarily directly linked to activist groups' involvement—concerning getting a residence status, obtaining an apprenticeship position or a job, finding an apartment or similar successes (IDI_P01, l. 338–346; IDI_P07, l. 508–518; IDI_P08, l. 241–251). Another type of repeatedly mentioned success is individual and collective development and empowerment (IDI_P08, l. 606–619):

> "According to what s*he told, s*he has passed very adverse, difficult situations, but her*his strength made that s*he could move ahead and, additionally, that s*he obtained what s*he believed to be entitled to. […] Therefore, this strength of achieving this, despite everyone telling her*him that it was not possible. S*he fought for obtaining this and s*he did. And it's not only her*him, but s*he also passes it on to everyone else. S*he also passed it on to me. Then this makes you fill with strength. I don't want to say power, but strength and knowing that you can […] obtained what we are entitled to. Actually, it's fighting for our rights. So this is what they remind us and it's important: knowing and remembering it." (IDI_P17_2, l. 31–46 [Translated])

This quote discusses individual experiences of empowerment but also relates them to collective development. Notably, it raises a time dimension by stressing that past experiences are shared in the present, generating hope. Seeing that one is able to realize or contribute something, taking responsibility and developing agency can be empowering experiences (IDI_P11, l. 483–489; IDI_P14, l. 1016–1026). Giving hope and keeping up the mood is a relevant success of joint action and so is seeing results from taking the time to exchange views and find ways of concretely developing together or successfully having organized with others (IDI_P01, l. 491–499; IDI_P11, l. 666–673; PO_G01_32, l. 4–8; PO_G02_32, l. 8–14). The multiplicity in goals and success in migrant rights activism on multiple levels is raised by some scholars (see e.g. Glöde & Böhlo, 2015, p. 85; McNevin, 2006, p. 147; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 198; Oliveri, 2012, p. 803; Schwenken, 2006, p. 323f.; Tazreiter, 2010, p. 212; Ünsal, 2015, p. 4).

Reflecting on the lack of (political) change

> "[Apparently in the meeting] some refugees remarked that 'It didn't change anything' [referring to a big jointly organized demonstration]. [Name 5] commented that this is always a difficulty and is linked to the question what

> success is in the first place. […] Many ask 'What use does it have for me?' and, indeed, in their specific life situations often these actions don't change anything. At the same time, s*he said that for [group name], it did release some energy. For instance, to organize the open meeting and exchanging a lot about [the current legal changes] and its consequences." (PO_G05_10, l. 55–66 [Translated])

This quote picks up the ambivalence of realized activities and how they might be perceived. Significantly, it also raises a recurring notion, namely that "nothing changed" (IDI_P01, l. 445). Or as one activist puts it: "[T]he laws worsened and no one listens to us." (IDI_P15, l. 572–579 [Translated]) Someone else says: "[M]aybe we won't reach anything." (IDI_P14, l. 415–420 [Translated]) Activists underline how they do not even expect to realize big changes by saying that one has to be "realistic" (PO_G05_05, p. 50f. [Translated]) or that "it is gigantic problems [we are facing] that are out of our hands." (IDI_P07, l. 569–575 [Translated]) These statements refer to the general political situation and personal life situations that do not seem to be changing no matter what activists do. Such lack of political change is often referred to and together with resulting disappointments are issues that the groups constantly have to deal with: "I'm losing more hope that […] refugees and immigrants will get […] better future here." (IDI_P08, l. 789–803) A recurring perception is also that "many fights [have been] lost" (PO_G05_07, l. 39–45 [Translated]). These expressions reveal that despite the previously cited "realistic" attitudes to change, its lack needs coping.[81]

The ambivalence of activities and successes at various levels also shows in demonstrations, which are likely the most frequent public activity groups organize. What activists perceive as satisfying numbers of people differs between rather low numbers, such as fifty, and much higher ones, such as 35,000 or more. That underlines the importance of context. On the one hand, it is often mentioned that the only thing that is being done are demonstrations but that they do not lead anywhere (IDI_P01, l. 606–610; IDI_P03, l. 950–963). On the other hand, demonstrations emerge as occasions that bring people together, keep up the mood and create empowering situations (IDI_P14, l. 712–728; IDI_P15, l. 205–209; PO_G01_17, p. 99). One activist interestingly

81 While failures of movements are sometimes addressed in terms of the cycle of protest, to my understanding, they are mostly not explored more (see e.g. Cook, 2010, p. 156; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 233; Glöde & Böhlo, 2015, p. 84; Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 134; Tarrow, 2011, p. 206).

raises that "if you're only focused on a goal that is that far away, it… makes things more complicated," pointing out that it can be good to have short-term goals, which are more "practically related" (IDI_P16, l. 1333–1339). Essentially, s*he points out that it is a balancing between hope and disappointment that activists are dealing with, individually as well as in their groups.

"Connecting [ideas] to something practical"

> "For [Name 6], the workshop was a way of bringing the social and the political struggle together in that sense. It is good and important, others agreed, to capture the interests of refugees. [Name 50] remarked that we have to talk about things that can be realized and that we can do something. Something [Name 8] said, at some point, was: 'Solidarity is daily life.'" (PO_G02_35, l. 31–37)

This group situation on reflecting a previously organized event in a way counters the issue of nothing changing. Groups discuss organizing events that are directly relevant to those people living in specific precarious situations, as a significant approach in its linkage to the political and structural context (IDI_P03, l. 1004–1010). This adds the notion that to keep going, despite all disappointments, practical or concrete steps are needed. Often, this can be linked to or even enforced by existing urgencies—due to institutional political dynamics, a specific occasion that a group can work toward or individual situations (IDI_P03, l. 458–468; IDI_P05, l. 933–942; IDI_P08, l. 141–150; PO_G05_05, p. 50f.). This is repeatedly referred to as the concrete "actually doing something" (PO_G05_01, p. 45 [Translated]; IDI_P14, l. 440–458; PO_G02_32, l. 12–16). Such concrete aims and practical activities are easier to realize and facilitate getting and keeping people on board in the very real urgency of everyday struggles. Barker and Cox seemingly make a similar point when discussing how activists always have to combine general and practical issues, (2014, p. 12).

"We have not finished"

> "And I had hope that we as a group could… eh- I know that we cannot change the system but I thought we might be able to do something good for these people." (IDI_P15, l. 148–151 [Translated])

Maybe through working on multiple types and levels of goals simultaneously and thereby experiencing various kinds of disappointments *and* successes at the same time, migrant rights activists find ways to not just individually balance but also collectively keep moving against all odds. As this activist points out, s*he is not convinced structural change will happen. But if there is the possibility of improving things for some people, it is significant to do it. The notion of not having finished is recurring and stands for continuation but certainly also persistence (IDI_P01, l. 521ff.): "We have to try again, again, again, again, again." (IDI_P01, l. 291f.) As in the opening quote, such persistence is often linked to various kinds of changes that occur: impacting people, giving hope, gaining courage, "strengthening ourselves" (IDI_P03, l. 374–381 [Translated]; IDI_P01, l. 279–284; IDI_P08, l. 619–636). Such a continuity can also persist through times more dominated by "low level" activity—fewer people and actions (IDI_P08, l. 251–266; PO_G02_30, l. 44–51). It means holding up the fight and keeping things moving. All this depends on an equally ambivalent expression that characterizes this category altogether. People are not really feeling hopeful, *but…*:

> "I don't really have a positive view into the future. I don't see that anything is changing in a good way. So, you could say 'Oh, you're really negative, [Name].' And I would say 'Yes, definitely.' But… well, it doesn't… mean that I need to […] stop doing something cause, on the one hand, I gain power out of political, practical action […], or strength. […] And the other thing is that there is the foolish hope that… yeah, many small drops… … will in the end, will create something bigger… somehow. But I don't know, if I still live then or whatever. But as long as I'm thinking that I'm working sort of on the right side and fighting… with people I like or […] I just respect them, I would say I would always continue […]." (IDI_P16, l. 1399–1415)

The same activist also talks about how learning about people's experiences and the realities they are facing is sad and frustrating, but that it can also be inspiring and empowering to see *that* and *what* they are doing to fight these (IDI_P16, l. 285–294). Other activists make similar points when saying: "I believe that… with a lot of work […] we can affect society" (IDI_P05, l. 630f.) or "I'm very convinced that […] when I work politically there is a chance I can change things." (IDI_P06, l. 216–226 [Translated]; see also IDI_P11, l. 483–489) In fact, part of this is also reminding each other "not to underestimate everyone's power" (PO_G01_10, p. 27). Ultimately, there seems to be some belief in

the own collective potential (IDI_P17_1, l. 1234–1243). This persistence to continue despite everything is a powerful notion.

Summary

> "But they are 'not moving' is what s*he said. 'A demo is not a success. A success is when you're creating something, when you're knowing where to go.' Later s*he said that the strength of them experienced and organized people is that they think about the future and understand that it's not about themselves: one day one won't be there anymore, but it won't matter because it's about what's created. Instead, it's about creating space and possibilities for others for the future." (PO_G02_28, l. 51–58)

This quote underlines the linkage of present and future in activism. Moreover, it indicates how groups might manage to handle the existing complexity through balancing. For instance, this can occur by building places and spaces where there is time to focus on each other, on oneself, to listen and aim at improving situations and how they work together (IDI_P16, l. 857–862; IDI_P17_1, l. 1216–1220; PO_G01_33, l. 78–85). In this sense, the claim "we have not finished" seems to be a self-assurance, a strategy and a challenge at the same time. This category highlights that negotiating and building solidarities takes time. It builds on past fights, seeks practical, concrete aims in people's present life situations while always aiming at big-scale societal and political change. It offers no recipe and is, surely, no endpoint—as might be suggested if these six analytical categories were presented as a linear sequence. This category works as the closing empirical-analytical subchapter because it nicely weaves them all together, as various references throughout the subchapter illustrate. Many of the ongoing negotiations discussed in this entire chapter show that groups are continually working on building lasting structures to continue fighting for their goals. The destructive consequences of the lack of political change cannot and shall not be denied—individual fates, groups falling apart, people quitting, losing hope or seeing no perspectives anymore. Yet, activist groups often manage to keep going anyways. In its inescapability, the collective claim discussed in this subchapter clearly relates to the individually felt need to be political: "We have to struggle." (IDI_P01, l. 524–527)

5.7 Summary of the storyline

This chapter offers an insight into lived realities of migrant rights activism in Hamburg. The analytical categories are very grounded in the empirical material of my interviews and fieldnotes and emphasize those patterns that seemed most promising to explore further. The overarching storyline Negotiating Solidarities only developed at the later stages of the research process. My impression was that processes of negotiating meaning and practices emerged in all the analytical categories as very central internal dynamics. This is not surprising since these are contexts defined by social interactions and political positionings. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 4, these are dynamics that are not conceptually developed very far in the Northern mainstream of social movement studies.

I already pointed out that solidarity is a very present buzzword in current times. I do not merely criticize this but decided to use it myself because it is a powerful idea. While it does not emerge very centrally in an explicit sense throughout my data, it seemed an intriguing way of capturing groups' various internal processes of figuring themselves out. The plural underlines that the claim here is not to develop *the* definition of solidarity. Instead, it is about rendering the many implicit understandings and practices of solidarities present in migrant rights activism in Hamburg. Notably, it also expresses that this is not a plainly pleasant and harmonious process. It involves negotiating, discussing, disagreeing as well as things going wrong and power relations playing out. Yet, these processes also highlight much practical engaging with each other and aiming at developing together. The next chapter consolidates the main insights I see in this storyline and puts them in dialogue with existing research to contribute to developing a conceptual angle that captures these activist groups and their activities for migrant rights from a social movement perspective.

6. Discussion: Exploring Transversal Solidarities in migrant rights activism

In the previous chapter, I presented the empirical data in-depth through the storyline Negotiating Solidarities. The analytical categories that constitute it display a multi-layered and complex picture of the empirical context of activism by, with and for refugees and migrants in Hamburg and how it can be conceptualized through the data themselves. In Chapter 4, I identified conceptual gaps in existing research that hamper convincingly capturing these struggles, especially when it comes to the Northern mainstream of social movement studies. Based on these gaps, in this chapter, I present three contributions that can be condensed from my data and that, by developing them in relation to existing literature, further answer my research questions. They build on the analytical categories presented in the previous chapter and grasp their overlaps and interactions.

Firstly, I develop the role of intersections of differences within the movement. Secondly, I address the variety of activities displayed. Thirdly, I conceptually acknowledge the role relations might play for experiences of success. I sustain each of these contributions with my empirical material in connection with existing research on migrant rights struggles, showing that they are not just present in the empirical context of my own research. Additionally, I develop these contributions in close exchange with existing concepts and literature from other research fields—mainly intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critically-engaged research perspectives. I focus them through the aim of addressing identified gaps in social movement studies. This also means that while pointing to valuable theoretical perspectives, I cannot pretend to display their whole conceptual depth in detail. In Subchapter 6.4, I present and develop the resulting overarching concept I propose. Following constructivist GTM, *Exploring Transversal Solidarities* results from theoretical coding, the most abstract level of analysis, which develops emerging with existing

theory. It captures the complexity of relations, positions and emotions as my take on migrant rights activism that is developed throughout the chapter.

6.1 Intersection of differences: how inequalities challenge solidarities

As discussed in Chapter 4, exploring the internal heterogeneity and resulting dynamics within movements is still a gap both regarding research on migrant rights activism and most of the Northern mainstream of social movement studies (Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 3; Ünsal, 2015, p. 2). In Chapter 5, I have shown that in the case of migrant rights activism in Hamburg it is essential to embrace the heterogeneous multitude of actors and how activists deal with it.[1] Therefore, my study's first contribution is exploring and capturing complexity of internal dynamics concerning inequalities and privileges in migrant rights activism through an intersectional conceptual take. This means that when considering the framing focus on solidarities, these need to be addressed in their moving beyond differences, as opposed to applying to supposedly homogeneous groups (Kabeer, 2005, p. 8). I explore how solidarities interact with power relations, underlining that this understanding moves beyond declaration.[2] This also implies trying to avoid an exclusive focus on legal status as the only meaningful social category through which activists are addressed or differentiated. Especially BPoC feminist research shows that such a focus on one category is not limited to migrant rights struggles and needs developing. Hence, integrating these with theoretical perspectives that already offer ways to embrace and accommodate such complexities and apparent contradictions is very promising.

To discuss internal dynamics, it is necessary to first address structural social categories more in general. Yuval-Davis discusses these as social locations: "[T]he positioning of people, in particular times and in particular spaces, along intersecting (or, rather, mutually constitutive) grids of power."

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1 These aspects weremainly discussed in the Subchapters 5.3 and 5.5.

2 I use power relations mainly in the sense of structural inequalities making people find themselves in intersectionally (dis)advantaged positionings, which necessarily impacts relations within activist groups. A further conceptual exploration of *power* goes beyond what I develop in this research.

(Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 268) According to her, these are often marked by "different embodied signifiers, such as colour of skin, accent, clothing and mode of behaviour" but should not be collapsed with them (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 20). The grids of power usually referred to are race, class and gender. Several others, which place systematically (dis-)advantage people vis-à-vis others, can be added, such as "sexual preference, age and/or physical ability" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151). Stuart Hall focuses particularly on analyzing race, ethnicity and nation as three ideas that organize classifying systems of difference (Hall & Gates, 2018, p. 52). Yuval-Davis underlines that such categories should not be reduced to one another, but they can also not be separated. They are contextual in that in specific contexts or moments, there might be especially contested ones (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 15ff.).

In that sense, legal status currently is a particularly dominant social category. In fact, as discussed in the last chapter, it is the most obvious and often defining of the various positionings in migrant rights activism (IDI_P06, l. 897–911; IDI_P11, l. 309–316). This aspect appears in my data and is acknowledged in some of the existing literature on migrant rights activism, mostly visible as differentiating between "refugees" and "supporters" (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2016; Johnson, 2015; Kanalan, 2015; Kewes, 2016a). Additionally, especially in critical border and migration studies, there is awareness that, instead of there being a dichotomy between citizens and non-citizens, as often displayed, there is a broad range of stratified statuses between those having and those not having a (clear) legal status or even citizenship (Carmel & Paul, 2013, p. 78; Schlee, 2021, p. 128; Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 145f.). These differences are not just there on paper but, as addressed in the previous chapter, they have direct consequences on people's access to the job market, public life, language classes or other rights (IDI_P01, l. 556–571; IDI_P05, l. 1366ff.; PO_G02_06, p. 68; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 197; Schulze Wessel, 2016, p. 52).

The case of legal status also shows particularly well that these categories, constituting the grids of power relations along which people are positioned, cannot be separated. Race or nationality also come up as relevant and have clear overlaps with legal status.[3] Gender plays some role in my data and some

3 Potentially due to my focus on mixed-organized group contexts, nationality and ethnicity are not in very central view in my empirical material, even though they are used and referred to (IDI_P01, l. 162–168; IDI_P05, l. 1348–1352). With a few exceptions (IDI_P16, l. 717–740; PO_G01_32, l. 124–132; PO_G02_33, l. 40–48), my impression is that racism within group contexts was increasingly addressed with the growing so-

publications also point to it as a significant positioning within migrant rights activism (Cissé, 1996; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2004; Ünsal, 2015). In my perception of the activist contexts, certain positionings remain invisible and/ or silent altogether most of the time, such as activists living with disabilities or Inter, Trans, queer and non-binary activists. Religion is an interesting topic in this context because, even though it is certainly present in migrant rights activism, it is relatively little explicitly reflected on, at least in my experiencing of the empirical contexts of this research. Neither as a potential line of discrimination or conflict nor as a life reality that is, at least sometimes, quite naturally taking place in these spaces.[4]

Black feminist perspectives have long offered valuable insights into such constellations of intersecting grids of power and resulting exclusionary dynamics. In fact, intersectionality is an often-used keyword today, most famously coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989:

> "Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women." (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149)

However, it is important to underline that Crenshaw herself makes direct reference to the fact that Black women have been facing and naming social positionings at intersecting grids of power in their life realities, struggles and theories way before herself (1989, p. 153; see also Hill Collins, 1986, p. 19). This

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cietal awareness around the renewed Black Lives Matter protests after the death of George Floyd in 2020. However, this impression can also relate to my own perspective being defined by a constant learning process with regard.

4 Sometimes there can be observed discrepancies between often Left atheist activists and religious ones, mostly Christian or Muslim. One concrete instance, which took place after the main phase of my fieldwork, was a demonstration for March 8. One group openly addressed at the demonstration and later-on in a written statement that some women*'s chants—"No God, no State, no Patriarchy"—had affected a Muslim woman* because s*he did not feel comfortable or welcome with her faith at the demonstration anymore. The written statement, including a critique of the handling of the demo organizers with it on-site, led to many controversial reactions among feminist groups involved.

is essential because often intersectionality is discussed as a realization that sequentially entered feminist struggles and theories at a certain point. Instead, for most women* and feminists, it has always been an obvious part of their fights. Such a sequence might only be true if we add that it only entered predominant *white academic* feminism at a certain point. As bell hooks argues, it had to be pointed out by Black feminists how "racism had shaped and informed feminist theory and practice" (2000a, p. 16). The Combahee River Collective strongly shows the diversities within feminist but also Black struggles by stating that "we have in many ways gone beyond white women's revelations because we are dealing with the implications of race and class as well as sex," and by referring to sometimes negative reactions of Black men to Black feminism (1977).[5]

Yuval-Davis offers a further analytical differentiation that enables distinguishing between social categories, identities and values in heterogeneous constellations (2011). As opposed to people's positioning along the grids of power, she discusses identities as the verbal and non-verbal narratives that are "stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)." (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 20) Of course, when dominant discourses force an identity on people, positionings and identities are intertwined more closely.[6] Normative values are the third analytical dimension Yuval-Davis introduces, discussing them as "the ways [social categories and identities] are assessed and valued by the self and others." (2011, p. 23) According to her, this includes the importance they are given but also "attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/should be drawn, in more or less permeable ways." (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 23)

As displayed above, my data clearly show such an intersectional reality in migrant rights activism. It is also visible in existing publications by activists themselves (see e.g. Cissé, 1996; Kanalan, 2015; Langa, 2015; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018; Ünsal, 2015). Intersectionality of social categories can

5 There are also critical and controversial debates and evaluations concerning the concept of intersectionality and certain ambivalences it contains between challenging and reproducing, by implying, the pre-existence of divisions (Lin et al., 2016, p. 312; Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 13f.).

6 I decided to follow Yuval-Davis' very clear and helpful distinction. Some other theoretical perspectives I refer to and quote do not use this same understanding of identities or rather conflate these two. I try to point to these different uses of identities to avoid confusion.

be additionally complex because it is clear but not always visible that a person experiences multiple forms of discrimination (Bakewell, 2008, p. 439). An activist might (currently) be a refugee, female and have never studied—for either of these factors and/or their combination, she probably experiences disadvantages and discriminations both in the German state *and* within activist groups. So, legal status certainly plays a crucial role in the discriminations she is experiencing, but as the only analytical frame, it might ignore further factors. Such ignorance could easily lead to a singular, exclusive perspective on her as a migrant, a woman *or* as part of the working class, which by embracing an intersectional perspective might be prevented.

In the context of critical migration studies, in fact, Bakewell points out how putting one identity—particularly legal status—too much at the center results in a distorted image that might tend to overlook other existing positionings:

> "There is a danger of falling into the trap of assuming that a certain set of problems or experiences are the exclusive domain of refugees. This can too easily lead us to ascribe particular problems to a person's identity as a refugee, when it may be more closely related to other aspects of their identity which might be shared with other 'non-refugees' in the local population: membership of an ethnic group, length of residence, income level, level of education, and so forth." (Bakewell, 2008, p. 445)

Indeed, one activist also very clearly points out how s*he does not like the societal focus on problems as migrants' problems, by stressing: "I'm not a problem." (IDI_P07, l. 794-804) This highlights once again that no one belongs to just one category or has only one identity, individual or collective. As famously expressed by Audre Lorde: "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not lead single-issue lives." (Lorde, 1982) People bring various values, interests or affiliations that might not easily fit set categorizations. Precisely this "hybrid and composite nature of identities" and categories is often ignored (Ålund, 1999, p. 154). Madjiguène Cissé offers an analytically relevant example by addressing how the Sans-Papiers movement had to repeatedly underline its multiple identities to show the complexity of the struggle. In fact, in their case, the activists used their specific positioning in constructing identities in Yuval-Davis' sense:

> "During that whole period, we had many identities to re-establish. For example, our identity as workers. So after Saint-Bernard we insisted on holding our

> press conference at the Bourse du Travail[7] to make people understand that we are not only 'foreigners', but that we're also workers, men and women who work in France. The purpose of the attacks against us is of course to casualize us. But we're not the only ones threatened with casualization: many French workers are in this position. Therefore, we were keen to signal this 'shared social fate' by where we held our press conference." (Cissé, 1996)

Additionally, positionings can also bring along seeming contradictions. German BPoC activists are often read as migrants. They experience racism and discrimination but simultaneously have privileges due to their formal papers or other factors. Some (white) migrants might *pass* as German or already have regular papers while still living precariously or experiencing language discrimination (IDI_P08, l. 279–287; IDI_P17_1, l. 742–756). Additionally, legal status is not a set, never-changing characteristic even though it is often treated as such (IDI_P14, l. 628–634; PO_G01_04, p. 36; PO_G02_35, l. 8–11). Finally, as discussed particularly in Subchapter 5.4, the felt need for political action around these categories and identities varies, which adds Yuval-Davis' analytical facet of values (2011, p. 23). Hence, what results from my data and existing research is that positionings, identities and values in migrant rights activism are complex and fluid.[8]

A lot of this might seem obvious in certain ways, but it is essential to emphasize because it is not analytically captured enough so far. There is relatively little social movement research on how intersecting social positionings take effect within activist groups and instead much conflation of social positionings with identities. Nevertheless, there has been some attention from research on this specific movement to dynamics reproducing dominant power relations within migrant rights activism, resulting from categorizations based on legal status. For instance, researchers address that dependencies, exploitation and dominance take place (see e.g. Ataç, 2016; Fadaee, 2015; Glöde & Böhlo, 2015; Johnson, 2012; Kewes, 2016b; Steinhilper, 2017; Ünsal, 2015). However, there is not much in-depth analysis of how these are taking form or how groups address them. From analyzing my empirical material, it seems that, rather than the more abstract positionings, some dynamics and characteristics do not have the same direct systemic roots as these but

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7 Trade union office.

8 In turn, this can apply to one movement, as here, and also to connections among various movements, which has "traditionally received scant attention" (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 230).

come up more frequently and explicitly. Thus, they might be helpful to reveal dynamics within groups that potentially reproduce power relations among positionalities. Many such dynamics are at work within and beyond activist groups and can exclude people, both externally—preventing them from entering in the first place—and internally—marginalizing them within.

External exclusion can be rooted in various social categories and their acting in concert, as shown in Subchapter 5.3. One example which emerged in my data as a factor that should not be ignored is gender (PO_G01_10, p. 26; PO_G06_02, p. 14). Cissé points out how an awareness of intersecting power structures does not mean cementing these or dividing the movement but can result in changes in the movement. She discusses how "[w]omen have played an extremely important role in this struggle," but that it "was not obvious that this was going to happen [because] [a]t the beginning it seemed to be taken for granted that women would not participate in general meetings." (Cissé, 1996) But women, particularly mothers, are often excluded from meetings as such through much more subtle dynamics, for instance, because there is no childcare or due to the choice of meeting places and times (IDI_P05, l. 818–825; IDI_P07, l. 49–55; PO_G06_02, p. 14).

To some extent, this can also apply to newly local, non-German-speaking activists or to people not socialized in the radical Left. Many meetings take place in visibly Left-organized spaces, and sometimes activities are quite confined to certain social circles. That means that many people do not even necessarily get to know about them. This mirrors a tension that most groups juggle, between wanting to be open to and even needing new, particularly migrant activists and eventually very often not managing to even reach the people they are interested in and working for (IDI_P06, l. 911–920; PO_G02_22, l. 85–90; PO_G06_05, l. 25–33).[9] Taking an intersectional perspective can mean considering that a combination of such factors might prevent, not only but centrally, migrant mothers from entering group contexts.

Another factor is language, which is often a challenge in migrant rights activism and is not as clearly linked to legal status as it might seem. Needs for German or English as the main language can rather vary across legal statuses. It potentially prevents people from joining meetings in the first place. Additionally, with this example we can move to internal dynamics of exclusion. Because even when interpretation is organized, people depend on others, can

9 Chapter 5.1 offered a more in-depth exploration of various structural factors preventing particularly people without (clear) legal status from becoming or staying active.

only participate indirectly and time-lagged (IDI_P06, l. 1021–1031; IDI_P14, l. 875–885; PO_G02_09, p. 109). Additionally, there can be inadvertent "symbolic mechanism[s] of exclusion" (PO_G02_09, p. 110). For instance, these take place when people who need interpretation are often visibly set apart, not to disturb the rest of a group. Furthermore, it is almost always migrants who are put into this position, while simultaneously often being the ones having the broadest language skills.

Other factors that often come up as an imbalance among diversely positioned activists are local knowledge and activist experience centrally determining how much someone depends on others and thus can participate in and shape activities (IDI_P05, l. 860–886; Della Porta, 2018b, p. 14). This is then linked to who has the capacities to acquire, manage and distribute group money or a power position in terms of networks, contacts and other kinds of resources. As mentioned above, these dynamics are not the same as grids of power because these characteristics or capacities can be acquired. Certain elements might apply to inexperienced activists or people having just moved to a place in general. Nevertheless, such capacities are not separated from the grids of power either. They can be rooted in positionings in specific social categories, such as social class, or be reinforced by them. Dependencies increase and acquisition is hampered without a (clear) legal status, non-European language skills or the fact that somebody also has to take care of children or other family members without being able to use public support structures.

My data show that the diverse positionings within groups often result in dynamics of dependencies as well as domination or imbalanced decision-making (IDI_P08, l. 402–412; IDI_P15, l. 389–401; IDI_P16, l. 698–703). The claim "we are all activists" itself is an example of internal dynamics potentially reproducing power relations. It underlines the goal of creating unity within the movement. This potentially overlooks the diversity of positionings, the absences and, in fact, sometimes can even be used to silence certain perspectives. That does not always have to come from powerful positionings. It can also result from refugee or migrant activists just being very tired of always being essentialized to this *one* social category and, therefore, aiming at a joint struggle without differences (IDI_P07, l. 476–487; PO_G01_04, p. 36). Importantly, bell hooks identifies *silencing* as a key strategy in denying intersectionality and delegitimizing marginalized positionalities (2000b, p. 13). This makes it even more central to be vigilant about it in such a complex context as migrant rights struggles. When trying to make the circumstances or strategies the same for everyone in a plight for an equal and united move-

ment, this can easily result in (un)consciously internally reproducing the very inequalities and resulting power relations that migrant rights movements are fighting (IDI_P04, l. 1157ff.; IDI_P05, l. 518–524; IDI_P05, l. 860–886; IDI_P07, l. 209–212; IDI_P08, l. 473–492; PO_G02_08, p. 90).

Yet, there also exists some overt ignorance and resistance against acknowledging power relations and addressing them. Especially privileged white German activists, who might genuinely wish to overcome differences, sometimes appear to hope to be able to do so by ignoring them (IDI_P16, l. 717–740; PO_G02_22, l. 29–33). Even when there is awareness about their power position within the movement, a complete resigning from visible and representative tasks, which sometimes is the consequence, can actually result in concealing the power relations at play again (IDI_P05, l. 1225–1230; PO_G01_32, l. 140–156; Scholz, 2008, p. 158). Ultimately, they clearly still contribute and use their networks, priorities and resources shaping movement activities. It is crucial to discuss this positioning especially because, given the very focus of these activist groups, it results in an essential power relation to consider. However, to focus on this alone can conceal other dynamics.

There is diversity in positionings among refugee and migrant activists and it can result in conscious or unconscious reproduction of power relations or even discrimination among them. When a Person of Color talks bad about Black people or a cis-male refugee activist uses his patriarchal power position toward a woman*, these behaviors are not always called out. This might be because with an awareness of own privileges can come fear and reluctance—particularly by white German activists—to criticize people belonging to a discriminated group (PO_G01_32, l. 140–156; DiAngelo, 2019; Ogette, 2021). I argue that this also happens and represents a challenge because it goes beyond easy dichotomies—for example, privileged German vs. disadvantaged refugee. Gutiérrez Rodríguez raises a related point, particularly underlining the dynamic of being spoken *about* rather than speaking *for oneself* when addressing the position of female migrant workers:

> "The question 'who is being represented' in public and 'why this person becomes a public speaker', is tidily linked to access to public space, the embodiment of a dominant habitus and culture of speech developed in specific local political scenes. These scenes are marked by the local criteria of distinction, mostly bound to the dominance of the local language, access to higher education, skin colour, gender, sexuality and class. On this basis, undocumented migrant women experience objectification. Even though their situation is

> always being spoken about, they experience exclusion as subjects and political protagonists of the antiracist movement." (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2004, p. 154)

This goes for their analysis and representation as well as movement-internal procedures. The quote shows particularly well how it is not clear-cut and homogeneous social categories that take effect within movements. Rather, it is complex dynamics, resulting from specific positionings along intersecting grids of power. Nadiye Ünsal is also one of the few scholars who reflect on this explicitly regarding migrant rights activism. She stresses herself that she is involved in the movement as a "female activist of color, who is negotiating and sharing her role as 'supporter' in the movement with mostly white activists." (Ünsal, 2015, p. 3). Indeed, Ünsal calls for more exploration of intersectional power relations in migrant rights activism beyond apparently clear distinctions between refugees and supporters (2015, p. 15). While her discussion mainly involves gender and legal status, she also addresses race and, generally, strongly emphasizes the importance of analytically recognizing discriminations *within* the movement. These examples show how complex and partly contradictory such dynamics and groups' internal dealing with them are. They indicate that diverse positionings are not captured by dichotomies (Hill Collins, 1986, p. 20). An intersectional perspective captures diverse life and movement realities by revealing that imposing homogeneity to all people supposedly included in a certain category or movement reproduces privileges and inequalities (Lister, 1997, p. 30).

Jodi Dean develops her criticism of identity politics through describing three stages that most movements, according to her, move through in seeing and defining themselves (1996, p. 74). Groups or movements first try to challenge the exclusion they experience by presenting themselves as worthy of inclusion, trying to assimilate their identity. They then embrace re-appropriation of formerly externally imposed negative difference as valuable and significant. Dean points out that this second stage in particular comes with strong homogenization. That is because it appears that to reclaim or take over the identity in question, it must be consolidated and indivisible (Dean, 1996, p. 26f.). Finally, some movements manage to move to the stage of accountability, which takes a more differentiated view on identity and self, understanding them as constructs formed through multiple interconnections with other identities and selves (Dean, 1996, p. 50ff.). Dean emphasizes that these three stages are not always linear, one stage following the other. They can

instead be intertwined and mixed or non-sequential. Interestingly, she sees "permanent risk of disagreement" as the basis for reflective solidarity, the third stage (Dean, 1996, p. 29). Dean refers to identities but acknowledges the importance of paying attention to the specific and interconnected experiences of intersecting realities.

Yuval-Davis' differentiation is valuable here because it emphasizes the very starting point of intersectional perspectives as not reducing people to social categories. As she presents, this is not only true for people's positionings but crucially also for their identity narratives and values, which can naturally vary among people with similar positionings. In fact, concerning the migrant rights struggles at Oranienplatz in Berlin, Napuli Langa states that there were internal difficulties, due to differing demands and interests, and importantly raises that these existed "between refugees and refugees, refugees and supporters, *and* between supporters and supporters" (Langa, 2015, p. 8 [Emphasis added]).[10] Therefore, identities in migrant rights activism in this reading come up in the negotiating taking place in activist groups.

Indeed, I think that this does not only apply to migrant rights struggles and should therefore be more broadly conceptually developed in social movement studies. Even when scholars acknowledge diversity in backgrounds and positions of activists (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 99), there is surprisingly little attention being paid in the Northern mainstream of the field to the ways in which inequalities play out internally within movements (Flacks, 2004, p. 144; Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 395; Susemichel & Kastner, 2018). Additionally, those approaches that do take identities into account often treat those as identical with social categories and present them as the direct reason for political action. Both in a Marxist understanding of *the* movement and the New Social Movements tradition, following the idea of identity politics, identities are too often predominantly seen as set and one-dimensional.[11] Not only are these views essentializing, but they also create dichotomous views on positionings and power relations, which, as shown above, are not helpful in and even obstructive to dismantling these same power structures.

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10 However, this is not to suggest that such disagreements are the same in terms of power relations. It is anyways good to be careful not to ignore them.

11 In the extreme of such readings, *the* worker's movement addresses economic inequalities and capitalism, civil rights struggles formed *the* Black identity facing racism, and the women's movement is composed of *the* women fighting for their rights vis-à-vis men (Dean, 1996, p. 48f.).

The fact is that individual positionings are intersectional and the existence of the resulting internal dynamics clearly affects groups and movements in complex ways. This can become a way of challenging the often-used clear distinction between subject and collective further, which is why I complement the intersectional conceptual angle to social movements with a focus on this in-between space here that emerges more visibly when discussing diverse movement identities. Sometimes, these complexities are most visible in the discrepancy between individual and collective identities, which have been discussed above. I argue that social movements are intrinsically moving in-between this distinction because they are spaces where individual and collective exigencies meet and are negotiated. It seems like this exact negotiation is rarely explored[12], so embracing this through approaching movements with an openness to the internal complexities and the variety of the lived experiences of activists in collectives seems necessary. Schwenken notes that for understanding political mobilizations, it is "important not to divide the levels of subjects and structures" (2006, p. 43 [Translated]). Cox and Barker claim that "we know comparatively little about the lived experience of activism and the everyday strategic concerns of movement groups." (2014, p. 3) This is potentially rooted in its appearing to challenge or even threaten the possibility of a united collectivity.[13]

Yuval-Davis offers a useful complement once again by stressing that identities are always constructed in dialogue. This dialogue is "not individual or collective, but involves both, in an in-between perpetual state of 'becoming', in which processes of identity construction, authorization and contestation take place." (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 22) This can be compellingly linked to McDonald's conceptualization of the "public experience of self," mentioned in Chapter 4 (McDonald, 2002). His distinction between individualization and individuality indicates that an individual experiencing something does not mean it is only about the individual. He refers to this as "a mode of experience that is personalized, while not individualized" (McDonald, 2002, p. 118).

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12 An exception might be framing and discourse analyses (Bloemraad et al., 2016; Cook, 2010; Laubenthal & Leggewie, 2007; Yukich, 2013). But these have a different focus than my analysis.

13 Of course, the dichotomy between structure and agency is one that has kept the whole of sociology busy for decades, so I do not pretend to solve it here—yet, it is one more analytical binary that might hamper rather than properly grasp experiences in migrant rights activism.

Such perspectives align with an intersectional view on social movements, which does not draw a linear, simplifying line between individual social categories and movement identities. McDonald sees a change with previous movements and explains it with the shift from industrial to network capitalism, claiming that while movements' reaction to the former had to be building a strong "we" of solidarity, the response to the latter can only be one of "fluidarity" (2002, p. 125). I tend to contradict such a historical sequence of different kinds of movements by claiming that intersectionality and diversity have always existed. I clearly also contend McDonald's distancing from solidarity as a concept. By developing it, as I do in this and the following subchapters, from an explicitly intersectional perspective and also involving its ambivalences, I hope to restore its analytic potential. Anyways, the "public experience of self" is a useful approach because it offers a perspective that embraces analyzing the collectivity of social movements explicitly through its interaction with complex subject positions and their relationalities.

In this subchapter, I have illustrated that especially diverse activist group settings, such as those in migrant rights movements, call for engaging with intersectional analytical perspectives and related approaches and concepts. There is an analytical contribution to social movement studies in linking my empirical conceptualizations of migrant rights activism in Hamburg to existing BPoC feminist theories and critical approaches. This linkage underlines the relevance of engaging with internal dynamics of movements in general and the concept of intersectionality in particular. It involves accepting that it is promising to focus on movements' and groups' internal dynamics and on explicitly naming diverse positionings along intersecting power relations.

What is particularly essential about this explicit involvement of intersectional and critical perspectives is that we cannot think in purely dichotomous terms anymore. Once acknowledging that categories and identities are multiple and overlapping, it is clear that there can be no homogeneous movement. It then becomes most promising—if certainly also challenging and possibly contradictory—to engage with the ways this is internally dealt with. I argue that this is part of conceptualizing solidarities in a way that is not merely idealistic but involves movement realities in all their complexity. The overarching claim of an approach to social movements that takes an intersectional perspective on struggles in their diversity and addresses their complexities through the in-between of collective and individual is that there is not and has never been *the* activist of any given movement. That does not mean that

the most dominant categories or identities cannot or should not still be analyzed. Precisely because of taking an intersectional perspective, I can point out the need to acknowledge while challenge power relations resulting from legal status, while *also* calling for addressing racist, sexist or further power dynamics.

That there might be tensions, both between different positionings and between these and the collective forms of action in movements, shows that solidarities should not simply be addressed through social categories. What is also raised by the focus on negotiating identities between individual and collective, is that it highlights that intersectional perspectives are applicable within movements themselves *and* to their analysis. In academia, just as in activism, it seems crucial to explicitly develop intersectional perspectives on migrant rights activism to capture exclusionary practices and ambivalent relations taking place within groups and alliances. In fact, this study's data also show that most groups are engaged in an ongoing process of learning and developing concerning existing power relations. It is not a linear progress or a development that all groups are at the same step of, but the practices are taking place and they are being negotiated. This is where I think the practical perspective on intersectionality emerges and this is what is developed further in the following two subchapters.

6.2 Variety in activities: how everyday politics build solidarities

Another gap in the extant literature, which was pointed out in Chapter 4, is that research often focuses on the most visible, most clearly political and state-oriented social movement activities, not capturing others (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 77; Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 3; Fadaee, 2017, p. 54; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 35). In fact, my empirical material has illustrated that the activities in migrant rights activism in Hamburg display a much wider variety.[14] It underlines how urgent needs are at the center of many activities and what that means for activities in general. In this subchapter, I establish that this is partly also reflected in existing literature on migrant rights activism. Therefore, my study's second contribution is to develop a conceptual perspective better able to grasp this variety. This subchapter directly builds on the previous one: An intersectional perspective on activist groups better enables

14 This was mainly developed in the Subchapters 5.1, 5.4 and 5.6.

a view that also embraces complexity in developing a broader conceptualization of political activities. Feminist, post-colonial and political practices theories offer valuable perspectives here. Looking at groups' engagement with their various living situations and several power relations also highlights the more practical or applied notions of intersectionality already taking place and illustrates building of solidarities.

The more classical, publicly visible activities of movements will not be addressed in detail because this subchapter's focus is on the less explored ones. Nevertheless, given that concerning activism by and with activists without (clear) legal status public visibility plays an ambivalent role, it is still important to acknowledge. These activities are significant and activist groups put much effort into organizing explicitly public activities, such as demonstrations, conferences, petitions or workshops (IDI_P01, l. 476–479; IDI_P03, l. 364ff.; IDI_P04, l. 360–364; IDI_P14, l. 539–546; Ataç et al., 2015, p. 6f.; Marciniak & Tyler, 2014, p. 7):

> "Given the hostile climate facing immigrants and governments' frenzied attempts to secure their borders, […] [e]ngaging in assertive, highly visible, and sometimes disruptive political actions like protests, occupations, and hunger strikes would seem counterintuitive at best and unwise at worst. However, rather than hunker down and turn in on themselves, many immigrants have asserted their rights to have normal, visible, and equal lives in the countries in which they reside." (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 3)

Hence, migrant rights movements involve activities that are very openly and directly targeting governmental political institutions. This makes sense because it is the political institutions on the various levels of governance taken to change the structural circumstances of migration and asylum laws, living conditions in camps or border policies (Ünsal, 2015). However, as shown particularly in the analytical category Making the Social Political, activist groups are engaged in a much wider variety of activities, which escape a gaze focused solely on public appearances. Many of those activities have to do with groups explicitly or implicitly dealing with the power differentials and dynamics within movements, discussed in the previous subchapter. I argue that this intersectional reality, if not yet fully embracing its consequences, does yield a constant process of engaging with a diversity of activities trying to build solidarities and negotiating what this means and does to activist groups themselves.

Firstly, there are examples showing that groups work on addressing dynamics of the external exclusions mentioned in the previous subchapter. Groups try to create circumstances that better enable equal participation in activities. What makes this especially interesting when moving beyond a mobilization-centered perspective is that these measures are often framed as activities in themselves. One example is how some groups try to deal with exclusionary language practices. It is visible that, depending on the constellation in a group at a given time, there is more or less *need* or rather urgency to actively engage with the resulting inequalities, but there often are, at least at times, reflection, negotiation and experiments.

One group tried to use interpretation technologies to smoothen the interpretation practices in meetings (PO_G01_33, l. 27–50). In a workshop context, interpretation was organized with professional technical equipment, making everyone rely on headphones, even if somebody in principle spoke all three discussion languages (PO_G06_04, p. 17).[15] Yet another group considers starting meetings in smaller language groups to give people the chance to start with a better understanding of the meeting's purpose (PO_G02_09, p. 109). Some groups organize childcare during their events or regular meetings to enable parents, especially mothers, to participate (IDI_P07, l. 49–55; PO_G01_33, l. 12–21). In some contexts, activists are very aware of choosing times and places that work for group members or potential target groups and that are, from a mainly white German perspective, often not considered (PO_G06_02, p. 14). One example in Hamburg is that many meetings are held in neighborhoods where the police is particularly present and exerts racist controls daily. On some occasions, this resulted in choosing a meeting place in another neighborhood. Other times, it involved people organizing to come and leave jointly (PO_G02_31, l. 42–53). Paying transport costs can also be a relevant step (IDI_P03, l. 831–837).

Secondly, my data show that groups are also concerned with addressing dynamics of internal exclusionary mechanisms. One strategy I observe is to explicitly share skills and experiences. This could express itself in specialized workshops, for instance, on legal regulations or possibilities of finding a job. It also shows in building working groups, explicitly involving activists with and without experience in the respective field. It could also mean *simply* creating room for exchange and mutual learning within meeting spaces (IDI_P04, l. 792–799; IDI_P14, l. 628–634; IDI_P17_2, l. 31–46; PO_G01_20, l.

15 Yet, it is good to acknowledge that this does not always work well or solve all problems.

46–54; PO_G02_10, p. 6f.). A related set of activities is concerned with creating spaces for developing together as a group by reflecting, discussing and learning jointly. Sometimes, there is also the decision to organize times when there is mainly room for getting to know each other, spending time or eating together without a set agenda. All these activities seem to regularly come up as expressed goals, while just as often not being actually realized in time-pressured group contexts with urgent life realities involved. I further explore the relational elements of this set of activities in the following subchapter.

Thirdly, as discussed in the analytical category Making the Social Political, groups are also centrally involved with support activities for individuals (fellow activists and not) in personal challenges and problems, for instance with regards to legal status (IDI_P03, l. 515–522; IDI_P04, l. 1009–1018; IDI_P07, l. 508–518). These activities do receive some attention in research on migrant rights activism (see e.g. Ataç, 2016, p. 642; Della Porta, 2018b, p. 14; Fontanari & Ambrosini, 2018, p. 591; Johnson, 2016; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 196; Steinhilper, 2017, p. 82; Ünsal, 2015). Kelz even claims that providing basic services is in itself "a political act of resistance," acknowledging that "the intention to create a political space where actors can meet as equals is not enough to make differences 'magically' disappear." (2015, p. 13) Indeed, this less visible nature of such activities is often highlighted by researchers focusing on migrant rights activism. Köster-Eiserfunke et al., for example, criticize dominant critical citizenship perspectives on migrant rights activism, as the focus on acts of citizenship puts most attention to what is visible:

> "The analysis of acts often concentrates on 'public' politics which do not work without the state that they construct. Consequently, we must not forget that from this perspective daily, but not publicly staged subversive practices fall out." (Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014, p. 191)

Referencing Papadopoulos et al. (2008), they frame such practices as "imperceptible politics". However, they also note that these do not necessarily involve or presuppose an explicit political subjectivity but emerge from daily life (Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014, p. 191f.). This is where negotiations about the definition and need of political and social components in activism can also emerge controversially. Subversive practices emerge and are enacted but might not necessarily be framed as *political practices* by the actors themselves (IDI_P07, l. 487–501; PO_G01_13, p. 60; PO_G02_22, l. 96–105).

Activists point out that some refugees might mainly join groups for practical support or social exchange and, even when talking about their problems,

do not necessarily mean to stress a political dimension or call for action about them (IDI_P07, l. 273–285; IDI_P08, l. 210–227). One activist even underscores how much pressure emerges due to a dependency that automatically materializes when people need support. S*he, therefore, strongly advocates for keeping social and political practices apart (IDI_P15, l. 225–242). It is important to mention these perspectives because they are often not very present in the negotiations going on in the groups. Furthermore, they are essential because they require us not to forget the intersectional power relations discussed in the previous subchapter. Nevertheless, it seems to me conceptually important and potentially powerful to develop a broadened understanding of the political through such practices.[16]

Piacentini also observes everyday practices that are generally not perceived as resistant or political while, according to her, they are conscious because they are "specifically intended to counter experiences of marginalization, segregation, and disempowerment and to effect change in how asylum seekers are treated and perceived." (2014, p. 170) She also emphasizes why it is so important to pay more attention to such practices:

> "Redirecting attention on action and opposition in the everyday lives of asylum seekers not only brings to light some of the often invisible and unacknowledged forms of resistance people use to survive, but also adds their voices to debates and reveals some of the ways they are developing social narratives and subject positions of their own making." (Piacentini, 2014, p. 184)

While this quote mainly focuses on the individual everyday level of such practices, I argue that this should be further explored with regards to activist groups as well. As mentioned above, (in)visibility is an element quite often explored in literature on migrant rights activism. Ataç et al. even refer to it as "invisible politics" (2015, p. 7 [Translated]). They observe how the fact that such practices do not fit dominant frames of the political can be strategically intended by activists:

> "These politics are invisible because they do not want to be perceived as such in the dominant regime of gaze, because they try to withdraw themselves

16 This does not mean that these contradicting voices disappear. By underlining the constant process of groups figuring themselves out and negotiating their own conceptualizations, disagreement is embraced as a more normal, potentially productive part of activism (Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 22).

> from it, or because they do not aim at making an appearance." (Ataç et al., 2015, p. 7 [Translated])[17]

The fact that migrant rights activism challenges such apparent binary tensions, between visibility and invisibility, between social and political, underlines how important it is to try and capture the variety of activities present in such movements more explicitly. In this regard, I want to further integrate the approaches discussed in Chapter 4 as local everyday Political Practices. I think that this growing body of literature exploring so-called micro-levels of politics reveals that a clear-cut distinction between political and social activities falls short of movement realities.

Authors use different labels for such activities, but they have a lot in common. In fact, there certainly is awareness that more conceptualizations are needed that move beyond a dichotomous view that in its extreme can see as political only what addresses the political system and all the rest as non-political (see e.g. Norris, 2002, p. 193). Scholars might argue that to change things beyond oneself, political claims to institutions are necessary (see e.g. Hellmann, 1998, p. 23). However, Political Practices underline that it is not exclusively targeting institutions that makes activities political. Dominant theoretical approaches in social movement studies, such as NSMs and PPMs, reinforce the opposition between political and cultural movements. This risks also reproducing existing power dynamics when not questioning which activities do not even appear or do not fit in.

In fact, the wider variety of activities displayed in this research display that there are many, potentially less visible activities of groups. These would hardly be captured from such viewpoints but can be considered political. The key for this seems to lie in explicitly fighting the structural roots of oppression. For example, Rygiel suggests that also activities not directly addressing governmental political institutions can resist or even undermine state (b)orders (2014, p. 143)—thereby containing very explicit political components. Indeed, when Bang and Sørensen point out that "the political is always rooted in a conflict over values and their allocation in society," (1999, p. 329) they also challenge the dominant distinction between political and cultural movements. Armstrong and Bernstein make a similar point by highlighting that with this distinction most often comes a dismissal in terms of the latter's

17 It is certainly important to note that still studying and analyzing these can therefore create ethical tensions.

legitimacy. They conclude that "[t]he activities of many contemporary movements do not fit neatly within a narrow definition of politics." (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 79). This aspect becomes most relevant when considering who exactly is delegitimized, as Jackie Smith raises when calling on the field of social movement studies to be more "sensitive to the ways new arrangements may be forming through the practices of actors who are now relegated to the margins of 'politics.'" (2015, p. 615)

Precisely here, political practices emerge as a fruitful perspective. Goldfarb, for instance, tries to develop such sensitivity in underlining the power of small things by paying attention to "the kitchen table" (2006). He explores the potential of apparently small things, such as poetry readings in private apartments as a free space in Soviet times: "These small events contributed to the transformation—indeed, the transformation could not have happened without them." (Goldfarb, 2006, p. 12) While generally in a very different context, in the activities in migrant rights activism similarly powerful practices can be found that are part of politically building solidarities for many of these groups—from childcare, over mutual support, all the way to workshops and more visible events.

The employed vocabulary might have already suggested certain proximity to feminist argumentations again, which is another conceptual complement I want to introduce here. Second-wave, mostly white, feminist fights evolved around the situation that women were formally included but actually excluded from citizenship. This exclusion has been famously revealed by the claim "the personal is political" (Hanisch, 2006). It broadens notions of the political because it reveals that individual problems are structural. Hanisch describes in her text that gave rise to this quote, which in 1969 originally was actually not intended for publication, how women groups' activities, referred to as "consciousness-raising," were often externally framed as *therapy*. According to her, this clearly shows the broader scale of the structural roots of gender inequality:

> "They could sometimes admit that women were oppressed (but only by 'the system') and said that we should have equal pay for equal work, and some other 'rights.' But they belittled us no end for trying to bring our so-called 'personal problems' into the public arena—especially 'all those body issues' like sex, appearance, and abortion. Our demands that men share the housework and childcare were likewise deemed a personal problem between a woman and her individual man." (Hanisch, 2006)

Her conclusion is even more firm: "Personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution." (Hanisch, 2006) There are clear resemblances to what a group writes when describing their activities: "The personal problems of the individual are our problems—we see them as societal problems which we are facing." (PO_G01_34, l. 4f.) Therefore, in the first place, feminist struggles show that even when problems are deemed private, that most often rather points to a strategic dismissal of women*—or generally of people who are fighting the structural, thus political, nature or root of these problems. I argue that part of this dismissal has been that not only the problems but also the activities developed against them were banned from the *political* sphere. That this is strategic and structural is important to see which impact existing power relations have on and in social movements.

Here, this feminist concept can be related to migrant rights activists' linkage of social and political, visible and invisible forms of action. Feminist perspectives indicate that the problem is that certain issues and, in this case, actors are excluded from what is considered political due to the conceptual, structural distinctions criticized above and in Chapter 4. In fact, in classical views, the migrant as a political subject is denied this very status by way of conceptualizing (Isin, 2002, p. 31). All this makes apparent how limiting this additional dichotomy is. An explicit link to citizenship can prove helpful here. Ruth Lister's notion of a feminist perspective on inclusive citizenship is illuminating: "A key tenet of feminist citizenship theory is that understanding lived citizenship involves a challenge to the public–private dichotomy that underpinned the traditional association of citizenship with the public sphere." (Lister, 2007, p. 55) She emphasizes that feminist fights cannot take place without the ground-work of everyday politics for satisfying "human needs" and, thereby, "[promoting] autonomy" (Lister, 1997, p. 16).

These observations similarly arose in my empirical data. One activist frames this as a need for "infrastructure" or "a safe room" (IDI_P16, l. 310–318). However, another activist also points out how people realized that such support was necessary to sustain the struggle for rights of a self-organized refugee group only when it had become politically visible (IDI_P08, l. 676–688). Martin et al. claim:

> "Recognizing these often-invisible forms of activism in embeddedness and social relations provides an analytical framework for better understanding

> the social basis of political action, and to recognize otherwise-overlooked actions that create social change." (Martin et al., 2007, p. 91)

However, there might be the need to caution generalizations on *the* migrant rights movement here. Ünsal points out that in her analysis of migrant rights struggles in Berlin, it was "mostly WLGBTIQ* 'supporters' [who] care about the support for the single asylum cases of 'refugees' or other individual solutions." (2015, p. 13) According to her, "many male 'supporters' are even not part of such groups or do not agree on helping out for bureaucratic assistance." (Ünsal, 2015, p. 13). Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize that it is not merely German activists organizing such support. Indeed, many support structures and community networks are completely self-led by refugees and migrants themselves. This is potentially what makes them even more invisible, at least to a predominant white German gaze. Once again, this accentuates the importance of an intersectional perspective on movement-internal dynamics and relationalities. It does not obscure but rather strengthen the call for a social movement perspective able to accommodate feminist conceptualizations of the political. Indeed, existential urgencies, which need to be addressed to continue working politically, become particularly visible in struggles fighting these exact structural inequalities at the root of such urgencies. The link to Lister's reading of citizenship becomes meaningful here because it captures the agency involved in this by linking citizenship and autonomy to satisfying human needs (1997, p. 5f.).

Another line of approaches that can help conceptualize such practices are post- or de-colonial ones because they broaden the analytical gaze beyond the Northern-centric view normally dominant in social movement studies as in other disciplines. For instance, Fadaee argues for including Southern experiences and characteristics in the general empirical and analytical social movement frame at all (2017). I think that, moreover, many of such elements can be very useful when looking at movements taking place in the Global North as well. Nevertheless, I definitely agree that in doing this, Northern scholars have to be careful not to simply appropriate Southern perspectives and equalize experiences that differ in their experience of historical and contemporary power structures. Therefore, I want to carefully embed Bayat's notion of "non-movements" into what I have explored so far in this chapter.

Asef Bayat mostly contextualizes non-movements in the Middle East but actually references the "non-movements of the international illegal migrants" as well (2010, p. 15). Non-movements' focus on the individual and everyday

characteristics of their practices might apply to what has been observed concerning the invisible dimensions of migrant rights activism in Europe. What is key to Bayat's concept is that this "quiet encroachment," as he calls it, is in a way imposed, or at least deeply rooted in the marginalized and precarious life situations of the poor combined with enduring state repression. The desperate need to survive adds up to the "impossibility […] or […] ineffectiveness" of organized activism, as Fadaee summarizes (2017, p. 54). Bayat points out that:

> "[U]nlike social movements, where actors are involved usually in extraordinary deeds of mobilization and protestation that go beyond the routine of daily life (e.g., attending meetings, petitioning, lobbying, demonstrating, and so on), the nonmovements are made up of practices that are merged into, indeed are part and parcel of, the ordinary practices of everyday life." (Bayat, 2010, p. 20)

According to him, through these acts can form political opportunities that lead to formal changes in the system as well (Bayat, 2010, p. 15). Of course, in migrant rights struggles involving various positionings, as those I explored, the heterogeneous and intersectional constellations, the variety in activities discussed here and, to some extent, their location in the Global North should caution a too complete adaption of Bayat's conceptualizations. But especially refugee activists are also in Europe often living not just in marginalized conditions and post-colonial relationalities but, indeed, have to struggle for survival on a daily basis.

This brings me back to the linkage between traditionally political and social activities in migrant rights activism. The everyday practices, which Bayat refers to, occur in migrant rights activism because for many activists without (clear) legal status, this everyday dimension totally exists, even if others in these mixed group contexts can limit it to the groups. This calls for taking such a broader and more nuanced view on what kinds of activities constitute this movement, and impacts who is framed as a political subject and what is framed as legitimate political action. This becomes particularly clear because while many activists are formally not citizens and, therefore, in traditional concepts impossible to be understood as political agents, this activism shows how much overcome such views are (Isin, 2012, p. 13).

Additionally, as otherwise especially in post-colonial settings, the physical need to survive is so central that social action and taking care of each other *is* political action. It directly goes against these conditions' structural

roots when it is framed in such ways (IDI_P06, l. 483–505; IDI_P11, l. 474–481; IDI_P15, l. 592–602).[18] Such urgency makes these struggles a continuous *part of* political resistance and surviving, which then might result in taking less collective and thereby less visible or public forms of acting, as described by Bayat. It is not about claiming that only this is politics. However, I argue that his observations can be insightful, even when developing a more reflective and integrated social movement perspective in general:

> "Multifaceted social movements are not single-episode expressions that melt away under an act of repression. Rather, they are prolonged, many-sided processes of agency and change, with ebbs and flows, whose enduring 'forward linkages' can revitalize popular mobilization when the opportunity arises. Clearly, the most common work of social movements is to pressure opponents or authorities to fulfill social demands. […] [But t]he very operation of a social movement is in itself a change, since it involves creating new social formations, groups, networks, and relationships. Its 'animating effects,' by enforcing and unfolding such alternative relations and institutions, enhances cultural production of different value systems, norms, behavior, symbols, and discourse." (Bayat, 2010, p. 247)

This shows that the observations from migrant rights activism on varieties of activities and the resulting broader understandings of the political might have an added value for exploring how solidarities are practically built in social movements. Scholz stresses that an important aspect of political solidarity might not just be to work for changing the conditions causing suffering but, in fact, "simultaneously those in solidarity may need to respond directly to the concrete needs of others and help to alleviate suffering." (Scholz, 2008, p. 56)

These calls for developing a broadened understanding of the political display where dualistic analysis is not helpful because by "sorting and ranking" people and phenomena into "non-overlapping categories," dominant systems of oppression are being reproduced (Hill Collins, 2010, p. 23).[19] In fact,

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18 In fact, this can leave the conceptual space for still differentiating these activities from social interactions that do not deliberately aim for a potential political change or effect.

19 Yet, for me, it is not so much about criticizing the use of categorizations as such, which to a certain extent can of course be useful, if not necessary, in describing and analyzing phenomena.

Hill Collins and other scholars' critique of binary or dualistic thinking is immensely central. Essentially, given that a binary differentiation underscores the division in that it depicts the two categories as mutually excluding each other, it intrinsically does not only distinguish but also does add value or judgment about them (Hill Collins, 1986, p. 20). So binary analysis is used where there are underlying power structures, which are reinforced through the unstable relation of the binaries—be it consciously or unconsciously—because there is no space left in-between. Trying to reveal these power structures or to build analysis beyond binaries is challenging because, most of the time, in order to do this the binary categories have to be named and thereby seem to be reproduced (Wartenpfuhl, 2000, p. 62). Ambivalences and contradictions in the empirical setting might appear in analytical tensions. An example is that the exploration of *the political* in this research, centrally builds on a seemingly binary distinction between the social and the political, while also challenging this very opposition in integrating them. I argue that this is not an analytical inconsistency but a necessary step in capturing complex realities and analytically moving beyond binaries.

Summarizing, this subchapter has focused on conceptualizing the variety of activities enacted in migrant rights struggles by exploring the contributions feminist and post-colonial theories can make and grounding it in Political Practices perspectives. Both Bayat's non-movements and Lister's inclusive citizenship bring contradictions in their application to migrant rights activism. The former because non-movements are turned into movements, the latter because citizenship is applied to non-citizens. I argue that this should not prevent an engagement with these concepts because rather than limiting their explanatory potential, it actually reflects the tensions and ambivalences present in this kind of activism itself. Taking this into account from an academic perspective on these struggles means doing justice to the controversies that the activist groups themselves engage with and that cannot be analyzed well in binary distinctions. In fact, this is a central part of Kelz' discussion of solidarity:

> "If we accept that we carry otherness within ourselves, that we are not self-identical, we might be in a better position to accept the otherness of another person and refrain from the need to captivate what she is within preconceived ideas of identity based on origin, religion, race or legal status. Such an understanding of solidarity also allows us to rethink political practices.

> Instead of stressing the need to create a strong and lasting set of common goals, agendas or identity traits, political action in concert can be redefined as needs-based, a notion that allows for the creation of more fluid and flexible forms of political association." (Kelz, 2015, p. 16)

This quote nicely links the previous to this present subchapter. It highlights how it might indeed be the intersectional presence of various positions that makes it more necessary to analytically capture the political essence of needs-based activities as practices of solidarities. This further strengthens the significance of developing intersectional analyses on power relations, discussed in Subchapter 6.1. Activists and groups explicitly reflect what is and what needs to be political and, more implicitly, engage in a broad range of activities around this. By displaying such a range of activities, reflecting their meaning and priorities, groups indeed practically build solidarities by acknowledging and addressing urgent needs resulting from structural inequalities. Engaging with the roots of the inequalities, which manifest in and beyond groups, means embracing a process of figuring out how solidarities can take form in a context defined by challenges and apparent contradictions and structured by power relations. The next subchapter develops the third contribution of this research project. It explores how intersectional constellations and this variety of activities also require a different analysis of goals and success of movements, stressing the role relations and emotions play in negotiating solidarities.

6.3 Ambivalence of success: how relationalities negotiate solidarities

Based on the discussion of intersectional perspectives on activism and the variety of political activities, displayed in the previous subchapters, this study's third contribution concerns the role that relations play in negotiating solidarities and the ways success and failure can be experienced and dealt with.[20] This subchapter focuses on how dealing with (not) succeeding to reach set goals in migrant rights groups seems to be closely linked to relationalities and emotions within the movement. In fact, what centrally emerges in the

20 This mainly draws on the empirical-analytical insights from Subchapters 5.1, 5.2 and 5.6.

empirical material, even if subtly, is that building lasting structures, which enable activists to keep going, might be considered a central success.

The basis of this are some of the activities previously discussed. Especially groups explicitly taking time and making space for personal relations and, indeed, developing together. These aspects are explored further here as a potential take on what keeps movements moving, in terms of how groups and individual activists find ways of handling failure and frustration. It adds another notion to solidarities because a particular focus is to stress the negotiating that is taking place through this. Fittingly, for Featherstone, solidarity is about "actively shaping political identities" (2003, p. 405). I argue that developing a conceptual gaze paying attention to what is happening within activist groups, in this sense enables us to better grasp the relational and emotional complexity of movements. Again, intersectional feminist and critical theories are significant for this and here are complemented by perspectives focused on prefigurative politics.

With a few exceptions, it seems that emotions still play a limited role in how activism is interpreted in predominantly Northern social movement studies. Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta summarize how emotions were used in the 1960s to pathologize movements. In contrast, when movements were taken more seriously in the 1970s, according to them, their depiction as rational actors ironically prevented any engagement with emotions (Goodwin et al., 2000, p. 69ff.). They discuss how, afterward, the cultural turn resulted in perspectives paying more attention to emotions but often limited them to the cognitive and did not bring about a proper theoretical development (Goodwin et al., 2000, p. 72). Such criticism is clearly very intertwined with the previous subchapters' call for more attention to internal dynamics of movements, as the following quote by Gould underlines:

> "Investigations of such stories, and analytical attention to the power of emotions evident in them, can provide us with important insights, illuminating, for example, participants' subjectivities and motivations, and helping us to build compelling accounts of a movement's trajectory, strategic choices, internal culture, conflicts, and other movement processes and characteristics. […] Political process theory also has narrowed the questions we ask about social movements, privileging investigations of emergence and decline over issues like movement sustainability, internal conflicts, ideological cleavages, rituals, and so on." (Gould, 2004, p. 157)

This links to the fact that while there is some research on how and why movements fail, little attention is paid to what that does to them (Weldon, 2011, p. 3). Most of the time, the rather instrumental perspective on social movements is that they do not really obtain their goals. Often this is supplemented by a note that they are anyways good for democracy because they act as correctives and push for democratization (see e.g. Rosanvallon, 2008, p. 62f.; Steffek & Nanz, 2008, p. 3; Tarrow, 2011, p. 1). This is well encapsulated in Della Porta and Diani's observation that while movements' capacity "for the realization of their general aims has been considered low, they are seen as more effective in the importation of new issues into public debate, or thematization." (2006, p. 232)

I argue that this limited view on continuity and success of movements builds on what has been discussed in the previous subchapter, namely a rather narrow understanding of what political action is. If political action is only what addresses the political system, it logically follows that success can only become visible in institutional policy change. This is limiting not because such change does not matter but because it is not the only one to matter (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 85f.). Thus, when claiming that this is a limited view, I am not saying that such indicators are not relevant for academics and activists. Rather, it is about pointing out that the emotional and relational dimensions of activism discussed in this subchapter seem to play a considerable role in how movements deal with success and failure—or: how they negotiate solidarities.

When exploring what goals exist within migrant rights activism, it quickly becomes clear that there are multiple ones aimed for simultaneously. One basic distinction that the Struggles Collective makes is between practical short-term, on the one, and long-term, more idealistic or radical goals, on the other hand (Struggles Collective, 2015, p. 18).[21] This observation from within the movement is well reflected in my data from activist groups in Hamburg and existing literature. Goals include supporting individual people and alleviating certain particularly urgent situations, such as living conditions in a specific camp, but also freedom of movement, the right to work or stopping deportations (IDI_P01, l. 193–198; IDI_P03, l. 1053–1060; IDI_P05, l. 544–550; Ataç, 2013; Marciniak & Tyler, 2014, p. 170; McGuaran & Hudig, 2014; Odugbesan

21 This is not to be confused with a distinction between concrete and abstract goals because, for instance, the claim that all deportations to Afghanistan ought to be stopped is quite concrete while not necessarily short-term.

& Schwiertz, 2018, p. 199; Schwenken & Ruß-Sattar, 2014, p. 116ff.). This also aligns with the observations from the previous subchapter because when literal political survival depends on addressing basic needs, this naturally reflects itself in a movement's goals. Furthermore, embracing multiplicity in aims better accommodates the fact that migrant rights activism can have, at least seemingly, contradictory goals, as McNevin points out with regards to the Sans-Papiers movement:

> "They demand that the exclusivity determining rights of access and membership to France be removed. They also seek formal inclusion within France via regularization in such a way as to accept and reinforce its existing boundaries." (McNevin, 2006, p. 146)

Indeed, this example underlines the importance of not just looking at the collective *or* the subject making such claims again. Instead, it is about claims emerging from the continuous dialogue and experience in-between them. The contradiction is no sign of inconsistency or irrationality of the movement. Täubig displays how in circumstances where people (in her case, asylum seekers) "see themselves [treated] as animals and insist on their humanity," such contradictions have structural roots: "[T]hey feel as belonging to the group of the foreigners *and* struggle against this classification, they are excluded from the society *and* integrate into it." (Täubig, 2009, p. 249 [Translated; emphasis added]; Erensu, 2016; McNevin, 2006, p. 147; Oliveri, 2012, p. 801) Kabeer also stresses how a strict distinction can "often serve to undermine the capacity of subordinated members of subordinated groups to press for their individual rights when to do so appears to divide the collective struggle for recognition." (2005, p. 14) An individual goal rooted in the structural inequality and existential urgency of a living condition—such as obtaining a legal status or citizenship—can contradict a group's or movement's other goals—for example, removing national citizenship. This can certainly result in tensions between activists differing in their assessment of priorities and urgencies regarding these different goals, as discussed more in-depth in Subchapter 6.1 (IDI_P07, l. 144–148; PO_G02_22, l. 96–105; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 198).

Such emerging tensions clearly also shape the solidary relations activists build and negotiate in working towards their goals. Kelz highlights that "relationality, the connection between the self and the other, becomes constitutive of what the self is" (2015, p. 5). It becomes constitutive in the sense that perspectives are confronted and discussed. Tensions can take place between activists with different positionings, for instance, when German or white

activists do not understand the urgency of certain exigencies and wishes (Fadaee, 2015, p. 734), as the following quote displays:

> "Many self-organized migrant and refugee groups have particular and pragmatic demands based on their particular situation, which can lead to sharp criticism by left-wing and other groups. However, compared to left-wing citizen activists – who already have full citizenship rights – refugee self-organizations cannot wait for structural change and the right to stay for everybody. They have a vital self-interest in changing things as soon as possible, because they are affected every day by the regulations that they are pushing to change. For this reason, many refugee groups struggle to frame their demands in a way that can also resonate with dominant discourses, which would allow them to negotiate with politicians and other officials." (Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 198)

This is an essential dynamic to emphasize. Simultaneously, such tensions can also emerge among those who share a legal status because of differing priorities, experiences or political understandings (Langa, 2015, p. 8).[22] In this whole composition, it seems promising to look more closely at the variety of emotions that become visible in my data and that activists experience in their daily activities. These emotions have to be dealt with—individually and collectively—and this links to how solidarities are continuously worked on. A notion that frequently comes up is that activists feel tired and exhausted. Many feel overwhelmed or frustrated at times because of the overall situation (IDI_P01, l. 929–933; IDI_P03, l. 227–234; IDI_P07, l. 476–487). Especially specific positionings at intersecting grids of power can lead to activists not having the capacities to cope with everything (IDI_P15, l. 176–185; PO_G05_05, p. 51). As discussed, (in)advertent reproducing of power relations occurs and certainly results in injuries. People are also exhausted by conflicts, dynamics or relations within their groups (IDI_P05, l. 181–183; IDI_P08, l. 378–382; IDI_P14, l. 440–458; PO_G02_15, p. 10). Yet another frustration that is expressed is that sometimes there is too much of a focus on organizing demonstrations. This can be not satisfying because, according to some activists, it is always the same routine, with the same people and it does not seem to change anything (IDI_P05, l. 574ff.; PO_G02_28, l. 51–58; PO_G05_10, l. 55–66). In my under-

22 In addition, there are of course various positionings among people sharing a legal status.

standing, this identified lack of change emerges as a significant individual and collective emotional challenge in migrant rights activism.

The frustration with demonstrations is particularly interesting to consider when exploring success, of course. Because demonstrations are what is most easily looked at to measure movement success: their number of participants and impact on policies that can usually not be upheld (Tarrow, 2011, p. 104). Approaching success through how it is experienced directly highlights that a focus on only certain activities, such as demonstrations, can easily result in a limited picture of movement realities. Demonstrations display an external and collective picture, which generally does not reveal internal dynamics. In fact, already what counts as a big mobilization immensely depends on its background and context, on who is organizing it and whom it is aiming for (IDI_P01, l. 270–275; IDI_P03, l. 1285ff.; IDI_P16, l. 1372–1380; PO_G02_35, l. 21–25). In the activist groups in Hamburg, next to the variety in activities, also all different kinds of success are experienced by activists. These experiences can range from individual and collective empowerment, changed living situations, over developing collectively to obtaining policy goals (IDI_P04, l. 824–827; IDI_P07, l. 96–104; IDI_P08, l. 576–584; IDI_P14, l. 437ff.; PO_G02_32, l. 38–55).

What I want to focalize overall in terms of negotiating solidarities is that the building of continuous structures in the movement might be an enabling factor for activists to move on.[23] This matters especially when considering that there have been migrant rights struggles over the last decades, even though the policy developments worldwide have continued to tighten migration and border regimes (Eggert & Giugni, 2015, p. 159; Heimeshoff & Hess, 2014, p. 14; Odugbesan & Schwiertz, 2018, p. 189). Ünsal emphasizes an impact that migrant rights struggles have had: "The outstanding success of the protest may not be legislative changes, but the politicization of many German and European citizens and empowerment of 'refugees' all over Germany." (Ünsal, 2015, p. 4) This upholds the importance of taking a closer look at what goals, success and continuing to struggle mean within these movements, for example in terms of activists' emotions and relations to one another. I see

23 However, not necessarily just in terms of a fully obtained success. As the Subchapters 5.1 and 5.6 showed, activists resigning from involvement or not becoming active in the first place are among the big challenges that groups face. In a way, this reinforces this subchapter's argument for taking this kind of success more seriously—in movements themselves and when studying them.

various ways in which this takes more concrete form, building on the previous two subchapters. In fact, these could be examples of practically figuring out solidarities: getting to know each other, gaining from activism and developing together. The role that emotions and relations play in these are, to my knowledge, not explored in most research on migrant rights activism very explicitly.[24] If anything, internal processes seem to emerge as "by-products" and thereby side-success (Fontanari & Ambrosini, 2018, p. 595).

Activists discuss how important it is to have spaces for taking care of each other and especially finding ways of treating each other honestly and on equal terms. Groups very explicitly aim at building spaces to getting to know each other, share positive experiences, gain energy together and, by all of that, build trust (IDI_P03, l. 1199–1209; IDI_P17_1, l. 1122–1133). In fact, Nicholls and Uitermark point out how central relations are for keeping social movements up: "These face-to-face interactions produce solidarity, emotional energy, collective symbols, and moral sentiments and feelings, all of which are essential for sustaining mobilizations." (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 16) Interestingly, Day makes a further point moving beyond interactions and into relationships. When discussing infinite responsibility, he emphasizes that it means to listen to one another—also to "a subject who by definition does not 'exist', indeed must not exist (be heard) if current relations of power are to be maintained." (Day, 2005, p. 200) He claims that "responding," as in hearing, is key to avoid "the unconscious perpetuation of systems of division." (Day, 2005, p. 200) Especially in a setting with diverse and intersectional positionings, this becomes ever more central, although merely hearing is not enough either. Spaces that allow for time to listen, respond and engage are not as easy to build as it might seem. Activists raise taking time for this as an important step by finding ways of personally involving individual activists, bringing together diverse experiences and perspectives, seeing decisions as sometimes exhausting processes needing time (IDI_P04, l. 1002–1018; IDI_P11, l. 412–426; PO_G01_32, l. 80–96).

Activist groups constantly negotiate their collective self. Activists position and re-position their subjective selves in relation to the collective and other subjects. This goes beyond the previous activities of spending time together to get to know each other. Lister stresses that "[t]he self, who acts, is thus 'the relational self'" (1997, p. 37). Some groups very explicitly discuss how open they

24 This might change when considering further literature, for instance from social psychology or BPoC pedagogies of empowerment.

are as a group, what kind of exclusionary and discriminatory structures are at play in their own dynamics, but also try to figure out how they fit together, what they aim for (PO_G01_32, l. 124–132; PO_G02_22, l. 117–123). This can happen in workshops that groups do together or in terms of addressing how decisions are taken and by whom. Negotiation and formulation of goals can be contained in this too and indicate continuous internal processes. Barker and Cox describe this as movements continuously trying to figure out who they are and what they want, which does not always have to be visible to the outside:

> "[T]he processes of unofficial thought that movement activists constantly work with—geared primarily towards the practical question 'what should we do?', but including all sorts of related questions, such as 'who are we?', 'what do we want?', 'who is on our side?', 'who are they, what are they doing?', 'what can we do?'." (Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 23)

Activist groups experience conflicts and tensions. They might lack joint decisions or communication. However, many also continuously engage with balancing such dynamics by reflecting together. There is often quite an awareness about the inherent contradictions of goals among activists (IDI_P03, l. 950–963; IDI_P05, l. 660–669; IDI_P07, l. 80–87; IDI_P08, l. 295–314; PO_G02_33, l. 19–27). In fact, sometimes it can be more important to figure out one's collective identities and dealing with each other rather than to put forward clear-cut political claims (PO_G02_22, l. 120–127) Interestingly, Glöde and Böhlo make an observation that goes in a similar direction when pointing out: "[B]ecause of the depicted challenges it was more the joint decision-making process itself, which was at the center, rather than its result or public conveyance." (Glöde & Böhlo, 2015, p. 84 [Translated])

Importantly, activists also describe very positive emotions, such as feeling fulfilled, experiencing the strength of collectivity or gaining hope as emerging from collective experiences more in general (IDI_P01, l. 394–402; IDI_P05, l. 174–181; IDI_P08, l. 141–150; IDI_P14, l. 1016–1026; IDI_P16, l. 638–643; IDI_P17_1, l. 1234–1243; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 16; Schwenken, 2006, p. 323f.; Ünsal, 2015, p. 4). This can involve a focus on individual gains as well, an aspect rarely discussed that does not necessarily involve negative connotation (IDI_P01, l. 394–402; IDI_P08, l. 241–251). Indeed, if we actually start looking at how activists, individually and collectively, manage to deal with disappointments and failures, some clues might lie here—without this directly leading to limiting rational-choice perspectives. There is nothing

wrong with gaining from activism. On the contrary, even in less precarious life situations, in order to keep going it is essential that what activists do also *gives* them energy (IDI_P14, l. 341–346; IDI_P16, l. 638–643).

Derickson and Routledge see profound feelings at the center of people becoming politically active: "It is people's ability to transform their feelings about the world into actions that inspire them to participate in political action." (Derickson & Routledge, 2015, p. 3) Bang and Sørensen refer to this as the "excitement about making a difference" (1999, p. 331). Nicholls and Uitermark underline the importance of activism transforming feelings: "Within these arenas, newly politicized activists experience changes to their own political subjectivities, transforming demoralizing feelings of fear and anxiety into motivating feelings of anger and hope." (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017, p. 26) Similarly, Schwenken points out how experiencing collective action can be boosting one's self-confidence (2006, p. 323f.). More concretely, Barker and Cox discuss (self-)empowerment in Black communities as follows: "Activists as well as those they encouraged to mobilize could be expected to make gains in dignity and self-respect as well as in rights and material advantages." (Barker & Cox, 2014, p. 15)

Such more material benefits, for instance in the sense of receiving support through activism or building networks and skills, which can favor people more indirectly, also emerge in my data (IDI_P08, l. 606–619; IDI_P17_1, l. 824–831). Additionally, these gains do not have to benefit just individuals because groups develop through the energy that people are able to put into them as well (IDI_P08, l. 141–150; IDI_P14, l. 712–728; IDI_P17_1, l. 1234–1243). Once again, it is fruitful to explicitly involve intersectional feminist experiences, as visible when looking at Hill Collins' depiction of aiming at change:

> "People do not aspire for a better or different world for intellectual reasons only. They act because they care. Yet emotion without reason is subject to manipulation. A good deal of the power of community lies in its ability to wed strong feelings to projects with diverse political agendas, especially aspirational political agendas." (Hill Collins, 2010, p. 26)

This embraces building solidarities through spaces of emotional and relational involvement in which goals and success are negotiated.[25] I claim that

25 This might especially apply when there are such clear dependencies between activists and the collective in individually precarious and marginalized life situations. It also challenges binary distinctions, between emotionality and rationality or subjectivity

such perspectives essentially enable us to embed relations among activists into what is considered the political space of citizenship. Understanding this as a process aimed at being able to continue fighting *together* seems particularly visible in migrant rights activism. Because especially in a constellation with very different positionalities and resources, obtaining an actually reciprocal and mutual relationship is a challenge that the groups are constantly facing because inequalities, conflicts and dependencies are real (Johnson, 2015, p. 14). While it is important to stress that these are issues that happen in many groups, neither they nor *the* movement can be said to have obtained a finished state of *mutual* solidarities, even though it is often aimed for (IDI_P05, l. 896–899; IDI_P07, l. 547–556; PO_G02_09, p. 109; PO_G06_02, p. 12). Johnson discusses mutual recognition and solidarity as follows: "It enables a relationship of mutual support and protection that uses the security of the citizen, but does not reduce or subordinate the power of the migrant." (Johnson, 2012, p. 16f.) bell hooks' distinction between support and solidarity is an interesting complement. She states this with regards to feminism. However, I believe that especially building on the previous subchapter, the following quote offers a strong argument for paying more attention to mutual relations when it comes to movements acting continually:

> "Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs, and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment. In feminist movement, there is need for diversity, disagreement, and difference if we are to grow." (hooks, 2000b, p. 67)

This links to the foci of the previous two subchapters on activists with various positionings working together—sometimes disagreeing—in diverse activities shaping their political essence. Relationalities are central for activists tackling the challenge of power relations reproducing inequalities within group contexts. Hill Collins underlines how this is too little acknowledged in the exact research fields that should look at relations. She notes that, while intersectional analyses normally use relational thinking, "analytic treatments of community as a political construct remain in their infancy in this literature." (Hill

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and collectivity, and thereby introduces another way in which groups try to build lasting structures, raising the importance of explicitly, reflectively, rationally engaging with emotions.

Collins, 2010, p. 24) She discusses how all communities, which are often distinguished as identity- or affinity-based, embody "similarity *and* difference" (Hill Collins, 2010, p. 23 [Emphasis added]). She argues that all communities are political since they organize beyond power gaps. This view much more directly focalizes dealing with each other, reflecting and negotiating together.

Kabeer's horizontal view of citizenship is a useful addition here (2005). It concentrates on the importance of relationalities among activists, citizens in her case, and accentuates the roots for this in political spaces. She characterizes this view as "one which stresses that the relationship between citizens is at least as important as the more traditional 'vertical' view of citizenship as the relationship between the state and the individual." (Kabeer, 2005, p. 23)[26] Thus, in this understanding the citizen can be an actor who defines herself through her involvement in multiple constellations and relationalities (and not just that to the state).

Perspectives on prefigurative politics interestingly build on this because they further look into the relationalities among activists and develop "a general understanding of politics as an instrument of social change" (Yates, 2015, p. 2). Yates sees prefiguration as "necessarily *combin[ing]* the experimental creating of 'alternatives' within *either* mobilisation-related or everyday activities, with attempts to ensure their future political relevance." (2015, p. 13 [Emphasis in original]) This combination is meaningful because it enables not to divide the importance of internal spaces for relations and development, contextualized in the previous subchapter, and the various kinds of further activities. Lin and colleagues powerfully advance prefigurative politics, by embedding them in intersectional feminist, reproductive justice theory and focusing on those "engaged in radical organizing around their own survival." (2016, p. 304)

They propose three elements of prefiguration: relationality, self-determination and intersectionality. I think that these elements resonate well with what I develop throughout this chapter. In particular, relationality underlines the importance of creating spaces for explicitly engaging with "being in relation to each other" (Lin et al., 2016, p. 308). Carillo Rowe discusses "a sense of 'self' that is radically inclined toward others" (2005, p. 18). This notion nicely links back to McDonald's "experiencing self through collectivity." However, combined with Lin et al.'s take of prefigurative politics, what is added in this subchapter is the explicit collective and reflective engagement with

26 Although, of course, it is important to directly add that migrant rights groups further expand this relationality beyond the formal citizen.

relations—both within activist groups and their academic exploration. This perspective engages with how people relate to one another within the everyday realities, considering necessities and positionings: "[T]he future to which we aspire must be worked out in our everyday materiality, in the relationships we create as we determine together what is in our common interest." (Lin et al., 2016, p. 305) The authors stress that these activities are not seen apart from each other but as fundamentally intertwined. Indeed, migrant rights groups are involved in a variety of activities, of which practices aimed at supporting and taking care of each other are an important part.

In my understanding, what seems to be at the heart of all these strategies and should be conveyed here is that groups work on making space and taking time to build relationships and develop together. This is not to say that emotions are always positive, nor that relationships in activist contexts are not complex. On the contrary, as my empirical material indicates, sustained by existing literature, there are tensions, struggles, conflicts and frustrations and they are a daily part of activism. But by creating spaces and taking time to reflect, negotiate and figure things out, groups might start to build lasting structures of solidarity. In this subchapter, intersectional feminist, critically-engaged and prefigurative politics were included to advance in grasping this analytically. In fact, conceptually including emotions and relations in all their complexity in analyzing political action might improve capturing these ways of going on despite apparent or actual lack of the aimed-for change.

6.4 Summary: Exploring Transversal Solidarities

So far, in this chapter, I developed the empirical-analytical contributions of my research on migrant rights activism in Hamburg together with existing research on this movement and, particularly, conceptual and theoretical perspectives from other fields, such as intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critically-engaged scholarship. Using gaps in social movement studies and existing research on migrant rights activism as starting points, I emphasized where these insights might have relevance for the field more in general. Throughout the chapter, I also explored the research question concerning what solidarities are and how they are negotiated, practiced and challenged in migrant rights activism. In Subchapter 6.1, I discussed that embracing BPoC feminist theories, such as intersectionality, is an essential step

in tackling inequalities and power relations in migrant rights activism and conceptually grasping the resulting complexities. In Subchapter 6.2, feminist and post-colonial perspectives on needs-based political spaces of citizenship were shown to display a variety of movement-relevant activities, underlining that activist groups continuously build solidarities in practice. In Subchapter 6.3., based on intersectional feminist and prefigurative politics perspectives, I stressed how consciously making space for strengthening relations and developing together are practical ways of negotiating solidarities by trying to build lasting structures.

Since these three dimensions are not separate from one another and to further complete this discussion chapter, I present *Exploring Transversal Solidarities* as the overarching concept framing my research. It emerges from all stages of the process and, I hope, can contribute to answering the research question even further. I present this concept through highlighting three scholars who already came up in the previous subchapters because their theoretical perspectives helped to advance the three contributions developed there. The overarching concept is not limited to their perspectives alone. I engage them here again because they clarify the emergence and developing of my overall conceptual proposition.

Throughout this publication, it has become clear that existing positionings and resulting inequalities need to be named to actually challenge them. I find Nira Yuval-Davis' exploration of transversal politics a fruitful practical-theoretical starting point here. She gives credit to her awareness of this concept to the autonomous Left movement in Bologna. It was used as a practice that addresses "the crucial theoretical/political questions of how and with whom we should work if/when we accept that we are all different." (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 125) She stresses how the concept and the practice are centrally about dialogue and *shifting* and concerned with acknowledging one's own intersectional positionings while also exchanging with others' positionings (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 130). It is an approach that calls for embracing complexity in relations and identities. Essentially, identities as discussed before in terms of individually and collectively developing narratives and not in the sense of social categories. For Yuval-Davis, transversal politics is a hopeful, if not always possible, way forward:

> "In 'transversal politics', perceived unity and homogeneity are replaced by dialogue in them as well as to the 'unfinished knowledge' that each such sit-

> uated positioning can offer. Transversal politics, nevertheless, does not assume that the dialogue is boundary free, and that each conflict of interest is reconcilable […] The boundaries of a transversal dialogue are determined by the message, rather than the messenger. In other words, transversal politics differentiates between social identities and social values, and assumes that what Alison Assiter calls 'epistemological communities' (1996: Chapter 5), which share common value systems, can exist across differential positionings and identities. The struggle against oppression and discrimination might (and mostly does) have a specific categorical focus but is never confined just to that category." (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 131)

The fact that groups engage in dealing with categories and negotiating identities and values suggests that solidarities might be a good frame for this. Of course, what makes this particularly complex is that the categories are not understood as homogeneous, clear-cut or mutually-exclusive. Yuval-Davis discusses how feminist ethics of care underline the asymmetrical nature of relationships. However, according to her, transversal politics are based on symmetrical politics, in the sense that shared and jointly developed values are at the basis of seeing everyone "as potential political allies," be they in need or not (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 153). Yuval-Davis' discussion of transversal politics captures the tension between challenging while acknowledging categorizing differences, which has been defining for this study as a whole.

I want to slightly shift the focus of this concept by linking it to the conceptual frame that emerged through my empirical storyline because transversality immensely enriches understandings of solidarities. Focusing on transversal *solidarities* emphasizes the intersectional and complex nature of positionings and relations even more. The explicit mentioning of solidarities seems fruitful when intersecting categorizations are such defining factors, challenging life and movement realities. To focus this proposition further, I want to complement it with Patricia Hill Collins' strong critique of either/or dualistic thinking and binary dichotomies. This might seem an obvious step when we are talking about taking a transversal perspective on intersectional realities. Yet, it is too rarely critically reflected that binary dichotomies structure our conceptual perspectives in multiple ways. I think that my take on solidarities further accentuates the displayed complex and ambivalent characteristics, which, as shown in previous chapters, underscores the limitations resulting from dichotomous binaries. Hill Collins' criticism is an important

reminder of this as she convincingly claims that binary-oriented perspectives reproduce rather than overcome inequalities:

> "One fundamental characteristic of this construct is the categorization of people, things, and ideas in terms of their difference from one another. For example, the terms in dichotomies such as black/white, male/female, reason/emotion, fact/opinion, and subject/object gain their meaning only in relation to their difference from their oppositional counterparts. Another fundamental characteristic of this construct is that difference is not complementary in that the halves of the dichotomy do not enhance each other. Rather, the dichotomous halves are different and inherently opposed to one another. A third and more important characteristic is that these oppositional relationships are intrinsically unstable. Since such dualities rarely represent different but equal relationships, the inherently unstable relationship is resolved by subordinating one half of each pair to the other." (Hill Collins, 1986, p. 20)

In the previous subchapters, I have referred to quite a few of the dichotomies she names here but could add: citizen/non-citizen, subject/collective, social/political, private/public, success/failure. It is quite difficult to conceptually move beyond these dichotomies because they offer re-assuring and convincing perspectives on complex problems. Criticizing them does not mean not using oppositional analysis anymore. Instead, I understand it as a cautionary reminder that reality is more complex. If we are to use binary models, we have to remember that focusing too much on the opposite counterparts risks a sense of mutually exclusive clarities that overlooks oppression. This, in turn, makes us ignore large parts of actual experiences and dynamics and hides existing power relations. For this reason, criticizing binary analysis cannot be reduced to calling for a both-and, as opposed to an either-or, perspective—because these both still presuppose a binary. Developing a conceptual perspective that aims at not reproducing binary thinking is about embracing the complexity of relations and the resulting activities in their various shades, levels and forms. This often requires naming, thus using, the criticized categories and binaries. What *transversality* adds to other concepts is that it moves beyond this step by integrating and embracing the resulting complex ambivalences.

Certainly, transversal solidarities are not easily obtained, neither as a theoretical concept nor as a practical approach. On the contrary, it is an on-going and probably never-ending individual and collective learning process. This is

where I find Lin and her colleagues' feminist perspective on prefigurative politics as experiments an apt final complement (2016). They highlight their focus on relationships and power which nicely aligns with what was developed as transversal solidarities so far. They describe that even though groups might not describe it in the terms of prefigurative politics, "many collectivities organizing around a politics of survival engage in prefigurative practices" because "they are re-imagining social relationships and power as they organize to resist domination." (Lin et al., 2016, p. 302) In a way, this might alleviate the earlier criticism of the claim "we are all activists" because it underlines the significance of imagination. Simultaneously, I would claim that seeing transversal solidarities not as something to be completely reached but as constant exploration and experimentation then allows for the same criticism to still emerge through joint discussion and reflection. Lin et al. discuss this is an everyday part of many groups' work, rather than completely distinct from other activities (2016, p. 305). The emphasis they put on relationality nicely links it to the here presented conceptualization of solidarities:

> "Relationality is a key element of the prefigurative in that it challenges us to recognize multiple and alternative forms of power. […] Relationships built on making power are not formed only around shared experiences of subjugation; rather, identifications in homeplace are formed around the ways in which participants want to – in which they can and need to – be in relation to each other." (Lin et al., 2016, p. 308)

By stressing the figuring out of relations and experimenting with ways of dealing with power, this perspective puts a fruitful emphasis on process and thereby makes learning a key component of solidarities. From my point of view, this is a powerful complement in conceptually grasping solidarities in migrant rights activism. It might actually be a way in which researchers might themselves engage in, at the very least analytically, contributing to overcoming dominant power dynamics.

Exploring Transversal Solidarities is the concept I propose to capture how my empirical and analytical research on migrant rights activism in Hamburg is put into dialogue with existing research on migrant rights movements and intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critically-engaged perspectives. Migrant rights activism moves so visibly beyond classical categorizations and reductions that this concept might present a promising take on it. Activists and groups are actively engaging in challenges and explore ways of building

practical solidarities in their daily interactions and negotiations. The concept captures this processual and potentially controversial character of many activities and, thereby, also calls for their academic analysis to be more open toward development and uncertainty.

My insights draw on a multiplicity of existing ideas from various research perspectives and fields as well as activist knowledge forms. I do not pretend to have developed a totally new conceptual perspectives here or to have exhaustively captured migrant rights activism from a social movement perspective. I see my contribution as one step in building bridges between empirical and analytical glimpses relevant to the scholarly exploration of and engagement with social movements. Exploring Transversal Solidarities can be a promising conceptual starting point to capture heterogeneous political organizing that struggles and experiments to fight intersecting structural inequalities and resulting power relations by putting positionalities, relationalities and mutual care at the center. This is particularly relevant in the context of social movement studies because, as discussed, they display conceptual gaps in this regard. So, while not generalizable, the concept can offer relevant insights for the analysis of migrant rights activism in particular as well as other social movements more generally. To some extent, but mainly in a different form, the contributions developed and presented through Exploring Transversal Solidarities here might also have some relevance for groups and activists. As a first step toward intertwining the academic presentation of findings more explicitly with more broadly accessible forms, the next chapter indicates some practical thoughts emerging from my research.

7. Some practical thoughts

In this chapter, I formulate a few practical thoughts about the findings of this research and the concept *Exploring Transversal Solidarities*. I do not pretend that I am the first or only one to have these thoughts. All the contrary. The very basis of my research are the knowledge forms I was allowed to encounter and learn about through the activists and groups in and beyond Hamburg. I learnt so much from activists from various contexts and from activist scholars with lived experiences that I have not all met personally—in particular BPoC, feminist, migrant and post-colonial activists and scholars. I want to give credit to all this knowledge!

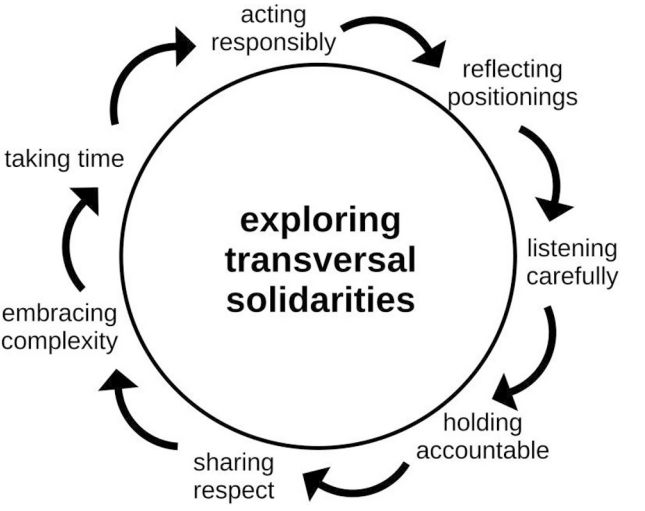
In the following, I want to present some practical thoughts that I developed based on these knowledges and my analysis.[1] The practices I discuss here play an important role in many activist groups and are reflected on in activist and academic debates. They are in no way a prescription, have no chronological order and are certainly not all there is to say. I recognize that they are presented here in very short, potentially not sufficient, form and very directly shaped by my own positioning. They might therefore rather address privileged positionings in group contexts. These thoughts are not meant to stay fixed but ideally could change, adapt and evolve through adding further perspectives, experiences and positionalities.

In this research, I explored how solidarities appear in migrant rights activism. My findings show that solidarities are difficult and sometimes exhausting. It is not a one-time decision to be solidary. Solidarities take a lot of

1 This publication is academic in its main purpose. Including this chapter with my condensed insights embraces that one goal of this kind of research should be to become accessible beyond academia, potentially even fruitful to movements, which potentially could still take yet another form.

communication and exchange. They include recognizing differences and embracing disagreements with the overarching aim of building solidary structures beyond these.

Figure 3: Visualization practical thoughts, by the author.



Reflecting positionings

> "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not lead single-issue lives." (Lorde, 1982)

We are all different from one another and each of us brings multiple positions, experiences, believes, values and goals. Some positionings come with more privileges and possibilities. I try to reflect my privileged positioning as a white, academic, cis woman holding a German passport. I have learnt how important it is to talk and think about this together. We want to fight together in a united way but there are always many struggles going on at the same time, as Audre Lorde writes, who self-identified as Black, lesbian, mother, warrior and poet. We need to consider the realities of racism, xenophobia, sexism, classism, ableism and many more. This does not mean only focusing on differences or doing all at once. If I focus too much on a difference, I might see

just that: I might see someone only as a refugee when she is of course a complex individual. Positioning stands for the various (assigned) social categories people find themselves in. It is not the same as identities, which we build as our stories, individually and collectively (Yuval-Davis, 2011). All of this is not clear-cut and can change over time. There is no better or worse. But it is important that I for myself think about what I bring and that as groups we talk about this as well. Who is here, who might be missing, who is active, who speaks, who organizes, who decides?

Listening carefully

> "If we had not taken our autonomy, we would not be here today. Because there really have been many organizations telling us that we could never win, that we could not win over public opinion because people were not ready to hear what we had to say." (Cissé, 1996)

Madjiguène Cissé, an activist from the Sans Papiers movement, describes here how discouraging people who pretend to know better can be—and how wrong. I think that the quote shows that it is important to be open for understanding each other on multiple levels. Listening means not assuming that I already have the full picture. When I try to listen carefully and get into exchange with people, I try to understand and learn. Listening can also mean knowing when to shut up. This can be true for learning about people's experiences, accepting their expertise and giving space to who might otherwise often not be listened to. I think that it is valuable to create spaces where it is possible to exchange and share without being in a rush and without fear of being judged. For example, this can in a practical sense involve reminding ourselves to be patient to give translation its place in meetings and exchange. Listening can be hard. It can also be contradictory.

Holding accountable

> "[W]e see scholar-activism as productive and constructive, not critically distant. We acknowledge the challenges of movement building and the always negotiated and situated positionality of scholar activists within such processes. However, we believe that [...] scholar-activist practices [...] provide

> opportunities to make positive contributions to an everyday politics of contention." (Routledge & Derickson, 2015, p. 404)

Structural privileges of all kinds can be problematic. However, it is not someone's individual fault to have them. The important thing is be(com)ing aware of them and trying to use them. In this quote, Paul Routledge and Kate Driscoll Derickson, two scholar-activists, describe their idea of this position. Using privileges is an on-going individual and collective process that probably never ends. I cannot expect anyone to educate me on my privileges. Holding accountable here mainly means trying to hold oneself accountable: what privileges do I have and how can I use them for sharing resources and changing things? It can also include being open to criticism, also when it is not comfortable. Questioning oneself about this and being receptive to be questioned about it is important. I think it is an opportunity to figure out and find ways of contributing and fighting together. Of course, it can be uncomfortable, challenging and destabilizing. But this is mostly how it is experienced by white, German, cis people. People with the lived experiences of all forms of discriminations face and experience these every day.

Sharing Respect

> "The solidarity called for is a solidarity that recognizes and respects their action as political participation, and as a radical demand for change. It enables a relationship of mutual support and protection that uses the security of the citizen, but does not reduce or subordinate the power of the migrant. Such solidarity is not easy; it requires a rethinking of protection, equality, and of protest itself." (Johnson, 2015, p. 16f.)

As this quote by researcher Heather Johnson raises, respect and solidarities have to do with mutuality. It means taking one another seriously and valuing the knowledge, exigencies and skills that each of us brings. If I do not have a certain experience, I should not pretend to know what it is like and cannot speak for it. If I do not agree with someone's view, I still respect her right to have and formulate it. If I have a certain idea of what is of value, I don't assume that there are no other valuable contributions. I think that this can mean naming differences and inequalities to understand how they influence our interactions. It can also mean, learning about them, even if they might

not be present in a certain setting. It means respecting many kinds of knowledges (e.g., not just academic). It also means that I try not to reduce people to just one of their characteristics: everyone contributes things and seeing and strengthening this is what fighting together is about.

Embracing complexity

> "Whereas binary thinking is central to systems of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and sexism that focus on sorting and ranking populations into nonoverlapping categories, relational thinking emphasizes connections among and across these categories." (Hill Collins, 2010, p. 23)

The world is obviously not simple. It comes with contradictions and ambiguity. Patricia Hill Collins says here that most systems of oppression are based on building two different categories that are presented as excluding each other, for example: Black/white, male/female, citizen/non-citizen, rational/emotional. Embracing reality means accepting that nothing is that easy. I can be discriminated in one way and be privileged in another one. Everyone unites various identities and they can change over time. Embracing this also comes with accepting feelings that might cause in me: fear, anger, uncertainty, surprise, etc. I have seen groups do this by addressing feelings and giving them space, by not avoiding disagreements. It is important to accept various ideas but engaging them in constructive ways. I think that embracing complexity means building an atmosphere of trust. But it also raises that we are often unaware of complexities. Just because someone engages in a certain context and is open to learn about one issue, she is not automatically aware of or open to various other struggles. This is where it goes back to being open to learning through exchange with many people and embracing that there is no *one* solution.

Taking time

> "That internal critique is essential to any politics of transformation. Just as our lives are not fixed or static but always changing, our theory must remain fluid, open, responsive to new information." (hooks, 2000b, p. xiii)

All of this takes energy, willingness and especially time. bell hooks writes here that in order to change things in the world, we must be willing to change

ourselves. That's not easy and it takes time. There is always too little time. Because there are urgent pressing issues and situations, needing priority. Because there are too many things happening at the same time. I think that it is very valuable to take time for taking care of ourselves and each other. This does not only take place in groups, but it can be part of them. For me, taking time means taking time for multiple things and valuing them by explicitly *making* time, even when there seems to be none. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that people have distinct times and urgencies. As a privileged person, I cannot expect anyone to sit and reflect with me when there are urgent living situations needing action and practical change. This tension cannot really be solved. Taking time involves being aware of this and valuing the time everyone makes.

Acting responsibly

> "[I]t is not enough to think about political subjectivity traversing frontiers. It is not enough to document acts that institute subjects without frontiers. It is not enough to interpret these acts through histories (or by giving them histories) that open up ways of enacting citizenship beyond the state and nation. My aim is also to participate in creating or constructing a field in which a new figure can acquire capacities to act as a citizen." (Isin, 2012, p. 9)

Practices are not just about reflection and communication but also about acting. Acting can take very different forms depending on where you stand. First, it can be the decision to act. It can be speaking up about an injustice or creating public visibility, for example through art. It can be trying to change my personal situation. It can be contributing my own expertise to a group. It can be building relationships with each other. Above all, it means seeing that I have a place in this and becoming active. Engin Isin is a scholar who, among other things, writes about political acts of citizenship beyond borders. In this quote he says that thinking, documenting and analyzing is not enough because he wants to participate in bringing political change, which he works on by linking academia, art and activism. Acting can take many forms and maybe these differ for people. I think that all the previous elements are part of and needed for acting. Doing this responsibly means that, before and when acting, I should pay attention to how I interact with others. Acting also brings acting in wrong or bad ways sometimes, making mistakes. This does not limit the importance of acting. Actually, acknowledging mistakes and learning from

them even reinforce it. Solidarities need acting to develop and always take new shapes.

8. Conclusion

This research set out to explore the lived realities of activism by, with and for refugees and migrants in activist groups in Hamburg. Thereby, it contributes to a growing body of literature from multiple disciplinary fields that question the supposed neutral standard of who is addressed as a citizen, an activist or a political subject. I accompanied activist groups, conducted interviews and experienced diverse organizing contexts and dynamics in Hamburg. Besides contributing to the existing research on migrant rights activism, I aimed to develop a perspective focused on social movement studies in particular. The research process followed constructivist GTMs. Therefore, the emerging conceptual developments are grounded in the empirical data and were integrated with existing theories from other research contexts, particularly intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critically-engaged theories. Exploring Transversal Solidarities is the resulting overarching conceptual proposition to capture migrant rights activism from a social movement perspective.

Especially in times of a global pandemic and more recently the war in Ukraine, references to *solidarity* seem ubiquitous. While my research does not capture the developments due to Covid-19, it has become evident that refugees and migrants without (clear) status are among those struck hardest. Due to living conditions that most often do not allow for proper precautionary and hygiene measures in themselves and due to not being considered in most rhetoric and political claims to solidarity. Even more recently, millions of people fleeing the war in Ukraine pose further questions. While it is certainly imperative to receive and assist them, it is striking how things that have been called for but were ignored for years suddenly are being discussed and even realized (for some). I believe that in such settings it is even more relevant than before to question which positionings are taken for granted and which are left behind and marginalized.

Migrant rights activism also engages for this. My research shows how challenging practicing and negotiating solidarities is, even within activist groups. It captures meanings, ambivalences and uncertainties that are present in migrant rights activism in Hamburg. It offers empirical, conceptual and methodological insights. In this chapter, I first outline this research project by linking its objectives to its findings, subsequently I address the limitations that these have and finally I point to directions for future research.

Linking objectives and findings

The first few chapters of this book were concerned with delineating my research context (Chapter 2), methodologies (Chapter 3) and relevant existing literature (Chapter 4). The rich range of empirical observations about the lived realities of activist organizing for migrant rights in Hamburg were presented in-depth in Chapter 5. The analytical categories were developed from the empirical material and later evolved based on existent research on migrant rights activism, mainly from various migration and citizenship approaches. They capture various dimensions of internal dynamics, which I presented through the storyline Negotiating Solidarities. It already addresses some gaps identified in existing literature in general and social movement perspectives more in particular. My further conceptual developing in Chapter 6 raised several contributions concerning these empirical insights by advancing them in dialogue with research perspectives that emerge from social movements but are often not explicitly engaged from a social movement studies perspective.

This publication's overarching conceptual proposition is Exploring Transversal Solidarities, which links my empirical research to existing studies on similar struggles and to intersectional feminist, post-colonial and critically-engaged theories. The concept, as well as the linkages, cannot offer an exhaustive account of migrant rights activism in Hamburg, of course. Still, I hope that it can offer valuable starting points grounded in exemplary explorations. On a methodological and analytical account, these findings emphasize the importance of conceptualizing social movements in closer dialogue with these same movements. These heterogeneous groups organizing for migrant rights show particularly clearly that addressing them either as identity politics or through resource or political process models does not do justice to their complexities and ambiguities.

Migrant rights groups are heterogeneous in the sense that activists come with a particular variety of intersecting positionings. This has very concrete consequences in terms of inequalities, dynamics and power relations within activist groups. Existing research on migrant rights movements sustains my empirical analysis of existing power relations between refugee, migrant and German activists (see e.g. Ataç, 2016; Glöde & Böhlo, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Steinhilper, 2017). However, it also becomes clear that an intersectional perspective calls for not seeing this as a set and binary differentiation and losing other power relations out of sight (Cissé, 1996; Langa, 2015; Ünsal, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Black feminists' advancement of intersectionality as an analytical lens proves extremely valuable in capturing this (see e.g. Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 2000b). Yuval-Davis' and McDonald's conceptual takes on addressing movements through the meeting of individual and collective experiences further strengthen the case against too easily reducing movements to single-issue struggles (McDonald, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2011). All these insights are essential when exploring what solidarities might look like in migrant rights activism. They centrally underline that solidarities are not a stable construct that is easily established between clearly positioned or delineated people or groups. Instead, solidarities are continually being challenged and negotiated within groups in terms of inadvertent dynamics but also through explicit discussion. My research shows that habits, practices and interactions can reproduce inequalities and complicate practical solidarities also within groups. This could receive further attention in future research.

The activities shaping migrant rights activism in Hamburg are diverse as well. Groups engage in various activities that are differently interpreted as more or less *political*. This includes classical, public mobilizations addressing broader society and institutional politics. However, it centrally also involves practical support activities for individuals and groups, creating spaces for personal contact and engaging in various processes to address existing inequalities and power relations internally. Existing research on migrant rights activism confirms this by often focusing on everyday political practices as a less visible form of political engagement (see e.g. Ataç et al., 2015; Köster-Eiserfunke et al., 2014; Nyers & Rygiel, 2012; Piacentini, 2014). Embracing feminist perspectives also underlines that the political cannot be reduced to publicly visible acts addressing institutional politics to obtain policy change (see e.g. Hanisch, 2006; hooks, 2000a; Martin et al., 2007). Structural inequalities and practical needs-based activities addressing them define activist real-

ities. Lister stresses the profoundly political nature of many practices through a feminist conceptualization of citizenship (1997). This is also consolidated by Bayat's insights on non-movements' characteristics entangling marginalized groups' everyday realities with their micro-level political practices (2010). Hill Collins accentuates how binary thinking and analysis are conceptually reinforcing power differentials (1986). All the addressed activities can be rising small-scale attempts of building solidarities. That particularly the interpretation of activities as political emerges as a controversial part from my empirical data yields potential for further exploration.

Finally, activist groups engage in resisting continuous challenges and experiencing lack of change. Aims and success are ambiguous issues in activist groups because activists regularly experience positive moments as well as disappointing and disillusioning ones. However, the implicit and explicit negotiating that occurs through building spaces for personal relationality and developing together as groups are intriguing dynamics concerning the practical figuring out of solidarities. The positive and the challenging relationalities and emotions involved in this partly emerge in existing research on migrant rights activism (see e.g. Erensu, 2016; Fadaee, 2015; Johnson, 2012; Ünsal, 2015). Some social movement and political practices perspectives offer valuable elaborations on such aspects in movements more generally (see e.g. Bang & Sørensen, 1999; Derickson & Routledge, 2015; Goodwin et al., 2000; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). Once again, intersectional feminist theories enable further exploring conceptual engagement with negotiating practices, building spaces for more continual movements (see e.g. hooks, 2000b; Johnson, 2015; Kabeer, 2005). Yates' and Lin and colleagues' developments of prefigurative politics are compelling additions when exploring these movement-internal negotiating and practicing of solidarities (Lin et al., 2016; Yates, 2015). How activists find ways of balancing the constant threat of worsening conditions with moments and activities they experience as empowering and that keep them going despite their exhaustion can be a promising starting point for further research.

The overarching conceptual proposal emerging from these contributions is Exploring Transversal Solidarities. It is firmly grounded in my research and the existing theories through which the contributions were analytically developed. I integrated Yuval-Davis', Hill Collins' and Lin and colleagues' perspectives to formulate the key messages of the concept, stressing the importance of moving beyond dichotomies, engaging in transversal dialogue and experimenting with practical solidarities. I think that approaching migrant

rights activism through this concept captures the complex relational character of groups continually figuring out how to deal with inequalities, power relations and controversies in and beyond the movements. There is no one definitive meaning of solidarities in social movements, of course. Instead, the case of migrant rights groups in Hamburg shows how activists and groups are juggling various dynamics that implicitly and explicitly address solidarities. Positionings, relations and emotions result in individuals' and groups' realities challenging *easy* claims to solidarities. They also display how activists actively engage in negotiating what possible ways might be there—a process that takes time and energy and also backlashes but lets some learnings and concrete practices emerge as well where it seems to me that solidarities are taking a concrete shape.

Addressing limitations and pointing to directions for future research

Of course, it is important to point out the limitations of these results and relate them to directions for future research. Methodologically speaking, I believe that a more explicitly and radically participatory and/or activist research design would have further benefited the carving out of academic and activist knowledge. The variety in positions explored here through my own positionality surely limits the view taken on migrant rights activism. It would have been hugely beneficial to realize such a research project in a more collective and collaborative way. For example, a promising participatory element would have been to conduct focus group discussions with further activists, for instance to discuss analytical results. I planned this but eventually decided not to realize it due to time restraints and the framing as a dissertation project naturally limiting its collaborative potential anyways. Both in terms of data generation and analysis, collaborative methodologies might have also enabled a more expansive engagement with language. This could have raised further promising insights in such a multi-lingual research context.

This also implies that it could be promising to widen the reach of this research by exploring further cases in more localities or by engaging more explicitly with the transnational forms that migrant rights activism very clearly contains. A mixed-methods approach might move such small-scale explorations into more systematic studies of these movements by increasing the number of participants and further focusing analysis of solidarities in migrant rights activism. Alongside existing work in migration and social movement studies, a comparative perspective could offer insights into structural

differences and similarities in various contexts. This might be especially relevant when considering the additional effects of the global pandemic since 2020, the resulting challenges for, but also the development of, new forms of this kind of activism. An engagement with and through digital forms and tools of activism could raise new insights here.

GTM research aiming at developing theory brings another challenge that this study faced because, especially when exploring a particular local context, this goal is ambitious. The findings of this publication do not pretend to be representative, generalizable or exhaustive. Yet, as shown, the conceptual propositions offer promising starting points to develop theory and research on migrant rights activism from a social movement perspective. It could further strengthen my analysis to engage in a more explicit dialogue with the social movement theories I am criticizing, on the one hand, and existing conceptualizations of solidarities, on the other. However, both would have gone beyond the scope of this research, engaging in the already complex task of linking various disciplinary fields concerning this local exploration of migrant rights activism. I do not see my contribution as a finished endpoint. Instead, I hope to have developed a proposition to be further explored.

In fact, more research is needed to develop a conceptual framework that might be more concise in terms of its capturing of movement dynamics explored here through migrant rights activism in Hamburg. Future research should analytically and empirically engage more with intersectional positionings and relationalities without collapsing positionings and identities. Regarding migrant rights activism, this involves further research on power relations in the movements, in terms of those resulting from legal status but without losing sight of the more complex realities of further ones, such as race, gender or class. Generally, I believe that paying more attention to the internal dynamics in movements, including relationalities, emotions and negotiations, is essential. However, as a cautionary note, I want to acknowledge that this has to come with a self-reflective and critical research perspective to not unreflectively contribute even further to the academic exploitation of marginalized and activist forms of knowledge.

Finally, the explicit engagement with the fields most active in the study on migrant rights activism, such as critical citizenship studies as well as critical border and migration approaches, could have been further developed. While I delineate these fields in Chapter 4, in the following analysis this engagement remains selective. This results from the focus on developing a conceptual take on solidarities aimed at social movement studies. Further explo-

ration of it in relation to, for instance, critical citizenship perspectives could be very fruitful. Similarly, the engagement of fields that I identified as emerging from movements themselves but little engaged in social movement studies certainly also remains limited. I focused on pointing out promising starting points, but I cannot pretend to have done full justice to the depth and range of all these critically-engaged perspectives. BPoC, intersectional feminist and/or post-colonial and Southern theories are powerful empirical and analytical research perspectives that the Northern mainstream of research fields needs to engage with in (self-)critical and careful ways. These perspectives can also enable further exploration of the intersections between movements.

Moving on...

As a constructivist grounded theory project, this research set out to develop theory. Since it evolved into starting to propose new angles to conceptualizing migrant rights activism, it hopefully has some relevance to scholars from various disciplines who are studying this kind of activism. Without pretending to have developed a full-fledged theory, it certainly offers interesting starting points for future research on the subject and in the field of social movement studies, as displayed previously. Future research could interestingly explore the here just initiated conceptualization of solidarities in migrant rights activism further and link it to other social movements. This study emphasizes the need for more trans-disciplinary awareness, especially when it comes to multi-disciplinary movements and research contexts.

As a research project guided by interpretive philosophies and sympathetic to activist scholarship, this publication also hopes to develop useful thoughts for practical engagement. Chapter 7 is one way in which I tried to address this by pointing out strategies that, from my understanding, emerge from activist contexts for engaging and developing with the dynamics addressed in this research. This will be especially true for mixed group contexts. Still, given that all groups are mixed from an intersectional perspective, I hope that it can be useful even in seemingly more homogeneous groups. However, I recognize that it is the more central step to take for privileged positionings, individual and collective. I think that an application to future research is that my findings show the importance of taking activists' perspectives into account more seriously. It follows from it that more research should engage in working more closely *with* movements, in the research process and concerning debating results and putting them to practical use.

Finally, indeed, as a personal journey throughout an about five-year-long period, this dissertation project has accompanied me into the professional sphere outside of university as well. In the practical context of an institution also engaging for migrant women*'s rights, I would claim that this publication might also have some relevance for professional practitioners—at least in the lived process, this is true for me. Throughout the last two years, I have realized that the concepts I encountered to matter to me as an activist and academic have proven to equally matter to me as a practitioner. However, this might be limited to professional, institutional contexts that, in one way or the other, aim to work in solidarity with or for migrant rights, especially from a predominantly white-German institutional perspective.

It will have become clear that this research contains much more than academic knowledge production for me. I believe that as activists, practitioners and academics it is most promising, if challenging, to embrace the tensions that come with acknowledging and fighting intersectionally unequal positionings. In this sense, transversal solidarities as the conceptual take of this research emerges in all dimensions and relations. It stretches from my own positionality as a person to the lived realities I set out to explore, the philosophical groundings of my research, the methodological choices I took, all the way to the presented results. It has been challenging and very enriching to explore, experience and understand the potential of conceptually undoing binary dichotomies to practically embrace complex, intersectional and ambiguous perspectives that have been there all along.

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