Chapter 9

“We Are Here to Stay” – Refugee Struggles in Germany Between Unity and Division

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9.1 Introduction

Throughout the migration history of Germany, the positions, rights, and social inclusion of non-citizens have been contested, with migratory and refugee struggles playing a crucial role. Especially in the last decade, new protest movements self-organized by migrants and refugees as well as solidarity networks have emerged. These movements publicly fight against the exclusion of migrants and the denial of rights in the German-European border and migration regime. Besides relatively invisible everyday acts of claiming the right to mobility and access to resources, different forms of refugee protests have emerged that directly challenge migration policies through public action and campaigns.

We focus in our chapter on these “visible politics of migration” (Ataç et al. 2015, 2016),¹ though we recognize that arguably the largest part of migratory struggles for mobility, a place to stay, and everyday survival could be understood as “imperceptible politics” that shifts regimes “without ever intending it” (Papadopoulos et al. 2008, 75; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). Drawing on the theoretical classification by Federico Oliveri (2016, 265), we can distinguish migratory struggles according to three main fields of contention: freedom of movement against bordering mechanisms; the right to stay and to choose where to live against irregularization and precarization

¹We will use migration as the general term in this paper. However, in regard to the passages about specific struggles we mostly use the word refugee according to the self-definition of the actors involved.

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mechanisms; and the right to free and decent work against exploitation mechanisms. Even though these fields – mobility, residency, and labor – are clearly interconnected with one another, we primarily focus on the second: struggles over the right to stay and social inclusion. Challenging the dominant migration regime, these struggles aim less to advocate a comprehensive reregulation of migration policies, but more towards a radical fight for the right to have rights (Schwenken 2006, 308–316; Arendt 1968). In order to understand the political context of migrant and refugee struggles, we draw on a concept of the migration and border regime that has been developed to describe the heterogeneous network of governing migration with a focus on Europeanization (Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe 2007; Kasperek and Hess 2010; Schwenken and Russ-Sattar 2014; Heimeshoff et al. 2014). As the struggles we analyze here are based in Germany, we conceptualize the political context as a specific German-European migration regime (Schwiertz and Ratfisch 2016) that merges policies such as the German *Residence Act* and the European Dublin regulation (Kirchhoff and Lorenz 2018).

Analyzing different forms of struggles in Germany, we ask how migrants and refugees organize themselves in order to fight for the right to stay and social inclusion, according to their specific positions in the migration regime. Our central aim is to understand the conflicts within migratory and refugee struggles, unpacking the reasons why there is not a more united movement, given that migrants and refugees with precarious legal status are affected by the same German-European migration regime. We understand self-organization as the idea of building resistance, political events, and initiatives based on the condition of a social group affected by specific structures of power and domination. These structures, which deprive them of their rights as well as the constant discrimination that they face, compel them to become active. This concept of self-organization includes directly affected people becoming active in groups that build collective structures of support, empowerment and, visible politics. Critically, they identify issues that they themselves consider a priority and decide how to shape and articulate demands on their own. However, it also includes people taking the risk to organize and defend themselves in forms of everyday resistance and imperceptible politics.²

The main argument of this chapter is that the narratives and strategies of different migrant and refugee protest groups are based to a large degree on their specific positionalities. These are positions that are rooted in post-colonial relations on a global scale and that are (re-)shaped by the German-European migration regime and its system of stratified rights and legal statuses. This hierarchical legal system and its division of migrants' positionalities is therefore a major cause for conflicts within the broader movement of migratory and refugee struggles in Germany. This can sometimes lead to competition between groups. Nevertheless, according to more general and long-term goals of fighting against the dominant migration regime as well as for freedom of movement, the right to stay, and social inclusion,

²The concept of self-organization could therefore be distinct from pro-migrant organizing (Schwenken 2006, 71–72). However, in other contexts, such as the US, where the concepts of community organizing or grassroots organizing already imply its meaning (Delgado and Staples 2008), it is only rarely used.

struggles of migration could further unite in the future. The potential for a common perspective is already visible in many forms and aims of self-organizing, functioning as protest repertoires that emerging initiatives reproduce. However, migratory and refugee struggles often differ according to their particular and short-term goals of claiming rights based on their specific positionalities and legal status. This is more important for non-citizens than for citizen activists because of their precarious situation and the immediate need for change (From the Struggles Collective 2015).

Because of the new migrant and refugee movements emerging in Europe over the last 5 years, there is a growing body of literature analyzing these mobilizations in Germany (Ataç et al. 2015; Johnson 2015; Jakob 2016; Klotz 2016). Most of the studies focus on local protests in Berlin (Ulu 2013; Wilcke and Lambert 2015; Fadaee 2015; Glöde and Böhlo 2015; Schwiertz 2016a) and Hamburg (Benigni and Pierdicca 2014; Meret and Della Corte 2016; Borgstede 2016). As previous research has mainly focused on single cases, we seek to provide an overview of the refugee movement, including its history, as well as a comparison of three struggles concerning our research question on different forms of organizing. We have chosen the cases because of their specific social and political positionalities in the migration regime as well as in the wider movement: *Women in Exile*, a group of female refugees active since 2002; *Youth without Borders* (*Jugendliche ohne Grenzen*, JoG), an initiative of young refugees active since 2005; and *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, a collective of refugees active since 2013 that is especially affected by the Dublin regulation, requiring them to return to Italy, and that is connected to a broader fight for the right to the city.³ While the participants of these initiatives describe themselves mainly as refugees, we contextualize their form of self-organizing with other migratory struggles.

Applying methodological approaches of activist scholarship (Hale 2008; Garelli and Tazzioli 2013; Carstensen et al. 2014), we build our analysis on social movement literature and in particular, studies of migrant protests, as well as drawing on the experiences and knowledge produced through our own fieldwork and participation in the struggles. This encompasses participant observation in the role of an activist researcher, supporting political groups in the process of doing fieldwork, as well as observing participation, drawing insights from playing a leading role in the movement (Hamm 2013). Drawing on social movement literature, we base our interpretative framework for analyzing the cases on three categories in order to highlight various specific aspects and their interconnection. First, we look at the social positions of actors involved in initiatives as well as their relative rights and

³Due to the variety of recently published studies on the refugee protests in Berlin, we do not select these cases, but instead the case of Lampedusa in Hamburg, which also has been part of the new protest cycle beginning in 2012. While there are studies focusing on aspects of mobility (Benigni and Pierdicca 2014) or relations with the local political scene (Borgstede 2016), the case of Lampedusa in Hamburg is especially relevant for our analysis because of their particular positionality as refugees with a legal status from another European member state. To capture the diversity of positionalities and related effects, we also selected the less researched cases of Women in Exile, representing a female self-organization, and JoG, representing a self-organization of youth (Women in Exile and Gürsel 2013; Kanalan 2015).

privileges – as well as the denial thereof – in the migration regime. Therefore, the category of socio-spatial positionality is crucial for analyzing situations of relational inequality within social space, elaborating on the construction, negotiation, and transformation of positionalities (Leitner et al. 2008; Sheppard 2002). Second, we focus on the framing and narratives of the initiatives (Benford and Snow 2000), which relates to the first category. Third, we describe forms of collective action and protest that different initiatives develop and employ (Tilly and Tarrow 2015).

In the following, we first sketch the German-European migration and border regime as the political context of our analysis before we describe the history of migratory struggles in Germany to highlight the continuities and ruptures of self-organization that still influence initiatives today. We then analyze our three cases in the main section of this chapter, in which we focus on their fight for the right to stay and social inclusion (housing, education, work permits, etc.). Finally, we will discuss the commonalities and differences of refugee struggles in Germany.

9.2 The German-European Migration and Border Regime

The self-organization of refugee groups must be understood against the background of the migration and border regime that compels them to engage in strategies of self-defense and survival.

The Europeanization of migration policies and the emergence of a European migration regime are shaped by processes of securitization and approaches to governing migration that preclude migration to a large extent and at the same time differentially include most arriving migrants by depriving them of their rights.⁴ Those who survive the hazardous crossing of the militarized external borders of the EU are confronted with Europe's internal border controls. An important characteristic of the protest of Lampedusa in Hamburg was the growing awareness of resistance to the Dublin Regulation on the European scale and its relation to the EURODAC fingerprint database. The Dublin Regulation attempts to stop refugees from being able to choose their country of destination, as it stipulates that the state of a refugee's first point of entry into the EU is responsible for processing their asylum application (Lorenz 2015).

In addition to European regulations, migrants and asylum seekers are confronted with specific but closely connected migration regimes in each of the EU Member States. The German regime of migration management encompasses a "highly elaborated and formalised system of civic stratification" (Morris 2002, 30). Rather than governing migration through a binary process of legalization and illegalization,

⁴For detailed analyses of the securitization of migration, see Huysmans 2000, 2006. For a complex analysis of the European migration and border regime and the modes of differential inclusion, see Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013. For the specific German-European context see Kirchhoff and Lorenz 2018.

it has developed a differentiated “hierarchy of statuses” that offers structures of opportunity for some migrants as well as “a set of insuperable barriers for others” (ibid.). The hierarchical system of non-citizen status ranges from: the illegalized position of undocumented migrants; to the de facto illegalized status of toleration (*Duldung*), which is according to the *German Residence Act* only a temporary suspension of deportation; to the temporary status of the permission to reside for asylum seekers; to different temporary residency statuses issued by other European member states, which prevent a person with such a status from obtaining many social rights in Germany; to various forms of time-limited and unlimited residency permits. The German migration regime encompasses a broad range of laws that result in the legal denial of rights e.g. by residential obligations (*Residenzpflicht*), which prohibit asylum seekers from leaving an assigned county or state, force them into compulsory collective accommodation, prohibit them from working, and making them dependent on food packages and vouchers. It creates a system of isolation and hardship that encourages a “voluntary return,” the self-deportation of migrants (Ulu 2013).

However, although there are defined internal and external European borders, the European border regime has not been able to regulate and limit migration according to its proclaimed policy goals. Every day, migrants and refugees reclaim their freedom to move, and manage to enter Europe. However, after crossing the external European borders, migratory struggles remain at internal borders through the continued fight against their removal, for the right to stay, and for accompanying social rights.

9.3 Migratory and Refugee Struggles in Germany

9.3.1 History and Transformation of Migrants’ Resistance

Although migrants played leading roles in the labor strikes of the 1970s and struggles concerning housing in the 1980s, there is a gap in academic knowledge and social movement history about migrants’ resistance in Germany in the second half of the twentieth century (Karakayali 2008; Bojadžijev 2012). With diverse forms of protest and organizing, migratory struggles pushed for changes in the state, in civil society, and indeed in social movements themselves in Germany, “but they often were not as visible and audible as today” (Kalan 2015, 12, translated from German by the authors). Despite unfavorable political conditions and opportunity structures caused by precarious legal status and their exclusion from political participation, many migrant-lobbying groups and associations emerged. These cultural, religious, or labor associations were often organized according to countries of origin. Critically, when they were incorporated into parties, unions, churches, or other organizations of mainstream society, they were more often than not in a subordinate position (Bojadžijev 2012).

Interestingly, this shifted in the 1990s, when migrant organizations emerged that organized around the broader struggle against racism and the racist mobilizations and attacks in the reunited Germany – rather than specific home countries. Similar to the Black Power movement in the US, empowerment and self-defense were priorities for groups like *Antifa Gençlik*, *FeMigra*, *Café Morgenland*, and *KöXüz*. They installed alarm phones to protect against racist assaults, organized demonstrations after arson attacks, and intervened against anti-migrant baiting in public discourses (Lenz and Schwenken 2002; Heck 2008; Bojadžijev 2012). Despite specific actions and demands, migrant self-organization and defense became a goal in itself. Relatively independent from German civil society and the leftist scene, they raised visibility through their own political positions. The aim of *KöXüz* – a name that derives from the Turkish word for “rootless” – was to organize beyond the limits of specific home countries. They sought to create a political space for all those who themselves could relate to the social category of migrant (KöXüz et al. 2000). Through the common migratory struggle, they aimed to bring together or align migrants from different social positions by articulating a political positionality of those affected by racism.

As early as 1989, Roma who had not received asylum and were in danger of deportation organized several actions to fight for the right to stay in Germany (Heck 2008, 119; Brenner 2000). They organized protest marches and squatted at a concentration camp memorial near Hamburg, the Cologne Cathedral, and other places. Although their demands were not met, these mobilizations could be seen as one of the first visible struggles of illegalized migrants in Germany (ibid.). In the second half of the 1990s, several self-organized groups of refugees emerged. They fought against the residential obligations, especially the collective accommodation system of refugee camps and deportations. The first political group of refugees living in camps emerged in eastern Germany, possibly because the isolation was more pronounced and there were a higher number of racist assaults in the East (Jakob 2016). For example, The Voice Refugee Forum was founded 1994 in a refugee camp in Thuringia. In the lead-up to the 1998 elections, this group was involved in initiating a Germany-wide network known as The Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants, who coined the anti-colonial slogan “We are here because you destroy our countries.” In 2000, following these actions, The Refugee Initiative Group of Brandenburg was established. On top of these organized groups and the everyday tactics of organizing a living despite disenfranchisement, several spontaneous protests of refugees took place inside collective accommodations and even in detention centers (Heck 2008, 119). Under harsh conditions, with scarce resources, and with little public acknowledgement, the self-organized refugee groups continued their political practices in the 2000s.

At the turn of the century, *Kanak Attak* developed a new approach to organizing migratory struggles, which also reflected their positionality; most members were born in Germany and studied at German universities. Their framing shifted from defending the asylum law to going on offense with a claim for freedom of movement and the right to stay, using political art and theater as forms of protest (Gürsel 2013). In 2003, together with the Respect Network, the Refugee Initiative Group of

Brandenburg, chapters of *no one is illegal* (*kein mensch ist illegal*, kmii), and other allies, they started a campaign calling for a broad legalization of migrants with the slogan “We are among you and we demand legal status!” (Association for Legalization 2004; Schwenken 2006). Furthermore, several “mixed organizations”, consisting of migrant and non-migrant activists, like *Transact*, *Welcome 2 Europe*, and *Afrique-Europe-Interact*, emerged that aimed to shed light on the situation of the European borders through, for example, setting up several *No Border Camps*. However, conflicts arose over the positionalities and the differentiation of migrant and non-migrant activists, e.g. with disputes around the notion of whiteness at the *No Border Camp* in Cologne in 2012 and the distinction between “citizens” and “non-citizens” at the *Refugee Struggles Conference* in 2013, where migrant activists with a residency permit were excluded from a meeting (Transact 2014; Kanalan 2015).

Building on the struggles of the past, migrant activists set about “a new era of protest” in Germany and Europe in 2012 (From the Struggles Collective 2015; Ataç et al. 2015; Mokre 2018). Starting with a hunger strike of Iranian asylum seekers in the Bavarian town of Würzburg, different local struggles joined forces to form a broad, self-organized, radical, and highly visible social movement that broadly aimed to end the isolation and stop the denial of rights (Langa 2015; Ulu 2013). This group walked 600 km from Bavaria to Berlin with the *Refugee Protest March*, and upon arriving in Berlin established a protest camp on the Oranienplatz in the center of the city, followed by squatting in an empty school building in for a few months (Wilcke and Lambert 2015; Schwiertz 2016a). Soon after, some refugee activists went back to Bavaria and established a Munich-based initiative (From the Struggles Collective 2015).

Beginning in 2013, the group Lampedusa in Hamburg also formed part of this new cycle of refugee protests, and this group forms part of our analysis together with the older initiatives of Women in Exile and Youth without Borders. In the following section, we describe their specific positionalities – as women, as youth, and as refugees with a legal status from Italy – in relation to their narratives as well as their protest and action repertoires. We provide a more detailed analysis of these groups, which emerged at different moments and which make particular claims, in order to understand the diversity of the wider migrant and refugee movement and its conflicting relations between unity and division.

9.3.2 Women in Exile

The specific situation and positionality of female refugees in *Lagers* – collective accommodation where asylum seekers are obliged to live – became a crucial issue and led to particular narratives and forms of organizing. Within the compulsory collective accommodation system, “women and children were facing problems of a different kind [...] such as lack of privacy, sexual harassment, and violence in the collective homes” (Women in Exile and Gürsel 2013, 88; Jakob 2016, 64–68). To make those specific problems visible, and in response to the prevailing disinterest of

male refugees, a group of female refugees in Brandenburg founded *Women in Exile* in 2002. They felt “that refugee women are doubly discriminated against,” both as refugees (by anti-migrant laws and racism), but also as women (Women in Exile n. d.). Therefore, they also sought to challenge male dominance in the refugee movement and “are one of the few links between the women’s movement and the refugees’ movement” (ibid.).

Women in Exile members visit the refugee camps and accommodations, which they call *Lagers*, to find out about the problems and needs of the residents, to discuss potential solutions, and, critically, to mobilize around their political struggle (Women in Exile and Gürsel 2013, 90). Self-organization is thus essential for building relations and credibility between the group and camp residents. The women from the camp are more likely to trust the organizers from Women in Exile, because they share similar experiences: “So you really have to talk to them and tell them what you have been through, give them the experiences. Then they can learn to trust you” (ibid., 94). Women in Exile organizes “Empowerment” seminars to inform women in the Lager about their rights and to encourage them to join the struggle as well as peer education seminars, where women are trained to become organizers themselves (Women in Exile 2013, 5).

In addition to being a space for mobilization, the *Lager*, as a central institution of migration control, is also the most important target of the political organizing of Women in Exile (Women in Exile and Gürsel 2013, 95f). Although police inspections and the threat of deportation, the strict residency obligations, and the prohibition of work were – and are – important subjects, the women-specific issues tend to relate directly to the compulsory accommodation. As such, the main demand of the group has remained: “No Lager for women and children, abolish all Lagers” (Women in Exile 2013, 2). This slogan captures how Women in Exile frames their claims, oscillating between the particular and more general.

In 2016, at the Refugee Conference in Hamburg, members of Women in Exile were part of a group that took over a panel discussion on self-organization and solidarity. This action further highlights how important speaking-for-oneseelf and the representation of female refugees is to them. Together with other refugee women and transgender people, they demanded an equal representation of men and women within the movement and a stronger awareness of their specific situation and perspectives (Kron and Perinelli 2016).

9.3.3 *Youth Without Borders*

Self-organizing and speaking-for-oneseelf is also crucial for *Youth without Borders* (*Jugendliche ohne Grenzen*, JoG), which follows the principle that those affected have their own voice and do not need paternalistic politics. JoG is an association of young refugees that has different local chapters throughout Germany. Its beginnings

can be traced back to the early 2000s, when youth with a status of *toleration* or other precarious legal statuses began to organize themselves. They sought to overcome the limited position designated to them by the state and civil society by developing their own political positionality as well as corresponding narratives and protest forms.

This initiative first focused on fighting for access to higher and professional education in Berlin. However, as some successfully gained access to universities and job training, they realized “that education and labor rights did not grant any durable solution, as long as the fear of deportation was omnipresent and long-term opportunities as well as social security were still denied” (Kanalán 2015, 5, translated from German by the authors).

Therefore, the migrant youth extended their focus to beyond their specific situation of being young people excluded from education. This was, however, used in conjunction with a framing strategy that highlighted their disenfranchisement and vulnerable position relative to their peers with citizenship status.

Inspired by the movement of *Sans Papiers* in France and other countries, refugee youth, some of whom later became involved in JoG, fought for a comprehensive right to stay. After fighting for the specific case of a 14-year old schoolgirl, the refugee youth organized an anti-deportation campaign called Stay Here (*Hier Geblieben*) in cooperation with a local counseling center, the *refugee council*, *Pro Asyl* (a non-profit organization), the *Grips Theater*, and the *Education and Science Workers’ Union GEW* (*Hier Geblieben* 2005).

Out of this organizing structure, JoG was formalized in 2005 at a conference with 70 refugee youth from all over Germany. These conferences, which they have held every year since 2005 in the same city as the Conference of the Ministers of the Interior, became their main political space to organize and voice political demands. The refugee youth were empowered by self-organizing workshops, demonstrations, and gala nights, by representing themselves at press conferences and by personally meeting politicians to discuss and confront them with their demands. Similar to the political practices of Kanak Attak, JoG not only uses conventional protest forms such as demonstrations and speeches, but also political art and theater to reach out to mainstream society and politicians (Jouni and Ziese 2016).

Causing some tensions, the framing and claims of JoG were at times perceived as less radical than those of other groups in the refugee movement, as they also had short-term and mid-term goals to improve the precarious situation of at least some refugee youth (Kanalán 2015, 9).

Particular claims based on their positionality as youth were crucial for the self-organizing of JoG, which led to a specific framing around youthfulness and several campaigns demanding an equal right to education and schools for all. However, despite these youth-specific claims, the “right to stay for all” has become a main slogan of JoG, reflecting the oscillation between particular and more general claims that we already described regarding the struggle of refugee women.

9.3.4 *Lampedusa in Hamburg*

Parallel to the struggles occurring since 2012 in Berlin and Munich, a self-organized group of refugees that became known as *Lampedusa in Hamburg* emerged in northern Germany in 2013. This is a protest group of 300–350 refugees mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa, who had previously migrated to Libya and then fled from the civil war in the country that began in 2011 to Italy. They established their organization as a direct response to European migration laws. Coming from Italy where they had few opportunities to make a living, they challenged the limitations of free movement imposed by the Dublin regulation. In Hamburg, the group started to organize and develop collective political claims. Homelessness, the lack of health care, limited access to education, social exclusion, and a lack of basic social amenities – the denial of social rights – were the major challenges that motivated the group to form and organize themselves politically. All of the group members had already gone through the asylum procedure of recognition in Italy, having their identities checked, meaning that they all had Italian residency permits before they came to Hamburg. Therefore, having a refugee status issued by the Italian government shaped their social position: this status gave them no real access to social rights, but did give them some legal possibilities to move within Europe via a temporary tourist visa. For *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, the permission to work was vital for survival, since crisis-ridden Italy had nothing to offer; there was neither work, nor support for a living. Therefore, their specific positionality shaped their claim to a right to stay and work in Hamburg, which is encapsulated in their main slogan, “We are here to stay!”

This powerful slogan challenges the idea that refugees are only here for a temporary amount of time. The protest forms of the group therefore derive their strength from this declaration of legitimate presence. Most of their efforts attempt to make this slogan a reality and – together with supporters and networks of solidarity – demonstrate that the group is already part of the local community, even though the Hamburg Senate denies this. Their political self-organization and mobilization has also motivated political groups and civilians in Hamburg who have given humanitarian and political support, showing that the group is part of a common social space (Borgstede 2016).

Lampedusa in Hamburg has engaged in a fundamental and vital struggle for their right to stay as well as for the rights of all refugees and migrants. Therefore, they began opposing procedures and laws that limited their right to dissent. On 5/22/2013, the group occupied the Town Hall, asking local authorities and particularly Mayor Olaf Scholz from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) to listen to their demands and start a dialogue; the politicians ignored these demands. As the struggle began to attract the attention of civil society and the media, the Senate of Hamburg, and in particular its governing party, the SPD, began to look for different opportunities to evict the group. One of these attempts involved using the St. Pauli church – which had provided shelter to some of the group members – as an intermediary. By November 2013, this tactic had forced some members of the group into a second

asylum procedure with the precarious status of *toleration*. This could be seen as an attempt to discipline the Lampedusa in Hamburg protest by integrating the group members indefinitely into the procedures of German asylum law.

Nevertheless, the group’s political campaign against the inequality in refugee policies became an increasing challenge for the local state authorities. This only increased following a major demonstration on 11/2/2013, where around 15,000 demonstrators marched in solidarity with the group. The visible and strong self-organization of the group brought together many political groups who were fighting for the same demands despite their political differences. Following the May Day Parade in 2014, some of these political groups came together and squatted in a building on behalf of Lampedusa in Hamburg and other refugees. It was a huge event under the banner of a much-needed Refugee Welcome Center. However, it ended when the police removed them from the building after a few hours.

The state’s harsh rejection of the demands of Lampedusa in Hamburg became manifest, as another peaceful demonstration in front of the Hamburg Town Hall on 6/5/2014 resulted in repression, with the police brutally beating up and arresting members of the group (Lampedusa in Hamburg 2014). The police eventually targeted all major locations where the group members had been living, and began to stop and check the identity of any black person, which was an obvious case of racial profiling. Many of these racist identity checks were carried out in the left-wing neighborhood of St Pauli. In response, the neighborhood started a week-long protest action and the ongoing repression continued to attract the attention of civil society and the media.

However, the struggle of Lampedusa in Hamburg went beyond marches, protest tent actions, and occupations. Based on their specific position of exclusion from social rights, they initiated different projects to realize their demands that the group was here to stay, and that they would work and create a life. Eventually, *ver.di*, a trade union, became a strong partner, when they registered over 150 people of the Lampedusa Group as union members. This also led to the initiation of Lampedusa Professions, a project that exhibits the qualifications and the various potential professional skills the groups have. Since then, Lampedusa Professions has also become an art project featured in exhibitions like *ort_m*—migration memory. As such, the group not only marches in the street for the right to stay and work; they also convert these demands into practical activities and in actual cultural projects. The group has also cooperated with the Kampnagel theater on the Eco Favela and Migrantropolitan projects, and they are involved with the Silent University, Curating the City e.V., No Border Academy, the Here to Participate project (in cooperation with the Education and Science Workers’ Union (GEW)), and the Refugee Radio Network. The establishment of FC Lampedusa in Hamburg was another project of the group, aiming to develop skills and create opportunities for the soccer players among them. This soccer team was established with the support of FC St. Pauli. An interesting point about FC Lampedusa is that most of the earlier members of the soccer team had been members of Lampedusa in Hamburg and thus came from Sub-Saharan Africa. However, by 2015, the team had changed, with refugees from other countries of origin in the team. Although these new players have a different history,

they are happy and excited to portray the identities and the struggle of Lampedusa, which points to its unifying potential.

Although they have been included into the social networks of the city, the Senate of Hamburg has provided the group with no legal means for the right to stay and has instead ignored their case, hoping it will disappear through the voluntary return of the refugees to Italy. Nevertheless, despite the legal consequences of the Dublin regulation, the Senate could provide a group solution on the basis of §23 Residence Act (AufenthG). This could give them the right to stay and work in Hamburg (HAJ 2014; Kanalan 2014). As Lampedusa in Hamburg argues, there is a sound political demand for this group solution, as their members meet the criteria of the policy; they have almost the same background and have faced the same human rights abuses.

However, it was civil society showed actual and genuine solidarity with Lampedusa in Hamburg, through the provision of accommodation, economic and logistical support, political understanding, and encouragement in their fight for rights. The humanitarian help and solidarity that the group experienced was much better articulated politically in comparison with the recent wave of civil engagement in the “summer of welcome” in 2015 (Karakayali and Kleist 2016). Even though Lampedusa in Hamburg could not succeed in pushing the Senate to grant them their rights, they managed to build a movement and a network that changed the social space of the city. Furthermore, they built a base from which to continue their struggle as well as contributed to the emergence of new alliances like *Right to the City – Never Mind the Papers* and other refugee, pro-migrant, and welcome initiatives.

9.3.5 Comparisons: Different Positionalities of Refugee Self-Organization

By analyzing different initiatives, we have stressed that the positionality within, and against, the dominant migration regime is the crucial starting point for the self-organization of refugees and migrants. These groups all shared the idea of developing self-organized political practice and resistance grounded in the specific situation of the social group in order to defend their rights and shape their political demands. Critically, one main strategy of the migration regime has been to isolate refugees and migrants, deny them a legitimate subject position, and silence their voices (Monforte and Dufour 2013; Ataç et al. 2015; Schwiertz 2016a; Mokre 2018; Hinger et al. 2018). As a result, when these activists make their demands public, it is a key moment of self-organization, as they are making their own situation visible. Most groups emerge from an attempt to organize themselves and build a structure due to their personal issues and problems. And it is from this point that they develop and raise their demands. For Lampedusa in Hamburg, this was the right to stay in the city, but also more specifically the permission to work and gain recognition of their Italian documents. In asylum-seeker protests, such as the *Refugee Protest March* to Berlin, the right to stay is also a central claim. However, they are also

specifically fighting against the German asylum system in order to be recognized. Almost all refugee struggles call for the abolition of the German and European asylum system and demand their right to stay, but they organize themselves based on different situations and conditions related to their specific experiences and status in Germany. Their diverse positionalities relate to distinct “identities, experiences and perspectives” (Leitner et al. 2008, 163).

To a large extent, these different positionalities are derived from the stratified German-European migration regime, which produces a hierarchy of legal statuses, from full citizenship to illegality. Besides separating migrant subjectivities, this can create relative privileges and cause conflicts as well as internal challenges for organizing refugee and migrant struggles (From the Struggles Collective 2015, 21–23). People from Lampedusa in Hamburg and other groups with Italian documents are in a different legal position than asylum seekers. At the Oranienplatz Camp in Berlin, it was a major challenge to bring together people with different legal statuses, as they did not always share the same specific demands; this led to huge conflicts. This stratified system of rights is produced by the state and is related to a (post-)colonial “divide-and-rule strategy” that led to rifts in the movement and made the eviction of the Oranienplatz Camp possible (Langa 2015, 8).

Furthermore, groups in the migrant movement also differ according to intersectional power relations. Organizing around gender relations, Women in Exile fight specifically for refugee women’s rights and against patriarchy and male domination. Another specific positionality results from the category of age, leading JoG to focus on education and struggles particular to the rights of refugee minors and youth. Additionally, the compassion, solidarity and support of citizens in relation to self-organized struggles are important. Their role has been critically discussed with refugee activists, asking if claims based on their positionalities have been neglected, or in which way the distinction between refugees and supporters is itself problematic (Ulu 2013; Rosenberger and Winkler 2014; Mokre 2015; Ünsal 2015).

In the migrant and refugee movement, some self-organizations are more visible, powerful, and privileged than others because of their positionality in the migration regime. When Lampedusa in Hamburg started organizing, some refugees, who had been stuck in the German asylum system for years, had the impression that they were not included in this process. They had the feeling that the public did not recognize their situation in the same way. Furthermore, the activists from Lampedusa in Hamburg were not fully under German authority: If they got in trouble with law enforcement, they would be at worst deported back to Italy, where they have legal status. This gave them a relatively privileged position, and made more militant action possible, e.g. the protest at the Town Hall. However, it also allowed the group to join other struggles that were not as privileged, and to even go outside Europe. To do so, the group has shared part of their resources and has built a structure, like the info-tent, which other refugees have also been able to use.

According to their positionality and the specific problems and priorities that a given group identifies, migrant and refugee protests produce different frames and narratives. Their collective framing processes lead to “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns” of the

different groups (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). As we have shown in the last chapter, Lampedusa in Hamburg has a specific story and on this basis, they demand their rights. They mainly argue for a right to stay for the 300–350 people of the group for two reasons: First, they claim that they are victims of the NATO war in Libya; second, that they already have Italian documents and working permits, but that the Italian state has failed to take responsibility for their lives in Italy. That their narrative focused on primarily claiming a right to stay for the group members also had strategic reasons. It is more realistic to approach the Senate of Hamburg, other politicians, and the broader public to demand a right to stay for around 350 people than to demand a right to stay for everybody. This made some supporters withdraw their solidarity, because they had the impression that Lampedusa in Hamburg had made themselves an exclusive group.

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. In the context of this limiting migration regime, the attempt to build more inclusive organizations with differently positioned participants and alternative narratives remains a constant challenge for migratory movements across the globe (Schwartz 2016b).

9.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have analyzed three different forms of refugee struggles in order to understand how refugees and migrants organize themselves within and against the dominant migration regime. We showed that specific social and political positionalities, shaped by the German-European migration regime and its hierarchy of legal status, greatly influences the diverse and sometimes contradicting narratives and strategies of different initiatives. According to actor positionalities that we investigated in all cases, the framing of initiatives often oscillates between general claims for the rights of all refugees and migrants and particular claims for the rights of their specific social group. The three cases analyzed here are relevant for the refugee movement in Germany, because they succeeded in constructing social spaces for self-organizing as well as political stages for raising the voice of refugees so that their specific claims could be heard in public.

The demand “No Lager for Women and Children” is characteristic for the narrative of Women in Exile, which focuses specifically on how the collective accommodation system of the Lager affects women and their families. Still, their slogan

also entails the demand to “Abolish all Lagers,” therefore including a claim for the rights of all refugees. However, fighting not only against the migration regime and racism but also against patriarchy, they are also challenging male activists within the refugee movement in an effort to make their own specific position more visible. The crucial contribution of Women in Exile has been to construct a platform for refugee women and to empower them to become political actors against all odds. This has also been the case with Youth without Borders (JoG), which created a unique social space for young refugees that has encouraged them to connect to each other and become politically active. Their slogan “Right to Stay for All” indicates a narrative that is generally open, yet at the same time, their organizing and framing builds on a specific positionality as youth. On the basis of a shared history, Lampedusa in Hamburg, with its slogan “We are Here to Stay,” mainly focuses on claiming a right to stay and social rights in the city for the group and its members. Nevertheless, the slogan also indicates the legitimate presence of all refugees and migrants. The achievement of the Lampedusa group has been to mobilize thousands of citizens in Hamburg to support and join their struggle, which was not only been visible in large scale demonstrations, but especially in the close-meshed networks built in the neighborhood of St. Pauli. In doing so, Lampedusa in Hamburg stimulated not only new activities around anti-racist politics and the right to the city, but they also laid the groundwork for broad refugee support in 2015.

Besides Lampedusa in Hamburg, the other major mobilization of the new refugee protest era, starting in Germany in 2012, is the Refugee Movement Berlin, who has been analyzed by several publications (Ulu 2013; Langa 2015; Wilcke and Lambert 2015; Fadaee 2015; Glöde and Böhlo 2015; Schwiertz 2016a). Their claims are part of one of the most inclusive and radical framing examples in the movement. This is captured in their three central demands: against Lagers, residency obligations, and deportations. Nevertheless, their narrative has mainly been applicable to the positionality of asylum seekers. Hence, the arrival of refugees who already had a legal residency status from Italy but no access to social rights in Germany caused conflicts over how to prioritize the three demands. According to their specific positionality, the Berlin Refugee Movement has consequently integrated “the right to work and study” into their demands.

In this paper, we analyzed different approaches of refugee self-organization, building on the history and experiences of migratory struggles in Germany. As we have shown above, refugee and migrant protests are by no means new, but the scale and nature of the recent actions in the 2010s are unprecedented. The protesters’ demands go beyond individualistic claims and target not only national but also local and supranational policies. Like at the International Conference of Refugees and Migrants in Hamburg in 2016, they seek to establish translocal and transnational networks and coalitions against these policies. Building on the history and experiences of groups like KöXüz, Kanak Attak, or The Voice, which are still active today, self-organized migratory and refugee struggles could develop strategies to further unite their fights within and against the German-European migration regime beyond their specific positionalities.

However, within the migrant and refugee movement, it remains a challenge to establish common initiatives and networks. This becomes even more difficult on a transnational scale, where people have to struggle with different local and national manifestations of the supranational migration regime. Its hierarchical legal system and its division of migrants' positionalities, characteristic of the German-European migration regime, shape the narratives and strategies of different self-organizing attempts. Despite this dividing regime of control, migrant and refugee groups repeatedly form networks beyond their particular struggles. These networks build narratives and strategies based on a common positionality of being directly affected by a nationalist and racist regime, as well as a shared fight for freedom of movement and the right to stay for all.

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