Being Different. How Differences in Resources, Strategy, and Culture Challenge Community Building

This chapter investigates collaboration across organizational differences within civil society. Specifically, I explore why sustained interaction between well-established professionalized organizations and more informal volunteer and activist groups is challenging and how these significant obstacles can be overcome. As outlined in Chapter 4, the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 did not lead to the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in Altenau and Neheim. This chapter explores the obstacles behind community building in two local civic landscapes with an influential presence of professionalized, well-established civil society organizations.

The primary question investigates why the more informal groups had difficulties institutionalizing themselves and, more importantly, how to make sense of the scarcity of lasting forms of interaction between well-established organizations and more informal groups. To find explanations, I used an inductive-deductive approach to identify three barriers to collaboration across organizational boundaries: (i) differences in resources, including the phenomenon of "crowding out", in which resource-rich organizations overshadow informal groups, (ii) differences in strategies of interaction and more concretely in different modes of coordination, and (iii) different cultures of interaction that influence perceptions of the effectiveness and appropriateness of interaction.

Regarding the structure of each local civic landscape, the proportion of well-established professionalized civil society organizations and more informal groups varied in the four cases (Lauda, Loburg, Altenau, and Neheim). The cases varied based on their existing infrastructure for supporting refugees during the refugee-reception crisis in 2015/16. Altenau and Neheim already had higher migration rates and some professionalized systems regarding migration support in place. Loburg and Lauda, on the other hand, had low

levels of migration and lacked such infrastructure before 2015/16. This contrast was reflected in the structure of the civic landscape in these cases. Lauda and Loburg were characterized by traditional recreational associations and some community organizations, whereas Altenau and Neheim's civic landscape had much more professionalized civil society organizations. Given the higher proportion of migrants in the latter, these organizations, primarily welfare organizations, were already engaged in migration-related issues before 2015/16. While even these organizations were not prepared for the quick rise in the number of refugees, the issue of migration was familiar to many of them. Consequently, they offered many services once the number of refugees strongly increased in 2015/16 and quickly took the lead in refugee support.

This chapter explores these differences by analyzing the relationships between well-established organizations and more informal groups in Altenau and Neheim. These interaction dynamics are then briefly compared with developments in Lauda and Loburg. Before the empirical analysis, I will discuss the theoretical perspectives on interaction between different actors. While neither social movement scholars nor voluntarism/non-profit scholars have paid much attention to interaction between unequal types of organizations and groups (but see Boersma et al. 2021; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Diani 2015), I have identified three theoretical building blocks that help explain the barriers to collaboration. These theoretical building blocks were first derived from an inductive approach to analyzing thematic patterns in the interview material. These patterns were then complemented by an extensive reading of the relevant literature on collaboration in social movement studies, and in voluntarism/nonprofit studies. The results of my analyses and literature readings were ultimately three building blocks, which I will discuss in the following section.

By synthesizing the literature on resource, strategic, and cultural differences, I aim to shed light on the dynamics shaping today's civic landscapes and the drivers and obstacles for developing pro-refugee communities. We need theoretical and empirical perspectives to understand underlying conflicts and interaction dynamics. Through this lens, I seek to improve our understanding of the complexities inherent in local networking.

In what follows, I first discuss the three theoretical perspectives regarding differences in resource power, networking strategies, and cultural understandings of interaction. I then examine the relationships between well-established professionalized organizations and more informal groups in Altenau and Neheim. A brief comparison with the dynamics in Lauda and Loburg follows this.

Finally, I compare and discuss developments in the four cities and offer some concluding remarks on how obstacles to collaboration can be overcome.

Theoretical Framework: Resources, Strategies, and Cultures of Interaction

The civil society literature, overall, has not paid much attention to interactive practices between professionalized organizations, including long-established non-profit organizations, welfare organizations, charities, and more informal groups like local community groups such as grassroots initiatives and small associations. However, some studies have suggested that these different types of civil society organizations face substantial challenges when collaborating (Boersma et al., 2021; Kanellopoulos et al., 2017). While it is indeed possible for them to collaborate (see Chewinski, 2019), various factors also hinder sustained interaction and engagement in the same network, such as alliances and coalitions. In this chapter, I focus on the factors that impede such forms of interaction.

Since the obstacles to sustained interaction between civil society organizations and groups are multifaceted, I draw on studies from various disciplines, such as voluntarism/non-profit studies, social movement research, and public administration. Through the inductive and deductive approach to analyzing the interview data and extensive literature readings, I identified three broad categories under which these insights can be subsumed: (1) Differences in resource power, (2) distinctions in networking strategies, and (3) diverging cultures of interaction. In the following section, I provide a detailed exploration of these explanations.

Differences in resource power

While resource dependency has been found to promote interorganizational cooperation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), the dominance of resource-rich organizations in one organizational field can overwhelm and overshadow informal volunteer activities and groups. This phenomenon, often referred to as "crowding out", is well-documented in the civil society literature but is usually applied with regard to civil society-state relations (see Brooks, 2000; Grasse et al., 2022; Gruber & Hungerman, 2007; Isaac & Norton, 2013)

In the scholarly literatures of voluntarism/non-profit studies, and public administration, the mechanism of "crowding out" refers to a mechanism in which the involvement of government in civil society leads to declining activities of civil society organizations and groups. Scholars in this literature have highlighted that government funding or service provision can crowd out resources available to civil society organizations. In this sense, a government offers services to the public that civil society organizations would otherwise provide. Greater government involvement has been shown to decrease the number of volunteers and private donations. This situation, in turn, potentially results in fewer resources available for civil society organizations (see Gruber & Hungerman, 2007; Gundelach et al., 2010; Ostrom, 2000).

I suggest that this "crowding out" effect can extend beyond the state's welfare institutions. This is particularly relevant when welfare organizations are involved, but it may also apply to other civil society organizations heavily reliant on state funding. In moments of crisis, be it social crises like the refugee reception crisis (Simsa et al., 2019) or natural disasters, civil society organizations often get increased funding from states or international organizations (see Donahue & Joyce, 2001; Wildasin, 2008). Civil society scholars even argue that welfare organizations like in Germany often take on a unique hybrid position between state and civil society in European welfare states. Their primary function is providing different social services to society, responsibilities that are 'outsourced' from the state. For this social service provision, they mainly receive state funding (Evers, 2005).

The prominent presence of established civil society organizations can inadvertently discourage volunteer-run groups and small associations. Volunteers may develop the belief that the professionals have it under control. This belief can negatively affect new volunteer-run groups and small associations. When established organizations, particularly those heavily reliant on state funding, assume the role of service provision, they can signal to volunteers and local community groups that they are no longer needed.

At the same time, it is also important to note that welfare organizations do not have to take on this role. Stadelmann-Steffen (2011) argued that government involvement or partnerships with civil society organizations can 'crowd in' additional resources, expertise, and support for these organizations. When considered in the context of the relationship between welfare organizations and less formal groups, welfare organizations are also capable of providing support to smaller groups and mobilizing resources.

Differences in networking strategies

In addition to these differences in resource power, another realm of explanations is differences in networking strategies (see King & Jasper, 2022; McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996; Reger & Staggenborg, 2006). A few studies have shown that professionalized and well-established organizations have different objectives and priorities than more informal groups that inform their networking behavior. While the former more intensely focuses on policy advocacy, fundraising, and implementing specific projects (Guo & Acar, 2005; Yanacopulos, 2005), the latter may prioritize more informal types of collaboration, such as organizing festivities, debates or protests (Reger & Staggenborg, 2006; Staggenborg, 1998, 2022).

Mario Diani's (2015) research on modes of coordination sheds light on this issue. Diani (2015) has conceptualized different modes of coordination, emphasizing that organizations and groups have distinctly different ways of coordination concerning resource exchange and boundary-making (i.e., solidarity and group identification). Specifically, he compared the relational patterns of civil society organizations in Bristol and Glasgow. He identified three distinct modes of coordination: the organizational mode, the coalitional mode, and the social movement mode of coordination. Organizations choose different coordination modes in collective efforts depending on how they think about building connections and engaging in boundary definitions. First, organizations in the two cities that engaged in an 'organizational mode of coordination' only had a few (if all) interorganizational linkages. Often, these were interest groups that focused on a specific narrower issue. Second, organizations engaged in the 'coalitional mode of coordination' were linked by dense relationships with others that were mainly "driven by instrumental concerns" (Diani, 2015, p. 188). Like the organizational mode, the coalitional mode did not involve closer relationships based on mutual solidarity. Lastly, some organizations took on a mode closest to a 'social movement mode of coordination'. These organizations also exchanged resources, but this exchange was based on a more profound identification with one another, often through overlapping memberships and personal relationships between activists and volunteers (Diani, 2015, p. 188).

Civil society organizations follow different modes of coordination. These different modes lead to the fact that some organizations, for instance, those following a coalitional mode and a social movement mode, may not be embedded in the same networks as their priorities and strategies around building al-

liances and relationships with individual organizations differ (Diani, 2015, p. 188).

While Diani (2015) acknowledges that grassroots radical groups can also adopt the organizational mode of coordination and reject coordinated action, in his book, I observed a trend where organizations that adopted the coalitional mode tended to be more professionalized and established organizations, while more informal groups tended to adopt the social movement mode of coordination. This is also what Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) found in their study of the Greek anti-austerity campaign. The authors show that competing modes of coordination are challenging to overcome and compromise cooperation between different groups. Since large unions mainly followed the organizational mode of coordination and other groups, such as grassroots unions and political parties, followed the coalitional mode, it took a lot of work to cooperate and build alliances. Ultimately, it only worked because the dominant mode of coordination shifted to the coalitional mode over a few years.

In sum, professionalized and well-established organizations often have a well-defined focus on specific activities, such as policy advocacy, fundraising, or project implementation. These activities are essential to their mission and goals and often require a more structured and formalized approach. Informal groups, on the other hand, tend to prioritize a different approach. Their methods are more flexible and adaptable and correspond to their local communities' direct needs. These distinct modes of coordination can lead to organizations being embedded in different networks based on their priorities and strategies for building alliances. However, it is essential to acknowledge that exceptions can exist, with organizations from different coordination modes occasionally collaborating.

Differences in interaction cultures

The third explanatory factor influencing sustained interaction is the cultural understanding behind interaction. In other words, what meanings do people and groups attach to collective action and interaction? Scholars such as Lichterman (2021; 1995; 1996), Eliasoph (2011), and Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994) have brought attention to this question. They show that despite shared objectives among groups and organizations in civil society, collaboration encounters obstacles because of substantial cultural differences. While Diani (2015) has pointed to the different strategies and ways of coordinated action, Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) and Eliasoph & Cefaï (2021) specifically have focused

on the impact of specific cultural meanings and "typification" (Eliasoph & Cefaï, 2021, p. 219) on the nature and scope of interaction. In other words, the extent of interaction is contingent upon people's understanding of collaboration.

The following section highlights how different cultural understandings of interaction manifest within civil society. It explores the influence of notions of "good politics" (Roth, 2010) on interaction, how interaction is styled in specific settings, and how distinct cultural foundations in activist communities shape the appropriate interaction forms.

Concerning different understandings of "good politics", Roth (2010) has shed light on the impossibility of forming coalitions within the feminist movements. She underscored how ideological differences among black, white, and Chicana U.S. feminist groups hindered coalition building in the 1960s and 1970s. While recognizing strategic considerations in coalition formation, she argued that coalitions are not merely products of rational cost-benefit analyses. Instead, her historical analysis highlighted the vast differences in how feminists from various groups perceived "good politics". This understanding, she stressed, was not linked to considerations about action's effectiveness but rather about whether actions aligned with established meanings within activist communities regarding identities and ethics (Roth, 2010, p. 112).

Eliasoph and Cefaï (2021, p. 219) have demonstrated that actors who work together need to use the appropriate "typification" of their joint efforts. Their study of youth empowerment projects highlighted that young people viewed themselves as "helpful, active and thoughtful volunteers who were improving their locale" (2021, p. 222). This self-perception stood in strong contrast to how professionals supporting the empowerment project saw them. They saw it as charity and interacted with the youth group as if they were the case of charity – a project for the "disadvantaged youth" (2021, p. 227). The authors highlighted that the different participants "typified" (2021, p. 231) the project in entirely different ways. The youth group volunteers did not like that they were seen as the charity case instead of the helpful citizens they thought they were. As a result, these tensions about the appropriate "typification" (2021, p. 219) increased and eventually stopped the project.

Similarly, Lichterman's research (2021) suggests that different interpretations of engaging in community action can hinder collaboration, even when goals and values are aligned. In a study of collective action around Los Angeles housing advocacy, Lichterman (2021) has noted that communities with shared goals and values may still fail to collaborate due to differing understandings of

community identity. In the ethnographical study, he found that in some cases, what activists believed was the appropriate style of interaction was incompatible. While most activists followed a "community of identity" style (Lichterman, 2021, p. 28), some activists used what Lichterman calls an inappropriate "community of interest" style (Lichterman, 2021, p. 28). When activists informally agreed on a particular style, it was much easier to achieve goals and stay in a coalition than when some activists used the 'wrong' style. For example, in LA housing advocacy, some coalitions were built around a shared community identity:

> "In a setting styled as a community of identity, in contrast, participants assume they should coordinate themselves as fellow members of a community resisting ongoing threats from the powers that be [...]. Participants understand themselves as protecting the community's moral and/or geographic survival and authenticity. They maintain relatively high boundaries, collaborating selectively versus imagining their issues should appeal to an indefinitely expanding general audience" (Lichterman, 2021, p. 28).

In contrast, Lichterman (2021, p. 28) pointed out that in a "community of interest" styled setting, participants pursue their goals with a specific goal in mind and without clear group boundaries:

> "Acting as a community of interest, participants treat each other as loyal partners pursuing a specific goal limited to an issue for which they share concern. They assume good members coordinate around an interest in an issue, not a population or community. Participants collaborate with those who share the focal interest. [...] They create expanding circles of interest in and attention to the issue, with different levels of commitment, rather than expecting tight, mutual identification among participants".

When one of the two community styles were used in the wrong setting, such as very interest-driven behavior and conversation in a community of identity, the mismatch in styles led to less mutual understanding, resulting in conflict and division (Lichterman, 2021, p. 28).

As I have emphasized in the cited studies, cultural dynamics and interaction cultures influence collaboration success. Diverging interpretations of "good politics" (Roth, 2010) and varied meanings of collective action, such as different "typification" (Eliasoph & Cefaï, 2021, p. 219) or community styles (Lichterman, 2021) can create immense challenges. This research illustrates

how conflicting cultural foundations in civil society can hinder collaboration, emphasizing the importance of aligning cultural perspectives for successful joint actions.

The theoretical building blocks discussed shed light on collaboration challenges between professionalized organizations and more informal groups within civil society. The relationship between these different actor types is multifaceted and nuanced. Understanding these challenges requires an examination of resource dynamics, organizational strategies, and cultural interactions. The following sections analyze these factors based on my empirical data.

Empirical Analysis

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the effects of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. This mobilization period did not result in new pro-refugee communities in Altenau and Neheim. As previously discussed in my work, the development and survival of pro-refugee communities are measured by looking at the dynamics of organizations' and groups' interactions in the post-mobilization period and the networks between them that emerge and are strengthened through ongoing interaction.

Despite the efforts of various volunteers and activists in local informal groups, alongside numerous established civil society organizations involved in refugee support during that year's refugee reception crisis, many of the informal groups eventually faded into the background. While some more professionalized and well-established organizations continued to intensify their work on migration issues, they almost exclusively engaged in sub-networks with similar organizations.

In the subsequent empirical analysis, I examine the relationship between these different types of actors. Specifically, I explore how the strong presence of professional, well-established organizations influenced the lack of institutionalization of more informal groups and contributed to the limited development and survival of pro-refugee communities in Altenau and Neheim.

Altenau

In the following section, I analyze the relationships between professionalized and well-established organizations on the one hand and more informal groups

on the other in Altenau. I focus on differences in resource power, modes of interaction, and cultures of interaction.

Resource power

As mentioned, Altenau falls into the category of cities with many well-established organizations. Organizations such as a significant Catholic disaster relief organization, Catholic and Protestant welfare organizations, a branch of the German red cross, and many more specialized in migration counseling actively participated in networks and roundtables with regular meetings to coordinate migration-related actions. Even before 2015, these organizations were recognized as experts in the field of migration, playing essential roles as first responders when the number of refugees increased rapidly. In the eyes of many interviewees, most noticeable were the efforts of a prominent Catholic relief organization commissioned by the city to build emergency housing tents for refugees in 2015.

As described by Birgit, a social worker and director at a Family center, many people were impressed by how the Catholic relief organization handled the increased arrival of refugees:

> "[…] the responsibility [for providing emergency housing for refugees] was entrusted to the [Catholic relief organization], and they were incredibly strong. They were pushed to their limits, leveraging all the resources at their disposal. They even hired a lot more people to deal with everything that needed to be dealt with".

She was amazed by the efforts of the organization's staff, but also emphasized that there was immense competition among organizations for the responsibility of providing emergency shelter for refugees: "They took immediate action. […] There was a race of sorts to oversee the operations of the refugee shelter".

While many volunteers (roughly 100 people as estimated by interviewees) organized refugee support independently of an established organization, the volunteer-run refugee-support group, *Refugee Welcome*, and a prominent Catholic relief organization in Altenau recruited many new volunteers (over 100 volunteers, as estimated by Sandra, the director), in addition to those who had been involved with them for years. There were so many volunteer requests that the organization could not accommodate them all at once. This was because the staff did not believe they could coordinate all the volunteers meaningfully. Harald, one of the long-time volunteers of the organization,

recalled that people had to apply to be selected as a volunteer: "And yes, there were an incredible number of applicants for a volunteer position […]. They couldn't even process all the applications, I remember that too".

Organizations such as the Catholic Relief Organization, a local Christian youth welfare organization, and the local Adult education center received increased state funding to expand their services roughly between 2015 and 2018. While they were also overwhelmed with some of the tasks and were thankful for the support of many volunteers, they appeared capable of covering many needs after the first few months. Notably, the Catholic relief organization expanded its work on migration, making refugee support an integral part of its services. Its employees initiated various projects, such as the development of integration guides. The Catholic relief and Christian youth welfare organizations also played a significant role in offering language and integration courses. These courses saw a substantial increase in demand due to the influx of refugees.

After a year, as the number of newly arriving refugees declined, welfare organizations presented an image of self-sufficiency, leading many volunteers to believe they were no longer needed. Harald, the volunteer from the Catholic relief organization, recalled that after one year, the refugee camp was suddenly closed down:

> "After a year […] the camp was closed […] and then the whole thing was over. Most of the people who were employed were fired. A lot of the volunteers organized themselves or got involved with the [Catholic relief organization]".

While the Catholic relief organization created space where the volunteers could continue to be involved in refugee support "the so-called integration service" (Harald), many people got the impression they were no longer needed and that the professionals were doing their job.

Perhaps unintentionally, the strong presence of these resource-rich organizations may have crowded out some of the potential for emerging, informal volunteer and activist groups. While the preparedness and dedication of established organizations were essential to address the need for refugee support, there is a possibility that this inadvertently interfered with the contributions of grassroots volunteers and civil society. In their prominent role, welfare organizations seemed to dominate the response in 2015/16.

Networking strategies

In addition to differences in pre-existing resources and organizational capacities, the interaction dynamics between well-established organizations and more informal groups were determined by distinct approaches and expectations. Welfare organizations in Altenau had a history of participating in various networks and collaborative projects, such as the district's roundtable initiated in the early 2000s. A similar roundtable emerged at the city level around 2015, where participants discussed migration issues and divided responsibilities. As Sabrina, an employee of one of the Catholic welfare organization highlighted, these roundtables allowed employees of different organizations, including the workers' welfare organization, the Catholic relief organization, the Catholic welfare organization, and the local government of Altenau to share their experiences and exchange information about their work.

Sabrina recognized that the roundtables were necessary for the participants of the roundtable to divide the tasks among themselves:

> "We don't want to get in the way of the other colleagues who work at [workers welfare organization] and the [Catholic relief organization]. This is why we inform each other so that three organizations do not work for the same client or on the same task".

Those involved emphasized the value of these roundtable discussions, as the roundtable served as a platform for knowledge sharing and resource allocation. Sandra, the director of the prominent Catholic relief organization, stressed the importance of these meetings, mainly since many refugees who had lived in the camp she and her colleagues set up were distributed throughout the district:

> "The round table is where we really meet – it's a very large group [...]. These are very important meetings that we like to attend. And of course, we also like to be there to hear what is happening at the district level since many of those who have been to our camp have been distributed throughout the district and we would like to know what is happening".

Being part of these networks allowed them to stay informed about developments at the district level and coordinate actions accordingly.

In contrast, informal volunteer and activist groups used different strategies to coordinate their actions. They were unhappy with the city's inability to organize the volunteer efforts and decided to become more independent. These groups established meeting points to share experiences and manage their support efforts. Thus, they created a grassroots community of support. Helen, a volunteer at the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome*, told me that they met regularly and exchanged experiences to benefit from each other's knowledge.

One such initiative was a neighborhood meeting that was organized once a month in one of the neighborhoods with many refugee accommodations. It brought together members of the diaconal committee of the neighborhood's Protestant church, the local council, and the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome*. As Bianca, one of the volunteers of *Refugees Welcome* explained, the event was designed to foster community bonds by encouraging people to meet, share homemade cakes, and engage in conversations:

> "Once a month we organized [the neighborhood meeting]. [...] The idea was to have coffee together. People brought homemade cakes. [...] It was about getting to know each other. And the normal [residents of this neighborhood] were also invited. There was a poster outside the door, and we did a lot of advertising. And then completely different people and completely new people came. And that's how these contacts should be."

As Bianca explained, this initiative aimed to build connections and foster understanding among diverse people, attracting regular participants and new faces from the neighborhood.

The contrast between networking priorities and the preferred coordination modes of the welfare organizations and the volunteer group was apparent. Welfare organizations were used to cooperating within structured networks, emphasizing information sharing and resource allocation, as highlighted by quotes from the employees of the Catholic welfare and the Catholic relief organization. On the other hand, the more informal groups envisioned a more flexible and community-oriented approach, where they could directly address their challenges and support one another more personally. These differences in coordination modes reflected varying expectations and perceptions about how collective action should be organized and executed. While welfare organizations relied on established mechanisms and formal structures, informal groups preferred a more grassroots, community-driven approach.

Interaction culture

Besides different resource and networking strategies, there were also contrasting cultural understandings of what it meant to collaborate between welfare organizations and more informal groups. Despite sharing similar values related to supporting refugees, volunteers and activists preferred a more informal and community-oriented style of coordination action.

The formality of interactions between welfare organizations was sometimes viewed as unhelpful by informal groups. Conversely, welfare organizations perceived grassroots interactions as less professional. This difference is already discussed in the previous section about strategies and modes of coordination, but I want to stress the cultural differences of the groups here.

The dynamics of coordination during the refugee reception crisis in 2015/16 revealed a notable contrast between the more informal, community-oriented style of interaction embraced by volunteers and the structured approaches of established civil society organizations and government officials.

Informal volunteer groups prioritized building personal connections within their respective neighborhoods. They also sought active participation in roundtable discussions and wanted recognition for their expertise and knowledge in refugee support. However, their desires clashed with the perspectives of civil society organization employees and government officials attending these roundtable meetings. The latter often believed that the volunteers needed guidance and direction. This perception resulted in a lack of acknowledgment of the volunteers' contributions.

In the case of the volunteers at *Refugees Welcome*, their experience at roundtable meetings was marked by a disconnect between their expectations and how they were perceived and treated. While they were invited to participate, the primary focus of these meetings was the distribution of information by employees of the established organizations, mostly relief and welfare organizations. This structure left limited room for volunteers to share their experiences and expertise. Although representatives from other areas, such as the Catholic relief and Catholic welfare organization provided important insights, it was challenging for the volunteers to emphasize their issues and challenges within this framework.

This disconnect highlights informal volunteer groups' and established organizations' different expectations and approaches to cooperation. Volunteers favored a more community-oriented approach, prioritizing personal connections and shared experiences. They also desired a platform to present their unique insights and challenges actively. In contrast, civil society organi-

zations and government officials often wanted a more structured and guided approach.

In addition, volunteers and activists had a distinct approach in their efforts, often taking a confrontational position against state policies related to migration. This approach included making clear and outspoken statements against these policies. However, this confrontational style created challenges regarding their interactions with established welfare organizations as they operated as a state and civil society hybrid and were heavily reliant on state funding.

An example of this dynamic can be seen in the actions of the volunteers at *Refugee Welcome*. They were deeply concerned about the living standards of many refugees and wanted to express their grievances. To this end, they wrote several letters to the local government and made public statements. Their declarations highlighted the deficiencies in integration courses, kindergarten availability, school support, and the presence of language mediators in offices and governmental agencies.

It is worth noting that these concerns may have also been shared by some of the welfare organizations, although such problems were not explicitly mentioned in the interviews. However, the volunteers at *Refugee Welcome* encountered limited support from these organizations regarding their more contentious and confrontational approach towards the local government.

This situation underlines the divergence in approaches between grassroots volunteers and established organizations. While volunteers were inclined towards a confrontational style to address pressing issues, welfare organizations wanted to maintain their relationships with the state.

Neheim

In the following section, I analyze the relationship between professionalized and well-established organizations and more informal groups in Neheim. I find similar dynamics to those in Altenau regarding resources, networking strategies, and interaction cultures.

Differences in resource power

Like Altenau, the residents in Neheim experienced a significant increase in civic action during the peak of refugee reception in 2015/16. Although this increased involvement of various civil society organizations and groups, the mo-

bilization did not result in the emergence and survival of a new pro-refugee community.

In Neheim, the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 was heavily influenced by the presence of well-established organizations, most notably the *Multicultural House*, a joint venture of three welfare organizations, and the local branch of the German red cross. Before 2015/16, these organizations had worked in migrant support for several years.

In the first phase of the refugee reception crisis, the local branch of the German red cross quickly became very involved in emergency housing. Moreover, the local government commissioned the *Multicultural House* to coordinate the volunteering efforts. The dominance of welfare organizations was quite apparent from the beginning in 2015/16. Three well-resourced welfare organizations – a Catholic, a Protestant, and a workers' welfare organization – had collaborated since the early 2000s, providing counseling and addressing migration issues. They had created the *Multicultural House*, a consolidated institution designed to pool resources and expertise. This approach differed from the past, where each organization operated independently with its own structures, sometimes duplicating efforts.

As Susanne, an employee from the Multicultural House noted, in 2016, the organization had become a central point for volunteer coordination due to its strong network of volunteers and connections with other welfare organizations:

> "Yes, well, yes, in 2016 things started to come together more and more, because, with the refugees, we were immediately approached by the city as the Multicultural House. […] And that's why the network of volunteers in the Multicultural House has really become a central point, as it is in other communities".

Paul, the founder of a small group against far-right extremism, recognized the unique collaborative model of the *Multicultural House*:

> "The [Multicultural House] in [Neheim] is special in [this state] because it is the only association where the three sovereign welfare organizations, three large ones […], work together and finance their house and finance their people together".

While the *Multicultural House* played a crucial role in creating a hub for volunteer coordination, its presence may have also inadvertently limited the space for new initiatives to flourish. This was apparent in areas such as legal migration counseling and the provision of German classes and family assistance.

When asked about the tension between the *Multicultural House* and smaller, more informal groups, Matthias, a long-time activist at the local *Refugee Council* pointed out that the "existing, long-established structures can prevent new initiatives". He emphasized that, especially in smaller cities like Neheim, well-established institutions like the *Multicultural House* can give the false impression that they are well prepared for all potential challenges:

> "I do believe that this (the dominance of established structures) can be an obstacle. In other words, an existing, long-established structure can prevent new initiatives. Especially in smaller municipalities where everything is well known. [...] On the one hand, the [Multicultural House] and the supporting welfare organizations claim that they are always ready to tackle new needs that arise and to meet them. [...] On the other hand, that's sometimes a problem for us".

He believed their claims were not always true but led people in the local government or potential volunteers to believe everything was fine and no further activities were needed.

The dominance of welfare organizations inadvertently crowded out opportunities for new, independent initiatives to institutionalize and make a meaningful impact. Furthermore, the city government's control over the allocation of tasks to welfare organizations further solidified the existing structures, as Matthias from the *Refugee Council* noted,

> "So I think everybody is proud of it, the churches, the [Catholic welfare organization], they are proud of it, the city government has somebody with whom they have a service contract and to whom they can assign tasks that then have to be completed, because they have control of that contract, so I think this structure is very difficult to break".

In sum, the civil society response to the refugee reception crisis in 2015/16 was characterized by the professionalization of support structures and the dominance of established welfare organizations. While these organizations played an essential role in the early stages, their presence may have inadvertently

hindered the emergence and institutionalization of new, informal groups in refugee support and advocacy.

Differences in networking strategies

The notable divergence in networking strategies became another significant factor in why well-established organizations and more informal groups did not develop close cooperative ties. These actors employed distinct modes of coordination, making it challenging to find common ground for sustained interaction.

The well-established welfare organizations were used to close networks that heavily relied on resource exchange and securing state funding. Their networking strategies were structured around the exchange of resources and the reception of financial support. This was exemplified by the *Multicultural House*, an institution where a Catholic, a Protestant, and a workers' welfare organization collaboratively institutionalized their migration work to pool resources and expertise.

Additionally, these well-established organizations had actively participated in a district-wide roundtable on migration, which served as a formal, monthly platform where employees of these organizations shared information and strategies. These well-established organizations engaged in networks utilized for resource acquisition and presented themselves as valuable partners to the state. Their emphasis was on dividing the field of migration work among themselves, similar to business operations primarily concerned with self-preservation.

However, volunteers, activists, and even the long-standing *Refugee Council* were absent from this roundtable. Informal groups like the *Women's Network* consisting of politically engaged women or a small informal group of volunteers that supported refugees in 2015/16 coordinated their efforts in a much less formalized way. They collaborated with others to strengthen community, solidarity, and informal information exchange. Their focus extended beyond resources and joint projects, emphasizing more informal knowledge-sharing and support.

Astrid, one of the founders of a small volunteer group that supported refugees between 2015 and 2016, talked about how her and other volunteer's engagement crossed many thematic boundaries. She recalled:

> "So the engagement here is very overarching. There is women's work, there is refugee work. […] And some people are involved in various projects".

She was active in Neheim's intercultural choir, the *Women's Network*, and the small refugee-support group. In her eyes, it did not make much sense to come to the very structured roundtables with the city when her priorities were building friendships and informal support networks for refugees.

This divergence in modes of coordination meant that well-established organizations and more informal groups would not necessarily engage in the same network structures. The well-established welfare organizations' resource acquisition and sharing strategy was inherently geared towards actors with similar strategies and resource requirements, as they aimed to sustain their existing infrastructure and operations. Their approach was less accommodating to grassroots actors who had fewer resources to offer and had different priorities.

To sum up, the response to the refugee reception crisis in 2015/16 highlights how the different modes of coordination can impact the ability of various actors to collaborate. The established welfare organizations had years of experience with close cooperative networks focused on resource exchange and securing state funding. In contrast, grassroots actors preferred a different mode of coordination that emphasized community development, solidarity, and informal information exchange. These divergent strategies made it challenging to find common ground for effective coordination.

Diverging interaction cultures

In the context of the work on migration-related issues, it became evident that there were contrasting cultural understandings of collective action and interaction between professional civil society organizations and more informal groups. The latter preferred informal exchanges, for instance, calls to attend neighborhood meetings and protests and to articulate open criticism of the local government. In contrast, welfare organizations, such as the *Multicultural House*, tended towards more planned and formal interactions and non-confrontational cooperation with the state. This tendency was partly due to their financial dependencies on the local government.

One example of these different cultural understandings was the Working Group on Asylum, which played a significant role in discussing asylum policy in Neheim. Composed of representatives from welfare organizations, the local government, religious communities, and the *Refugee Council*, the group was active from the mid-1980s until 2016. In 2016, however, its regular meetings ended abruptly because of changes made by the new mayor.

The new mayor transferred the refugee support issue to another government department. As a result, he introduced new officials who had never been part of the Working Group before. These newcomers declared that missing data protection and privacy concerns prohibited them from further discussing individual cases within the Working Group. This shift led to conflicts and, ultimately, the withdrawal of the immigration agency officials and the employment office officials from the meetings, which resulted in the group's dissolution in 2016.

Many civil society representatives believed that the data protection argument was a pretext to limit the influence of civil society organizations and groups on asylum-related matters. Despite efforts to revive the group, they could not do so, as they relied on the local government's participation and lead of the Working Group meetings. Without the involvement of the immigration agency's officials and employment office's officials, the group became inactive.

The activists from the local *Refugee Council* expressed their disappointment and frustration with the city's decisions and the eventual break-up of the Working Group. While their primary frustration was directed toward the decisions of the new mayor, they also expressed dissatisfaction with the behavior of the employees at the *Multicultural House*.

The reason for this dissatisfaction was the lack of response from the *Multicultural House*. Annette, an activist from the *Refugee Council* and the *Women's Network*, pointed out that the *Multicultural House* was so dependent on a new contract with the city that they did not want to risk a confrontation with government officials:

> "The [Multicultural House] used to be funded by the state for refugee work and also had a contract with the city. That contract ended in 2016. And then they reapplied, and there was some uncertainty about whether the government would renew the contract. And, of course, that had an effect. It had an effect. At the moment when [they] had to negotiate with the city [government], you cannot go against them".

The Working Group's deterioration highlights the differing approaches of the *Multicultural House* and the *Refugee Council*. While the *Multicultural House* did not actively contest the city's decisions, the *Refugee Council* preferred a more confrontational approach. Activists at the *Refugee Council* mentioned in interviews that they sometimes found it challenging to work with the *Multicultural House*, as they shied away from confrontations with the local government, possibly

due to their receipt of state funding for ongoing projects. Matthias emphasized:

> "We (the members of the Refugee Council) can exert political pressure, the [Multicultural House] can't, because they have a contract with the city, so they can't exert any pressure".

Lastly, the volunteers at the *Refugee Council* urged the city's churches, mainly the Protestant and Catholic congregations in the city center, to exercise their rights to provide refugee church asylum. Church asylum allowed churches in Germany to offer refuge to individuals not granted asylum by the state. However, the churches in Neheim hesitated to provide church asylum, citing uncertainties about their ability to provide necessary care.

While the volunteers at the *Refugee Council* mentioned an excellent working relationship with the churches and occasionally organized workshops together, their understandings of collective action clashed when actions became more political and contentious. Members of the *Refugee Council* expressed disappointment over the two churches' decision not to offer church asylum. While the interviews do not provide insight into how representatives of the two churches thought about church asylum, interviewees from the *Refugee Council* emphasized that the churches did not believe they could take responsibility for refugees living under their roof.

To sum up, the analysis demonstrates that deep-seated organizational differences contributed to major challenges to community building in Neheim. While professional civil society organizations and more informal groups aimed to support refugees, their varying resources, networking strategies, and interaction cultures, and their approaches to interaction created tensions and conflicts.

Lauda

In the previous sections, I explored the interaction dynamics in Altenau and Neheim by shedding light on the challenges related to differences in resource power, networking strategies, and cultural differences in interaction. These factors complicated interaction between professionalized, well-established civil society organizations and more informal groups. In this section, I discuss how these two distinct actors can collaborate in certain constellations, using the case of Lauda as an example.

First, the distribution of resource power in Lauda differed from Altenau and Neheim. Lauda had limited experience with migration until 2013. In that year, the number of refugees rose until it peaked in 2015/16. Migration was not a prominent issue in Lauda before this influx. The civic landscape in the region was characterized by traditional engagements typical of rural areas in southern Germany. Activities revolved around classic organizations like rifle or folklore associations and various sports clubs. Political groups and project-related involvement were less prevalent.

This scenario changed around 2013 when an increasing number of refugees arrived in Germany and were allocated to Lauda and the surrounding towns and villages by the regional government. During that time, pro-refugee groups had already developed robust connections with refugees and had accumulated substantial knowledge in refugee support. They understood the needs of refugees upon arrival, the requirements for navigating the job center and immigration agencies, finding employment, and more.

In contrast, established organizations such as the local Adult education center and various welfare organizations had not previously engaged with migration-related topics. While the refugee-support groups were predominantly volunteer-run and struggled to gain funding for new projects or paid employees, they had in-depth knowledge of migration. They occupied the refugee-support landscape for a few years. Consequently, the pre-existing structures and resource advantages between established and grassroots actors were not as clear-cut as in Altenau and Neheim.

Divergences in networking strategies and modes of coordination were also evident in Lauda. Like in Altenau and Neheim, welfare organizations were accustomed to and expected a more formalized and structured approach to coordination. Their priorities lay in securing state funding and maintaining their operations. In contrast, the refugee-support groups favored more informal coordination modes. As welfare organizations had not been deeply involved in refugee support before the refugee reception crisis, they were not part of formalized networks, such as a roundtable on migration. Consequently, interaction between these groups was not predefined by established formats. New formats included the creation of a funding alliance that supported the volunteer-network known as *Asylum with Us*, which comprised all refugee-support groups in the district, in securing paid staff to lift the burden on the overworked volunteers.

The initial points of contact between welfare organizations and refugee-support groups were made through volunteers and employees of the welfare

organizations who began offering migration counseling. Many of these individuals had prior involvement in refugee support. This was either as volunteers or activists and thus having gained experience in the grassroots mode of coordination.

In addition to differences in coordination, I observed that key individuals in Lauda were sensitive to diverging cultures of interaction. The decision-makers behind the three prominent welfare organizations in Lauda realized that supporting the volunteer-run refugee-support groups required financing a position within the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*, allowing one or two volunteers to assume paid positions. The welfare organizations financed this position but granted independence, allowing *Asylum with Us* to pursue their goals and priorities. This acknowledgment of the expertise built by the volunteers and activists at *Asylum with Us* and their desire to remain independent greatly facilitated sustained interaction, setting it apart from the challenges faced in Altenau and Neheim.

Loburg

The situation in Loburg, in contrast to Altenau, Neheim, and even Lauda, was more unique. Around 2015/16, none of the significant welfare organizations significantly engaged in refugee support. Instead, it was primarily grassroots groups and organizations that took the initiative. Consequently, potential pitfalls arising from interactions between more established and more informal actors were less prevalent, providing a different starting point for interaction.

However, an interesting aspect in Loburg was the dynamic between the grassroots association *In Action*, which focused on social justice, and a small refugee-support group within the city. *In Action* had its roots in the early 2000s, while the refugee-support group was established in 2015. During interviews, the chairwoman of *In Action* emphasized her intention not to overshadow the refugee-support group's activities. Instead, she allowed them to lead in organizing voluntary engagement in the city's refugee shelter.

While the volunteers and employees of *In Action* were active in their own facilities, the refugee-support group volunteers primarily used the refugee shelter's spaces for various activities, such as hosting summer parties and providing German language classes. This approach emphasized a more harmonious coexistence and ensured that the refugee-support group had the autonomy to lead in their area of expertise.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter emphasized why and how differences across organizations and groups in civil society can challenge sustained interaction. Specifically, I highlighted three concrete explanations for why the development of networks through sustained interaction proved difficult in two cases, Altenau and Neheim.

In what follows, I will briefly summarize and compare the interaction dynamics in Altenau and Neheim. In the subsequent section, I will outline this chapter's conceptual contribution and discuss potential overlaps between resource differences, strategies, and interaction cultures.

First, there is a common assumption from the resource dependency perspective that in a sphere where organizations need resources, they generally want to collaborate. However, collaboration is more complex. As shown in this chapter, resource-rich organizations can overshadow the activities of informal groups. In this regard, I referred to the mechanism of "crowding out" which is usually employed when the state expands funding and services. As a result, the need for civil society involvement declines (Gundelach et al., 2010). However, my analysis highlighted how a similar mechanism unfolds when well-established professionalized organizations such as welfare organizations receive large amounts of state funding. As a result, they can crowd out smaller, more informal groups with volunteers and activists who may feel like their actions are no longer needed.

In Altenau, well-established professionalized organizations dominated the field of refugee support. Considered experts in the field, these organizations received increased state funding and were therefore able to expand their services to cover the needs of refugees around 2015/16. A consequence, which may have been unintended, was the sidelining and crowding out of volunteer groups. Due to the substantial differences in resources, the welfare organizations appeared capable of taking on the responsibility of refugee support alone. This situation was similar in Neheim, where the longtime collaboration between three prominent welfare organizations under the umbrella of the *Multicultural House* sought responsibility for refugee support. While interviewees indeed praised them for their involvement, the dominance of this actor also posed challenges. Specifically, the dominance of the welfare organizations crowded out opportunities for new, more informal volunteer-run groups to institutionalize and establish themselves as independent actors in Neheim.

In contrast, the case of Lauda demonstrated how such obstacles can be overcome. In Lauda, the volunteer-run refugee-support groups became involved in refugee support well before any welfare organizations started to be active in that, for Lauda, a new field of action regarding refugee and migration issues. In this case, welfare organizations were relatively slow to engage and opted to adopt a more supportive and rather commentary role instead of taking over that new field.

Second, the chapter demonstrates that the different networking strategies and modes of coordination impact with whom actors interact and collaborate. Drawing on Diani's work (2015), actors who pursue a coalitional mode of collaboration are usually connected to others sharing the same mode. Similarly, those seeking a social movement mode of collaboration are also linked to like-minded counterparts. On the one hand, many welfare organizations in Altenau and Neheim leaned towards the coalitional mode. They were highly interested in resources and less interested in creating solidarity and shared identity. On the other hand, groups like the *Refugee Council* or refugee-support groups were much more interested in building personal connections and a community of like-minded people pursuing the social movement mode of coordination.

More specifically, in Altenau, well-established organizations, such as the Catholic relief organization, the Christian youth welfare organization, and the Adult education center participated in roundtable discussions and networks around information sharing and resource allocation. In contrast, informal volunteer and activist groups like *Refugees Welcome* preferred a more flexible and personal approach. This community-oriented mode highlighted a divergence in coordination modes where the well-established organizations relied on formal structures and the more informal groups on a personalized approach. In Neheim, the dominance of welfare organizations and the local government's control over allocating responsibilities led to a highly formalized support structure. This structure diverged from the priorities of more informal groups like the *Refugee Council*. In comparison, the development of unique modes of coordination, such as a funding network in Lauda, showed how the adaptability and willingness to adapt their typical mode of coordination enabled cooperation between different actor types.

Finally, the culture, which organizations and groups deem appropriate interaction styles, plays a crucial role in actors' collaborative behavior. As Lichterman (2021) and Eliasoph and Cefaï (2021) have pointed out, diverging cultural understandings of interaction are much less built on a rationalist cost-benefit analysis. Instead, cultural understandings of interaction are deeply ingrained

norms within organizations and groups. While these cultural understandings may change, Lichterman (2021)has shown that organizations and groups prefer a specific interaction style. This is evident in all four cases.

On the one hand, the more informal groups wanted to be independent of the state to put political pressure. They thrived in a community-oriented and more flexible interaction style that Lichterman (2021) refers to as a community of identity. On the other hand, the professionalized and well-established organizations, often interacting with similar types of organizations, thrived in more formalized structures and were much more interest-oriented, which Lichterman (2021) refers to as the community of interest style.

In this respect, I demonstrated that actors in Altenau and Neheim experienced clashes between the interaction styles. The well-established professionalized organizations, on the one hand, and the more informal groups, on the other hand, had contrasting understandings of what interaction meant. Informal groups and grassroots activists favored a more informal, community-oriented style of interaction and a more contentious behavior toward the local government. However, welfare organizations were used to a contrasting interaction style. They favored a community-of-interest style of interaction that pushed collaboration when useful for their agenda. Rather than seeing volunteers and activists as valuable community members, they looked down upon them. Thus, there was an apparent disconnect between the expectations of volunteer and activist groups and welfare organizations.

The empirical analyses demonstrate that resource differences, networking strategies, and interaction culture present overlapping obstacles. This overlap is particularly evident in Diani's (2015) modes of coordination and Lichterman's (1995, 2021) concepts of interaction style. For example, the empirical analyses in this chapter demonstrate that Diani's (2015) modes of coordination are linked to Lichterman's (2021) community interaction styles. Both concepts share the notion that individuals active in an organization or group have a specific understanding of how to interact with one another. The level of boundary-making, sense of solidarity, and appropriateness of collective action influence individuals' choice of interaction style (Lichterman, 2021) or mode of coordination (Diani, 2015). My empirical analyses revealed an overlap in the community-oriented, flexible, and personalized approach favored by more informal groups.

Concerning modes of coordination, the informal groups favored a social movement mode with similar characteristics. Regarding interaction culture, these groups also acted in a community of identity style that similarly prioritizes high in-group boundaries and personal relationships. Concerning both

concepts, the professionalized organizations favored a more structured and formalized approach to networking, which aligns with a coalitional mode of coordination and a community of interest interaction style.

As evidenced by the preceding analysis, actors' network strategies are not solely based on rational-cost analysis. Instead, they are also influenced by the culture inherent in the respective organization or group. Furthermore, an organization or group's resource dependency, such as reliance on state funding, informs its long-term interaction culture.