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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.1 Migration studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.1.1 Border and Migration Regimes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.1.2 Autonomy of Migration

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

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

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

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

4.1.2 Critical Citizenship studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.2.1 Sub- and supra-national models of citizenship

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

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

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

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

4.1.2.2 Acts of Citizenship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.3 Social movement studies

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

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

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

4.1.3.1 From Political Opportunities to Contentious Politics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.3.2 Cultural approaches to social movements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.3.3 Local everyday Political Practices

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Identifying gaps and consolidating my own approach

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

4.2.1 Four sensitizing concepts sorting the field

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.2 Identified gaps in the literature

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.3 Setting the stage: Conceptualizing solidarities

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 Community.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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