Clara van den Berg

CIVIC REFUGEE SUPPORT

The Shifting Landscape of Pro-Refugee Communities in Germany After 2015

[transcript] Social Movement and Protest

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For my family

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Introduction

My research for this book began with a genuine interest in the fate of the volunteers, activists, groups, and organizations who engaged in refugee support in 2015 and 2016. During this period, more than one million people applied for asylum in Germany. Approximately five million people in Germany provided support to refugees[1] during this time. The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 was characterized by a significant amount of informal volunteering and activism, the creation of approximately 15,000 new projects and groups dedicated to supporting refugees, and the participation of numerous established civil society organizations and groups (Schiffauer et al., 2017, p. 13ff.). Scholars in Germany and across Europe have produced rich insights into the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 (Boersma et al., 2019; Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019; Simsa et al., 2019; Monforte & Maestri, 2023; Alcalde & Portos, 2018; Feischmidt et al., 2019; Schiffauer, 2022; Karakayali, 2016; Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017b; Carlsen et al., 2022; Toubøl, 2019). However, there has been limited research on what came once mobilization declined after 2016 (Dinkelaker et al., 2021).

Five years after this unprecedented increase in civic action in Germany, I was curious about the lasting effects of the pro-refugee mobilization. What happened to all those volunteers and activists, to the new initiatives and projects, and the organizations involved in supporting refugees? Did this spontaneous upsurge in civic action have a lasting impact on the structures and connections between these diverse actors? I quickly realized that research on this question was limited. Civil society research has not yet systematically tracked the consequences of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 on civil

1 In the book, I use a broad definition of "refugee" that encompasses forced migrants with a wide range of legal statuses, including asylum seekers, persons with a humanitarian protection status, or persons with temporary protection from deportation.

society itself. By the end of 2016, around one year after the peak of the mobilization, support activities for refugees had begun to decline. Along with the decreasing activities and shrinking number of refugees entering the country, public attention and media coverage also declined (Gesemann et al., 2019; van den Berg et al., 2020). However, it was unclear whether this decline marked the end of the story or whether something else had happened.

To fully understand this phenomenon, I began researching the effects of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 as part of a larger research project called "The Activated Civil Society"[2] (German: "Die Aktivierte Zivilgesellschaft") funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. In order to gain initial insights into the lasting impacts of the pro-refugee mobilization, my colleague and I conducted a pilot study in three cities in southern Germany at the beginning of 2020. We had heard from acquaintances that southern Germany had witnessed quite strong pro-refugee mobilization and wanted to see whether one of the cities would be a good place to start our research.

We interviewed three volunteers who were involved in the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and had since then engaged in refugee support. Luisa, a volunteer from the very beginning, was one of them. She told us that her involvement had started in 2014. In that year, her city and many neighboring cities and villages in the district were already experiencing an increased influx of refugees, which only intensified in 2015. To support these newly arriving refugees by providing them with the basic necessities, Luisa and a small group of 10 other volunteers created a refugee-support group. Simultaneously, across the entire district, volunteers and activists created new refugee-support groups. Stephan, a Lutheran pastor and volunteer whom I also interviewed for this project, recalled how fortunate it was that so many people wanted to help:

2 The three-year research project, titled "The Activated Civil Society. An analysis of the sustainable impact of civic engagement on social capital and public welfare in Germany" (2020–2023), was a collaborative effort between the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), and the Institute of Intercultural Studies at the University of Osnabrück. The project partners examined the long-term impacts of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 at various levels: (1) the impacts on the lives of volunteers and activists, (2) the impacts on inter-organizational networks, and (3) the impacts on the relationships between civil society and the state.

> "That was a stroke of luck for us. Not only the left-wing students, of whom we have very few in the district anyway, but also doctors or teachers who had just retired got involved. […] And so seven or eight refugee-support groups were already founded [in 2014] […]."

When the number of refugees arriving in the district rose even more in 2015/16, the number of volunteers and activists in each refugee-support group increased from around 10 people to 60 people. Additionally, many more groups were founded in the district that year. By the summer of 2015, the district, with around 150,000 residents, had 28 refugee-support groups. Luisa recalled her surprise when so many people showed up to their small group in 2015:

> "2015 was a remarkable mobilization when you think about it. In my village and neighboring towns and villages, there were groups of five to six people who had started helping refugees in 2014. Then, in 2015, we all decided to make our small group meetings public: 'We meet on Thursdays at 8 p.m., and anyone who wants to help with the refugees is invited to come'. We set up 20 chairs. Suddenly, each group had about 60 new people attending. This was an amazing turnout."

According to Luisa, she and her fellow volunteers were astonished by the amount of support offered in 2015. Similar scenarios occurred in neighboring towns and cities, where over 100 people suddenly wanted to contribute in various ways, including donating clothes, teaching German, and providing childcare.

Five years after they had begun volunteering in refugee support, the three interviewees from the pilot study still met with other volunteers from that time and remained involved in their local refugee-support groups. There were fewer people involved in refugee-support activities than during the height of the mobilization period, but the groups were still thriving. They were excited to tell us about *Asylum with Us*, the semi-institutionalized volunteer network they had founded to combine some of the efforts of each refugee-support group. They also informed us about the twice-yearly asylum summits organized by different refugee-support groups in the region. The summits brought together volunteers and activists from various groups in southern Germany to discuss the current state of refugee support and advocate for progressive changes in asylum and migration policy.

Although mobilization reached its peak one year after it began, and the number of volunteers and their activities declined in scope after 2016, my three interviewees from southern Germany gave me the impression that a community had emerged. To me, it appeared that something had stuck. However, it was unclear what exactly had stuck. Based on these initial findings, my research explored whether the observations in the pilot study were coincidental or if the development and survival of pro-refugee communities could be systematically observed as an outcome of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16.

Research Question and Design

To take a big step forward in understanding what really happened after the decline of pro-refugee activities, I investigated the lasting effects of the pro-refugee mobilization in Germany six years later. In this book, I examine whether the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development and survival of new pro-refugee communities. The results of my comparative case study of four German cities indicate that pro-refugee communities developed and sustained themselves in two of the four cities. Consequently, this book specifically examines the factors and conditions that contributed to the development and survival of these types of communities in two cities and their failure to survive and develop in the other two.

This book explores pro-refugee communities as a case of *local civic action communities*. I developed this concept to study community building in the differentiated civic landscapes of today, which encompass a broad range of entities and activities. Local civic action communities consist of individuals and collective actors who work together towards a shared vision through civic action (for more on civic action, see Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). Individuals such as volunteers, activists, mayors, social workers, and business owners and collective actors such as organizations and groups, alliances, and coalitions are engaged in civic action in a particular locality and have a shared vision toward which they are working. This vision is derived from a local problem or set of problems that the collective actors wish to address.

My concept of local civic action communities is related to the concept of social movement communities developed by Suzanne Staggenborg (2013, 2020). However, the actors involved in what I consider local civic action communities are less politicized and do not support or identify with a particular social movement as in Staggenborg's (2013, 2020) conceptualization. Moreover, most

of the community activities I looked at are concerned with local or regional manifestations of global problems rather than global problems themselves. Local civic action communities also do not necessarily actively oppose authorities and they do not have a clear political agenda, which social movement communities tend to have.

The concept of local civic action communities offers a framework to study community building and resilience in such differentiated civic landscapes over time. As an idea, it has the potential to enrich civil society research as it provides significant insights into community building and grassroots mobilization across these diverse sets of actors. Since the notion of local civic action communities involves this broad range of actors, with varying degrees of political actions and agendas, it allows me to also examine the role and position of different actors in community building, resilience and civic action.

To explore the development and survival of pro-refugee communities and the drivers and barriers to their development, I have used a qualitative embedded case study approach. I have examined four different medium-sized cities in Germany, each with a unique civic landscape, within the larger context of pro-refugee mobilization. All the cases shared the experience of pro-refugee mobilization, which was the larger phenomenon I studied. Through my research, I identified three major features that characterized the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 across cases: (i) the significant rise in spontaneous civic action, (ii) the increased interaction between individuals, groups, and organizations, and (iii) the emergence of new, more informal groups and initiatives. After the end of 2016, the scale and intensity of civic action declined again in each case.

Based on extensive case research and expert interviews, my colleagues from the larger research project "The Activated Civil Society" and I selected four cities that were representative for their region and experienced the pro-refugee mobilization with the three features mentioned above. The final cases selected were the following four cities, each in one of the main regions in Germany: Loburg (East), Altenau (North), Neheim (West), and Lauda (South). As I explain in more detail in the research design (Chapter 3), I chose to anonymize the city names to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

We decided to sample medium-sized cities (20,000 – 99,999 inhabitants) because there has been a disproportionate focus on large cities in case study research. Yet, this focus is out of step with the actual movements of refugees, who were distributed relatively evenly across Germany and reached many cities of that size. Small and medium-sized cities (5,000 – 99,999 inhabitants)

are where the majority of people in Germany live (Deutscher Städtetag, 2022). Given that refugees often end up in such cities[3] and the majority of people in Germany live in them, it is imperative to monitor the impact of migration on civil society in such smaller urban centers. Moreover, the smaller population size of medium-sized cities enabled me to interview most, if not all, of the key actors engaged in refugee support and advocacy in each city.

The principal data for my study came from extensive qualitative interview material combined with field visits, participant observations, and additional document analyses. Between 2020 and 2022, I conducted 83 semi-structured qualitative interviews in the four selected cities, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviewees were volunteers, activists, and employees from volunteer-run refugee-support groups, grassroots associations, and political initiatives to sports clubs, church congregations, and welfare organizations. In addition, I analyzed meeting minutes, brochures, and newsletters provided by the interviewees. I also attended some meetings where the actors active in the pro-refugee communities came together, such as summits and council meetings.

In my research design, the focus is on organizations and groups involved in the pro-refugee mobilization. The aim was to understand the extent to which these organizations and groups developed new and more extensive networks through continuous interaction in the post-mobilization period. To measure the emergence and survival of pro-refugee communities, I investigated sustained forms of interaction between the organizations and groups involved in the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. Based on this information, I investigated the relational impacts of the pro-refugee mobilization by using the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and conducting qualitative ego-centered network analyses (Crossley et al., 2015) on the interorganizational and intergroup level.

To summarize, this book aims to determine whether the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 contributed to the development and survival of pro-refugee

3 The distribution of refugees in Germany is done according to a calculated admission quota called the "Königsstein Key". Depending on a state's tax revenue and population, refugees are distributed relatively evenly across Germany, where they can then apply for asylum (BAMF, 2022). The federal states have their own laws regarding the distribution of refugees within their state, but refugees are distributed across federal states in different districts and cities of different sizes (Leitlein et al., 2015; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021)

communities in Germany. In particular, the book explores the factors and conditions behind the development and survival of those communities.

Overview of Contributions

This book makes a big step towards better understanding the lasting effects of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 on the structures of local civil society and community building. As I will discuss in greater detail in the next section, scholars in Germany and across Europe have conducted extensive research on the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. Nevertheless, most studies have not explored the lasting effects of the mobilization. Furthermore, they have tended to examine the situation in isolation, focusing on specific types of organizations and groups (De Jong, 2019; Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2021; Hunger & Holz, 2019; Kanellopoulos et al., 2021; Meyer & Ziegler, 2018; Simsa et al., 2019; Wyszynski et al., 2020); on volunteers' and activists' lives, motivations, and struggles (Carlsen et al., 2022; Feischmidt & Zakariás, 2020; Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019; Karakayali, 2016; Schwiertz & Steinhilper, 2020); or on the experiences of refugees and the effects of refugee support on refugees themselves (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Bergfeld, 2017; Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2021; Funk, 2018; Zick & Preuß, 2019).

There has been insufficient attention to the differentiated civic landscape as a whole that we see in refugee support and advocacy today. By exploring the bigger picture, I show how the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 affected civil society's relational foundations and structures. Consequently, rather than focusing on single organizations or on the lives of individuals, I aim to demonstrate whether and how pro-refugee communities emerged and survived in the kind of differentiated civic landscape that is typical for today; this is one that involves volunteers and activists, informal groups and traditional membership-based associations, and other entities situated between and beyond these categories (see della Porta, 2020a; Diani, 2015; Edwards, 2014).

In addition to taking a big step forward regarding the study of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, my work advances the research on solidarity towards migrants and refugees more broadly. While the scholarly literature on refugee and migrant solidarity actions is not extensive, it has expanded over the last years. These scholars have focused on how solidarity towards refugees and the pro-migrant movement has manifested in Europe and the United States (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Bloemraad & Voss, 2020; della Porta, 2018;

della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Feischmidt et al., 2019; Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019; W. Nicholls, 2019), on the emergence and continued support of refugees from Ukraine (Bang Carlsen et al., 2023; Haller et al., 2022; Höltmann et al., 2022; Mikheieva & Kuznetsova, 2024), and on the relationships between volunteers and activists with refugees and political institutions (Bock, 2018; Carlsen et al., 2022; Eckhard et al., 2021; Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Parsanoglou, 2020; Schiffauer, 2022; Toubøl, 2019). My work contributes to this research by examining the challenges encountered in campaigns of solidarity towards refugees and migrants, especially those relating to the specific conditions present in specific localities. Notably, in my empirical chapters, I will shed light on the factors and conditions driving community building regarding the agency of actors in creating ongoing forms of interaction, organizational differences, and local political opportunity structures.

Lastly, this book bridges social movement studies with voluntarism/nonprofit studies by linking crucial theoretical and empirical perspectives from both fields and exploring the "relational" outcomes of mobilization periods. First, the boundaries between both fields have become increasingly blurred, but the two are rarely brought together, as I will highlight in a subsequent section in more detail (but see Diani, 2015). The hybridization of these fields was evident in recent crises such as the Great Recession or the pro-refugee mobilization as it involved forms of actions and types of actors that are typically studied in either of the subfields of the civil society literature (della Porta, 2020a).

Second, research on the relational outcomes of mobilization periods is scarce in civil society research overall. The general assumption is that the civil society networks spawned during mobilization periods are spontaneous and issue-specific and that they break down easily when the problem becomes less present in the public imagination. In fact, this is not always the case. As I show, in two of the four cities, pro-refugee communities not only emerged but sustained themselves over a period of six years. While social movement researchers have extensively studied movement outcomes (Bosi et al., 2015), they have devoted less effort to examining how mobilization periods transform movements themselves and specifically how they affect their relational foundations and interconnections within the broader civic landscape. To answer how interaction and networks are sustained in the post-mobilization period, I bring together studies of social movements, voluntarism, and nonprofits with organizational sociology, public administration studies, and network studies.

To sum up, research on the lasting effects of the pro-refugee mobilization is scarce. However, we know a great deal about the mobilization period itself. This understanding is crucial with a view to understanding the effects of this mobilization period, because it allows us to comprehend the nature of the civic landscape in which the mobilization took place and the opportunities that may have been created during this period. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of what we know about the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. I highlight the types of actors who were mobilized, their activities, and their motivations. I subsequently present a discussion of current research on the effects of mobilization periods and the lack thereof, demonstrating how my research is embedded in the current discourse in the scholarly civil society literature.

The Pro-Refugee Mobilization of 2015/16

The movement of refugees to Europe underwent a significant shift in 2015, with hundreds of thousands of individuals seeking refuge in the Near and Middle East, particularly in countries such as Turkey and Jordan, subsequently crossing into Europe. This development coincided with the suspension of the Dublin Agreement by several European nations during the summer of 2015, leading to the opening of their borders to a substantial influx of refugees entering Northern and Western Europe. Consequently, substantial numbers of refugees arrived at prominent train stations in major European cities, such as Munich and Berlin, over the course of several weeks and months. (Alcalde & Portos, 2018; Boersma et al., 2019; Carlsen & Toubøl, 2022; Schiffauer, 2022; Simsa et al., 2019).

In European civil society, the stark increase in refugee numbers sparked an unprecedented pro-refugee mobilization. While some European politicians and citizens advocated for stricter isolation policies, many host communities also demonstrated a strong sense of solidarity with refugees (Boersma et al., 2019; Carlsen & Toubøl, 2022; Feischmidt et al., 2019). Volunteers and activists in countries like Germany (Schiffauer, 2022; Schiffauer et al., 2018), Denmark (Toubøl, 2019), Sweden (Kleres, 2018; Povrzanović Frykman. & Mäkelä, 2020), the Netherlands (Boersma et al., 2019), Austria (Simsa et al., 2019) and Spain (Alcalde & Portos, 2018) came together, initially very informally, to support the newly arriving refugees by providing them with basic necessities. While the situation varied in scale and quality across countries, most of the initial support was similar to that provided in disaster relief efforts. Volunteers provided

basic supplies of clothing, food, and care. Faced with national authorities and governmental agencies that could barely cope, a host of civil society organizations, associations, and individuals provided emergency aid throughout their communities. In addition to this emergency aid, volunteers and activists also engaged in more contentious activities such as demonstrations and street protests (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Aumüller, Jutta, 2016; Boersma et al., 2019; Carlsen & Toubøl, 2022; della Porta, 2018; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Simsa et al., 2019).

The increase in the number of refugees arriving in Europe in 2015 and 2016 is commonly referred to as the "European refugee crisis". However, migration and civil society scholars have referred to the recent increase in refugee migration to Europe as the "long summer of migration" (Kasparek & Speer, 2015) or the "refugee reception crisis" (see Ambrosini et al., 2019; Rea et al., 2019). Rea et al. (2019a, p. 16) have noted that the summer of 2015 and the arrival of many refugees was portrayed as an "exodus" to create panic, which served the agenda of certain media and international institutions. The term "refugee reception crisis," which I employ in this book, highlights that the crisis was not due to the increased number of refugees per se, but to the poor preparation of authorities and governmental agencies in the countries of arrival (Eckhard et al., 2021; Simsa et al., 2019).

Of all these countries, Germany was considered to have an unparalleled "welcoming culture" and a strong sense of solidarity with refugees (The Economist, 2015). There was an upsurge in spontaneous, grassroots support for refugees, which had not been seen since German unification (Schiffauer et al., 2018, p. 29). In 2015, news spread worldwide that Chancellor Angela Merkel had decided to open the borders, famously declaring "wir schaffen das" (Engl.: "we can do it") (Cohen, 2015). In the spring of 2014, just 1 percent of the German population was involved in refugee support and advocacy (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2014, p. 19), but by the fall of 2015, this figure had surged to 11 percent (Ahrens et al., 2021) (Ahrens et al., 2021). Compared to the years between 1990 and 1992, when around 890,000 asylum applications were registered in Germany in the context of the Balkan war, the support in 2015/16 was much greater in scope and in terms of organizational structures (Speth & Becker, 2016, p. 39). Between 2015 and mid-2017, 25 percent of adults in Germany were involved in civil society efforts to support refugees (BMFSFJ, 2017).

The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) indicates that in 2015 and 2016, approximately 32 percent of the German population participated in some form of refugee support. Most individuals (28 percent) provided financial

or material donations, while smaller groups volunteered locally (6 percent) or joined signature campaigns and demonstrations (5 percent) (Alscher et al., 2018, p. 380). According to Schiffauer (2017, p. 13), more than five million citizens were engaged in around 15,000 projects and refugee-support groups during this time. Additionally, various local civil society organizations, such as sports clubs, recreational associations, church communities, and welfare organizations, played an active role in refugee assistance across Germany (Krimmer, 2019).

Similar to mobilizing structures in other European countries, many people who began engaging in refugee support in Germany did so informally. In contrast to traditional volunteering, which is organized under the umbrella of established civil society organizations, the volunteers and activists of 2015/16 organized themselves in small groups, mainly through informal personal networks (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016). This stronger informality is often associated with social movement activism (see della Porta, 2018, p. 11) and volunteering in response to natural disasters (Boersma et al., 2019; Simsa et al., 2019). Of course, during 2015 and 2016, established organizations such as the Red Cross, humanitarian and disaster relief organizations, and traditional NGOs were active in refugee support. Yet, studies have also shown that informal volunteering and volunteering by small groups, such as refugee-support groups, played a significant role in supporting refugees (della Porta, 2018, p. 11; Schiffauer et al., 2017).

The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 attracted many individuals who had previously been active in civil society. At the same time, numerous individuals who had no experience in traditional volunteering were also mobilized (Ahrens et al., 2021; Mutz & Wolff, 2018). In an online survey of 460 volunteers, Karakayali and Kleist (2016, p. 19) found that more than half of the people who became active in refugee support in 2015 did not engage in volunteering or activism in the years before. These findings are also supported by the results of the 2017 ZiviZ survey (Priemer, Jana, 2017, p. 39).

Studies show that people had varied motivations for engaging in refugee support. According to Daphi (2017, p. 41) involvement was influenced by the humanitarian needs of the refugees. Therefore, their support of refugees could be seen as a humanitarian engagement kindled due to compassion for refugees. According to Karakayali and Kleist (2016, p. 31ff.), the primary motivation for most volunteers was a sense of community and the opportunity to learn about other cultures. A smaller study conducted by Mutz and Wolff (2018) on refugee support in Munich suggests that many volunteers viewed their engagement

as a form of political engagement. Regarding the diversity of individuals involved in refugee support, Schiffauer et al. (2017, p. 22ff.) has noted that this group included many people who had never participated in a demonstration before. In 2015/16, they observed that these individuals were exposed to more politically active people and began considering participating in these forms of protest themselves (Schiffauer et al., 2017, p. 22ff.).

After what has been referred to as a "magical moment" of 2015 (Schiffauer et al., 2018, p. 9), the number of volunteers and activists supporting refugees declined in 2016. And not only did the number of volunteers and activists decrease; so, too, did the scope of support activities. Although there are fewer large-scale systematic studies that have measured this downward trend across Germany, it is quite evident that the mobilization period peaked in 2015/16 and then declined (Gesemann et al., 2019; van den Berg et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2023).

There has been rigorous research on the pro-refugee mobilizations of 2015/16 in Germany and other European countries. However, as I have emphasized, there has been limited attention paid to the lasting effects and potential transformations of civil society structures. Empirical studies have documented the emergence and growth of civil society activities in 2015 and 2016 but they have not gone beyond 2017. This research gap even extends to the study of the relational effects of mobilization periods more broadly and to research on today's differentiated civic landscape, as I will show in the next section.

Research on Mobilization Effects in Today's Civic Landscape

So far, I have highlighted the limits of research on how the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 lastingly impacted the relational foundations and structure of civil society. In the following, I will further situate my research at the intersection of social movement studies and voluntarism/nonprofit studies. I will discuss the limited attention given to the relational effects of mobilization periods and to today's differentiated civic landscape.

When do mobilization periods, such as the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, have lasting effects on the activities, patterns of interaction, and connections between the volunteers, activists, and organizations and groups involved? Civil society research has not confidently answered this question. The main strands of scholarship—social movement studies and voluntarism/non-

profit studies—have scarcely focused on the relational impacts of heightened periods of mobilization or on the broader, more differentiated type of civic landscape in which mobilization occurs (but see Diani, 2015). Social movement studies have significantly contributed to understanding the political, institutional, and biographical outcomes of collective action since the late 1990s (see Bosi et al., 2015). However, they have offered limited insights into how these periods shape the civic landscape itself, including the networks and interaction dynamics within that landscape[4]. Similarly, scholars in the field of voluntarism/nonprofit studies have provided rich insights into the effects of mobilization (e.g. post-disaster or pro-refugee mobilization) on the emergence of new ad hoc volunteer engagement and organizational capacities and resources (Boersma et al., 2019; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Kim et al., 2022; Toubøl, 2019). Yet, they also fail to address the impact that these mobilization periods may have on civil society structures and community building.

Scholarly discussions have tended to focus more on the initiation of mobilization and collective action than on how they conclude (Tarrow, 1998; Zeller, 2022). Yet, scholars have consistently shown that periods of intensified mobilization lead to greater interaction between individuals and organizations. In such periods, people modify their interaction habits and deepen their relationships, often solidifying existing bonds or establishing new ones (della Porta, 2020b; della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; McAdam et al., 1996; Staggenborg, 2020). Even when mobilization diminishes and the factors driving increased interaction change, these connections can endure. I highlight under what conditions mobilization periods can lead to the formation or strengthening of networks that continue to thrive and expand, even in periods of low mobilization.

In addition to the research gap regarding the relational effects of mobilization, social movement studies and voluntarism/nonprofit studies have typically focused on studying actors and actions that are representative of their

4 While there has been little research that calls these effects "relational" outcomes (but see Wood et al. 2017), there are scholars that have mentioned the impacts of campaigns and protests on organization's and activists' relationships. For instance, Staggenborg and Lecomte (2009) pointed to the positive impacts of the Montreal Women's Movement on the relationships between the organizations involved. Similarly, Taylor (1989, p. 762) highlighted in her research on abeyance structures that the women's movement continued to exist due to strong social movement organizations and strong activist networks that sustained goals and tactics on the one hand, but also the collective identity, on the other.

field while paying less attention to the diverse contemporary civic landscapes (but see Diani, 2015; Eliasoph & Cefaï, 2021; Lichterman, 2021; Staggenborg, 2020). In other words, social movement researchers have focused on protest and activism, while other civil society researchers who study voluntarism and the nonprofit sector have had a greater interest in volunteer organizations and groups, nonprofit management, and formal collaborations (della Porta, 2020a).

In my work, I bridge the gap between two subfields in civil society research and examine the current diverse civic landscape, encompassing actors and actions that are typically studied in one of the fields only. In this vein, della Porta (2020a) has recently proposed bringing together social movement studies and civil society research, including voluntarism/nonprofit studies, as both fields share many theoretical interfaces and empirical overlaps. According to her, social movement studies have traditionally focused on conflict, while other strands in civil society research have been more concerned with connections, cohesion, and social capital (della Porta, 2020a, p. 2). In social movement studies, the focus has been on activism, protest, and collective identity, while scholars of voluntarism/nonprofit studies have tended to concentrate on volunteering and NGO cooperation. However, della Porta (2020) notes that the theoretical and empirical boundaries between both fields are becoming increasingly blurred. For instance, norms of solidarity and identity issues are receiving more attention, as are efficacy and citizen involvement. According to della Porta (2020a, p. 9), recent crises such as the Great Recession or the pro-refugee mobilization have empirically reinforced this hybridization. The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 involved both typical volunteering activities and established civil society associations, such as sports clubs and church congregations, as well as activism and civil disobedience by more politicized NGOs (della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Monforte & Maestri, 2023; Stjepandić et al., 2022; Toubøl, 2019).

In light of these blurred boundaries, I employ a civil society definition that mirrors the diverse associational life that exists outside the state and market (see Anheier, 1990). I specifically subscribe to Michael Edward's understanding of associational life (2014, p. 33f.), which involves

> "all associations and networks between the family and the state in which membership and activities are 'voluntary,' including NGOs of different kinds, labor unions, political parties, churches and other religious groups,

professional and business associations, community and self-help groups, social movements and the independent media".

Two major clarifications are necessary to this definition. First, as Edwards (2014) has noted, the term "voluntary" encompasses both paid professionals and volunteers. However, the involvement of these individuals is voluntary, and the practices are "voluntaristic", meaning that they are based on dialogue, bargaining, and negotiations rather than on enforced compliance (M. Edwards, 2014, p. 34). Second, the term "associational life" gives the impression that this life or "ecosystem" of civil society is strictly connected to formal entities. However, this ecosystem is constituted by a multitude of "overlapping memberships, cross-interest coalitions, hybrid organizations," and a vast array of grassroots organizations and informal groups (M. Edwards, 2014, p. 127).

In this vein, Tarrow (1993) and della Porta (2020a) have similarly noted that, in contemporary civic landscapes, actors cover a broad spectrum, ranging from professionalized organizations such as resource-rich social movements and welfare organizations to smaller associations and informal groups. Consequently, today's civic landscapes encompass both politically oriented organizations with extensive experience in protest and those operating within the nonprofit and voluntary sectors. Owing to the decline in traditional volunteering in membership-based organizations and the rise of individualized forms of volunteering, including project-based and temporary volunteering (Boersma et al., 2019; Cnaan et al., 2021; Hustinx, 2005; Hyde et al., 2016; Kewes & Munsch, 2019; Simsa et al., 2019, p. 104), today's civic landscapes encompass various informal forms of organizing, such as projects and small activist/volunteer groups.

Recent examples of these types of local mobilization periods include the solidarity actions and demonstrations in support of migrants and refugees in Europe and the United States (Bloemraad & Voss, 2020; Carlsen et al., 2021; della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Stjepandić et al., 2022), the community support and activism during and after the financial crisis in Greece (Malamidis, 2020; Tzifakis et al., 2017), the Women's March and anti-Trump resistance (Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Gose & Skocpol, 2019; Skocpol & Tervo, 2020), and the mobilization in response to emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Rodríguez et al., 2006; Wang & Ganapati, 2018).

So far, scholars have not yet systematically studied the impact of these mobilization periods on sustained interaction and networking in the post-mobi-

lization period. While they have identified increases in interaction during mobilization periods, it is not clear what drives the persistence and development of networks and community building once the mobilization is over.

Book Outline

The goal of this book is to investigate how local civic action communities develop and survive after periods of heightened mobilization. Specifically, I explore whether and under what conditions the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in four German cities.

Given the paucity of previous research on my specific topic, the structure of this book is largely informed by my empirical findings, which I generated by applying a combined inductive and deductive approach to analyzing the interview data I collected. The first part encompasses the theoretical framework (Chapter 2) and the research design (Chapter 3). Since previous research on my topic was scarce, I utilized Chapter 2 to introduce my concept of local civic action communities, discuss the research gap, and highlight three dimensions that guided the search for driving factors and conditions.

The second part presents a long and detailed empirical analysis of the overall results regarding the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in each case (Chapter 4). The objective of this second part is to demonstrate the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in two cities, as well as the absence of such communities in two others. This part closely follows the developments in each case, beginning with the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and the subsequent decline in mobilization from the end of 2016 until the year of 2020, which marked the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The third and final part of this book builds upon the extensive case analyses presented in the second part. This section presents a systematic examination of the factors and conditions that facilitate or impede the development and survival of new pro-refugee communities. In each of the three chapters, I conducted a paired case analysis with the objective of identifying one or more factors or conditions that either facilitate or impede community building. The three factors I identified are as follows: local brokers and their abilities to maintain interaction (Chapter 5), cultural, strategic, and resource differences across organizations with varying degrees of professionalization (Chapter 6), and trust-building in the interaction of civil society and local governmen-

tal representatives (Chapter 7). Using a combined inductive and deductive approach, I have generated these factors and conditions by analyzing and comparing major themes and patterns in each case, as well as by conducting extensive readings of the relevant literature. These extensive analyses and readings have resulted in the paired comparisons that I present in Part 3 of this book.

Chapter 5 highlights the role played by local brokers in sustaining interaction in the pro-refugee communities by continually creating a diverse set of interaction opportunities. I conceptualize local brokers as active agents who create opportunities for interaction and thus continually bring people together in their locality. This understanding of brokers builds on recent innovations in organizational sociology and was coined by David Obstfeld, Stephen P. Borgatti, and Jason Davis (2014). By employing this more nuanced conceptualization of brokerage, I advance the current understanding of brokers and supplement the literature of social movement studies with recent concepts in organizational sociology. I first demonstrate how local brokers built trust and recognition within their communities, a significant precondition for community building. In the second step, I show how brokers used a diversified approach to create interaction opportunities. This diversification included three types of interaction opportunities involving non-contentious and contentious actions: (i) maintaining the core work, (ii) policy advocacy on asylum and migration, and (iii) broadening the issue by organizing events beyond the issue of local refugee support (including connecting the pro-refugee community with activists combating far-right extremism). Through this unique lens of brokers as active agents, I explore how local brokers emerge and what kinds of strategies they employ to keep interaction and networking alive.

Chapter 6 highlights major obstacles to collaboration and community by focusing on the interaction dynamics between well-established, professionalized organizations and more informal volunteer and activist groups. I focus on the influential presence of well-established, professionalized organizations, a key contributor to the dynamics in these two cities. The primary question revolves around why the more informal groups had difficulties institutionalizing themselves and, more importantly, why there were so few sustainable collaborations between well-established organizations and more informal groups. To explain why the development of pro-refugee communities in these two cities did not occur, I draw on insights from voluntarism/non-profit studies and from social movement research and identify three major obstacles to collaboration and community building between different types of actors

in civil society: (i) differences in resource power, (ii) distinctions in networking strategies, and (iii) diverging cultures of interaction. Based on these theoretical building blocks, I highlight how these factors endanger collaborations between professionalized, well-established organizations and more informal groups, such as local community and grassroots groups.

Chapter 7 examines the dual importance of co-production in fostering improved interaction within civil society and enhancing civil society-state collaboration. Specifically, I investigate how trust is built in the interactions between local government officials, volunteers, and activists, which is essential for sustainable co-production. Drawing on the concept of linking social capital, I emphasize the importance of promoting norms of respect and fostering trust between individuals who engage across power divides (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Co-production offers civil society actors significant opportunities to engage in policy-making and cultivate closer ties between organizations involved in refugee support and advocacy. Therefore, involving civil society in co-production can yield positive spillover effects on the development of interorganizational and intergroup networks within civil society. This final empirical chapter focuses on the processes that contribute to the creation and decline of linking social capital. The empirical analysis reveals that the trustful co-production of public goods and the development of linking social capital are not guaranteed and require sustained effort from all involved parties. Mediation and more formalized exchanges can enhance mutual understanding and strengthen cooperation after periods of severe conflict in initial interactions. However, even promising beginnings of cooperation and mutual respect can eventually give way to suspicion and frustration.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the current discussion in civil society research and lays out the theoretical building blocks for this book. First, I give a detailed definition of local civic action communities and differentiate them from social movement communities. Second, I discuss literature on the consequences of mobilization based on existing studies in civil society research. Specifically, I draw from voluntarism/non-profit studies, and social movement studies. As discussed in the introduction, both strands of literature have given little attention to the enduring effects of mobilization and whether events such as the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 manifest in sustained interactions and strengthened networks. However, there is limited understanding of interaction dynamics in the post-mobilization phase. Therefore, in the third section, I review the literature regarding the factors and conditions that serve as drivers and obstacles to interorganizational and intergroup networking outside of the subject of mobilization. This review informed my conceptual lens when I further theorized the concrete drivers and obstacles in the following empirical chapters. More specifically, I identified the three following themes that are relevant for organizations' and groups' sustained interaction and network formation: (i) political opportunity structures, (ii) resources and capacity, and (iii) ideology and culture.

Local Civic Action Communities

In this book, I examine whether and under what conditions the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development of new pro-refugee communities in four German cities. As I highlighted earlier, these communities represent a case of the broader concept of local civic action communities, which I developed based on Staggenborg's concept of social movement communities

(2013, 2020). As briefly described in the introduction to this book, I conceptualize local civic action communities as communities consisting of a wide range of actors involved in local issues. These actors range from grassroots groups, community organizations, and sports clubs to church congregations, welfare organizations, and humanitarian organizations. Actors within local civic action communities aim to address specific local problems they have identified. Rather than working independently or in isolation, they interact, creating networks among the various actors and entities involved. Although these communities often start working in a specific locality, they are not primarily defined by their location in a particular territory. That is, local civic action communities are not necessarily tied to a city or district. For example, the relevant local civic action community might extend beyond the boundaries of the respective city and include some of the neighboring villages or act region-wide.

Let me briefly specify what I mean by civic action and where the concept stems from. Civic action is a term developed by Paul Lichterman and Nina Eliasoph (2014). Civic action is similar to what is also known as civic engagement. With the term civic action, Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014) have created a less normative understanding of civic engagement. In addition, they have emphasized that civic action is not necessarily a practice only found in the institutionalized voluntary sector.

More specifically, Lichterman (2021, p. 5) has underscored in a recent study that people engage in civic action when they "work together, voluntarily, to address problems they think should matter to others". He has further outlined that these activities

> "may or may not be contentious […]. Civic action may or may not address government, and may take up issues that are local, national, or global. […] Participants in civic action act in relation to some shared understanding of 'society', no matter how expansive or restrictive. Put simply, civic action happens when citizens work together to steer society, identifying problems and collaborating on solving them."

Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014, p. 799) have suggested that in the Neo-Tocquevillian tradition[1], it is assumed that all actors in the institutionalized vol-

1 With their civic action approach, Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014, p. 799) criticize the research tradition that focuses almost exclusively on the democracy promoting function of volunteering and on the assumption that voluntary engagement only exists in the institutionalized voluntary sector. They call scholars in this more traditional civil

untary sector act "civically". However, they have emphasized the significance of searching for civic action first, regardless of the sector in which the actors are mainly active.

The term civic action describes the phenomenon I am researching at the local level well. In the years 2015 and 2016, we could observe an immense increase in civic action at the local level in Germany and many other European countries like Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, and Spain (Alcalde & Portos, 2018; Boersma et al., 2019; Kleres, 2018; Povrzanović Frykman. & Mäkelä, 2020; Schiffauer, 2022; Schiffauer et al., 2018; Simsa et al., 2019; Toubøl, 2019). As discussed in the introduction, around 5 million people in Germany alone engaged in civic action by supporting refugees with housing, clothing, or counseling (Schiffauer et al., 2017). As the concept of civic action mirrors, this support was not limited to the institutionalized voluntary sector but was heavily driven by people and initiatives from the informal voluntary and activist sector. While my study has empirically focused on civil society, I have also interviewed some people who engaged in civic action in multiple roles as volunteers, business owners, and social workers. They, too, were highly involved in refugee support during the mobilization.

Another example is a Civic Alliance that consisted of many volunteers and activists acting as members of civil society and city officials. Social workers are another example of the blurring boundaries between sectors. As an employee of the city government, one of my interviewees combined her paid job as a social worker in a refugee shelter with her desire to volunteer and improve the living conditions of the refugees she got to know through her work. She shared this desire with other volunteers and activists in her city. As a result, she connected with many of them and established a network of volunteers via WhatsApp.

The examples suggest that this study is suitable for civic action because it is not restricted to normative or sectoral expectations. However, it is essential to note that sectoral differentiations are still present. In this study, emphasizing the differences between civil society and state is vital due to the significant power differences between civil society and local government.

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society research "Neo-Tocquevillians" (e.g., Berman, 1997; Verba et al., 1995; Warren, 1999; Warren, 2001; Wuthnow, 2002).

Distinguishing local civic action from social movement communities

The following section introduces the concept of social movement communities and explains how it relates to and contrasts with the notion of local civic action communities I have developed. Local civic action communities are related to social movement communities, a notion originally coined by Steven Buechler (1990) but was further conceptualized by Suzanne Staggenborg (2013, 2020). Staggenborg (2013, p. 125ff.) has outlined three key characteristics of social movement communities by exploring how social movement communities form, mobilize, and sustain themselves over time. First, social movement communities house diverse types of organizations, from SMOs to cultural groups, alternative organizations, and established entities supporting movement activities. Second, at the heart of these communities are the interactions among these various actors and spaces, including coalitions, organizations, individuals, and other entities. A third defining feature of social movement communities is the diverse actors engaging in political and cultural conflicts. Thus, similar to social movements, social movement communities consist of formal and informal interaction networks of individuals and organizations that work on a shared goal or political cause. Staggenborg (1998, p. 182) has specifically outlined what types of actors and entities encompass social movement communities. In contrast to social movements that include actors who are in contentious interaction with authorities, elites, or other opponents, a movement community also includes feminist health clinics or women's music festivals. These spaces can bring people from the movement community together and, therefore, contribute to sustaining a movement's culture and collective identity

Staggenborg (2013) has argued that her concept of social movement communities differs from social movements mainly in its scope. As she has pointed out, many social movement scholars, such as McCarthy and Zald (1977) and Sampson et al. (2005), have mainly focused on social movement organizations when studying mobilization. While acknowledging their importance, Staggenborg (2013, p. 125) has further developed the concept of social movement communities to understand the "diffuse nature of social movements and their changing structures". She highlighted the diversity of today's mobilization structures consists of:

> "social networks, cultural groups, movement habitats with institutions, movement-related commercial enterprises, coalitions, alternative insti-

> tutions, and more established organizations that sometimes become movement allies, such as labor unions and community organizations" (Staggenborg, 2013, p. 125).

As highlighted above, social movement communities consist not only of social movement organizations or formal and informal interactions but of the combination of all these actors, entities, spaces, and their interactions. Furthermore, the concept of social movement communities allows us to identify and study collective identity because it is in these communities that collective identity can grow and be sustained:

> "Community implies mutual support among people who are connected to one another in various ways. Movement culture, in the sense of symbols, rituals, values, and ideology, is shared and developed within movement communities and creates a collective identity. Groups and individuals within a movement community are linked by culture (and through it, by collective identity), social networks, and participation in movement activities" (Staggenborg, 1998, p. 182).

To sum up, social movement communities comprise formal and informal network ties between a wide range of organizations and groups, sustained interaction over time that strengthens the community's networks, and a culture that revolves around common practices, boundaries, and goals. In the following section, I will elaborate on how the concept of local civic action communities differs from that of social movement communities.

As highlighted at the beginning of the subsection on local civic communities, they are made up of individuals, organizations, and groups, as well as formal and very informal entities with a shared vision who work together to address a collectively identified local problem. Although not strictly defined by geographic boundaries, they are rooted in the civic landscape of a city or district and are connected through formal and informal networks and collaboration among participating actors.

While Staggenborg's (1998, 2013, 2020) concept of social movement communities and my concept of local civic action communities have similar features, they are two distinct types of communities. I suggest they differ in six features listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison between social movement and local civic action communities

	Social Movement Communities	**Local Civic Action Communities**
Goals and Objectives	Address broader, often national or global causes and systemic change. Goals are political, and actors have a political agenda.	Focus on localized, specific issues that may be local or regional manifestations of global problems.
Origin	Often, they emerge from social movement campaigns or protest activities.	Usually emerge from a new local problem that may arise from a crisis-moment, disaster, or another form of juncture.
Political agenda	Often highly politicized, emerge from campaigns and protests. Actors often have political agendas and make claims	Lack of a formal political agenda. May involve actors with varied levels of politicization, including sports clubs and churches.
Opposition	Focus on opposition, i.e., authorities, politicians, elites.	Emerge from collectively addressing local problems without necessarily opposing authorities.
Territory	Often involve individuals and groups in a specific local setting but may include actors from various regions, states, or countries.	Emerge and operate at the local level, which promotes familiarity among actors. Yet, they are not bound to a specific territory.
Collective Identity	Collective identity develops in the community through a shared culture over time.	Collective identity is not a significant characteristic but may develop in the long-run.

First, the goals and objectives of social movement communities extend beyond local concerns to broader, often national or global causes and advocacy for systemic change. In contrast, local civic action communities focus primarily on local and specific issues. While global issues may eventually be considered, they are not the central or immediate focus. Local civic actors often engage in collective action to address immediate community needs before potentially expanding their scope.

Second, local civic action communities do not emerge out of a social movement campaigns or protest activities, as Staggenborg (1998, 2013, 2020) has outlined, but mainly from mobilizations around local problems people want to address. Note that in the case of my empirical work, the local problem arose

during the reception of refugees at the local level in Germany. As a result of the quick increase in refugee numbers and the ill-prepared public authorities (Eckhard et al., 2021), the situation created momentum for people to provide emergency support. This momentum was the starting point for the mobilization of millions of individuals and thousands of organizations, groups, and other entities to become involved in refugee support.

Third, and closely related to the previous point, social movement communities are often much more politicized than local civic action communities, which involve more and less politicized actors. The actors involved in a local civic action community may be sports clubs, churches, and community organizations with a less politicized repertoire of actions and no formal claims or political agenda. While Staggenborg (2013, p. 182) has mentioned some entities, such as feminist health clinics, that may be less political, the distribution of non-politicized or less politicized actors is certainly higher in local civic action communities.

Fourth, local civic action communities do not necessarily act in opposition to opponents, authorities, or elites. Unlike social movement communities, they can form when people engage in collective action to address a local problem. Their collective action revolves around ameliorating or elevating a problem. Thus, it is collective action for something rather than in opposition to something. Yet, over time, local civic action communities may also develop political claims.

Fifth, while social movement communities per se are not conceptually tied to a specific territory, local civic action communities emerge from a mobilization at the local level in a particular territory. By local level, I mean on a city or district level in Germany where actors potentially know each other or know of each other.

Finally, while social movement communities are often connected through a collective identity that emerged through a boundary towards the outgroup, a common culture, and rituals, local civic action communities are not necessarily bound through a strong collective identity. As collective identity is a fluid concept, local civic action communities may exhibit certain features of collective identity. However, collective identity is not the focus and part of the primary definition of the communities I am studying in my work.

To sum up, local civic action communities provide a valuable framework for studying community building in a local civic landscape outside of the classical social movement realm. Local civic action communities are measured based on

sustained forms of interaction between actors over several years that manifest in new and strengthened network ties.

To assess local civic action communities, I examined network connections between organizations and groups and patterns of interaction as key metrics. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, I explored whether interorganizational and intergroup networks intensified during the mobilization period and throughout the post-mobilization period after 2016 up to 2021 and whether I observed ongoing interaction among the actors involved in refugee support and advocacy.

Civil Society Literature on Mobilization Effects

In the civil society literature, periods of heightened mobilization are often depicted as large campaigns and protests organized by individuals engaged in social movement organizations, alliances, and coalitions (della Porta, 2020a). In contrast, other types of mobilization periods are pretty overlooked. In recent years, civil society scholars have paid more attention to mobilization periods that involve an upsurge in solidarity actions, humanitarian support, and advocacy after intense social and financial crises or natural disasters.

Recent instances of these types of mobilization periods that were realized at the local level the solidarity actions and demonstrations in support of migrants and refugees (Bloemraad & Voss, 2020; Carlsen et al., 2021; della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Stjepandić et al., 2022; Toubøl, 2019), the community support and activism during and after the financial crisis in Greece (Malamidis, 2020; Tzifakis et al., 2017), and the mobilization in response to emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina (Hawkins and Maurer 2010; Rodríguez, Trainor, and Quarantelli 2006), and the earthquake in Haiti (Nolte & Boenigk, 2013; Twigg & Mosel, 2017). These periods all have a few features in common: (i) the spontaneous ad hoc mobilization of volunteers and activists, (ii) the emergence of new initiatives and informal groups, (iii) the increased interaction of different actors on a large scale, and (iv) a rapid decline of ad hoc activism after its peak.

The literature on civil society does not provide much research on the impact of such periods on local community building. Neither research focusing on social movements nor research focusing on voluntarism and the non-profit sector has paid much attention to lasting effects such as changing interaction patterns and network impacts (but see Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Staggenborg & Lecomte, 2009).

In the following part, I discuss what I found in both strands of civil society literature, voluntarism/non-profit studies, and social movement studies, about the effects of mobilization periods on civil society, especially interaction and network dynamics. There is little evidence on the mechanisms behind lasting changes in interorganizational and intergroup networks and sustained interaction. However, there is some empirical evidence in both strands on the immediate consequences of mobilization periods, which I will outline.

Effects of heightened mobilization in social movement studies

Social movement scholars have recently paid more attention to the consequences of mobilization periods, such as policies, culture, and institutions (Bosi et al., 2015). However, the same literature has rarely shed light on how movements transform due to periods of mobilization. While this is understandable, given social movements' innate striving for agency and change (Giugni, 2008), social movement mobilizations' effects on movements should not be underestimated.

There is evidence in the social movement literature that periods of heightened mobilization do not just influence their external environment and structure. Mobilization periods, in particular, are also vital periods for movements and activists themselves as they may potentially strengthen their networks and social capital (della Porta, 2020b; Diani, 1997; McAdam, 1988; Staggenborg & Lecomte, 2009). While there are rarely systematic studies on the lasting effects of mobilization periods on the emergence of new communities, new forms of interaction, and social networks, some social movement scholars have outlined the potential of such periods. For instance, Diani (1997) pointed out that social ties are rarely unchanged after certain protests and other social movement activities. Occasionally, they even foster the development of new bonds of unity and solidarity (Diani, 1997, p. 134).

In this regard, della Porta (2020b, p. 562) has also theorized the profound relational impacts of "eventful protest," which amplify and reshape interactions among diverse actors. In her view, eventful protests happen in the context of a crisis, the abrupt imposition of grievances, a moral awakening, or a disaster (della Porta, 2020b, p. 569). Eventful protests can only be defined as eventful ex-post because the relevance of the protests can only be evaluated once a protest period is over and the meaning and consequences of the protest event are examined (della Porta, 2020b, p. 569). Examples of eventful protests are the protests around the democratization efforts in Central East-

ern Europe in 1989 and the Arab Spring in 2011. In her view, eventful protests have "relational impacts by intensifying and transforming interactions among different actors. Rather than being spontaneous, they are produced through a convergence of preexisting nets and contribute to building new ones at great speed" (della Porta, 2020b, p. 562). While della Porta (2020b) has shed light on the impacts of protest mobilization on relational changes, other scholars have shed light on different forms of collective action and their effects on relational changes within movements (e.g., Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Diani, 1997; McAdam, 1988; Small & Gose, 2020; Taylor, 1989, p. 19).

McAdam (1988), for example, has examined the biographical effects of volunteers who participated in the so-called Freedom Summer of 1964 and found that activists' social ties were strongly influenced by their participation in that period. The Freedom Summer Project was a volunteer campaign in the United States to register more black voters in Mississippi. Along with thousands of black Mississippians, the 1,000 or so volunteers, mostly white college students from the North, came to support the civil rights movement, register black voters, and teach in the so-called Freedom Schools, alternative free schools for black Americans in the 1960s. McAdam (1988, p. 161ff.) tracked down over 40 volunteers for his study (plus surveys) and interviewed them about their life stories after the summer of 1964. He found that while not all of them remained politically active, many of them developed lasting friendships, political partnerships, and romantic relationships. Thus, his study showed that their participation in the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign permanently altered the volunteers' networks.

Similarly, Corrigall-Brown (2022) and Gose and Skocpol (2019) showed in the context of the Women's March rallies that this period was critical for those involved in building networks. Corrigall-Brown (2022) followed newly emerged volunteer and activist groups after the Women's March in 2017. After former President Donald Trump was inaugurated in January 2017, approximately 5.3 million people participated in Women's Marches in Washington D.C., New York City, Los Angeles, and other cities across the United States. The goal of the marches was to show resistance to Trump's presidency and to advocate for women's rights, including LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive rights, racial equality, and related issues. After the people who participated in these marches in Washington, D.C., and other major cities returned to their hometowns, such as Atlanta and Portland, Amarillo, and Salt Lake City, many formed local groups to stay connected and continue women's rights activism. Corrigall-Brown (2022) followed over 30 of these groups over several

years. Some disappeared, and others were still active five years after they were founded. She was interested in why some groups disappeared, and others remained active. Factors that drove their survival were: "(1) tactical selection and diversity, (2) the use of coalitions, (3) practices to facilitate individual engagement, and (4) the use of online technologies" (Corrigall-Brown, 2022, p. 2).

Similar to Corrigall-Brown (2022), Gose and Skocpol (2019) have studied the local resistance groups that formed during Trump's inauguration in 2017, which they pointed out were formed through friendships and social media contacts. They highlighted that for the groups to survive, it was essential for them to reach out to surrounding communities. Many of them changed leadership, suggesting that leadership is not easy to maintain and that when leadership is successful, generating and supporting candidates is an important factor for a group's survival (Gose & Skocpol, 2019, p. 310f.).

The studies of Freedom Summer (McAdam, 1988) and the Women's March (Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Gose & Skocpol, 2019) have outlined how networks and groups of volunteers and activists emerge and survive after periods of heightened mobilization. However, no study explicitly focuses on relational impacts, the lasting effects of periods of heightened mobilization on interorganizational and intergroup networks, whether after the intense volunteer experience of the Freedom Summer or the feminist rallies following Trump's inauguration. Mechanisms mentioned in the studies included the formation of friendships and intense contact during the mobilization period, as well as leadership tactics such as coalition building and using online technology to keep groups alive.

In Diani's (1997) conceptual study on social capital building during mobilization periods, he showed one fascinating example of mobilization's effects on interorganizational networks. He emphasized that unsolved conflicts between groups of different ideological orientations during the mobilization period can inhibit future cooperation. Studying the oppositional movement against nuclear weapons and energy production in Italy, Diani (1997, p. 136) argued that internal conflicts between radical-left and moderate groups hardened between 1976 and 1978. Since these conflicts were not solved, they strongly affected the network structure of the environmental movement in the 1980s.

In sum, social movement scholars consistently demonstrated that when mobilization intensifies, it leads to greater engagement among individuals and organizations. During such periods, people change their patterns of inter-

action, strengthen their connections, and often either reinforce existing ties or form new ones (see della Porta, 2020b; della Porta & Mosca, 2005; McAdam et al., 1996; Staggenborg, 2020). At the same time, the same literature has yet to emphasize studying the mechanisms behind strengthening network ties and the factors that lead to sustainable community building. Only Diani's (1997) work provides insights into what effects unsolved ideological conflict can have on movement networks even a decade later.

Scholars in the field of social movement studies have conducted extensive research on the interaction dynamics and the underlying mechanisms of these dynamics, whereas scholars of voluntarism/nonprofit studies have not. However, my analysis of the literature on the latter revealed that there is also evidence of increased interaction during mobilization periods.

Networking after heightened mobilization in voluntarism and non-profit studies

Scholars of voluntarism and non-profit studies have recently demonstrated increased interest in mobilization periods. Even though these periods have not lied at the heart of this subdiscipline, scholars have begun to research these periods concerning the effectiveness of networks during disasters, the recruitment of ad hoc volunteers, and organizational capacities and resources (Aldrich, 2012; Boersma et al., 2019, 2021; Doerfel et al., 2013; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Kim et al., 2022; Nolte & Boenigk, 2013; Shaw & Goda, 2004; Toubøl, 2019).

These scholars have not yet explicitly focused on the effects of mobilization periods on sustained community building and network development among actors involved in mobilization. Yet, their studies point to some interesting empirical observations suggesting that mobilization during and after humanitarian emergencies and disasters can catalyze increased interaction. It is important to emphasize that the observations from the studies I share in the next section relate only to the duration of mobilization periods and not to developments in the post-mobilization period. Moreover, these were not the focus of the cited studies but secondary findings I identified in the studies.

This literature has shown that civic action increased in the aftermath of several natural disasters, including the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in the United States, the 1995 Kobe earthquake in Japan, the 1923 Tokyo earthquake in Japan, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. These actions involved various civic networks

and groups of actors (Aldrich, 2012; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Nolte & Boenigk, 2013; Shaw & Goda, 2004).

For example, Nolte and Boeringk (2013) observed increased collaboration and joint activities among a wide range of organizations during the civil society response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake. The authors collected data from 288 active disaster responders during the Haiti earthquake and examined the network drivers in well-functioning ad hoc networks in 2010. The drivers of emergent, well-functioning ad hoc networks were adequate task coordination, a strong sense of reciprocity among organizations, and prior experience working together. While their findings shed light on short-term network changes, they did not examine long-term changes beyond 2010.

Similarly, in a study of the power of social capital for New Orleans residents to rebuild their communities, Hawkins and Maurer (2010, p. 1786) have found that some communities were able to benefit from existing ties and form new coalitions across class, race, and religion shortly after the hurricane. In their study of Hurricane Katrina, the authors examined how 40 families in New Orleans used their social capital to cope with the hurricane and rebuild their lives and communities. While they found that they could use the bonding, bridging, and linking forms of social capital to ensure the short- and long-term survival of their families and communities, they also made new connections within and across neighborhoods. While the issue of new network connections was not the focus of Hawkins and Maurer's study, they did show that the experience of shared grievances and criticism of the lack of government assistance fueled local coalition building. In an interview, one resident described this coalition: "We are the real rainbow coalition: different races, different classes, people of faith with nonbelievers" (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010, p. 1786). In need of financial resources, residents formed various associations, such as the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association. They began working with local groups, the American Red Cross, and a newly created government agency, the Louisiana Recovery Authority, to organize the rebuilding of New Orleans neighborhoods (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010, p. 1786).

One study even examined the lasting effects of such civil society response to a natural disaster (Shaw & Goda, 2004). Examining the devastating 1995 Kobe earthquake in Japan, Shaw and Goda (2004) have shown that community networks were created and sustained in the aftermath. Nine years after the earthquake in Japan, the authors have examined whether the increase in civil society activities was sustained and found that many initiatives were sustained by strong government leadership and financial resources. In addition to the sus-

tainability of activities, they found that the volunteers who began to engage in recovery efforts in 1995 continued to interact with each other through celebrations and town hall meetings almost a decade after the disaster. While Shaw and Goda (2004, p. 28f.) have not explicitly examined the reasons for this continued interaction, they have mentioned that the city government played an essential role in facilitating community interaction. For example, cooperation between the Kobe city government and an NGO network led to the construction of a new assembly hall used for volunteer meetings and festivals. Thus, the involvement of civil society in urban planning and community rebuilding efforts by members of the city government was an essential factor in promoting relationships among volunteers in the city.

To sum up, factors driving networking during the mobilization phase were collaboration with the local government, reciprocity and previous networks, and the shared experience of harsh grievances during disasters. While these studies have indicated potential effects on increasing networking among organizations and groups, these were not systematic studies specifically interested in the lasting impact on volunteer activities and networks (but Shaw & Goda, 2004).

Factors Driving Networking, Interaction, and Cooperation

The above literature points to some critical dynamics that lead us to believe that mobilization periods can increase interaction and create new and strengthened networks in the long run. However, neither social movement nor volunteer and nonprofit studies provide sufficient information about the factors that promote or hinder the emergence of interorganizational or intergroup networks and sustained interaction after mobilization periods. Therefore, in what follows, I will provide a more general account of the factors and conditions that promote interorganizational and intergroup networking and sustained interaction outside of mobilization periods. While the literature engaging with networking and interaction dynamics does not focus on mobilization effects, they provide rich insights into mechanisms relevant to studying sustained interaction and networking.

Civil society scholars have discussed diverse conditions and factors contributing to forming and sustaining interorganizational networks. In what follows, I will discuss these factors and conditions organized around the three

themes I have identified: (i) opportunity structures, (ii) resources and capacity, and (iii) ideology and culture.

Political opportunity structures

Various studies have highlighted (local) opportunity structures as significant explanations for when and why organizations decide to collaborate and build network ties. Among the environmental opportunities and threats for organizations and groups to enter alliances and coalitions and create new or strengthen network ties are governmental funding, the professionalization of NGOs, and policy changes and repression (e.g., Baldassarri & Diani, 2007; Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Diani, 2003; Eggert, 2014; Hathaway & Meyer, 2023; McAdam, 1999; McCammon & Campbell, 2002; Obach, 2004; Reger, 2018; Rucht, 1989).

The first issue is government funding. Government funding is often highlighted as a factor that inhibits civic action and network formation. The idea that governments "crowd out" civil society initiatives by increasing public social spending is a widely recognized factor that inhibits civic action and coalition building (Gruber & Hungerman, 2007; Gundelach et al., 2010; Ostrom, 2000, p. 2). However, some studies show that government funding increases the chances of community building and interorganizational network formation (Bloemraad, 2005; Chung, 2005; Eggert, 2014). A Chung (2005) study found that social service agency funding helped Korean American nonprofits in Los Angeles form coalitions and funding networks. Another comparative study of Vietnamese and Portuguese immigrant organizations in Boston and Toronto similarly showed that material and symbolic resources provided by the Canadian government enabled the organizations in Toronto to build broad organizational infrastructures (Bloemraad, 2005).

In contrast, immigrant organizations in Boston suffered from a structural lack of funding. Bloemraad's (2005) findings emphasize that government funding structures enabled a significant growth of organizational capacity in immigrant communities. While these studies show how organizational capacity, membership, and activity levels in civil society are affected by government funding, it is not entirely clear in what context it helps or hinders interorganizational networks and sustained interaction.

Second, Baldassari and Diani (2007) have emphasized the professionalization of civil society, particularly of nonprofit organizations, as a threat to interorganizational networking. Specifically, they showed that an increase

in the professionalization of voluntary organizations in the United Kingdom and their participation in local politics led to more hierarchical networks in civil society. While networking was not actually reduced among professionalized organizations, others became less integrated. Thus, professionalization, sometimes even driven by governments that fund welfare organizations in countries like Germany and Sweden (Evers, 2005), can threaten diverse civil society networks. Baldassari and Diani (2007, p. 775) suggested that the mechanism behind this finding was mainly the fact that voluntary organizations could focus on more specific issues and did not need the "instrumental ties to a small number of central, highly influential actors within the sector".

Repression or policy changes are another political opportunity structure that can both inhibit and promote interorganizational networking (Meyer & Corrigall-Brown, 2005; Obach, 2010; Staggenborg, 1986). Meyer and Corrigall-Brown (2005) have argued that new political projects can create pressure to become more active and pool resources across organizations and groups. Examining the movement against the war in Iraq between 2002 and 2003, they showed that the threat of war in Iraq generated grievances that ultimately increased the need to build a broad coalition. While it is very costly for social movement organizations to engage in coalition building (i.e., less focus on their central issue), they are more likely to join a coalition when external threats such as war in another country, exist. As shown by the case of the 2002/2003 movement against the war in Iraq, external factors can increase the propensity of social movement organizations to cooperate in common cause (Meyer & Corrigall-Brown, 2005, p. 342).

Similarly, Staggenborg (1986) has argued that environmental threats provide a significant opportunity for organizations to engage in interorganizational cooperation. In her study of the pro-choice movement between 1966 and 1983, she found that during periods of intense threat from countermovement activists and politicians to overturn the legalization of abortion, organizations formed coalitions. However, she also pointed out that the opportunity to form coalitions while the organizations' primary issue is under attack could be the tipping point for coalition breakup, as ideological conflicts among coalition members could lead to the collapse of the coalition.

Resources and capacity

In addition to environmental opportunities and threats, resources and organizational capacity are frequently mentioned as explanations for why or why not organizations cooperate and build connections. Factors that are most commonly mentioned are financial resources, human resources, membership size, and leadership (e.g., AbouAssi et al., 2016; Bandy & Smith, 2005; Despard, 2017; Diani et al., 2010; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Hardy et al., 2003; Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005; Kim & Peng, 2018; McCammon & Campbell, 2002; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Morris, 1984; Nowy et al., 2015; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Robnett, 1997; Rose, 2000; Selden et al., 2006; Shumate et al., 2018; Staggenborg, 1986; Tsasis, 2009).

Concerning finances, scholars have assumed that organizations with a lot of revenue is shown to be less collaborative than those with fewer resources. Resource dependency theory has suggested that organizations must navigate their activities in uncertain terrains and thus depend on the information they gain from cooperation. Organizations with resource dependencies on external entities often incentivize cooperation and collaboration. Organizations may need to form alliances, partnerships, or other cooperative arrangements to secure the necessary resources. They also need financial and human resources to function. However, when an organization has enough financial means for staff, technologies, and projects, they are less inclined to cooperate (Guo & Acar, 2005; see also Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

However, recent evidence has highlighted that despite resource dependence, more financially stable organizations with more resources are more likely to collaborate. On the other hand, economically vulnerable organizations are less likely to collaborate, as it depends on whether an organization can collaborate, e.g., in terms of staff (Gazley & Guo, 2020, p. 227).

In addition, studies have also shown that collaboration also depends on the type of funding organizations receive. Private funding drives organizations to collaborate in contrast to the public (AbouAssi et al., 2016, p. 439; see also Irvin, 2007).

In addition, studies have highlighted that higher numbers of staff and members in an organization also drive the propensity for collaboration. In their study of environmental NGOs, AbouAssi et al. (2016) highlighted that organizations with more human capacity and technical resources were likelier to collaborate than other organizations. As collaborations and partnerships need to be planned and managed, NGOs with more staff are better equipped to

communicate with different partner organizations, seek new collaborations, and maintain existing ones. This effect was also evident when comparing the number of volunteers. The authors found that an NGO with 100 more volunteers was less likely to engage in partnerships than an organization with 10 more staff (AbouAssi et al., 2016, p. 444). But what about the various NGOs that operate with fewer than five employees? Kim and Peng (2018) have argued that small human service nonprofits in the United States need at least one or more full-time staff to engage in formal collaborations on an ongoing basis. They surveyed 248 small human service nonprofits in the United States with gross revenues of less than $500,000 in 2016. Similar to the findings of AbouAssi et al. (2016), the main reason for this minimal human resource need was that full-time staff are responsible for funding applications and partnership meetings. Volunteers often cannot maintain these activities for long periods. Thus, the professionalization of NGOs makes collaboration more likely. In this vein, Diani, Lindsay, and Purdue (2010) also showed that resources, particularly the size of an organization's membership, are a significant indicator of coalition participation. In a comparison of interorganizational networks in Bristol and Glasgow, they found that one factor determining coalition participation in a local organizational landscape, as opposed to a movement, was an organizations' ability to devote human resources, i.e., employees and volunteers, to coalition work. While movement identity was important within movement networks, human resources may be more critical in broader civic landscapes (Diani et al., 2010, p. 228f.).

Finally, a factor related to membership size and human resources is the leadership and staff of an organization. While the studies mentioned above have assumed that the size of staff, volunteers, and activists drive cooperation, a few studies have emphasized the importance of individual skills and the role of well-connected leaders (Bandy & Smith, 2005; Morris, 1984; Robnett, 1997; Rose, 2000; Staggenborg, 1986). For example, Rose (2000, p. 176) highlighted so-called "bridge builders" as people who advanced coalition building between the labor and environmental communities by creating dialogue and developing a shared vision. Furthermore, Robnett (1997) and Morris (1984) showed in their studies of the civil rights movement how actors and entities such as bridge builders, movement centers, and movement halfway houses played an important role in linking the movement's diverse constituencies. They emphasized that these actors not only initiated contact or dialogue but also provided vital resources such as workshops and knowledge to skilled leaders so that they could bring diverse groups together and coordinate collective action.

Ideology and culture

The factors mentioned above, and conditions regarding political opportunity structures, resources, and capacity can help answer the question of *when* organizations and groups are more likely to organize themselves and *why* they enter collaboration but not *with whom* they collaborate (Diani, 2015, p. 55ff.). Organizations' and groups' shared interests, ideological unity, and culture can further help to explain *with whom* organizations and groups want to collaborate. Since organizations are often embedded in existing networks, the knowledge they gain through being part of them determines whether they collaborate with specific organizations (Granovetter, 1973; Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). Based on previous ties, organizations can estimate whether they share values and align in ideology with potential partners. Thus, they understand common or competing goals (Atouba & Shumate, 2010; Diani, 1995, 2015). At the same time, preexisting cohesive clusters can keep organizations and groups from creating ties to others outside their circles. Cohesive clusters can thus hinder actors' ability to establish cooperative relationships with actors outside of those clusters (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999; Putnam, 2000).

While this view of network formation is more interest-oriented, many civil society scholars have also emphasized that these more rationalist notions of evaluating a potential partner are not the only ways in which individuals and organizations form ties in movements and movement communities (e.g., Obach, 2004; Rose, 2000), personal relations between key movement actors (e.g., Sabatier, 1988), regarding ideological compatibility (e.g., Kleidman & Rochon, 1997; McCammon & Campbell, 2002; Staggenborg, 1986), aligned ideology and community culture (e.g., Gongaware, 2010; Holland & Cable, 2002; Reed, 2023; Staggenborg, 2020; Taylor, 1989; Whittier, 1997).

Network formation is not necessarily a direct choice but results from how the network is structured and happens more often (Feld et al., 2021, p. 367). In this vein, Diani (2015) noted that network formation is a function of existing personal ties and collective experiences in collective action. He highlighted that

> "organizational forms of civil society are rarely planned in their entirety [...]. Networks stem from heterogenous decisions, taken by individual activists, regarding their multiple memberships, their involvement in collective activities, and their personal ties to fellow activists" (Diani, 2015, p. 14).

In this regard, activists decide with whom they collaborate based on their embeddedness in existing networks and previous experiences. Here, temporality becomes crucial in network formation and demolition (see Lichterman, 2021; Staggenborg, 2020). Over time, organizations and individuals forge personal relationships, develop a community culture, and learn whether their understanding of action is compatible with those of other organizations (see Diani, 1995, 2015).

Accordingly, whether organizations collaborate in one form or another also depends on activists' assessments of cultural compatibility, positive past experiences, and the quality of personal relationships. Assessments that activists make over time. For instance, a comparative study by Guenther (2010) on the formation of transnational ties between East German, Western German, and Swedish feminist groups in the early 1990s showed that whether these feminists liked each other was much more central to coalition building than cost-benefit considerations. After the German reunification, East German feminist groups at the local level intensified their relationships with western German and Swedish feminist groups because they had already established trusting ties with each other even before reunification in the 1980s. These groups got support for their work in Eastern Germany even before 1990 despite their differences concerning views on gender, action repertoires, and their relationship with the state. In essence, these groups from different political and local contexts developed a shared understanding of supporting each other and practicing feminist solidarity.

While these are national and transnational examples of coalition-building, Staggenborg (2020) and Lichterman (1995, 2021) indicated in their studies that liking each other and having a shared understanding of how to act as a community is similarly crucial in specific localities. For instance, Lichterman (1995) showed in his analysis of two environmental communities that they can have distinct cultural bases. Whereas more ethnic or highly localized groups are based on communitarian ties, other communities emphasize a personal, more individualized sense of responsibility. These two understandings of what it means to act for the community made it difficult for them to build alliances even though the ideology and goals matched.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I define the concept of local civic action communities and distinguish it from Staggenborg's (2013, 2020) related concept of social movement communities. Local civic action communities, comprising diverse actors, respond to novel local problems. These actors range from grassroots groups, community organizations, and sports clubs to church congregations, welfare organizations, and humanitarian organizations. They focus on localized issues that may be manifestations of global problems. Actors within local civic action communities aim to address specific local problems they have identified. Rather than working independently or in isolation, they interact, creating networks among the various actors and entities involved.

In the subsequent sections, I delve into existing studies on the relational effects of mobilization periods. While social movement, and voluntarism/nonprofit studies provide limited research in this regard, social movement scholars have offered fascinating insights into the interaction dynamics during mobilization periods. These scholars have demonstrated that interaction is most likely to be more intense and active during these periods.

Given the lack of research on interorganizational and intergroup networks and interaction dynamics in the post-mobilization period, the third section of this chapter focused on networking and interaction more broadly. I identified three themes from social movement, voluntarism, and nonprofit studies: political opportunity structures, resources and capacity, and ideology and culture. A literature review on these three themes revealed important insights regarding the conditions and how and with whom organizations and groups interact and collaborate. These themes improved my conceptual lens through which I analyzed the concrete drivers and obstacles to the development and survival of pro-refugee communities. However, it is essential to note that the three themes differ from the factors and conditions I identified and further theorized in chapters 5, 6, and 7. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, these factors and conditions relate to critical actors and the role of the brokerage; the resource, strategic, and cultural divergences between highly professionalized and more informal actors, and the potential for co-production and linking social capital produced among civil society and state.

Data and Methods

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the research design employed to answer whether and how the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the emergence and survival of new pro-refugee communities. The study adopts a comparative case analysis approach, examining four cases (medium-sized cities) selected based on the same phenomenon; each case experienced an enormous mobilization during the refugee reception crisis in 2015/16.

Overview

I operationalized the impact of the pro-refugee mobilization on the (potential) emergence and survival of pro-refugee communities by examining the networks and interaction dynamics among civil society organizations and groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, they are communities in a specific locality composed of individuals, organizations, and groups, as well as alliances, coalitions, and similar entities, that are engaged in civic action. These communities seek to address specific local problems that they have identified. Rather than working independently or in isolation, they interact, creating networks among the various actors and entities involved.

I measured the development and survival of pro-refugee communities as new and strengthened networks among the organizations and groups actively involved in the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 in their respective city. Thus, in my research design, I focused on those organizations and groups actively involved in the pro-refugee mobilization. I wanted to understand whether and to what extent these organizations and groups developed new, and more extensive networks and new and more extensive forms of interaction. I chose four medium-sized German cities as case studies, each

characterized by its distinct local civic landscape, all having undergone the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16.

Based on the results regarding community emergence and survival, I explored the reasons for the main findings: What factors and conditions drove the emergence of pro-refugee communities in the positive cases, and what were the barriers? Using Scharpf's (2018, p. 26) "backward-looking hypotheses" approach, I started with the dependent variable, the results of my first research question. This approach allowed me to consider the phenomenon's complexity and analyze different factors and conditions that influenced the emergence and survival of pro-refugee communities in two of the four cases.

To delve into the drivers and barriers to the emergence of pro-refugee communities, I have adopted an embedded case study approach (see Yin, 2018). This approach hones in on distinct cases within a larger context – individual cities, each with its own unique local civic landscape. The common thread among these cases was their shared experience of pro-refugee mobilization, which constituted the larger phenomenon that I studied.

This embedded case study design facilitated the analysis and comparison of factors and conditions, including the local political environment, the structural components of each civic landscape, and the key players involved. These three factors resulted from my systematic data analysis, which was based on an inductive and deductive approach. By adopting the embedded case study approach, I explored to what extent these factors could be used to explain the emergence or lack of emergence of local civic action communities in the four cases. I will further justify these factors in the following empirical chapters. By focusing on the effects of pro-refugee mobilization on emergent pro-refugee communities, I aim to lay the groundwork for understanding the broader impacts of the mobilization period.

Since the research question is explorative, I chose qualitative methods to answer the question. The research question is particularly explorative as the effects of the pro-refugee mobilization and even other mobilization periods have yet to be explored on the local level, particularly regarding community building. As scholars such as Gerring (2009) and Yin (2018) have shown, such explorative studies are best done through in-depth qualitative case research. Qualitative research allowed me to explore the phenomenon of the pro-refugee mobilization and its lasting impacts in-depth and gain insights into the underlying factors that influenced it.

My research aims to uncover the effects of the mobilization and specifically illuminate the networking and interaction dynamics between organiza-

tions and groups. To achieve this, a more comprehensive understanding was necessary. Furthermore, such in-depth information is challenging to acquire solely through surveys and social media analyses alone. While survey methods may have provided data on institutionalized meetings and protests, they would have fallen short in capturing the evolution of these activities. In terms of quantitative network approaches, such methods would have been inadequate to gather network data, as many of the connections between organizations and groups are informal and not publicly available.

Given my focus on the 10 to 20 organizations and groups that were mobilized in 2015/16, it was more feasible to interview them. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, I combined my data collection to conduct a systematic qualitative content and pattern analysis, an ego-centered network analysis and to a smaller extent a review of documents.

In the following sections, I introduce the systematic case selection by discussing the rationale behind the case comparison and the procedure. Subsequently, I shed light on the systematic case selection and description, the data collection efforts, the data analysis, including interview and ego-network analysis, and ethical considerations. Finally, I show how I systematically analyzed the interview data using a combination of an inductive and deductive approach.

Systematic Case Selection and Case Description

As I have previously outlined, the empirical foundation of this book is a comparative case design. In the following, I will give a more precise outline of how the case selection was conducted. I will describe each case based on significant relevant characteristics. As I noted earlier, my book is based on a larger joint research project called "The Activated Civil Society". As a result, I conducted the case selection with my colleagues from the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research and the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at Osnabrück University—the entire process after the case selection, was conducted by myself, including data collection and analysis.

Design of case selection

Since the book explores the effects of the pro-refugee mobilization on local civil society, we selected the four cases based on the presence of a pro-refugee mobi-

lization in 2015/16. Due to the open-ended nature of this first research question and a lack of previous studies on the lasting effects of mobilization periods, the cases do not differ along specific variables to hold certain developments constant. The rationale behind the case selection was to identify four cities representing average German cities. As cities in Germany are diverse, we chose cities representative of specific structural features in the regions (Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Western Germany).

By selecting one city from each region of Germany, we aimed to capture the diversity of German cities while maintaining one common thread – the pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16. The case selection strategy optimized the external validity of our findings. Our case selection included cities representative of different regions and with typical demographic and economic characteristics. It ensured that the results could provide valuable insights for evaluating other cities with similar characteristics.

We also decided to focus on medium-sized cities (20,000 – 99,999 inhabitants). In case study research, there tends to be a disproportionate focus on larger cities. However, this focus is inconsistent with the routes of refugees, who are distributed relatively evenly across Germany and reach small and medium sized cities. The majority of people in Germany also live in small and medium-sized cities (5,000 – 99,999 inhabitants) (Deutscher Städtetag, 2022). Given the routes of refugees and the reality of the majority of people in Germany, it is essential to observe the impact of migration on civil society beyond the large urban centers. Furthermore, the smaller population size of medium-sized cities allowed us to interview all, if not most, of the key actors involved in refugee support and advocacy in each city.

Process of case selection

The systematic case selection was based on qualitative contextual analyses and expert interviews. The selection was carried out in two steps. First, we developed a pre-selection of 18 medium-sized cities in the north, south, west and east of Germany. The selection was based on a number of contextual factors, including migration-related diversity, economic situation and political context.

In a second step, my colleagues and I conducted expert interviews with 15 civil society representatives from different regions in Germany. We mainly looked for representatives of civil society organizations in each region and contacted them via email or phone. These interviews were crucial to pinpoint the cities that witnessed a pro-refugee mobilization around 2015/16. Not all

21 cities in our pre-selection actually experienced a pro-refugee mobilization around this time so the interviews were needed to make sure the necessary condition was met in each case.

Based on the extensive case research and expert interviews, we selected the final four cities that were representative of their region and experienced a pro-refugee mobilization. The final selection of cases fell on the following four cities: Loburg (East), Altenau (North), Neheim (West), and Lauda (South). The city names are anonymized as I justify under Data Analysis.

The final case selection

All four cities experienced an unprecedented pro-refugee mobilization around 2015. During this time, many different associations, groups, and organizations interacted with each other. In addition, the four cities share many key characteristics. For example, the size of the cities is similar, as is the local government, which is composed of parties that occupy the center of the political spectrum in Germany (social democratic or Christian conservative). Three of the four cities are the urban center of a more rural region with many surrounding small towns and villages. One of the cities, Neheim, is located in a more metropolitan region. At the same time, the city selection reflects regional variance. Loburg is in the east, Altenau in the north, Lauda in the south, and Neheim in the west.

Table 2: Case characteristics

Case	Pro-refugee mobilization	Socioeconomic characteristics	Political environment	Civic landscape
Loburg	Experienced pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16	Population: 30.000 Unemployment rate: 10% Migration-Related Diversity: 3%	Strongest party in regional elections (2014): Social Democratic Party (SPD) Mayor: Independent (center left) (2005–2020)	Limited institutional infrastructure in the area of migration (before 2015) Strong history of movements in the recent past

Case	Pro-refugee mobilization	Socioeconomic characteristics	Political environment	Civic landscape
Altenau	Experienced pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16	Population: 70.000 Unemployment rate: 12,2% Migration-Related Diversity: 8%	Strongest party in regional elections: Christian Democratic Party (CDU) Mayor: SPD, CDU (2017-)	Established municipal structures in the area of migration Limited history of movements, more traditional civil society
Lauda	Experienced pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16	Population: 20.000 Unemployment rate: 2,7% Migration-Related Diversity: 12%	Strongest party in regional elections: Citizens for Lauda Mayor: Citizens for Lauda (conservative) (since 2002)	Limited institutional infrastructure in the area of migration (before 2015) Very limited history of movements, more traditional civil society
Neheim	Experienced pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16	Population: 60.000 Unemployment rate: 15,9% Migration-Related Diversity: 15,9%	Strongest party in regional elections: Social Democratic Party (SPD) Mayor: SPD, Independent (economically liberal) (2016-)	Established municipal structures in the area of migration Strong movement history and traditional civil society

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data for this study is based on extensive interview material combined with field visits, participant observation, and the analysis of documents. I chose to base the empirical data on semi-structured interviews because this provided the opportunity to get a more interpersonal perspective on the case and also allowed me to adjust information and presumptions I had about the case (Kaufmann, 1999, p. 65f.; Loosen, 2016, p. 143f.). A semi-structured interviewing technique often involves a flexible interview guide with prepared questions (Loosen, 2016, p. 143f.).

I traveled to the four cities for field research and interviews eight times. Between 2020 and 2022, I conducted 83 semi-structured qualitative interviews in the four selected medium-sized cities, each lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviewees were volunteers, activists, and employees of organizations and groups, ranging from volunteer groups, grassroots associations, and political initiatives to sports clubs, church groups, and welfare organizations. In addition, I analyzed meeting minutes, brochures, and newsletters provided by the interviewees. I also attended some meetings where the actors active in refugee support and advocacy came together, such as Asylum Summits and council meetings. Before each interview, the interviewees signed a declaration of consent. On the declaration, the interviewees could decide whether the interview should be anonymized.

Interview phases

In the following section, I outline the interview collection process. As shown in Table 3, this process involved three interview phases: (1) interview sampling and expert interviews, (2) in-depth interviews, and (3) follow-up interviews.

Table 3: Interview phases

Phase 1: Interview sampling and expert interviews
Timeline: Spring and summer of 2020 · Identified key organizations and groups in each city through online research · Conducted 12 expert interviews with these key organizations and groups · Selected 10 – 17 organizations and groups in each city for Phase 2
Phase 2: In-depth interviews
Timeline: Fall 2020 to winter 2021 · Interviewed 10 – 17 organizations and groups in each city (57 interviewees) · Adapted to pandemic travel restrictions in Altenau by conducting most interviews via Zoom
Phase 3: Follow-Up interviews
Timeline: Spring and summer 2022 · Re-interviewed 14 respondents in each city · Aimed to gain insight into post-pandemic reactivation and new mobilization to support refugees from Ukraine. · Verified main hypothesis

I first identified key organizations involved in the 2015/16 pro-refugee mobilization through a combination of online research and expert interviews. I gathered contextual information from online and offline documents, local newspapers, blogs, social media, and organizations' websites. This helped identify active organizations during the mobilization. I then contacted 2–3 organizations in each city for interviews with their representatives, resulting in 12 expert interviews that provided deeper insights into the local civic landscape and dynamics during mobilization. These interviews also helped identify additional relevant organizations for further research.

I then conducted guided interviews with 10–17 central organizations per city, depending on saturation. These interviews, lasting 45 to 90 minutes, took place in diverse settings such as cafés, living rooms, parks, and organization facilities.

In the final phase, I conducted 2–5 follow-up interviews per case in 2022, which provided valuable insights into civil society reactivation post-pandemic and new mobilizations linked to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. These interviews also validated key hypotheses developed during the initial phase.

Interview guide

In preparation for these interviews, I developed a detailed interview guide based on the following six analytical dimensions: (i) Organization, (ii) Interorganizational networks, (iii) Vertical Networks, (iv) Political context, (v) Contextual conditions, and (vi) Effects of COVID-19 pandemic. The interview guide helped me to structure the interview process but allowed the openness to include new questions and leave others out (Loosen, 2016, p. 142f.). After every interview, I reflected on my interview technique and revised some of the questions in the interview guide.

The operationalization of the research question was structured into five analytical dimensions. First, I examined the engagement of key organizations and groups involved in refugee support during the 2015/16 mobilization, focusing on changes in their engagement and organizational structure between 2015/16 and 2020/2021. The second dimension centered on identifying the network connections of each organization, exploring the quality and extent of these relationships. This dimension formed the core of the ego-centered network analysis (see the data analysis section), and it constituted a major portion of the interview, beginning with questions about the organization's top 5 contacts and extending to detailed discussions on the nature and development of these relationships.

In the third dimension, I analyzed the political opportunity structures in each city, focusing on the relationships between the interviewed organizations and local government officials. The fourth dimension explored the political scope of pro-refugee engagement and participation in protest activities. In the fifth dimension, I assessed the state of the local civic landscape, particularly regarding mobilization potential, volunteer recruitment, and underlying conflicts or dominant interaction patterns not addressed in earlier parts of the interview. The final dimension investigated the impact of COVID-19-related contact restrictions on the activities of the organizations and groups.

To increase the validity of my findings, I cross-checked key information across interviews. I asked interviewees to elaborate on stories shared by others

and verified protest timelines and activities from online documents during the interviews.

Collection of documents

In addition to the qualitative interviews, I collected 31 documents with a total of 786 pages to support and verify some of the findings from my interviews. I collected online documents, meeting minutes, newsletters, and project reports for each case. People involved in the organizations and groups I interviewed provided the minutes and newsletters. I used the documents to gain more background information about the activities of the organizations and groups I interviewed and the events that took place in the city in the area of refugee support.

During my face-to-face interviews in each case, two to three interviewees per case showed me the facilities and places where most of the refugee support activities took place. For example, in Loburg, a volunteer at the Multicultural Café invited me to their weekly organizational meeting and dinner. In Lauda, a volunteer invited me to experience a German class for Ukrainian refugees. Since in Altenau and Neheim the daily support of refugees has largely disappeared, I did not have the same experiences. Nevertheless, I visited the office and community rooms used for migration counseling. I also attended a bimonthly meeting of the Migration Council in Loburg and a biennial Asylum Summit in Lauda.

Analysis

In total, external transcription services transcribed all 83 interviews, except for the 12 interviews conducted during the preparatory first phase. For these, I opted not to record but instead took detailed notes. I used the thematic analysis approach to analyze my interview data. For the coding process, I used the qualitative coding software MAXQDA. My approach was heavily based on a methodological approach by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), who define this type of qualitative analysis as follows: "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail." The method allowed me to approach my data in a very systematic way and helped me to sufficiently answer my two research questions.

I chose a combination of approaching the interviews inductively and deductively. This approach meant that I went back and forth between the theoretical literature and my empirical data. Since there was little previous research on my exact topic, I considered theoretical concepts from various fields of research. Particularly at the beginning of the analysis, I remained open to new themes and patterns I noticed in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83ff.)

Ethical Considerations

In my research, I made several ethical considerations to ensure the well-being and rights of my respondents and to uphold ethical standards. The three most important aspects were reflexivity and power dynamics, informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity (Wiles, 2013, p. 80ff.).

First, I acknowledge that my personal background may have influenced my perceptions of the actors and forms of interaction I observed during my interviews and field visits, as well as my interactions with my interviewees and the people I met. I came to the field of refugee support and advocacy as a young, white woman from West Germany with an academic background and native German language skills. Therefore, I was sensitive to three dimensions: the power dynamics between East and West Germany, between researcher and interviewee, and between a German citizen and a refugee without permanent residence status.

In addition to the reflexivity and power dynamics, I secondly ensured that I received informed consent by all interviewees. Thus, before each interview, I explained the purpose of my research and how I would deal with the results. I ensured that interviewees gave voluntary and informed consent.

Third, I addressed an issue that most interviewees were concerned about confidentiality and anonymity. Since most interviewees tended to prefer complete anonymity, I decided to anonymize all names, including the names of interviewees and organizations and groups. I also decided to extend anonymization to city names, given the smaller size of these cities and the existence of single prominent groups, such as a refugee-support group or a refugee council. Therefore, I pseudonymized the city names as well as the names of individuals and organizations. For the city names, I used old German city names that are no longer in use in the respective regions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the research design I developed to examine the impact of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 on the emergence and stabilization of pro-refugee communities. I operationalized the impact of the pro-refugee mobilization on community building by examining the sustained forms of interaction and the newly created and strengthened networks among organizations and groups active in refugee support and advocacy six years after the mobilization. Methodologically, I used a comparative case analysis approach based on qualitative, problem-focused interviews and extensive thematic and ego-centered network analysis. I also reviewed organizational reports, meeting minutes, and other documents. In an extensive case selection process involving contextual analysis and expert interviews, I selected four medium-sized cities as cases representing different regions of Germany. Each case experienced the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16.

The data I collected in each city was based on extensive interview material and 83 semi-structured qualitative interviews with volunteers, activists, and staff of organizations involved in refugee support and advocacy. The data also included site visits to the cities and participant observation of more formal roundtable discussions and other meetings. Before beginning the interview process, I developed a detailed interview guide based on six analytical dimensions. I conducted the interviews in three phases: initial contact and scheduling, primary interviews in 2020 and 2021, and some follow-up interviews in 2022.

In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed answer to my first research question regarding the lasting impact of pro-refugee mobilization on the lasting emergence of pro-refugee communities, which I will call pro-refugee communities for my specific research. I will describe and analyze the interaction and network dynamics patterns in each case, followed by a final comparison of the four cases.

Did it Stick? Where Pro-Refugee Communities did and did not Develop

In this chapter, I explore whether the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in Lauda, Loburg, Altenau, and Neheim. Each subchapter is devoted to a specific case, allowing for an in-depth examination of the unique developments after the pro-refugee mobilization. Through careful analysis, I explore where pro-refugee communities developed between 2015/16 and 2020/21 and where not. As noted in the introduction, pro-refugee communities are a case of local civic action communities, a concept I developed drawing on Staggenborg's (2013, 2022) social movement communities. Local civic action communities comprise of collective actors, ranging from small pro-refugee groups and church congregations to community organizations and more professionalized welfare organizations. They are a community of actors that engage in civic action, meaning they aim to address specific local problems they have identified. Instead of working in isolation, they interact, creating networks among the various actors involved. I measure the development and survival of pro-refugee communities by exploring the interaction between organizational and group actors. In particular, the analysis examines the changing patterns and forms of interaction between actors active during the pro-refugee mobilization and the quality and strength of relationships. In other words, the study analyzes the interaction dynamics at the local level and how they manifest in network changes among the investigated organizations and groups.

In this chapter and the following chapters, I will distinguish between formalized and more informal connections. More specifically, formal ties include relationships rooted in projects or financial arrangements that are formalized through formal agreements between two or more actors. On the other hand, informal ties revolve primarily around non-formal connections that stem mainly from personal ties between group members, like volunteers,

activists, and employees. These personal ties were typically forged during routine interactions, such as recurring summer parties, protests, or Migration Council meetings.

Below, I outline the potential for the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in 2015/16, comparing the development of such communities in Lauda and Loburg with the divergent outcomes in Altenau and Neheim. Central to this analysis is the pro-refugee mobilization in the four cases in 2015/16. This mobilization provided a favorable opportunity for the development of pro-refugee communities. However, as the mobilization waned from mid-2016 to mid-2017, developments diverged. Thus, I explore the interaction dynamics in Lauda and Loburg, where I observed sustainable pathways that materialized in the development and survival of pro-refugee communities. I then examine and outline developments in Altenau and Neheim, where communities failed to develop and sustain themselves after mobilization.

In the first subchapter, I examine the case of Lauda and its surrounding district, where the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 resulted in the development and survival of a pro-refugee community. This community consists of self-confident volunteers and activists and is characterized by a hybrid structure between formalized structures and very informal ways of interaction. Notably, establishing *Asylum with Us* as a registered association that functions as a volunteer-network and forming expert groups for integrating immigrants and refugees were important steps toward continued interaction and strengthening networks between different organizations and groups.

In the subsequent subchapter, I analyze the development and survival of a new pro-refugee community in Loburg. This community is characterized by the involvement of two self-confident key activists, the absence of highly professionalized organizations, and conflictual but close relationships with local government agencies. Events such as summer parties and café meetings significantly kept interaction going. In addition, more formalized forms of interaction, such as the Civic Council on Migration, which connects all relevant actors in refugee support, served as a constant meeting platform over several years.

In the third subchapter, I provide an analysis of the developments in Altenau, where I did not find new a pro-refugee community. Although there was a significant mobilization of individuals, organizations, and groups during the refugee reception in 2015/16, civil society actors involved in refugee support did not establish lasting interaction routines that manifested in new and strengthened networks. In particular, the dominance of professionalized organizations

such as welfare organizations and the lack of trust between local civil society actors and the local government hindered the development of a pro-refugee community.

Finally, I analyze the developments in Neheim, where the pro-refugee mobilization did not lead to a new pro-refugee community. While there was an unparalleled solidarity with refugees in 2015/16, sustained routine forms of interaction did not evolve. I find that mistrust between local government officials, volunteers and activists, and the highly professionalized civil society response in 2015/16 hindered their sustained development and survival.

Lauda: The Development and Survival of a Pro-Refugee Community

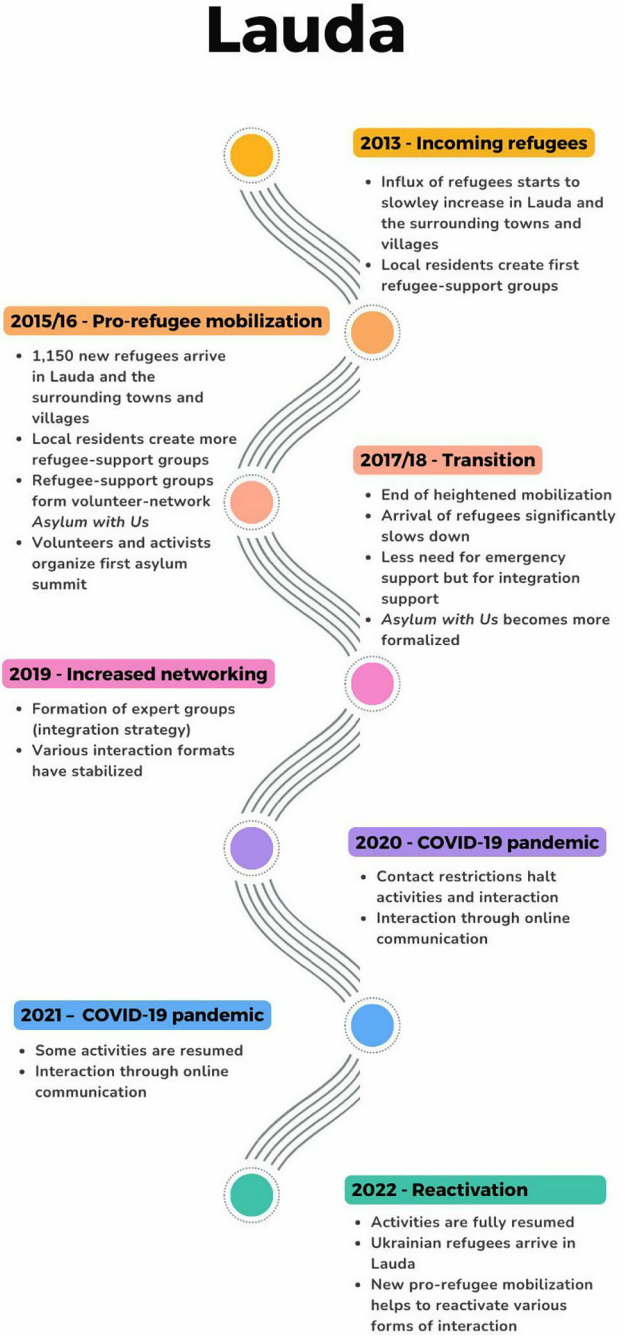
In this subchapter, I explore the effects of the pro-refugee mobilization in Lauda. Specifically, I show how the pro-refugee mobilization catalyzed the development and survival of a new pro-refugee community. In the following, I first outline the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. Second, I discuss how organizations and groups interacted during that period and how these loose interactions became more structured routine forms of interaction and networks over the six years. Note that the timeline in Figure 1 illustrates developments between 2013 and 2022. Table 4 provides an overview of the key players.

Refugee support and interaction dynamics in 2015/16

The influx of 1,150 refugees around 2015/16[1] resulted in significant activity in the civic landscape of Lauda and surrounding towns and villages throughout the district (Destatis, 2017, 2019). Interviewees described this support as a response to the state of emergency that many refugees were in when they arrived in the district. There was an urgent need for various support, including medical appointments, immigration procedures, language classes, financial assistance, and trauma support.

1 Interviewees in Lauda made clear that most of the influx happened around 2015. However, the number is based on a data set that provides data for 2014 and 2016.

Figure 1: Timeline Lauda (2015–2022)



The large increase in refugees in Lauda and the surrounding towns and villages began as early as 2013 and reached its peak in 2015. The district of Lauda experienced an initial surge of refugee arrivals in 2013 and 2014, which led to the formation of seven volunteer-led refugee-support groups throughout the district. Lauda's refugee-support group, founded in 2013 by approximately 15 volunteers, had approximately 180 active participants by the spring and summer of 2015/16, making it one of 28 such refugee-support groups spread across the district. A prominent volunteer named Luisa shared her amazement at the remarkable turnout at the group's first meeting, attesting to an unexpected surge of interest and support.

She and other members of the refugee-support group organized a large informational meeting for interested volunteers and were glad that so many people showed up. Luisa found it amazing that so many people were interested: "[…] In our town and in the neighboring towns, there were actually more people than you would have thought. […] depending on the size of the town, we set up maybe 20 chairs and then 60 people came." She recalled that she had never seen so many people wanting to help in her town.

These refugee-support groups operated in a self-organized manner, with no formal membership, established leadership, or set guidelines. As Pastor Stephan, one of the founders of Lauda's refugee-support group in the district, aptly noted, the only tie that bound them together was an email list. In Lauda, the new refugee-support group was disconnected from the more established organizations and groups. Luisa explained that they were hardly involved in helping refugees:

> "The established associations, like the fire brigade or the football club or musicians, members of traditional costume associations, were not involved and were not represented in our group. I don't know how it is with the others, but the members of these really established associations were in our group."

While Lauda's refugee-support groups took primary responsibility for providing direct aid and relief, some organizations became involved in the cause. Select sports clubs, for example, welcomed refugees to their teams by offering free memberships to refugees who temporarily occupied their gymnasium in 2015. Although this support proved temporary, the sports club subsequently continued integrating refugees into their teams. Markus, the chairman of one prominent sports club in Lauda, recalled that he and other club members met the volunteers who had been involved in supporting refugees for a few years:

> "These volunteers started offering recreational activities for refugees. And that's when the sports club was asked to help. Our members were asked if they wanted to get involved."

This support did not last long, but the sports club continued to include refugees in its teams in the years that followed.

Table 4: Overview of key actors in Lauda

Name[2]	Role	Affiliated Organization/Group
Luisa	Volunteer	Refugee-support group, Lauda
Stephan	Volunteer and Pastor	Refugee-support group, Lauda/ Volunteer-network "Asylum with Us"/ Protestant Church
Daniel	Staff	Protestant welfare organization 2
Markus	Chairman	Sports club
Anne	Volunteer	Refugee-support group (neighboring 3 town)/Volunteer-network "Asylum with Us"
Maria	Volunteer and Activist	Refugee-support group (neighboring town 2/ Volunteer-network "Asylum with Us"
Jana	Volunteer	Refugee-support group (neighboring town 2)
Bettina	Volunteer	Refugee-support group (neighboring district)
Dieter	Activist	Organizer of first Asylum Summit
Tobias	Director	Protestant welfare organization 1
Ellen	Former volunteer, now staff	Asylum with Us

The local branches of the major Christian welfare organizations initially stayed on the sidelines. The local government initially took over the care of the refugees and later transferred this task to the welfare organizations due

2 Names are anonymized.

to the increasing demand. Daniel, an employee at a Protestant welfare organization, recalled that local government officials provided most of the services to refugees. They only later transferred these responsibilities to the welfare organizations:

> "So, in the beginning, in 2015/16, most of the formal migration counseling was still done by people from the city or the local government. And gradually the burden became so heavy that the officials said 'We can't do all this anymore'. And so, they transferred the migrant counseling services to a few welfare organizations with local branches in the district."

As a result, the local branch of the Protestant welfare organization opened a shelter for unaccompanied minor refugees.

Network development in Lauda and the district followed a dual path: First, refugee-support groups pooled their efforts by creating the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*, consisting of all 28 refugee-support groups of the district. Second, by organizing state-wide Asylum Summits, Lauda's refugee-support group expanded its connections with other volunteer and activist groups in refugee support beyond the district. Before 2015/16, interactions had been sporadic, often through Pastor Stephan.

When the number of refugees peaked in 2015/16, and the refugee-support groups in the district of Lauda grew significantly, the groups began to reach out to each other. Previously, they had no real contact with each other, except for some very informal relationships through Pastor Stephan, who had initiated the formation of three different groups in the district.

That changed in 2015. Within a few weeks, they shared some best practices on how to deal with local labor and immigration authorities and shared knowledge on asylum law. Based on these initial experiences, the volunteers and activists from the different groups decided it was time to create a more formal network. Maria, one of the volunteers, recalled that Stephan, the pastor who had initiated the creation of the first group in Lauda and some groups in the district, had supported the idea of joining forces. Other interviewees, such as Bettina were happy about his networking efforts: "This changed so much, we finally got to know each other."

Thus, in 2015/16, all groups met in Lauda and founded the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*, first as an informal network and later as a registered association – in German "Verein" – for funding reasons. Since the 28 refugee-support groups were repeatedly in conflict with the local government, exchange

was needed. The volunteers thought they would have more power if they joined forces.

Volunteers in the new *Asylum with Us* volunteer-network organized regular coordination meetings. Each group had two volunteer coordinators who met every other week. Anne remembered how the coordinator roles were created:

> "These refugee-support groups are quite heterogeneous. They all have the motivation to help, but they do it differently. So, there were tensions very quickly and it became clear that we needed one or two people per group in the district to be the contact person. That's how the coordinator positions were created. […]. We discussed what was going well and what was going badly, how many refugees there were in each town and what countries the refugees came from."

Regarding the role of the coordinator, Pastor Stephan said in a self-published report that a coordinator identifies ideas and seeks individuals to bring them to life. The role also includes facilitating connections among people and providing motivation and support (Anonymized 2018: 08)[3]. In other words, a coordinator was the kind of informal leader that many grassroots movement groups have. At the biweekly coordination meetings, the volunteers exchanged information about the latest developments in German asylum law and about individual refugees who needed specific support, such as legal or medical assistance. In addition, their awareness of the shared struggles with local government agencies rose. Overall, the collaboration between the 28 groups emphasized their struggles.

The refugees who had arrived in the district of Lauda since 2013 suffered from various insecurities, including difficulties in finding adequate housing and in establishing a life. The main reasons for these struggles were the pressure of future deportations and the lack of work permits provided by the regional state government. This problematic situation also affected many volunteers who had developed close friendships with refugees and put so much effort into this work. These efforts included daily visits to refugee shelters, group and family homes, and crisis meetings.

As a result of these deep struggles experienced by refugees, volunteers, and activists at *Asylum with Us*, a small group of volunteers and activists created

3 This quote is from an online report that Pastor Stephan published on his website about *Asylum with Us*. That is why I anonymized the author.

the first Asylum Summit, a political organizing meeting, in 2015. While these Asylum Summits were initially organized at the district level and took place in Lauda, they soon expanded their scope to include the entire region. Luisa, one of the first volunteers in a neighboring village of Lauda, recalled how the refugee-support groups created the first Asylum Summits at one of the coordinator meetings:

> "At one of the coordinators' meetings of Asylum with Us, we decided that next time we would also invite other refugee-support groups that are not in the district of Lauda, but nearby."

At the first Asylum Summit, the coordinators of *Asylum with Us* met other volunteers in the region who had also started to expand their networks. Luisa told me one of them was Dieter:

> "Dieter had already started to network in his district [a neighboring district of Lauda district]. He had created this homepage to map all the refugee-support groups in the whole state."

Luisa said that the participants were excited about creating more regular meetings with volunteers and activists beyond the district of Lauda:

> "So, at the summit, he (Dieter) collected the addresses of our groups. Then we had the idea that we really should network more continuously beyond the district. That was actually the first asylum summit in Lauda, which we developed further, because we then invited more and more groups, until now we have invited groups from the entire region."

This is how the regular Asylum Summits in the region came about.

By creating the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* and the regular Asylum Summits, the refugee-support group in Lauda and the groups throughout the district built new connections among themselves and with similar groups throughout the region. These new connections were based on the shared experience of fighting for refugee rights and supporting and getting to know refugees in their everyday lives. In contrast to the extensive networking efforts with other refugee-support groups, the Lauda group developed few loose connections with other organizations around 2015. These connections developed between individual volunteers and some employees of the welfare

organizations who had just started to work in the refugee support field for a few months in 2015. In the next part, I will explore the further development of these connections and focus more on the secondary actors who began engaging with the issue around 2015.

Exploring the development of the pro-refugee community (2017–2019)

In the following, I examine the further development of the network connections between civil society organizations and groups. I show how the interactions among the refugee-support groups and with other civil society actors turned into more routine interactions and more formalized ties.

Around 2017, the arrival of refugees slowed down significantly. While there was less urgency for initial emergency assistance in 2017, interviewees who were still actively involved in helping refugees referred to this phase as the integration phase in contrast to the emergency phase in 2015/16. During this new integration phase, many volunteers withdrew from groups. The reasons for shrinking volunteer groups were varied. Some volunteers wanted to become more involved in another area or felt their support was no longer needed. Others were exhausted by the often frustrating and challenging nature of volunteering. Our interviewees reported experiences of frustration, particularly about how local government authorities dealt with refugees. For example, one of the volunteers, Anne, told me:

> "A lot of people said, 'I can't take it anymore, I'm frustrated, I'm going to quit.' There are really a lot of people who have thrown in the towel because we're all tilting at windmills because the asylum policy has become so strict in our region."

Given the dwindling number of volunteers, the conflicts with the local government officials, and the general disappointment with the national asylum policy, the hardcore of volunteers and activists decided to formalize and professionalize the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* further. This formalization and professionalization mainly consisted of transforming *Asylum with Us* into a registered association and acquiring the resources for a small staff. At the same time, the volunteers and activists insisted on maintaining many of the informal structures that defined the network.

The volunteers and activists of *Asylum with Us* created this hybrid association because they were first confronted with the fact that many volunteers were

withdrawing from refugee support work. Against this backdrop, they knew they needed more resources to fund a small staff to take over some of the coordination tasks that volunteers had been doing, sometimes for years. Second, they wanted to be able to rent space, apply for training from social service agencies, and apply for project funding from social service agencies and churches. All this was only possible if they made *Asylum with Us*, a registered association. While many registered associations have a more institutionalized framework of a formal membership association, the volunteer-network remained very informal regarding membership and formal responsibilities. None of the volunteers and activists became members or took on formal roles in the associations. Instead, they were still primarily connected through email lists.

Shortly after *Asylum with Us* became a registered association in 2017, the volunteers and activists worked on getting funding for a full-time position and some projects they had wanted to pursue for a while. Pastor Stephan, the volunteer of the first hour, discovered that the regional government was promoting a new funding line that would provide funds for paid volunteer coordinators. He told me in an interview that he knew about the latest funding line from other regional districts. He also knew that the welfare organizations in the district had some funds available for smaller projects. In the interview, he said:

> "I just put one and one together and thought, 'Let's put these funds together and create one or even two [volunteer coordinator] positions out of them'. When I suggested it, everyone was on board."

By "everyone", Pastor Stephan meant the four Christian welfare organizations working in the district that he already knew from his work with refugees. He also suggested that the local government had to request funding from the regional government formally. Stephan convinced all these actors that the local government would apply for the funds, and the four welfare organizations would each contribute additional funds to pay for a second paid volunteer coordinator for *Asylum with Us*.

While there was no disagreement on whether to provide funding for two volunteer coordinators, there was disagreement on whom the two coordinators would report. The local government officials involved in the negotiations initially wanted to employ the two volunteer coordinators directly. However, this proposal created considerable tension. The idea that the local government could supervise the two volunteer coordinators caused alarm and resistance among the volunteers. For them, this was an impossible proposal. They told me

that they felt that they had built up a great deal of independence over the years, which they did not want to give up under any circumstances. In any case, they often felt that the local government viewed them as henchmen. For example, Ellen recalled that she and other volunteers feared that this direct connection to the local government would keep political involvement low if the local government directly employed the coordinators. Since *Asylum with Us* had been a registered association for a few months, they could have hired the volunteer coordinators themselves, but the local government vehemently opposed this idea. After some debate, the compromise was that two welfare organizations hired the two volunteer coordinators. Funding for the positions came from regional and local government resources and the four welfare organizations.

According to the interviewees, it is clear that this joint venture intensified the relationship between *Asylum with Us* and the four welfare organizations. After the volunteer-network got to know the representatives of these organizations through the mobilization in 2015/16, the contact remained very informal and limited to individuals. Yet, according to several interviewees, the formalization of the connection in 2017 also created more trust. For example, Pastor Stephan said:

> "Over time, we have become very grateful that they [the four welfare organizations], which previously had no contact at all with the issue of migration, took on so much responsibility and invested their own money in us."

The representatives of these welfare organizations were also enthusiastic about the project. Tobias, the director of one of the two Protestant welfare organizations, emphasized in the interview that the joint project was an excellent opportunity to build a more robust civil society network and share resources. In particular, he stressed the need for local civil society actors to speak with a solid and confident voice on the issue of asylum:

> "If we, the welfare organizations, speak with one voice, then the local government cannot simply ignore us. That's why the joint project is such a great opportunity to share our resources. Not only our organizational resources, but also the resources of Asylum with Us and the volunteers. We all have to work together."

Overall, the joint project was successful in the eyes of those interviewed. Pastor Stephan assumed one of the volunteer coordinator roles after funding was

secured, taking a two-year break from his pastoral ministry. In addition, the welfare organizations hired another volunteer coordinator.

These two volunteer coordinators relieved some of the most dedicated volunteers whose involvement had become almost a full-time job. They also developed many projects where volunteers could provide concrete support to refugees. For example, they offered cultural interpreters to institutions through their website, advertised for participation in the Integration Advisory Board, or organized the cross-district project Vocational Training Support for refugees who were starting an apprenticeship and needed support. *Asylum with Us* also has rooms for the weekly café and language classes.

In addition to the bi-annual Asylum Summits that were constantly organized between 2019 and 2022, various civil society actors established an integration strategy for the Lauda district. This endeavor was motivated by the lack of a comprehensive integration strategy for the district at that time. Volunteers, activists, and staff members at *Asylum with Us* took the initiative in 2019 to establish expert groups that would eventually develop such an integration strategy. While it is typically the responsibility of government authorities to formulate official integration strategies, *Asylum with Us* successfully persuaded the local government to collaborate with civil society actors in developing such a strategy.

Over the subsequent three years, a diverse array of actors contributed to developing this integration strategy. Although a smaller core group played a pivotal role in steering the process, the participation of several hundred individuals was instrumental in providing input and insights. These expert groups encompassed various action areas and crafted specific measures to enhance the integration of immigrants and refugees in the district's future.

The composition of these expert groups was notably diverse, encompassing volunteers, activists, employees from welfare organizations, local government representatives, refugees, and individuals with migration backgrounds. Seven expert groups were established, each dedicated to distinct topics such as society, religion, mobility, education, and health.

One coordinator from the group focused on society and religion and shed light on their discussions, particularly regarding Muslim funerals. They convened meetings that included imams and pastors to address the issue of why Muslims in the district were still sending their deceased loved ones to Turkey for burial rather than being interred locally following Islamic traditions. Through their deliberations within the expert groups, they discovered that there was only one cemetery in the entire district where Muslims could be

buried according to Islamic law. Consequently, this expert group was determined to include a policy recommendation advocating for additional Muslim cemeteries within the new integration strategy.

Stress-test: The pro-refugee community during the pandemic (2020–2022)

In the following, I briefly outline how the pro-refugee community in Lauda dealt with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and survived this immense stress test. As discussed in the introduction, civil society in Germany experienced significant challenges during the pandemic, as personal contact was at times reduced to a minimum, and activities were suspended. Since I began to conduct the interviews during the pandemic, the topic of the pandemic and its impact on refugee support and advocacy activities were naturally part of the interviews. The interviews in Lauda clearly show that the pro-refugee community survived the stress test of the pandemic, as the follow-up interviews in 2022 highlighted the community's survival and continuation.

Let me first outline how the effects of the pandemic manifested in activities and interaction dynamics of the pro-refugee community in Lauda before I briefly discuss how they dealt with these challenges. The contact restrictions imposed on all residents in Germany meant that members of the pro-refugee community were no longer allowed to meet in groups. As a result, central locations such as the community café remained closed to their activities and interactions. Group German classes, the annual summer festival, and meetings with local government officials were suspended in 2020. This new situation was very tragic for many people who had been involved in the community for several years and for refugees who were still dependent on support. This is how Anne, founder of a small refugee-support group near Lauda remembered it in the follow-up interview in 2022:

> "That was a real turning point. You have to say that […]. For example, we had to stop our German courses. […] This technical German is very difficult, especially for the trainees. The training is not so easy. They [the refugees] need a lot of support."

While the contact restrictions imposed by the pandemic severely limited the community's activities and interactions, especially during the first year of the

pandemic, community members also found ways to cope. The use of digital communication and expanding activities were critical.

First, many volunteers and activists at *Asylum with Us* just as for the expert group members used online tools such as Zoom to keep in touch. While some interviewees acknowledged that online communication was not a substitute for face-to-face meetings, they felt these online tools were necessary for maintaining contact. Jana, a volunteer from a refugee-support group in a neighboring town, told me that she hadn't met her friends from the community in 2020. She said: "We only met on the phone or through Zoom. WhatsApp is also very important to communicate with the refugees […]. That was our communication for the time being." Against this backdrop, the expert groups for developing the integration strategy for the entire district continued. The monthly online meetings felt more exhausting for their participants but proceeded as planned. Similarly, the region-wide Asylum Summits that developed around 2015 continued to occur online. When I participated in one of these Asylum Summits online in 2021, there were approximately 150 people for 6 hours in one Zoom call.

Second, in 2020/21, two employees of *Asylum with Us*, along with volunteers and activists, expanded the services offered by the volunteer-network. The project aimed to help children and adolescents from socially disadvantaged families in the district who could not participate in online classes due to a lack of access to a laptop, regardless of whether they were from refugee families or not. According to Ellen, a former volunteer and current *Asylum with Us* staff member, laptops were needed. She stated: "Our computer project was initiated to provide children with access to computers at home" As a result, *Asylum with Us* began collecting laptop donations, and through their campaign, they recruited new people interested in the work of *Asylum with Us*. Ellen told me they were interested in getting more involved in the refugee issue, something some of them had not considered before.

The pandemic-related contact restrictions were burdensome for volunteers, activists, and employees in the pro-refugee community, as their main activities came to a halt or changed drastically in 2020. However, many adapted to the restrictions after a few months and began using digital communication tools. They addressed local issues, such as the lack of laptops for children and adolescents who needed them for online school work.

When I interviewed community members again in 2022, they resumed their activities. They transferred many activities back to their original in-person formats but conveniently kept some online meetings. The community

café was reopened, the German classes retook place, and activists were planning another Asylum Summit, this time in person. Pastor Stephan expressed excitement about the expert groups completing the integration strategy for the district after two and a half years of collaboration. They convinced the local government to establish an integration advisory board for the district. This was a direct result of the expert groups whose members emphasized the importance of such an advisory board to address topics such as racism and integration as significant local policy issues.

Overall, the pro-refugee community in Lauda faced significant challenges during the pandemic. Despite these obstacles, they persevered and emerged stronger from the pandemic. One contributing factor was the increase in Ukrainian refugees, which heightened the demand for refugee support and advocacy in the district. However, this topic is beyond the scope of this book and will only be addressed in the concluding chapter.

Insight into the network structure

In the previous sections, I described the formation of a pro-refugee community that emerged in Lauda from the pro-refugee mobilization around 2015. As detailed in the last section, this community's development and survival is characterized by the evolution of loose and more structured interaction routines. These interactions manifested in new and strengthened networks between the organizations and groups in refugee support. In the following section, I offer another perspective on these network dynamics by presenting them as network maps. With the network maps, I want to illustrate how the network ties of key actors were affected by their involvement in the mobilization six years after the mobilization in 2015.

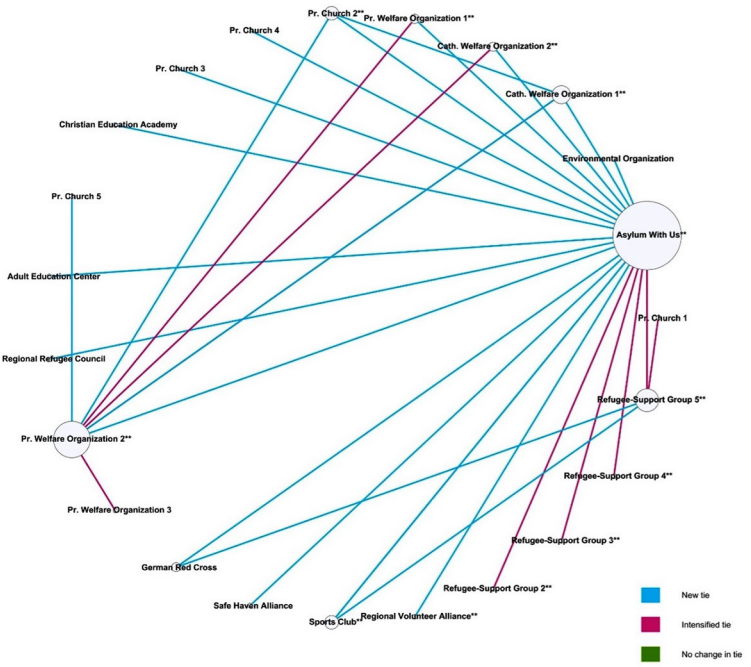
The network map in Figure 2 shows all the key actors that are part of the pro-refugee community (marked with two asterisks **) and their links to other organizations and groups that they are connected to through their work in support of refugees. The network map shows that most ties between organizations and groups are new, with some intensified ties here and there. New connections are those that did not exist before 2015. In other words, these are ties between organizations or groups that developed due to interactions during and after the pro-refugee mobilization. In addition, intensified ties mean that the organizations and groups were already connected before the pro-refugee mobilization. Still, their ties intensified during the mobilization period and in the

years that followed. New and intensified ties represent the community that developed between 2015/16 and 2020/2021.

The volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* shows precisely this dynamic. While *Asylum with Us* started as a network of all 28 refugee-support groups in the district of Lauda, *Asylum with Us* became an independent actor with its group of core volunteers, a small staff, and a meeting space. As you can see from the map, this organization developed a variety of connections with different organizations and groups in Lauda, the district, and the region.

In addition to the network effects, the visualization in Figure 2 shows that the pro-refugee community includes different types of actors. In this respect, the community consists of refugee-support groups, welfare organizations, church congregations, a sports club, an environmental group, a refugee council, a regional volunteer alliance, and a few other actors. What is unique about the pro-refugee community in Lauda compared to the one in Loburg is that the community is not only rooted in the city of Lauda. On the contrary, the community extends to the neighboring districts and even to the regional level. For example, the community includes all the refugee-support groups that have sprung up in the district and are organized in the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*. I only included the three refugee-support groups I interviewed in the network map. In addition, this community includes organizations and groups that have worked with both *Asylum with Us* and the local government to create the first-ever integration strategy for the district. The community also includes the faction of refugee-support groups from neighboring districts that meet at least twice a year for the Asylum Summits.

Figure 2: Network changes in Lauda



The pro-refugee community in Lauda prevailed

To summarize, this subchapter explored the development of the pro-refugee community in Lauda and its district six years after the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. The increase in the number of refugees in Lauda encouraged the creation of volunteer-led refugee-support groups throughout the district. These informal groups initially provided emergency support, which included medical care, language classes, financial support, trauma counseling, and more. When the volunteers and activists reached their capacities, they combined the efforts of the 28 refugee-support groups and created the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*. While the connections between the groups were initially very informal, creating *Asylum with Us* formalized these connections to some extent. By 2017, the situation had changed. Due to volunteers' and activists' fatigue, support efforts were shrinking. A core group of volunteers and activists turned *Asylum with Us* into a registered association to stop the

decline of refugee support activities. In terms of its structure, *Asylum with Us* became a hybrid due to its formal status and still a very informal organization with flat hierarchies. In 2017, *Asylum with Us* partnered with local welfare organizations and the government to secure resources. By 2019, key activists at *Asylum with Us* launched expert groups in collaboration with the local government to develop an integration strategy. These groups included diverse participants and aimed to improve the integration of immigrants and refugees. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic severely challenged the survival of the pro-refugee community, the members of the community were able to push through this stress test and take up their activities once the restrictions were lifted. In summary, this subchapter highlights the development and survival of a pro-refugee community in Lauda driven by the efforts of volunteers and activists, the collaboration between informal groups and professionalized organizations, and the opportunities for co-production with the local government.

Loburg: The Development and Survival of a Pro-Refugee Community

In this subchapter, I discuss the evolution and survival of a new pro-refugee community in Loburg and the dynamics that led to its development. This analysis highlights the emergence of initial interactions around 2015/16 that evolved into more routine interactions and more formalized network structures over the six-year period. First, I outline the situation during the pro-refugee mobilization around 2015/16 and how different groups and organizations interacted. In a second step, I shed light on how these initial interactions during the heightened mobilization evolved into persistent networks. Note that the timeline in Figure 3 illustrates developments between 2015 and 2022. Table 5 provides an overview of the key players.

Figure 3: Timeline Loburg (2015–2022)

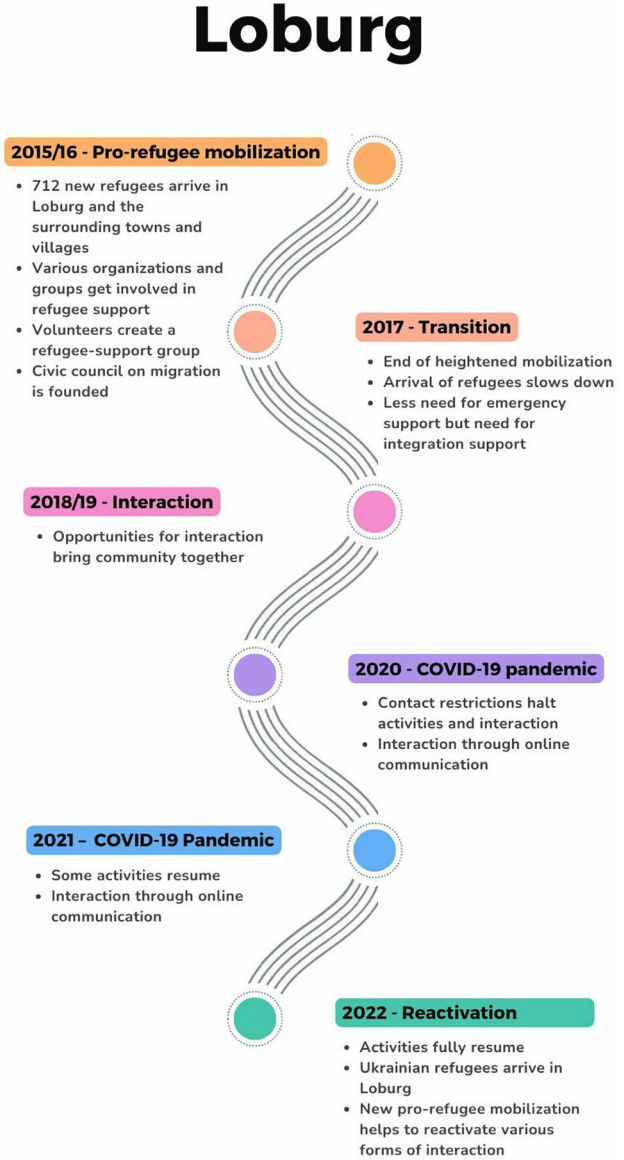


Table 5: Overview of key actors in Loburg

Name[4]	Role	Affiliated Organization/Group
Lukas	Volunteer	Local business network
Thomas	Activist and Spokesperson/ Manager of refugee shelters	Civic Alliance "Unified"/Regional management of refugee shelters
Lisa	Activist/Director/Trained Lutheran pastor	Grassroots association "In Action"
Daniela	Volunteer	Refugee-Support group "Solidarity 4 Refugees"
Amir	Volunteer and Café manager	Community café
Herbert	Volunteer	Refugee-support group "Solidarity 4 Refugees"
Ali	Volunteer	Muslim prayer association
Peter	Chairman	District sport association
Christian	Chairman	Local sports club
Anna	Social worker and Volunteer	Loburg's refugee shelter
Jacob	Staff	Grassroots association "In Action"
Johannes	Staff	Regional anti-racism organization

Refugee support and interaction dynamics in 2015/16

In the following section, I will discuss the impact of the pro-refugee mobilization around 2015/16 on the network connections between the groups and organizations active in refugee support in Loburg. In doing so, I emphasize how the first interactions between the groups came about that would develop into closer networks in the following years. Before discussing network changes, I describe the overall situation in the civic landscape during the mobilization. The influx of 712 refugees around that year[5], constituting a 180% increase compared to previous periods, caught local authorities and citizens in Loburg unprepared (Destatis, 2017, 2019).

4 Names are anonymized.

5 Interviewees in Loburg made clear that most of the influx happened around 2015. However, the number is based on a data set that provides data for 2014 and 2016.

Similar to developments across Germany, the influx of refugees in Loburg posed considerable challenges. The local government struggled to manage the housing and welfare needs of the new arrivals. Although the government had delegated the management of refugee shelters to a regional entity, local agencies, including immigration and employment offices, remained responsible for refugee services. The challenges identified by my interviewees encompassed inadequate family housing, insufficient public transportation and access to shelters, and local residents' skepticism and opposition towards refugees.

Civil society responded to these challenges by providing essential support and addressing the growing skepticism of the local population. Their efforts entailed furnishing refugees with necessities, fostering interpersonal connections, and engaging in political advocacy to counter skeptical or even xenophobic sentiments, particularly with the emergence of the far-right party called Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Volunteers and activists exhibited remarkable dedication, offering substantial support to fulfill refugees' basic needs during 2015/16. Lukas, a volunteer from the local business network, was astounded by the wave of support: "I was so impressed by […] how many people were willing to take a stand and actually get involved in supporting refugees." He thought this level of support might be expected for a natural disaster but not for a surge in immigration: "In a flood, it would have been normal for people to help. But in 2015/16, many people could have avoided the problem. It would also have been possible not to seek contact with the refugees." While such levels of support might have been expected during a natural disaster, their presence during the immigration surge was remarkable. Thomas, a prominent figure in Loburg's civic landscape, shared this sentiment. As both the district's refugee shelter manager and a spokesperson for the Civic Alliance *Unified*, Thomas interacted extensively with the first volunteers. In the interview, he recounted that people came to the refugee shelters to do something: "At the very beginning, in 2015/16, a lot of people suddenly had so much motivation and drive and went to the refugee shelters". He further underscored that during 2015/16, the ten refugee shelters in the district of Loburg became hubs for volunteers and activists.

Overall, there were two ways to get involved in helping refugees: either volunteers formed informal refugee-support groups, or they supported refugees through existing association and alliance activities. Many volunteers spontaneously decided to go to the ten refugee shelters in the district and see where help was needed. In an interview, Lisa, the managing director of the Grassroots association *In Action*, estimated that there were about forty volunteers

per shelter in the district. Initially, the volunteers offered clothing donations, playgroups, homework help, and sponsorships. This support was informal.

These efforts resulted in the permanent group at the refugee shelter in Loburg. The volunteers in Loburg, who had met at the local refugee shelter, decided to start a refugee-support group called *Solidarity 4 Refugees*. They started the group just a few weeks after meeting at the shelter. When Herbert and Daniela, the group's two founders, initiated the first meeting, they were amazed at the level of interest in the new group:

> "After our first official meeting as a group, we received a lot of encouragement. By that time, we must have had thirty people who wanted to be on our e-mail list."

They left that first meeting with thirty people on their e-mail list and ten people who would later become part of the hard core of the group.

Many of the volunteers and activists in the group belonged to the two churches (a Catholic church and a Lutheran church) in Loburg. Initially, they expected the churches to become more professionally involved in supporting refugees. Daniela, one of the group's founders, recalled that they soon realized that the pastors were also overwhelmed, so they decided to organize the volunteer support themselves: "The pastors were overwhelmed by the situation, and so were the other workers. So, I thought, we just have to do something on our own."

Since she and a few other volunteers in the group were already well connected through previous alliance work in Loburg, they quickly contacted Lisa, the managing director of the small Grassroots association *In Action*, and the city's Lutheran pastor. Since *In Action* had been working on issues like migration for some time, Lisa gave the new group some advice on what services the group could provide. Regarding resources, the group asked the pastor to provide church space for their weekly meetings. In addition to meeting space, the group received some church funds for the first summer party at the refugee shelter and a cooking night. Daniela recalled how *Solidarity 4 Refugees* celebrated the first summer party with the church funds and other donations:

> "Our pastor at the time often donated part of the church's funds to our group. For the first big summer party, we received 550 Euros from the church's donation pot [...] In addition, the church donated ten cakes! [...]."

In addition to the new refugee-support group *Solidarity 4 Refugees*, several existing groups and organizations became involved. Two actors, in particular, emerged as key players. These were the Civic Alliance *Unified* and the Grassroots association *In Action*. The Civic Alliance *Unified* was formed in the mid-2000s and consisted of a broad range of civic actors, the mayor, and some local businesses. *In Action* was a small Grassroots association with some paid staff. In addition to these key actors, volunteers from two large sports clubs and the local business network, as well as staff from the women's aid organization and the regional sports association, became involved in supporting refugees.

This group of actors helped in very informal ways: *In Action* expanded its programs for migrants to include the new refugees. The alliance *Unified*, and the refugee-support group *Solidarity 4 Refugees* became involved in volunteer work in refugee shelters. At the same time, *Unified* organized demonstrations for refugee rights and against the new far-right party, Alternative for Germany (AfD). The sports clubs organized a small bus service to transport refugees from the refugee shelter to the sports clubs and integrate them into various teams. The women's aid association provided support and advice for women and families. The regional sports association organized swimming lessons for girls and tried to resolve conflicts in sports clubs when anti-refugee tendencies and tensions arose. The business network expanded its student sponsorships to provide school supplies for refugee children. Welfare organizations were hardly active in refugee support during that time and did not become part of the key actors. Interviewees told me that welfare organizations did not play a significant role in Loburg and were generally not among the key actors in their local civic landscape.

Initially, the connections that developed between these actors working for refugees around 2015/16 were very informal. The two coordinators of the refugee-support group, Daniela and Herbert, the executive director of *In Action*, Lisa, the spokesperson of the Civic Alliance *Unified*, Thomas, and several other people active in refugee support already knew each other in part before 2015. For example, they had met at protests and rallies organized by the alliance to combat the rise of right-wing extremism in the district. Some of the volunteers from *Solidarity 4 Refugees*, who were also involved in the city's Lutheran congregation, knew *In Action's* managing director, Lisa, through church work. She was also a trained Lutheran pastor and had previously taken on some minor roles in the church.

Lisa also engaged in anti-far-right activities together with Thomas, the speaker of *Unified* and manager of the district's refugee shelters. They wanted

to find a way to deal with the increasing skepticism and rejection of some residents. Thus, they organized several town hall meetings in 2015/16 and 2016 to deal with these worrisome tendencies. In 2015/16, Lisa, the managing director of *In Action*, was one of the first volunteers to connect with some refugees who arrived at the first shelter in the district. This shelter was set up in a village outside of Loburg. Among the residents that lived near that shelter, Lisa recalled that opposition and skepticism spread: "Since there was opposition to the shelter, I decided to go and see what was happening. Many people did not want refugees in their village." In response to this local opposition to refugee shelters, Lisa and Thomas decided to organize town hall meetings. In addition to being an activist with *Unified*, Thomas also became the manager of the district's refugee shelters in 2014, before the peak of refugee reception. In this dual role, he wanted to create a positive, refugee-friendly atmosphere around the refugee shelters. Therefore, the town hall meetings served as information sessions to inform "concerned" citizens about the refugee housing and care plans and eventually calm the tense atmosphere that had developed over a few weeks. Thomas recalled that the overall atmosphere was not hostile. One of the reasons, in his view, was that the public debate in Germany in 2015/16 was quite welcoming to refugees: "The whole mood of the time was dominated by Angela Merkel's famous sentence ['We can do it']." Thomas believed that roughly one third of the population did not openly support this pro-refugee mood, but it was not opportune to rebel against the refugees. He continued: "Later, we realized that this positive mood may have been on thin ice [in the 2017 federal election, the AfD received about 20 percent of the vote in the district of Loburg]." While these town hall meetings may have had only a short-term effect, Thomas and Lisa believe they contained some initial opposition.

The evolution of the strengthened network (2017–2019)

In the following part, I describe how the network contacts of the groups and organizations developed further when the mobilization period flattened out again in 2016/17. The period between 2016 and 2019 can be described as the institutionalization period. After some groups and organizations interacted with each other during the pro-refugee mobilization around 2015/16, these contacts were still very informal. Most of the contacts were based on personal networks that either already existed in other contexts or were established, for example, in the refugee shelter. While new routines of interaction were

developing within groups and organizations, interaction between groups was more episodic and spontaneous.

Interaction between the various actors became more structured over time. Central to this transformation was establishing the Civic Council on Migration at the end of 2016, led by Thomas. Working at the intersection of government (as the manager of the refugee shelters) and civil society (as a volunteer spokesperson for *Unified*), Thomas wanted to take advantage of his unique dual position. His goal with the council was to regularly bring together the various civil society actors and local government officials. As a conduit between civil society and local governance, the council aimed to reconcile differing perspectives and conflicts.

This format allowed routine exchanges, providing a dialogue and conflict resolution platform. As in Lauda, volunteers and activists often felt overwhelmed and frustrated. From their point of view, the scope of the activities and, thus, the personal burden was enormous. They often felt abandoned by the government. Lukas, a volunteer in a business network, said, "When Merkel said 'We can do it' […] it went a little bit in the direction of 'You can do it.'" Another interviewee, Christian, a chairman of a local sports club, had a similar impression: "In the end, the politicians of the time put a lot of the burden on the volunteers and let them do the work."

In addition to this general frustration, specific conflicts arose, for example, over the lack of housing. The president of a local sports club, Peter, expressed his frustration at the slowness with which the authorities responded to this problem: "[…] the authorities responded so slowly and the paperwork took so long. For us, it was not about some governmental act, but about very intimate personal fates of real people (deep breath)". A social worker who worked and volunteered at one of the refugee shelters, Anna, would have expected much more support from the authorities: "Housing has always been a problem. We would have needed more support in communicating with the local housing associations."

Thomas recalled the tensions between civil society representatives and local government officials. He said those tensions sometimes built up during the week in the refugee shelters before everyone came to the council on Friday: "The interactions were not always consensual. Sometimes sparks flew." He felt that the regular council meetings helped keep the climate between local government and civil society cooperative:

> "Sometimes during the week, when we were stressed and, on the phone, we would say unkind things to each other, and on Friday, when we were together [at the council], we had to put things right. Most of the time it worked out that we looked at each other and said, 'I apologize for my slip the other day. We all want the same thing.' And that's how we always resolved [conflicts]."

Overall, the council became a format for routine interactions between civil society and local government actors. These routine interactions were not free of conflict, but they created opportunities to stay in touch and resolve problems before they escalated.

In addition to these interactions between the state and civil society, the establishment of the council allowed people involved in refugee support to interact more frequently. Johannes, a staff member of a regional anti-racism initiative, recalled that around 2016, the council was important for many people involved in refugee support because it was the only format for them to interact. He described the activities around 2016 as quite flexible but effective:

> "There were so many processes going on between all the actors that were not yet regulated uniformly, but where everything was constantly in flux and being reconsidered. If you wanted to find out something, you had to go to the council meeting and discuss it. For example, council members would ask, 'Who's doing the counseling next week? What about the clothing donations? Do we still have toys? I need a 5-room apartment [for a refugee family]. Can anyone help?' and so on."

While the term "council" makes these meetings seem quite formal, the above quote illustrates how informal and unstructured the meetings were at the beginning. The council was a relatively flexible network without a set list of participants.

By inviting a wide range of actors, the council meetings brought together volunteers and small refugee-support groups, professional welfare organizations, and public officials representing the local government to attend council meetings. In an interview, Anna, the social worker at Loburg's refugee shelter, told me that the council was a very open circle where everyone active in refugee support and advocacy could voice their opinions:

> "Everyone is invited to the monthly council meetings. Associations, companies [that employ refugees], volunteers from our local refugee-support group, [welfare organizations] – everyone was welcome from the beginning

> and it has remained that way. It's an open meeting where everyone can say what's on their mind."

In the interview, Anna repeatedly emphasized that the meetings were open to all individuals and organizations who wished to attend.

Over the years, the group of participants changed. While around 2016, several volunteers and refugee-support groups attended the meetings, since 2017, more and more full-time employees of organizations have participated in the meetings. Volunteers have attended more sporadically since then. At the same time, when Daniela from *Solidarity 4 Refugees* wanted to discuss something with other people in the council, she felt welcome to attend.

In addition to the Civic Council on Migration, from 2017 to 2019, people also strengthened their contacts through regular meetings at the new café, the annual summer parties at the refugee shelter, and the rallies and demonstrations in the city. The café was started by Lisa and some volunteers from the Grassroots association *In Action*. Trained as a pastor in the Lutheran church, Lisa used her church network to get space from the local Lutheran church. The space included a large lounge and kitchen. In 2016, and in the years since, the café, which was open several times a week, became essential for refugees and volunteers. One of the volunteers who kept the café running was Amir. He fled Syria for Germany in 2015. He first came to the café as a refugee to meet other people. In 2018 he started to run the café voluntarily. In 2021, *In Action* received some government funding for the café and hired Amir as a staff member for the café. The events held at the café were essential for the volunteers and the refugees. These events ranged from dinners and religious celebrations to political lectures and discussions about German asylum laws. In the café, volunteers and refugees could talk to each other. More intimate relationships, such as friendships, could form in these casual gatherings. For example, interviewees reported a strong sense of joy and togetherness at celebrations and informal dinners. However, they also noted the great frustrations of working within a restrictive asylum and migration system that was unbearable for many refugees. While the interactional routines at the café differed greatly from the council meetings, the café has a similar networking function. In particular, volunteers from the refugee-support groups *In Action*, *Unified*, and *Solidarity 5 Refugees* made new contacts and strengthened existing ones. In addition, many Muslim refugees have networked and formed their own Muslim prayer association in 2018.

Another recurring point of interaction was the summer parties, which have been held annually since 2015. As mentioned above, the volunteers and activists of *Solidarity 4 Refugees* organized the summer parties to bring all the groups and organizations together for a party. The parties also allowed the group to maintain its networking contacts with many people over the years. Not only were the main actors from 2015/16 (In Action, Unified, Solidarity 4 Refugees) present, but also a much wider range of actors. Herbert, one of the founders of *Solidarity 4 Refugees*, told me in the interview how the summer parties usually took place and who participated:

> "[...] at these summer parties in the refugee shelter, the whole spectrum of actors was always present. So, all the district officials, the social services, and many other associations and people. One person would play the music, another would provide the tents. There was always a welfare organization present, as well as the fire department, the police, and the district sports association."

Herbert emphasized that the summer parties were joyful and welcomed various groups and organizations.

Stress-test: The pro-refugee community during the pandemic (2020–2022)

In the following, I briefly discuss how the pro-refugee community in Loburg coped with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and survived this immense stress test. As mentioned in the previous subchapter about the pro-refugee community in Lauda, civil society in Germany faced significant challenges during the pandemic. Personal contact was often limited, and activities were suspended. As I conducted most of the interviews during the pandemic, the topic of the pandemic and its impact on refugee support and advocacy activities was naturally part of the interviews. The interviews in Loburg in 2020 and the follow-up interviews in 2022 highlighted that the pro-refugee community coped well with the stress of the pandemic.

First, I will discuss the impact of the pandemic on the community's interaction dynamics, followed by an outline of how community members coped. In 2020, the pandemic suspended many interaction opportunities created since the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. The contact restrictions significantly impacted both community members and refugees in Loburg. One problem was

that people in groups and organizations could no longer meet as usual. Ali, the founder of a Muslim prayer association, expressed his sadness over the fact that Friday prayers were scarcely being held anymore, as "nobody comes to the mosque anymore".

The pandemic brought about a significant challenge in refugee shelters: visitor restrictions. Volunteers and activists from Grassroots associations like *In Action* and the local refugee-support group were no longer allowed to enter the shelters, making it difficult for them to maintain contact with the refugees still residing there. Thus, they were unable to establish relationships with newly arrived refugees. Herbert, one of the founders of *Solidarity 4 Refugees* lamented: "The corona pandemic paralyzed everything". As a result, the group lost their primary location for activities and interaction with refugees and among themselves.

In addition, many of the interactions that became routinized since 2015/16 stopped in 2020. The summer parties at the refugee shelter, meetings and celebrations at the community café, and protests in the city center were all put on hold. Although the intercultural week took place, the party that usually occurred during the week did not happen that year due to the pandemic. Thomas from *Unified* emphasized: "There will be no party this year at the refugee shelters, as it has happened every year before".

However, the community also coped with pandemic-related restrictions by switching to online communication tools and meeting outside. For instance, participants of the Civic Council on Migration, founded in 2016, transitioned from face-to-face to online meetings. They were able to maintain their collaboration during the pandemic. Jacob, an employee of the Grassroots association *In Action*, emphasized: "It really depends on the technical requirements of the people." In 2021, I participated in one of the monthly online sessions with 21 attendees from civil society and the local government.

In 2021, activists organized protests against the difficult living conditions of refugees in Greece. Many volunteers, activists, and employees of organizations attended. In a follow-up interview in 2022, Herbert from the refugee-support group said, "It was nice to finally meet everyone again at the demonstration." Protests against the so-called "Querdenker" movement, formed in Germany against pandemic-related political measures, were organized by members of the pro-refugee community. The members of the Querdenker movement regularly protested against contact restrictions with around 1000 people, including far-right figures. Approximately 300 to 400 volunteers and activists from the pro-refugee community and other progressive groups par-

ticipated in counter-protests. The Querdenker protests since waned following the complete lifting of pandemic restrictions in Loburg.

After pandemic-related restrictions were lifted in early 2022, community members eagerly resumed many of the activities that had been put on hold. Herbert from the refugee support group noted that the influx of refugees from Ukraine was one reason these activities resumed quickly. In a follow-up interview in 2022, Herbert expressed his gratitude for the overwhelming support residents provided to Ukrainian refugees.

Others I interviewed again in 2022 also felt a renewed sense of purpose when the influx of refugees increased rapidly. Therefore, one of the contributing factors to the reactivation after the pandemic and passing the stress test was the new need for refugee support and advocacy in 2022. However, this topic is beyond the scope of this book and will only be addressed in the concluding chapter.

Insights into the network structure

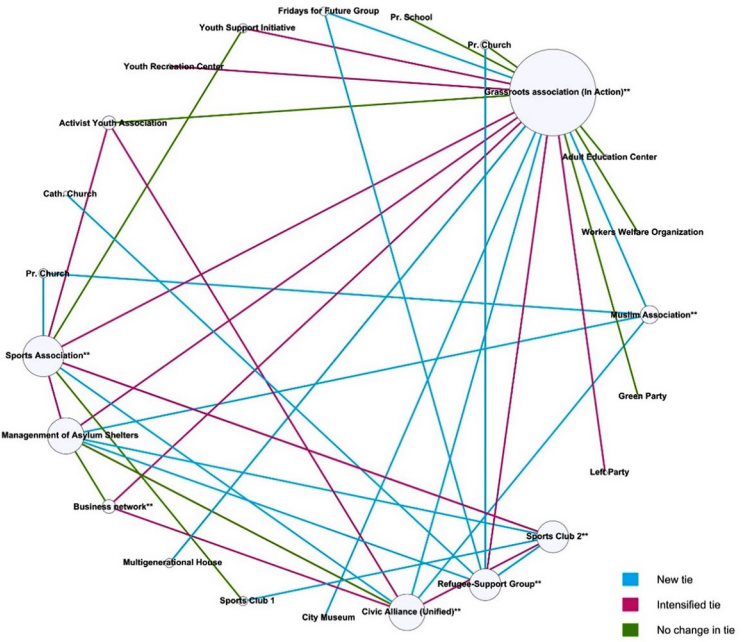
As described in the previous analysis, the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development of a new pro-refugee community in Loburg. The development of this community is first characterized by the development of either loose or more structured routines of interaction and, as a result, relationships between key actors that were strengthened by the heightened mobilization period and the six years that followed. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of these network changes in a more structured way and compare the networks of key actors before 2015/16 with the networks I examined in my qualitative interviews.

The network map in Figure 4 illustrates the lasting network effects of the pro-refugee mobilization for the involved actors. Specifically, the network map shows all the key civil society organizations and groups involved in 2015/16 (marked with two asterisks **) and their connections to other civil society actors with whom they have interacted on refugee support and migration since 2015. This means that the network map represents a composition of the key actors, as well as several other actors, who are part of the new pro-refugee community in Loburg at the time of the interviews in 2020/21.

As illustrated in the network map, significant connections between organizations and groups grew stronger between 2015/16 and 2020/21. Strengthened network ties refer to those in place before 2015/16 but intensified during and after the pro-refugee mobilization. To put it differently, these ties among

organizations or groups were strengthened due to interactions during and following the pro-refugee mobilization. New network ties did not exist before the mobilization but grew during and after the mobilization. Lastly, there are also network ties between actors unaffected by the mobilization in 2015/16. In this case, no effect means that the actors interviewed did interact with another actor during the mobilization. Still, this interaction did not lead to lasting network tise. The network map overall underscores that many connections that actors built in 2015/16 and the six following years became the threads that united the pro-community that emerged in Loburg.

Figure 4: Network changes in Loburg



Regarding key actors, it is clear that the Civic Alliance *Unified* and the Grassroots association *In Action* had established a significant number of connections before 2015. This observation is underscored by the fact that most of these connections were strengthened rather than newly developed in 2015. This con-

trasts with the case of the refugee-support group *Solidarity 4 Refugees*, which emerged in 2015/16 and consequently established entirely new connections. Beyond these network connections, it is equally noteworthy to emphasize the diverse spectrum of actor types interlinked within the pro-refugee community. For example, the Civic Alliance *Unified* has connections with key actors in refugee support and with welfare organizations and religious institutions, including various churches. This multifaceted network pattern is also evident within the Grassroots association *In Action*. The refugee-support group *Solidarity 4 Refugees* has also established links with various actors within the broader civic landscape.

The pro-refugee community in Loburg prevailed

In this subchapter, I explored the impact of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 on the development of a pro-refugee community in Loburg. The increasing number of incoming refugees in 2015/16 created significant challenges for local government officials and civil society who were unprepared for this situation. Civil society responded by providing emergency support, addressing skepticism, and countering xenophobia. Initiatives such as town hall meetings organized by the Grassroots association *In Action* and the Civic Alliance *Unified* played a crucial role in addressing skepticism and resistance to refugees. These interactions built the foundation for developing and surviving the pro-refugee community in Loburg.

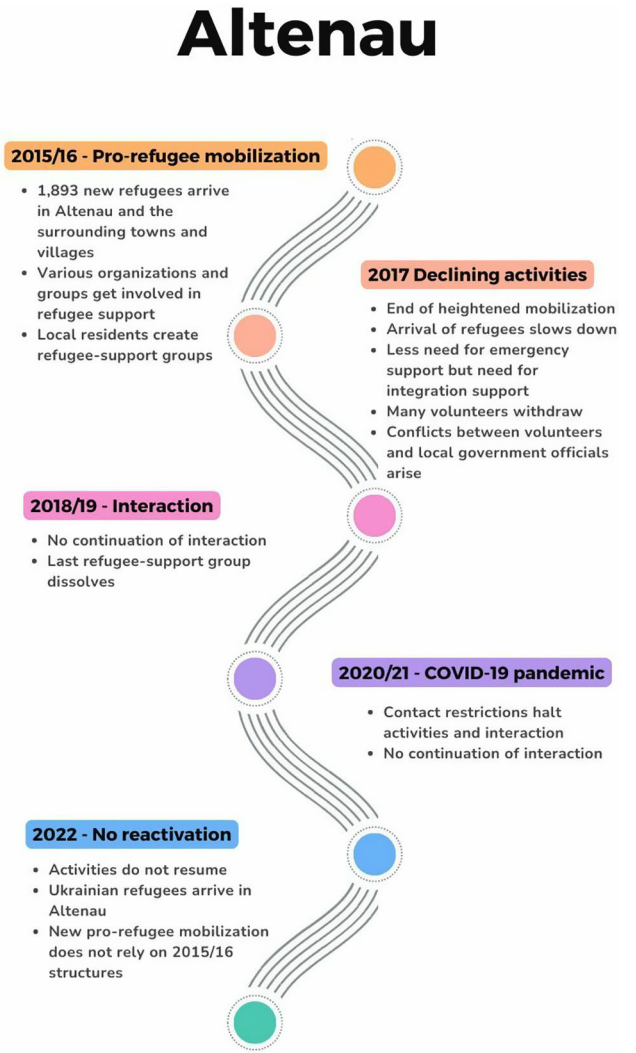
Central to this development was also the establishment of the Civic Council on Migration in 2016. This council served as a bridge between members of civil society and local government. It facilitated important interaction routines over the six years and became a platform for dealing with conflicts. At the same time, the café initiated by *In Action* and the annual summer parties at the refugee shelter became essential hubs for networking.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant challenge for the community, as many activities and group interactions came to a halt due to contact limitations. However, some interactions were transitioned online, and all activities were re-activated once the restrictions were lifted in early 2022. The increased influx of refugees from Ukraine was also essential for re-activating the community's activities because it highlighted the need for refugee support and brought many of the community members together.

Altenau: Missed Opportunities for Creating a Pro-Refugee Community

In the following subchapter, I discuss what happened in Altenau during the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and its effects on developing a pro-refugee community. I show that despite a strong mobilization, the organizations and groups that were mobilized in 2015/16 did not develop enduring sustained networks and forms of routine interaction that characterize a pro-refugee community. Note that the timeline in Figure 5 illustrates developments between 2015 and 2022. Table 6 provides an overview of the key players.

Figure 5: Timeline Altenau (2015–2022)



The heightened mobilization and networking efforts

Much like in the other cases, the increase in the number of refugees by 1,893 around 2015/16[6] sparked an intense mobilization of support in Altenau (Destatis, 2017, 2019). This support mainly responded to the local government's lack of preparedness to handle this sudden increase. Altenau faced substantial difficulties in accommodating and supporting the influx of refugees. Conversations I held with people involved in refugee support already showed people's deep sense of pride when talking about the year 2015/16. One of them was Sophie, an employee at the Youth migration service. She shared her surprise about the extent of the support in 2015:

> "2015 was of course surprising for everyone [...]. There were a lot of volunteers who immediately got involved and really picked up the refugees from the bus and even from the train station and then made sure that they were accommodated. So, there was really a lot of positive energy, which was perhaps not so typical for our sleepy Altenau".

She expressed her surprise at the positive response to the challenging situation.

Other interviewees also fondly recalled the broad support volunteers and employees of various welfare organizations and churches provided. Birgit, the director of the Family center who got involved, recalled that various groups and organizations established new initiatives:

> "There were definitely many new meet-ups and groups of social and church institutions that tried everything to help the refugees. Whether it was the international café here or the international youth meeting."

When she thought back to 2015, she got excited about the new climate she experienced in Altenau: "The word 'international' was suddenly everywhere again. It was so beautiful. Here for small province Altenau it was just really nice." Both Sophie, the employee of the Youth migration service, and Birgit from the Family center perceived Altenau as quite province-like. Yet, both women thought Altenau's residents were mainly excited about the fresh air

6 Interviewees in Altenau made clear that most of the influx happened around 2015. However, the number is based on a data set that provides data for 2014 and 2016.

and the new international feel. While this sentiment was shared by other interviewees, Bianca, the co-founder of the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome*, also emphasized that refugees also experienced harsh racism, and the volunteers involved in the support activities experienced rejection by people they knew.

Table 6: Overview of key actors in Altenau

Name[7]	Role	Affiliated Organization/Group
Sophie	Staff	Youth migration service
Birgit	Director	Family center
Harald	Volunteer	Catholic welfare organization 2
Sabrina	Migration counselor	Catholic welfare organization 1
Katja	Director	Adult education center
Niko	Pastor	Protestant church 4
Bianca	Volunteer	Refugee-support group "Refugees Welcome"
Helen	Volunteer	Refugee-support group "Refugees Welcome"
Leo	Volunteer	Yezidi cultural association

The pro-refugee mobilization was visible across the local civic landscape. It resulted in forming numerous informal refugee-support groups and the active involvement of already established organizations and groups. Among the groups was the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome*, which was particularly prominent during that time.

The already existing organizations that became active around 2015/16 can be divided into three types of actors: welfare organizations, recreational organizations, and religious organizations. In the following part, I describe how these different organizations and groups were involved, and to what extent and how they interacted during this time.

First, I will outline the support of the welfare actors who were well represented and much more involved in Altenau than Loburg and Lauda. One reason

7 Names are anonymized.

for their strong involvement was that many welfare organizations, such as the various Christian welfare organizations, had already been active in the field of migration before. As explained in the research design chapter, the proportion of the migrant population is higher in Altenau than in the other two cities, so services such as migration counseling were already established beforehand. Sabrina, the migration counselor of a Catholic welfare organization, underscored that the organization gained many new volunteers in 2015/16: "In the beginning, of course, there was a lot in 2015. We had the main staff and the migration-counseling centers. We also had very, very many volunteers who were very active." Thus, for these organizations, this was also a great recruitment opportunity.

Particularly central in Altenau was the local branch of a large Catholic relief organization. In a fly-by-night operation, the Catholic relief organization was commissioned to establish an emergency camp in the city. This Catholic relief organization became one of the key players in refugee support in 2015/16. Harald, a long-time volunteer at the organization, shared his amazement about how quickly the employees of this relief organization set up Altenau's first of such emergency refugee shelters:

> "They got the assignment to build the refugee camp on a Friday. And Monday morning the refugee camp stood and could take 1,000 people. In the beginning, there were only 700 in there, but the number kept increasing. And the camp was gradually expanding to accommodate up to 1500 people at some point."

Tasked by the local government with setting up tents for up to 1,500 refugees, the organization gathered around 200 volunteers over a few weeks. While some had already volunteered for them, many were new to this engagement and came just because they heard the tents had to be built up in only a few days. Overall, they set up tents, organized food distribution, offered recreational activities for children and young people, and set up clothing stores with donated clothing.

Quickly after that, other welfare organizations began to expand their work. One Catholic welfare organization was responsible for about 100 families in 2015/16. Another Christian organization had already been responsible for youth migration services before 2015/16 and scaled up its projects in this area with state funding.

Like other welfare organizations, the Adult education center successfully applied for state funding for beginner German courses. The center's director, Katja, told me in the interview that she decided to apply for these funds because volunteers were asking for help with German classes and professional counseling because they were overwhelmed providing all of these services on their own. Others also noticed that she got these funds for the Adult education center. For instance, Birgit, the director of the Family center, noticed that the Adult education center substantially improved their funding situation during that time:

> "[…] There was the adult education center, which of course also got good funding from the federal government for one German course after another. So, I think they expanded their offerings by 300 percent."

The case of the Adult education center in Altenau was representative of other welfare organizations that also significantly improved their funding as they benefited from increased government funding.

The interviewees working for the different welfare organizations in Altenau said their interaction had increased during 2015/16. At the same time, they emphasized that these contacts had existed before and had worked together with these actors on other occasions. They had already participated in a round table on migration at the district level. As Altenau already had a high proportion of people with a migration background before 2015/16, such round tables had developed years before, bringing together all professional organizations working on migration. In 2015/16, another round table was created at the city level. Several interviewees emphasized that the same actors participated in this round table as in the round table at the district level.

The second type of actors involved in refugee support were a few informal refugee-support groups. These groups often did not have a name or formal structures. Interviewees usually referred to them as friendship-based circles that wanted to "do" something by collecting clothes and donating them to a refugee shelter nearby.

Besides these highly informal groups, there was also one larger refugee-support group *Welcome Refugees*. This group emerged when residents saw the enormous need for emergency support that the local government and the welfare organizations setting up the first emergency camp could not handle alone. The local government had previously invited citizens to a few information sessions about the increasing influx of refugees to Altenau. At the information

sessions, fifty residents decided to form a group. While some volunteers were helping the Catholic relief organization in the emergency camp, most of the group wanted to support refugees at the city's new Central contact point. The Central contact point was an institution the local government had established in 2015/16 to coordinate their refugee reception efforts. The Central contact point offered refugees advice on various topics, particularly housing, income, health, education, work, and social issues. The refugee-support group *Welcome Refugees* attracted around 100 people in total. Initially facilitated by local government staff, the group later operated independently, focusing on fostering encounters, companionship, and education. Helen, one of the first volunteers, recalled that *Welcome Refugees* developed several working groups in only a few months:

> "There was a working group called 'Encounter', which was more of a meet-up café, and I took part in that. Then there was the group 'Guidance', which accompanied people on their way to the authorities and so on, in other words a form of sponsorship. And the third working group was called 'Education', which offered basic German lessons."

There were ten to twenty volunteers in each of these and other working groups.

However, the group's prominence waned by 2016 due to the professionalization of migration services and the loss of meeting facilities at the Central contact point. While the group was active in these working groups for roughly one year, volunteers increasingly left the group because different welfare organizations and the Adult education center had started offering more professional services in similar areas like education and legal counseling.

Some volunteers, including Bianca, who had coordinated most of the activities at *Welcome Refugees*, wanted to keep the group alive. Thus, Bianca and a few other volunteers contacted the local mayor, who was looking for volunteers to run an information hub in one of the neighborhoods where many refugee families were moving around in 2016.

After a few meetings, the mayor allocated a dedicated space for *Welcome Refugees*. In a neighborhood that had a high concentration of refugee families but historically low migrant presence, the mayor suggested converting an empty building into a space for the group. This space aimed to foster interaction among volunteers, refugees, and residents, serving as a hub to mitigate potential conflicts and promote understanding between new and old res-

idents. One of the group members, Bianca, recalled how glad they were when they got this building:

> "We started quite promptly in February. This house was officially handed over to us by the mayor, with the keys and the words 'You can do what you want here'".

In 2016, *Refugees Welcome* had around forty volunteers who regularly met at the new information hub.

In addition to the activities of more professionalized organizations such as welfare organizations and more informal refugee-support groups, three religious institutions were among the third type of actors that actively began to participate in refugee support in 2015/16. The first initiative to support refugees by a religious institution was a Protestant congregation involved in setting up a bike yard to repair and distribute bicycles to refugees, fostering mobility and forging close relationships among volunteers and refugees. Volunteers in that congregation organized a free bike shop in the courtyard of the main church building. The bike yard offered to repair donated bicycles and then give them to refugees. When I interviewed Niko, the congregation's pastor, he proudly told me about this unique set-up:

> "People came to us and donated their bicycles, which were then repaired together with two mechanics who work for us on a voluntary basis. And this offer then exploded, so to speak. We were open almost every day and we had a lot of people coming and going in our inner courtyard. We collected bicycles, old bicycles, we made them into good condition. We then gave these bicycles to refugees, because we thought it was easier to explore the surroundings on a bicycle than on foot, so to speak [...]. We then trained refugees as mechanics, who then worked here in teams themselves. So, we had, I don't know, to put it mildly, maybe 50 to 60 people outside in the churchyard every day."

In 2015/16, according to Pastor Niko, about 100 to 150 refugees came to get a bike. He went on to say that the commitment of his congregation came "*from the bottom up*". It was not he who had started the bike shop, but volunteers. These volunteers also organized themselves to a large extent. In the interview, Pastor Niko raved about this time: "*We were like in a frenzy for two years*".

During this time, the community networked here and there with other groups. For example, with two catholic welfare organizations, the vocational

school, and various local businesses. Significant at the beginning of 2017 was the festival of cultures in the city, where the church connected with multiple local associations. At the same time, there was little networking with other churches or congregations of different religions. From Pastor Niko's point of view, competition between the church congregations was the main reason for this:

> "There is always an underlying competition between churches. The distribution of funds. It all plays a role. I totally pulled out of that, because I don't want to do that."

The second initiative was founded by the Family center of Altenau, which involved an intensive language program for refugees, a program to help with documents, and a summer vacation program for children and young people. For Birgit, the director of the Family center, the period between 2015 and 2017 was a collaborative moment. She believed many actors moved closer together due to 2015/16 and that "Not everyone was doing their own thing." The different actors had to cooperate to cope with the situation because before 2015/16, many actors were focused on their work and concentrated on acquiring funding.

The Yezidi cultural association of Altenau led the third initiative. Since many refugees were Yezidi, they felt a special responsibility to support people of the same religion. This is what Leo, one of the organization's leaders told me in an interview. During this time, the organization also established contacts with other organizations, such as the Catholic relief organization, the Castle theater, the Youth center, and the Art association. However, the members of the association could not continue these contacts. In the interview, Leo said it is often difficult to find people in the association who actively promote cooperation: "We often lack the people who sit down there and promote such cooperation". Finding the financial resources and volunteers to commit to such initiatives was challenging.

Activities and enduring interactions (2017–2019)

The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/2016 was characterized by a collaborative spirit among various actors, resulting in increased interaction. However, despite the pro-refugee mobilization in response to the refugee crisis, Altenau's actors lacked the enduring networks and interactions observed in Lauda and Loburg. While the key actors I interviewed emphasized that interaction with

other organizations and groups increased between 2015 and 2016, almost none of these relationships were affected in the years after the heightened mobilization.

Unlike in Lauda and Loburg, the empirical analysis of Altenau showed almost no persistent interaction routines established among the different organizations and groups involved in supporting refugees during 2015/16. In the interviews, I observed some exceptions where actors did establish such routines. However, these routines either did not last or were quite exclusive. A few examples of interaction routines that did not last revolved around the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome*. As previously described, *Refugees Welcome* was founded with great enthusiasm in 2015. After having to move their meeting spot several times, the group finally set up their roots in a building that the then-mayor rented out for them free of charge. Helen, one of the group's founders, shared how they interacted with many other civil society actors in the neighborhood:

> "Once a month we organized neighborhood meetings. There was a local welfare association, the church community, the local council and we from our group Refugees Welcome. We also invited a woman from the debt counseling service, the social worker from the youth welfare office, and so on. It was actually a coffee party. So, people brought their own home-baked cakes. The normal residents of the neighborhood were also invited, a poster was hung in front of the door, and we did a lot of advertising. And then completely different people and completely new people came."

However, two years after the mayor had provided the building for the group's use as a hub for their activities, the local government terminated the agreement. As a result, the group had to leave the building. This closure was a significant blow to *Refugees Welcome*, as the volunteers had long-term plans and had built relationships within the group and with residents, including many refugee families and civil society actors in the neighborhood. Consequently, many volunteers associated with *Refugees Welcome* resigned, ending their involvement with the group. Thus, the weekly café meetings and monthly meetups with a group of civil society actors from the neighborhood stopped instantly. The exact reasons for termination could not be determined in the interviews. Ultimately, however, the reason was probably that in 2018, the new mayor of the city wanted to relocate the refugee families living in the neighborhood. From his point of view, there was no longer any reason to keep the

volunteers of the group *Refugee Welcomes* in the building. All municipal buildings occupied for refugee accommodation and the activities of *Refugees Welcome* were supposed to be used again for other purposes. As a result, the interaction routines that had grown after the heightened mobilization in 2015/16 waned in 2018 when *Refugees Welcome* had to move out of the neighborhood. I will go into more detail about these dynamics in a later chapter.

Another routine interaction with the potential to become an anchor for a new pro-refugee community also emerged in 2015/16. As described above, the city established a city-based migration roundtable for civil society organizations working on refugee and migration issues. However, this roundtable, which was still taking place in 2021/2022 when I conducted the interviews, did not contribute to developing and surviving a pro-refugee community like in Lauda and Loburg. This is because the roundtable was like an exclusive membership club with only professionalized organizations, mostly welfare organizations. This means that other civil society actors, such as refugee-support groups, sports clubs, or more minor associations, were not an equal part of the roundtable meetings. Helen from *Refugees Welcome* acknowledged that volunteers supporting individual refugees were sometimes invited to the meetings. However, she felt they were not involved in the exchange and were instead informed about new developments or legal changes. They could also listen to what welfare organization representatives had to say. But they wanted to be included and seen as the experts in refugee support that they felt they were. Bianca told me about her frustration with these roundtables:

> "As volunteers, we also received invitations to the meetings, but the main topic was the passing on of information by the social workers. At the end of the meeting, there was always an opportunity to talk again, but not in such a way that we could put our experiences in the foreground, but rather that we were told something. Then people from other areas were always invited, from different welfare organizations, who presented new reports. This was of course also interesting. But it was not possible to talk about individual problems and challenges somehow."

As Bianca pointed out, the volunteers from *Refugees Welcome* did not just want to sit quietly and receive information from staff and officials but instead actively contributed to the discussions.

The second reason why the roundtable did not contribute to the development of a pro-refugee community relates to the meaning of the roundtable.

Interviewees from welfare organizations that participated in the roundtable emphasized that their relationships with other members were not affected. This is because most roundtable members knew each other quite well before 2015. They were already in close contact through the very similar district-level migration roundtables.

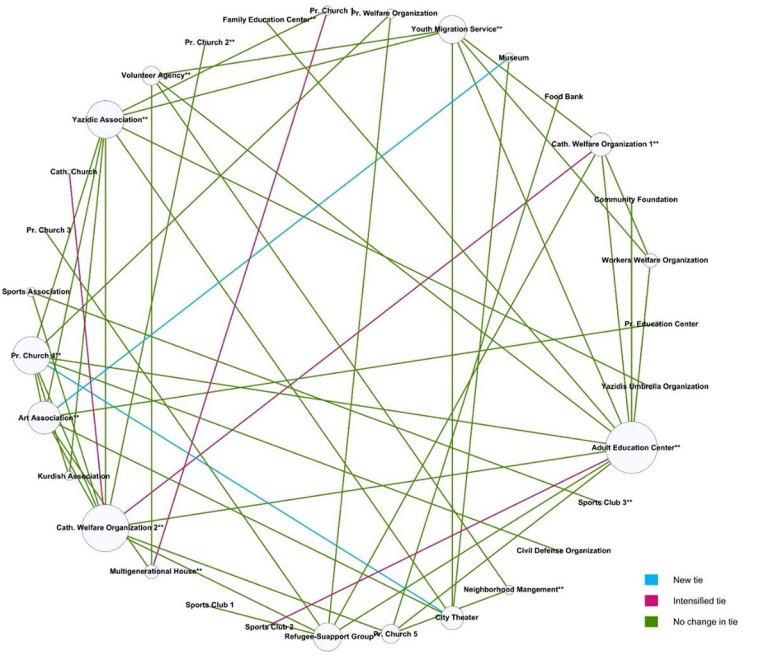
Finally, it is worth mentioning that Altenau's local government developed an integration strategy in 2018. According to an interview with an official, no civil society actors were involved in the development. While in Lauda, for example, the development of the integration strategy became an important part of networking between civil society actors and between them and state actors, Altenau's local government may have missed this opportunity

Insights into the network structure

As described in the previous analysis, the increased mobilization in 2015/16 did not have a lasting impact on establishing a new pro-refugee community in Altenau. As outlined above, the formation of such a community can primarily be characterized by the development of loose and more structured routines of interaction. It also depends on the relationships between key actors that were either newly cultivated or strengthened during the period of heightened mobilization and the years that followed. In the following section, I present an overview of the network perspective in a more systematic way.

The network map in Figure 6 illustrates the network effects of 2015. Specifically, the network map shows how the network connections of key actors involved in refugee support in 2015/16 (marked with two asterisks **) were affected. The network map highlights that, as of 2020/21 (interview period), most actors did not experience any network changes due to the increased mobilization in 2015. This means the key actors interacted with the other actors they were connected to on the network map but did not develop an intensified connection with them in the following years.

Figure 6: Network changes in Altenau



However, there are some exceptions. For example, Catholic welfare organization 2 intensified its connection with the Catholic welfare organization, and the Arts association developed a new connection with the City museum. Recall that an intensified tie is a tie that existed before 2015/16, but not to the same extent. A new tie is an entirely new connection that did not exist before 2015. Nevertheless, the overall picture reflects the developments I described in the first part of this chapter. That is, the organizations and groups that were mobilized to support refugees in 2015/16 did not get involved.

Lost momentum: Altenau's struggle with growing a pro-refugee community

Despite the unprecedented pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, this subchapter shows that the organizations and groups involved in the mobilization did not develop lasting networks and sustained interactions characteristic of new

pro-refugee communities. Altenau, similar to the other cases, experienced a pro-refugee mobilization when the number of refugees starkly increased in 2015/16. This mobilization led to the formation of numerous informal refugee-support groups in the city and the active involvement of pre-existing organizations, such as welfare organizations, recreational associations, and religious institutions. My analysis showed increased interaction between the different groups and organizations during the heightened mobilization.

Despite this increased interaction from 2015 to 2016, these actors did not develop new and strengthened networks and continued forms of interactions, as I observed in Lauda and Loburg. Few sustained forms of interaction were established, and those either did not last or were exclusive. In addition, the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome* lost its meeting place and many volunteers, eventually resulting in declining interaction. The city's migration roundtable also did not contribute to the development and survival of a pro-refugee community because it was exclusive and based on pre-existing relationships not strengthened by the roundtable meetings. In this sense, the network map in Figure 7 above also helps to visualize these findings. The map shows that the connections between key actors in 2015/16 did not intensify significantly in the six years after the mobilization. Although the pro-refugee mobilization in Altenau was significant, the period did not lead to the development and survival of a new pro-refugee community.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic did not significantly impact the actors' interactions regarding refugee support and advocacy. Notably, no interaction routines or intensified networks were developed that could have been affected. During follow-up interviews in 2022, interviewees reported that when the influx of refugees from Ukraine increased in Altenau, residents formed new support groups instead of relying on the short-lived structures built around 2015/16.

Neheim: Missed Opportunities for Creating a Pro-Refugee Community

In this subchapter, I aim to describe what happened in Neheim during the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and examine the implications of this period for developing a new pro-refugee community. As I show, Neheim's civil society did not experience such a development. I discuss what prevented a new pro-refugee community from evolving. Note that the timeline in Figure 7 illustrates

developments between 2015 and 2022. Table 7 provides an overview of the key players.

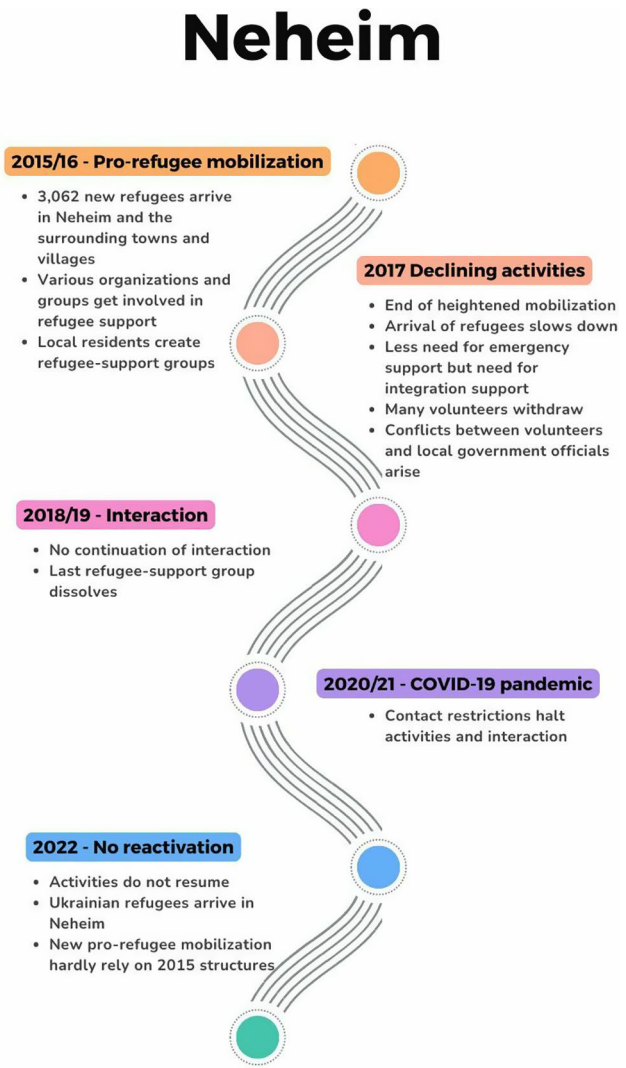
The heightened mobilization and networking efforts

The increased influx of refugees in 2015/16 catalyzed a profound surge of volunteerism and activism in Neheim. Between 2014 and 2016, 3,062 refugees arrived in the larger district of Neheim (Destatis, 2017, 2019). As interviewees told me, most came in 2015/16. Please recall that the district is much larger than the district of the other three cases, which explains the higher number of refugees in the district. Responding to this upsurge in the number of refugees, various organizations and groups rallied to provide emergency support.

The response manifested through new informal refugee support and established organizations and institutions such as the *Multicultural House* and the Adult education center. Church congregations fostered cross-cultural interaction by establishing an international café, and the local *Refugee Council* saw increased volunteer engagement.

Residents of Neheim formed small groups to address emergent needs and navigate the complexities of supporting the refugees. Several interviewees estimated that around 100 to 200 volunteers and local activists were involved in refugee support in 2015/16. Two volunteers, a married couple, Christine and Luis, who belonged to a small, informal refugee-support group, described this period as follows:

Figure 7: Timeline Neheim (2015–2022)



> "In the beginning, we were completely overwhelmed when the first refugees arrived in 2015. And they came in such large numbers. When it came to very practical things, it was very good that we met in small groups, but on the spot and very local, to share ideas. One volunteer had this advice, and another had that advice about teaching German. That was really helpful."

Christine and Luis emphasized the value of small groups of volunteers where immediate exchanges could occur.

Table 7: Overview of key actors in Neheim

Name[8]	Role	Affiliated Organization or Group
Christine	Volunteer	Refugee-support group
Luis	Volunteer	Refugee-support group
Hamza	Chairman	Integration Council
Henrik	Social Worker/Neighborhood Manager	Multicultural House/former Neighborhood management
Susanne	Director	Multicultural House
Matthias	Activist	Refugee Council
Annette	Activist	Refugee Council and Women's Network
Johannes	Pastoral advisor	Catholic Church
Patricia	Pastor	Protestant Church

The refugees were initially placed in decentralized, makeshift accommodations. For instance, empty buildings of two former middle schools and a hotel were spontaneously converted into refugee shelters. The local government in Neheim only created the most necessities, and even these were sometimes missing. Thus, the different civil society organizations and groups shouldered the responsibility of addressing shortages in essentials such as accommodation, food, and clothing. Yet, the local government's unpreparedness and deficient infrastructure posed considerable challenges. Responding to the situation's urgency, many volunteers acted independently or cooperated through

8 Names are anonymized.

established organizations to provide immediate support. The chairman of the integration council, Hamza, recalled that many refugees wanted to learn German quickly. Still, not enough classes were available: "When the first young people came to us and said they wanted a language course. […] But in [Neheim], there were no offers." Hamza noted that essentials such as German language classes were unavailable in Neheim around 2015/16.

Henrik, a social worker who worked as a neighborhood manager around 2015/16, remembered this support very well. As a neighborhood manager, he was responsible for weekly neighborhood meetings and youth groups. Through his work, Hendrik was constantly in exchange with many people. When one of the new refugee shelters opened up in his neighborhood, he experienced everything firsthand:

> "There was an incredible amount of civic engagement in a variety of places. There was everything from concrete help with clothing, furniture, general equipment to food and care packages. It was really a culture of welcome, a very broad welcome culture."

Among the key players in 2015/16 I identified were the *Multicultural House*, the local *Refugee Council*, two church congregations, and the *Women's Network*. The *Multicultural House* was founded in the late 1990s by three welfare organizations in the city. The aim was to unite their efforts in migration and asylum, as previously, each of these organizations offered migration support services. Since its establishment, the *Multicultural House* has become the central institution dealing with migration issues in Neheim. Since the staff at the *Multicultural House* had previously worked on migration and asylum issues for many years, in 2015/16, many volunteers reached out to them. Susanne, the director, recalled: "People came to us and asked 'what can we do'? For example, people came here and had plastic bags with clothes. Others asked where they could donate money." Since they had coordinated volunteer work in the field of migration before, the local branch of a large humanitarian organization that had set up the first emergency camp in the city asked the *Multicultural House* to coordinate the volunteers again. The humanitarian organization staff did not have capacities on their own but believed volunteers needed some form of coordination. In 2015/16, the *Multicultural House* staff and around 50 volunteers organized a café for refugees and volunteers to meet. They also organized language classes and helped deal with government agencies and obtain documents.

During this time, the *Multicultural House* and the *Refugee Council* interacted closely with each other. Since these actors had worked together before and interacted in the city's Working Group on Asylum, they tried to exchange information on the legal situation of refugees and divided duties regarding accompanying refugees to job centers, immigration agencies and other public institutions. Unlike the *Multicultural House*, the *Refugee Council* was volunteer-run since its formation in the mid-1980s. The group of around 15 volunteers has been primarily advocating for better and more just asylum policies. In 2015/16, they also started to work more with individual refugees who needed legal counseling by cooperating with an asylum law firm.

Another important initiative in refugee support was the welcome café that the Catholic and Protestant Church in Neheim created in 2015. Situated near a new refugee shelter, the two church congregations organized monthly café gatherings for residents and refugees. The idea to create a café was born at a community party close to the shelter, where some initial interactions between residents and refugees occurred. Recognizing the need for ongoing connections, the pastors of the two congregations envisioned a dedicated space for interaction. Pastor Patricia from the Protestant Church and Johannes, a pastoral advisor from the local Catholic Church, told me that this was when they realized that they needed a place where residents and refugees could meet regularly:

> "It was a very nice community festival and refugees had just arrived in the neighborhood. Some of the refugees wanted to see what was going on. The music was blaring over to the refugee shelter, and then some of the refugees joined in and mingled with the crowd. This was in 2015/16, in September. And that's when we realized, 'Oh, there's a need there. They want to get into contact with some residents. […] It would be nice if they could connect a little bit in the neighborhood'".

Patricia and Johannes thought about how refugees could connect with residents in the neighborhood and decided to open up a little welcome café. The gatherings took place at a nursing home due to limited available space at the churches. Despite the constraints, the pastors arranged various activities, including coffee, games, crafts for children, mimes, and bobby car races. For about five months, the café thrived, run by a group of roughly 20 to 25 loosely organized volunteers affiliated with the local Catholic and Protestant church.

The café's success was evident in the consistent turnout, as individuals from the refugee shelter and the neighborhood met regularly. However, after a year of these gatherings, they abruptly dissolved. The reason behind this interruption was the dissolution of the nearby refugee shelter, rendering the café's initial purpose obsolete. From Patricia's and Johannes' points of view, this was a shame because they had just routinized the café meetings: "Just when we were so well established, the shelter disbanded". Just as the café was gaining stability, the shelter's closure disrupted its operations. Some volunteers continued to work with refugees, while others shifted their focus. Those who wanted to continue their work began volunteering at the *Multicultural House*.

The accounts of engagement and support for refugees in the period around 2015/16 demonstrate a significant pro-refugee mobilization in Neheim. In addition, the different organizations and groups were interacting with one another around 2015/16. However, after 2016, I could not find any records regarding lasting forms of interaction. In contrast, I could even observe some institutionalized interaction formats being destroyed around that time.

One issue that came up repeatedly in the interviews was the breakdown of the Working Group on Asylum. The Working Group was created in the mid-1980s and ended in 2016. In the 30 years of its existence, the various members came together regularly to discuss issues related to asylum policy. Members represented various welfare organizations, the local government, religious congregations, and the *Refugee Council*. Then, in 2016, the regular meetings of the Working Group ended quite abruptly.

Matthias, a long-time activist of the *Refugee Council*, was angry when he told me about the abrupt ending of the Working Group. He expressed frustration and sadness because, in his eyes the group had done so much good for the refugees in the city:

> "This exchange [in the working group] then completely collapsed over the change of mayor. The structures that existed until then have been eroded. And the basis of trust that we had built up over the years is largely broken. So, all it takes is a few acting individuals in politics or administration to destroy such structures."

Since the end of the Working Group meetings, he told me that all the structures around the Working Group had been broken.

Since the breakup of the Working Group in 2016, members did not come together anymore. In the years before 2016, the group had, amongst other things, worked on a care strategy for refugees that the local government approved. They also had successfully fought for a resolution to take in more international civil war refugees.

Matthias, the activist mentioned above, was convinced that the new mayor had decided to stop the Working Group. The mayor moved the refugee issue to another department of the local government, so other government officials were now responsible for the problem. These were officials who had never been part of the Working Group before. They suddenly expressed great concern for the refugees' privacy regarding data protection and decided that the Working Group could no longer discuss individual cases. Since discussing individual cases was 2015/16 the group's main business, this decision brought about many conflicts between civil society actors and local government officials. Ultimately, the officials stopped convening meetings of the Working Group in 2016. This marked the end of the Working Group. Matthias told me that in the view of many civil society representatives of the Working Group, the data protection issue was just a means to end the influence of civil society organizations and groups on the topic of asylum:

> "Everything we did in the area of refugees was a thorn in the side of the new mayor. Under the guise of data protection, he made sure that individual cases could no longer be discussed in the working group. Then the immigration authorities, who were usually present at our meetings, also withdrew. As a result, we were not able to talk about legal developments."

Susanne, the director of the *Multicultural House*, who had worked on asylum and migration issues for many years, expressed a similar sense of grievance about the end of the Working Group. She, too, believed that the issue of refugees' privacy was only an excuse: "That was an absolute killer argument with data protection".

Another activist from the *Refugee Council*, Annette, recalled being shocked to learn of the Working Group's demise: "He [the mayor] put us out of business from one day to the next with the argument of privacy. That blew us away." She also said that the *Refugee Council* tried to get the Working Group going again, but since they were dependent on the local government's invitation, they could not meet again. She said there was no point without the government's approval because otherwise, the staff of the Immigration Office and the Employment

Office would not attend the meetings. However, these agencies were of central importance to the Working Group because they had much information about the work permits and immigration status of the refugees that the civil society actors were assisting.

Activities and interaction ceased after the heightened mobilization

As in other cities, engagement in Neheim declined sharply after 2015/16. According to the interviewees, this was because the refugee shelters were being dismantled, and fewer newly arrived refugees needed emergency care. In Neheim, however, it was also because people found the often lengthy and challenging involvement and interaction with authorities stressful and unpleasant. The people who continued to be involved in individual cases said they enjoyed the work but were also working at the edge of their limits. While there were interactions between different actors during the mobilization period, such as between churches, informal volunteer groups and churches, or between the *Refugee Council* and the *Multicultural House*, these interactions did not last. These interactions did not turn into routinized forms of interaction. Opportunities for interaction between the various actors active around 2015/16 were relatively scarce after the mobilization period.

Only one such opportunity developed in 2016 in the context of the refugee reception strategy. Many interviewees reported the development of the strategy, which aimed to provide integrative counseling and support for the refugees coming to Neheim. Special attention was to be given to vulnerable groups such as children, people with disabilities, and others. The strategy was intended to provide a framework for this and the structures and processes needed to get this done. When Susanne and Matthias told me about the development of the strategy, they were excited about the idea. Matthias said that a broad coalition of representatives of political parties, welfare organizations, the local government, and the *Refugee Council* worked on the strategy for a whole year:

> "In 2015/16, together with the Social Democrats, the Multicultural House and the local government, we developed a strategy to improve the reception of refugee in [Neheim]. We really looked at all aspects, from sports to housing, education, work, training, health, and so on. And we wrote down the key points."

During that year, the actors involved outlined steps and procedures to deal with refugee reception in housing, education, and health. All members of the coalition agreed on the strategy in 2016. But, as Matthias told me, "unfortunately, it did not come to life". Like Matthias, who expressed his immense frustration with this situation, Susanne, director of the *Multicultural House*, was also quite annoyed at the local government. When she told me about the development of the strategy, she said: "It's all stuck there [at the local government] again."

What did Susanne mean by "stuck again"? Before talking about the refugee reception strategy in the interview, she told me about the Working Group on Asylum and how the new mayor had been counteracting the Working Group since 2016. Thus, she referred to the breakdown of the Working Group. In the eyes of several interviewees at the *Refugee Council* and the *Multicultural House*, the refugee reception strategy, like the Working Group on Asylum, was not something the new mayor was fond of or wanted to pursue.

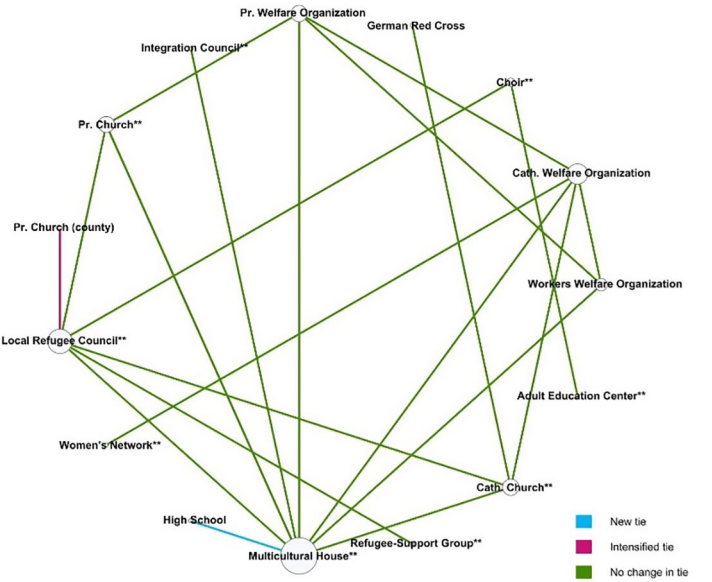
Insights into the network structure

As outlined earlier, the development and survival of a pro-refugee community depends primarily on the development of loose and more structured routines of interaction and the relationships between key actors that were newly created or strengthened during the period of heightened mobilization and the years that followed. In the next section, I offer a brief overview of this network perspective in Neheim.

As depicted in the network map in Figure 8, various civil society organizations and groups actively supported refugees in 2015/16. This network map outlines the organizations and groups that were actively involved. In addition, it shows whether the network connections between key actors and others (notably marked with two asterisks **) have shifted due to the pro-refugee mobilization over the subsequent six years.

The network map highlights that the connections among the actors that were mobilized in 2015/16 were primarily not affected by that time. The map also shows that these key actors had already established these connections before 2015/16, and the interactions during 2015/16 failed to notably intensify these connections in a manner that would endure over time. Instead, these actors stressed their pre-existing familiarity with one another, highlighting that the pro-refugee mobilization did not substantially sustain their connections.

Figure 8: Network changes in Neheim



Lost momentum: Neheims's struggle with growing a pro-refugee community

In this subchapter, I showed how the initial prospects of a new pro-refugee community did not materialize. The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 was characterized by an unprecedented solidarity in Neheim with various organizations, grassroots groups, and institutions supporting refugees. While these organizations and groups interacted during the heightened mobilization, these interactions diminished over time. The dismantling of refugee shelters and the declining refugee population in Neheim seemed to reduce the urgency of emergency assistance for many volunteers. In addition, burnout and fatigue became key struggles for many people actively supporting refugees as bureaucratic challenges intensified and refugees' needs seemed to shift from a state of emergency to a state of integration that included finding jobs and housing.

The case of Neheim also highlights the problematic relationship between members of civil society and local government. The dissolution of the Working

Group on Asylum in 2016 broke off years of collaborative efforts and emphasized the importance of trust. In addition, I visualized these developments in a network map by showing that key connections remained largely unchanged over time. This visualization again illustrated that the mobilization did not significantly change pre-existing relationships between organizations and groups involved in refugee support during 2015/16.

Finally, it should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the activities of organizations involved in refugee support, such as the *Refugee Council* and the *Multicultural House*. However, due to the lack of a pro-refugee community in Neheim, there were few interaction routines and networks that could have been disrupted or reactivated after the pandemic. The influx of Ukrainian refugees also led to a new mobilization in Neheim. However, networks like the Working Group on Asylum were not re-activated.

Conclusion

The empirical analysis of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and its lasting impacts on civil society provides unique insights into the challenges and successes in developing and sustaining pro-refugee communities. In the following, I explore the overarching themes that emerge from the subchapters and shed light on the driving factors and obstacles factors to the development of such communities.

In this chapter, I examined whether this heightened mobilization resulted in the development and survival of pro-refugee communities. The results of my analysis indicate that pro-refugee communities developed in two cities, Lauda and Loburg, according to the concept of local civic action communities that I defined in Chapter 2. In contrast, pro-refugee communities did not develop in the other two cities, Altenau and Neheim.

A common thread across the four cities is the initial pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. All four cities witnessed a significant influx of refugees that year and volunteers and activists engaged in civic action, showing remarkable commitment to immediate refugee support. A common perception in the four cities was the recognition that collective action during that period was urgently needed to address the various challenges of refugee support. Many interviewees highly valued the increased interaction among the different civil society actors during the mobilization.

Despite similarities in the peak of mobilization, pro-refugee communities developed only in two of four cities. While the organizations and groups involved in refugee support built new pro-refugee communities in Lauda and Loburg, I did not find similar effects in Altenau and Neheim. Initially, interactions and efforts did not result in lasting community building.

As I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, two main characteristics define the development and survival of pro-refugee communities. First, initial interactions developed into continued interaction, such as regular gatherings, celebrations, or protests, and more formalized forms, such as roundtables and council meetings. Second, these interaction forms manifested in new and strengthened network connections between the organizations and groups involved. While both of these characteristics apply in Lauda and Loburg, in Altenau and Neheim, the interactions from 2015/16 did not expand, and the relationships of the actors involved did not develop or strengthen between 2015/16 and 2021.

Factors and conditions that drove these different outcomes are related to the respective local context, the relationships and tensions within the civic landscape, and the strategies used by key actors. In Lauda, the central role of key volunteers and activists, the institutionalization of the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*, and the cooperation between the volunteer-network, welfare organizations, and the local government significantly contributed to the stabilization of the pro-refugee community. In Lauda, most actors developed new ties because a majority of them did not know each other or collaborate before. This was different in Loburg, where, through a shared history of local activism, most actors knew each other before but still intensified their ties through the ongoing interaction opportunities. In Loburg, the new Civic Council on Migration and recurrent events were crucial in strengthening the connections of individual organizations and groups. In both cities, the COVID-19 pandemic and the related contact restrictions severely minimized the opportunities for interaction within the pro-refugee community. However, the communities did not dissolve. Instead, the activities and interaction formats were re-activated once the restrictions were lifted. When the influx of refugees from Ukraine increased starkly in the spring of 2022, new and old volunteers and activists came together and built on the existing structures of the community.

The case of Altenau, on the other hand, highlights that lasting community building was not a natural outcome of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. Despite increased interaction between groups and organizations during the mobilization period, these actors did not develop continued forms of interac-

tion and network ties. Similarly, in the case of Neheim, solidarity and collective action were evident during the initial mobilization in 2015. However, sustaining these interactions was challenging. The reasons behind the absent development and survival of pro-refugee communities in Altenau and Neheim are manifold. Still, they can be explained by conflicts and loss of trust between civil society and local government members. In addition, the dominance of professionalized organizations in both cases and the different strategies and interaction cultures between these organizations and more informal refugee-support groups proved to be an immense challenge to community building.

In the following three empirical chapters, I will highlight the factors and conditions that were either drivers or obstacles to the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in each case. I will dedicate each chapter through paired comparisons to one factor or a closely linked set of factors and conditions that can explain the varied outcomes.

Opportunities for Interaction and the Role of Brokers[1]

In the previous chapter, I outlined the development of pro-refugee communities in the four cases: Lauda, Loburg, Altenau, and Neheim. I discussed how the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 unfolded in each case and how, despite similar starting points, pro-refugee communities developed only in Loburg and Lauda. In the remainder of the book, including this chapter, I examine specific factors and conditions that help explain these outcomes. These chapters aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of when local civic action communities emerge and what factors and conditions are conducive to their development and sustainability.

In this chapter, I explore one of the driving forces behind pro-refugee communities in Lauda and Loburg: the role of local brokers in sustaining interaction in a pro-refugee community by continually creating diverse interaction opportunities. I conceptualize local brokers as active agents who create opportunities for interaction and thus continually bring people together in their locality. This understanding of brokers builds on recent innovations in organizational sociology by David Obstfeld, Stephen P. Borgatti, and Jason Davis (2014).

In the literature on social movements, scholars have highlighted the significance of maintaining interaction during periods of low mobilization through community events, rituals, and the institutionalization of groups (Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Staggenborg, 1996, 2020; Taylor, 1989). However, there is limited research on which types of actors facilitate interaction and how. To shed light on how specific actors intentionally create opportunities for continued inter-

1 This chapter is based on the following article: van den Berg, C. & Hutter, S. (in press): How Local Brokers Keep Interaction Going: Pro-refugee Communities after Heightened Mobilization. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*.

action, in this chapter, I draw on recent innovations in organizational sociology that focus on the behavior of brokers.

With this more nuanced conceptualization of brokerage, I innovate the current understanding of brokers and bridge the literature of social movement studies with recent concepts in organizational sociology. Through this unique lens, I explore how local brokers emerge and what kinds of strategies they employ to keep interaction and networking alive. Most brokerage studies define brokers as actors who can connect with others because of their structural position in the network (Burt, 2007; Gould & Fernandez, 1989). I draw on recent studies by Obstfeld et al. (2014) and Small and Gose (2020) to focus on the behavior of brokers and the process of brokerage itself. According to these authors, brokers are characterized by their "bridging" behavior and how they bring other actors together. Thus, rather than being determined by their structural position, individuals and organizations become brokers once they are actively involved in the brokerage process, making them a "matchmaker" or a "catalyst" for interaction (Stovel & Shaw, 2012, p. 146).

Overall, Chapter 4 shows that individuals and organizations continued to interact in Lauda and Loburg. Focusing on these two cases, I first demonstrate how actors built trust and recognition within the communities by tackling the challenges volunteers, activists, and employees of community organizations and small groups encountered when dealing with local state actors. Developing this trust and recognition had significant implications for their role as active brokers because this created the opportunity to foster interaction in the first place. In the second step, I show how brokers adopted a diversified approach to create interaction opportunities. This diversification included three types of interaction opportunities involving non-contentious and contentious actions: (i) maintaining the core work, (ii) policy advocacy on asylum and migration, and (iii) broadening the issue by organizing events beyond the issue of local refugee support (including connecting the pro-refugee community with activists combating far-right extremism).

The paper is divided into four sections. First, we outline the theoretical framework, linking social movement studies with advances in brokerage theory from organizational sociology. Second, we provide an overview of our cases and present our data collection and analysis strategies. Third, we present the findings in the two steps outlined above, from identifying how specific individuals and organizations became local brokers to analyzing how these brokers sustained interaction through diversifying interaction opportunities. In the final section, we summarize our results and conclusions.

The chapter is divided into three sections. First, I outline the theoretical framework, linking social movement studies with advances in brokerage theory from organizational sociology. Second, I present the findings in the two steps outlined above, from identifying how specific individuals and organizations became local brokers to analyzing how these brokers sustained interaction through diversifying interaction opportunities. In the final section, I summarize the results and conclusions.

Theoretical Framework: Local Brokers and Sustained Interaction

As I have already discussed in the literature discussion in Chapter 2, periods of heightened mobilization provide a tremendous opportunity for individuals and organizations to interact and build networks (della Porta, 2020b; della Porta & Mosca, 2005; McAdam et al., 1996; Staggenborg, 2020; Staggenborg & Lecomte, 2009). Staggenborg and Lecomte (2009), for example, found in a study of the Montreal Women's Movement that social movement campaigns positively affect organizational ties. Relatedly, della Porta (2020b) suggests that events like the demonstrations in Gezi Park in 2013 alter interaction routines and intensify network potential. These mobilizations

> "have emergent relational impacts by intensifying and transforming interactions among different actors. Rather than being spontaneous, they are produced through a convergence of preexisting nets and contribute to building new ones at great speed" (della Porta, 2020b, p. 7).

When mobilization declines, these ties can survive and evolve even though continuous interaction and networking may be more complex during low mobilization.

A number of scholars have highlighted that continued interaction and networking promoted by specific actors such as entrepreneurs, leaders, or social movement organizations are critical factors in shaping the fate of social movements post-heightened mobilization (Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Krinsky & Crossley, 2014; McAdam, 1988; Obach, 2004; Robnett, 1997; Staggenborg, 1996; Taylor, 1989; Whittier, 1997). A classic study in this regard is Verta Taylor's (1989) article where she highlighted the significant role of individuals and organizations in sustaining interaction beyond peaks of mobilization. She indicated that longtime activists and a centralized leadership foster the maintenance and rein-

forcement of networks that may be used for future mobilization efforts. Her seminal work on abeyance structures has laid essential groundwork to better understand the long-term continuity of movements. She emphasized how the women's movement endured over decades when opportunities for mass mobilization were low. Taylor (1989, p. 762) highlighted three core aspects of how abeyance structures contribute to movement continuity over the long term: "through promoting the survival of activist networks, sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics, and promoting a collective identity that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose". According to Taylor (1989), the continued existence of a movement depends on whether activists and organizations continue to network and interact, what decisions they make concerning their action repertoire, and whether they foster a collective identity and memory about their core vision of society.

Regarding movements' action repertoire, recent studies of the Women's March and environ-mental movement emphasized that grassroots groups often rely on a mix of more and less contentious events to promote interaction in their movement community (Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Staggenborg, 2022). Catherine Corrigall-Brown (2022) highlighted in her study of 35 feminist groups founded after the first Women's March in 2017 that a key factor explaining the survival of these groups were their diversity of tactics. When tactics varied like "hosting talks at the local library, social events, and postcard campaigns", groups could "engage a diversity of members who often have varying interests and levels of comfort with different tactics" (Corrigall-Brown, 2022, p. 145). Similarly, Suzanne Staggenborg (2022, p. 6) showed that some social movement entrepreneurs created events "outside the boundaries of movement organizations and campaigns" and established routine interaction spaces like a "sustainability salon". These spaces, although less contentious, created opportunities for relationships to form and "provided opportunities for involvement in new events and organizations" (Staggenborg, 2022, p. 6). Both studies highlight that non-contentious activities in addition to contentious activities are an essential puzzle piece in explaining movement survival.

The literature cited above has provided crucial insights into the internal dynamics of movements, emphasizing the importance of experienced activists, leaders, and organizations to better understand why and how some movements fade away and others do not. However, I believe it is crucial to further examine the specific actors that keep the interaction going, who they are, how they emerge, and what kinds of strategies they employ to sustain

interaction among a diverse set of actors involved in the cause. There are a few notable studies that are not working with the term "brokerage" but mean a similar notion. Instead of referring to brokers, they refer to "local movement centers" (Morris, 1984, p. 40), "movement halfway houses" (Morris, 1984, p. 139), "bridge builders" (Rose, 2000, p. 176), or "bridge organizations" and "bridge leaders" (Robnett, 1997, p. 25f.). For instance, Rose (2000, p. 176ff.) highlighted bridge builders as people who advanced coalition building between the labor and environmental communities by creating dialogue and developing a shared vision. In their studies of the civil rights movement, Robnett (1997) and Morris (1984) showed how bridge leaders, movement centers and movement halfway houses played an important role in linking the movement's diverse constituencies. They emphasized that these actors not only initiated contact or created dialogue but also provided essential resources to skilled leaders, such as workshops and knowledge, to bring the different groups together and coordinate collective action.

To better understand how individuals and organizations maintain interaction and networking over multiple years, I draw on recent advances in conceptualizing brokerage from organizational sociology. The role of brokerage has received considerable attention in social movement studies. In "Dynamics of Contention," McAdam et al. (2001, p. 142) see brokerage as a primary mechanism in mobilization. The authors define brokerage as "the linking of two or more currently unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with each other and/or with yet another site.". According to them, units and sites exist as individuals and as organizations, cliques, and programs. They outline various strategies brokers employ, from actively merging connections to keeping actors apart. Empirical studies have used the concept of brokerage to explain different phenomena, such as diffusion processes, power inequalities, coalition and alliance building, and the formation of interorganizational networks (Abul-Fottouh, 2018; Bassoli et al., 2014; Crossley & Diani, 2018; Diani, 2003; Hoffmann et al., 2022; McAdam et al., 2008; Obach, 2004; Romanos, 2016; Tarrow, 2005; von Bülow, 2011).

While the majority of social movement scholars have traditionally adopted a structuralist reading of brokerage, defining brokers as a distinct element of the network structure while placing less emphasis on the active role of brokers in facilitating interaction (notably Burt, 2007; Diani, 2003; Gould & Fernandez, 1989), some studies deviate from this trend (McAdam et al., 2001; Obach, 2004; Romanos, 2016; von Bülow, 2011). For instance, von Bülow (2011) discussed the role of brokers in building durable transnational coalitions in the

context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations. She examined transnational civil society efforts to influence trade negotiations in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations. Reviewing the successful and unsuccessful broker roles over time, she emphasized that enduring coalitions require "institutionalized brokerage roles" (von Bülow, 2011, p. 166) for the predefined areas of action, i.e., more formalized roles that the other coalition members accept. Another deviation from this trend is a study by Obach (2004). Obach (2004, p. 206) emphasized the significant contributions of "coalition brokers" in activists' efforts to bring the labor and environmental movements together. He showed how coalition brokers bridged frames across movements by highlighting values shared by members of both movements (on frame alignment, see Snow et al., 1986)

Based on these insights and further studies by organizational sociologists Smith (S. S. Smith, 2005, p. 8f.) and Obstfeld et al. (2014), whether actors engage in brokerage, that is, facilitate or hinder the formation of ties between others in their networks, depends on their behavior. More specifically, Obstfeld et al. (2014) began to contribute to a reconceptualization of brokerage as a process. They pointed to the importance of differentiating between "strictly structural patterns (such as structural holes) that Burt and others have associated with broker-age and the social behavior of brokering" (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 139). Based on this critique, they expanded the understanding of what it means to be a broker as someone who "influences, manages, or facilitates interaction between two actors" (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 141).

Instead of seeing brokers as transactional agents, they focus on the process of "coordinative action" (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 138) where brokerage influences interaction between different triads. In contrast to structural holes theory that considers the absence of ties as an integral condition for brokerage, Obstfeld et al. (2014) argue that brokerage can also involve the connection of two alters who are already connected but the broker alters the way they interact. Three possible triadic scenarios are conduit brokerage, gaudens brokerage and iungens brokerage. Conduit brokerage involves the passing of information between one alter to another alter without wanting to impact their relationship. Gaudens brokerage is happening when a broker upholds or profits from competition or conflict between two alters. Lastly, iugens brokerage involves a broker introducing two alters or facilitating their interaction (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 141f.).

In this chapter, I highlight the last type of brokerage – iungens brokerage – since I want to better understand how brokers actually facilitate interaction in

a social movement setting. Following Obstfeld et al.'s (2014, p. 147) conceptualization, a broker can either conduct brief iungens brokerage where the broker simply introduces two parties or sustained iungens where the broker engages in continued facilitation of interaction between two or more alters/parties. As I will later outline, keeping interaction going once heightened mobilization is over, likely involves a more sustained form of iugens brokerage. How the local brokers in this study sustained interaction will be part of the empirical analysis.

Understanding brokerage as a process is essential when exploring network change over a longer time span. For my study, I argue that when the mobilization period is over, and organizations may disperse, brokers become crucial to holding a movement community to-gether. In this vein, Small and Gose (2020) have emphasized the significant role brokers can play in what they call the post-contact stage, which I take as an equivalence of the post-mobilization period. In their study of routine organizations such as childcare centers, businesses, or churches, Small and Gose (2020) theorize the role of these organizations in addressing poverty through encouraging the increase of beneficial social ties between people like clients of childcare centers or members of churches. In their paper, they argue that such routine organization (e.g., childcare center or church) successfully facilitates interaction amongst people (e.g., clients or members) when the organization enable frequent and long-lasting interaction that is outwardly focused or centered on joint tasks (Small & Gose, 2020, p. 14).

An organization that enables people to meet regularly for a more extended period of time and focus on one task or topic can act as a broker. This organization is a broker because it makes this form of interaction between individuals possible in the first place. It creates the opportunity for interaction, and not just briefly, but sustainably. Obstfeld (Obstfeld, 2005, p. 104) originally made this distinction between brief and sustained facilitation of interaction to emphasize that in the case of the latter the broker takes on an "essential coordinative role over time".

To conceptualize which type of actors contribute to sustaining interaction and networking in the pro-refugee community, I want to build on this recent reconceptualization of brokers. The stronger focus on the brokering behavior instead of on brokers' structural position allows me to show *how* actors in the pro-refugee community use their network contacts to create opportunities for interaction during the post-mobilization period. The local brokers make interaction available during low mobilization when interaction and networking are less likely.

Two key features I need to consider in order to understand how brokers make this happen is what Obstfeld et al. (2014) call multiplexity and heterogeneity. First, I need to consider multiplexity, meaning the "nature and patterns of existing ties and their subsequent alteration" (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 150). More specifically, they underscore the importance of a "trusted broker" someone who "facilitate[s] sufficiently increased trust to make collaboration possible." (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 151). In other words, a broker must be trusted by the actors s/he wants to bring together. Otherwise, facilitating interaction will be a complex undertaking. The second feature is heterogeneity. Brokers need to consider the heterogeneity of the actors they want to bring together. To assess this heterogeneity, Obstfeld et al. (2014, p. 152f.) suggested accounting for the identity, the size, and the relationship between the actors.

Considering multiplexity and heterogeneity in brokerage is highly relevant for social movements in their post-mobilization phase for two reasons. First, due to the multiplexity of the relationships in a social movement (see Crossley & Diani, 2018, p. 158), the brokers who want to facilitate interaction need to instill a certain level of trust so that actors are willing to engage in coordinated action. Second, the heterogeneity of actors in social movements, for instance in size or political claims, means that brokers need to consider this heterogeneity when planning and facilitating interaction.

I believe that both multiplexity and heterogeneity are particularly important in today's diverse civic landscape and specifically in the pro-refugee movement. As emphasized in the introductory chapter, the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 studied here involved a wide range of actors, from highly politicized actors involved in more contentious activities, such as protest alliances and activist groups, to actors primarily involved in non-contentious activities, such as church congregations and welfare organizations. In addition, their relationships with each other are multiplex, with some actors knowing and trusting each other well and others not, and perhaps more importantly, the trust they have in each broker. Based on Obstfeld et al. (2014) and Small and Gose (2020), I suggest that how brokers emerge and what types of ongoing interaction opportunities they need to create is highly influenced by this complex and dynamic environment. Thus, in my empirical analysis, I consider the different types of actors found in my case studies and their relationships and levels of trust in the brokers.

Empirical Analysis

In the following, I first introduce the three local brokers I identified in the evaluation of the interviews in Lauda and Loburg. I briefly show the kinds of relationships they have developed and then assess *how* they built trusting relationships within their communities. Second, I discuss *how* they sustained interaction within their communities and therefore significantly contributed to the survival of pro-refugee communities in the two cities.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 led to the development of pro-refugee communities in Lauda and Loburg but not in Altenau and Neheim. Please recall that I measure the development of these communities by examining whether networks between organizations and groups were sustained and evolved until 2020/21. Further evaluation of the interviews and documents highlighted that the strong presence and activities of three major actors in Lauda and Loburg was a significant factor in the development of the pro-refugee communities in both cities.

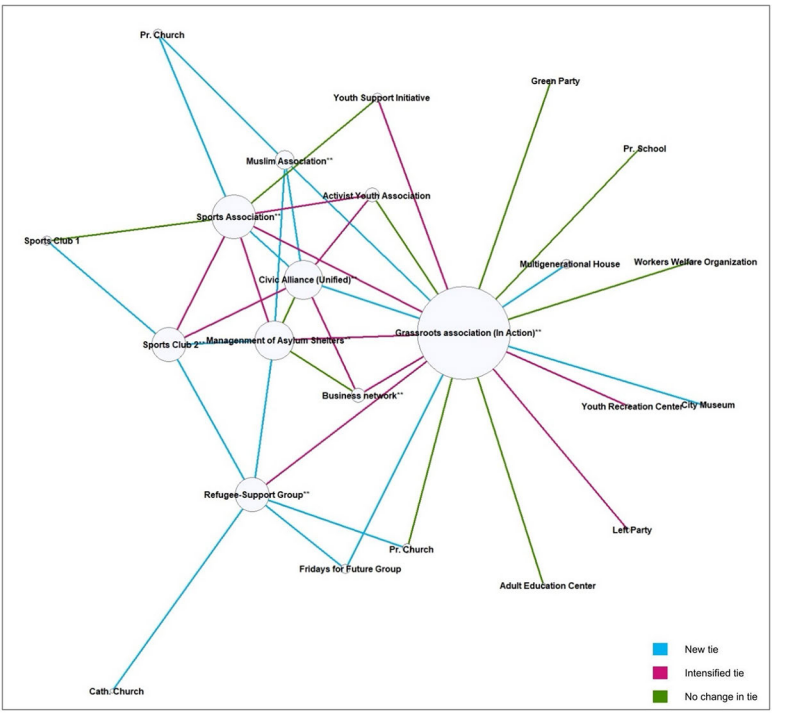
Why these three actors? These actors initiated most interaction opportunities in the cities between 2015 and 2022. They were instrumental in ensuring that the interaction continued. More specifically, the three actors that I identified as brokers were key figures in two community organizations and one civic alliance, having been active in refugee support and advocacy for years.

To visualize the central role of the brokers in each community, I created network maps. I showed similar maps in the previous chapter. The two network maps in Figure 9 and Figure 10 reflect the brokers' central position in the pro-refugee communities. In Lauda, the broker is the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*. In Loburg, the brokers are the Grassroots association *In Action* and the Civic Alliance *Unified*. To illustrate the extent to which relationships change as a result of actors' involvement in the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, I use different categories – new ties, intensified ties, and no effect – in my network maps. These categories were systematically applied to code all interviews, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of changes in interorganizational and intergroup relationships.

The network maps are labeled accordingly to indicate the nature of the relationship change. When a new relationship is formed between two organizations as a direct result of their engagement during the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 and the post-mobilization period, I labeled the connecting lines as new ties (blue). This highlights the emergence of a new relationship due to their involvement. If an existing relationship was deepened or strength-

ened due to their participation, I labeled the connecting line as intensified ties (pink). This indicates that a pre-existing relationship became more robust and substantial due to their involvement in the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. Conversely, if participation in the pro-refugee mobilization had no significant effect on the relationship between the two organizations, I labeled this connecting line as no effect (green). This indicates that the relationship remains unchanged despite their involvement in the cause.

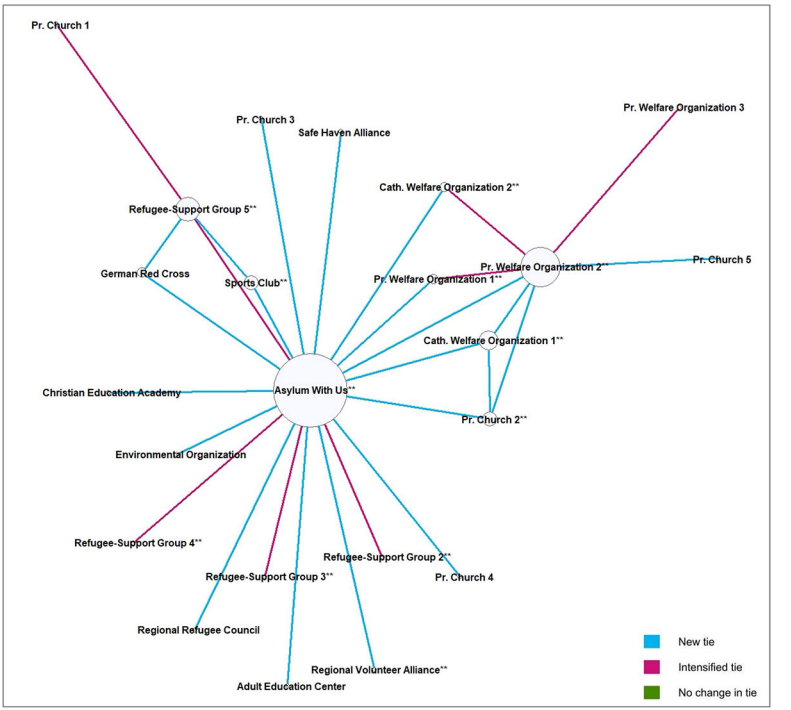
Figure 9: Network changes in Loburg with a focus on brokers



During the mobilization period, many organizations and groups in the four cases interacted with one another. As noted above, not all of these interactions resulted in long-term changes in interorganizational and intergroup relations. Overall, the maps show that the majority of actors in Loburg and

Lauda either intensified pre-existing ties or established new ones during the heightened mobilization and post-mobilization periods.

Figure 10: Network changes in Lauda with a focus on brokers



Since this chapter is not about the structural position of brokers but about their active role in connecting third parties, I will now introduce the three local brokers in Lauda and Loburg and show how the people involved in refugee support and advocacy developed immense trust in them. In this brief analysis, I will also briefly discuss the reasons why local brokers may not have emerged in Altenau and Neheim. I will then examine in detail the strategies of the brokers in Lauda and Neheim to bring the different actors together by creating various opportunities for interaction between 2015/16 and 2020/2021.

Broker 1: Asylum with Us (Lauda)

In Lauda, I identified one broker, the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*. A small group of volunteers and activists founded *Asylum with Us* in 2015. The group created the network to connect all twenty refugee-support groups developed throughout the district in the previous months. Because all refugee-support groups faced immense challenges from local state agencies, they wanted to exchange experiences and share resources like knowledge and existing social networks. In the eyes of many volunteers, the work in refugee support was precious but also frustrating because refugees lived under highly precarious conditions. The groups often put every ounce of energy into improving the lives of the refugees who lived in the local refugee shelters close to them. However, they were frequently confronted with the restrictive asylum laws and realities that made the lives of many refugees unbelievably tricky.

Two challenges were particularly difficult for the volunteers and activists. First, the deportations of refugees were very depressing. In an interview, Marion told us: "I experienced my low when a man from Pakistan whom I had guided for a long time was deported overnight". The deportation took place although she and other volunteers in the refugee-support group had agreed with officials at their local government only a few days earlier that he could stay in their town for a few more months to work. In Marion's words:

> "They made fools of us. They built trust and promised he could work here for a few more months. But then he was taken away and we couldn't even say goodbye. This experience destroyed our motivation".

Second, volunteers witnessed the poor treatment of refugees who remained in the district, the lack of public funds for housing and food, and the lack of work permits. Maria, a long-term volunteer and activist for refugee rights, recalled how all of these conditions affected the refugees' psyches. She thought she was ministering to the dying: "It's almost like I was watching people die. Because they see no future here." During this time, the rifts between local state agencies and civil society groups became apparent. In Maria's words:

> "the sides became very divided, because from our point of view, people working for the local government always interpreted the laws to the disadvantage of the refugees we tried to assist".

These severe challenges prompted some volunteers and activists to create the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* and to organize the first political Asylum Summits. These first local and then region-wide Asylum Summits soon received considerable visibility across the pro-refugee community. The Asylum Summits, discussed in more detail in the second part of the analysis, were workshop weekends for everyone involved in refugee support. As the volunteer-network invited local politicians to these Asylum Summits, they soon attracted public attention and even reached the state secretary of the interior. My interviewee Luisa, a long-term activist at *Asylum with Us*, remembered this time well:

> "Finally politicians noticed us! And then we even got an invitation by the state secretary who invited Stephan and some other activists to speak to him in person. They basically told him about the work we are doing on the ground and the challenges we face. So yes, that's when the network became more and more known".

The interviewees reported that they felt relief when their work and the struggles of the refugees finally got more attention. They really wanted to "*report from below*" and refused to feel like the "h*enchmen*" of their local governments.

In contrast, the key figures (volunteers and activists) at *Asylum with Us* gained incredible recognition and trust from various actors involved in refugee support and advocacy. In light of the challenges that the people active in the pro-refugee communities faced, the core group at *Asylum with Us* were always responsive and protective of the people active in the pro-refugee community. When asked about the role of *Asylum with Us*, Bettina, volunteer in one of the refugee-support groups responded:

> "They are essential to the work we do! Because Asylum with Us has put so much work into building a network, we now know who in the region is working on this issue. They have also helped to politicize the issue of migration here".

In another interview, the chair of a local sports club recognized the distinctive role of the network's informal leader, Pastor Stephan: "We would not have managed without him. The state was completely overwhelmed". One interviewee, Max, a migration counselor working for the local branch of a Catholic welfare

organization, reported that he was often at his limits, on the verge of exhaustion:

> "It's a constant battle for the refugees' interests. We [the pro-refugee community] are really struggling [...]. And of course, we always try to fight back against our local government."

In this challenging situation, he expresses gratitude to the volunteers and activists at *Asylum with Us*:

> "They are always ready to help us with any problem we may have. So, they are really great because you can always rely on them. You know when you need something, you always call them first".

In addition, Daniel, an employee of a local charity that I interviewed argued that the crucial importance of *Asylum with Us* was that of the intermediary between the pro-refugee community and local state actors:

> "Asylum with Us is so important because the volunteers and activists have a central point of contact. And the representatives of the different state agencies also have a central point of contact".

Although the volunteers and activists at *Asylum with Us* naturally emerged from and felt part of the grassroots community, they established communication channels with local state agencies and government representatives.

Brokers 2 and 3: Unified and In Action (Loburg)

In Loburg, I identified two brokers within the pro-refugee community. One of these brokers was the Civic Alliance *Unified*. The second broker was the Grassroots association *In Action*. While the Civic Alliance *Unified* is made up of local activists, the Grassroots association *In Action* consists of paid employees and some volunteers. In contrast to the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* that emerged in the context of increasing migration in 2013, the two brokers in Loburg already existed long before the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. *Unified* and *In Action* emerged in the 2000s when the region dealt with high unemployment rates and rising far-right marches. The Civic Alliance *Unified* was founded to combat rising far-right groups by organizing demonstrations and

rallies. The Grassroots association *In Action* was established a few years earlier with a similar mission to combating far-right tendencies and children's and youth poverty. In contrast to *Unified*'s entirely volunteer-run Civic Alliance, the Grassroots association *In Action* had a small paid staff.

In Action's chairwomen, Lisa, a trained Protestant pastor with close ties to various civil society organizations, and Thomas, the spokesperson of *Unified*, were well-known in the local civic landscape even before the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. However, around 2015, they got heavily involved in refugee support and became critical focal points for the city's newly emerging pro-refugee community.

They gained enormous recognition by facing challenges experienced by many refugees, volunteers, and activists engaged in refugee support and advocacy. In doing so, they dealt with representatives of state agencies and their local government, raised public awareness for the cause of refugees, and combated far-right sentiments. Their efforts gave others active in the community the strength to continue supporting refugee rights and other topics.

Like in Lauda, volunteers and activists often felt overwhelmed and frustrated. From their perspective, the scope of the activities and, thus, the personal burden was enormous. They often felt abandoned by their local government. Lukas, a volunteer in a business network, said: "When Merkel said 'we can handle this' […] it went a bit in the direction of 'you will handle this'". Another interviewee, Christian, a sports club board shares a similar impression: "In the end, politics shifted a lot of the burden onto the volunteers and let them do the work". Both volunteers were involved in refugee support and advocacy, but expected the state to shoulder more of the burden.

Amidst these struggles, *In Action* and *Unified*, stood out as particular representatives of this community. Volunteers and employees at *In Action* and activists at *Unified* started to bring the issues volunteers were facing to the attention of the local government. One of the reasons *Unified* gained such a position was because Thomas, *Unified*'s speaker, assumed a double role in the city. On the one hand, he was an activist. In his professional life, on the other hand, he had just become the manager of the refugee shelters a year prior to the refugee reception crisis in 2015. He was employed by a regional company that managed the refugee shelters in the district. Johannes, an employee of a regional association against racism expressed amazement about Thomas' double function: "It is really special that the speaker of Unified, an activist, also had the role of the refugee shelter manager. This was perfect". As one of the leading activists at *Unified* and the professional refugee shelter manager, he could medi-

ate between civil society and state actors. He told me about one of the meetings between him and other people active in the pro-refugee community and public officials working for the local government. These meetings were sometimes complicated but, in his eyes, vital:

> "[…] we met with the local government once a week for two to three hours. That wasn't always amicable. Sometimes the discussions got very heated. Sometimes, during the week, in a stressful situation over the phone, we would say some rude things to each other, and next Friday, at the meeting, I had to straighten things out".

Many actors credit him for taking on this intermediary role. For example, Herbert, a refugee-support group volunteer, shared his unique role:

> "Everyone active in this new refugee support and advocacy space knew that he was an advocate for the issue. It's like, we [volunteers and activists] are finally being heard. Not everything works like we want it to, but at least we communicate and talk about the issue".

Similar to *Unified*, the Grassroots association *In Action* became also very recognized throughout the pro-refugee community. Securing permanent housing for refugees was one of the issues for which *In Action* received much credit. Around 2016, volunteers involved in the local refugee-support group, along with refugees themselves, felt alone in dealing with discrimination against refugees in the housing market. Christian, the chair of a local sports club expressed his frustration with how slow state agencies reacted to this problem:

> "[…] the agencies reacted so slowly, and the paperwork took so long. For us, it was not about some governmental act, but about very intimate personal fates of real people [deep breath]." Another interviewee, Anna, would have expected much more support from state agencies: "housing has always been an issue. We would have needed more support in communicating with the local housing associations".

Although *In Action* could not solve the housing problem in Loburg, employees of *In Action* worked hard to provide refugees with more access to housing. Daniela, a volunteer from the local refugee-support group remembered how the chairwoman, Lisa, tackled the issue by applying for state funding, buying apartments, and renting them out to refugees: "Lisa has achieved so much con-

cerning housing. In Action simply started to buy a few apartments and rent them out, because it was so difficult to find apartments for refugees at that time".

Concerning housing, *In Action* also supported a new Muslim prayer association in Loburg that people who primarily fled from Syria to Germany created in 2018. This young association encountered similar discrimination in the housing market. Following the formation of the association, landlords twice terminated their leases at short notice. After these setbacks, *In Action* leased the association some of its facilities for the association's activities. Johannes, a staff member of a regional anti-racism initiative remembered how the new Muslim prayer association finally got a permanent lease by *In Action*:

> "It was amazing how In Action built a nest for the association. That is something special. It is especially remarkable when you consider how many other new Muslim prayer association in our region have gone bankrupt because they were ripped off by landlords".

The two brokers, *In Action and Unified*, overcame some complex challenges facing Loburg's pro-refugee community. First, they found ways to communicate with representatives of the local state agencies and government. This way, they gave the various people active in the pro-refugee community a stronger sense of agency. Second, they tackled the problem of discrimination in the housing market which was a daunting issue for many refugees and people involved in supporting them. With the tremendous commitment that both these actors put into this issue of refugee support, they proved to the pro-refugee community that they were reliable and trustworthy.

In summary, the three actors, *Asylum with Us* in Lauda and *In Action* and *Unified* in Loburg gained their unique position by building a strong sense of trust and recognition within their pro-refugee community. They built this trust and recognition by creating a strong position towards the state and becoming strong advocates of the people active in refugee support. However, *Asylum with Us* was founded amidst the struggles and as a representative of all refugee-support groups in Lauda's district. In contrast, *In Action* and *Unified*, existed before the pro-refugee community emerged in Lauda. They were not created through the community's struggles but nonetheless became brokers in the process of being active in refugee support.

While *Unified*, *In Action*, and *Asylum with Us* became local broker and made the community feel more heard, the situation was different in other cities. In

Altenau and Neheim, the two 'unsuccessful' cases, there were two welfare organizations that had the potential to assume the role of brokers. However, despite their engagement in refugee support, they did not gain the same recognition and trust among grassroots actors in their communities. These organizations were heavily engaged in refugee support efforts between 2015 and 2016 and interacted with various grassroots actors during that period. However, the welfare organizations were not successful in gaining recognition and trust among the pro-refugee communities. One of the main reasons for this may have been that both organizations received state funding and were hesitant to engage with their local governments in a highly controversial manner. Instead, they maintained a positive and non-controversial relationship with representatives of state institutions, which made it difficult for them to be seen as effective advocates for the pro-refugee community. Thus, despite their engagement in refugee support, these welfare organizations were unable to gain a strong foothold within their communities. Their reluctance to engage in more confrontational tactics, coupled with their dependence on state funding, limited their ability to act as brokers for the community.

Diversifying interaction opportunities

In the second part of the analysis, I want to demonstrate the strategies employed by the identified brokers to keep interaction going. Specifically, I show how they facilitated interactions by offering three different types of events, diversifying the opportunities for interaction. In both cases, opportunities for interaction were oriented towards (i) maintaining the core work, (ii) policy advocacy on asylum and migration, and (iii) broadening the issue by organizing events beyond the issue of local refugee support. Table 8 provides an overview of concrete events that the brokers organized.

Table 8: Diversification of interaction opportunities

	MAINTAINING THE CORE WORK	POLICY ADVOCACY ON ASYLUM & MIGRATION	BROADENING THE ISSUE
	Non-contentious	**Contentious**	**Contentious**
LAUDA	**Community café** Informal community place for volunteers and refugees (e.g., language tandems, women's group, afternoon coffee, parties)	**Asylum Summits** Biannual summits that bring together grassroots groups working on refugee support (workshops, presentations, development of policy recommendations)	**Protests against European border politics** Protests and rallies against conditions of refugees on Greek islands; involvement in Save haven initiative ("Sichere Häfen") and in regional initiative for human rights ("humanity alliance")
	Intercultural party Party for everyone involved in refugee support	**Expert groups** Seven groups made up of representatives of civil society organizations. Development of new integration strategy for the district.	**Protests against far-right extremism** Rally against racism, bike rally to Hanau (against NSU murder)
			Public debates Public debates and joint readings on issues like human rights and democracy more broadly

	MAINTAINING THE CORE WORK	POLICY ADVOCACY ON ASYLUM & MIGRATION	BROADENING THE ISSUE
	Non-contentious	Contentious	Contentious
LOBURG	**Community café** Informal community place for refugees and volunteers (e.g., support meetings, dinners, dance parties)	**Civic Council on Migration** Regular meeting format for people in pro-refugee community that want to influence local politics; also serves as exchange format between civil society and local state representatives	**Protests against European border politics** Protests and rallies against burning refugee camp in Moria; rallies against inhumane living conditions in European refugee camps
	Summer parties Volunteers from a refugee-support group organized yearly summer party at local refugee shelter (stopped in 2019)		**Protests against far-right groups** Protests against far-right groups and parties, marches against far-right on national remembrance days
	Intercultural party Yearly party for people who are involved in the pro-refugee community		**Public debates about far-right voting** Public talks about rise of far-right party in 2017 and 2018

The main goal of the first type of interaction opportunity, 'maintaining the core work,' was to bring the volunteers and activists together who still worked on everyday refugee support. Events under 'maintaining the core work' were non-contentious activities such as informal meetings, language classes, or celebrations at the community cafés but also summer parties and celebrations at the refugee shelters. With the second type, 'policy advocacy on asylum and migration,' the brokers addressed people who wanted to be politically more involved and influence local policies concerning asylum and migration. These events include more contentious activities such as the so-called Asylum Summits, expert groups on integration, and meetings at the Civic Council on Migration. The goal of the third type of interaction opportunity, 'broadening the

issue,' was to bring together people from the pro-refugee community and people involved in other forms of political activism, such as racism or combating far-right extremism. These events were usually protests and rallies and, thus, the most contentious activities covered by my research.

As follows, I will discuss in more detail the different events the brokers organized and how they could connect different groups of the pro-refugee communities throughout the years.

Maintaining the core community

The first type of interaction opportunities concerns the core work in refugee support. This means, the brokers organized events to promote interaction among the volunteers who still maintained the core work in refugee support. These volunteers continued to support refugees who had appointments with state agencies and doctors or help them find housing and jobs. To maintain this core group, the brokers created, for example, community cafés, where they and other volunteers organized afternoon coffee, dinners, parties, or language tandems. These cafés took place in the community spaces, rented free of charge by the city council (Lauda) and the Protestant church (Loburg).

In Lauda, this café was founded around 2015 to create a space for refugees and volunteers to meet outside the refugee shelters. Ellen, who worked for *Asylum with Us* when I interviewed her, but started to participate in refugee support as a volunteer in 2015 reported that the café was a space for various activities: "The voluntary German courses take place at the café. There is also a women's group, and there are the language tandems" (A language tandem is a pairing of people who regularly meet up to learn a language). She and other interviewees were very frustrated when the café could not open during its regular hours for over a year when the COVID pandemic was at the peak. In particular, they missed the sense of togetherness created through celebrations. When I interviewed Ellen in 2021, she was really excited about the reopening party of the café: "[…] we are planning an opening party that should finally revive the activities at the café. We have a Syrian woman who will open on Saturdays now." Ellen believed the café was more than a weekly meeting spot. In her eyes, the café was "like a community center." She and other volunteers already looked forward to serving coffee and tea and playing games with everyone once the café opened again. She remembered joyfully how various volunteers and refugees regularly visited "to play games or just to talk to each other."

Employees of the Grassroots association *In Action* created a similar community café in Loburg. This café was located in a space owned by the Protestant

church and shared with the Protestant youth group. The community café was volunteer-run from the beginning and became a key location to hang out and meet refugees and volunteers. Over the years, the volunteers at the café hosted various events, from dances, and potluck dinners, to talks and discussions centered on the German asylum law.

The interactions that the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* in Lauda and the Grassroots association *In Action* facilitated through these cafés were essential for the core group of volunteers. These cafés provided opportunities for volunteers and refugees to socialize and participate in various activities, such as German language courses, women's groups, and language tandems. The non-contentious gatherings allowed for more intimate relationships, such as friendships, to be forged. For example, interviewees talked about how they experienced a strong sense of joy and togetherness when participating in celebrations and informal dinners. However, they also shared the severe frustrations of working within a restrictive asylum and migration system that they viewed as unbearable for many refugees. Similar events that the brokers repeatedly organized concerning maintaining the core work were summer parties and intercultural parties.

Policy advocacy on migration and asylum issues

Another type of interaction opportunity that the three brokers organized were more contentious and more policy- and social change oriented. Events that fell under policy advocacy brought people in the community together who wanted to influence policy changes and actively influence local politics. These events drew on the communities' desires to bring about social and political change. On the one hand, they created a shared vision for the future by discussing new ideas on how immigration should look (e.g., increasing refugee admission quotas or faster issuing of work permits). On the other hand, participants in the events practically engaged in policy-making by developing demands addressed to the local government or by contributing to the new local integration strategy.

To offer interaction opportunities to civil society actors that wanted to be more active in policy-making, the three brokers organized region-wide Asylum Summits, expert groups on integration, and the Civic Council on Migration. In the following, I outline three institutionalized interaction events that the brokers in Loburg and Lauda organized.

The volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* in Lauda initiated two regular events oriented towards policy work on migration and asylum over the years:

the twice-yearly Asylum Summits and the expert groups on integration. Both events brought together a broad range of actors who wanted to improve the current state of asylum law and the situation of refugees.

The Asylum Summits were first initiated by *Asylum with Us* but later organized by different refugee-support groups in the region. In 2015, volunteers of *Asylum with Us* organized the first Asylum Summit as a two-day workshop with around 30 people. They invited the volunteers of all refugee-support groups from Lauda and the surrounding towns and villages and organized discussion sessions and small presentations. The Asylum Summits became an institution attracting significantly more participants in the following years. Because supporting refugees on the ground was an ongoing struggle for volunteers and activists, the region-wide Asylum Summits also became a space where people share experiences and receive support beyond their local refugee-support groups. As Pastor Stephan from *Asylum with Us* recalled, the Asylum Summits became an indispensable interaction format with around 200 people in the following years:

> "You see, I'm a real networker! The first asylum summits attracted about 30 people and then I asked the refugee-support groups in my neighboring districts 'don't you want to come to the summits, too?' Then there were 200 people at some point."

Between 2015 and 2022, hundreds of members of the various refugee-support groups met regularly for the annual or biannual Asylum Summits. The main goal of these Asylum Summits was to develop policy proposals and keep local groups motivated. As the Asylum Summits grew more prominent and spread across the district, participants could also attract the attention of politicians. This development went so far that a minister of state met with the three volunteers and activists from *Asylum with Us*. This initial meeting evolved into regular meetings where the volunteers and activists reported on the problems with refugee reception at the local level and called for far-reaching improvements. Maria, one of the participants reported that she was initially astonished about the reach and public awareness they created with the Asylum Summits: "Finally politicians noticed us! […] That's when the network became more and more known."

Besides these Asylum Summits, the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* initiated expert groups on integration in 2019. Volunteers and activists at *Asylum with Us* wanted to develop an integration strategy for the district because no

such strategy existed then. Although state actors usually develop an official integration strategy for the district, *Asylum with Us* convinced the local government that civil society actors would collaborate in creating the strategy. In the three years that followed, many different people worked on the strategy. Pastor Stephan from *Asylum with Us* talked about the significance of these groups:

> "Overall, a few hundred people worked on the strategy, even though there was a smaller core group that kept everything going. Still, a few hundred people participated and gave their input."

The expert groups covered many action areas and developed specific measures to improve the integration of immigrants and refugees in the future. Max, an employee of a Catholic welfare organization who was also active in one of the expert groups, reported that the members of the groups were quite diverse:

> "Many different people developed the integration strategy. Those involved ranged from volunteers and activists, employees of welfare organizations and the local government to refugees and citizens with migration histories".

There were seven expert groups on various topics, such as society, religion, mobility, education, or health. Pastor Stephan, who coordinated the expert group on society and religion gave me some insights into what his group discussed:

> "At the moment, our discussions revolve around Muslim funerals. I have called all the imams and pastors together and we meet quite regularly. Why do Muslims in our district still send their deceased people to Turkey? Why can't they be buried here? In the expert groups, I learned that there is only one cemetery in the whole district where Muslims can be buried according to Muslim law."

He then told me that his expert group would try incorporating a policy recommendation about more Muslim cemeteries into the new integration strategy. The integration strategy was completed in 2022. The members of the seven expert groups then started the process of setting up an integration advisory board to ensure that the policy recommendations were implemented in the coming years.

The Civic Alliance *Unified* and the Grassroots association *In Action* also regularly facilitated interaction concerning social and political changes in migra-

tion and asylum. They founded and organized the Civic Council on Migration, regularly bringing together a broad spectrum of civic actors. When Thomas, the spokesperson of *Unified*, launched the Civic Council on Migration, he initiated the first weekly meetings of a wide range of actors involved in refugee support. After a few years, Lisa, the chairwoman of *In Action,* took over the council meetings' leadership. In his dual position as spokesperson of *Unified* and manager of the refugee shelters, Thomas founded the council in the fall of 2015 to improve communication among all civil society and government actors working on asylum and migration issues. He also wanted to create a space where civil society actors could influence refugee policy at the local level.

By inviting a wide range of actors, he brought together volunteers and small refugee-support groups, professional welfare organizations, and public officials representing the local government to attend council meetings. Anna, a former social worker and volunteer told me that the council was a very open circle where everyone active in refugee support and advocacy could voice their opinion:

> "Everyone is invited to the monthly council meetings. Associations, companies [that employ refugees], volunteers from our local refugee-support group, [welfare organizations] – everyone was welcome from the beginning and it has remained that way. It's a really open round where everyone can say what they think."

In the following years, the council developed into a recognized meeting format for many actors who had first become active in refugee support in 2015. Initially, the council met weekly to coordinate the work of the various actors active in refugee support. After the level of activities in refugee support declined, they continued to meeting every month. Actors used the council to address complex problems of individual refugees and conflicts with state agencies, such as the job center and immigration agency. Johannes, a staff member from a regional anti-racism initiative emphasized that the crucial function of the council was to empower civil society actors to continue their work: "I believe that people in the council, although very overworked, also realized that their involvement has a political significance and can make a tremendous difference."

As the example of these events demonstrates, the three brokers also connected their pro-refugee communities by organizing more contentious events. Between 2015 and 2022, they initiated interaction formats that go far beyond the original task of providing concrete everyday support for refugees. In addi-

tion, they brought together very different civil society actors in the context of the Asylum Summits, expert groups, and the Civic Council on Migration.

Broadening the issue

The third and final strategic dimension of the more contentious interaction opportunities is broadening the issue. Events included citizen talks, panel discussions, and demonstrations against restrictive European border politics and right-wing extremism.

Working in refugee support and advocacy raised many people's awareness of local challenges related to migration but much broader and even beyond. Working with refugees shed light on these challenges. Drawing on a more contentious strategic repertoire again, the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us* organized protest events and public debates beyond local refugee support. One of these events was the protest march against racism through Lauda, which took place every few years. Interviewees particularly remembered that at one of the protests during the city's intercultural week, activists of *Asylum with Us* set up a lifeboat in the middle of the city to commemorate the rescue operations in the European Mediterranean.

In addition to these protests, a group of volunteers and activists and the two employees at *Asylum with Us* started to organize public lectures and debates that went beyond the issue of migration. Ellen, a staff member at *Asylum with Us* talked about how they linked problems refugees faced in the district with other community challenges such as poverty:

> "We talked about poverty, which is not only a topic for refugees and migrants. [...] we wanted to draw attention to the fact that [poverty and child poverty] also affects many other people – not only migrants but also many Germans."

With this strategy of broadening the issue focus to human rights, *Asylum with Us* also tried to reach a broader audience and include parts of civil society that were not part of the pro-refugee community.

Like the pro-refugee community in Lauda, the Civic Alliance *Unified* and the Grassroots association *In Action* were trying to expand the focus of their activities. These include, on the one hand, events dealing with the issue of precarious refugee camps in Europe. On the other hand, they were concerned with far-right extremist groups and attitudes spreading in the district.

Jacob, a local activist and employee of *In Action*, was very proud of how quickly he and others could mobilize for a protest: "Most of the time, it is on

relatively short notice. There is the classic setting. Either the speaker from Unified calls or we [In Action] do something. Or an activist from the Greens [local branch of the Green party]." When, for example, the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos burned down in 2020, these actors spontaneously decided to call for a rally. Herbert, a volunteer from the local refugee-support group, fondly remembered the rally as an event that brought together the whole community:

> "We participated in a spontaneous rally after this fire. The Civic Alliance Unified, the women's group, yes, and In Action organized this very, very nice rally. It was really touching. We felt that there was really a lot of energy. And it's so great that you can always count on so many different people to participate."

Some people participating in these protests were deeply involved in the local pro-refugee community. In contrast, others were less active in the community but were still interested in issues like European border politics.

In addition, *In Action* and *Unified* combined the issue of solidarity with refugees with the issue of creating an opposition to far-right groups in the district. Thus, they organized protest events and public discussions to unite the pro-refugee community and activists against the far-right. Indeed, some of the communities overlapped already because active members of the pro-refugee community engaged in combating far-right groups even before 2015. As mentioned, many right-wing groups have been active in Loburg and the surrounding towns and villages since the 2000s. Around 2015, groups such as Pegida and the emerging right-wing party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland; Engl.: Alternative for Germany) gained considerable popularity there. This rise in popularity occurred parallel with the enormous increase in refugees arriving in the district. *Unified*, *In Action*, and some other groups brought together the people active in refugee-support and anti-far-right activities.

For example, *In Action* and *United* organized several public debates after the 2017 federal elections when the AfD won almost 20 percent of the votes in Loburg. While the AfD did not win the majority of the votes, the election results were still a considerable success for the new party. The public debates aimed to bring together people sympathetic to the AfD and people from the pro-refugee community. Anna, a former social worker and volunteer reported that the organizers wanted to create a platform where people could share fears and concerns:

> "The debates were really just about exchanging ideas within civil society. Simply being open to it. We wanted to discuss what the problems are because we asked ourselves 'Why did the AfD get so many votes?'"

These events also helped the pro-refugee community network with other activists, such as those working to counter far-right extremism. The broader pro-refugee community typically attended these events. Even many of those still involved in the day-to-day support of refugees were often present at these protests. Many participants appreciated these protests precisely because they were moments when all community members came together.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlighted the critical role of local brokers in pro-refugee communities, emphasizing how they create diverse interaction opportunities for volunteers, activists, and employees over six years. By examining the contributions of these brokers to sustaining networks and promoting continued interactions within the pro-refugee community, my analysis provides insights into the internal relational dynamics that shape the development and survival of local civic action communities.

Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the dynamic process of brokerage, going beyond the mere positioning of brokers within a network. It emphasizes their crucial role in bringing together different actors and facilitating ongoing interactions. Understanding this perspective on brokerage is essential for comprehending how networks can be sustained over time. This is particularly true for social movements where long-term goals require continuous interaction. This chapter also contributes to understanding brokers in social movements, drawing on recent advances in organizational sociology (Obstfeld et al., 2014; Small & Gose, 2020). I demonstrate that brokers are present for the initial contact and play a crucial role in fostering further interaction. Consistent with Small and Gose's (2020) findings, the interaction opportunities that brought together volunteers, activists, and representatives of civil society organizations were more frequent, long-lasting, and centered around shared tasks. Over the six years following the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, these brokers consistently created diverse opportunities for interaction. They pursued a "sustained iungens" brokerage (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 147) by creating ongoing interaction opportunities. These interaction

opportunities events encompassed non-contentious activities to maintain the core work, contentious activities related to policy advocacy on asylum and migration, and contentious activities events that addressed broader issues such as anti-racism and countering far-right ideologies. These findings align with the perspectives of Corrigall-Brown (2022) and Staggenborg (2022), highlighting the significance of diverse events that bring people together. This diversification of interaction opportunities is particularly relevant in broader civic landscapes like the one I study in this book. Such pro-refugee communities involve various collective actors, including churches, welfare organizations, political groups, volunteer initiatives, and sports clubs.

As shown by Obstfeld et al. (2014), brokers need to consider the heterogeneity of the actors in their strategy to bring them closer together and facilitate interaction. Through the diversification of interaction opportunities, the three brokers observed in Lauda and Loburg exactly considered this heterogeneity.

In addition to considering the heterogeneity of actors in the field, brokers also facilitated interaction between those who already knew each other well (those doing the core work) and those who knew each other little or not at all in the context of events that expanded the scope of refugee support and advocacy. As such, they created bonding and bridging relationships, thus strengthening social capital in the local pro-refugee community. Creating interaction opportunities for volunteers and activists pursuing the core work in refugee support and those seeking political advocacy strengthens the communities' bonding social capital. On the other hand, they strengthened bridging social capital by broadening the scope and contributing to relationship building beyond their communities (see Diani, 1997; Putnam, 2000).

The interaction events designed to broaden the scope beyond the issue of refugee support and advocacy have been shown in other research to be an essential aspect of community building in social movements. Specifically, Gerhards and Rucht's (1992, p. 559) concept of mesomobilization emphasized that "mesomobilization actors" not only connect groups but also bridge frames between movements or develop a shared movement frame to connect different groups across issues and cultures. Thus, issue broadening, as the brokers in Lauda and Loburg did, is also a well-known strategy of actors to connect different actors beyond their main issue.

In the next chapter, I examine collaboration challenges between civil society organizations and more informal groups. The proportion of professionalized and well-established organizations differed between the four cases. In the two cities, Altenau and Neheim, where the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16

did not lead to the development of pro-refugee communities, the proportion of these professionalized and well-established organizations active in migration issues was much higher than in Lauda and Loburg. Thus, in Chapter 6, I take advantage of this difference and conduct a deeper analysis and comparison of the civic landscapes in each case, focusing on Altenau and Neheim. Conceptually, I will draw on scholarly discussions in social movement studies and voluntarism and non-profit studies about resource power, networking strategies, and interaction cultures.

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.

Linking Social Capital as a Resource for Co-production and Community Building[1]

In this chapter, I examine the relationship between volunteers, activists, and local governmental officials, focusing on the conditions under which collaboration between the local state and civil society flourished. As discussed in Chapter 4, state-civil society collaboration in Lauda and Loburg provided significant opportunities for civil society actors to engage in policy areas typically managed by local governments. These policy areas included housing, care, rights, employment opportunities, and the general integration of refugees. One notable example was the development of a district-wide integration strategy in Lauda from 2019 to 2021. Another is the establishment of the Civic Council on Migration in Loburg in 2016. These forms of co-production extend beyond impacting policy; they also create opportunities for regular interaction among civil society actors, fostering the formation of pro-refugee communities.

I examine the production of linking social capital to explore why state-civil society co-production was more favorable in Lauda and Loburg than in Altenau and Neheim. Linking social capital refers to the norms of respect and trust built through networks between people who interact across power divides in society, such as members of civil society engaging with government representatives (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004, p. 655). The central question I aim to answer in this chapter is how linking social capital was produced (and eroded) through interactions between local government officials and individuals engaged in civic action within local organizations and groups.

1 This chapter is based on the following article: van den Berg, C., Steinhilper, E., & Sommer, M. (2025). Against the Odds: On the Arduous Production of Linking Social Capital in Local Refugee Reception. *Administration & Society*, 57(3), 339–367. https://doi.org/10.1177/00953997251314509

I focus on the processes behind the production and decline of linking social capital in two local settings: Lauda and Altenau. In Lauda, I document how an initial atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion gradually transformed into a cooperative and trusting relationship over six years. In contrast, in Altenau, an initial period of mutual appreciation between refugee-support groups and the local government deteriorated over time, leading to frustration and resignation.

The heightened interaction between civil society and local governments during the 2015/16 refugee reception crisis provided fertile ground for the production of linking social capital. This was evident in my empirical case study and in Germany, where many mayors invited citizens to public events to recruit volunteers as local governments were stretched to their limits. However, the production of linking social capital is a complex process, and the inherent frictions of state-civil society interactions were ever-present. Both volunteers, activists, and local government officials described this context as inherently conflictual, characterized by interdependence, different roles, and conflicting logics of action (see Daphi, 2017). Against this backdrop, I evaluate the processes by which the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 did and did not lead to the production of linking social capital in the four cases.

Focusing on refugee-support groups and community organizations instead of welfare organizations is theoretically and empirically motivated. First, power imbalances between smaller refugee-support groups and community organizations are significantly pronounced, making linking social capital particularly challenging. Second, German welfare organizations often occupy a unique hybrid position between the state and civil society. Their primary function is to provide various social services to society – responsibilities that are "outsourced" from the state (Evers, 2005).

Previous work on state-civil society interactions and the co-production of the common good has focused either on the perspective of civil society actors (Ostrander, 2013) or on that of local governmental actors (Eckhard et al., 2021). However, in isolation, neither perspective can fully capture the interactive dynamics of this relationship. Therefore, I draw on the semi-structured interviews from my research project and 16 interviews that my colleagues, Elias Steinhilper and Moritz Sommer, conducted with local government officials. These officials were city mayors, district managers, and civil servants at job centers and immigration agencies.

By adopting a dual perspective in this analysis, I can assess how linking social capital is produced and perceived from both sides in this vertical rela-

tionship. Given the structural asymmetries and different logics of action between the two spheres, I argue that the production of trusting relationships is not a given; instead, the production of linking social capital is a laborious, situational, and interactive process that is open-ended.

The chapter is organized into four sections. First, I outline the theoretical framework and discuss the literature on linking social capital. I then examine the interactions between refugee-support groups and local governments to identify processes that facilitate and hinder the production of linking social capital. A brief comparison with the dynamics in Loburg and Neheim follows this. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks.

Theoretical Framework: Linking Social Capital

To examine state-civil society interactions during the refugee reception crisis in Germany, I build on theoretical reflections on linking social capital and participatory citizen engagement more broadly. On this basis, I propose a dynamic and interactive approach highlighting the opportunities for linking social capital production and the processes that contribute to overcoming such obstacles. In general terms, Putnam et al. (1994, p. 167) defined social capital as "the features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions". Theoretically, the concept echoes relational sociology, which argues that connections between individuals and groups entail "mutual obligations and sustain rules of conduct, fostering norms of reciprocity (Szreter, 2002, p. 574). The concept has energized the field of civil society research and development studies. Still, it has also received two particularly articulate critiques concerning its normative bias in ignoring the negative effects of social capital (Portes, 1998, 2014) and its society-centeredness and silence on the role of the state (Levi, 1996; McAdam et al., 1996; Szreter, 2002). The former has led Putnam (2000, p. 22ff.) in his later work to distinguish between "bonding" social capital, which refers to connections between actors with similar characteristics, and "bridging" social capital, which operates between heterogeneous groups of actors, the latter being more likely to have beneficial effects for democracy and good governance.

In response to the second criticism regarding the focus on civil society, Szreter and Woolcock (2004, p. 655) have proposed the concept of linking social capital as a third variant of social capital, defined "as norms of respect and

networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society". Following this perspective, scholars have considered the state's role in facilitating or hindering the production of social capital.

Regarding the empirical analysis of social capital, most of the literature has examined the stock of social capital by comparing quantitative measures across space (Stolle, 2009). It has paid less attention to "how and why (under what circumstances) social capital increases or decreases" (Szreter, 2002, p. 573). Few scholars have addressed the dynamic nature of social capital, drawing on qualitative research to identify mechanisms that contribute to the production of linking social capital (Titeca & Vervisch, 2008). Furthermore, most empirical studies have focused on bridging and bonding social capital, but linking social capital has rarely been studied empirically (Titeca & Vervisch, 2008; Woolcock, 2001).

Against this background, my analysis contributes to understanding *the dynamic production of linking social capital and its ambiguous nature*. Like other types of social capital, linking social capital is not necessarily beneficial. To unfold its positive effects, it is not the networks between individuals and groups per se that matter but their quality (Levi, 1996). Putnam (2004, p. 669) has accordingly distinguished between responsive linking and unresponsive or exploitative linking social capital. In a similar vein, Szreter (2002, p. 579) has argued that linking social capital

> "takes on a democratic and empowering character where those involved are endeavoring to achieve a mutually agreed beneficial goal (or set of goals) on the basis of mutual respect, trust, and equality of status, despite the manifest inequalities in their respective positions".

These reflections on state-civil society interactions across power gradients resonate with a broad literature on participatory citizen engagement. Such forms of "co-production" by local governments and civil society have become *envogue* because they are expected to foster democracy and the production of public goods simultaneously (Alford, 2014; Nabatchi et al., 2017) recent years, there has been a growing trend toward citizens taking a more active role in addressing public issues through self-organization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Edelenbos et al., 2018; Healey, 2015; Igalla et al., 2019). Often, these efforts respond to the perceived inadequacy of local governmental agen-

cies in addressing public concerns such as land use, school governance, or the reception and inclusion of migrants (Teasdale, 2012).

Research in this area has primarily followed two different paths. On the one hand, local government and public policy scholars have tended to adopt a top-down perspective, focusing on the effectiveness and feasibility of government (Adams, 2004; McComas et al., 2010). On the other hand, civil society scholars have flipped the coin, critically examining how citizens perceive their involvement and whether it implies citizen empowerment (Doerr, 2018; Lee, 2015; Polletta, 2016). While both approaches offer valuable insights, scholars have curiously refrained from engaging with the literature on linking social capital. Moreover, this research has accentuated either the state's or civil society's perspective.

Against this backdrop, I seek to complement and further integrate these bodies of scholarship. Understanding the production of linking social capital as a laborious, dynamic, and open-ended task requires a perspective that considers both state and civil society perspectives and the dynamics through which such relationships are made or broken.

For empirical and theoretical reasons, I focus on informal volunteering rather than the more professionalized and formalized segments of civil society, such as welfare associations with established interaction routines with the state. In recent decades, scholars have observed a growing "organizational dissatisfaction" (Nedelmann, 1987, p. 196) among citizens, resulting in a declining ability of political parties, trade unions, and traditional civil society organizations to bind their members who increasingly opt for more volatile, informal, issue-specific, and networked forms of civic action. Due to their more flexible nature as spontaneous networks, informal groups have taken on crucial roles in various crises (Lahusen & Grasso, 2018), including the reception of refugees during the refugee reception crisis of 2015 (Boersma et al., 2019; della Porta, 2018). These groups typically take a bottom-up approach, focusing on local issues and relying on the collective mobilization of residents who volunteer to address community needs (Igalla et al., 2019).

When these informal volunteers and state officials interact, the power asymmetries between the two camps may be particularly accentuated. While local government officials may normatively value citizen participation, different logics of action and organization create structural tensions. The fixed and often slow routines of bureaucracies do not fit easily with the action-oriented impetus of spontaneous volunteers. For example, in a study of participatory processes in Spain, Fernández-Martínez et al. (2020) found that the relation-

ship between local governments and civil society can also deteriorate due to such interactions. Inflated expectations and lack of policy impact were among the moments they identified leading to frustration in local participatory processes.

From a theoretical perspective, sustained interactions "based on mutual respect, trust, and equality of status, despite the manifest inequalities in their respective positions" (Szreter, 2002, p. 579) are anything but self-evident. For linking social capital to be built and sustained, these difficulties must be overcome via repeated interactions in which both sides acknowledge their differences and are willing to address them.

Empirical Analysis

In the following, I examine the making and breaking of linking social capital in local settings. Adopting an interactive perspective, I study interactions between local governmental agencies and the main refugee-support groups that emerged in 2015 to support refugees.

The first case study is located in Lauda. As mentioned in chapters 3 and 4, Lauda is a medium-sized city in a prosperous, rural area in Southern Germany. The city and surrounding district's political culture and government have long-standing conservative majorities. The city's ethnic diversity is limited compared to other areas in Germany, and there is a lack of experience in hosting large groups of migrants. Against this background, the public infrastructure for professional integration services was limited when the first refugees arrived in 2015. The refugee-support group *Solidarity for Refugees* was founded then. One of the group's founders, pastor Stephan, recruited many volunteers and activists from his congregation. The response to their efforts was "tremendous", with more than 180 volunteers and activists joining the newly formed group in 2015. With the local government soon overwhelmed by the numerous arrivals of refugees, the group stepped in to fill the gap. Volunteers and activists became deeply involved in various refugee support activities, gaining in-depth knowledge of the latest asylum laws and managing many aspects of refugee reception, such as providing German language classes, childcare and assisting with local governmental agencies. From the beginning, the group operated in an informal, self-organized, and independent manner outside of established and professional structures such as welfare organizations.

The second case study is located in Altenau. As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, Altenau is a medium-sized city in a moderately prosperous region of northern Germany. While the region has a conservative tradition, the city was governed by a Social Democratic majority until the conservatives regained the mayor's office shortly after 2015. In contrast to the first case study, this city is home to a large migrant population, and the topic of migration was already evident. These experiences are reflected in established governmental processes and a range of existing public services in the field of local integration policies before 2015. As in Lauda, the city saw the establishment of a refugee-support group in 2015. The incumbent social democratic mayor made the first call for volunteers. She wanted to inform citizens and find volunteers willing to accompany refugees during their first months in a centralized refugee shelter. The volunteers initially expected the local government to coordinate this new civic action. Still, when the local government failed to take a leadership role, they decided to move forward as a group of about 100 volunteers and create a self-organized group called *Welcome Refugees*. They set up a café where refugees and locals could meet, provided language classes, and offered support with bureaucratic processes. In the first phase, in 2015 and 2016, most of these activities took place in a designated room in a centralized refugee shelter.

Thus, in Lauda and Altenau, the limited capacity of local governmental agencies provided a new opportunity for volunteers to create a new, self-organized field of civic action. In the immediate "crisis" period, these spontaneous refugee-support groups could create new engagement structures much faster than any more professional civil society organizations. Moreover, volunteers quickly acquired knowledge about their needs through their intensive involvement and direct contact with refugees. They familiarized themselves with the legal and governmental context, thus narrowing the usual knowledge gap with professionals working for local governmental agencies and welfare organizations. The new volunteers quickly concluded that their commitment was needed and that the reception of refugees could only be managed if the local governmental agencies accepted them as essential partners in providing refugee support. Below, I show how this relationship evolved after 2015. For analytical purposes, I divide the interaction into three phases.

Table 9 summarizes three phases of interaction in the two local settings and highlights the making or breaking linking social capital connections between 2015/16 and 2021/2022. In Lauda, I document a dynamic between refugee-support groups and local governments in which initial mistrust and suspicion gradually transformed into a cooperative and trusting relationship

over six years. Conversely, the second case study in Altenau describes a scenario in which a period of mutual appreciation between the refugee-support group and the local government was followed by deterioration over time, eventually leading to frustration and resignation. The evolution of interactions, including critical events, is described in detail.

Table 9: Phases of interaction and linking social capital development

	Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**
Lauda (Case Study I)	**Suspicion and frustration**	**Mediation**	**Mutual appreciation**
	Local government officials and volunteers exhibited initial suspicion, driven by differing logics of action; both parties felt distant and disconnected.	Conflicts were actively addressed through mediation and open communication; actors chose to voice concerns instead of withdrawing; Both parties recognized shared interdependence, leading to increased informal meetings.	Local government officials and volunteers successfully developed a collaborative working relationship; Both sides felt valued and appreciated, resulting in enhanced cooperation and the development of a new integration strategy.
Altenau (Case Study II)	**Mutual appreciation**	**Resentment**	**Frustration and resignation**
	Local government officials and volunteers recognized refugee reception as a shared responsibility, fostering a climate of mutual appreciation; Consensual cooperation and regular exchange meetings were established.	Divergent logics of action caused growing discontent among stakeholders; Volunteers felt excluded, while local government officials found working with volunteers challenging.	Local government officials perceived volunteers as disruptive elements, which hindered the decision-making process; Volunteers felt marginalized and left out of important discussions.

Lauda: Producing Linking Social Capital Against the Odds

Phase 1: Suspicion and Frustration

The relationship between the refugee support group, *Solidarity for Refugees*, and local government officials had a difficult start, as the volunteers showed a deep distrust of the local government. In the eyes of the volunteers, the local government rarely used its leeway to interpret asylum laws in favor of refugees. Disputes arose over the restrictive issuance of work permits, deportations, and Internet access in refugee shelters. Luisa, one of the first volunteers and co-founder of *Solidarity for Refugees*, recalled the problems with the issuance of work permits:

> "For a while, we had serious problems with the work permits because we couldn't understand how the local government made its decisions about who would get a work permit and who wouldn't".

Some refugees received work permits, while others had to wait years for a work permit and sometimes never received one.

Despite these tensions, the group quickly became an integral part of the local refugee reception process, as it promptly immersed itself in the issue and developed significant expertise in supporting refugees. They soon learned about the legal situation and understood how much legal leeway there was regarding the immigration status of refugees. This starkly contrasted with the local government, which had no relevant experience in receiving migrants or refugees and was slower to respond when the number of refugees increased sharply around 2015.

The visibility and influence of the group were enhanced by its ability to coordinate other refugee-support groups in the district, pooling expertise and gaining a knowledge advantage over the local government, which was struggling due to the lack of staff and expertise in this area. As this increasingly assertive actor entered the scene, disputes over funding and responsibilities arose. While the volunteers wanted to receive public financing yet remain autonomous, the district's government officials wanted more coordination. According to one influential official, "opposing fronts clashed" in this initial phase, underscoring that irritation on both sides dominated the interaction.

Maria, one of the volunteers of the refugee-support group, confirmed the initial perception of opposition between the volunteers on the one side and the local government on the other side:

> "[The local government] has other interests than us volunteers. […] We are on the side of the refugees and have other goals in mind than the local government with all its regulations. […] And there have been disputes about this recently".

While volunteers felt deterred in their enthusiasm for helping stifled by the governmental and, in their view, outdated rules, local government officials were often uncertain and challenged by the emergence of this well-organized refugee-support group. Overall, deep mistrust and seemingly irreconcilable logics of action were an unlikely starting point for the production of linking social capital.

Phase II: Mediation

Things changed in the following phase. Despite the initial tensions, representatives from both sides continued to perceive the local reception of refugees as a *matter of mutual concern*. In the words of Luisa, one of the founders of *Solidarity with Refugees*: "it was not always easy, and of course we [and the local government] had different interests, but it was still clear from the beginning that we could only do it together". This admission did not end the interaction; instead, both sides engaged in open negotiations about their different interests and viewpoints. In the terminology of Hirschman's classic work (Hirschman, 2004), the actors opted for "voice" rather than "exit" and opened channels for discussion.

Similarly, the district governor recalled that the initial tension of clashing opposing fronts was gradually reduced by "slowly coming closer" and "trying to accept the other's way of thinking". The combination of conflict and a shared understanding of interdependence led both sides to work things out, build trust, and reconcile conflicting viewpoints and organizational logics. Informal meetings between local government officials and volunteers proliferated, preparing the ground for deeper interaction.

Phase III: Cooperation

Regular exchange forums soon supplemented the first informal meetings, institutionalized in the form of specialized expert roundtables on various topics related to refugee housing. These fora regularly brought together actors from local civil society, business, local politics, and local government to exchange ideas and develop common approaches. Later, these expert roundtables provided the framework for discussing and formulating a new integration strat-

egy for the district in close cooperation between the group, other civil society actors, and the public sector. At the same time, they emphasized that the process of negotiating the integration strategy and reaching a final agreement was not entirely problem-free. One of the local government officials mentioned that interactions between the group and the local government were initially very contentious. He found it all the more surprising that volunteers and officials began working on a new integration strategy for the district:

> "The funny thing is that people who used to be our biggest opponents were actually involved in creating this integration strategy. […] The groups are not on our side now, but they are working with us to see how we can bring the best together. And in the integration strategy, we have not only the views of the district government, but also of all the supporters [i.e. civil society organizations, groups]".

According to Ellen, a volunteer and staff member of the volunteer-network *Asylum with Us*, the group and the local government began to meet more often in weekly exchange meetings between group members and local governmental agencies. Both sides felt that the challenges of hosting refugees could only be solved together:

> "And it wasn't always easy and of course we had different interests, the district office and us, but it was still clear from the beginning that we could only do it together. And that's why the district office was happy for our support, and we were happy for their support".

Both sides recognized the productivity of these forms of integrating the expertise of different actors and negotiating differences. As a result, the interaction continued even after housing the refugees had lost its immediate urgency.

The fact that interaction continued did not mean that there was no conflict. On the contrary, the different interests remained. Pastor Stephan, one of the founders of *Solidarity for Refugees*, recalled that deciding on a new integration strategy required hard compromises, and some attempts to reach an agreement failed:

> "But we can at least say that it has a broad basis. And again, sometimes we had arguments where we said, 'we see this very differently, this absolutely has to go in' [for example allowing Muslim women wearing a headscarf to

> work in a public institution], but the district office said, 'No, that's too hot for us, we are leaving that out'".

Despite such failures, the actors involved did not opt for "exit" but made efforts to maintain the interaction against all odds. These three phases of interaction illustrate how unfavorable initial conditions were successfully overcome, resulting in enhancement, however fragile, of the mutual understanding, trust, and formalized cooperation that characterize responsive forms of linking social capital. Conflicts acted as a catalyst for rapprochement because of the actors' willingness to address them. Looking back on the evolution of the relationship, some local government representatives came to appreciate the challenging tone of the new refugee-support group, which was initially met with irritation, admitting that "it's good to have a bit of external pressure" to reflect on institutional roles and routines, while highlighting the efforts of the volunteers to see the bigger picture and engage in debates from different points of view.

Altenau: A failed Opportunity to Produce Linking Social Capital

Phase I: Mutual Appreciation

In contrast to the conflictual start in Lauda, the relationship between the refugee-support group *Refugees Welcome* and the local government in Altenau was initially characterized by mutual appreciation and respect. The local government officials and the volunteers in the group believed that the reception of refugees was a common challenge that could only be met through close cooperation between civil society and the state. While the volunteers saw the local government as having a duty to care for and integrate refugees, they also saw refugee support as a project too large to be solved by local governments alone.

The consensual start is illustrated by the following email excerpt in which Helen and Bianca, two volunteers, thank the staff of the local government for an information event in 2015:

> "It was nice to see how friendly and relaxed [...] and how calmly and unpretentiously you [governmental officers] handled the incredibly heavy workload last night [...]. I thought that was really great! And I think that also encourages all the volunteers to see when they experience that not every employee does their job by the book but is as committed as you obviously are".

Helen and Bianca underscored the mutual appreciation and trust they experienced from the local government, particularly the mayor.

With this trust came a certain latitude for the group, allowing the volunteers to organize and consolidate themselves. First, the local government officials at the refugee shelter gave the volunteers leeway and allowed for a great deal of agency and self-organization. Second, the mayor gave the group space when the local government distributed most refugees to the different neighborhoods. Since one of the neighborhoods housed a vast number of refugee families and since the proportion of migrants in this part of the city had previously been low, the mayor asked the group to use one of the buildings as an information point. The idea was to provide a shared space for volunteers, refugees, and residents to mediate and prevent potential conflicts between these groups.

The volunteers appreciated the local government's support, and, in turn, the mayor showed his interest in their activities, including attending one of the group's parties. Helen recalled that the mayor even participated in their barbecue: "The mayor stood at the barbecue and actively helped, and that was an important experience for us because in the beginning we experienced a lot of rejection and hostility from the neighborhood […]". In contrast to the initial constellation in Lauda, this first interaction phase was characterized by the mutual perception that the local government and the volunteers were pulling in the same direction. Thus, at the outset, the conditions seemed favorable for producing linking social capital. Volunteers and public authorities shared this impression, and regular information meetings were set up to exchange ideas. Actors on both sides were happy to see the other taking on responsibility and understood the reception of refugees as a common task.

Phase II: Resentment

However, this harmony did not last. By the end of 2016, there was growing discontent among the volunteers. As the focus shifted away from initial emergency relief to education, employment, and housing issues, the group *Refugees Welcome* became increasingly vocal about refugees' difficult conditions. While the local government and the refugee-support group initially appeared to be on the same team, the different areas of responsibility and logics of action between the state and civil society became more apparent in the second phase. In particular, the shift in focus from emergency reception to integration issues fueled conflicts. While local government officials and the volunteers at the refugee-support group agreed on the importance of providing emergency

relief and humanitarian aid, they began to disagree on the long-term integration strategies. When Helen and Bianca raised their concerns about how many refugees were being treated regarding a lack of social resources and care, they did not feel heard by the local government. The volunteers openly expressed their discontent. In a public letter from the group to the local government, the volunteers claimed: "There is a lack of integration courses! There is a lack of kindergarten places! There is a lack of support for schools! There is a lack of language mediators in offices and authorities!".

Throughout 2017 and 2018, the volunteers pointed out problems and made demands in numerous letters to the local and regional governments. In addition, they repeatedly emphasized that the local government did not address the volunteers' demands and needs during the city's information and exchange meetings. Bianca, one of the long-time volunteers in the group, felt that the local government's exchange meetings were designed to convey official information rather than provide a space for peer-to-peer discussion:

> "[…] I don't want to be unfair to the city, but there were also invitations from the central reception point for the volunteers to meet, but the main topic was the passing on of information by the social workers. In the end, we always had the opportunity to share information, but not in a way that brought our experiences to the fore. It was more about being informed about something, and people from other areas were always invited, like the Order of Malta or Caritas [central welfare organizations], who then reported, which was interesting of course, but it wasn't really possible for us to present our problems and challenges.".

The central concern of the volunteers was that they felt they needed to be heard. While established welfare organizations were invited to share their experiences in information meetings with the city, the group was only supposed to listen. This new situation did not correspond to the group's self-image, which increasingly perceived itself as a group of experts who had been immersed in refugee support and advocacy and, therefore, deserved to be taken seriously. As a result of numerous disputes between the volunteers and the city officials, the fronts hardened. The common public concern of refugee reception turned into an escalating conflict that destroyed the trusting relationship of the first interaction phase.

Phase III: Escalation and Resignation

Eventually, the conflict escalated to the point a controversial decision by the local government ended the interaction. Two years after the mayor offered the building, which had since served as the group's information point, the local government canceled the agreement for temporary use. The closure was a significant setback for the group. The volunteers had planned out their projects for several years and had established strong relationships internally and with the residents of the surrounding neighborhood. As a result, many *Refugees Welcome* volunteers resigned and gave up their involvement in the group.

The closure resulted from two key developments—first, a change of mayor. While the previous mayor had been open to refugee reception and volunteer projects, his successor was hardly interested in this type of civic action. Volunteers and local government officials lamented this loss of interest in the interviews. Second, the support structures within the local government had become more formalized and professionalized. Over time, the local government officials saw volunteers not as a source of support but as "annoying troublemakers". Their autonomy was no longer seen as an asset but as a threat to the city's claim to holistic management. The local government reacted with notable discomfort:

> "Some of the volunteers were a bit invasive. They were just doing things. They interfered. They wrote letters. They published e-mails that had been exchanged between them and us within the local government. They took positions that we did not take".

While in Lauda, volunteers used their knowledge advantage over the local government to become indispensable actors in the local reception of refugees, in Altenau, the growing professionalization of refugee reception left no room for volunteers. As a result, the importance and visibility of the group declined.

From the volunteers' point of view, the closure of their central meeting point was an inexplicable intrusion into their self-organized activities. The volunteers were hardly involved in the local government's decision and had little opportunity to advocate for the preservation of the building. From then on, the lack of a central and open meeting place forced the group to meet in private homes, which made it difficult to stick together, share experiences, and sustain the joint commitment. Helen highlighted her frustration:

> "What we were promised, in 2016, the city gave us the building rent-free for five years, and then they just said quite early, no, the buildings have to be returned to the city, you have to get out of here.

Volunteers expected local government officials to treat them as equals. However, after their initial support, volunteers later felt that their engagement was no longer needed but seen as a cumbersome obstacle in the official refugee assistance system. After the conflict escalated, neither local government officials nor the volunteers were willing to return to a common understanding. While mutual respect was a favorable starting point for the production of linking social capital, the interaction dynamics were subsequently dominated by a perceived lack of appreciation. Even a key figure in the local government admitted: "I don't think the volunteers feel that their commitment is sufficiently appreciated. I felt that way. I have had many conversations about this".

The three phases combined show how favorable conditions of trust between volunteers and local government officials can give way to bitterness and an escalation of hostilities. What began as a similar perception of the refugee reception crisis as a common challenge that could only be solved through cooperation between the state and civil society ended in deep frustration on the part of the volunteers. Starting in 2017, volunteers in the refugee-support group in Altenau became increasingly critical of the local government's long-term integration strategy. When they voiced their criticism, they felt that they were not heard. From the perspective of local government officials, they were not professional enough and were seen as "troublemakers".

Civil society – state dynamics in Neheim and Loburg

For the previous paired comparison, I selected two of the four cases from my research to show how linking social capital is produced and how it deteriorates in interactions between members of civil society and local government. However, I observed similar dynamics in Neheim and, to a lesser extent, in Loburg. Thus, in the following, I will briefly discuss how, in Neheim, the relationship between volunteers, activists, and employees of civil society organizations and groups and local government officials began trustingly and ended in an escalation and cessation of communication. In contrast, the relationship between civil society and the state in Loburg remained positive and trusting despite repeated conflicts.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the relationship between volunteers and activists from refugee-support groups and community organizations in Neheim on the one hand and local government officials on the other was challenging. The relationship went through three phases similar to those in Altenau, with positive, trusting (favorable conditions) during the pro-refugee mobilization in 2015/16, but then a phase of resentment and finally a phase of resignation. Since the 1980s, employees of Neheim's *Multicultural House*, an institution financed by three major welfare organizations, employees and volunteers of religious congregations, activists of the *Refugee Council*, and local government officials worked together within the framework of the so-called Asylum Working Group. At the regular meetings of the Asylum Working Group, they exchanged information on new political issues and upcoming legal changes. They shared responsibilities for supporting refugees at the Employment and Immigration Office and other public institutions. Despite these favorable starting conditions, the collaborative and trusting relationship changed at the end of 2016 when the newly elected mayor dissolved the Working Group. The structure that had existed until then eroded, and the various members of the Working Group did not meet in this constellation in the years that followed. As a result, there was immense frustration among the activists of the *Refugee Council* and also among the staff of the *Multicultural House*. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the mayor who canceled the Working Group's meetings cited data protection as the reason they could no longer meet since the Working Group members often discussed the situation and plight of individual refugees and their families.

The activists and civil society workers emphasized in the interviews that they did not believe the new mayor. For them, it was clear that

> "under the guise of data protection, he ensured that the groups could no longer discuss individual cases in the working group. Then, the immigration authorities, usually present at our meetings, withdrew. As a result, I could not discuss legal developments" (Matthias, Refugee Council).

Without the presence of the local government, said another activist from the *Refugee Council*, there was no point because, as a result, Neheim's Immigration Office and Employment Office did not attend the meetings either. Despite years of cooperation, certainly not without conflict, but in regular communication, the Asylum Working Group in Neheim collapsed. With its dissolution, the

collaboration and trust the Working Group members had built over the years collapsed.

Loburg's situation differed from the previous three cases because the civil society-state relationship remained relatively constant between 2015/16 and 2020/21. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the different volunteers, activists, and employees of community organizations already had positive experiences working with the local government, particularly with the mayor, before the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. This relationship was undoubtedly tested several times during and after the mobilization. As in the other three cities, there were clashes between civil society, especially between relatively grassroots groups, and governmental officials. At the same time, the emergence of the Civic Council of Migration in Loburg created a regular forum for exchange. Many conflicts were resolved in this forum so that, as in Lauda, the conflicts did not lead to a complete breakdown in communication.

On the contrary, a closer and more personal relationship developed between the members, who felt they belonged to civil society, and the officials. However, the relationship between civil society and the state in Loburg did not go through three phases as in the other three cities. In other words, the relationship was positive, including through the mayor's participation in an action alliance before 2015, and has remained positive.

Conclusion

My analysis of interaction sequences between refugee-support groups and local government officials in Lauda and Altenau during and after the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 provides insights into the laborious and contentious dynamics of linking social capital production. This type of social capital is crucial because it creates co-production opportunities, which fosters community building within civil society.

As I demonstrated earlier, local governments wield immense authority over the lives of refugees. Therefore, co-production, such as collaborative efforts on integration strategies or the establishment of migration councils where civil society actors and governmental officials work together, is vital for sustained interaction within civil society. However, this co-production relies heavily on linking social capital, a form of vertical trust essential for successful collaboration.

The production of linking of social capital requires a continuous effort on the part of all parties. Distinct routines and power asymmetries between volunteers and local government officials created structural tensions that served as breaking points for the production of linking social capital. Even favorable initial conditions, such as in Altenau, do not guarantee the emergence of lasting responsive relationships. Viewing a challenge such as the public reception of refugees as a "matter[..] of mutual concern" (Polletta, 2016, p. 237) constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for the emergence of linking social capital. Linking social capital is a fragile and dynamic process rather than a resource that can be taken for granted.

Overall, initial harmony between the two sides is a poor predictor for lasting linking social capital. Instead, scholars should pay attention to how the actors involved deal with the tensions inherent in the interaction between the different spheres of local government and informal civil society, regardless of whether the co-production of refugee reception is normatively heralded.

Self-confidence and the courage to confront may be essential to encourage public officials to experiment with new forms of responsive, peer-to-peer encounters. The case of Lauda illustrates how mediation and more institutionalized exchanges eventually led to mutual understanding and close cooperation after severe conflict in the initial interaction phase. Frictions were proactively integrated into multi-actor forums to continue interacting against apparent odds and moments of (mutual) frustration. In contrast, in the second case study, Altenau, the relationship between the refugee-support group and the local authorities deteriorated after promising initial cooperation and mutual understanding. Both sides need to recognize this difference and be willing to engage with each other to work things out. Local government officials may shy away from such a process because it challenges established routines. Such rejection, however, further alienates volunteers. Volunteers intuitively sense whether their efforts are taken seriously, or in social capital terms, whether vertical ties are "responsive" or more instrumental or even "exploitative" in nature (Putnam, 2004, p. 669). The experience of not being taken seriously is a significant driver of discouragement, in which volunteers choose to drop out, resulting in a rapid breakdown of ties.

These findings on the interconnectedness of linking social capital production require systematic testing based on a more significant number of cases. Nevertheless, this unique analytical approach to examining the dynamics of linking social capital production offers an essential complement to broader scholarship on social capital and state-civil society relations. Rather than tak-

ing the beneficial consequences of citizen-state interaction for granted, scholarship should pay more attention to the conditions under which trusting relationships can be forged in the face of asymmetrical power relations and distinct logics of action.

Conclusion

I began this project with a genuine interest in finding out what happened to the volunteers, activists, and diverse groups and organizations that became active during the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, the initial pilot study in southern Germany indicated that the traces of that initial period had not been erased and that a community had survived the six years beyond the pro-refugee mobilization. Yet, this book demonstrates that the development and survival of pro-refugee communities is highly conditional.

Overview

My empirical findings reveal that in two of the four cities, pro-refugee communities emerged and sustained themselves over the six-year period. While Lauda and Loburg witnessed the development and survival of pro-refugee communities, Altenau and Neheim did not experience similar effects. These new pro-refugee communities in Lauda and Loburg were characterized by a continued interaction between the involved organizations and groups that went well beyond the peak of the mobilization. Following the end of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, many volunteers and activists withdrew, and media attention surrounding the proclaimed "welcome culture" dissipated. However, the members of the emerging communities continued to interact, consequently strengthening their networks and building new ones. On the one hand, recurrent informal gatherings and parties provided the opportunity for members of the pro-refugee communities to come together and share more personal experiences and frustrations related to their work. On the other hand, the pro-refugee communities came to participate in increasingly formalized interaction formats. These included expert groups established to

develop an integration strategy, a volunteer network, and a civic migration council.

In contrast, in Altenau and Neiheim, although organizations and groups mobilized during the refugee reception crisis in 2015/16, they did not lead to the emergence and survival of pro-refugee communities. Despite the unprecedented mobilization, there were few sustained forms of interaction with the potential to manifest in new and strengthened networks. A significant obstacle was the limited integration of volunteer-run groups into established forums, such as Altenau's migration roundtable. This roundtable failed to extend invitations to prospective members, such as volunteer-led refugee support groups, and continued to serve as an exclusive platform for well-established, professionalized organizations. Additionally, the ongoing tensions between members of civil society, such as the Refugee Council, and local government officials in Neheim and Altenau, hindered lasting collaboration.

Through paired comparisons, I identified three sets of factors and conditions that either drove or inhibited the development and survival of pro-refugee communities. I first highlighted the significant role of local brokers in sustaining interaction within local civic action communities. Local brokers are crucial in maintaining engagement by creating diverse opportunities for interaction. In Chapter 5, I reconceptualize brokers as active agents who continuously connect individuals, drawing on recent innovations in organizational sociology (Obstfeld, Borgatti & Davis, 2014). Moving beyond traditional definitions that focus on structural network positions (Burt, 2007; Gould & Fernandez, 1989), I emphasize brokers' behavior and strategies, portraying them as "matchmakers" (Stovel & Shaw, 2012) who ensure the longevity of networks. In my study, I identify three types of local brokers who gained recognition and appreciation by defending their communities and serving as mediators between activists, volunteers, and local government. Furthermore, I demonstrate the diversified interaction opportunities these brokers provide, distinguishing between activities related to "maintaining core work," "policy advocacy," and "broadening the issue scope." These diversified interaction opportunities were instrumental in keeping interaction alive once mobilization faded, as they catered to the needs of the various subgroups within the communities.

Second, I revealed the significant obstacles to collaboration and the organizational differences underpinning them. In particular, I identified three major mechanisms that hinder sustained community building: resource differences, differences in modes of coordination, and differences in interaction cultures.

In Chapter 6, I explore the challenges of building enduring networks between professionalized organizations and informal groups, addressing deep-seated organizational differences often overlooked in voluntarism/nonprofit studies. First, resource-rich organizations often overshadow informal groups, crowding them out of collaborative efforts (Guo & Acar, 2005; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Second, divergent coordination modes create barriers, with professionalized organizations adopting a coalitional mode focused on resources, while informal groups emphasize solidarity and community (Diani, 2015). Third, cultural norms influence interaction styles, as informal groups value independence and flexibility, whereas professionalized organizations prefer formalized, interest-driven approaches (Eliasoph & Cefaï, 2021; Lichterman, 2021). These factors make lasting collaboration and community building across organizational divides particularly challenging, as evidenced by cases where pro-refugee communities failed to emerge. However, these challenges can be addressed through greater appreciation for informal groups and the creation of more balanced power dynamics.

Third, I emphasized the importance of trusting relationships between local government officials and volunteers for co-production and community building. I highlight how positive civil society-state relations lay the foundation for formalized interaction formats, such as integration-strategy and civic-council meetings. Drawing on the concept of linking social capital – trust built across power divides (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) – I show that its production requires continuous effort. Structural tensions, power asymmetries, and the perception of whether efforts are taken seriously shape these relationships. Viewing shared challenges, like refugee intake, as mutual concerns foster cooperation, but trust remains fragile and dynamic. While mediation and institutionalized exchanges can strengthen ties, unaddressed frustration and suspicion risk undermining linking social capital over time. Volunteers can intuitively gauge whether their efforts are valued, or in terms of social capital, whether vertical ties are "responsive" or more instrumental, or even "exploitative" in nature (Putnam, 2004, p. 669). The experience of feeling disregarded is a key driver of discouragement, often leading volunteers to disengage, which in turn results in a swift erosion of these ties.

These driving factors and obstacles not only operate independently but also have meaningful interdependencies. Brokers, for instance, build trust and create interaction opportunities for their communities, while also serving as key mediators between volunteers, activists, and local government. They play a crucial role in strengthening the bonds between civil society and local

government by translating the diverse concerns of civil society to government officials, thereby fostering trust. Additionally, brokers can help mitigate established power dynamics between informal volunteer groups and professionalized organizations by maintaining positive relationships with both groups and addressing conflicts. Moreover, the mechanism behind linking social capital formation—establishing responsive ties rooted in listening and respect—can contribute to bridging organizational divides. By acknowledging each other's perspectives and respecting differing interaction cultures, volunteers, activists, and local government officials are better able to collaborate and build trust.

Conceptual and Empirical Contributions

This book has made four major conceptual and empirical contributions. First, this book has made an innovative contribution to current civil society research by introducing the concept of local civic action communities and demonstrating their significance in contemporary civic landscapes. Second, the book makes essential empirical contributions that further the study of pro-refugee mobilization, of the potential for remobilization, and of the changing nature of volunteering,

Local civic action communities

First, I advance civil society research by introducing the concept of local civic action communities in today's civic landscape, borrowing and adapting Suzanne Staggenborg's (2013, 2020) concept of social movement communities. Mobilization periods today often involve a broad range of actors, from typical membership-based voluntary and welfare organizations to more politicized grassroots associations and informal groups. To understand community building in this civic landscape, I introduced the concept of local civic action communities. They differ in their emergence and survival to movement communities because actors may not follow a global vision with concrete policy changes in mind and may not be involved in classical social movement campaigns and protests.

Local civic action communities instead emerge through a collective focus on local problems that the members of the communities are convinced must be addressed. As may typically arise following mobilization periods such as

the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, the actors in my case were, on the one hand, quite broad involving organizations that were typically not part of largescale protest events (not as politicized). On the other hand, they focused on local problems and were most interested in solving these. Unlike social movement communities, such communities are generally not necessarily bound by a collective identity, even though these identities may form later in some local civic action communities, too.

Existing civil society research, however, had not adequately address community building in this way. While, for instance, scholars in voluntarism/nonprofit studies had provided rich insights into more formalized network formation and collaboration (e.g., Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Nolte & Boenigk, 2013; Shaw & Goda, 2004), they had rarely explored the community aspect behind such developments. This especially holds true with regard to the outcomes of heightened mobilization. Social movement studies, on the other hand, while offering many conceptual insights, are still more movement-centered and do not fully address the contemporary, differentiated civic landscape in which mobilization periods such as the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 take place (but Corrigall-Brown, 2022; Diani, 2015; Lichterman, 2021). As a result, neither voluntarism/nonprofit studies nor social movement studies have provided sufficient tools to study community building as I have done in this book. Consequently, the concept of local civic action communities represents a crucial building block, one that can be used to bridge the gaps between these fields of civil society research and studies of today's differentiated civic landscapes.

The emergence and survival of local civic action communities is incredibly important for civil society in light of recent societal changes. First, local civic action communities that survive over time provide citizens with the opportunity for lasting involvement in effective policy-making at the local and regional level. In the pro-refugee communities that I examined, the various actors involved came together in regular interaction formats to influence local policy-making in the field of migration.

Second, local civic action communities that continue to exist for years become a sphere where people from different organizations and groups build professional relationships but also friendships. The activists and volunteers active in the pro-refugee communities looked forward to meeting each other across organizations and groups at summer parties, get-togethers, film screenings, and protest actions. They were excited when, sometimes after

a few months, they got the opportunity to meet again and do something together.

Third, local civic action communities provide viable foundations for new mobilization periods as the networks that form and become stronger through continued interaction can be activated to cope with other local and regional problems. For the pro-refugee communities, the mobilization in solidarity with Ukrainian refugees was such a period. The foundations built in 2015/16 were used in 2022 to provide new emergency support for Ukrainians and collaborate across organizations and groups. Knowing that this foundation was in place gave the volunteers and activists, who had been active in the pro-refugee communities for years at that point in time, a sense of peace and pride.

Finally, it is also important to note that the factors that underpinned local civic action communities also underpinned the bridging form of social capital. Various studies have investigated whether and under what conditions bridging social capital is created and facilitated. Most studies refer to surveys on norms of trust (e.g., Gidengil & Stolle, 2009; Paxton, 2002) or on the heterogeneous composition of volunteers in associations (e.g., Geys & Murdoch, 2010; Hooghe & Stolle, 2003). Less attention has been paid to relationships between organizations (i.e. between associations, church congregations, political groups) (but see Baldassarri & Diani, 2007), although it is these very interorganizational networks that promote trust and cooperation between heterogeneous groups (Smith et al., 2004, p. 509f.). This book has shown how bridging social capital can be promoted at the local level. In addition, social capital research has paid little attention to interaction dynamics (Lichterman, 2006) in local contexts (Edwards et al., 2001, p. 267). In this book, I highlight how the structures of the local civic landscape, the behavior of local governments, and the quality of local interaction dynamics can enormously influence social capital. This does not just enable us to show where social capital exists and where it does not but also allows us to identify which forms of interaction are particularly conducive or unfavorable to its development. To put it in a nutshell, the concept of local civic action communities provides a useful lens through which civil society scholars can analyze community building in the contemporary civic landscape.

The pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16

Second, I expand on the empirical research regarding the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 by examining the evolving activities and interaction dynamics of mobilized actors six years after the mobilization. Although significant research has been done on the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16 in Germany, most studies have only focused on the mobilization period itself (but see Dinkelaker et al., 2021). As a result, there is limited knowledge of the trajectories of the mobilization period and refugee support. With regard to the trajectories of the pro-refugee mobilization of 2015/16, I have provided significant empirical insights into what came after the media attention decreased and the mass of volunteers and activists withdrew at the end of 2016.

Recent studies have focused on the lives of volunteers and activists and on their motivations and struggles (Carlsen et al., 2022; Feischmidt & Zakariás, 2020; Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Gundelach & Toubøl, 2019; Karakayali, 2016; Schwiertz & Steinhilper, 2020) and on the experiences of refugees and the effects of refugee support on refugees themselves (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Bergfeld, 2017; Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2021; Funk, 2018; Zick & Preuß, 2019). However, studies have rarely shed light on how the volunteers and activists and the collective actors involved were affected and how it strengthened communities involved in refugee support and advocacy.

Local manifestation of refugee support and advocacy

Second, this book sheds light on how activities around refugee support and advocacy have manifested in specific localities. In recent years, pro-migrant and pro-refugee groups have intensified their advocacy efforts and protest activities on a global scale (Bloemraad & Voss, 2020; W. Nicholls, 2019; Zepeda-Millán, 2017). However, research has predominantly concentrated on the national level, which has meant that crucial insights into local grassroots dynamics have remained uncovered. Scholars have criticized the lack of attention paid to particular localities in research on pro-migrant and pro-refugee work (de Graauw et al., 2020; Nicholls et al., 2016; Triviño-Salazar, 2018). Nicholls et al. (2016, p. 1038) have emphasized the lack of research on cities as "important hubs in national-level struggles". In Europe, several notable movements have emerged in recent years, including "Barcelona Refugee City" in Spain (Garcés-Mascareñas & Gebhardt, 2020), "City of Sanctuary" in Great Britain (Squire & Darling, 2013), and "Create Safe Havens" (German: "Seebrücke") in Germany (Schwiertz

& Schwenken, 2022). These movements have campaigned for improved social care and political rights for refugees. While cities and towns have become important sites for immigration debates and conflicts (Nicholls et al., 2016), the local emergence of pro-immigrant and pro-refugee movements has, with a few exceptions, only received minimal attention (Boersma et al., 2019; Hoppe-Seyler, 2020; Monforte & Maestri, 2023). By shifting the focus from the national to the local level, this book outlines how grassroots actors provided emergency aid in 2015/16 while subsequently transitioning to a focus on integration in the years following the refugee reception crisis. I demonstrate how the different actors built and strengthened networks among themselves and built pro-refugee communities.

Structural changes in civil society

Finally, this book extends the current scholarly debate on the recent transitions in civil society. This book highlights the potential for conflict between the more traditional sphere of associations and the "new world of initiatives and projects" (German: "die neue Welt der Initiativen und Projekte") (Grande, 2021, p. 173). In recent decades, the number of initiatives and informal groups with a project-based character and a stronger political orientation, also known as new voluntarism, has increased (Brandsen et al., 2017; M. Edwards, 2014; Evers, 2005; Evers & von Essen, 2019; Hustinx et al., 2014; Hyde et al., 2016). At the same time, studies indicate that civic action in traditional civil society entities, such as trade unions, churches, and charities, is on the decline. However, these structures continue to coexist with the new structures (Grande, 2021). This diversity within contemporary civic landscapes is evident in the four cases that I examined in this book. While existing research has produced rich insights into the phenomenon of new voluntarism and the decline of the traditional civil society sector (Brandsen et al., 2017; Hustinx et al., 2014), there are few studies that show how these different actor types interact. This book demonstrates that new, more informal refugee-support groups and more traditional welfare organizations face challenges in collaborating with each other. The power imbalance between these more informal groups with fewer resources and larger welfare organizations can result in the formation of exclusive sub-networks that exclude informal initiatives and groups. This creates parallel structures that separate traditional and new informal actors.

Political and Societal Implications

The study has highlighted the great potential of mobilization periods for community building but also pointed to the difficulties for the development and survival of pro-refugee communities in the post-mobilization period. My research has significant social and political implications for civil society practitioners and policymakers.

Democracy promotion

First, my research has significant implications for policymakers and civil society practitioners who seek to enhance democratic values and societal cohesion. My work demonstrates the efficacy of community building across diverse sets of actors. Building broad-based communities that include actors from different sectors and with varied societal convictions is crucial for the sustained success of democratic institutions.

In Germany, heightened mobilization against the far-right "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) (German: Alternative für Deutschland) in 2024 has emphasized the power of people working together against democratic threats. Despite their differences, participants in large-scale protests have collectively stood up against the AfD's inhumane, racist, and antisemitic agendas (Diez, 2024).

Today, right-wing extremism is on the rise globally and Germany is no exception. We have witnessed attacks on Muslim minorities, National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders, and assaults on Jewish-owned businesses and synagogues (Bennhold, 2020; Eddy, 2020). With the AfD's electoral successes, Germany has seen the first far-right party since the end of World War II to hold increasing influence in public institutions. Due to the AfD's danger to Germany's democracy, members of the German Bundestag are currently examining a legal ban procedure against the entire party (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2024; Kathe, 2024; ZDF heute, 2024). However, many observers agree that banning the AfD will likely only be one of the steps needed to protect democratic institutions (and improve social cohesion) (Laudenbach, 2023; Reinbold, 2024; Zeit Online, 2024).

One crucial step is the promotion of local community building. Based on the findings in my book, I strongly advocate for supporting network formation and community building across organizations and groups at the local level. Diverse local civic action communities encompassing a broad range of actors can

address concrete problems such as refugee support and advocacy. They can also broaden their scope and pursue related goals, such as anti-far right actions.

Renowned scholars such as Putnam (2000; 1994), Stolle and Hooghe (2003) and Newton (1997) have highlighted that broad actor networks can reinforce democratic values and social cohesion. Broad networks are vital because they can improve communication between the organizations and help build trust as different organizations share problems, concerns, and potential solutions. While heterogeneous networks among individuals can be established within associations, broader group cohesion is significantly improved by the relationships between different informal groups, organizations, and clubs.

In times when democratic societies are at risk, it is imperative to reinforce these heterogeneous relationships. Policies that facilitate collaboration between diverse organizations and groups should support collaborative roundtables and expert groups. These roundtables and groups should include informal initiatives and groups as well as more professionalized and experienced organizations. This type of co-production benefits local governments but also encourages interactions between diverse sets of civil society actors.

Civil society practitioners should create new ways of adopting diverse interaction formats to cater to different actors. Many groups and organizations have their own ways of doing things. These ways include their unique culture of interaction and networking strategies regarding collaboration. Showing sensitivity concerning these different cultures and preferences will likely enable more collaboration, even across organizational differences.

Migration policy

Second, my findings suggest that local civil society can contribute to social cohesion in times of conflict around increasing immigration. Research indicates that migration to Europe will likely be one of the key policy issues in the next ten to twenty years (OSCE, 2020). Policymakers in Germany and other European countries have increasingly expressed the fear that migration will lead to divisions in host communities (Guardian, 2023; Le Monde, 2023; Tagesspiegel, 2023). Empirical evidence regarding this issue is mixed at best (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Mau et al., 2023). With regard to local civil society, my research suggests that increased migration to Europe in 2015/16 actually reinforced community building in some places.

Indeed, contrary to the aforementioned expectations, my research findings indicate that the high inflow of refugees in 2015/16 did not lead to divi-

sion, at least not within local civil society. During that time, over one million refugees arrived in Germany (Schiffauer, 2022). This did not necessarily foster discord; in two of the four cities I explored in this book, new and thriving pro-refugee communities emerged and survived well beyond the peak of the mobilization period in 2015/16. In these cities, the pro-refugee communities—consisting of volunteers, activists, organizations, and groups—have been more closely connected since the mobilization than before. Even in the other two cities, where similar pro-refugee communities did not develop, the increased influx of refugees in 2015/16 nevertheless did not significantly increased conflicts within local civil society.

Though my period of study was one in which a skeptical or even hateful atmosphere emerged towards refugees, the increasing number of refugees did not result in a breakdown of social cohesion in the four civic communities. Hence, rather than exacerbating concerns about the potential decline of social cohesion due to migration, policymakers who participate in public debates on migration should highlight instances where migration has a constructive impact on community building. By focusing on circumstances in which cohesion is not undermined but rather reinforced, policymakers can enhance legislation and local structures that facilitate community-building within civil society.

In addition, policy makers and civil society experts should improve the conditions under which community building is facilitated and improved. Volunteers, activists, and employees of local organizations who stand up for refugees often face hostility from the far right. Advocating for migration in times of skepticism is not easy. At the local level, policymakers should, for instance, support local community building through financial support for projects and the provision of spaces for civic action, especially in times of rising rents.

As I have shown in my research, cooperation between local governments and civil society was an important step towards sustainable community building. For example, local politicians and government officials should include individuals from civil society in their strategy meetings and policymaking (for example, when planning a new integration strategy for the district).

Civil society is central to the management of migration. My research underlines the need to support civil society groups as actors that are indispensable for social cohesion. Such support at different levels is an investment in a democratic and inclusive society where diversity is seen as a strength.

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