6. Discussion: Exploring Transversal Solidarities in migrant rights activism

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

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

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

6.1 Intersection of differences: how inequalities challenge solidarities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Trade union office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2 Variety in activities: how everyday politics build solidarities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.3 Ambivalence of success: how relationalities negotiate solidarities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.4 Summary: Exploring Transversal Solidarities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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