"A GOAT THAT IS ALREADY DEAD IS NO LONGER AFRAID OF KNIVES"

Refugee Mobilizations and Politics of (Necessary) Interference in Hamburg

Martin Bak Jørgensen, Aalborg University

This article investigates the political activism undertaken by sub-Saharan West-African migrants residing in Hamburg. The article looks into political activism and resistance by exploring a politics of interference and emergence of new political subjectivities among African migrants. As stated by the refugees, they "did not survive the Nato war in Libya to die on the streets of Hamburg." The struggle works on different scales. It is based on a critique of the EU asylum and control system, of the Italian management of the "refugee problem", and of the local authorities of Hamburg. Furthermore, the article looks into how such political activism is diffused across local and national borders through local and transnational alliance-building.[1]

Keywords: border struggles, political subjectivities, asylum seekers, citizenship, activism

When we speak of crisis in relation to migration today, the notion of the "refugee crisis" automatically comes to mind. The "long summer of migration" in 2015 created an image of a situation out of control, which was a particular framing of the situation. Prem Kumar Rajaram calls it "a representation of the crisis" and argues that "the refugee crisis in Europe is fabricated" (2015). It is a framing that reduces the complexities of the situation to an "abstracted understanding" allowing policymakers and commentators to treat it as an exceptional condition and hence legitimize the use of exceptional policy means (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). The talk of the crisis was and is conflated with other crises. We sometimes find the notion of "humanitarian crisis", which, contrary to focusing on the human consequences, also emphasizes victimization and creates distinctions between wanted and unwanted migrants, and ultimately is linked to a "crisis of the asylum system" and/or a "crisis of the European border" and border control (De Genova et al. 2016: 7–14; Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). Before the "refugee crisis", the main framing was based on the economic crisis. Particularly in times of economic crisis, conventional discourses describe asylum seekers and refugees as "scroungers", stealing welfare resources, housing and eventually the jobs of the native people (Anderson 2013; Jørgensen & Thomsen 2018). The "security crisis", or the securitization of immigration that entered a new phase after

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9/11, also influenced the life conditions and rights of asylum seekers negatively and opened a space for coercion and policing (Bourbeau 2011; Faist 2006; Huysmans 2006). This tendency was strengthened further with the attempts to control the "refugee crisis" and secure the external borders of Europe. What is crucial here is that any notion of crisis alludes to a sense of emergency, which inevitably makes life more difficult for migrants and refugees, as it spurs the development of preventive and restrictive policy responses. At the same time, refugees' existence is made invisible by the authorities; they often confine them in remote and prison-like environments, where people cease to have a normal life and their existence does not disturb the rest of society. Asylum seekers' and refugees' claims for rights have been systematically ignored and purposely obstructed by institutional powers and dominant elites, whose involvement facilitates non-coercive forms of consent and silent submission to rules and regulations, when state authorities have difficulties acting directly on subjects. Yet the subaltern (in Gramscian terms) has in different places raised its voice and started to organize from below (Meret & Della Corte 2016; Meret & Diener 2019; Odugbesan & Schwiertz 2018). Examples are the self-organizing processes of Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland – MASI,[2] the Wij Zijn Hier [We Are Here] group in Amsterdam (Dadusc 2017),[3] the organizing of Top Mantas in Madrid (undocumented migrants selling their goods from the streets; see Agustín 2013), the refugee squats in Athens (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019), protest marches of Romani berry pickers in northern Sweden (Mešić & Woolfson 2015), protest marches and self-organizing in Vienna (Ataç 2016), and the autonomous organizing taking place among refugees from the intervention in Libya (see also Agustín & Jørgensen 2019; Oliveri 2016; Caraus & Paris 2018). These organizing processes and autonomous struggles are also border struggles (De Genova 2015). They illustrate that borders no longer are constrained to being fixed geographical lines but are continuously reshaped on different geographical scales (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

In this article I investigate the political activism undertaken by mainly sub-Saharan West-African migrants residing in Hamburg and how this activism has spread beyond the city and country. The group in Hamburg is a heterogeneous group, composed of migrants, refugees, as well as active and rejected asylum seekers. I here use the term "migrant" to include all of them, to underline the agency of this group, unless other notions are used by the group itself. The migrants included in this group arrived before the beginning of the "refugee crisis", before the "long summer of migration", and their struggle in Hamburg has been going on since 2013. As the years have passed, their situation has become even more complex with the arrival of newcomers from especially Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The large number of newly arrived refugees has created new hierarchies, competition and divisions within the asylum system, but also opened for new alliances. Using the notion of "politics of interference" I argue that the actions and interventions undertaken by the African migrants are generative not only of new political subjectivities, but also disturb and rupture the political consensus and bring forth radical imaginaries for an inclusive and just society. Their actions become a corrective to a flawed democracy characterized by exclusion and repression. Therefore, their actions are also necessary. A second important aspect I employ is that of scale. I argue that political activism takes place on different co-existing and interconnected scales, ranging from the local to the international. Scales, following Bob Jessop (1997), are related to economic and social conditions that influence the form and content of the political struggle taking place. The struggles in Nicholas De Genova's words constitute "transnational spatial conjunctures" challenging methodological nationalism (2015: 3–4).

The article progresses as follows: Firstly, I outline and discuss my empirical data and methodology. I use my data from ethnographic fieldwork in Hamburg and Denmark and combine this with an approach drawing on the Autonomy of Migration approach (AoM) and a militant research approach. Secondly, I outline the theoretical framework underpinning the argument and analytical concepts. Here I draw on scholars like Engin Isin, Peter Nyers and Kim Rygiel, all having in common that

they look at new forms of citizenship and resistance developing from below. I use their theories as a backdrop for outlining what I understand as a politics of interference. Thirdly, I introduce the case of Hamburg – the starting point for the empirical analysis – and thereby enter the discussion on scales. Next follows an overall analysis of the constitution of the Lampedusa in Hamburg (LiHH) movement. I conclude by investigating transnational links and how the politics of interference is diffused across city and country borders.

Methodology – Autonomy of Migration and Militant Research

In short, the material for this article is based on participatory fieldwork and informal interviews with members of the Lampedusa in Hamburg (LiHH) activists and supporters: both sub-Saharan refugees from the intervention of Libya and "native" supporters of the LiHH network. I have participated in demonstrations and events in Hamburg since the fall of 2013, as well as in internal meetings with the network. While this fieldwork was mainly based on participant observations, I also had a proactive role in co-organizing meetings and seminars with invited members of the LiHH in different places in Denmark. This was to connect them with self-organized migrant groups and to present their stories and struggles and share experiences. In that sense I have been, and still am, personally engaged in the ongoing struggle. This article therefore relies on a militant research perspective. As an approach, militant research sees research and activism as co-constituted and is oriented solely "by invested militant activists for the purpose of clarifying and amplifying struggle" (Team Colors Collective 2010: 3). The starting point for militant research is not an academic researcher seeking to further a particular strand of knowledge, but the context of political struggle itself (Halvorsen 2015). Militant research "is an intensification and deepening of the political," argue Shukaitis and Graeber (2007: 9). In practical terms, it meant connecting struggles in Germany and Denmark by co-facilitating meetings between migrant activists and supporters and using the knowledge that is produced in the political struggle. The experiences from the trips to Hamburg and the meetings in Denmark led to the development of a political activist platform in Denmark for migrant and non-migrant activists fighting for rights and better conditions in asylum and deportation centers. Militant research connects to other engaged and militant approaches within anthropology, ethnography and sociology. In 1995 Nancy Scheper-Hughes called for a "militant anthropology" and the "primacy of the ethical", and for anthropologists to become morally and politically engaged. Jeffrey Juris coined the notion "militant ethnography" to describe this approach. He depicts this as "developing a model of politically committed ethnographic research that uses engaged ethnography as a way to contribute to movement goals while using my embedded ethnographic position to generate knowledge of movement practices and dynamics" (Juris n.d.; see also 2007, 2014). Michael Burawoy addressed the American Sociological Association with a call for a "public sociology" (2005), which he describes as an "organic public sociology in which the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public" (ibid.). Such an organic public sociology is undertaken by sociologists working with labor movements, neighborhood associations, immigrant rights groups, etc., and Burawoy further argues that, "[t]he project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life" (ibid.: 8). Although these positions originate in different disciplines, they pursue the same goal: solidarity with the research subjects and a research praxis that produces insights into how micro-processes of resistance are linked to macro-processes of repression (be it against neoliberal globalization or the border regimes) (Mathers & Novelli 2007). I here draw on the work of Andrew Mathers and Mario Novelli in their call for an engaged ethnography. I regard militant research as an overall approach capturing the positions outlined in the aforementioned disciplines. Militant research highlights engagement, the priority of the ethical (as in committed research), possible interventions and disruptions in the field we study, and solidarity between citizens. As argued by Mathers and Novelli,

picking up on Scheper-Hughes: "[T]he ethnographer [here broadly researcher] may find many paths to ethical and political commitment, but each of them involves him/her in undertaking a variety of acts of solidarity" (2007: 245). Over the last years, I have engaged in understanding solidarity both as a theoretical concept and as a practice I myself take part in. In this work, the continuing links with the self-organized groups in Hamburg and Denmark as well as the establishment of the platform are evidence of at least being in committed, strong networks and having forged relations with the people with whom I work and share political engagement.

A final methodological reflection relates to the Autonomy of Migration approach (AoM), which is a strand within critical border studies (e.g. Bojadžijev & Karakayali 2010; De Genova 2013, 2017; Hess 2010; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013; Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013).[4] While it can be characterized both as a method and a theory, I find it to have analytical implications and goes hand in hand with the militant ethnographic approach. In the book *Border as Method* (2013) Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson build on an AoM approach. They explain how the proliferation, mobility and deep metamorphosis of borders are key features of "actually existing" processes of globalization (Casas-Cortés, Cobarrubias & Pickles 2015). This links the reading of borders to multi-scalar processes of political geography (ibid.; see also Clough 2013). The AoM approach has implications for how we understand activism like the one discussed in this article. It makes mobility and migration the starting point of analyses and conceptualizes migrants as having agency (see also Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). In this way, borders follow migration – and not the other way round – by constituting collective action that challenges institutional power to reshape the border regime (Mezzadra 2011). Migration as a process is understood as a particular type of social movement.

Theoretical Reflections – Acting as if They had Rights

The development of collective resistance has a temporal aspect. The dynamics capture a moment in history. Collective campaigns such as "A Day Without Immigrants" in 2006 organized by Latino immigrants in the United States (see Longhi 2013) and the "24h sans nous" in France in 2010 where migrants laid down work and stopped consuming to illustrate what the reality would be like without immigrants, show how agency can be seized and provide an example of the emergence of new political subjectivities. Peter Nyers has asked: "What insights can be gained about citizenship from these 'moments' when non-citizens with extremely precarious status assert themselves as political by publicly making claims about rights and membership, freedom and equality?" (2010: 128). He brings in Engin Isin for an answer to this question. For Isin these events constitute "acts of citizenship" (Isin 2008). Investigating such events entails a "focus on those moments when, regardless of status and substance, subjects constitute themselves as citizens – or, better still, as those to whom the rights to have rights is due" (ibid.: 18). Étienne Balibar (2002), working along the same lines at an earlier stage, coined the notion of "politics of civility". It is a politics that raises a critique and offers sets of practices against an exclusivist universalism. Reviving political conflict is employed as a mode to make for instance the asylum seekers visible as political subjects.

The restrictive policy responses, policing and narratives set the rationale for what De Genova has termed "the border spectacle" (2013). The border spectacle sets a scene of "ostensible exclusion", in which the "purported naturalness" and necessity of exclusion may be demonstrated and legitimized. It is a spectacle which reifies migrant illegality and which extends the border regime far beyond the external borders (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). The border spectacle creating the illegalization of migrants, in Kim Rygiel's understanding, becomes the bridge around which people on either sides of the borders, non-citizen migrants along with citizens, come together in solidarity and support for migrants' rights – what she calls "bordering solidarity" (Rygiel et al. 2015). This particular type of solidarity and alliance-building has been a characteristic of the response to the "refugee crisis" (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019), but we have also seen it previously, as in the case of

Hamburg. Bordering solidarity develops both at the geographical borders as migrant solidarity networks seek to assist people on either side of the border and in the transnational solidarity network built up by activists in one country and connected with like-minded groups across Europe and elsewhere (ibid.). Together with Peter Nyers, Rygiel (2012: 3) furthermore argues that border controls can be restrictive but also "constitutive of new ways of 'being political' […]." They give rise to new political subjectivities and "may reflect different ways of organizing political community through a condition of mobility, in which values of equality, justice and recognition come to be redefined from the perspective of mobile subjects" (ibid.: 13). Such an understanding is in line with the AoM approach as these new ways of being political in time may be transformative and disrupt the regimes that try to exclude and repress the migrants. As argued by Natasha King, history shows several examples of how minority groups' (from the Black Panthers in the USA to Sans Papiers in France) demand for representation, when carried out by themselves, challenged the dominating structure and created new, emancipated subjectivities (King 2016: 41–42). Migrant-led activism therefore is an important topic for the analyses to see what kind of agency is developed by different migrant groups and collectives (Oliveri 2016; Caraus & Paris 2018).

In this article I coin the notion of "politics of interference" to capture and denote the agency, practices and politics played out in Hamburg (and elsewhere) during the last five years. It draws directly on the previous discussion as well as on the discussion of militant research. In the title of this article, I added "(necessary)" as it becomes a crucial form of politics to fortify and expand democracy (Mouffe 2000). In that sense, acting for democracy becomes an ethical imperative for challenging structures of exclusion and retrenchment of democracy. Politics of interference does not refer to the struggle for formal citizenship (or at least cannot be restricted to this), but for the formation of political subjectivity and agency. Politics of interference thereby becomes the questioning of consensus and the constitution of political subjectivities. It is the voice of the insurgent. Following from the AoM approach, we can regard this as the active and deliberate engagement with the social and political order. Politics of interference can be considered as a productive form of dissent that re-politicizes the social order by rearticulating disputes and conflicts. Re-politicization is also about introducing new affections, emotions and indignations, which constitutes people as human beings (Jørgensen & Agustín 2015). The dynamics of this type of politics are the formation of alliances. In relation to a militant ethnography this is also where the researcher her-/himself takes part in this process in a shared political struggle – albeit on different terms and with different stakes.

The last concept I want to discuss is that of scales. Politics of emancipation such as the ones discussed in this article are spatially produced and respond to particular geographies of resistance. Following the Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci, Bob Jessop (2007) argues that the analysis of social forces and their alliances must be spatialized (Agustín & Jørgensen 2016). This entails that we acknowledge and emphasize interconnection between all scales: local, regional, national, international and transnational. When the LiHH group in Hamburg demonstrates on the streets for the right to stay and to be recognized as refugees – a status category entailing certain formal rights – it is at one and the same time a response to the local authorities in Hamburg as a city and a federal state but also a response to the restrictive, repressive and exclusivist asylum and border regime of the EU. Emphasizing scale makes it possible to understand why specific actors and alliances create the responses they do to their situation as migrants without rights. Scaling theory has been a central focus within urban studies (Bauder 2016; Brenner 1999). Margit Fauser, investigating the nexus between urban studies and border studies, argues that re-territorialization and rescaling are constitutive elements in globalization (2017; also Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). She says, "the urban scale [should] not simply be seen as nested, subordinated, and bounded within the national but rather as contested, constructed, and dynamically changing, including its relationship to the national scale,"

and furthermore contends that "[u]rban border spaces are thus one element in the re-scalarization of border and power" (2017: 2). What we can take from this claim is that scale cannot simply be analytically translated with "level". Scale is the complex dynamics of social relations between actors and authorities. When LiHH for instance participated as members of the pan-European March against Frontex in 2014, when migrant collectives and supporters marched from various places in Europe to Brussels in connection with a migration summit, it was an attempt to re-scale a conflict and thus a tactical maneuver for the involved actors (Jørgensen 2016).

The Context of Hamburg

Hamburg has a long history of spaces of resistance and urban struggles (see Birke 2010, 2016; Boeing 2015; Füllner & Templin 2011; Mayer 2013; Sutter 2016). While Berlin's motto after the reunification is "*arm, aber sexy*" (poor but sexy), Hamburg by comparison is a rich city. It is the second-largest city in Germany with 1.8 million inhabitants and one of the few German cities with a growing population. Hamburg's development dates back to the period of the *Hansestadt*, when the city was part of the Hanseatic League, which granted almost undisturbed expansion to trading activities and autonomy from central government. A Hamburg maxim goes: "Wherever there's trade, Hamburgers trade" (Meret & Jørgensen 2014). The alleged inclusive internationalism also stood strong in 2014 when mayor Olaf Schulz identified Hamburg with the words: "Hamburg – gateway to the world." Hamburg was in his words an "international", "cosmopolitan" metropolis, where "everyone who decides to stay contributes with their own ideas, personal history, individual talents and skills to the city" (ibid.). This narrative is not recognized by those who have been engaged in anti-gentrification and housing struggles or, as in this article, struggles for immigrant rights. While Hamburg has been an immigration city for long, the emergence of the self-organized network LiHH signals a new phase in the urban struggles in Hamburg. The Right to the City movement in Hamburg (Recht auf Stadt, RAS) has allied with LiHH and introduced a critique of borders and the European asylum regime – "*Recht auf Stadt kennt keine Grenzen*" (Right to the city knows no borders) – alongside their housing struggles (Jørgensen 2016). The solidarity with LiHH from the local communities in especially St. Pauli and St. Georg areas has been massive. In sum, LiHH has tapped into the militant solidarity work already present in these areas for the last three decades (ibid.).

Lampedusa in Hamburg

Lampedusa in Hamburg is the latest stage in what Susi Meret and Elisabetta Della Corte have termed the "Emergency North Africa" odyssey (2014). The emergency started in 2011, under the Nato intervention in Libya, intensified by the geopolitical instability in Tunisia and Egypt. In the first five months of 2011 more than 45,000 refugees from Libya arrived in Italy (Nadeau 2011). This was the registered number, but the real number was probably much higher. Most of the asylum seekers originated in the sub-Saharan region – as well as other parts of Africa – and all of them were forced out of Libya where they had managed to make a living. Their lives were characterized by hardship but they were not necessarily refugees in Libya. Some were and some were not. I have talked to different persons from LiHH originating from countries like Ghana, Mali, Sudan and Uganda, and they all tell different life stories.[5] However, they were all made into refugees when they were abandoned by their workplaces (many of them international companies) in Libya as the war intensified and they were forced to flee. In 2013 two major shipwrecks, on October 3 and 11, causing the death of over 400 people, made the Italian government act and appeal to humanitarian principles and disengage from the ordinary management of irregular migration by launching the rescue-at-sea program Mare Nostrum (Castelli Gattinara 2017; also Dines, Montagna & Ruggiero 2015). Those who arrived in Italy were absorbed in the Emergency North Africa program. The emergency program was a profitable economic business for most of the actors involved in the care of asylum seekers, but entailed a bleak existence for the refugees. Asylum seekers were housed in

dismissed hotels, empty residences and houses. The large number of requests for asylum led to lengthy waiting lists and many did not get a notification until the end of the program in 2013.[6] With the emergency declared over from official hold, the lives and future of the thousands of refugees were ignored. To release them from Italian responsibility, the authorities issued a one-year humanitarian permit to all. Some were given a bonus of 500 euros, which many used to travel to Switzerland, France and Germany (A Collage 2015; Odugbesan & Schweirtz 2018).

This is where the story begins in Hamburg. From an AoM perspective – which the LiHH group shares – it is not a story of victims but one of a group attaining agency by claiming rights and the freedom to move. The "Lampedusa in Hamburg" movement was formed in March 2013 as a direct response by a group of refugees from the Libyan war to German and European laws and regulations. About 300 refugees coming from Italy openly challenged the limits to free movement imposed by the Dublin Regulations that prevent them to move to, stay and work in another European country than the one they first arrived in (Odugbesan & Schweirtz 2018). All of the group members had already gone through the asylum procedure in Italy and had been recognized as refugees. However, the refugee status issued by the Italian state gave them no real social rights (ibid.). What it offered was the legal possibility to move within the EU on a temporary tourist visa, but not the right to work in other EU countries. This was the main claim: the right to live and work. At the same time the recognition in Italy can be seen as empowering as the activists in the group could "only" be deported to Italy (due to the humanitarian permit obtained there) if they got in trouble with the German authorities. In Hamburg, the group assembled and began to organize a protest movement. The group has since engaged in a fundamental and vital struggle for their own right to stay and, indeed, for the rights of all asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to freely decide where to move, live and work. Firstly, it manifests the type of political engagement I try to capture with the notion "politics of interference". Secondly, the struggles illustrate what Néstor Rodríguez in a US setting has termed "the battle for the border" (1996). In his article, he shows how borders are contested by autonomous (immigrant) actors challenging the established stratified socio-spatial global order on the one hand, and on the other hand defended and reified by the authorities seeking to halt irregular migration and curtail regular migration. The slogan of LiHH embodies this type of struggle: "We are here to stay!" – as it directly challenges the still widespread idea that asylum seekers and refugees are only here on a temporary basis (De Genova mentions similar claims-making among irregular migrants in the USA "*Aqui estamas y no nos vamos*" [Here we are and we are not leaving] and "*On bosse ici, on vit ici, on reste ici*" [We work here, we live here, we stay here] in France [2015: 5]). "Lampedusa in Hamburg" became the principal driving force behind numerous public demonstrations, solidarity initiatives and social and political events organized with the support of local movements and advocacy groups and sustained by broad segments of civil society (Meret & Della Corte 2016).

The formation of the movement has a slightly longer history. The group engaged with the Hamburg section of the Karawane, a network for the rights of refugees and migrants.[7] In early May 2013, Karawane met up with 50 refugees of the LiHH for the *Kirchentag*, the national conference of the Protestant churches, bringing together more than 3,000 participants. At the meeting, representatives of the Protestant community, politicians and intellectuals discussed immigration and integration. "You want to talk about immigration? You want to help refugees? Well, here they are," they said. The consequence was that the St. Pauli church opened its doors to the refugees in late May. Other places of worship joined in, such as the mosque in the St. Georg area. Added to the private shelters – mainly located in St. Pauli and offering refugees a place to stay during the cold months – this helped compensate for the lack of help from the municipality. The refugees set up a tent camp near the central station where they slept at night. The camp was torn down by the police, which caused a public outrage and broadened the support base for LiHH. The reaction and force used by the

municipality also urged the group of "Lampedusa in Hamburg" to become increasingly self-aware and organized, advancing specific claims and selecting its own spokespersons from amongst the refugees. Their main message was summed up in the slogan used for protests: "We did not survive the Nato war in Libya to die on the streets of Hamburg." This message displays the interlinkage between international conflicts and local conditions as well as the brutality of the current border regime. It depicts the conflict as multi-scalar and is again a manifestation of the battle for the border (cf. Rodríguez). It was constitutive for the moment. In a call for demonstration and a related press release in 2013 the group used the words "*Eine Ziege, die schon tot ist, fürchtet kein Messer mehr*" (A goat that is already dead is no longer afraid of knives) – meaning "there is nothing more you can do to us,"[8] "we are not going back." In the press release, LiHH explains how they first escaped from the war in Libya and later ended up on the streets of Italy deprived of rights and dignity. With the protest they firstly reclaim their dignity and secondly come into being as political subjects claiming their rights. "We are human and have rights," they state in the release. The newspaper *Taz* summarized the position as "*der Aufstand der Unsichtbaren*" (the revolt of the invisibles) (Taz 2013). This paraphrases the theoretical positions of scholars like Hannah Arendt and Jacques Rancière. The Western European societies are not used to asylum seekers making noise or irregular migrants coming out in the public.[9] This is exactly what happened here: The refugees went from being invisible to being visible and thereby also making their political claims and calls for rights visible. The claims for rights were addressed to the senate in Hamburg, but the legitimacy of the claims was based on human rights and a critique of the European asylum system.

Karawane has a special role in this organizing process. Karawane is committed to self-empowerment and has supported the LiHH in this process. They have helped them in going public, organizing demonstrations and public meetings, and issuing press releases (interview with Karawane at Social Center B5). They believe to have avoided victimizing the refugees or formulating the demands. The demands were there from the beginning. Ideologically, Karawane perceives the refugees as autonomous subjects, who can represent and help themselves if given the right opportunities, and so do the migrants I have talked to over the last years. Their coming-into-being as a group and as political subjects is similar to Sylvère Lotringer's analysis of autonomous struggles among the Italian working class in a setting of postindustrial social conflicts. In "The Return of Politics" Lotringer captures some basic characteristics of autonomous struggles. Autonomy is a "body without organs of politics, anti-hierarchic, anti-dialectic, anti-representative. It is not only a political project it is a project for existence" (in Lotringer & Marazzi 1980: 8). This is what politics of interference looks like.[10] It forges new relations, constitutes new political subjectivities and disrupts the status quo and social order. It becomes a struggle for survival and emancipation at one and the same time. Karawane's support consists mainly of practical aid: networking activities, supporting the organizing of demonstrations and helping in understanding how the different social and institutional realities work within the city of Hamburg and the country. They have linked LiHH to refugee lawyers. The refugees themselves attend meetings with the authorities, the press, the trade unions, the students, the various citizens' movements and are at the frontline of the demonstrations. The organizing of LiHH shows the constituting of political subjectivities in their persistent claims-making and struggle also as political subjects.

The political nature of LiHH and support of Karawane also led to new conflicts in the broader alliance. The church in St. Pauli held the conviction that they could only help with the humanitarian aspects of the conflict. They did not want to take a political stand although they regard humanitarian help *as* political (Meret & Della Corte 2014). For Karawane this was not an option. The conflict *is* political, and interference *is* necessary. This created division lines within the group – which Karawane thus indirectly may have helped consolidate. LiHH called for a collective solution and more specifi-

cally for the use of the § 23 of the Residence Act, which would collectively recognize the refugees of the Libyan war regardless of their personal trajectories. This can be done by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in consultation with the federal State. The authorities, however, rejected this and said that the refugees individually should accept the *Duldung* – the individual assessment of the claims for asylum within the Asylum Law. The new procedure would replace the former recognition with a precarious status of *toleration* (Odugbesan & Schwiertz 2018). As Abimbola Odugbesan and Helge Schwiertz state: "This could be seen as an attempt to discipline the Lampedusa in Hamburg protest by integrating the group members indefinitely into the procedures of German asylum law" (ibid.: 195). The *Duldung* provides the applicant with some financial support, but deportation ensues if the claim for asylum is rejected. The church also supported the *Duldung*. The Lampedusa refugees collectively rejected this initially. The implication would be losing all that they had gained since 2011, such as the recognition of humanitarian asylum already obtained in Italy. They *had* already been recognized as legitimate refugees as mentioned above. It also became the crux of the internal conflict. When 300 persons stick to the collective claim of being recognized as a collective group having ended up in the EU under the same conditions, they speak with a united voice. The pressure from the local church led the people staying there at the time of the conflict (70–80 refugees) to pursue the *Duldung*. It also broke up the group as they were no longer a part of the collective. The group replaced some spokespersons, as former spokespersons had accepted the *Duldung*. This is a main challenge for the LiHH, when looking at this as an isolated group. Basically, the group split in two, and they each follow their strategy: The ones accepting the *Duldung* like the former spokespersons and the other faction seek an overall political solution. The people following the first were able to stay in the church and later in trailers put up behind the church and believed that they would have a chance to obtain asylum within the German system. The result has been that the network overall has diminished in strength when looking at the number of refugees participating. Limiting the development to two strategies is a simplification: When looking at the development over the years, members also used other approaches, such as marriage to secure their own status. In reality the "political" group used a variety of tactics that did not address the political system.

During this time, support has expanded among non-immigrant actors too. The neighborhood of St. Pauli has a long history of militant activism and leftist urban engagement. The support is not only given by leftists and black bloc activists but extends to the community. The solidarity with LiHH is visible from windows, shops and cafés all over St. Pauli and other parts of Hamburg. The support comes from churches, the leftist St. Pauli soccer club, the local schools, the university, the theater, alternative social movements and to various degrees trade unions such as Ver.di and IG Metall (IG Metall having initiated meetings between migrants, metalworkers and dockworkers to exchange knowledge and experiences). Ver.di registered 150 persons of the LiHH group as union members to highlight the right to work and not least work under decent conditions. The collaboration led to the development of Lampedusa Professions, a project that exhibits the qualifications and the various potential professional skills the members have (Odugbesan & Schwiertz 2018: 195). Demonstrations have been organized by schools and students. Locals have offered refugees to stay. There have even been reports of the police refusing to proceed with the authorities' request to carry out ID checks within the churches hosting the refugees (Meret & Della Corte 2014). In an interview with Ver.di, local union leader Peter Bremme informed me that the union has made the refugees members of the union regardless of the lack of working and residence rights. The Education and Science Workers' Union (GEW) has done the same and initiated the Here to Participate project together with LiHH. A symbolic act, perhaps, but nevertheless an example of an expansion of the alliances. It shows how a politics of interference is used to disturb the social and political order. In other settings, the

unions have reacted against foreigners, regarding them mainly as competitors and potentially wage-reducing on the local labor market.

One particular type of expansion has been the links to the Right to the City movement of Hamburg, linking the issues of gentrification, urban autonomy and refugee rights. It points to another re-scaling of the struggle, expanding the struggle horizontally within the context of urban Hamburg.

"Here to Stay: Refugees, *Esso*-Häuser, *Rote Flora – Wir bleiben alle*"

Since the mobilization began in 2013, a connection has developed between LiHH and the Right to the City movement in Hamburg, which provides an example of expanding as well as re-scaling the struggle, both enabling the constitution of political subjectivities. One way of expanding and re-scaling the struggle is through alliance-building, as I have already addressed in the previous section. Alliance-building is a crucial aspect of solidarity. Alliances have a role in shaping "impossible activism", as Peter Nyers (2003) has termed it, that is, migrants as non-citizens have no right to a speaking position but they claim it nevertheless and create this position for themselves (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). Alliance-building helps establish that position and makes migrants' claims visible and legitimate. The Canadian "No One Is Illegal" movement (NOII) is a good example of alliance-building. It was established as a response to the illegalization of migrants, but the solidarity movement also expresses solidarity with other groups and individuals suffering from structural oppression (Bauder 2016). The alliance is constituted by labor unions, social justice groups, refugee justice groups, poverty advocates, indigenous groups and other groups working against ethnic, racial, sexual, etc. repression (ibid.). There is some similarity to what happened in Hamburg. The Right to the City movement in Hamburg is a broad coalition fighting against commercialization of public spaces and privatization and for affordable housing. In 2013 the movement started including the LiHH refugees in their protests (Jørgensen 2016; Jørgensen & Makrygianni forthcoming). Likewise, some of the formerly squatted houses in places like Hafenstrasse (a street near the harbor known for squats and activism) have accommodated refugees. Members of the "Gezi Park Fiction" group at Hafenstrasse expressed their solidarity with the LiHH through the message: "Love real boat people – hate maritime marketing," connecting the refugee protest with the anti-gentrification struggle. They also stated: "People from Lampedusa have enriched our lives for a few months now. They gave back to St. Pauli a sense of community and a sense of knowing that our right to the city doesn't know nations or property; and surely no skin colour."[11] Later in 2013, Rote Flora, a former theater now leftist communal house in Schanzenviertel (a multicultural leftist area of Hamburg), was about to be sold by the local government alongside the planned demolishment of a pair of high-rises in St. Pauli, the so-called Esso-Häuser, by the new owners. Together these planned actions spurred new demonstrations. The biggest one took place on December 21, 2013, under the slogan: "Here to Stay: Refugees, Esso-Häuser, Rote Flora – *Wir bleiben alle*." As argued elsewhere, the slogan is both interesting and powerful because it creates an inclusive "we", not distinguishing between natives and foreigners ("We are here to stay"), based on a heterogeneous movement defining a new common ground in Gramscian terms (Jørgensen 2016). According to Gramsci, space does not exist in itself, "independently of the specific social relations that construct it, reproduce it, and occur within it" (Jessop 2007: 105). It points to the relevance of looking at how diverse political actors interact (Agustín & Jørgensen 2016). Combining spaces and scales makes it possible to account for social struggles within and amongst contemporary civil societies and how these struggles on different scales challenge the hegemonic order (ibid.).[12] It also points to a multiplicity of interacting scales. The protest against the Nato-led intervention in Libya becomes linked with localized struggles for urban space in Hamburg. Border struggles are localized.

The alliance between LiHH and *Recht auf Stadt* (Right to the City) has established a new position and introduces a renewed claim for rights. The alliance

emphasizes the permanence of the situation. They are not only here to stay – they are staying:

> A new alliance consisting of Lampedusa in Hamburg, groups from the Right to the City network, refugees from Lagers [asylum centers] around Hamburg, trade union activist (*sic*), student organisations and many other groups has formed in Hamburg! They want to campaign for a change in the refugee policy on the occasion of the elections in February 2015 and call themselves "Right to the City – Never mind the papers!"[13]

The political context for the new alliance was the election that took place on February 15, 2015. As such the alliance constructs a new political unity based on heterogeneous actors pursuing a common goal. It is not based on distinctions between ethnicity or residential status but connects the commonalities of people living in Hamburg:

> We are people living in Hamburg. We are refugees struggling on a daily basis with the bad living situation in overcrowded and isolated camps, we are neighbors fighting against our displacement from overpriced neighborhoods, and we are activists recapturing our right to the city. We are organized refugees of the group "Lampedusa in Hamburg". We are unionists who know that as wage-earners, we can only be strong if we unite with the wage-earners working under the poorest working conditions. We are students who cannot tolerate that quality education is only for rich people. We are people who cannot accept that inalienable human rights do not apply to our neighbors. We are fighting for solidarity in Hamburg and everywhere. We take care of each other and we will become stronger by uniting our struggles. We know that in this city there is enough room for everybody except for those people who try to take away our rights and to enrich themselves at our expense. […] We fight together with homeless people, not against them. We fight for our right to the city, knowing that the profits of real estate owners are more important in this city than the needs of the general public. […] We want to live in a city where all human beings have the same rights, never mind their legal status.[14]

Again, the statement is revealing for the expansion of the conflict. The group no longer claims rights for people with no status but rights for everyone and thus tries to universalize the conflict by identifying systemic inequalities shared by precarious, marginalized and excluded groups regardless of residential status.

The continuous struggle and the persistence of both the authorities and refugee activists have taken their toll on the latter. Despite a high level of activities, such as demonstrations and meetings, it has become somewhat quiet around the LiHH in both the media and on the political level. Several of the LiHH activists I have talked to have had to return to Italy to renew their papers, facing obstacles with authorities in Italy and at the borders. Money is an issue (as always). The group has had to work with internal disputes and disagreement regarding objectives and strategies. As is always a risk for social movements, regardless of what they are fighting for, struggling is hard and activists risk burning out. This is what has happened in Hamburg. On the other hand, the political consciousness is strong, and the struggle and organizing processes have expanded outside Hamburg and Germany.

Across City and National Borders – Re-scaling Conflicts in a Translocal and Transnational Perspective

In a German context, new asylum-seeker and refugee movements have been established in several major cities in the past two years, including Berlin, Hannover, Frankfurt/Hanau, Nuremberg and Munich. The composition, practices and strategies of these struggles vary, differently influenced as they are by opportunity structures at local level and by the nature of political support from local advocacy groups, activist networks and civil society organizations. However, besides the obvious local differences, what is common among these mobilizations are the attempts to work together, to learn from each

other's actions and practices, from detrimental alliances and mistakes, in order to further entrench solidarity and understanding from the European society (Agustín & Jørgensen 2016; see especially Meret & Della Corte 2016). Activists from the struggle have sought to disseminate their everyday experiences as well as develop political platforms, articulating a public voice and forging links to other groups in civil society.

Over the last three years, I have been part of an activist network seeking to diffuse the experiences from the self-organized struggle in Hamburg (and Germany broadly; see A Collage 2015) to groups in Denmark fighting for rights and political change. This is where the militant research perspective comes to the forefront and where research intersects with acts of solidarity (cf. Mathers & Novelli 2007). Consequently, I use the notion "we" in the following section when describing practices I have been part of myself. The contexts of Denmark and Germany are not the same. Conditions are not the same. Hence, the struggles need spatial translation. Denmark has not been scene of the same kind of self-organized mobilizations as we may observe elsewhere. Some examples have been hunger strikes (the most recent one taking place at deportation center Kærshovedgaard in late 2017) organized by groups of rejected asylum seekers or the demonstrations and manifestations throughout 2018 to better the conditions for people (and especially so children) kept at the detention center Sjælsmark. Likewise we can point to the mobilization around church asylum (*kirkeasyl*) taking place in 2009 when a group of Iraqi refugees and activists occupied the Brorson Church in Nørrebro in Copenhagen (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019). It was a defining moment for the national solidarity network. Activists occupied the church and hid 282 Iraqi refugees who were facing deportation because of a new return agreement between Iraq and the Danish government. The mobilization was not a success in the sense that the occupiers were apprehended by the police and the Iraqis deported. However, it was a success in the sense that it was the beginning of a movement. Another recent example of a self-organized protest is the Castaway Souls of the Sjælsmark group. Sjælsmark, like Kærshovedgaard, is another infamous deportation center in Denmark. In 2016, non-recognized refugees mobilized under the motto "Empty the Camp!" (Siim & Meret 2018). The group demanded recognition, justice, visibility and the freedom of movement. It connects to other groups in Europe raising the same claims and is another good example of how protests and mobilizations work on different scales. Their mobilization is at one and the same time a reaction against local conditions at Sjælsmark, against the Danish asylum and deportation regime and against the international asylum regime.

We invited LiHH to Denmark on different occasions. The first times LiHH members and German supporters were invited to Denmark to give guest talks at the university. Our rationale was that migrants/refugees like the ones constituting LiHH are the experts when it comes to talking about conditions of asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. The same goes for analyzing and informing about the routes from North Africa to Italy and on to northern Europe. Members of LiHH have over the last years become involved in knowledge production at the Silent University, which is a solidarity-based knowledge exchange platform by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants led by a group of lecturers, consultants and research fellows.[15] Lecturing here becomes an interference in academia, where lecturing traditionally is done by academic staff. Here the roles are reversed. The LiHH members who have taken up this job have welcomed the due recognition as they have been able to share their relevant insights and experiences. They are recognized as human rights defenders with a just cause. At a recent event, "Human Rights Defenders at Work: Lampedusa in Hamburg" on March 1, 2018, organized by Lüneburg University in Germany, the LiHH lecturer for instance was described in the following manner:

> [AO], an activist, educator and spokesperson of Lampedusa in Hamburg will share more of this story and connect it to German and European politics, past and present. During the Q&A we look forward to exploring how Lampedusa in

> Hamburg can be understood more broadly in terms of social movements to protect refugees and why these activists can be considered human rights defenders who deserve special protection based on European laws.[16]

Lecturing becomes not only a matter of transmitting and sharing knowledge, but can also be seen as a political act as part of a struggle for recognition and rights.

As a second step, we initiated meetings between LiHH and groups in Denmark. Under the heading "Strengthening the bonds in transnational migration activism" both people with refugee status, non-refugee status, supporters and activists in general discussed issues of self-organization, self-empowerment, mobilization strategies and transnationalization of struggles. Silent University members presented educational opportunities and thus tried to make ways for including people otherwise excluded from formal educational structures. LiHH was connected to Castaway Souls. Asylum seekers from Danish asylum centers were invited from all over the country and given financial opportunities to participate. LiHH shared its experiences in mobilization and claiming rights inside and outside asylum centers. An independent refugee radio station gave talks about how to set up independent radio shows. This event took place in Copenhagen. A similar but longer event was organized a year later in northern Denmark, again facilitating that members of LiHH could come to Denmark. But this time also representatives from the Berlin-based refugee collective World Refugees Let Fear Go who over the last years have been traveling to different (so far) European countries as Freedom of Movement World Tour – Migrant Activism Workshop – were invited.[17] The event consisted of talks, seminars, movie screenings and lectures at the university, but perhaps most importantly visiting the asylum centers located in northern Jutland and organizing talks with people living there in wait for decisions. Many of the people living in Danish asylum centers receive no information of their rights. Some have been told by staff not to organize, etc. The activists from Germany offered a language for how to claim rights, how to organize horizontal structures of participation and representation within the centers. Later some of the asylum seekers living in these particular centers have become members of the platform we established and co-organized events informing about conditions in centers, aspirations for life, and political demands for a sustainable future. Several of the people living in the centers expressed a sense of profound recognition, for the first time a chance to frame their own situation and to address issues that were not possible to discuss in the centers without a structure, and a feeling of belonging to an inclusive political community. It proved necessary to help facilitate these meetings. Some of the activists with refugee background were experiencing fatigue and lacked the possibilities of making connections within Denmark. Economic resources are one obstacle but so is the access to travel for those placed in deportation centers. Utilizing the privileged role of academia made it possible to invite people from all over the country to share experiences. While the activists from Germany see commonalities in the refugee-led struggles they had no easy access to activists or groups in Denmark. That has changed after our initial meetings, and more sustaining relations have been formed. In a recent invitation to join a large-scale demonstration against racism and for migrants' rights in Hamburg in September 2018 the Let Fear Go groups sum up their past visits: "We learned a lot from each other about the struggles, exchanged ideas, empowered each other and established valuable connections." Despite obvious differences in status, routes to Europe and ethnicity (most of the LiHH activists as mentioned are sub-Saharan Africans whereas most asylum seekers in Denmark currently come from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and Iran), these meetings emphasize commonalities in the struggles and political activism. LiHH over the years has organized in a way refugees have yet to do in Denmark. These meetings transfer knowledge and know-how translocally and transnationally. Commonalities do not in themselves create (transnational) connections, and the experience of our platform is that this is one place

where the engaged/militant research can play a role in facilitating the meetings alongside local groups. Nevertheless, the starting point is the agency and autonomy of the migrants themselves and the right to call for and have rights. On different scales a politics of interference is articulated, making the exclusionary structures and illiberal means for control visible and in this process also making the invisible visible and constitute new political subjectivities. It works from the logic that people only get rights by actively seizing them.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

How does one conclude on an ongoing process? The activism of LiHH has not led to a happy ending so far. There have been very few concrete victories in terms of political recognition and outcome. In Germany local and federal authorities reject any claim of using the § 23. Susi Meret and Waldemar Diener in their analysis of refugee-led mobilizations in Berlin and Hamburg argue that the activities rarely achieve permanent victory, continuity and political power due to a lack of strategic direction, continuity and coherence in the various phases of mobilizations (2018). The original LiHH group today is more or less splintered. The small tent in front of the central station largely constitutes the heart of the movement and even that has recently been in danger of being removed. Yet, the struggle continues, and new actors are drawn into the struggle and forced to take sides. Some of these are the long-existing network of Right to the City. LiHH may be pressured as a group but has strong ties to other refugee-led networks and solidarity networks such as The Voice, Silent University, No one is illegal, Black Box Deportation, international charters of organized Sans Papiers and increasingly the growing European precarity movement (Jørgensen 2016). LiHH is a loud voice and participant in campaigns against deportation, against racism, against present-day slavery in Libya, etc. LiHH and similar groups call for action when they feel that democracy is threatened.

Despite hardship, they keep mobilizing: inside Hamburg, in Germany, and – as shown in this article – across national borders in transnational solidarity networks. What the past few years have shown is that the collective will survive and gain momentum. This is the message from many of the activists I have engaged with personally over the last five years. They claim that regardless of how many people the authorities have detained or deported the struggle has continued. The conditions and lack of rights for refugees is a structural problem, which is not limited to the individual. No matter how many or who are evicted it will "only" be individuals. Let us recall the words: "A goat that is already dead is no longer afraid of knives." The authorities cannot evict the problem. This claim was articulated again in 2014 when the police tried to evict a group of Lampedusa refugees from an abandoned school in Berlin when the protesters shouted "You can't evict a movement." This is what politics of interference does and looks like. It is the ongoing and persistent interference with the political system: the rights to be heard and making visible the invisible.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the ISA Conference in New Orleans 2015. I am grateful for the comments and suggestions from the discussants and the panel. I am also grateful for the constructive comments from the anonymous reviewers as well as the editors of this journal. Thanks to Liv Rolf Mertz for another good effort.

2 "MASI is an independent, grassroots movement of asylum seekers in Ireland that was born from the protests in direct provision centers across the country last September. MASI is calling for an end to direct provision, residency for all asylum seekers, the right to work and third level education, and an end to the deportation regime. We are building a national movement of asylum seekers, for asylum seekers, seeking to restore our human dignity and basic human freedoms" from https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/movement-of-asylum-seekers-in-ireland-needs-you.

3 http://wijzijnhier.org/2012/11/we-are-here-we-need-life-please-help-refugees/.

4 The notion itself goes back to the work of the French scholar Yann Moulier-Boutang on irregular migrants in the 1980s.

5 Several of these personal narratives and life trajectories can also be read on the site set up by LiHH: http://lampedusa-in-hamburg-professions.blogspot.de/.

6 The abolishment of the emergency program points to a complex situation within Europe. The program was

also a call for European solidarity as Italy at the time received a great part of the irregular migrants coming to Europe (Agustín & Jørgensen 2018). The program, however, was criticized not only internally in Italy but also by European countries that saw the program as indirectly encouraging and even facilitating migration. Hence when Italy during the fall of 2014 sought EU solidarity to cover the costs of Mare Nostrum (which amounted to 11 million euros per month), EU decided to downsize and transform the operation into a European operation named Triton (Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme 2017). Operation Triton's work (managed by Frontex Plus) with the Italian coast guard focused much more on border protection than on search-and-rescue missions and was criticized for leading to more fatalities by experts and NGOs (Agnew 2015).

7 http://thecaravan.org/.

8 http://thecaravan.org/files/caravan/demoflyer_de.pdf.

9 One of the slogans used by LiHH at demonstrations and flyers is "Let's break the silence."

10 To paraphrase the famous refrain from the WTO summit in Seattle 1999 when protesters shouted "this is what democracy looks like."

11 http://park-fiction.net/lampedusa-hamburg-hande-weg-von-unseren-nachbarn/.

12 Due to new visitation rights of the police and a fear that some groups might not want to affiliate with black bloc activists, the LiHH refugees ended up on the side of the demonstration. This shows that power of alliances can be delimited due to the embedded tactics of the different actors.

13 https://www.facebook.com/pages/Recht-auf-Stadt-never-mind-the-papers/373524372808420.

14 http://www.rechtaufstadt.net/recht-auf-stadt/3112015-demo-recht-auf-stadt-never-mind-papers.

15 http://thesilentuniversity.org/.

16 https://www.leuphana.de/en/college/first-semester/conference-week/program/veranstaltungstexte-2018/human-rights-defenders-at-work-lampedusa-in-hamburg.html.

17 https://www.facebook.com/events/1625423681100633/.

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Martin Bak Jørgensen is associate professor at the Department of Culture and Global Studies at Aalborg University. His research interests include theorizations of solidarity, political activism, and migration and refugee issues. He is editor of the Social and Political Change series at Peter Lang. Together with Óscar García Agustín he has published *Solidarity without Borders: Gramscian Perspectives on Migration and Civil Society Alliances* (Pluto Press, 2016) and *Solidarity and the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). (martinjo@cgs.aau.dk)