

Special Issue

# „Broadcasting Early Career Voices in Forced Migration Research“

Edited by Cita Wetterich

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



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# Introduction: Broadcasting Early Career Voices in Forced Migration Research

By Cita Wetterich

## Abstract

Whether precipitated by political or environmental factors, human displacement is a phenomenon influenced by the ways in which a set of bodily, material, imagined and virtual mobilities and immobilities interact to produce population movement. Very little work, however, has broadcasted expert knowledge by refugees and migrants themselves, as well as by student researchers. This article introduces the special issue by setting out the ways in which critical theories of mobilities find their reflection in student studies on contemporary research puzzles in migration research.

*Keywords:* Early Career, Migration, Displacement, Critical Research

## Introduction

Migration and displacement are best understood not as a single event, but as a process that can span over months or even decades.<sup>1</sup> This process is shaped by a multitude of causalities and directionalities and is seldom a stringent process (Papastergiadis 2018). What is also known about the impact of migration and displacement on individual people and communities, is that the status of being displaced is a process, experience and circumstance that often has implications outlasting the migratory process. Meaning we need critical, feminist and postcolonial approaches to engage in-depth with implications of experiences of migration and displacement and situate them within existing societal and political structures (DeJesus 2018).

Whilst human mobility is not a new phenomenon, migration and displacement gained more public and scholarly attention since 2015 in Europe – oftentimes with a specific focus on the Central Mediterranean Route from Northern Africa to Italy or Malta. The so-called “European refugee/migration crisis” of 2015 and the stricter border controls led to new directionalities of and circular movements within the migratory processes (Crawley et al. 2018). A tightening of border controls and surveillance, as well as new cooperation of bordering actors on both sides

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<sup>1</sup> I want to highlight again the impressive work my undergraduate students put into their research projects and into their articles. It is a sign of great engagement with a topic and motivation to take a course with unusual requirements and challenges.

Also, I want to thank Annette Kollefrath-Persch and Patrick Siegert from the University Freiburg Public Relations office for covering and supporting this “Special issue”.

of the Mediterranean Sea led to restrictions of movement, circular and return movements, as well as to decisions to embark on even more dangerous than anticipated journeys with the help of human smugglers or forced by traffickers (Collyer 2010). These challenges were aggravated by restrictive immigration policies by the European Union and its member states. As a result, the Mediterranean became the ‘deadliest border’ in the world (cf. Last 2018) and the conditions in camps and during processes to claim a legal (asylum) status in European countries sometimes became unbearable (Snel et al. 2020).

Hence, our understanding of the precarious situations of migrants on the move and once arrived in a “safe” destination remains limited. The aim of this issue is to contribute to this understanding through articles describing the diverse obstacles refugees and migrants face within Europe on different levels and the discursive patterns that facilitate certain constructions of migration and displacement.

#### Knowledge production on migration and displacement – which contributions are valuable?

In research of forced migration, there exists an ongoing debate about who and in what ways is producing and accessing knowledge. This Special Issue looks at two groups of people more closely and broadcasts their research results. Hence, we have contributions from undergraduate student researchers, as well as a commentary by a researcher with a personal background in migration and displacement.

Even though many university lecturers seek to promote student research, opportunities to do so often are rare or costly (Cowell-Meyers et al. 2015). Student research can have a multitude of results, the biggest are 1) a transformational experience for students including a high learning impact on conducting and publishing research (Osborn & Karukstis 2009) and 2) the production of new and timely research on a specific topic. Especially in fast developing fields within the Social Sciences – such as forced migration – it can be a win-win situation for students and academic community.

Since 2015, the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft) encourages and supports refugee scientists and academics, acknowledging their expertise in a variety of disciplines (DFG 2020). When it comes to research on migration and displacement, the situation becomes more complex, as individuals might not only be experts in their own right within a discipline, but also hold unique insider knowledge that is linked to their personal experiences as refugee or migrant. Besides the unique access opportunities and expertise, the situatedness of a refugee or migrant researcher in forced migration research also has its downfalls. Here, especially asymmetric

power hierarchies come into play and the positionality of researchers is constantly discussed (Tewolde 2020).

### Contributions to the Special Issue

The special issue starts with an intriguing short piece by Dilshad Muhammad on positionality as a researcher in migration and displacement studies with a displacement background. He engages with the complexities of insider and outsider perspectives and elaborates on different obstacles and challenges that a researcher might face during fieldwork, in connection – among others – to research permits and travel restrictions. The short piece is fuelled by personal experiences and builds a bridge to contemporary findings in forced migration research.

The second article concentrates on media discourses by two main actors in the Mediterranean – namely Sea Watch, an organisation concentrating on search and rescue, as well as on monitoring operations on the Mediterranean Sea, and Frontex, the EU agency for border control. Selina Luy, Lorenz Bayer and Esther Bauer nicely show in a comparative setting how the Twitter use of the two organisations can be read in context of two different, sometimes opposing strands of discourses: humanitarianism and securitization.

In their article about gender inequalities in the refugee camp Moria, Miriam Schießl, Inken Ladiges and Friedrich Trautmann conduct a media analysis. By relying on a feminist and intersectional approach, they show how the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has increased inequalities within the camp setting on Lesbos. To illustrate, they look more thoroughly at provision of health care and social services, as well as gender-based violence.

Lilli Mühlbach's, Hannah Loskamp's and Ulla Schlumpberger's article, the fourth in this special issue, unpicks and critiques integration processes for LGBTQIA refugees and migrants on the local level in Germany. This article focuses on programmes in Munich, Bavaria, and use feminist approaches and especially the concept of intersectionality to explore the structural opportunities and hurdles for refugees and migrants. By focusing on expert interviews by one NGO, the "Rainbow Refugees Munich", the article reveals the underlying discrimination in local integration processes. Moreover, by relying on their analysis, the authors are able to give recommendations and make a connection between scholarly results and policy work in Germany in a forced migration setting with a specific focus on LGBTQIA people.

The fifth article of the special issue, by Sarah Rondot, Anton Held and Daniela Sauer, examines the interplay of visibility, participation and (im)mobilities of female refugees and migrants on a local level in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. Based on expert interviews, it disputes

stereotypical gender descriptions and argues for a greater appreciation of women's agency and diverse interests. The article also identifies distinct obstacles to female refugees and migrants' participation in everyday life on a local level – pointing out that programmes are oftentimes built on said stereotypical assumptions instead of tailored to specific needs and interests.

Taken together, this collection of articles disputes the notion that academic knowledge is reserved to the ivory tower of academia. The articles included in this special issue are an invitation to further explore critical research on contemporary issues within forced migration research – especially on the local level. This special issue is also an invitation to further engage with research conducted by either refugees and migrants themselves (and acknowledge their immense expert knowledge) or student researchers – as both groups of people offer unique insights into the multidirectional and multicausal phenomenon that is human mobility.

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## Observations on Positionality between Field and Academia in Forced Migration Research

By Dilshad Muhammad

In summer 2015, I was part of a group volunteering in offering some basic assistance for refugees in Istanbul in Turkey. I was in the city's main coach station, Esenler Otogarı, when an adult person with their two children approached our group and asked few questions about resettlement programmes undertaken by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR in Turkey for Syrian refugees. We could not offer any answer to their questions, even later on after doing some basic research and making necessary phone calls. There was no information nor contact details available by the UNHCR - when we attempted to figure out about the program and reach the agency. The UNHCR work and activities in Turkey at that time was not easily accessible nor adequately transparent, at least as seen by our group which included journalists and academics (two sociologists and a geographer). Parallel to this event, there were intensive communications in that summer between the Turkish government from one side and the EU and some of its Member States from the other side about how to deal with the then ongoing movements of refugees over the Aegean Sea and the Balkans (Gürcanlı 2015). In addition to my personal interest, I was following these developments in my capacity as a freelance journalist and as a political science master student who was interested in topics like the Turkish foreign policy.

After that summer experiences, I ended up, as far as I remember, with several observations: first, the total absence of refugee persons, or any form of refugee representations not only on the political level, but also in the media. While politicians from the involved countries were bargaining the presence and the movement of the refugees (Morris 2015), news coverages and commentators were discussing the topic from an angle not far from the politicians' one. In all this, there was almost no space and time for the interests of the refugees to be expressed and manifested. The only pictures or video shots of refugees were those which show them as stranded and miserable people. Second, obscurity was the main characteristic of the international and Turkish policies regarding the refugees inside Turkey and those on the move. Rumors, mis- and disinformation, wrong addresses and contact details were making the already difficult lives of refugees even more difficult. Individual and family refugees would risk everything they own just to travel from one Turkish province to another seeking a less difficult

situation. Many of these movements were based on a piece of news that would turn out to be a mere rumor as in the case of several stories told by refugees at Esenler Otogarı. The third observation was that migration is a major variable that shape relations between countries and beyond. The Turkish government was clearly utilizing the presence of millions of (Syrian) refugees on its land for supporting its positions regarding the Syrian conflict and other political gains. That behavior was especially remarkable after some junctures that critically re-configured the conflict in Syria in favor of the Syrian regime like the infamous Obama's redline (Lewis 2013), the direct involvement of the Russian military in Syria (Quinn 2016; Bishara 2016)), and the carelessness of the EU about the carnage that was going on in its vicinity. On the other hand, politicians from the EU and its Member States, were ready to concede and reshape their relations with Turkey just for one goal: keeping refugees inside Turkey and outside the EU (cf. Soykan & Şenses 2018; Tsourapas 2019). This modality will later in 2016, lead the two parties to reach the so-called EU-Turkey Deal where the EU would seek to achieve its ultimate goal of keeping refugees out of its territories at any cost, while the Turkish side was seeking many (bar)gains, like easing its accession to the EU and liberalization of Schengen visa for the Turkish citizens (European Council 2016). The later part was particularly an ultimate irony; further restrictions of the movement of refugees who were in genuine need to move, would have meant further opening for the Turkish citizens. Refugees at that moment of nation states-based international order were factually abandoned stateless people with no internationally-recognized entity to belong to and which could seek their interests.

Few years later and loaded with such observations, I have developed an interest in studying this area - forced migration in Turkey - or in fact a part of it, academically. This time I was a refugee in Germany. It was a great moment for me when I finally knew that I would have a space to pursue doctoral studies. I am now a doctoral student at the University of Freiburg since early 2019. Apart from the typical different levels and types of stress and pressure any doctoral student would experience, I have so far witnessed other situations that were somehow time-disrupting. I will mention three situations in this regard.

Moving from one city to another in Germany is something should not be taken for granted for a refugee. After I actually moved to Freiburg, I have spent exactly additional 27 days and multiple 500km-trips by train to convince the migration office, *Ausländerbehörde*, in Freiburg that I my family and I are eligible to move to Freiburg from another city in Germany. That was an unfortunate moment, especially for a city like Freiburg.

The second situation started with my preparations for the field research trip. To carry out a research activity inside Turkey, a researcher, like in the case of many countries, would need a research permission. The procedure, as explained to me by a Turkish colleague, goes as follows: the researcher enters the country as a tourist, then apply for a research permission inside the country at the General Directorate of Security and finally the permission is usually issued in few hours. This scenario was not applicable in my case because I would need a suitable visa prior to the travel. After many correspondences and discussions with different Turkish diplomatic missions in Germany about the purpose of my travel and type of visa that I would need, and after getting necessary documents from a Turkish academic institution that agreed to host my stay, I finally got a visa... after additional several months to the period that the issuance a visa would usually take.

Third, when the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic on March 11<sup>th</sup>, I was in Istanbul carrying out interviews for my dissertation. This declaration and the rapid increase of cases in Turkey made me seriously evaluate the possible ways in which I would be able to go back to Germany, my country of residence, in the case of potential (borders) shutdown. There were probably hundreds of thousands of people in similar situations to that of mine all over the world. But one factor made me to hastily cut my trip; I was legally not entitled to any form of consular services or travel support by Syria, Turkey or Germany because of my situation as a recognized refugee with a special travel document. Responses to the coronavirus pandemic were on the base of each country for itself, each country for its citizens. It was another nationalist moment, again, like those moments of 2015 and 2016 as mentioned above. Nonetheless, my trip back went smooth just before the shutdown of borders and flights.

Finally, and inspired by one of the questions raised during the seminar that this student special issue is based on about topic selection, it probably goes without saying that any (doctoral) researcher should have a genuine interest in the topic they study. A researcher, especially in the Social Sciences, is required to have a deep knowledge and familiarity with the elements of their study and develop a sufficient insider perspective. This, however, may turn into a difficult situation if the researcher was/became too close to or part of the topic they study. In other words, topics that are closely related to the (personal) background of the researcher could result in (psychological) burdens that make the scientific task of the researcher more difficult and consequently lock the researcher inside their topic. As such, the researcher should, at least occasionally, be able to step back from the topic they study so they can approach and evaluate

it from an external point of view. In fact, the positionality of the researcher is one of the most fundamental factors that shapes the research process and that determines its outcome. Positionality is not a fixed or a given variable, but it is an open-endedly changing and context-specific one. As such, I see that reflecting on one's positionality and its relation to the research activity should clearly and sufficiently be articulated in the design of any research.

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# Constructing Discourses about Migration in the Mediterranean Sea. The example of Frontex and Sea-Watch: A Twitter analysis

By Selina Luy, Lorenz Bayer & Esther Bauer

## Abstract

Communication on social media can be used strategically to pursue different aims which can be observed in the example of communication about migration in the Mediterranean Sea. The following research paper examines Sea-Watch's and Frontex's communication on Twitter between June and October 2019 with the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This method is used to dismantle how different discourses or frames are used to legitimize the actions and to ultimately achieve the aims of the organization and agency. Using a Constructivist approach, the findings suggest that two main discourses namely securitization and humanitarianism are used by Frontex and Sea-Watch to achieve legitimization in the EU and to generate donations, respectively.

*Keywords:* Twitter analysis, communication strategies, constructivism, securitization, humanitarianism, Frontex, Sea-Watch,

## Introduction

The ongoing debate about migration to the European Union on the routes of the Mediterranean Sea showed that different politicians, institutions, and ultimately citizens conceptualize migration in different ways. As a result, varying discourses are constructed in this field which portray migration fundamentally differently. These views on migration are used to legitimize actions and to ultimately achieve differing aims. On the one hand, some politicians and institutions want to protect the EU and its borders, who therefore portray and frame migration as a threat to European security. On the other hand, there are other actors, and organizations that focus on the rescue and human rights of migrants. This way of portraying migrants rather points in the direction of solidarity and the need to help migrants in distress situations.

Two institutions that demonstrate these different views of migration are Sea-Watch and Frontex. One of the institutions that is established by the European Union to protect Europe's outer borders is Frontex. The border control agency controls the flow of migrants at external

borders of the European Union and has missions in the Mediterranean Sea. Another organization that demonstrates a different view to Frontex's frame of migration is Sea-Watch. The Non-governmental organization is focusing on Search and Rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea and raises awareness in the European Union about the issue of migration.

As Katharina Horsti (2012) described in her article published before the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, different discourses are constructed by organizations like for example Frontex to legitimize the actions of the agency. However, since the publication of her article, the importance of the topic has increased, and after substantial criticism of Frontex's work, the legitimization of their work is a highly relevant issue. Furthermore, the importance of social media has increased and as a result, the communication of organizations on social media can represent which discourse the respective agency or organization is using. Therefore, our research question is the following: How did Frontex and Sea-Watch use tweets to construct different frames about migration to pursue their aims between June and October 2019?

Our method for the analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). That means we are analyzing all tweets of Frontex and Sea Watch in the given time frame. In our analysis, we want to see whether Frontex and Sea Watch are using different discourses to communicate about migration and how this can be connected to their work and goals. In addition to that, we are analyzing the pictures used and the agents that are retweeted as resources for our CDA. We expect to find that Frontex is using a securitization discourse which is focusing on the security of European borders and that Sea-Watch is using a humanitarian approach that focuses on the individuals and their situations and the call for solidarity.

Our paper will be structured as follows: First, we will introduce the Constructivist approach that is used in our research. Then we will explain the methodology of the CDA and the elements that have to be considered when doing a CDA on social media. Afterwards, we will introduce two different discourses that have been identified in previous research in the context of migration and analyze the tweets by Sea-Watch and Frontex. Our in-depth analysis will furthermore include an interpretation of the pictures and retweets. Lastly, we will combine the results of the CDA and examine how Frontex and Sea-Watch are using their communication on Twitter to achieve their goals.

### Constructivism and Framing

The underlying theoretical considerations of our research project are based on the approach of Constructivism. We use Edelman's (1990) influential publication "Constructing the Political Spectacle" to set the theoretical framework. Edelman (1990) explains that media reporting is continuously constructing and reconstructing the political spectacle (p. 1). This consequently means that media has the power to define a picture of reality which then is accepted and adopted by the audience. In fact, different organizations are constructing the same social problem differently to pursue different political agendas. Even though Edelman formulated the hypothesis before social media was of increasing importance, his theory can also be adapted for the communication strategies on social media. This means that strategic communication within different discourses helps the organizations or actors achieve their goals.

The way of portraying the same events in different ways in order to achieve concurring aims is not only captured by the term discourse but can also be defined as framing. There are different ways and definitions of framing. The behavioral economists Kahneman and Tversky (1986) described framing as failures of invariance meaning that the same situation was perceived differently when varying formulations were used. For the purpose of our research, the sub-category of story framing as defined by Hallahan (1999) is used: He defined it as "selecting key themes or ideas that are the focus of the message" (p. 207). This form of framing is relevant because it is creating different narratives about the same event.

In the course of understanding how two different actors in the political and public sphere are trying to form political discourse and influence the way people think about certain issues via their respective Twitter appearances, we assume that both of these actors actively practice and promote two certain types of discourses. It is nothing new that social media has turned into one of the main platforms of communication and public appearance. Consequently, all institutions, organizations, political parties, and individual persons who publicly represent these will try to promote their certain political agenda by using social media. It is important to analyze their public statements as carefully as those actors are picking their words to support their respective agendas.

## Methods

In order to answer the research question, we decided to conduct a CDA of the Twitter accounts of Sea-Watch International and Frontex between June and October 2019. The method of CDA is fitting for our research purposes for two reasons: First, according to van Dijk (1993) CDA focuses on the discourse dimensions of power abuse that results for example in inequality but

also injustice. This perspective is relevant for our research question because the dismantling of power relations that are reproduced on social media is a central point of our analysis. This is because both Frontex and Sea-Watch use different discourses to manifest their power concerning other institutions but more importantly in relation to migrants to then pursue different aims. Second, CDA is the fitting form of research for the analysis of Frontex and Sea-Watch because CDA not only focuses on power relations but also on the contextualization of language (Bozdag, 2019). This means that language is analyzed in the societal context because it is seen as an instrument of social communication. That is relevant because this language view allows us to make the implicit semiotic dimensions of power explicit.

Based on the different steps of CDA of social media content by Silverman (2016) we will structure our analysis as follows: In the first part of the analysis the detailed case study of the communication of Frontex and Sea-Watch, as described as Step 6 by Silverman (2016), will lay the groundwork for the CDA. A primary quantitative analysis that mainly focuses on the frequency of keywords will help to identify certain frames that are used by the actors. Then an in-detail analysis will dismantle the used discourses and reinforced power structures. In the second part of the analysis, as it can be seen in Step 7 by Silverman (2016) we will focus on the the analysis of the contextual dimensions represented in tweeted pictures and retweets. This part is crucial because the pictures and retweets are defined as discursive practices on Twitter (Bozdag, 2019, p. 6). Analyzing this discursive practice is one important step in CDA because the relations expressed in retweets help to make power structures explicit. Lastly, it has to be stressed that critical in the context of discourse analysis does not imply negative but rather to question power relations in social phenomena. However, as van Dijk (1993) explained, CDA is political and the position of the researcher is crucial.

For the purpose of our research project, we chose the agency Frontex and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Sea-Watch because the agency and the organization are pursuing different aims but at the same time, they are both operating in the context of migration on the Mediterranean Sea. The medium Twitter is relevant because both Frontex and Sea-Watch are using Twitter to transmit their information in a relatively simple and fast-paced manner. Moreover, both accounts are easily comparable because they have similar numbers of followers. Due to the existence of several different Twitter appearances of Sea-Watch, we refer to the international account of Sea-Watch, Sea-Watch International (@seawatch\_intl). In addition to a similar number of tweets, English tweets are more accessible to a broader, international audience and make the linguistic analysis more comparable.



The time frame is set from June to October 2019 for two main reasons. First, we wanted to have a look at more recent data to see which discourses are used at the moment. Second, an incident in June 2019 with the Sea Watch 3 put Sea Watch's work on the political agenda. In this incident Sea Watch 3 with captain Carola Rackete and rescued migrants was denied access to a harbor by Italian authorities. This event led to a huge outcry in European media, and the organisation Sea-Watch became an issue of public attention. Therefore, June 2019 is a good starting date for our investigations. We analyze data until October 2019 because in winter there are normally fewer search and rescue missions and the number of migrants decreased significantly (UNHCR). For the data analysis, we downloaded all the data from the tweets of the respective time frame, to then analyze it with the software Antconc. Moreover, we added the percent figures of the word appearances because there were more tweets by Sea-Watch in the relevant time frame. These percent figures make the comparison of the word use of the EU agency and the NGO easier. The results of this data analysis can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

### Securitization Discourse

Before starting to analyze the tweets, one has to take a look at the discourses that are allegedly practiced by Frontex and Sea-Watch. While regarding and comparing the results of both accounts with both discourse theories, we assume that Frontex is using its appearance on Twitter to promote a discourse of securitization, which would meet many of recent critics in public, media, and NGOs that accuse Frontex and the EU of an inhumane approach to the phenomenon of intensified migration and mobility in the Mediterranean Sea in the last years. Furthermore, the securitization of migrants through the Twitter appearance of Frontex itself (and as a subordinated instrument by the European Union) can be considered as a very likely result, regarding the fact that Frontex as an organization whose main task is to protect the external borders of the EU, is largely perceived as one of the main institutional protagonists dealing with the migration phenomenon.

The concept of securitization began to arise in the course of a changing way of interpreting the term security in Security Studies in the early 1990s, as security was no longer only a topic that concerned states exclusively on a military basis. The studies are now directed to the security of "actors ranging from individuals and sub-state groups [...] to global concerns such as the environment that have often been marginalized within a traditional state-centric and military conception". (Williams, 2003, p. 513) In securitization, following the Copenhagen School, security is not the starting point of the social construction but the result of such. The securitizing

subject constructs a security issue by formulating or pointing out the securitized object as a security threat to a perceiving audience. The Copenhagen School defines five sectors where securitization appears in the political realm. In addition to that original approach, the literature added the sector of migration to the platform that provides political actors possibilities to promote their agenda through securitization. (see Huysmans, 2000) While it is theoretically possible for anybody to securitize anybody or anything, the Copenhagen School also points out limitations in this regard. (Williams, 2003, p. 514) Followingly, the effectiveness of the attempt of securitization depends on

“the differential capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats, by the forms in which these claims can be made in order to be recognized and accepted as convincing by the relevant audience, and by the empirical factors or situations to which these actors can make reference.” (Williams, 2003, p. 514)

It is obvious that those capacities are predominantly assigned to those actors that have the economic or structural means or established themselves as opinion leaders to have sufficient influence on the respective audience. Furthermore, the social structure and context and certain political reality have a big influence on the question of what objects can be and are effectively securitized. The securitization approach is also interesting because it combines aspects of allegedly opposing theory schools. On the one hand, it can be clearly categorized as a theory of Social Constructivism, regarding the emphasis on the so-called “securitizing speech-acts” that describes the big role of communication and rhetoric when it comes to formulating social and political realities. (Williams, 2003, p. 513) On the other hand, it has to be examined why securitizing actors do what they do and why they can be successful with what they do. The subject achieves its aim by constituting the object not just as a minor threat which cannot cause irreversible damage but as an “existential threat” to the actual status of the audience, that most likely will be preferred to be retained by this audience. (Williams, 2003, p. 514) Further, securitization is constituted by three main aspects, which are “existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules” (Buzan et al., 1998 p. 26) At this point it becomes obvious that securitization is not only composed by assumptions of Social Constructivism but can also be related to classical realist thinking when it comes to the emergency of the action that is created by the framing of the securitized object as an existential threat. The emphasis on decision making and the emergency of action is the main connection of securitization with Classic Realism which makes it different from other Constructivist theories. (Williams, 2003, p. 515)

Because both, Frontex and Sea-Watch, have their main focuses and interests in the sector of migration, we need to project the general theory of securitization also on this sector. Jef Huysmans already worked on the discourse of securitization between the European Union as the securitizing subject and migration as the securitized object. Following this, the phenomenon of migration is constituted as part of a political framework that declares declining internal border control as a security issue that is caused by (im)migration. Trying to justify their work, “EU policies support, often indirectly, expressions of welfare chauvinism and the idea of cultural homogeneity as a stabilizing factor.” (Huysmans, 2000, p. 756) That affects the perception of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants in a negative way. Huysmans stresses that the EU has made moves to reduce the time an asylum seeker has to wait for the processing of the asylum applications but at the same time implemented constraints that should cause a smaller number of applicants. The author also points out that the EU “connects immigration and asylum with terrorism, transnational crime, and border control” and that it “locates the regulation of migration in an institutional framework with the protection of internal security”. (Huysmans, 2000, p. 756 f.) It is characteristic for the approach of securitizing migration that mobility is constructed as an issue that needs to be handled and worked on by the security policy primarily. The security policy is presented as an “instrument to protect the state, its society and the internal market against the dangers related to an invasion of (illegal) immigrants and asylum-seekers”. (Huysmans, 2000 p. 756.) By securitizing migration, the actual people that move or try to move from one place to another are framed as a security problem that seemingly needs to be regulated and looked at as an obstacle for the internal safety. This security approach ignores a possible alternative focus on migration that questions, in how far human rights are ensured and treats migrants only as threats to the current social and cultural status quo. The realist character of securitization appears when migration is constructed “as being one of the main factors weakening national tradition and societal homogeneity”. (Huysmans, 2000, p. 758)

“The discourse frames the key question about the future of the political community as one of a choice for or against migration. But it is not a free choice because a choice for migration is represented as a choice against (the survival of) the political community.” (Huysmans, 2000, p. 758)

#### Word Analysis – Examining Indications of Securitization Discourses

In the more quantitative first part of the analysis of words used in the tweets of Frontex and Sea-Watch, we examine the words most frequently used and compare them with the

characteristics of the two discourses we focus on. In this part, this concerns securitization. As we have introduced the methods used while securitizing someone or something it should make sense to observe primarily words that can be categorized as part of “military language” and “security language” such as “technological” and “institutional or administrative” references. (Appendix). In contrast to these types of word selection, the use of terms that refer to migration as a topic concerning humans such as language that stresses feelings or emotions will play no role in a possible securitization discourse.

In the respective time frame, the Twitter account of Frontex used 1284 words in total. The word that is most often used right behind the word “Frontex” is “border(s)”, which makes almost eight percent of all words. As the EU agency basically exists to protect the external borders of the EU it is obvious that borders are the main focus of their communicative content. But it also shows that this communication stresses the existence and importance of borders, which implicitly creates a picture of the ones inside and the ones outside the border(s). Frontex frequently tweets about the work with “authorities“ or “officers” and describes its work as “operation(s)” which indicates strict plans and policies. The acting according to strict authoritarian order seems to leave very little space for thinking outside the box or regarding their work as work with individual and sensitive human beings that have to flee from war or religious persecution. The agency also tweets a lot about their cooperation with certain European national states which puts a focus on an alleged European unity. This supports the creation of a common European identity and culture which may justify a more restrictive work in the sector of migration. This also leads to the aspect we have described as the realist characteristic of the securitization approach, as a common sense of an exclusive internal society helps to construct the urgent decision for or against migrants and respectively for or against their own culture and identity. As securitization of migration means that migration and migrants are viewed as a security issue, one has to expect that migrants are criminalized in a securitization discourse. In combination with the mentioned military language, a representative example of this behavior is a Tweet that was posted by Frontex on June 6 in 2019:

Today we celebrate the National Day of Sweden. Swedish officers, ships, and planes have been taking part in Frontex operations at Europe’s borders for many years. Thank you for working with us to make Europe a safer place. Happy #sverigesnationaldag

Additionally, Frontex frequently tweets words like “crime“, “illegal“, “criminals” and “smugglers”. Consequently, you can argue that Frontex mostly focuses on the crimes

committed, when Frontex talks about the actual people that are part of the migration phenomenon. That argumentation is supported by a closer look at the context of these tweets that include the word “crime”. Frontex uses the word as part of the bigger word “cross-border crime” in 13 out of the 14 times the word crime was used. This shows that Frontex exclusively focuses on crimes committed by others in the form of people belonging to migration. Perhaps it is not surprising, but it is an interesting finding that Frontex never uses the word crime regarding the accusations that are made against their work.

When it comes to the Twitter appearance of Sea-Watch it is harder to find words that are sufficiently often used to support a possible securitization discourse. Further, it can be regarded as not likely for an organization that supports the rights and the fair handling of migrants to implement a Securitization discourse. Why this can be considered the case will become clear later when this work focuses on the aims of the actors that might be connected with practiced discourses. The Twitter page used 1972 words in the respective time frame. Sea-Watch also tweeted the word border(s) as often as Frontex. But in contrast to Frontex, it seems like Sea-Watch criticizes the existence and usage of border control and protection. An example of this narrative is the tweet of Sea-Watch on August 13, 2019:

"Europe's silence is infamous." Day 12 on which 151 people aboard #OpenArms get to feel the bleakness of the European border regime. Every day is getting more difficult. They need a port of safety before things come to the worse. #OpenThePorts

The assumption of a practiced securitization by the organization appears even more illogical if you take a look at the tweets that accuse the EU or its countries authorities of criminalizing people whose work focuses on rescuing migrants from emergencies. This indicates that Sea-Watch has the desire to defend its actions from a witnessed evaluation and presentation as illegal. The organization points at this criminalization, which, if true, can be considered as one aspect of a securitization discourse. On August 6 in 2019 the organization tweeted:

#Salvini's amended 'security decree' has become law. Another step to criminalize rescue, another attack on civil rights. But justice remains on the side of those who continue to fulfil the duty to rescue and to bring people to safety. Sea rescue is not a crime.

Regarding these examples, it becomes clear that Sea-Watch not only should not have any interest in a securitization discourse, furthermore it is aware of the possibility and associated

dangers of such a discourse. A finding that is also interesting is the fact that Sea-Watch, like Frontex, mentions the EU and some nation-states by name but by far most frequently tweets about Libya (n, ns). About 2,3% of all words are about Libya while the next country (which interestingly is Malta) is only mentioned as half as often. This finding and the fact that Frontex rarely mentioned non-European states like Libya is so interesting because it shows that Sea-Watch seems to relocate the focus on the actual places where the most crucial parts of migration happen. It also is a further indication that Sea-Watch is not practicing a securitization discourse, as it does not focus on the EU countries and their alleged common issue migration. The exact opposite can be said about the behavior of Frontex with their Twitter appearance. Regarding all the aspects of securitization theory, it appears that this discourse is really fitting with the communication of Frontex on Twitter, while it is not genuinely fitting with Sea-Watch.

### Humanitarian Discourse

Besides securitization, we are analyzing the tweets of Frontex and Sea-Watch through the humanitarian discourse approach. Shortly after Italy shifted the discourse from a “nationwide state of emergency” to a “humanitarian emergency”, Frontex started the operation Hermes in 2011. (Horsti, 2012, p.2) In press releases Frontex highlights the numbers of saved people and puts their medial appearance in light of human rights standards. Sea-Watch declared its mission to save lives and raise public awareness about the “humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean Sea.[...] Every single life saved through our initiative is a success and a stand for humanity.” (Sea-Watch, 2020) Clearly, both organizations use humanitarian arguments to justify their actions. We understand Sea-Watch and Frontex as “discourse technologists” who try to shape public understanding of irregular migration through Twitter.

Humanitarianism has many arms and faces. It is a broad topic shaping our view and is used in diverse contexts. The principles of the Red Cross influenced the understanding of humanitarianism in the past. “The humanitarian discourse is organized around an ethical obligation to relieve human suffering. Among core guiding principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence [...]”(Büthe, Major & Souza, 2012, p. 576). Impartiality is central for the Red Cross due to their work that takes place in regions with high political tension. Regardless, there is a strong critique of those principles. (Pacitto & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 5)

Over time, the self-perception of actors in the humanitarian sector has evolved. Imperial humanitarianism and the Red Cross are described as the first phase of humanitarianism. (O'Sullivan, Hilton & Fiori, 2016, p. 7) During the late 1960s, in the context of the Biafran

crisis, the Red Cross principle of impartiality became less popular along with aid organizations. In 1980 campaigns about the awareness of human rights violations arose, followed by a support of the “right to development” and development from above in mainstream humanitarianism. It must be noticed that humanitarian work follows imperial paths, has capitalist roots, and is not always purely motivated by altruism (O'Sullivan, Hilton & Fiori, 2016, p. 7)

Even if the goal seems to be in the manner of helping, the following action and outcome does not have to be helpful. Humanitarianism was a tool of forming the world after the NGOs and donors “vision of ‘welfare’, ‘development’, ‘progress’, and ‘modernization’ ”. (O'Sullivan, Hilton & Fiori, 2016, p. 9) For a long-time humanitarian discourse was shaped by the morality of the aid-givers. Good intentions were assumed to lead to a good outcome. (Büthe, Major, Souza, 2012, p. 557) This often resulted in an even worse situation than before.

After recurrent humanitarian disasters, aid programs started to include a long-term thought process. (Molland, 2019, p. 764). Falsely humanitarianism was perceived as a duty of the Global North in the past. Recently the research focus shifted more towards Southern agents and institutions. (Pacitto, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 7) Humanitarianism always existed in a South-South context, in the case of India giving aid to Spain in 1930 also a South-North humanitarianism. (O'Sullivan, Hilton & Fiori, 2016, p. 2)

One of the main critiques of humanitarianism is the dominance of the Global North, which follows imperial paths and manifests colonial imperatives. (Pacitto, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p. 6) Humanitarianism allows the imperial mindset to continue, it relies on colonial hierarchies of race. A good example of this can be seen in the Za'tari refugee camp in Jordan. (Turner 2019, p. 138) In this specific example, Syrian refugees got advertised as entrepreneurs based on their “natural trading skills” and were informally perceived as “non-African”. The organization implicated donors to be white middle class. In order to gain more empathy and acceptance from the assumed donors, Syrian refugees got depicted as hardworking and non-African. This shows underlying anti-black racism and implicated white supremacy in humanitarian work.

In contrast to the principle of impartiality and neutrality humanitarianism is not apolitical. (Pacitto, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013, p.6) In fact, the urgency of humanitarian need is used to legitimize political action, it is a central method to policy legitimation even outside the humanitarian aid sector. (Molland, 2019, p.763) Humanitarian discourse is linked to securitization and victimization. (Perkowskia, 2016, p.332) All three discourses imply a hierarchy and differentiation, between “us” and “others”. Humanitarianism builds up a

dichotomy between “victims” and “savior”, which also implies an underlying hierarchy. Especially refugees often get depicted either as a “mute faceless physical mass” (Rajaram, 2002, p.247) who is passive, dependent, helpless, lost, and removed from historical, political, or cultural background or as an emotional and gendered story. (Rajaram, 2002, p.248)

Through the framing of a humanitarian need, to prevent deaths at sea, the EU military operation Naval Force Mediterranean, as well as the Italian military-humanitarian mission Mare Nostrum was introduced. (Perkowskia, 2016, p.332) This example shows the practical combination of securitization and humanitarianism. Two main currents can be identified in the language used by humanitarian players: a savior-victim dualism, implying a hierarchy, and a language of urgency.

### Word Analysis – Examining Indications of Humanitarian Discourses

With a clear declared aim of rescuing lives in the Mediterranean Sea and gaining public awareness of the situation, Sea-Watch can be identified as a humanitarian and political actor, shaping the recognition of irregular migration. “Our work is both humanitarian and political. We want to put pressure on the politicians”. (Cuttitta, 2018, p. 641) The analysis of the words used in the tweets show as expected a humanitarian frame. The word most often tweeted by Sea-Watch was “rescue”. (Appendix 1 and 2) It describes a situation with a group or person depended on outside help and another group or person joining the situation to help. The word “rescue” also implies urgency and the requirement of immediate action.

The occasional usage of the word’s “help”, “need”, “women” and “children” fit into the approach of victimization in contrast to the words “solidarity” and “survivor” that are more often used. Sea-Watch posted on Twitter on the 26th. of June 2019:

I decided to enter the port of #Lampedusa. I know what I'm risking, but the 42 survivors I have on board are exhausted. I'm taking them to safety.

Titling irregular migrants as “survivors” instead of “victims” shapes an active and less passive image. It gives irregular migrants a position of strength instead of helplessness and dependency. The hashtag “defendsolidarty” often used by Sea-Watch represents unity, it does not build up a hierarchy between those giving and those receiving. A mutuality is implied in the word solidarity.



Prior literature argues that even though Sea-Watch is aware of victimization and tries to devoid depicting irregular migrants as victims, there is always an underlying dichotomy between rescued and rescuer and asymmetrical power relation between those who are dependent on help and those helping. (Cuttitta, 2019, p.645) This might be true, but as our twitter analysis shows, Sea-Watch is contributing to a perception of irregular migrants, as strong and active through their words chosen.

Through the frequently used words “emergency”, “distress”, “medical” or “alarm”, Sea-Watch signalizes the need for immediate action. It pushes the focus away from long political discussions into a state of urgent humanitarian action. Sea-Watch wrote on the 10th of June 2019:

At 1 pm our plane was informed by @alarm\_phone of a boat with 100 people in distress, having been at sea for 3 days. Since yesterday several military aircraft have flown over the area, and today a Maltese patrol boat was nearby.

From this tweet, you can see that the organization Sea-Watch does not only see itself as a helper for the refugees in distress at sea but also as an enforcer of human rights and a whistle-blower concerning the inaction of governmental organizations. Sea-Watch refers in their tweets to the legal base and duty of their work and the implicated values of human rights. The word “right” has a high number of usage and implies official justification. It also adds a connotation of official acceptance and common sense, to the political position of Sea-Watch. A good example of a humanitarian discourse frame combined with human right argumentation is shown in the tweet of the 26th. of June 2019:

If our captain Carola follows the law of the sea, that asks her to bring the rescued people on the #Sea-Watch3 to a safe port, she might face heavy sentences in Italy. Help Caro to defend human rights, donate for her legal defense: DE93 4306 0967 1239 3243 00

It can be summarized, that Sea-Watch is a humanitarian organization with a political interest, that tries to impart an image of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean Sea as human beings, with the right to live and to get rescued.

Based on the paper “Humanitarian Discourse Legitimizing Migration Control: FRONTEX Public Communication” that Horsti published in 2012, we assume that Frontex uses a language of humanitarian needs as a discursive strategy to legitimize their action on Twitter. Horsti shows in her analysis of how Frontex represents itself in press releases as an organization with a

humanitarian character that values human rights standards. As described earlier, we found plenty of words and phrases relating to the securitization approach. In contrast, you can notice a high occurrence of the words “rescue” and “help” which indicates that Frontex tries to shape its recognition as a humanitarian actor. Those words convey an urgent emergency that includes migrants as “victims” and Frontex as their “savior”. Frontex tweeted on the 11 June 2019:

Today Frontex was involved in a dramatic search and rescue off Lesvos. A @Marechaussee vessel spotted a sinking rubber boat and the @HCoastGuard directed 7 vessels to assist in the rescue operation. 57 people were saved, 7 bodies recovered <https://bit.ly/2MIjWsM>

This example shows how Frontex uses adjectives and verbs like “dramatic”, “sinking” and “rescue” to picture a situation that needed the immediate reaction of Frontex. It implies that Frontex is working for the duty of saving lives and helping migrants. A humanitarian discourse can be found to some extent in the tweets of Frontex.

#### Analysis of Pictures and Retweets:

The previous theoretical discussion of the securitization and humanitarianism discourse focused on the analysis of words without including the social factors that are crucial in CDA. As Bozdag (2019) mentions, the pictures that are included in posts as well as the retweets are crucial elements to define how power structures are reproduced and used by the actors. In the following analysis of the pictures and retweets, one paradigm for CDA of social media data is the leading feature: CDA is concerned with making the implicit explicit (Silverman, 2016). That means that the pictures and retweets are carrying a lot of implicit meaning that needs to be dismantled by the CDA.

First, there are fundamental differences between the accounts that Frontex and Sea-Watch are reposting. Frontex is mainly retweeting pictures and links that were tweeted by EU institutions or official agencies. Examples for these are EU home affairs, EU council, or European Commission. The retweeting and reproducing of this content are signalling that Frontex is an EU agency and portrays it within an institutionalized structure. Moreover, this is establishing a power structure that portrays Frontex as powerful because it is retweeting from powerful institutions such as the EU Commission. This superiority of Frontex over other institutions and organizations is achieved by the institutionalization and the professionalism that is created through the connection to the EU structure.

On the other side, Sea-Watch is also retweeting official content from for example the UNHCR. Similar to Frontex, they are using other professional institutions to legitimize their own work by retweeting. However, Sea-Watch also retweets tweets published by private persons such as for example captain Dariush Beigui on June 18(Sea-Watch, 2019), who is a captain on one of Sea-Watch's rescue missions. The retweeting of this video is having a different purpose: It is used to deconstruct hierarchies and power structures by not retweeting an anonymous organization but giving a face to the people working for Sea-Watch.

With regards to the use of pictures, interesting differences can be observed, when comparing both Twitter accounts. To have a better measure of controlled comparison we decided to compare the pictures posted and retweeted on June 20 which is World Refugee Day. Sea-Watch posted a picture of migrants on the Sea-Watch 3 which were holding up signs stating "Do not forget about us". Frontex retweeted a picture by EU Home Affairs that was presenting figures on refugees that want to return home. In these pictures, the fundamental difference of communication strategies can be observed: Whereas Sea-Watch is appealing to the target audience to generate solidarity and to raise awareness about problems in the Mediterranean Sea Frontex was retweeting neutral figures that represented how much money the EU is spending on humanitarian aid and how many refugees want to return home. Frontex's retweet therefore shows the form professionalism the agency is using because it seems like a professional apparatus that does not take personal stories of migrants into account.

Analyzing the pictures in general, it can be observed that Frontex is creating a technocratic picture of an EU agency, that is simply doing the work of protecting EU borders. However, including the political opinion of the researchers in a CDA, Frontex is reproducing the picture of the EU as a fortress that not everyone can enter, which has to be evaluated as highly unethical. Sea-Watch on the other side is trying to appeal to the solidarity of the people by tweeting pictures of people that can be matched with the victimization discourse. However, in the majority of the pictures, Sea-Watch tries to avoid framing migrants as victims by not including pictures of for example children that are in the need of help but rather for example the boats that are used in the search and rescue missions as on August 7 (Sea-Watch, 2019).

### Strategic Use of Discourses

After having analyzed the words used by Sea-Watch and Frontex as well as the pictures and retweets, it is necessary to consider how the different discourses are strategically used by the EU agency and the NGO to achieve certain goals. To answer this question, it is first necessary

to find out about the goals of Frontex and Sea-Watch. Frontex and Sea-Watch present their aims on their respective websites and we are using these mission statements as a framework for the analysis of the aims. The goal of this analysis is to bring the findings of the different used discourses by Sea-Watch and Frontex into a broader context. This helps to see how the use of different discourses has direct implications for the work of the EU agency and the NGO.

**Table 1: Discourses used by Frontex and Sea-Watch to achieve respective aims**

	Frontex	Seawatch International
aim	secure borders of EU	save lives on the Mediterranean
Subcategories of the aims	professionalism and protection of European values	humanity and raising awareness
Necessary means to achieve the aims	legitimacy within the EU	donations (money)
discourse	Securitization	Humanitarianism/ Victimization
use of the discourse on social media to achieve aims	professionalism: see use of pictures and retweets  protection of European values: see choice of words (analysis of words)	humanity: see use of words (twitter analysis)  raising awareness: see use of pictures and retweets to have a bigger target audience

As it can be seen in Table 1 both Frontex and Sea-Watch have one main aim: For Frontex that is formulated in the mission statement as to secure and protect the borders of the European Union. Sea-Watch has the mission to save lives in the Mediterranean Sea which they are also presenting in their mission statement on their website (Sea-Watch, 2020). These overarching aims are further defined by subcategories which are formulated in the mission of Sea-Watch and Frontex. For Frontex, we decided on two relevant subcategories for the aims that are professionalism and protection of the European values (Frontex, 2020). Two subcategories for Sea-Watch are humanity and raising awareness for the events in the Mediterranean Sea (Sea-Watch, 2020).

Both Frontex and Sea-Watch need certain means to achieve these overarching aims. These means differ fundamentally but can also be seen as a target of the social media work of the organization and the EU agency. To clarify, these means are necessary to achieve the overall aim. Therefore, Frontex and Sea-Watch are working to achieve those means to ultimately meet the goals. These goals are further defined in the already established subcategories. For Sea-Watch this instrument to achieve the goal is to generate donations as it can be seen in Table 1. The NGO needs donations because otherwise, the operations would not be possible. On the other hand, Frontex is an EU agency that has been subject to heavy criticism, and therefore one

tool for Frontex is to legitimize its actions. That can be achieved via social media because it is an easy way to reach a big target audience.

As it can be seen in Table 1, the results of the CDA can be connected to the subcategories of the aims of Frontex and Sea-Watch and the different discourses. The aims of the subcategories are pursued by using different discourses. For Frontex that can be explained as follows. Frontex is using the securitization approach as it has been established in the analysis of the words. This discourse is then used to protect European values and the European status quo. This means that by using the securitization discourse the aim of protecting European values is fulfilled because of the choice of words that portray that protection as it can be seen in Appendix 2. With regards to the aim of professionalism, the securitization discourse can be connected to the pictures and the retweets used by Frontex, that are reinforcing the securitization frame. As explained in the analysis of the pictures and retweets, Frontex is trying to draw a professional picture of the agency by retweeting tweets of influential EU organs.

Sea-Watch is also using the humanitarian frame to achieve the aims of the subcategories. In fact, the aim of appealing to the humanity of the people and defining the rescue of migrants as an act of humanity and to raise awareness for the search and rescue work is achieved by using humanitarian discourse. The appeal to humanity is achieved by the use of words as analyzed previously, which is part of the humanitarian discourse. The raising of awareness can be examined when analyzing the pictures and retweets which are recreating personal accounts of for example a captain. Moreover, the pictures of people in need, which are also part of the victimization frame are used strategically to achieve the aim of raising awareness. In contrast to the textual analysis which showed that Sea-Watch is trying to avoid the victimization discourse, these pictures show that this discourse cannot always be avoided and is in fact used. This means that the use of specific discourses is used strategically to fulfil the aims formulated in the subcategories which then help to get the necessary means to achieve the overarching goal.

To summarize, this table exemplifies that both Frontex and Sea-Watch are using the discourses to achieve the aims of the EU agency and NGO as formulated in the aims and further defined in the subcategories. Furthermore, the use of the discourses helps to achieve the means which are necessary to meet the overall goals. The use of the discourses contributes to get support of a target audience to fulfil the means. To clarify, this signifies that the target audiences of the EU agency and the NGO are willing to support the means, when being confronted with the different discourses. This support helps Sea-Watch and Frontex to ultimately achieve the goals

because the means are strengthened. In conclusion this shows that the strategic use of specific discourses can help to achieve the overarching goals.

### Conclusion

To answer the research question in how far Frontex and Sea-Watch are using discourses strategically to pursue their respective aims, the CDA showed that Frontex is mainly using the securitization discourse whereas Sea-Watch is using the humanitarianism discourse. The analysis of Frontex's tweets between June and October 2019 showed that the agency used specific language in order to support the image of migration and migrants as an external security issue that has to be addressed by their work. Consequently, they predominantly used military language and terms to relocate the main focus from humans to institutional and administrative work with the European authorities. Frontex also presents the phenomenon of crime exclusively as "cross-border crime" committed by migrants, that has to be fought against by the agency to keep a supposed current European status quo of society. All those findings indicate a practiced securitization discourse via Twitter by Frontex. In contrast, humanitarian discourse is closely connected to the human rights and victimization frame. The language used in the tweets by Sea-Watch indicates that the organization tries to avoid victimization and depicts migrants rather as survivors than victims. Sea-Watch used also an argumentation of human rights to legitimize their actions.

With regards to the aims of Frontex and Sea-Watch, it can be stressed that both are using the respective discourses to achieve differing goals. The NGO Sea-Watch financially depends on donations and therefore uses the humanitarianism frame to motivate their target audience to donate, while the ultimate goal is to save lives. Opposed to that, Frontex's goal is to secure European borders, which can only be achieved by the legitimization of the agency and its work within the EU. Frontex reaches this goal by using the securitization discourse, which is an effective strategy because migration is portrayed as a security issue. This strategic use of discourses can also be seen in the retweets and used pictures.

However, it has to be mentioned that our research only focused on the very limited time span of a few months. In addition to that, it remains a topic for future research on how the strategic use of discourses and frames may be changing with differing numbers of migrants on the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to that, it is also possible that the discourses are changing because for example the humanitarianism discourse is flexible and includes also elements of the victimization discourse. Even though these limitations exist, it is a relevant finding of our

research that communication on social media can be used strategically. That is not only important in the context of migration, but could also be relevant in other discourses such as environmental protection.

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## Appendix 1: Antconc Analysis Seawatch

### Sea-Watch

**Total number of words: 1972**

#### **Mostly normative connoted terms**

<b>number of words</b>	<b>words</b>	<b>percent</b>
<b>108</b>	rescue(d)(rs)(med)(es)(ing)	5,477
<b>95</b>	people / boatpeople	4,817
<b>58</b>	sea	2,941
<b>53</b>	boat(s)/    refugeeboat    / rubberboat	2,688
<b>51</b>	safety & safe & savelives & safely & port of safety & safepassage 1 unsafe	2,586
<b>40</b>	right(s)/ (un)humanrights	2,028
<b>34</b>	port(s)	1,724
<b>34</b>	live(s)(d) / life	1,724
<b>29</b>	human(ity)(itarian)/ inhuman /humane    /    humankind    / humans 3 humantrafficking	1,471
<b>21</b>	defendsolidarity    (political appeal)	1,065
<b>21</b>	distress	1,065
<b>20</b>	dead / deadly / deadliest / death(s)	1,014
<b>18</b>	coast	0,913
<b>17</b>	need	0,862
<b>17</b>	ship	0,862
<b>16</b>	civil	0,811

15	openarms (political appeal)	0,761
14	friends	0,71
12	survivors	0,609
12	responsibility(ies) / responsible	0,609
12	shipwreck(s)(ed)	0,609
12	help(ed)(ers)(ing	0,609
11	solidarity & solidary	0,558
10	opentheport(s) (political appeal)	0,507
9	support(ing)(ive)	0,456
8	welcome & welcoming	0,406
7	emergency	0,355
6	bodies	0,304
5	women	0,254
4	children	0,203

**Words of administration /  
institutions / work of sea-  
watch**

65	Sea-Watch	3,296
25	carolarackete / freecarola(rackete)	13 1,268
21	moonbird	1,065
21	captain(s)	1,07
21	crew(s)& aircrew	1,07
15	authorities & authority	0,76
13	disembark(ed) /(ation(s))	0,66
12	refugee(s)	0,61
11	colibri	0,56
11	guard / 6 guardiacostiera / 1 coastguard / guardian	0,56

11	policy & policies	0,56
9	aircraft(s)	0,46
8	mission(s)	0,41
7	medical	0,36

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<b>Terms with approach to safety / crime</b>	Terms with approach to safety / crime
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9	crime (s)	0,456
9	Criminalisation / criminalization / criminalise / criminalized	0,456
7	legal (ly)	0,35
5	illegal (ly)	0,25

## Appendix 2: Antconc Analysis Frontex

### Frontex

**Total number of Words:**

**1284**

#### **military Language**

<b>58</b>	operation(s) & operational	1,63551402
<b>21</b>	euborderguard / europeanborderguard	1,5576324
<b>20</b>	authorities & authority	7,71028037
<b>99</b>	border(s)	2,02492212
<b>26</b>	officer(s)	1,40186916
<b>18</b>	flagge	1,40186916
<b>18</b>	guard(s)/ 5 coastguard / 3 guardiacostiera / 3 safe guard / 2 eucoastguard / 1 guardiacivil	0,70093458
<b>9</b>	exercise	0,85669782
<b>11</b>	control(s)& bordercontrol	0,85669782
<b>11</b>	fight(ers)/(ing)	0,62305296
<b>8</b>	patrol(ling)	0

#### **Technological / scientific (seeming) descriptions of their work 17**

<b>17</b>	director(s)	1,32398754
<b>11</b>	management	0,85669782
<b>10</b>	cooperation	0,7788162
<b>10</b>	experts	0,7788162
<b>10</b>	documents	0,7788162

**Terms with reference to  
nations or sovereign states /  
naming of regions**

28	Europe & Europa/ European	12	2,18068536
15	nation (ality)		1,1682243
13	countries & country		1,01246106
19	Portugal & Portuguese		1,47975078
19	Greece & Greek		1,47975078
18	Italian & Italy		1,40186916
13	Spain & Spanish		1,01246106
9	state (s)		0,70093458
8	international		0,62305296
8	Mediterranean		0,62305296
8	western		0,62305296
7	Balkan (s)		0,54517134

**Terms with focus on  
security approach and  
legality in context of their  
work**

14	crime [ the people committing crime: criminal(s)]	3	1,09034268
16	migrant(s)		1,24610592
12	migratory / 6 migration / 6 migrationeu / 1 unmigration		0,93457944
9	illegal		0,70093458
12	rout (s)		0,93457944
10	smuggler(s)/ smuggle/smuggling	2	0,7788162
8	security/ 6 secure/ bordersecurity	2	0,62305296
6	arrested		0,46728972

**Word with humane  
approach / reference to real  
objects / subjects of their  
work / also words that I'm  
not sure yet how to  
interpret accurately**

<b>29</b>	people	2,25856698
<b>24</b>	boat (s)	1,86915888
<b>23</b>	rescue (d) / (s) / (ing)	1,79127726
<b>21</b>	sea (s)	1,63551402
<b>17</b>	help (s) /(ed)	1,32398754
<b>14</b>	together	1,09034268
<b>13</b>	eurotecs	1,01246106
<b>13</b>	support (ed) / (ing) / (s)	1,01246106
<b>6</b>	rights	0,46728972

# Gender-based inequalities in the Refugee Camp Moria (Lesvos)

By Miriam Schießl, Inken Ladiges and Friedrich Trautmann

## Abstract

Even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation in refugee camps was alarming. The following paper focusses on only one specific facet: We want to know to what extent has Covid-19 changed the gender-based inequalities in Moria on Lesbos. In order to answer our research question, an intersectional and feminist approach has been used. Additionally, we have included articles and videos in our media analysis to get an overview of the current situation in Moria. The analysis shows the dramatic worsening in the camp – especially for female refugees. Physical and structural violence against women has increased. The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the gender-based inequalities and the situation is particularly dangerous and threatening for women living in Moria.

## Introduction

March 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic has arrived in Europe. Everyday experts, politicians, and the media are announcing measures to fight the novel virus that is spreading rapidly worldwide. People are asked to stay at home, wash their hands regularly, and keep some distance between each other. Practising social distance is the most important factor when it comes to avoiding an outbreak of the pandemic. While the streets, for example in Freiburg, were nearly empty in March and April 2020, it seems impossible to stay at home and away from each other in less privileged living conditions. There is no need to look at distant countries when refugee camps in Europe are not able to provide adequate conditions and sufficient space – even before the fear of COVID-19 was added (SJPH, 2020, p.1).

Social distancing is a privilege. A privilege that among others the refugees on the Greek-Aegean islands do not possess. It is not difficult to imagine that refugees are part of a very vulnerable group and are particularly affected by the challenging situation – but what does it mean to be a female refugee during the pandemic? Women are facing gender-based inequalities during their way to Europe and in the camps. They seem to be vulnerable in two different ways: their status as refugee and their gender (Arte, 2020b). This leads us to our research question:

## *To what extent has COVID-19 changed the gender-based inequalities in a refugee camp?*

In order to answer this question, we decided to look primarily at Europe's largest refugee camp, called Moria on the Greek island Lesbos. In the first section, we will provide a general overview of the situation in Moria and present the theoretical approach we have chosen for our analysis. We will apply a feminist – and more precisely – an intersectional perspective as it seems to be a relevant lens to look through. Further on, we are going to focus on women during their journey to Europe and in refugee camps as well as the gender-based inequalities they are experiencing along the way. The previous descriptive parts will provide the basis for the following media analysis. We have included different sources (e.g. newspaper articles, videos and interviews) to present the situation on Lesbos during the pandemic. As a conclusion, we will present our results and end by giving a brief outlook on the current demands and prospects for the future.

### Overview and theoretical approach to the topic

#### *The situation in Moria on Lesbos*

Greece is an important destination for refugees and migrants on their way to Central Europe as well the country with the highest number of refugee arrivals in the Mediterranean area (UNHCR, 2020). The total refugee population in Greece is around 50,000 of whom 38,000 are on the mainland and 11,000 on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Samos and Leros. Over half of them are women and children, more than 3,000 are travelling alone (RESCUE, 2020). A lot of people from the Middle East reach Europe over the Greek-Aegean islands, as they are the gateway from Turkey to Europe. That is the reason why Greece and especially the Aegean islands play an important role in the Greek and European asylum policy. Since the Greek government-debt crisis in 2008, the country has had serious financial problems making Greece dependent on the political and financial support of the EU.

In 2020, 10,348 people arrived in Greece by the end of June. Around 80 percent are sea arrivals which underlines the importance of the Greek-Aegean islands. Most of these arrivals come from Afghanistan - around 40 percent - and Syria - around 25 percent (UNHCR, 2020). The most important refugee hotspots on the Greek-Aegean Islands are Moria on Lesbos, Vial on Chios, Vathi on Samos, Lepida on Leros and Pyli on Kos (HRW, 2018). Moria is particularly present in the media, because it is the largest refugee camp in the European Union. The living conditions in the camp are alarming. The reason for this is that the camp is not designed for so many people: It was built in 2016 for 3000 people. In March 2020, 20.000 refugees lived there, 40%



of whom are under 18. More than the half of the refugees live in an unofficial camp of tarpaulin tents and makeshift huts made of pallets. There is no electricity, not enough clean water and a lack of protection against cold and rain (The Guardian, 2020a).

Camp life is characterised by hopelessness, fear and frustration. Another problem is, that people have to stay in Moria for a long time until they are able to apply for asylum and get the chance to proceed to the Greek mainland. Often, they have to go back to Turkey because of the EU-Turkey-Deal. The “living hell of Moria” (The Guardian, 2020b) has been sharply criticised for years. Unfortunately, little has changed in most cases. Finally, it can be said that Moria is a symbol for the inhumane conditions at Europe's borders and the failure of the European asylum policy.

### *Theoretical approach: Intersectionality out of a feminist perspective*

Gender matters: A feminist approach to migration is essential to get a better understanding of the highly complex migration system. Even if the media presents a different picture, approximately half of international migrants are known to be women and girls. Refugee statistics show a similar pattern (Diab, 2019).

Gender issues have been ignored in migration research for far too long. Many scholars focused on migration and movement in general and gender-neutral, “rather than upon questions of who migrates - and how the who plays into the why” (Diab, 2019, p. 16). A feminist approach helps us to understand the reasons for migration in a more differentiated way by focusing the gendered power structures, forms of discriminations and hierarchies within the social system on different levels. Feminist structural theories “conceptualize gender not only as a [socially constructed] characteristic of individuals but also as collectives, institutions and structures” (Nawyn et al., 2009, p. 176). For example, migration depends heavily on the connection between the gendered (re-)productive international labour market and the specific household structures in their home countries (woman’s traditional care work responsibilities etc.)<sup>2</sup> In the international migration context, the feminist structural approach helps us understand the gendered reasons for and the dynamics of movement along the different steps of the migration process. They can explain “the circumstances under which women become movers, enter into illegal trafficking rings, or even seek refugee status, asylum, or permanent resettlement” (Diab, 2019, p. 16). This shows us that a feminist approach can relate on the micro and macro levels: They do not only describe structures, but also connect them with the individual levels of women

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<sup>2</sup> These aspects are discussed in detail by Nawyn et al., 2009.

and queers<sup>3</sup>. Questions of identities, bodies, gendered discrimination or individual agencies and restrictions are thus also part of the feminist theory and research. Individual and structural discrimination often leads into violence. This is the reason why since the early 1990s, scholars and policies focus on the problem of gendered violence<sup>4</sup> in the context of migration (Nawyn et al., 2009, p. 190). We join this line of research because, among other things, we are concentrating on gender-specific security and violence in refugee camps.

For a broad feminist understanding it is important to look at different power structures and forms of discrimination and the interactions between them. This approach is called Intersectionality and “aims to reveal multiple identities, exposing the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities” (Women’s Rights and Economic Change, 2004, p. 2). Gender matters, but social categories like race and class are also very powerful and have a big influence on exploitation, discrimination and the individual agency. “Agency is defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices” (Baker, 2003, p. 448). For example, refugee women in camps on the EU border are often subject to multiple types of discrimination. They suffer sexist attacks within the camp and racist exclusion from the European Union and European citizens. Furthermore, they may have fled because of economic reasons like wage dumping. It is necessary to link the grounds of discrimination “to the social, economic, political and legal environment that contributes to discrimination and structures experiences of oppression and privilege” (Women’s Rights and Economic Change, 2004, p. 5).

Intersectional approaches combine critical-theoretical analysis with activist perspectives of women’s rights and gender equality. This is a central point that is of great importance for any feminist approach, because woman and queers are not only “passive or reactive, responding only on to family pressures or structural demands” (Pettman and Hall, 2010, p. 293). Furthermore, not all migrant women are exploited or subject of abuse and violence (Pettman and Hall, 2010, p. 293). As important it is to analyse marginalization, discrimination and exploitation, feminist approaches should also focus on the active role and the empowerment of

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<sup>3</sup> Our understanding of gender is non-binary: There is a heterogenous number of identities with different agencies, visibilities and restrictions which are related to the social power structures and discriminations. Nevertheless the binary system and the connected power relations are still very influential and play an important role within the feminist approaches. Mainly because most statistical data is based on the binary system, it is constantly reproduced, also in our research. The necessary criticism of it is not the topic of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Violence includes different levels of violence like physical, mental and structural violence.

women and queers. The different aspects show that gender is not static but performative: “Gender identities are constantly being reproduced and recreated along the migration pathways” (Pettman and Hall, 2010, p. 293). Feminist research has to be aware of the changeability of gender roles and identities. This requires heterogeneous research paths that can capture qualitative and quantitative methods.

Due to the above-mentioned aspects, we pursue a feminist and intersectional approach in our research project. This can be seen in our choice of topics, but also in the fact that we relate gender and migration status to each other. The situation in refugee camps cannot be considered in isolation. It is embedded in an economic and political system that provokes or prevents certain processes and developments.

### The situation of women during their journey and in European refugee camps

In the following chapter the situation of refugee women during their journey and after their arrival in European refugee camps is examined. In order to understand that women are particularly affected by the deteriorating conditions during the outbreak of Covid-19, it is first necessary to take a closer look at the conditions that have affected refugee women (already) before. As observed in multiple research articles, nowadays the number of women who leave their country of origin to look for a better future outnumber men who do the same. That is why organisations as Caritas and the Migration Policy Institute talk about the “feminization of migration”. Women can also possibly benefit from the change of their surrounding concerning their gender roles, for example they can win agency and autonomy through migration (Diab, 2019, p.9-10). Nevertheless, this is just one lens on the topic, and we will focus on another one: The gender-based inequalities that refugee women face during their journey and after their arrival in Europe. These binary phenomena can be expressed by a quotation from Graeme Hugo: “Migration can be both a cause and a consequence of female empowerment” (Diab, 2019, p.8).

At first, different types of gender-based violence (GBV) that occur during the journey and within the refugee camps are described. This will be followed by a description of the lacking access to health care women have, after having experienced violence. We decided to focus on these two topics, because they are most repeated in the literature and the articles we used. Attention should also be paid to other existing injustices such as economic and structural inequalities. It is important to clarify a few aspects at the beginning of this part: In our research we talk about women as a coherent group, at the same time we are aware of the fact, that it is impossible to talk about half of humanity as a homogenous group. Men experience GBV and

inequalities due to their gender as well, but (refugee) women are especially often victims of gender-based violence. That is the reason why we decided to focus on this “group”, that can hardly be defined as one, as we just clarified.

The difficulty finding scientific literature about the situation of women in European refugee camps is already a serious result. The conditions are insufficiently researched and are by no means in the centre of attention, which is where they should be, since they represent unacceptable human rights violations. As information about women in European camps is rare (despite reports from NGOs in selected refugee camps), the focus is rather on GBV against refugee women in general.

### Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) can be defined “as violence against an individual or a population based on gendered identity and expression... [This type of violence] violates the rights of bodily integrity and security of the person and affects the victims’ mental, physical and reproductive health.” (Jensen, 2019, n.p.). GBV can be pictured as the outcome of the subordination of women in social structures. Within these structures, systematic inequalities are reproduced. It is common, that in conflict settings in general people change their behaviour and traditional habits are reinforced. Refugees experience feelings of powerlessness and frustration and due to this emotional excessive demand, some use violence as an outlet (Jensen, 2019, n.p.). The social, economic and geographical structures of refugee camps are changing rapidly (f.e. because of new arrivals) which can possibly lead to little sense of community. Consequently, the whole setting becomes even more fragile and the camps’ inhabitants become even more insecure (Freedman, 2016, 22).

The issue of GBV is widespread, about 69 percent of refugee women have experienced sexual violence since their arrival in Europe (Keygnaert & Guieu, 2015, p.45). It is important to interpret these numbers critically, as many cases of GBV are not reported (more about that in the next section). Different types of GBV occur and can be divided in various ways. Jane Freedman is writing about four types of GBV or issues that cause insecurity for female refugees - her categorization is focusing on perpetrators: As the first type of GBV she mentions *war-related-violence*. Secondly, she is considering *violence experienced during the journey*, which is often perpetrated by smugglers and traffickers, when sexual violence is used as a means of exerting pressure. As third type she defines *family and conjugal violence*, when women experience this type of violence, their own family poses a threat, on which they are highly

dependent. Fourthly, Freedman is describing *inadequate accommodation as a source of insecurity* also as a cause of GBV (Freedman, 2016, p.21-23).

Karakosta and Riza also subdivide GBV, their classification is rather focusing on the form of violence, that is perpetrated. After having done a research on increasing vulnerability to gender-based violence of refugee women from 2010 to 2020 they define six different forms, that the women they interviewed, experienced: 1) *Sexual Violence* (rape, sexual coercion, trafficking), 2) *Emotional-Psychological violence*, 3) *Physical violence* (beating, punching, kicking, throwing, pushing), 4) *Socio-Economic violence* (Threats and isolation of women, denial of assistance related to asylum procedure/ health care), 5) *Intimate partner/domestic/intrafamilial violence*, 6) *Other forms of violence* (abduction, forced abortion, reproductive control). We think these categories speak for themselves and it becomes obvious how many different faces GBV can have. Female refugees are suffering extreme violence, inequality and discrimination, due to their gender and their “illegal” status. This is paradox, when realizing that most women were fleeing from violence in their country of origin and then they are going through/have to suffer the same in Europe again, where they hoped to be safe.

#### *Lack of access to health care and other social services*

Refugees can be defined as “world’s most vulnerable people” (Jensen, 2019, n.p.) and the lack of access to health care services also violates their human rights. Camps like Moria on Lesbos are often completely overcrowded, and it becomes impossible to see a doctor or psychologist, because there is not enough staff. Another problem can be, that employees are not sensitive enough and fail to recognize women in danger. Many female refugees are scared to talk about their experiences and do not report the things that have happened to them, as they are ashamed of being stigmatised. This often results in a damage of self-esteem and can lead to self-destructive behaviour. Furthermore, women do not want their reporting to threaten their journey and they are aware of the high dependence on their surroundings (Jensen, 2019, n.p.).

Poor experiences of the survivors of sexual violence regarding the safety and quality of available services can also prevent them from seeking help, and the consequences are severe: They can develop mental disorders, sexual dysfunctions and sexually transmitted infections. Often, they go through unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, as no or just little safe spaces and health care services are provided in the camps where they can talk calmly. Consequently, traumas can manifest (Karakosta & Riza, 2020, p.118/122).

Refugees of both genders are also disadvantaged because of their “non-legal” status; it is harder for them to participate and fight for their rights however the probability of being exploited or abused is higher as for European citizens (Keyneart & Guieu, 2015, p.45). A legal form of protection is missing, due to the undocumented status of many refugees. This is when the European Union failed and is still failing to focus on universal human rights. As borders were closed in 2015 and also during the outbreak of Covid-19, people had to enter the EU in an “illegal” way with the help of smugglers. Border police, smugglers, traffickers and police within the camps pose the greatest threat to the security of female refugees (Freedman, 2016, p.23). The EU focused on the repression of smuggling, trafficking and the prevention of so-called illegal immigration. If they wanted to protect refugees, they should have set another focus, as refugees are highly dependent on the people and networks the EU fights against. Some authors claim that EU’s policy even increased the insecurity of refugee women, as they also failed to provide adequate medical and psychological support at external borders and in European refugee camps (Freedman, 2016, p.18).

#### Women’s situation in Moria

Reports from the Aegean islands, especially from Moria, underline the theoretical arguments. It can be seen that the gender-specific problems are embedded in the structure and functionality of the refugee camps and that these are not individual phenomena. Both GBV and the lack of access to health care and other social services are problems that shape the living situation for women on the Greek-Aegean islands. Examples of these dynamics can be found in interviews conducted by Human Right Watch (2017): Migrant women describe harassment, the threat of gender-based violence, and health risks (HRW, 2017). Reports like this one are published almost every year. It can therefore be concluded that, the camps are a place of injustice and violence for many women. The following quotation of a migrant woman shows impressively the situation: “Sometimes I think I would have died better at sea than to be here” (DW, 2018a).

#### The impact of Covid-19 on Moria

In December 2019, the first cases of a novel coronavirus were detected in Wuhan, China. Within the following weeks, the new virus – named COVID-19 – spread rapidly at first in China and then worldwide. The increasing number of cases outside China led the World Health Organisation (WHO) to the decision on 11 March 2020 that the outbreak can be characterised as a pandemic. By this time, Europe had become the epicentre of the epidemic – over 40% of the globally confirmed cases were reported in European countries (WHO Europe ,2020).

Because of the unprecedented spread of COVID-19, the health-care systems worldwide are under great pressure. The high demand for health-care professionals and life-saving equipment, as well as the novelty of the virus are still posing difficulties when fighting the pandemic. While already being a threat to those with access to high quality health-care systems, it becomes clear that the virus is particularly dangerous to the ones experiencing poor living conditions and facing bad medical resources – for example the thousands of refugees staying in refugee camps all over the world (SJPH, 2020, p.1). As shown earlier in this paper, the Greek government has already been struggling to provide adequate conditions in refugee camps like Moria within the past years. Therefore, it is not surprising that an outbreak of COVID-19 would disproportionately affect the people living in the camp which clearly reveals the necessity to protect the residents (SJPH, 2020, p.2).

The preventive measures published by the WHO include social distancing, washing hands regularly with soap and water and staying home when feeling unwell (WHO, 2020). While people all over the world are following these recommendations, it seems nearly impossible to implement them in Moria. The overcrowded camp does not provide the space for keeping distances between individuals as the BBC has reported. On 31 March 2020, the British broadcaster published videos that have been filmed by refugees living in the camp. People are waiting closely in long lines for satisfying their basic requirements such as food, taking a shower or using the toilets. Additionally, the water supply is only sporadic, the camp is running out of soap and cleaning products, and camp residents have little access to gloves and masks (BBC, 2020). Human Right Watch is additionally reporting the alarming health care situation. As there are only few doctors working in the camp and the hospitals next to it, receiving a test would be extremely difficult. Seeing a doctor always includes waiting in crowded line for hours, which might increase the risk of spreading the virus (HRW, 2020).

The Greek government released measures to protect the people in refugee camps like cleaning indoor and common spaces, door handles should be disinfected regularly, and informative posters provided. They restricted people's movement – residents are not allowed to leave the camp other than for buying groceries and other necessary supplies. Among other camps Moria is more or less locked down since March. Only recently the government has extended the confinement until July 19 (Arte, 2020c). Additionally, the government suspended informal schools and prohibited visitors in the camp. (HRW, 2020).

As preventive measures aren't sufficient to protect the residents in overcrowded camps on the Aegean islands, the government started transferring more and more people, especially the ones

who are at high risk, to the mainland. In March 2020, there were more than 19.000 refugees living in Moria, the transfers achieved the reduction to less than 15.000 people (Infomigrants, 2020b). Some member states of the European Union agreed on welcoming unaccompanied children from the Greek Islands: amongst others, 47 minors came from Lesbos to Germany mid-April (Tagesspiegel, 2020b). The fact that Greece evacuated more than 3000 people out of camp Moria and Germany is only willing to receive about 50 children has to be emphasised. The European solidarity is more or less non-existing in times of Covid-19. Instead, the refugees are left locked down on the Greek-Aegean islands and Greece has to deal with the situation itself.

This proceeding is a step in the right direction – however it has to be kept in mind that the camp was built for 3000 people. Without any doubt, it becomes clear that an outbreak in Moria would be extremely difficult to curtail because of the crowding, bad sanitarian conditions and lack of health care. Covid-19 is worsening the already alarming circumstances on the island of Lesbos.

### Media analysis

Current and complex dynamics such as the Covid19 pandemic represent a major challenge for research. On the one hand, there is little data to refer to and on the other hand, global developments are very dynamic and therefore difficult to analyse. Among other things therefore we have chosen a qualitative approach to the refugee situation in Moria and the other Greek-Aegean Islands. In the following section we will present our research design.

### Methodical approach

The first thing we did was to get an overview of the latest media reports. We have chosen April 1 and July 10 as the time frame and focused on newspapers and video reports in order to get the most comprehensive and well-researched information possible. Our result is a selection of seven articles and three videos. We have tried to use German and English language sources to include different perspectives on the situation. In addition, we refer to a radio interview that is presenting an activist perspective. Because our research question refers directly to the gender-specific changes brought about by Covid19, we first explicitly searched for articles with "gender" or "women" in the title or as main topic. We have had little success with this approach, which already shows that the gender issue is seriously underrepresented. Because of the few results, we have concentrated on articles that only touch on the topic or deal with it indirectly.

Secondly, we have summarised the articles and classified them according to gender-specific arguments. It has been shown that some issues are frequently raised: Lack of infrastructure,



(sexual) violence, unfair distribution of care work and mental pressure. Reports from those affected or interviews with supporters<sup>5</sup> have further underlined the importance of these aspects.

Finally, we have summarized the results and connected them to our theoretical base, which we have worked out in section three. The results of the media analysis are presented in the next section. Further qualitative and quantitative research is needed to elaborate on these. Many of the dynamics and problems triggered by Covid19 cannot be sufficiently analysed at this stage.

### *The worsening of gender-based inequalities in the course of Covid-19*

In the following media analysis, we are focussing on three aspects, that are revealed in the articles and videos most often and find answers to our research question. The outbreak of Covid-19 has worsened gender-based inequalities in many ways and we will outline concrete examples for the aspects we have elaborated in our theoretical part. The three main issues we will take a closer look at can be summarized as lack of infrastructure, increase of sexual violence and growing emotional burdens that female refugees are especially confronted with. As they are all logically connected with each other, we won't subdivide the following part because our aim is again to prove, how (different) inequalities influence each other, as the theory of intersectionality underlines.

At first, the lack of infrastructure in refugee camps, especially in Moria, is described as an omnipresent issue. Many areas of life in the camps are concerned with that. The fact, that many people don't live in appropriate shelters, but in tents or improvised accommodation made out of plastic waste is a perfect example for this issue. Naturally, tents cannot be locked and as a consequence, people (especially single women with or without children) and their belongings are not safe. All the buildings in Moria are fragile and pose a threat to people's security themselves. In September 2019 a woman and her child burned in a kitchen-container, because the electricity was not installed properly (Tagesspiegel, 2019)<sup>6</sup>.

During the outbreak of the pandemic, everywhere in the European media people were asked to "stay home" and act responsible to stop the ongoing spreading of the virus. This may be possible, if you have a flat, house or room, but was and still is impossible if you live in a tent in Moria. Often more than one family is staying in one tent or container. As mentioned above,

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<sup>5</sup> Many reports and articles are based on statements and analyses by people from aid organisations and NGOs. Although it is more important to refer to statements of the people affected, the secondary sources are of great importance.

<sup>6</sup> This article is not part of the media analysis as the incident happened before the outbreak of Covid-19.

many female refugees are confronted with domestic violence. It is obvious that aggressions and violent acts increase, when a lot of people are forced to stay “at home” in their small tent. As a consequence of the curfew, women are exposed to violence, even more than before, and at the same time violence increased. Women can't rely on the police, as there are nearly no officers to protect them from violent acts, or they just don't act when becoming witnesses of violent acts that often occur at night. A woman that talks in a video of Mare Liberum e.V.<sup>7</sup> says, that she became victim of a knife attack and when reporting that to the police, an officer told her: “If your safety is so important for you, you shouldn't have come to Greece!” (Mare Liberum, 2020), (Arte, 2020a).

Another consequence of the fact that more than one family is staying in one tent is that Muslim women are not able or do not want to remove their Hijab out of religious reasons, and because of unsafe and unprotected sanitation, they often can't wash. This can lead to serious skin problems and it becomes almost impossible to engage in everyday religious activities.

Already during the day, it takes a lot of time to use the toilet and people in Moria have to wait for hours in queues. But at night, it is so dangerous for single women to leave their accommodation, that they either need male company or just stay in their tent. This sanitary situation is especially hard for women who are pregnant or have their period (Arte, 2020b). If it is impossible for women to meet their basic needs such as going to the toilet and washing themselves, one can talk about serious violations of women's dignity. Furthermore, the most important advice doctors gave to fight the virus were to keep distance and wash their hands often. This is impossible if you have to wait for a long time for water, share an extremely small accommodation and live in a camp where five times more people stay than originally planned.

The immense burden because of emotional stress is rising for both genders. For women this is especially dangerous, as they are mostly the victims of GBV and men use violence as an outlet for their hopelessness more frequently than women (Infomigrants, 2020). This does not mean that all men are violent, it is a rather a tendency and of course it is also a result of bad living conditions. Men and women react differently to the challenging situation. Even though women are particularly confronted with issues of GBV, they tend to act more social. There is a video called *Lesbos in Quarantine* from the European culture channel Arte in which a male voluntary helper talks about his idea. “(I said) let's make masks. We have the women. Let's start!” (Arte,

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<sup>7</sup> Mare Liberum e.V. is an organisation that uses two ships to observe human rights in the Aegean. The aim is to draw attention to the dangerous escape route between Turkey and Greece, to strengthen solidarity and fundamental human rights.

2020a). What we have to question in this context is, if women really wanted to sew masks or if typical gender hierarchies are imposed. Obviously, men could have also sewed some. Nevertheless, it is impressive to see the commitment of women to the community which causes them so much harm.

Many rapes and other forms of sexual harassment occur, but women have no safe spaces to go to, after having experienced emotional or physical violence, as these places rarely exist in Moria (RDL, 2020). To cope a trauma, such places outside the camp are essential. In a radio feature of Radio Dreyeckland an activist argues, that solidarity between the affected women is the only way out of this vicious circle. This can only work if they have the necessary resources to come into conversation without interruption. Many aid agencies left the island because of the bad living conditions, and claim they won't come back until the Greek government improved something (RDL, 2020). It is also hard to establish safe spaces, as the socio-economic situation is changing rapidly and there is simply no space (within the camp and right now, people are not allowed to leave the camp). There is also no hope for a way out as European borders were closed and evacuations to the mainland focus on elderly people and children on account of the pandemic. (Female) Refugees are locked up like in a prison and in multiple articles, Moria is described as hell on earth (DW, 2018a).

All in all, it is obvious now, that GBV existed already before Covid-19, but incidents increased since the outbreak of the virus. We argue that this development is influenced by the lack of infrastructure and the growing emotional pressure on everyone, who lives under the curfew in the camp. These phenomena are frequently reoccurring in all the sources we used for our media analysis. Female refugees become particularly vulnerable to violent behaviour that is gender-based and disadvantages concerning their gender and status are interdependent. Right now, Greece is welcoming tourists again, but the lockdown was extended for refugees in camps all over Greece. It is undeniable that this treatment is discriminating, and especially female refugees are continuously suffering from these decisions (The Guardian, 2020c).

### *Current demands and prospects for the future*

As we have already mentioned in the theory section that people who experience structural discrimination like refugees and especially women refugees are not exclusively passive. In many different ways, people fight injustice, generate attention for the situation and support each other. The spread of the hashtag *#leavenoonebehind* (Leavenoonebehind, 2020) shows that the struggles are having an effect and that many people worldwide are showing solidarity. Despite many expressions of solidarity, the situation is still catastrophic because Greek as well as

European politicians are not acting. In our media analysis we came across many demands in politics which we would like to mention here. In addition, reports have shown that local women are joining together to stay hopeful and make a difference despite the catastrophic situation.

Many reports are revealing the urgent need to act. Residents living in Moria sent an open letter to the European Union, the governments in the European countries and the European public. They are describing the inhumane situation, the bad sanitarian conditions and the “double crisis” they are experiencing now: the circumstances in Moria and the fear of the pandemic (Tagesspiegel, 2020). They ask “How should we keep social distances, when thousands are waiting for food every day? How should we wash our hands when there is no water available? How should we isolate sick people if there is no space?”. Questions that need to be answered. They are underlining the necessity to evacuate the sick and elderly people as well as unaccompanied and sick children with their families.

In March 2020, the non-profit organization Médecins sans Frontiers demanded to evacuate migration camps such as Moria immediately (Médecins Sans Frontiers, 2020). The organization Human Right Watch did not go quite so far, but demanded that at least the weakest, such as the older people, pregnant women and women who have recently giving birth, be brought to safety. (HRW, 2020). Since then little has happened, there were calls in July for at least the freedom of movement of the refugees to be extended again (Infomigrants, 2020).

The political demands of refugees and aid organisations are trying to change the structural and political framework of the situation. In addition, our media analysis shows that those affected, especially the women, are organising on the ground to counter the situation. In April, the Atlantic Council headlined: “Refugee women: The most vulnerable and yet the most resilient in this pandemic” (Atlantic Council, 2020). This statement refers to reports that show that the women in the camps remain capable of action despite or precisely because of the pandemic. With incredible strength they defy the circumstances, sew masks for other refugees and share their stories worldwide:

“If I don’t help refugees like me, who will? We have been abandoned here and left to fend for ourselves to fight this virus that has shaken the entire world. But while governments take care of their own citizens, there is no one to take care of us. We feel like we belong to no one,” a young woman says (Atlantic Council, 2020).

This example shows the agency of the migrant women. From a feminist and intersectional perspective, it is especially important to make these efforts and struggles visible and to support them unconditionally. “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own”, Audre Lorde said in 1981 (Lorde, 1981, p. 10). This basic idea must also set the direction for contemporary feminist activism.

In our opinion these articles and videos succeed to embed our thesis, that GBV increased in course of the outbreak of Covid-19. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that our selected articles are all relatively short and sometimes fail to explain the phenomena of GBV from a more general perspective. To actually improve the situation of women in refugee camps, further research concerning the origin of the violence is necessary.

### Conclusion

It is undeniable that refugees are “among the world’s most vulnerable people”. (Jensen, 2019, n.p.) That is exactly why we wanted to engage with the circumstances people live in who are going through their migration process during the outbreak of the novel Covid-19 process. In the beginning of our research we asked the question: To what extent has COVID-19 changed the gender-based inequalities in a refugee camp? To frame our research, we looked through feminist and intersectional theoretical lenses, as we think there is an interconnection of social organisations such as race, class and gender. Inequalities concerning these social organisations do overlap and there exists an interdependent system of discrimination and disadvantage (Diab, 2019, p.7).

During our research process we realized, with a special focus on the Greek refugee camp Moria on Lesbos, that gender-based inequalities increased dramatically. On the one hand physical violence, that is mostly/often gender-based, became a bigger problem due to the lockdown in the camp and mostly women became victims of this phenomenon. On the other hand, so-called structural violence poses also a threat to female refugees, as the lack of health and other social services within the camps can be identified. To prove our arguments, we analysed certain articles and videos, which were published between 1st April and 10th July. Many specific examples that reveal gender-based inequalities could be found, such as the danger women perceive in camps during the night. They do not have the possibility to protect themselves as tents cannot be locked and they are not able to go to the toilet on their own, without being threatened. Female refugees experience interconnected inequalities because of their status as refugees and furthermore because of their gender.

The Covid-19 pandemic that shakes Europe and the world since March 2020 worsened the living conditions for those who were already disadvantaged. Border closures and the reduced aid of charity organisations caused even more human rights violations in that field. It is completely unclear what lies ahead and if a second Covid-19 wave will come in the European autumn. One thing is clear: It is necessary to learn from the things that were done wrong during the first wave and we should do everything to protect the rights of (female) refugees in European camps better. It is impossible to follow the same (hygiene) measures all over Europe, independently of the local living conditions. Before demanding social distancing from refugees, their general living conditions have to be improved. People from the overcrowded camps have to be evacuated to the mainland. As long as that is not done, social distancing stays a privilege and gender-based violence in camps will continue to increase.

The aim is to centre the situation of women during the challenging times and try to call the (academic) public's attention to the refugees that might have been moved to the fringes of the field. By writing this paper, we are entirely aware of the fact that we will not be able to present the difficulties in their entirety. This research should rather be seen as a first approach to the topic. Furthermore, we know that there are also other groups of people that are equally affected by the pandemic or maybe even worse. It is not the claim of this analysis to include every kind of disadvantages but to focus on one specific aspect of the pandemic. Further observations need to follow.

We, as a student's research team from Freiburg, are aware that we enjoy many privileges. We have the greatest respect towards refugees, who use their agency, despite the complex conditions they live in. Just as refugees are counted among the most vulnerable groups, they are also very courageous actors fighting for their own future.

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## Appendix 1: Media analysis

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# The Rainbow Struggle: How NGOs Make a Difference in the Integration Process for LGBTI\* Refugees. A Case-Study on Integration Challenges and Measures of Local NGOs in Germany.

By Lilli Mühlbach, Hannah Loskamp and Ulla Schlumpberger

## Abstract

This article investigates the integration process of LGBTI\* refugees - also referred to as Rainbow Refugees - on the local level in Germany. The NGO “Rainbow Refugees” in Munich serves as a case study. It includes interviews with five experts in different fields and corresponding practical projects from five sub-organisations. To analyse them, we made use of the thematic analysis and identified three main themes: *Asylum procedure*, *Living Conditions* and *Social sphere*, which represent different stages of the integration process. LGBTI\* refugees encounter different problems in each of these stages. This study is based on a theoretical queer migration approach. Subsequently we compared the challenges - on the basis of our codes - to the projects offered by the NGO. This will offer a deeper understanding of how the integration process works out for LGBTI\* refugees in Germany. Our findings underline the huge importance of NGOs as civil society actors on the local level, mostly as a help to recognise problems and prevent them during the integration process. This is especially striking when considering the rather inactive role of the state.

**Keywords:** NGO, Rainbow Refugees, Queer Migration, Intersectionality, Thematic Analysis

## Introduction

LGBTI\* refugees<sup>8</sup> - also described as Rainbow Refugees - face challenges that differ from other migration groups. After escaping from oppression or persecution in their home countries, they are often times still victims of discrimination in society, or perhaps of other refugees during their journey. When arriving in the new country, they are confronted with a difficult integration process. Officials in the country of arrival can often be ignorant towards a refugee's individual identity and experience (UNHCR 2015). While LGBTI\* refugees will not be portrayed solely

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<sup>8</sup> Here and in the following used for refugees who identify themselves as Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transexuals, Intersexuals or \*.

as victims in this paper, it will be highlighted in how far the integration process of migrants influences their further inclusion into society. A closer look into the integration program ‘‘Rainbow Refugees Munich’’ offers deeper insights of an example of opportunities and support for the special needs of LGBTI\* migrants during their integration process today in Germany. This overview also leads to more individual proposals to guarantee a successful integration in society.

We decided to do research in queer migration studies, as we felt that it is a topic of great significance and relevance also in the academic field of migration research. As a starting point the EU statement ‘‘There are no official statistics on the number of asylum claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Only a few EU Member States have specific national guidelines for interviewing LGBTI\* persons. [...] Support from civil society has a significant impact on the appropriate handling of asylum cases and applicants’ openness towards asylum authorities’’ (FRA 2017) triggered further discussion, influencing our research question. This is an attempt to shift the focus on the NGO's<sup>9</sup> effort to integrate LGBTI\* refugees in the host society.

Furthermore, this study focuses on civil society actors on the local level for several reasons. First, the state itself remains rather inactive. There are no official guidelines for LGBTI\* integration in Germany, neither on the state, nor on the municipal level. Second, NGOs as local civil society actors take on most of the work to integrate LGBTI\* refugees into society. They are the only actors to focus on queer refugees specifically. The NGO we chose for our case study offers a diverse program for Rainbow migrants, which is still missing in other regions of Germany. Moreover, this project offers propositions to apply in other cities as well. This study also serves as an indicator for the high-ranking position Germany owns in the Rainbow Index, where the country ranks on the 16th place for the asylum procedure during integration, out of 49 countries overall (ILGA-Europe 2020). This ranking will be critically examined and it will be concluded whether Germany fully adapts to that place. Even though the program is only investigated as a local initiative and thus cannot stand for the whole country, it can serve as a starting point for further studies, filling an important research gap.

Based on this, we developed the research questions ‘‘How do civil society actors on the local level make a difference in the integration of Rainbow Refugees? In what way do they recognise

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<sup>9</sup> Here and in the following used for Non-Governmental Organisation(s).

problems and take measures to prevent them along the way?’’ To best answer this and to fit our qualitative research, we chose the method of thematic analysis as the most useful approach.

This article is divided as follows. In the main part, our theory, data, method and the main themes will be introduced. Those main themes are the *asylum procedure, living conditions, and social sphere*. Each of these will be further analysed and compared to the programs offered by the NGOs in Munich, before our results are being summarised in the conclusion. Last but not least, we will look into how the civil society actors on the local level fulfill the needs of LGBTI\* refugees and end our article with the limitations we met during our research project.

### Theoretical Approach

Due to the diverse research field of migration and displacement, we found that multiple factors, such as race, ethnicity and gender, have to be taken into account during our investigations. Rainbow Refugees cannot be seen as a homogenous group. The factors mentioned before intersect, strengthen each other and can in their individual combinations make them more prone to discrimination and thus complicate their integration. Intersectionality can be crucial when for example race and sexuality are combined for Rainbow Refugees. Regarding their sexuality, the refugees seem to belong to the local LGBTI\* community, but nonetheless, because of their race, they can feel like an outsider. Therefore, queer migration studies is the best fit for our cognitive interest. This approach developed from a feminist sociology and expanded the migration area. Their main achievement was to open the blackbox of the homogen term “migrants or refugees” and put focus on different sub-groups, like homosexual refugees (Lewis and Naples 2014). Power structures and hierarchies in international politics are mainly influenced by gender, sexuality, or race (Luibhéid 2008). It is to say that “the intra-group diversities around sexual and gender identities [explore] the ways that (attitudes and experiences of) sexuality may also drive immigration, inform group membership, and affect integration in host societies” (Karimi 2018). Based on our data available, the main focus lies on how gender and sexuality structure the integration experience of refugees, which best answers our research question. This queer analytic framework “[is best] for revealing (...) the mobility of different bodies across many different kinds of borders” (Lewis and Naples 2014). This interplay of gender, race and sexuality also becomes visible when considering how “particular migrants [that are] legally vulnerable to deportation and violence” (Lewis and Naples 2014) are influenced by underlying power structures. This structuring of daily life by heteronormativity can be seen in many cases, as for example the accommodations for refugees that are structured according to the needs and interests of cisgender heterosexual refugees. This

is just one of the many fields where Rainbow Refugees are disadvantaged through hegemonic power relations. This theoretical approach helps to uncover underlying power structures in society.

### Data

This study uses information from interviews conducted by the local NGO ‘‘Rainbow Refugees Munich’’. Five experts, i.e. people that engage in refugee programs, were interviewed about their specific areas of expertise, such as therapy (Prousalis), accommodation issues (Glas), asylum procedures (Seidler and Held) and mentoring (Pflaum and Michel). Those interviews were published in 2019 on their official website and are accessible for everyone conducting their homepage. It is based on the information provided in each of those interviews that this study is built.

We have defined main themes that are being repetitively used by the experts or form the main part of speech. They are *asylum procedure*, *living conditions* and *social sphere*. These themes help to form an understanding of what is being considered important by the local NGO and where they lay their main points of focus. Some themes we find important to help integration of LGBTI\* refugees or prevent problems along the way, but noticed they were sparsely used in an interview or not used at all. This will be highlighted accordingly. Each main theme will be further sub-defined into codes.

After identifying them we compared the codes to the projects offered solutions in our case study programm ‘‘Rainbow Refugees Munich’’ and analysed missing solutions, also in accordance with existing literature on Rainbow Refugees. The program used as a case study is divided into five sub-organisations, each laid-out to specific rainbow spectrums, such as solely gays or only trans. Some of these organisations offer refugee-specific programs, while others encompass the LGBTI\* community in general. All information conducted for this research can be found on their websites.

### Method

Thematic analysis is a framework to analyze data, resulting in multiple main themes and codes. Despite being a commonly used method in research studies since the 1970s, thematic analysis has only recently become a recognised methodology. Furthermore, this method has been used in qualitative researches with similar cognitive interest as ours (c.f. Alessi et al 2018).

The single steps during a thematic analysis can be defined as follows. First, we started with the familiarisation with the data. We specifically read many diverse articles, further interviews and studies to get into the topic of LGBTI\* migration. The second step is coding. This is where we focused on data reduction by summarising our findings from the expert interviews of the “Rainbow Refugees Munich” into reoffered solutionsurring codes. We did so by identifying patterns, with the background literature and our research interest in mind. They were divided according to challenges and stages in the integration process. Third and similar, we summarised our former smaller codes by finding a heading for the different points of interests. As the fourth step during thematic analysis, we reviewed our themes by comparing them and coming up with their final names. It should be highlighted here that reviewing the paper was a constant process while engaging with our main themes and codes. Therefore, some points were changed throughout the project, as we gathered more information and became more engaged with our findings.

Thematic analysis is the most useful method for this study for several reasons. First, thematic analysis can be defined as identifying patterns in qualitative data, which we used in the form of interviews. Thematic analysis is a flexible approach, allowing us to collect data based on a relatively small number of interviews. However, these interviews are not our own in that we were not present when those were conducted. Yet thematic analysis as a flexible method allows us to use and examine the present data. We are particularly interested in patterns, main points and repetitions made in interviews that can be interpreted accordingly, and this is also the main focus of thematic analysis. As a result we developed our three main themes with further codes. Moreover, the method includes a review process, allowing us to double check the data conducted and thus guaranteeing more reliability and quality (Clarke and Braun 2006, 2016).

### Asylum Procedure

The following abstract deals with our first main theme *asylum procedure* from Rainbow Refugees during their application process for asylum in Germany. The codes we developed through the thematic analysis from the interviews are *Legal position*, *Reasons for the displacement and their legal recognition in Germany*, *Reasons for the denial of an asylum application* and *interview process*.

The interconnection between the codes is very obvious. *Legal position* and *Reasons for the displacement and their legal recognition in Germany* are pointing out the juridical framework and basis factors which are playing an important role in the asylum procedure. *Interview process* and *Reasons for the denial of an asylum application* are describing one of the most



important parts during the asylum procedure and on the other hand all the challenges that can result in a denial of the asylum application. Each code highlights the main challenges of the different steps throughout an asylum procedure in Germany especially in relation to the multiple discrimination of Rainbow Refugees. These heteronormative power structures and homogenous view on the group of Rainbow Refugees as excluded underlined in queer migration studies are highlighted in the following.

As the first code of three theme asylum procedure, *legal position* for Rainbow Refugees in Germany will be examined. As a member of the European Union, German law is based on European law and its rules for migration, building the judicial base for the whole asylum procedure. The decision from the European Court of Justice in 2013 declared it is not reasonable anymore to live out one's own sexuality in secret in any country, whereby a broader range of countries are now declared as being unsafe for Rainbow Refugees. But each asylum seeker has to prove his or her sexuality and need of protection in his or her application for asylum, making law enforcement an ongoing fight to acknowledge their threat (Seidler 2019). In general, there is an ongoing discussion over the whole law of migration, because of the different points of view inside the European Union and Germany. Literature points out that the clustering-system of "safe" countries of origin and the lack of a stringent criteria to categorise the countries in the German law is a violation of Article 3 of the Human Rights Convention, which is the right of freedom from torture, especially for Rainbow Refugees. A case-by-case-system would prevent this violation (Witschel 2017). Research projects like SOGICA (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Claims of Asylum), founded by the European Research Council, are calling for a reform of the Common European Asylum System (SOGICA 2018).

Next, the code *reasons for the displacement and their legal recognition in Germany* will be examined. There are two different types of persecution. First, in some countries the prosecution happens by the state, which adopted laws, criminalising the sexuality of LGBTI\* people. The second type of persecution happens through non-state actors. This could be the own family, who want to avoid the "shame" of a member with LGBTI\*-sexuality in existing cultural or religious moral systems (UNHCR 2013). But in reality, there are many cases in which the two types are mixed, for example the state in Senegal is not willing to protect LGBTI\* people from harassment and prosecution, or in Afghanistan the state cannot guarantee the protection caused by the unstable situation (Seidler 2019). Thereby the legislative hostility towards Rainbow Refugees is concentrated in Africa, MENA (Middle East and Northern Africa) and Asia-Pacific, as well as in regions of the Global North - such as Eastern Europe. The social exclusion and

other forms of violence have spread globally (UNHCR 2015). The experienced persecution leads to psychological stress like PTSD (Alessi, Kahn, Woolner & Van der Horn 2018). In Germany, both types of persecution can be used to justify a claim for asylum. It remains difficult however to prove sexuality which is such an individual and private aspect of life and personality. This can be done through evidence of visits to LGBTI\* bars and clubs, or through public outings like on a cover of a magazine or through the confirmation of a sex partner, to name but a few examples. But this method does not work for everyone, so there is a high risk of remaining invisible in their host country especially for Rainbow Refugees who experienced forced displacement (UNHCR 2015).

*Reasons for a denial of asylum application* is another code of our main theme asylum procedure. One of the reasons can be a domestic escape alternative e.g. living out their sexuality in secret in their home country. Whether this alternative works for a country is decided on the basis of law and individual decision. In reality, a so-called “alternative domestic escape” is mostly non-existent (Seidler 2019). Another reason is the lack of proof of the sexual orientation in front of the court. In general, the “proof” is difficult to present as described above, because of the individuality of the way of living out their LGBTI\*-sexuality (Seidler 2019). The DSSH-modell (difference, stigma, shame, harm) from a British barrister, Chelvan, is an attempt to get a more structured way of the proof of sexuality, but it still is not sufficient enough to capture all forms of the individuality of sexuality. The BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany) on the other hand often declares that the story, which the Rainbow Refugees tell about their (sexual) life are not detailed enough. Critics say that the education and environment have a huge impact on the individual and his or her treatment of their sexuality, which causes Rainbow Refugees to hide their sexuality under persecution (Held 2019). It can also be decided that the persecution is not reasonable to protect Rainbow Refugees with asylum. This missing proof of the LGBTQ\*-sexuality or definition of proof is an example of heteronormative power structures that are described in the queer migrations studies.

All these court decisions depend on random casts of judges, interviewers and translators and their individual attitude on refugees and LGBTI\*-Sexuality and the current Migration and Asylum law in Germany. Rainbow Refugees are confronted with discrimination factors from different sides and agents during the whole asylum procedure (UNHCR 2015) .

Since the interview at the BAMF is one of the most important sources for the decision in court, the code *Interview process* is a topic for itself. The interview processes for Rainbow Refugees are influenced by different factors like previous negative reactions to their sexuality and also

the public authorities in the form of the interviewer, translators, judges and other officers. So first and foremost there is the figure of the interviewer. Some interviewers do not want to hear the whole or detailed stories of Rainbow Refugees because of their brutality of persecution and torture. Under these circumstances, some experience will not be written down in interviews and thus cannot be proofed (Seidler 2019). Gisela Seidler, a professional lawyer focussing mainly on asylum rights, oftentimes intervenes in interviews with explicit questions to prevent this problem from happening. Another difficulty regarding the interview process is the sex or gender of the interviewer, effecting the openness from Rainbow Refugees talking about their sexuality. Especially a negative influence by male interviewers in the case of women who suffered under male oppression can influence the interview. The Rainbow Refugees can choose the sex of their interviewer, but oftentimes don't know about this right, which makes the guidance by NGOs very important to prevent these effects (Seidler 2019). The NGOs VivaTS e.V and Sub e.V in Munich offer personal guides or attendance for Trans\*women or gay men and Trans\*men for the whole interview process and the interaction with the German public agencies, to prevent misunderstandings based on language and cultural differences (Sub, VivaTS). Another influence on the outcome of an interview process is the personal neutrality and openness towards queer people and the officers' blunting towards individual experiences and individuality (e.g. judges or officers). At this point, special trained officers for Rainbow Refugees created a positive trend on good talk, handling and interview atmosphere (Held 2019). To raise awareness regarding the officers and generate this positive effect the NGOs LeTra, Diversity München and Sub e.V. are offering advanced training for officers especially to sensibilizes for the special needs of Rainbow Refugees (LeTra, Diversity München and Sub). According to Gisela Seidler, the BAMPF improved their catalogue of questions about sexuality which tries not to be too intimate. Another important role in the interview process is captured by the translator. Language problems or false translation can have a huge impact on the outcome of the BAMF decision. Causes for this problem can be lacking knowledge about the language or more importantly a negative approach to the LGBTI\*-sexuality based on cultural and individual values of the translator. In this case, the translator occupies a more active role on the Rainbow Refugee as he or she should in prompting the answers or translating only partly (Held 2019). The character and gender of the officers and the translators are making a huge impact on the outcome of the interview, therefore, this serves as another example of the interconnection mentioned in queer migration studies.

Of course, the interconnection and dialectical relationship of the form and content between our different codes is conspicuous, but the possibilities to act and change the frame of the codes is

located at different social players in Germany. Thus the local programm of the “Rainbow Refugees Munich” can only prevent the problems from the codes though direct positive changes like the guidance of Rainbow Refugees to the agencies or the positive indirect changes through the offer of advanced training for involved officers. The indirect positive change to the code *legal position* induces “Rainbow Refugees Munich” by raising awareness to the special needs of Rainbow Refugees through actions like the “Rainbow Refugees Stories”-project with photographs and a magazine from 2019 (Rainbow Refugees Stories) or activities like the CSD Parade 2019 from Sub e.V. in Munich (Sub).

In regard to the asylum procedure for Rainbow Refugees in Germany, the changes from the local NGO may only have small effects, but through a closer look the local changes by NGOs in each city are building the base to a greater change, also on the juridical circumstances for Rainbow Refugees in Germany. On the individual level, these positive changes are making a great difference and are essential, because without offers Rainbow Refugees would have a lot less help going through the asylum procedure.

In sum, the asylum procedure in Germany is very hard to go through for Rainbow Refugees without the help of local NGOs. This is caused by the several difficulties mentioned in our codes *legal position*, *reasons for the displacement and their legal recognition in Germany*, *Reasons for the denial of an asylum application* and *interview process*. Gisela Seidler, a lawyer for LGBT\*-asylum, says in her interview: “Many homosexuals experience a shock when arriving here and coming to an anchor centre. They are victims of violence from homophobic men, have no money and no access to legal advice. If it were me I would not come here!” (Seidler 2019).

### Living Conditions

The *living conditions* of every human being are profoundly shaped by the *accommodation conditions*, *discrimination of non-LGBTI\* refugees*, *the oppression of emotion*, and the *health care* available. Through analysing semantic patterns in interviews, such as recurring themes, we noticed the codes mentioned above. In the following, it will be looked at how Rainbow Refugees in Germany experience those codes named above that have an impact on their overall living condition in their country of arrival. In addition to that, it will also be briefly examined how the state responds to the projects of Rainbow Refugees Munich. This will be highlighted by the code *state response*. To begin with, Rainbow Refugees experience different living conditions than other, non-LGBTI\* refugees (c.f. Alessi, 2008, p. 14). This is a commonly used code in interviews of experts engaging with rainbow integration. For instance, they are subject

to harassment and vulgar treatments from other refugees (Alessi, 2008, p. 14). This can easily develop into mental stress and worries. From discriminating comments to actual physical violence, other refugees react differently and sometimes strongly to openly gay refugees in their accommodation (Alessi, 2008, p. 14).

This highlights the need of a specific and especially protected place for rainbow refugees. Other codes used are the *accommodation conditions* and *state response*. They form the main part of content in the interview with Michael Glas. The need for a protected accommodation becomes partly visible when considering the treatment the refugees encounter as named above. In Munich, as an example, Michael Glas created the first accommodation in Bavaria for LGBTI\* refugees only. The local government was aware of the lack of a protected accommodation, yet Glas was the first to actually tackle the problem, seeing rainbow refugees as an especially vulnerable group (Glas, 2019). He speaks of the living conditions for LGBTI\* migrants: a gay woman was transferred into an accommodation with only men around her – this Glas names a scandal.

*State response* is only an indirect code, meaning it becomes obvious when reading the interview, yet is not directly addressed by Glas and he talks only briefly about this. It shows how little local governments do to protect rainbow refugees and their specific needs, leaving it to individual actions to protect them. Glas strongly supports the government to address this matter and not leave it to others (Glas, 2019). This, of course, requires time, funding, and political will (Alessi et al, 2014).

Throughout the interview, Glas talks a lot about his accommodation project, which forms the main part of the interview: how he organised and financed housing specifically for LGBTI\* refugees. However, there is more that the program offers to address the issue of LGBTI\* discrimination and violence. In addition to protected housing, Rainbow Refugees Munich publishes a flyer specifically for LGBTI\* people having experienced violence. This contains information about advice, legal basis, and also advice on how to support friends who are subject to violence.

Regarding the code *health care*, rainbow refugees struggle to find services, as stated by Jakob Prousalis in the next interview. When keeping in mind that they face higher or additional risk of physical illness (e.g. HIV), it is striking that refugees struggle to find services in that they trust (Prousalis, 2019). For instance, they express fear that doctors will break confidentiality in countries where LGBTI\* refugees experience persecution (Rainbow Welcome Initiative 2014). Rainbow Refugees Munich offers tests for HIV. In addition, the program offers sexual health

counselling, and it can be assumed that this includes answering questions of where and how to be tested for HIV, or getting treatments as a Trans Person (source). Specifically, the program offers support for mental well being. This becomes obvious when analysing the interview of trauma therapist Jakob Prousalis. He names the complexity of mental disorder, which is not necessarily visible, yet leaves deep wounds. Whereas most refugees in general do not have access to good therapy, Prousalis highlights that it also depends on rainbow refugees themselves to show initiative. As a common theme, many try to oppress their traumata based on discrimination, neglect, or even torture experienced in their country of origin (Prousalis, 2019).

This code of *oppression of emotion* is commonly used in the interview. Yet Prousalis states it is vital to have good therapy as early as possible. Rainbow Refugees Munich offers a safe space for rainbow refugees to talk about their experience. It becomes obvious that the program focuses mainly on mental well-being. But the most important factor for mental well being is out of his hands: refugees need clarity in their asylum procedure (Prousalis, 2019). However, Rainbow Refugees Munich also offers advice for the asylum procedure, which is available on their website.

All in all, most codes named here are taken into account by Rainbow Refugees Munich. The NGO recognises specific needs of LGBTI\* refugees and addresses them appropriately. Additionally, it could be taken into account how refugees can get better access to health care, also insurance, or accompanying refugees to their first appointments, etc. While mental problems are being considered and treated, physical health seems to be neglected, but is equally important. This would be a valuable addition to provide improvement of living conditions.

### Social Sphere

The *social sphere* represents the social integration of the refugees in the country of arrival. It means “the process through which refugees become members of the society in which they are settled” (Georgaca et al 2010). We believe that social integration connects the refugee and the citizen, while not requiring full adaptation (Georgaca et al 2010). As a result we look at the effort of the society, represented by the NGO, in different social fields. This also allows us to answer another aspect of our research question. For LGBTI\* refugees the social sphere contains to a certain degree other dimensions than for refugees in general. To capture all important ones, we developed four codes, keeping previous studies and recurring themes in the interviews in mind. Thematic analysis was used during this process to identify patterns. The codes are *relationships, introduction to the queer scene, education and work*.

The UNHCR points out the risk of multiple forms of discrimination for LGBTI\* refugees. In many host countries there are parts of society, officers and other officials, as well as refugees that might treat LGBTI\* individuals in a harmful way. As a result, they do not have the same access to programs, like language courses, offered to other refugees, or they reject voluntarily. This shows the necessity of special services. The consequences for the social integration of LGBTI\* refugees are a missing support system and therefore a lack of educational programs. There is also the possibility of discrimination during work, which either leads to unemployment, exploitation or abuse. Therefore some LGBTI\* refugees have to face unsafe, illegal working conditions, for example in sex work. As a result, some feel the need to adapt to preexisting gender roles or hide their sexuality and identity. They might also not be able to lead relationships or depend on degrading ones. Cooperation with LGBTI\* NGOs are crucial to fight these problems (UNHCR 2013). In previous studies, LGBTI\* refugees mention the support and acceptance provided by NGOs. In some cases, individual refugees mention feeling like an outsider, due to a background of persecution in their home country (Alessi et al 2018). Other studies on interactions of LGBTI\* refugees with the queer community highlight similar findings. General societal tolerance of homosexuality often connects to white and middle-class individuals. In LGBTI\* communities the refugees experienced homonormativity and “othering” on the basis of ethnicity, nationality or class – they are excluded, “sexualized, racialized, and marginalized” (Karimi 2018). The queer migration studies approach uncovers these factors. A withdrawal from labor, as well as missing language classes and relationships can further complicate the integration process. Mentoring programs, for example, promote education and simultaneously social contacts (Losi and Strang 2008). The findings mentioned build on a positive asylum procedure and on the other hand influence the mental health of the refugees. Therefore all three themes are interconnected (Fox 2019). The background literature and the space in the interviews dedicated to the chosen codes shows their relevance.

Overall, the theme *social sphere* is mentioned less often than *asylum procedure* and *living conditions* in the interviews. A reason for this might be the choice of experts. With two experts for the legal process the theme asylum procedure is over represented. Besides, social sphere is a broader and less specific category than for example living conditions. Additionally, the code is oftentimes mentioned in reference to another one. Even if there is less literature and parts in these interviews dedicated to it, it is still a topic of high significance. In contrast, most of the projects offered by the NGOs refer to exactly these codes.

The code *relationship* is mentioned multiple times, the most by Seidler. As a lawyer she refers back to the first theme when talking about them. She highlights the importance of not hiding one's own sexuality and identity, as well as distancing or isolating oneself. This could lead to a denied asylum status. A sexual partner can also be a witness in the court and advance the asylum process. Contradictory, she talks about the anchor centre. In Bavaria, refugees are bound to a specific district, where the anchor centre is situated, for two years. This can turn out to be a hardship for long-distance relationships (Seidler 2019). Prousalis, the psychologist, shows how the social sphere is indispensable for traumatized people and therefore connects to mental health (Prousalis 2019).

Pflaum and Michel are two of the founders of the Rainbow Refugee Project. They offer different mentoring programs and refer back to its importance for social interactions and friendships, as found in the background literature. „Just like you are excited for your friends, we are happy about the mentees success, whether it is an apprenticeship, a job, or their first apartment.” (Pflaum and Michel 2019). The Sub offers such mentoring programs for refugees that could result in those social contacts. Otherwise there are multiple programs and events, that aim at establishing connections and possibly friendships, which are not always LGBTI\* specific. Examples are open-bars or board game groups. Because they are not refugee-specific, the organization diversity offers a buddy program, where refugees are accompanied to events. This can also serve as a starting point when having little social contact (Sub and diversity 2020).

For the *introduction to the queer scene*, Seidler once again accentuates the connection to the asylum procedure. Having evidence, like picture from queer bars, or the Christopher Street day can help a positive procedure (Seidler 2019). On the other hand, Pflaum and Michel confirm previous findings. The LGBTI\* community can prove to be a burden for LGBTI\* refugees. „Even in the so-called community I experience things like these. To me, they do not deserve their status regarding refugees.” (Pflaum and Michel 2019). This can depend on factors of intersectionality. All the sub-organizations from the Rainbow Refugees Munich connect to the LGBTI\* scene. The programs for the refugees are part of these organizations, which shows a general openness. Some also try to raise awareness and proclaim fighting for the refugees circumstances. Then again, only three of the five Rainbow Refugee sub-organizations have refugee-specific programs. The ones that do, offer information about and connection to the queer scene. There is also the possibility to take part in usual LGBTI\* events that are offered, like meetings or participation during the Christopher Street Day (diversity, Sub, LeTRa 2020).



The code *education* is talked most about by Pflaum and Michel. Pflaum previously worked as a mentor at the university, when he joined the project. Both confirm that the importance of the themes changes during the stage of the integration process. After an approved application for asylum and with factors of the living situation resolved, the social sphere moves to the center of attention. „By now practical questions about how to integrate the refugees have moved to the center. [...] How is an application written? Which things are important in a rental agreement? How is the tax return to be filled out?“ Meanwhile both of them testify that integration is a reciprocal process. They support the refugees in writing a résumé or finding a job or housing and introduce them to the queer scene. Otherwise they also educate the public about the refugees situation (Pflaum and Michel 2019). The Rainbow Refugee organizations offer different mentoring programs in the educational field. The information on them is available in different languages. The Sub and LeTRa teach German language courses specifically for LGBTI\* refugees. This is an important step, as background literature shows that discrimination in usual refugee courses can lead to refraining from them and be a hardship for the integration. They also have further programs to guide the daily integration and offer counseling in different fields. Some organization also try to educate the public about LGBTI\* topics, which shows the other side of the integration process (Sub, LeTRa, Viva 2020).

*Employment* is discussed from a legal perspective. Seidler mentions how the defining of certain countries of origin as safe will deny refugees from those countries the possibility to work (Seidler 2019). Pflaum and Michel also mention difficulties. While many workplaces are looking for people to employ and the refugees do want to work, the officials and departments can complicate or deny them this process. Otherwise they claim that work has high significance for a successful integration (Pflaum and Michel 2019). Discrimination during work is mentioned in none of the interviews. One of the Sub programs for refugees concerns employment and job-hunting. The organization TransMann refers to discrimination during employment and offers job-coaching. Still, this is not a refugee-specific program (Sub and TransMann 2020).

Overall many of the problems during social integration appear in the interviews, although not all of them are mentioned. The sub-organizations of the Rainbow Refugees Munich use different approaches to tackle many of these potential problems. They offer courses, for LGBTI\* refugees specifically and make sure that they can attend them without an environment of stigmatization. They introduce them to new social contacts through different programs and events. Otherwise they offer counseling in different fields, like harmful relationships. Because

all of them connect to the queer scene, the refugees can celebrate their identity and sexuality. The organizations also offer support for work-related questions. Altogether they find many useful ways to facilitate the integration in the *social sphere*. There are still more studies necessary to find out about the refugees' perspectives on these programs.

### Conclusion

Our conclusion aims to give clarity and transparency by highlighting the limitations we encountered during our research. Subsequently, we summarise our findings and results from our three main themes and connect them to the broader debate. Furthermore, we suggest research gaps and questions that remain open for discussion.

### Limitations

The research group of this project consists of white women, having grown-up in an industrial country and thus being influenced by their surroundings and aware of their personal bias. We were working as outsiders on the topic Rainbow Refugees and with a community-based approach, doing research on a community which was not actively involved. We did not conduct the interviews ourselves and did not include the experts and Rainbow Refugees from the "Rainbow-Refugees-Stories-Projekt" to our research process. We did not ask the questions and were also not present to examine the mimic and expression of the interviewers. Therefore, there were no direct interactions or exchanges, creating a distance between us, the researchers, and the Rainbow Refugees (Cetin 2019). To sum up, all our findings are based solely on the sentences provided on the internet. Our analysis was based on five expert interviews. This relatively small number of interviews contained much useful information, yet by no means did it offer an all-encompassing picture of LGBTI\* integration.

We are aware of the limitations thus created and kept this in mind throughout the project. The effort put into this study will hopefully create a foundation for further studies on LGBTI\* migration to fill the academic research gap, and also trigger improvement in integration programs. It has been shown that besides being a neglected field of study, the integration of LGBTI\* refugees is as important as any other integration of refugee groups. It should be noted specifically that the term of refugees and Rainbow Refugees cannot be understood as an homogenous group and it is on this understanding that we based our research project. Our theoretical aim respects the diversity and individual needs and characteristics specifically of Rainbow Refugees.

### Results and Suggestions

The main theme *asylum procedure* with the codes *legal position*, *reasons for the displacement and their legal recognition in Germany*, *Reasons for the denial of an asylum application* and *interview process* is the most tangible and publicly treated theme in science and society, because of the written input in the asylum law of the EU and Germany. The interconnection and dialectical relationship of the form and content between our different codes is conspicuous, but not always clear to see on the first view. Thus the NGO “Rainbow Refugees Munich” as an active society actor on the local level is preventing problems from the main theme asylum procedure through direct positive changes like the guidance of Rainbow Refugees to the agencies or the positive indirect changes through the offer of advanced training for involved officers. On the other side, “Rainbow Refugees Munich” is making indirect positive changes to the code *legal position* through awareness raising actions like the “Rainbow Refugees Stories”-project. This shows that there are concrete and important changes due to the direct and indirect positive changes from the civil society actor on the local level during the asylum procedure. But in general the personal guidance during the asylum procedure from the NGO seems so important and marks a great difference that it should be offered for every Rainbow Refugee. At the same time it is clear that the offers are restricted by factors like money and personal capacities.

Living conditions were defined as *health care*, *accommodation*, *the oppression of emotions* and *state response* to the actions of local NGOs. Overall, it has been shown that “Rainbow Refugees Munich” actively takes into account those codes named above, meaning the NGO offers services such as advice, therapy, or HIV tests to actively improve living conditions of LGBTI\* refugees. On a side note, Rainbow Refugees Munich could add a few more possibilities for migrants especially in the field of health care, such as vaccination information, health insurance, or accompaniment to doctor appointments if need be. Considering the NGO is still fairly new and also subject to change, this might be added to their services in the next few years. All in all, Rainbow Refugees Munich does a lot to change living conditions for LGBTI\* refugees for the better, thus influencing also their integration in society in the future.

While the theme *social sphere* is of high significance, it is the least mentioned in the interviews. The times it is mentioned, the findings agree with the background literature. The problem during integration in the social sphere that were coded by us are *relationships*, *introduction to the LGBTI\* scene*, *education* and *work*. Contrary, the NGO's developed multiple creative ways to prevent or fight these possible problems. This especially counts regarding relationships and introduction to the LGBTI\* scene, which connects to many of the programs. The Rainbow

Refugee Munich organisations recognise that integration is a two way process, and even though they mostly focus on the queer scene and refugees, they also try to educate the general public. Some of the organisations offer programs, which are refugee-specific, but this is not the case in all NGO's. This is an important feature that should further be developed. Together with *mental health*, these are the two longer-lasting themes that remain after a positive *asylum procedure*.

Overall, all three themes are interconnected and a positive result in the different spheres depend upon another. (Un)certainly about the asylum status will definitely influence mental health and so does the social sphere. Despite the medium high ranking in the Rainbow Index, the codes we developed represent the different fields where the refugees might encounter difficulties during integration in Germany. The results of our research about the NGO and integration process in Munich have to be carefully considered to be transferred to Germany as a whole. A NGO that focuses on the integration of LGBTI\* refugees specifically is a rarity, as are the worked out programs they offer. The diverse and broad offers from “Rainbow Refugee Munich” is neither a standard at different levels in Germany, nor elsewhere in Europe. Still, they can serve as a role model and further shine light on the stages of the integration process and creative solutions. This can happen in a scientific context, as well as the practical application. Nevertheless, there are many fields that still require more attention and work. Altogether, Rainbow Refugees Munich is a fresh attempt to improve and support LGBTI\* refugees integration.

The coding of the interviews and the offered solutions from “Rainbow Refugees Munich” showed clearly that civil society is the main and most significant social actor. Its importance also stems from the fact that the state remains largely uninvolved and inactive. The positive changes from the NGO may appear small at times since they only focus on the local level and their sources are restricted. Still, when looking at the bigger picture, each city is part of a greater change, when working actively to integrate LGBTI\* refugees and thus raising awareness in society. Besides, these improvements are essential for the individual refugees in their integration process.

Yet it is important to mention that the state cannot leave that whole responsibility for a successful integration process in society solely to local NGOs. Some of the tasks remaining, like the working permit or the asylum law, are clearly out of the NGO's and Rainbow Refugee reach and should not be a burden to them. If the state becomes more active and involved, this in turn also serves as a sign for the diverse and integrated society Germany should aim to

become. Potential for improvement on the state-side especially exists in terms of motivation for more local NGOs to develop, financial funding and enhancing the juridical system.

Through a greater active state and awareness in our society by scientific input and social actions, it will be possible to prevent and avoid multiple discrimination of Rainbow Refugees during their integration process.

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### Appendix 1: NGO's Websites

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## Appendix 2: Interviews from Rainbow Refugee Stories

Interview with Gisela Seidler by Alexander Holzer (Text & Interview) in 2019 on <https://www.rainbowrefugeesstories.com/gisela-seidler.html> (last checked on 10/08/20).

Eine Asylanwältin spricht über den Umgang des deutschen Rechtssystems mit homosexuellen Geflüchteten.

Kürzlich konnte sie einem Mandanten, der vor zwölf Jahren kurz vor der Abschiebung stand, zur Einbürgerung gratulieren: Wegen solcher Erfahrungen macht Gisela Seidler ihren Beruf gerne. Die Rechtsanwältin arbeitet seit 23 Jahren im Bereich des Asyl- und Ausländerrechts. Manche Klient\*innen betreut sie über viele Jahre hinweg. Beim Gespräch in ihrer Kanzlei im Münchener Westend berichtet sie über ihre Erfahrungen mit homosexuellen Geflüchteten. Obwohl es ein emotionales Thema ist, spricht sie sachlich – über diffuse Rechtslagen, Willkür, Schikane und desillusionierte Flüchtlinge.

Sie vertreten immer wieder Menschen, die in ihren Heimatländern wegen ihrer sexuellen Orientierung verfolgt werden. Wie geht das deutsche Rechtssystem mit solchen Leuten um?

Mit der Entscheidung des Europäischen Gerichtshofes vom November 2013 hat sich die Rechtslage stark verändert. Bis dahin galt es als zumutbar, dass Menschen ihre jeweilige Sexualität im Heimatland heimlich ausleben. Seit dem Urteil gilt das als nicht mehr zumutbar; jetzt reicht es schon aus, wenn Homosexualität in dem Land strafbar ist, ohne dass der Schutzsuchende selbst mit Strafe bedroht ist.

Also müsste sich die Situation für homosexuelle Geflüchtete hierzulande sichtbar verbessert haben?

Die Rechtsdurchsetzung ist ein dauernder Kampf. Kürzlich hat ein Gericht gegen einen meiner Mandanten entschieden, dass der Senegal für ihn sicher sei. Die Begründung: Die letzte Verurteilung von Homosexuellen habe 2016 und damit vor einiger Zeit stattgefunden. Ich habe dagegen herausgefunden, dass Betroffene seitdem wieder festgenommen und im Gefängnis geschlagen wurden. Die Festgenommenen wurden zwar freigesprochen, aber nur aus Mangel an Beweisen. Wenn jemand freigesprochen wird, weil man ihm die Tat nicht nachweisen kann, dann heißt das ja, dass sie immer noch als strafbar angesehen wird. Das Strafgesetz wird dort also noch immer angewandt.

Muss es sich immer um staatliche Verfolgung handeln? Wie ist es, wenn jemand von homophoben Banden verfolgt oder von der eigenen Familie geächtet wird?

Ich betreue auch viele Menschen, die wegen nichtstaatlicher Verfolgung anerkannt wurden. Hier müssen wir zusätzlich nachweisen, dass ihnen der Heimatstaat keinen Schutz bietet, entweder weil er nicht kann oder nicht will. Eine Anerkennung kann nur dann erfolgen. Ich hatte viele Fälle aus Uganda und dem Senegal, wo es sich fast durchweg um nichtstaatliche Verfolgung handelte und die anerkannt wurden. Im Senegal mangelt es an der Schutzwilligkeit

des Staates, in Afghanistan fehlt es teilweise schon an der Schutzfähigkeit.

Der Bundestag hat zugestimmt, die Maghreb-Staaten und Georgien als sichere Herkunftsstaaten einzustufen. Die Grünen wollen den Gesetzesentwurf im Bundesrat blockieren. Wie würde sich die Gesetzeslage auf LGBT\*-Flüchtlinge auswirken?

Natürlich hätte es negative Auswirkungen auf die Verfahren – aber auch auf die Wartezeit der Flüchtlinge. Betroffene Flüchtlinge dürften weder arbeiten, noch dürften sie aus der Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung ausziehen. Ich bin aber optimistisch, dass das Gesetz nicht zustande kommt.

Wie weisen Sie bei einer Anhörung nach, dass Ihr Mandant wegen seiner Sexualität verfolgt wird?

Das ist gar nicht so einfach – das hat man ja nicht schwarz auf weiß vorliegen. Aber man kann bestimmte Aktivitäten nachweisen. Viele zeigen Fotos, auf denen sie in einschlägigen Bars und Diskotheken oder auf dem Christopher Street Day zu sehen sind. Manche sind auch öffentlich aufgetreten, sind auf dem Cover von Magazinen zu sehen und haben Interviews über ihre Geschichte gegeben. Das wird als glaubwürdig angesehen. Niemand würde sich im Bayerischen Landtag auf ein Podium setzen und sagen: „Ich bin schwul“, wenn er es nicht ist. Das Risiko ist einfach viel zu groß, wenn es nicht stimmt. Ein Sexualpartner oder eine Sexualpartnerin kann auch als Zeuge aussagen. Schwieriger wird es, wenn sich jemand Zuhause verkriecht. Diesen Leuten entgegen Behörden und Gerichte meistens: Wenn du dich verstecken willst, dann kannst du das auch in deinem Heimatland tun.

Wie erfolgreich sind Sie damit, die Homosexualität der Mandanten nachzuweisen?

Ich nehme vor allem aussichtsreiche Fälle an und habe in dem Bereich auch alle Fälle gewonnen. Für aussichtslose Fälle fehlt mir leider die Zeit. Problematisch ist zum Beispiel, wenn jemand bereits mehrere Jahre in Deutschland lebt und erst dann mit seiner sexuellen Orientierung herausrückt und dafür Schutz bekommen möchte. Das kann man dann nur bis zu einem gewissen Grad mit Scham erklären. Bei den anderen Fällen Sorge ich dafür, dass ich von Anfang an bei den Anhörungen mitdabei bin.

Was können Sie als Rechtsanwältin bei der Anhörung beim BAMF bewirken?

Man kann schon bei der Anhörung dafür sorgen, dass alles ins Protokoll kommt. In einem Fall wurde einer meiner Mandanten in der Haft gefoltert, da sagte der Anhörer vom BAMF: „Das ist alles so schrecklich, das will ich gar nicht hören.“ Er ist aber nicht derjenige,

der die Entscheidung trifft, sondern ein Entscheider in Berlin. Wenn dieser das Protokoll bekommt und da steht nichts von Folter - also nichts Verfolgungsrelevantes - drin, dann wird er den Antrag natürlich ablehnen. Dem kann ich als Anwältin durch gezieltes Nachfragen bei der Anhörung vorbeugen.

#### **Was spielt noch eine Rolle?**

Wer die Entscheidung beim BAMF trifft und mit welchen Richter\*innen man es zu tun hat. Manche glauben einem schon mal grundsätzlich gar nichts, sind Argumenten nicht zugänglich und hören auch nicht neutral zu. Dann ist man ziemlich aufgeschmissen. Und man begegnet diesen Menschen immer wieder; manche Leute beim Gericht oder beim BAMF bearbeiten seit 15 Jahren dasselbe Land.

#### **Sexuelle Orientierung als Verfolgungsgrund ist ein sehr intimes Thema. Wie neugierig sind die Behörden?**

Die fragen nicht: „Wie oft haben Sie Sex miteinander?“ Aber sie wollen schon wissen, ob man mit seinem Partner bzw. seiner Partnerin ausgeht. Auch Gefühle werden angesprochen, ob man sich zueinander hingezogen fühlt, wann und wie man seine sexuelle Orientierung entdeckt hat. Es gibt einen Fragenkatalog des Bundesamtes, der die sexuelle Orientierung abfragt. Der geht aber nicht zu sehr ins Intime. Die Fragen sind soweit ok, das hat sich in den letzten Jahren verbessert. Aber es werden viel mehr Anträge mit teilweise abstrusen Begründungen abgelehnt.

#### **Zum Beispiel?**

Der Verweis auf die inländische Fluchalternative ist in den letzten zwei Jahren immer häufiger geworden – auch, wenn diese gar keine Option ist. In Uganda zum Beispiel ist Homosexualität strafbar, und zwar im ganzen Land. Lesbische Frauen werden dort oft vergewaltigt. Das nennt man dort „korrektive Vergewaltigung“. Deren Asylantrag wird mit der Begründung abgelehnt, sie können ja in einem anderen Landesteil leben. Das ist in Uganda natürlich Quatsch. Das Land ist nicht in Herrschaftsgebiete unterteilt und auch in anderen Landesteilen kommt das mit der Homosexualität irgendwann raus.

#### **Woher stammt die Idee, man könnte innerhalb des Landes fliehen?**

Das Konzept der inländischen Fluchalternative wurde für Länder entwickelt, in denen Teile nicht unter staatlicher Kontrolle sind. Wenn man im Zentralirak von Saddam Hussein verfolgt wurde, sollte man zunächst in den kurdischen Gebieten im Norden Schutz suchen, denn dort hatte das Regime keinen Zugriff. Solche unterschiedlichen Herrschaftsgebiete gibt es in Uganda aber nicht. Wie das die Rechtsprechung beurteilen wird, ist noch nicht klar. Zu den Ugandafällen liegen noch keine Gerichtsentscheidungen vor. Die

Ugandafällen liegen noch keine Gerichtsentscheidungen vor. Die haben sich alle aufgestaut und werden voraussichtlich in diesem Jahr entschieden.

#### **Ist Deutschland ein freundliches Land für Menschen, die aufgrund ihrer sexuellen Orientierung verfolgt werden?**

Ich kann vielleicht nicht für das ganze Land sprechen, aber zumindest für Bayern gilt: Das ist kein flüchtlingsfreundliches Land mehr. Die Menschen haben durch den Umbau des Asylsystems wirklich sehr schlechte Chancen auf Anerkennung. Dazu kommt viel Schikane durch die Behörden.

#### **Inwiefern werden diese Menschen schikaniert?**

Man versucht bewusst, Menschen, die einen berechtigten Schutzanspruch haben, rechtlos zu stellen. Bayern ist Vorreiter bei den Ankerzentren. Dabei sind die homophobsten Orte in Deutschland Flüchtlingslager! Rauskommen können sie aber auch nicht: Wegen der wieder eingeführten Residenzpflicht sind sie 24 Monate an den Landkreis des Erstaufnahmelandes gebunden, sind also eingeschränkt in ihrer Bewegungsfreiheit. Einer meiner Mandanten lebt seit über einem Jahr im Ankerzentrum in Bamberg, sein deutscher Verlobter ist hier in München. Mein Mandant hat den Antrag gestellt, dass er für eine Woche das Zentrum verlassen kann, um mit seinem Verlobten Weihnachten zu feiern. Das wurde abgelehnt.

#### **Wie reagieren ihre Klient\*innen auf solche Erfahrungen?**

Das Deutschlandbild vieler ist noch von der Willkommenskultur aus dem Jahr 2015 geprägt. Doch dass die bayerische Abschreckungspolitik es geschafft hat, die Stimmung im Land in so kurzer Zeit zu drehen, schockiert mich sehr. Für viele Homosexuelle wiederum ist es ein Schock, wenn sie hierher kommen und dann in einem Ankerzentrum landen. Die Betroffenen sind der Gewalt durch homophobe Mitbewohner ausgeliefert, haben kein Geld und keinen Zugang zu Rechtsberatung. Ich an ihrer Stelle würde nicht herkommen!

Interview with Dr. Nina Held by Dominik Wolf (Text & Interview) in 2019 on <https://www.rainbowrefugeesstories.com/nina-held.html> (last checked on 10/08/20).

Dr. Nina Held lehrt an der University of Sussex. Ihr Forschungsinteresse zu LGBT\*-Asyl entwickelte sich aus ihrer Arbeit in verschiedenen Menschenrechtsorganisationen. Sie ist Teil des vierjährigen Forschungsprojekts SOGICA, das in Deutschland, Italien und Großbritannien Daten zu den sozialen und rechtlichen Erfahrungen von Geflüchteten erhebt. Außerdem wurde sie bei der Auswertung von Fragebögen eingebunden, die von verschiedenen NGOs in Nordrhein-Westfalen an LGBT\*- Geflüchtete verteilt wurden und Fragen nach deren Erfahrungen in den Anhörungen des Bundesamts für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) beinhalten. Im Interview spricht sie über die Rolle von Anhörer\*innen, Dolmetscher\*innen und die Schwierigkeit, die eigene Sexualität zu beweisen.

**Was macht die Anhörungen von LGBT\*-Flüchtlingen so sensibel, dass sie eine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung wert sind?**

Da gibt es zwei Antworten. Einmal die der Geflüchteten: Wenn jemand aus einem Land kommt, in dem Homosexualität kriminalisiert ist und man gar nicht über seine Sexualität reden kann, dann ist die Frage, ob man sich überhaupt traut, in einer Anhörung etwas zu sagen, wofür man im Herkunftsland ins Gefängnis gekommen wäre. Und dann ist da noch die Perspektive der Behörden: Wie wird mit dem Gesagten umgegangen vonseiten der Anhörer\*in oder der Dolmetscher\*in?

**Inwiefern spielt denn das Geschlecht der Anhörer\*innen eine Rolle?**

Die meisten Geflüchteten wissen nicht, dass sie sowohl weibliche als auch männliche Anhörer und Dolmetscher beantragen können. Gibt es vorher Beratung durch NGOs, wissen mehr von ihnen Bescheid. Gerade Frauen, die vorher Gewalt von Männern erfahren haben, sind oft sehr eingeschüchtert. Einzelne haben gesagt, sie konnten überhaupt nicht über ihre Sexualität reden. Es ist deshalb sehr wichtig, den Geflüchteten schon vor den Anhörungen klar zu machen, dass sie das Geschlecht der Anhörer\*innen auswählen können.

**Welche Rolle spielen die Übersetzer\*innen?**

Die meisten Geflüchteten, mit denen wir gesprochen haben, haben negative Erfahrungen mit Dolmetscher\*innen gemacht. Die eine Problematik ist die Qualität der Übersetzung. Wenn Fehler in der Übersetzung gemacht werden, kann das fatale Folgen für die Entscheidung des BAMF haben. Die andere ist der Umgang der Dolmetscher\*innen mit Sexualität. Sie reagieren teilweise feindselig und spielen eine aktivere Rolle als sie sollten: Sie mischen sich ein und wirken auf die Geflüchteten ein, was sie sagen sollen und was nicht. Oder sie übersetzen nur die Teile, die sie übersetzen wollen, weil das andere ihnen persönlich widerstrebt.

**Helfen denn die Sonderbeauftragten der Behörden, also speziell für den Umgang mit LGBT\*-Geflüchteten geschulte Anhörer\*innen, hinsichtlich der Anerkennungsquote?**

Die Studie in Nordrhein-Westfalen hat gezeigt, dass alle sieben Geflüchtete, die einen Sonderbeauftragten bei der Anhörung hatten, eine Form der Anerkennung bekommen haben. Man kann allerdings nicht davon ausgehen, dass alles besser läuft, nur weil ein Sonderbeauftragter die Anhörung führt. Hinsichtlich der Sensibilität und der Art der Fragestellung machen sich aber positive Auswirkungen bemerkbar – einfach, weil diese Sonderbeauftragten besser ausgebildet sind. Trotzdem: Wenn jemand täglich die Geschichten von LGBT\*-Geflüchteten hört, droht auch bei ihnen die Gefahr der Abstumpfung.

**Was müsste denn passieren, damit all diejenigen, die für Asyl in Frage kommen, auch anerkannt werden?**

Eigentlich müsste sich die Kultur ändern. Wenn in den Medien die ganze Zeit von „Flüchtlingskrise“ die Rede ist, hat das natürlich auch Einfluss auf die Entscheider. Dann hält sich der Irrglaube, dass diese Menschen aus ökonomischen Gründen nach Deutschland kommen, hartnäckig in den Köpfen.

**Ist es überhaupt möglich, die sexuelle Orientierung zu beweisen?**

In England gibt es einen Anwalt, der ein Modell entwickelt hat, das DSSH-Modell. D steht für „difference“, S für „stigma“, S für „shame“ und H für „harm“. Sein Modell geht davon aus, dass man in den Anhörungen nach Anzeichen für diese vier Felder sehen kann. Aber auch das wird kritisch betrachtet – schließlich lebt jeder seine Sexualität anders aus und hat seine eigene Geschichte. Oft wird beim BAMF argumentiert, die Geschichten seien nicht detailliert genug. Dass die Menschen, die da ihre Geschichten erzählen, verschieden sind, bleibt oft unberücksichtigt. Unsere Empfehlung ist, die sexuelle und geschlechtliche Selbstidentifikation zu akzeptieren und das Zusammenspiel verschiedener sozialer Faktoren zu berücksichtigen. Wie jemand aufgewachsen ist, welche Bildung er genossen hat, was er erlebt hat. Das Gesamtpaket zählt.

## Interview with Jakob Prousalis by Maria Christoph (Text & Interview) in 2019 on

<https://www.rainbowrefugeesstories.com/jakob-prousalis.html> (last checked on 10/08/2020).

Einschlagende Bomben, ein Messerangriff im Club, sexueller Missbrauch – katastrophale Erlebnisse, die ein psychisches Trauma auslösen können.

Erlebnisse, die ein Mensch nicht direkt verarbeiten kann und deswegen zu verdrängen versucht. Ein Trauma ist die unterbewusste Schutz-Reaktion des Körpers darauf. Das Gehirn stellt auf dauerhaften Alarmzustand. Es kann bis zu vier Wochen dauern, bis das Erlebte verarbeitet ist. In dieser Zeit haben Betroffene oft Alpträume, leiden unter Angstzuständen. Bei drei bis acht Prozent wird das Leiden jedoch chronisch. Wer unter einer Posttraumatischen Belastungsstörung, kurz PTBS, leidet, hat über Jahre Alpträume und Flashbacks. Bilder bleiben mit Emotionen verknüpft und lösen immer wieder Stress aus. Menschen mit PTBS fühlen sich ständig mit Gefahr konfrontiert, das verändert ihr Gehirn, ihr Denken, Fühlen und Handeln im Alltag.

Ob jemand unter einer PTBS leidet, hängt von der eigenen sogenannten „Resilienz“ ab. Aber auch davon, wie häufig jemand eine katastrophale Erfahrung macht. Nach 25 oder mehr Episoden ist die PTBS sogar unausweichlich, wie Forscher der Universität Konstanz herausfanden.

20 Prozent der Bevölkerung in Nord-Uganda etwa sind an PTBS erkrankt,

solchen traumatischen Erlebnissen zu widersetzen – manche Menschen sind „resilienter“ als andere. Doch je länger der Körper einer seelischen Belastung ausgesetzt ist, desto schwerer ist es, sich dieser zu widersetzen. Zeit ist also ein wichtiger Faktor.

**Was ist das Problem bei der Behandlung traumatisierter Geflüchteter?**

Viele geflüchtete Menschen haben eine sehr schlechte psychiatrische Anbindung und Versorgung. Das beobachte ich immer wieder. Häufig wird die Traumatisierung aber auch gar nicht erkannt oder bagatellisiert. Erst vor kurzem kam jemand zu mir, der von einem Arzt weggeschickt wurde mit dem Vermerk: Anpassungsstörung. Manche Geflüchtete sagen selbst „Mir geht es gut“, obwohl das nicht stimmt. Verdrängung und Scham sind wichtige Merkmale für eine Traumatisierung – und belastend für den Körper. Denn dieser erinnert sich an das Erlebte. Wir haben das nach dem Vietnamkrieg und beiden Irakkriegen beobachten können: Die Soldaten sind zurückgekehrt, haben zunächst normal gearbeitet, doch dann traten nach und nach eine Anzahl von Begleiterkrankungen der PTBS auf, die die klassische Medizin nicht erklären konnte.

**Was muss passieren, um den Betroffenen besser helfen zu können?**

Zunächst muss das Trauma jedes Einzelnen als solches anerkannt werden. Für Geflüchtete mit LGBT\*-Hintergrund ist die Unterbringung in sogenannten „Safe-Houses“ besonders wichtig. Ein bisschen Geld, ein Dach über dem Kopf und eine primäre Asylberatung sind wichtig, reichen jedoch nicht aus. Die Menschen wollen vor allem Klarheit über ihren Aufenthaltsstatus. Sobald sie wissen, ob sie in Deutschland bleiben dürfen, kann eine Therapie ihnen helfen, herauszufinden, wer sie vor der Flucht waren, wer sie heute sind und wer sie künftig sein wollen.

nachdem sie 20 Jahre lang im Bürgerkrieg lebten. Aber auch andere Faktoren unterstützen die Entwicklung einer PTBS – wie Unsicherheit über den Aufenthaltsstatus. Menschen, die aus einem Krisen- oder Kriegsgebiet kommen und sich noch im Asylverfahren befinden, zeigen beispielsweise mehr Symptome auf als bereits anerkannte Flüchtlinge, fand eine Studie der Cambridge University mit Asylsuchenden und Geflüchteten aus dem Jahr 2015 heraus.

Eine besondere Stufe der PTBS ist die „komplexe PTBS“. Die Betroffenen wurden über eine lange Zeit traumatisiert und leiden dann zusätzlich unter sogenannten Begleiterkrankungen: Sie sind abhängig, depressiv, haben eine Essstörung oder auch körperliche Schmerzen. Menschen, die wegen ihrer sexuellen Orientierung ihr Heimatland verlassen haben, seien häufig komplex traumatisiert, sagt der Psychotraumatologe Jakob Prousalis. Er ist Mitglied der Gesellschaft für Psychotraumatologie, Traumatherapie und Gewaltforschung, und betreut traumatisierte LGBT\*-Geflüchtete für die Schwulenberatung Berlin.

**Warum wissen wir so wenig über die Traumatisierung von LGBT\*-Geflüchteten?**

Die Psychotraumatologie ist eine sehr junge Wissenschaft. Besonders in der Beratung von LGBT\*-Geflüchteten müssen wir noch viel Pionierarbeit leisten, immer wieder Grundlegendes erklären: Was ist ein Trauma? Welche Anbindung zu psychosozialer Versorgung brauchen traumatisierte Menschen? Und wieso ist die sexuelle Identität eines Menschen ein besonders vulnerabler Faktor? Wir

**Herr Prousalis, wer sind die Menschen, mit denen sie täglich zu tun haben?**

Die Menschen, mit denen ich arbeite, waren über Jahre verschiedenen traumatischen Belastungen ausgesetzt. Sie kommen aus politisch instabilen Ländern oder Regionen nach Deutschland, traumatisiert wurden sie aber bereits vor ihrer Flucht: Wegen ihrer sexuellen Orientierung lehnte die Familie sie ab, die Gesellschaft grenzte sie aus oder sie saßen sogar eine Zeit lang in Haft. Geflüchtete mit LGBT\*-Hintergrund projizieren diese Erlebnisse und Gewalterfahrungen – auch auf emotionaler Ebene – auf die eigene Identität, die sich dadurch verändert. Vor allem die sexuelle Orientierung und die Geschlechtsidentität sind sensible Faktoren in der Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit eines Menschen.

**Woran erkennen Sie ein psychisches Trauma?**

Oft kann man sie nicht sehen. Doch sie bleiben Wunden. Ein psychisches Trauma ist eine schwere Art der Selbstverletzung. Viele wissen nicht, dass sie betroffen sind. Es ist eine Überforderung der psychischen Schutzmechanismen durch Krieg, Misshandlung, Ausgrenzung. Unser Körper und unser Gehirn hat die Fähigkeit sich

brauchen mehr Fachmenschen, Psychotraumatologen, die sich damit auskennen und verstehen, dass ein Mensch mit einer Trans-, Inter- oder anderen Gender-Identität völlig andere Bedürfnisse hat, als ein anderer Traumatisierter aus einem Krisengebiet.

## Interview with Michael Glas by Leonie Hudelmaier (Text & Interview) in 2019 on

<https://www.rainbowrefugeesstories.com/michael-glas.html> (last checked 10/08/2020).

Michael Glas, Gesch.ftsführer von Fliederlich e.V. dem schwul-lesbischen Zentrum Nürnberg, hat Anfang 2016 mit seinem Verein und der Stadt Nürnberg die erste geschützte Unterkunft für LGBT\*-Geflüchtete in Deutschland eröffnet. Mittlerweile sind daraus zwei Schutzunterkünfte mit einem Platz für ungefähr 50 Geflüchtete geworden. Im Interview erzählt er, wie er durch einen Zufall und mit viel Eigeninitiative eine geschützte Unterkunft ins Leben gerufen hat.

**Was war der persönliche Auslöser dafür, dass Sie eine geschützte Unterkunft ins Leben gerufen haben?**

Ende 2015 kamen zwei junge Männer aus dem Norden Iraks zu uns. Es waren zwei schwule Männer, die Angst hatten, in ihrer Gemeinschaftsunterkunft von Landsleuten diskriminiert zu werden. Und die beiden waren nicht die einzigen Geflüchteten mit dieser Sorge. Immer mehr LGBT\*-Geflüchtete kamen zu uns und fragten uns: Wie kann ich mich auf mein Asylverfahren vorbereiten? Und: Wo kann ich unterkommen, ohne von Landsmännern verurteilt oder gar angegriffen zu werden? Das ohne, dass wir groß Werbung für unser Angebot gemacht hätten.

**Was erleben LGBT\*-Geflüchtete in den regulären Unterkünften?**

Es geht los mit Befürchtungen, wie die eigenen Landsleute in der Stammunterkunft reagieren, wenn sie von der sexuellen Orientierung ihrer Mitbewohner erfahren. Das ist schon eine relativ starke psychische Belastung, bei der man auch aktiv werden muss. Weiter geht es mit diskriminierenden Bemerkungen über Beschimpfungen, bis hin zu tatsächlich tätlichen Übergriffen. Da hatten wir zum Glück nicht viele, aber schon paar Vorkommnisse. Daraus entstand die Idee einer Schutzunterkunft.

**Wie kam es dann zu der ersten Schutzunterkunft?**

Das war ein purer Zufall. Durch Zufall traf ich in Nürnberg einen alten Bekannten. Wir unterhielten uns ein bisschen. Er erzählte, dass er nicht mehr in Nürnberg wohnt. Dann ist mir eingefallen, dass ihm und seiner Frau ein kleines Gewerbegebäude gehörte, in dem sie auch ihre Wohnung hatten. Also fragte ich ihn: Wie schaut es denn mit dem Haus aus? Es kam heraus, dass es leer stand. Daraufhin sind wir uns relativ schnell einig geworden, dass er uns das Gebäude für die Unterbringung von Geflüchteten vermietet. Wir haben dann einfach zugeschlagen und gesagt: „Ja, wir machen das!“

außer ihrer Zimmermitbewohnerin nur Männer untergebracht sind. Das ist einfach die Katastrophe schlechthin! Aus solchen Fällen kommt auch unsere politische Forderung an die Staatsregierung: Man kann nicht immer nur die Kommunen in die Pflicht nehmen, entsprechende Schutzunterkünfte zu schaffen. Da kann man nicht sagen „Liebe Kommune, mach du das mal aus deinem Etat.“ Die Staatsregierung könnte die Schutzunterkünfte auch in die bayerischen Städte verlegen, aber dann muss die Staatsregierung auch dafür bezahlen. Dabei muss ganz klar sein, dass die LGBT\*-Geflüchteten auch in die entsprechenden Städte zugewiesen werden – und zwar problemlos und nicht immer mit einem ewigen Kampf!

**Gab es dabei auch ein Risiko, dass sie eingegangen sind?**

Unser Risiko war zunächst mal, dass wir uns erst, nachdem wir den Vertrag hatten, an die städtischen Stellen wandten. Dort haben wir aber offene Türen eingerannt. Denn die Stadt hatte das Problem auch schon auf dem Schirm. Mit ihr sind wir uns dann auch relativ schnell handelseinig geworden. Und haben dann den Vertrag abgeschlossen, dass wir Leute unterbringen können und dafür eine finanzielle Entschädigung bekommen.

**Eine Unterkunft zu wechseln ist bekanntlich nicht immer einfach. Wie lief das im Fall der Schutzunterkunft ab?**

Durch einen guten Kontakt zu der zuständigen städtischen Stelle in Nürnberg haben wir die Unterkunft innerhalb von vier bis sechs Wochen voll belegen können. Der große Vorteil war dabei, dass die betroffenen Flüchtlinge von der Regierung sowieso schon der Stadt Nürnberg zugewiesen waren und daher in anderen städtischen Großunterkünften untergekommen waren. Von daher war die Regierung von Mittelfranken also außen vor.

**Wie wird sichergestellt, dass die Menschen in den Unterkünften auch wirklich geschützt sind?**

Außen an den Unterkünften hängen jetzt keine großartigen Schilder. Von Organisatoreseite wurde die Adresse auch nicht bekannt gegeben. Wir haben dann aber festgestellt, dass die Bewohner und Bewohnerinnen diesbezüglich nicht immer so strikt waren. Aber zum Glück hat es deswegen bisher keine Probleme mit homophoben Übergriffen gegeben.

**Welche Verbesserungen wünschen Sie sich im Bezug auf die Schutzunterkünfte?**

Das größte Problem ist, dass uns keine Geflüchteten mehr zugewiesen werden. Wenn ich die Gruppe LGBT\*-Menschen als eine besonders gefährdete Gruppe definiere, für deren Unterbringung es auch vom Bundesfamilienministerium gesetzliche Mindeststandards gibt, dann bräuchten viel mehr Menschen einen Platz in einer Schutzunterkunft. Die gibt es in Bayern aber nur in zwei, drei Städten. Da machen so Vorfälle wie kürzlich keinen Sinn: Eine lesbische Frau wurde von Nürnberg, wo es geschützte Unterkünfte gibt nach Krumbach in Schwaben verlegt. In eine Unterkunft, in der

Interview with Stephan Pflaum and Thomas Michel by Viktoria Spinrad (Text & Interview) in 2019 on [https://rainbowrefugeesstories.com/stephan-pflaum\\_thomas-michel.html](https://rainbowrefugeesstories.com/stephan-pflaum_thomas-michel.html) (last checked on 14/08/20).

Als die Münchner 2015 die Flüchtlinge am Hauptbahnhof willkommen heißen, war Thomas Michel und Stephan Pflaum klar: Unter ihnen müssen auch schwule Menschen sein, die vor Repressalien in ihren Heimatländern geflohen sind.	freue ich mich mit meinen Mentees über ihre Erfolge, sei es eine Ausbildung, eine feste Arbeit oder die erste eigene Wohnung“, sagt Pflaum. Auch Michel fühlt sich in seiner ehrenamtlichen Arbeit bestätigt. „Es gibt einen sichtbaren Unterschied, ob die Geflüchteten Unterstützung haben oder nicht“, sagt er.
Thomas Michel war zu der Zeit bereits langjähriger Gast im SUB und engagierte sich für gleiche Rechte für Homosexuelle. Er kannte die Szene und fasste einen Entschluss: Die Neuankömmlinge, die so denken und fühlen wie er, sollen nicht im Regen stehen. Er fand Mitstreiter, zusammen gründeten sie die „Rainbow Refugees Munich“, ein ehrenamtliches Projekt für schwule Geflüchtete. „Dass Menschen, die in ihrer Heimat wegen ihres Schwulseins oft sogar um ihr Leben fürchten mussten und alles verloren haben, Unterstützung brauchen, um sich hier bei uns ein neues Leben aufzubauen, war für mich irgendwie selbstverständlich“, sagt er.	Was ist das Ziel der Organisation? SP: Beim Ankommen zu helfen, im Umgang mit den Behörden zu unterstützen bis hin zu, dass schwule Geflüchtete unsere Szene hier verstehen und selbstbewusster Teil davon werden können. TM: „...und die Öffentlichkeit über die schwierige Situation von schwulen Geflüchteten zu informieren.“
Ein Gedanke, mit dem er nicht alleine war. Mit Bestürzung verfolgte Stephan Pflaum zu der Zeit die Hasskommentare im Internet „gegenüber allen und allem Fremden“. Der 44-Jährige entschied sich, nicht nur im Internet dagegenzuhalten, sondern auch im realen Leben. Mentoring, damit kannte er sich sowieso aus: Er arbeitet beruflich als Mentor an einer der Münchner	Wie kommen die Refugees zu Ihnen und woher wissen sie, dass es euch gibt? TM: Social Media, Sozialarbeiter in den Sammelunterkünften, andere Refugee-Organisationen, Flyer, Plakate, Mundpropaganda.
Universitäten, vernetzt Studierende aller Fächer mit Mentor*innen aus allen Branchen und Berufen. Und so stieß auch er zum Projekt dazu.	Wie helfen die Mentoren den Refugees? SP: Zu Beginn geht es darum, sich mit dem Asylverfahren auseinanderzusetzen. Das geht von der Vorbereitung auf Anhörungen bis hin zur persönlichen Begleitung dorthin. Später geht es mehr um Fragen, die sich auch den Einheimischen stellen: Wie schreibe ich einen Lebenslauf, ein Bewerbungsschreiben, finde eine Wohnung, usw.
Drei Jahre sind vergangen. Michel hat seitdem zehn schwule Flüchtlinge intensiv betreut, viele zeitweise unterstützt und das Projekt nach außen vernetzt und öffentlich bekannt gemacht. Acht seiner Mentees haben einen positiven Asylbescheid erhalten. Auch Pflaum ist durchaus stolz auf seine Quote: Die Hälfte seiner 15 Mentees sind anerkannt, wobei sie zunächst abgelehnt wurden und er den Spieß dann doch noch im Sinne seiner Schützlinge umdrehen konnte.	Wie finanziert sich die Organisation? TM: SUB-Projektförderung, Mentorenpauschalen der Bundesregierung und Spenden.
Der Schlüssel, sagen beide, ist der enge und bisweilen hartnäckige Kontakt zu den Entscheidungsträgern, den Behörden. Die Perspektive der Sachbearbeiter zu verstehen, darin sind sie in der Zwischenzeit beide Experten geworden. Michael formuliert es mit einem Augenzwinkern: „Man lernt, Behördenmitarbeiter zu verstehen und mit ihnen ergebnisorientiert zu kommunizieren.“	Wie ist das Verhältnis zwischen der RR-Organisation und dem SUB? TM: Wir sind ein ehrenamtliches Projekt des SUB, das inzwischen auch durch zwei von der Stadt finanzierten Sozialarbeiter unterstützt wird. SP: Die Ehrenamtlichen können sich viel intensiver mit den einzelnen Personen und Persönlichkeiten befassen. Das ist auf der hauptamtlichen Ebene kaum möglich – und mit Blick auf eine
Das wird für ihre Arbeit besonders dann wichtig, wenn einer ihrer Schützlinge einen negativen Asylbescheid in der Hand hält – trotz	notwendige professionelle Distanz auch nicht sinnvoll.
Verfolgung im Heimatland. Dann geht es darum, eine zweite Anhörung einzufordern. Worauf es dann ankommt, hat Stephan Pflaum gelernt: eine detaillierte, stimmige Fluchtgeschichte und so viele Nachweise wie möglich. Doch die Arbeit der beiden endet nicht mit dem positiven Asylbescheid. Mittlerweile geht es vielmehr um die Frage: Wie lassen sich die Neuankömmlinge integrieren? Die kommen mittlerweile mit ganz praktischen Fragen zu Michel und Pflaum. Wie schreibe ich eine Bewerbung? Auf was muss ich bei einem Mietvertrag achten? Wie fülle ich eine Steuererklärung aus?	Mit welchen anderen Projekten kooperieren Sie? TM: Wir kooperieren mit fast allen Refugee-Projekten in München: Lichterkette, Arrival Aid, Münchner- und Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat, Matteo, Münchener Freiwillige – und natürlich vielen Rechtsanwälten, die Geflüchtete unterstützen. SP: Ich selbst arbeite bei meinen Mentees mit akademischem Background sehr eng mit den Students4Refugees zusammen.
Dabei sind es natürlich die Erfolge, die die beiden motivieren: Ein Flüchtling, der erst abgelehnt wurde – zum Beispiel, weil er sich gar nicht traute zu sagen, dass er schwul ist – und nach einer weiteren er kämpften Anhörung doch anerkannt wird. Eine bezahlbare Wohnung, die einem Geflüchteten den Start in ein neues Leben ermöglicht. Ein Flüchtling, der einen Ausbildungsvertrag bekommt oder eine Arbeit findet. Denn, davon ist Michel überzeugt, „Arbeit ist der Schlüssel für das neue Leben in Deutschland“.	Wie stellen Sie fest, ob ein Refugee wirklich schwul ist oder die Organisation möglicherweise als Alibi benutzen will, um anerkannt zu werden? SP: Das merkt man mit der Zeit an Dingen wie: Kommt er regelmäßig zu Events? Nimmt er mit Begeisterung am CSD teil? Wie agiert er mit anderen Schwulen? Engagiert er sich in Projekten? Ein festes Muster der „Erkennung“ gibt es da nicht. Es geht ums Gesamtbild, das man mit der Zeit gewinnt. Schwarze Schafe gibt es mit Sicherheit, aber die fliegen früher oder später auf.
Ein Prozess, der Mentoren-Beziehungen zum Teil auch in Freundschaften verwandelt. „Wie man sich mit jedem guten Freund über etwas freut, so	TM: Als Mentor lernt man seinen Mentee sehr gut kennen und eine

Verfolgungsgeschichte, die glaubhaft sein soll, kann man nur schwer erfinden. Und die Gefühle, die man dabei erlebt, schon gar nicht.

**Mit welchen Problemen haben Sie in Ihrer Arbeit zu kämpfen?**

**SP:** Am meisten nervt mich die insbesondere von bayerischen Behörden oft gepflegte Kultur des Verweigerns, Ablehnens, Verhinderns. Ich weiß nicht, wie viele meiner Mentees bereits Arbeits- und Ausbildungsverträge oder Studienzugangsberechtigungen in der Hand hatten und sofort mit einem Studium, einer Ausbildung oder einem Job hätten anfangen können – würden die Behördenmitarbeiter ihre Ermessensentscheidung nicht oft zu Ungunsten der Flüchtlinge auslegen. Immer wieder werden nach Salamiaktik neue Steine in den Weg gelegt. Die müssen von uns gemeinsam mit den Mentees mühsam, manchmal dann auch vor Gericht, aus dem Weg geräumt werden. Das dauert und macht alle Beteiligten müde, soll sie vielleicht auch müde machen. Und das, obwohl Handwerk und Industrie händeringend Auszubildende, Angestellte und Arbeiter suchen, unsere Mentees sofort einstellen würden.

**Wie sehen Sie das, Herr Michel?**

**TM:** Mir geht es wie Stephan. Es ist wie oft im Leben: in schwierigen Situationen kann man erleben, wie einfühlsam und wirklich hilfsbereit Menschen sind. Ich hatte zumindest das Glück, in allen Behörden auch auf Menschen zu treffen, die nach Lösungen gesucht und sie deshalb auch gefunden haben. Das war eine gute Erfahrung! Was mich etwas ratlos macht, ist die Gleichgültigkeit und das Wegschauen von Vielen. Erst haben es die Rechtspopulisten geschafft, das Thema Flucht zum Dauerthema zu machen und immer wieder negativ zu besetzen, obwohl es anfangs ja viel Verständnis für Geflüchtete gab. Jetzt scheint die Öffentlichkeit sich am liebsten gar nicht mehr mit dem Thema beschäftigen zu wollen. Das beobachte ich leider auch bei den Parteien, die sich anfangs auf die Seite der Geflüchteten stellten. Auch in unserer sogenannten „Community“ erlebe ich das so. Die hat ihren Namen in Bezug auf Geflüchtete für mich nicht verdient. Daher liegt es an Wenigen, schwule und lesbische Geflüchtete zu unterstützen. Und die können nicht mehr alles leisten, was nötig wäre, um Rainbow Refugees wirksam zu helfen, sich hier bei uns ihr neues Leben aufzubauen.



# Invisible Residents? - A case study on female African refugee's and migrant's (in)visibility in public space

By Sarah Rondot, Anton Held, Daniela Sauer

## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to critically question and examine the common image of women of colour and refugees as being passive and invisible. While people of African descent play a crucial role in the image of the German society by now, social discourse mostly focuses on male refugees. We have to wonder why so many males and so few females are (seemingly) visible in public space. Therefore, the question to answer is in how far female African refugees and migrants are visible in public space and to what extent does this reproduce or contradict the prescription of female refugees as passive. In order to be able to answer this huge theoretical question, we want to focus on a local level. Freiburg shall be the place of our case study.

Public spaces are spaces where society meets – as strangers and as friends – and where performative and linguistic discourse happens. Power dynamics and social hierarchies can be examined, as public spaces can be seen as a physical mirror of social interaction, discrimination, prejudice, interaction, etc. Answering this question, we need to wonder where those women then actually do spend their time, and which possible limitations, challenges, but also positive encounters they might experience while doing so. The results of this research highlight the explanatory potential of feminist approaches, intersectionality, and space theory.

*Keywords:* visibility, agency, gender, (female) refugees, feminism, intersectionality, space theory

## Introduction

Germany has experienced a rapid growth in refugees and asylum seekers since the summer of 2015. The political landscape has since changed dramatically, as much as society's discourse about migration, refugees, and citizenship. As the discourse mostly circles around male refugees and their behaviour, women are being portrayed as the stereotypical suppressed wife who is never present in public, doesn't speak, and lives the life of a housewife (Maurer 2018). With that, a big part of the people arriving in Germany is getting taken away their voice and perspective. In Freiburg, we observed this perception as well and had to admit that we do not



know much about the situation of a female Africans in Freiburg ourselves. It is therefore crucial to examine this stereotypical prejudice further and critically research in how far it is true and if so, ask for the reasons of their passiveness. Research on a local level examines societal contexts in detail and can provide complex explanations about, in this case, the perception of invisibility and passiveness. We want to offer space for a more nuanced perspective which highlights individual stories of both people who work with refugees and people who are migrants or refugees themselves. Therefore, this research has the potential to support realizing projects that address female Africans in Freiburg and to get a deeper understanding for their situation.

In order to be able to answer the research question, we will focus mostly on expert interviews. While the perspective of the marginalized group of female African refugees is of utter importance, it is even more important to acknowledge their vulnerable position. The limited time frame of this research might restrict a respectful access and approach on a trustful basis to actual female refugees. Therefore, we mainly conduct interviews with experts working in this field, such as people working in asylum accommodations, NGO's or other organizations. Being experts in this field and in close contact with refugees and migrants but not themselves in such a vulnerable position, we perceive them to be good experts in talking about the topic in question.

The research uses two broad theoretical approaches as foundation: feminist approaches (Finkelstein 2006) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) as one approach, and space theory (Bourdieu 1991) as another one. Later, we will analyse the conducted interviews by using the following two categories: First, education and language, and second, space, including public vs. private space, participation, mobility in the city, and contact with the German society. After analysing the material and connecting it with theoretical explanations, we will discuss the limitations and further potential of this paper.

### Theoretical Approach

First, we will briefly outline the three main streams of feminist theories and highlight their common ground. In general, feminism considers the materialisation of and ideological and psychological impact of the masculine and feminine on gender (the social sex) and gendered relations. It recognizes society as a patriarchal one and deconstructs i.e. the perpetuation of gender-specific power relations. The three main streams are liberal, radical, and postmodern feminism (Krell 2004). The liberal approach aims to make women visible and to focus on their achievements. It highlights the previous and still existing discrimination and tries to promote participation of women in all areas of life. The radical approach emphasises the differences between women and men and considers the female character to be more peaceful and better.

The postmodern approach emphasises that women are not only women but that their gender related experiences of discrimination is intertwined with the ones of race and class (Krell 2004). The common concern is to overcome the discrimination and oppression of women and to establish an emancipatory and critical approach towards gendered relations (Krell 2004). As our research examines the invisibility of female refugees and migrants, the liberal approach will be most useful.

Additionally, the approach of intersectionality will be useful (Enloe 2002; Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality highlights the importance of linking different kinds and categories of discrimination together, and that individuals or marginalized groups can be affected by more than one kind of discrimination. In our case, we suspect that the perceived invisibility of female refugees and migrants is not monocausal but roots in discriminations of gender, race, and class (Roth 2015). It is important to be aware of “traps of re-inscribing a North-South dichotomy of knowledge production and distribution” (Roth 2015).

Space theory considers space to be separated into private space and public space. Private space is isolated, while public space is accessible for (supposedly) everyone. Taking the liberal feminist approach into consideration, it links private space with the feminine and public space with the masculine. Public spaces are seen as places to do politics, to discuss, to be present, while private places are seen as homes, family time, household, and unseen. This division derives from centuries of excluding women from almost all aspects of public life, such as politics, literature, war, etc. (Finke 2006). The liberal approach states that today the public space is still made by and for men and therefore less and harder accessible for women (Krell 2004). This idea is a useful tool to examine the reason of the perception of female refugees and migrants as passive and invisible. In sociology, space is seen as a social construct associated with specific meanings, functions, and forms of appropriation and ownership (Schäfer 2006). Bourdieu differs between a physical and social space. The body acts in the physical space, while the social space allows for different social positions and positions of power side by side (Bourdieu 1991). The appropriation of space can be understood as a performative act by individuals, always trying to improve or maintain their position. In order to achieve power in social space, three types of capital are necessary to accumulate: economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991). This paper will indirectly question in how far female refugees and migrants (do not) have access to these categories of capital.

## Methodology

Working with people in a vulnerable position requires a researcher to carefully reflect on their own positionality and impact on the relation between the researcher and the research subject. We are all white German students, two females and one male. Hierarchies and power relations in class, race, and gender will impact the interview dynamic and with that the outcome of the research project. It is not possible to eliminate the power relations in such a situation completely, but to be aware of them and to address the problematic can help to reduce them. For our research, we interviewed refugees and migrants who chose to be active in migration work and already live in Germany for a few years. Therefore, their position is not as vulnerable as the one of new refugees.

Due to a short time frame, only three expert interviews were conducted using the semi structured technique. This technique allows for a rough structure in all interviews, later making an analytical comparison possible (Bernard 2006). At the same time, it leaves space for the interview partners to bring up own topics and aspects, some we might not even have thought about. Using qualitative research makes it possible to look at individual stories, at details, and complex situations allowing for a more comprehensive analysis and explanation than only statistics. To ensure a proper analysis and full understanding, we took notes during the interviews and recorded them. A confirming letter of our instructor Cita Wetterich ensured the credibility of our work. All our interview partners allowed us to use their names in our work.

Choosing Freiburg only made sense as it is our hometown and we can safely state that we feel female African refugees and migrants to be less visible. In another city this might just have been an impression from a short visit. Also, Freiburg is a student city with many vibrant public places and a reputation to be alternative and more open-minded towards refugees and migrants. We have to wonder why even in such an environment it seems that the women are less visible.

In the following, we will analyse the interviews by the categories already introduced: first, education and language, and second, space (public vs. private, mobility within the city, participation, and contact with the German society).

### Analysis of the interviews

#### Category 1: Language and Education

Kirstie Angstmann, a board member of African Information Movement, emphasises the importance of understanding the German system in order to change it. Therefore, she works as a translator and advisor in local refugee camps to guide them through the bureaucratic jungle

and encourage them to move forward. She arranges workshops for women to describe their future, in order to encourage them to trust their own capabilities and become more active.

As Angstmann sees it, the key to understand the German system is integration and therefore participation in a new society which comes down to being able to speak the language and understand the cultural habits. All of our interview partners stress that being able to speak German is a fundamental skill to interact with their environment and overcome barriers. As shown in the annual report of the IAB (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung), female refugees are in charge of childcare and household, and therefore suffer significantly from access to participation in language or integration courses. These courses, as well as communication with the majority society then take up many resources such as time and mental health (Ulmann 2018). However, they are not only social resources but also a form of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, this is an important capital to fully participate in and have access to a society (Bourdieu 1991). Furthermore, the studies state that female refugees participate less in the labour market and are, compared to their male counterparts, less sociable (Flüchtlingsmonitor, Endbericht 2019). Offei-Yeboah offers an explanation for this in describing the language barrier as a key factor preventing Ghanaian women from interacting with society as it causes insecurity and shyness. For him, education in form of graduation or a job license are important skills for an active participation. According to Angstmann, the German society blocks exactly this possibility to participate. Most educational attainments and other licenses from Africa are not approved, so are only 37% of the applications for equivalent attainment accepted by the German government and the bureaucratic process can take more than a year (IAB Flüchtlings Monitoring 2019). “Anything what comes from Africa is negative” (Angstmann 00:54:21), a thinking based on racism and prejudice. Not even her driver’s license got recognized when she applied for it, like for most of her other Ghanaian degrees. On the contrary, her certificates from England were all well accepted.

But the difficulties are also caused by structural disadvantages which keep African females from actively participating. Angstmann criticizes the call for a one-sided assimilation by the majority society and recognizes it as one of the major factors impacting and reinforcing the passivity. In a steady “assimilation phase of life” (Angstmann 01:30:09), many African migrants lose their ambitions as they find themselves in a new environment and a process of constant re-education in order to fit into a new system. In order to improve this situation, the majority society needs to get rid of its negative image of Africa and should rather embrace African people and their culture, and respect their capabilities, such as educational attainments.

A consequence of those structural difficulties, only low skilled and low paid jobs mainly in the cleaning sector remain. “If somebody is doing cleaning, what will that person learn out of it? There is no progress in their life” (Angstmann 01:50:07). Rather, she wants to see African women in important positions in order to have someone with African background who can help to transform this one-sided thinking.

Another factor of constant anxiety for female refugees and migrants is the fear of losing their children to the youth welfare service due to supposed inappropriate upbringing. This fear makes it harder to balance between participating in society and fulfilling their role as a good and careful mother (Angstmann 00:13:45).

As brought up before, education or educational attainment could be a big part to participate. Education, too, is an important tool and part of cultural capital. A higher degree of education is linked with better job opportunities and therefore participation in society, also in a social-political sense. Offei-Yeboah, the head of Ghana Union, speaks enthusiastically about his educational training of the new generation of African women. The object is to help them find jobs in public services, such as police forces or public transportation. “This are the faces we want to see. A black woman in the police force. This is where we want to see them. Then we feel we are a bit integrated” (Offei-Yeboah 00:24:45). These kind of jobs make African women more visible and help them to take up public space. But it is not only this subliminal political influence they are looking for. Angstmann criticizes the absent right to vote in a political election and sees it as an important reason why African immigrants in general are (assumed to be) less passive. She does not understand why tax paying migrants, contributing to society, are not allowed to vote.

Education is the key to more gender equality too, so Offei-Yeboah. Change starts in the childhood. Offei-Yeboah predicts a change in the traditional gender-based thinking, which, as we have seen, keeps women bound to household and childcare, and reinforce the passivity of female Africans.

Taking into account that most female refugees are bound to their households, are less likely to have proper knowledge of the new language, are less likely to work, and, most of all, the structural bureaucratic system reinforcing and keeping them home, the data offers a reasonable explanation for their perceived invisibility in public spaces. Those pre-conditions complicate a more extensive participation in the new host society and often make the process of integration very stressful and time consuming. “You said they (African women) are passive, you have created the passiveness of that person” (Angstmann 00:40:25).

## Category 2: Space

### Private vs. public space

Shahrzad Mohammadi, founder of the bike bridge, asked herself almost the same questions as we did. While visiting a refugee accommodation, she wondered why there were no women. She soon learned that many women lived there but usually stayed inside their rooms. She thought: “Ok, they really spend a lot of time indoor, many of them they don’t want to spend them indoor. There were no projects like recreation to bring them out. Not necessarily out of their rooms, but out of the whole accommodation” (Mohammadi 00:05:14). So, she invented bike bridge for female migrants and refugees to learn cycling. Cycling for women is something that is culturally not taken for granted in Africa (Mohammadi 00:06:13). At first, her “expectation was that there won’t be anybody who wants to participate, because of the predominate perception of them [...] that they don’t want to do anything to integrate themselves. Ah such things you still here a lot sadly” (Mohammadi 00:10:43). Her hope was not only to get them more active on the bike, but to get them into contact with German society. With an increased range in mobility, the women can acquire public spaces easier and become more independent.

Kwame Offei-Yeboah, the president of Ghana Union in Freiburg, understands the impression of women being less visible. When the union gathers, less women show up when it is about topics of politics. Only family life or the preparation of food as topics lead to a higher percentage of women participating. This goes along with the traditional gendered lifestyle explained before. Offei-Yeboah mentions that it’s not easy to find somebody who takes care of the children. “Südwind” in Freiburg is an organization where migrants can learn German and children can stay there at the same time. This is especially helpful for women who want to take language classes or meet other people. But Offei-Yeboah points out the language barrier as a second reason. They meet with friends and cook inside. This makes it difficult to integrate. “At our meetings they are active, they can speak in their mother tongue” (Offei-Yeboah 00:33:14). This reinforces them staying at home in private, with their friends, and not to be present outside and to participate in society. Offering another reason for women being less active, Offei-Yeboah reproduces exactly this gendered perception in stating that “it comes from the character also” (Offei-Yeboah 00:43:02). This is a perfect example of how deeply rooted the image of the passive and simply quiet women is. It is a dangerous assumption as it might lead to not questioning their silence and therefore not improving the situation they are in.

The Ghanaian activist Kirstie Angstmann sees the key to understand why the women are less visible in public space in the traditional background. “We make sure there is food. That the man

has the right to go out there and bring money” (Angstmann 00:14:15), “even if you [the women] are well educated, it’s nature” (Angstmann 00:24:11). She explains her own active role with her good educational background. Angstmann talks about gatherings in the African community, which mostly take place in the private space. According to her, family events like baptism, marriages, and funerals are very important. They offer opportunities for the community to connect. Taking this activity in private space for given, Angstmann has a different approach to get female refugees and migrants to be more active, and at best, outside into public space. She brings the projects inside the accommodation first, in order to encourage the women. She also tries to encourage them to contribute their own ideas to the projects. Overall, Angstmann expects the government to include them more. “They should involve them in decisions. You need somebody with that background to connect the African and the German” (Angstmann 00:53:10). Freiburg should allow them to work, to be a part, and with that start a process of building confidence. “If Freiburg is ready to embrace them [...] something can be achieved” (Angstmann 01:30:28).

### Freiburg as a public space

For Mohammadi, Freiburg, a green city and one where almost everyone rides the bike, was a good city to realize her project. Her idea to help female migrants and refugees to increase their mobility and explore public spaces receives a lot of positive feedback.

A problem for Offei-Yeboah was to find suitable and affordable accommodations for Ghana Union. All of the members are mostly scattered all over the city and live in suburbs, which hinders them to meet up. Additionally, some public places, i.e. the city hall, bear negative emotions even though they might offer helpful information. “You have to go to the Rathaus and you get information. But because of the visa, going to Rathaus is like going to Zahnarzt” (Offei-Yeboah 00:11:01). One main problem Offei-Yeboah sees is Freiburg’s size. In bigger cities, such as Hamburg or Stuttgart, the African communities are larger and therefore offer more activities. If he’d given a pot of gold, he knew exactly what to do: “To build something like an integration centre, where all foreigners could meet, to give seminars, to teach them how to integrate, a house, because when we are searching for places to make parties it’s difficult. Ooh, the Africans are loud. Artists could show their art, we can make an African week, show our culture” (Offei-Yeboah 00:32:36).

Angstmann, too, criticizes Freiburg in comparison to bigger cities. “I almost left Freiburg because it was not open for my work. Freiburg as a small city limits the women” (Angstmann 01:02:00). Even though being well-educated and integrated (i.e. married to a German man), she

had trouble finding a flat. At the end, her husband had to get the flat on his own. Contrary, she thinks of cities like Berlin as cosmopolitan, making it possible for African females to make their own way.

Linking this to space theory, the data demonstrates how inhabitants of a city try to break through the maintaining power structure. Female African migrants and refugees, who suffer from a lack of the economic, social, and cultural capital, have more difficulties to acquire spaces for themselves. Due to their lack of capitals and their multiple burden, it is much harder for African female migrants to be active in the public spaces and therefore seem to be less visible.

### Media perception and social perception

Throughout the interviews, all of the experts confirmed the perception of female African refugees and migrants to be passive and invisible. According to Mohammadi, most women have a problem with the label “refugee” since the social and political discourse about refugees has become more fueled by emotions, racism, and xenophobia and therefore is connotated with stigma. “The media doesn’t help us to promote us” (Angstmann 01:44:21), states Angstmann. If she would have a pot of gold, she would change the image of Africans, make it possible for them to contribute what they can offer. She often observes that people in Germany think the reason for refugees to leave Africa is because Germany is a paradise. Sometimes, family members of refugees or migrants believe this as well and will call for money. This imposes a lot of pressure on migrants and refugees: “So, always is the mind at home, so how can you integrate?” (Offei-Yeboah 00:12:34).

Adding to the problematic image refugees and migrants have in the social and political discourse, Mohammadi describes integration as a two-sided process: If a society has a problem, it is everyone’s responsibility to solve it. It needs both sides to work together, not only the ones arriving in the new host country. One possible way to reduce barriers she sees in reducing the complicated bureaucratic system.

### Positionality and Limitation

As already mentioned, researching on the population of female African women, we have to acknowledge and be aware of ethical issues. The concept of intersectionality serves as an important warning signal. Women in society have limited access to public space and can access it in very different ways, as power dynamics influence this access through gendered relations. Additionally, the women under research are non-white which adds the category of race. A third category to keep in mind is class, as they are refugees and migrants. Furthermore, this puts them



in an especially vulnerable position, as they often have been threatened in their home country, have an unclear status of residency or asylum, and have lived through immense traumatic experiences. Especially women i.e. might be survivors of rape and sexual assault.

While it is not only important to acknowledge the vulnerability of the researched individuals, it is also important to understand one's own positionality in order to dismantle as many power dynamics as possible. In terms of the research group, we are all white young people with German residency and members of the host country. Not only our skin colour and status of residency puts us in a differently privileged position, our educational background additionally allows us to inhabit a higher status within society regarding the category of class. In this sense, this study portrays a study-down research due to structural dynamics in our white, Western society. However, on a factual basis our interview partners contradict this image based on racism and prejudice. All of them are very well-educated, have much more experience and knowledge regarding the topic, and have managed to achieve many challenges, such as founding unions and projects. Sadly, all of them experienced way more racism and discrimination than we, as white people, would have thought. This again demonstrates the urge to research more in the field of participation of migrants and refugees, and especially the need to raise their voices and not only the researcher's one.

As many important aspects as this study was able to highlight, it clearly has limitations. First of all, the very limited time frame did reduce our research to only a few interview partners. Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction, we were not able to speak to actual female refugees. Approaching them would have required a long and trustful approach in order to not exploit their vulnerable position. Also, the study could have been more extensive, including actual field work, observation and participation, more interviews, interviews with Germans in relevant positions, a media analysis, and maybe a comparison with other cities. Future questions interesting to answer would surely be to ask in how far female African refugees and migrants are (in)visible in other cities, and, if they are more visible, why this might be the case. The research question could also be well linked with a more extensive analysis of the media coverage about female refugees and migrants, and its influence both on their lives and the social and political discourse.

### Conclusion

During our research and interview analysis it became apparent that the perceived invisibility of female African refugees and migrants is not only a perception. Initially, it might reinforce the image of them being passive. However, this is a very simplified answer to why they do not

participate more in public space. There are many reasons why they don't, several of them being external factors preventing them from an active participation and therefore causing passiveness. Talking with our interview partners made it clear that language barriers, unrecognized educational training, internalized traditional role models, and the negative perception of African female refugees and refugees in general shape their reality and pose burdens to an easier integration. Furthermore, they suffer from psychological stress due to a constant fear of getting evicted, losing their children to social welfare, and facing everyday racism. All of these factors create multiple burdens, minimizing their cultural, social, and economic capital and therefore their access to society (Bourdieu 1991). In combination with daily experiences of racism and xenophobia, manifested in structural discrimination such as not finding a flat, it is very difficult to integrate into a new society and new system.

However, what our analysis demonstrates very well is that female African refugees and women are not passive at all. They take care of the household, all the children, plan events in private, are often well educated, and, given a welcoming opportunity such as bike bridge, are interested in actively participating in public space. It becomes clear that the women are very active, just not in public spaces.

But what exactly can be done to improve the situation in Freiburg? Offei-Yeboah would like to have an integration centre as a place for refugees and migrants to meet, interact, and celebrate. Most importantly, it could be a place for educational seminars and information distribution, and at the same time could offer childcare. It could be a place to provide women with enough resources to let go of their insecurities and to be more self-confident to participate "outside". But in his vision the centre should also function as an inclusive public space for everyone, so that different cultures could get to know each other and improve the communication between German residents and refugees and migrants.

Mohammadi would like to see more programmes offered for women to help them integrate. This is a request directed at the host society, asking it to stand up to its responsibility and make integration a process on both sides. Angstmann additionally thinks it to be very important for those programmes that the organizer work together with female refugees and migrants as to avoids hierarchies and to give agency to the participants.

The ideas and suggestions of our interview partners should be heard and considered by the city and society of Freiburg. They are directly affected by the measures Freiburg takes and live these experiences. It demonstrates how important contact with the German society is, and, most of

all, that many actually do have interest in contact but are held back by circumstantial burdens, often constructed by the German bureaucracy and government itself.

We want to deeply thank our three interview partners for their effort, voice, and fruitful thoughts. Sadly, all of them have experienced much more racism and discrimination than we suspected. This again demonstrates the urge to do more research in the field of participation of migrants and refugees, and especially the need to raise their voices and not only the researcher's one. To quote Angstmann: "You said they (African women) are passive, you have created the passiveness of that person" (Angstmann 00:40:25).

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## List of Contributors

**Cita Wetterich** is the student counselor and course coordinator for the Department of Political Science, University of Freiburg. She also pursues a PhD with the Political Science Department in Freiburg and in Gender Studies with the University of Basel, CH. Her areas of expertise are migration and displacement, feminist, critical and postcolonial research, violence and insecurity with a regional focus on the Central Mediterranean Route.

**Dilshad Muhammad** is a PhD research fellow with the Arnold-Bergstaesser-Institut Freiburg. His areas of expertise are migration and displacement, identity with a regional focus on Turkey and Jordan.

**Anton Held** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Daniela Sauer** is a student with the University of Freiburg with a major in European Ethnology and a minor in History.

**Esther Bauer** is a University College student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Friedrich Trautmann** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political science.

**Hannah Rut Loskamp** is a Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Inken Ladiges** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Lilli Mühlbach** is a Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Lorenz Bayer** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a major in Political Science.

**Miriam Elisabeth Angela Schießl** is a Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a minor in Political Science.

**Sarah Rondot** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a mayor in Political Science.

**Selina Luy** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a mayor in Political Science.

**Ulla Marie Schlumpberger** is a polyvalent two-major Bachelor's degree student with the University of Freiburg with a mayor in Political Science.



Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

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Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg  
Fahnenbergplatz  
79085 Freiburg  
[www.uni-freiburg.de](http://www.uni-freiburg.de)