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THE *REFUGEE STRIKE* BERLIN:
Struggles for autonomy within the movement

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Abstract

This paper focuses on protest activities by self-described “refugees” (asylum seekers) and other protest constituents around Oranienplatz-square in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district and Pariser Platz-square in the period of early October – December 2013. The protest is conceptualized as a social movement. Moving to urban space plays a crucial role in the development of the so-called “Refugee Strike”, as it provides opportunities for mobilizing resources needed to further protestors’ demands. This paper proceeds from a puzzle: refugees have the greatest interest in realizing political and legal change in asylum policy. Yet, they also have least access to resources, which makes the emergence of a movement theoretically unlikely. Autonomy is loosely conceptualized in relation to the ability of refugees to create instances challenging institutional political authority through acts of protest of their choosing. Despite being more marginalized than other constituents, refugees successfully aggregate resources of social-organization and notably self-produce cultural resources. In that sense, they remain autonomous from other constituents of the movement by implementing their own vision of the protest’s shape. At meetings with political decision-makers resulting in part from the mentioned protest tactics, refugees momentarily challenged institutional political authority.

Introduction

“Enough is enough. It is time for resistance!” (Refugee Protest Camp, 2012). This call for action was spread on flyers via the “Refugee Protest Camp“ at Oranienplatz-square in Berlin. What began as protest camps of asylum seekers in various German cities in the spring of 2012 led to an occupation of Oranienplatz-square that lasts until the present (June 2013). Since their arrival in Berlin, asylum seekers have participated in demonstrations and initiated other acts of protest. These underline their demand for an end to all deportations of asylum seekers, freedom of movement in all of Germany (i.e., an end to the obligation of residence, or “Residenzpflicht” in German), as well as an end to collective accommodation for asylum seekers (Refugee Protest Camp, 2012).

As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, asylum seekers are in a socially and economically marginalized position as compared to majority society in Germany. Nonetheless, protest activities related to the “Refugee Strike”¹ could be observed for nearly eleven months². The paper will answer the research question how protesting asylum seekers’ partial reliance on supporters, as well as administrative and political actors for access to certain kinds of resources affect their ability to direct the movement’s choice in acts of protest. This implies a loose conceptualization of autonomy. It is conceptualized in relation to the ability of asylum seekers, as the prime constituency within the movement making political demands, to create instances challenging institutional political authority through acts of protest of their choosing (cf. Snow et al., 2004: 9). To answer the question, this paper examines the protest resources mobilized by protesting asylum seekers, supporters and political as well as administrative actors and the means of access to these resources (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 132-133). The Refugee Strike will be conceptualized as a social movement in accordance with David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi (2004: 11).

The Refugee Strike is neither an isolated experience within Germany nor within the European Union. Asylum seekers have pointed to their networking with similar protests in Austria, France and the Netherlands (Second Participant Observation, 2012; Refugee Tent Action, 2012). In Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Lille (France) and Vienna (Austria), protest camps were founded by asylum seekers over the fall of 2012. In Amsterdam, a group of around 40 protesting asylum seekers went on hunger strike about the same time. Following the eviction of the camp, the remaining asylum seekers moved into a church (Nu.nl, 2012a, b, c, d). In Lille (France), a group of asylum seekers went on hunger strike for some time in November 2012 (Le Blog du CSP59, 2013a, b). The Viennese camp was founded in late November 2011, following a protest

¹In interviews and during participant observations, various participants referred to it as the “Refugee Strike”. For that reason, the terminology will be adopted throughout the paper when referring to the string of acts of protest happening all over Germany from March 2012 until January 2013.

²As mentioned, the Refugee Protest Camp in Berlin still exists at present. However, this paper only studies processes of resource mobilization and acts of protest that took place from the beginning of the protest in Berlin until the end of data gathering for this paper in January 2013.

march of reportedly up to 300 participants on the Austrian capital. A number of protesting asylum seekers there have spent some time on hunger strike. The camp was evicted by police in late December 2012. Since then, some of the remaining asylum seekers have also sought refuge in a Viennese church (Asylstrike Berlin, 2012a; ORF, 2012; idem, 2013).

Chapter 1 introduces the Refugee Strike. The first section traces the development of the Refugee Strike from March 2012 until January 2013. This is followed by a field description of the Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square. Next, the constituents of the Refugee Strike are introduced. The chapter ends with a brief overview of aspects of German asylum law relevant to understanding asylum seekers' marginalized position. Chapter 2 gives a theoretical introduction to social movements, resources and their means of access. It provides reasons why social movement theory is applicable to the Refugee Strike. Subsequently, the use of qualitative interviews and participant observations for data gathering in this research is explained. Chapter 3 retraces the steps of the content analysis performed on interview protocols. The next section presents the findings that resulted from this process and gives an answer to the research question. It attempts to present patterns of types of resources and means of access that were typically employed by the surveyed actors. Chapter 4 discusses the suitability and limitations of qualitative methods for the purposes of this paper.

1 The Refugee Strike

1.1 Genesis of the Refugee Strike in Berlin

This section traces the development of the Refugee Strike from the emergence of protest camps in several German cities (March 2012) to the end of empirical data gathering for the present paper (January 2013). It attempts to present the story of the movement as shaped by verbal and written accounts delivered by refugee-activists themselves. Information for this section was gathered by means of participant observations at information meetings on the Refugee Strike in Berlin (cf. Third Participant Observation, 2012; Fourth Participant Observation, 2012) and flyers on the Strike distributed at Oranienplatz-square (cf. Refugee Protest Camp, 2012). Accounts rendered in newspaper articles claiming to be based on interviews and statements by protesting asylum seekers served to fill in gaps in the chronology (cf. Litschko, 2012). A timeline of events can be found in annex 1.

In the Southern German town of Würzburg asylum seekers erect a camp in the city center in March 2012. They are protesting conditions they feel led to (attempted) suicides of asylum seekers. A total of seven protest camps are mounted over the summer of 2012 in the towns of Bamberg, Düsseldorf, Nürnberg, Osnabrück, Passau, Regensburg and Würzburg (Litschko, 2012; Second Participant Observation, 2012; Litschko, 2013; Solidarität mit den hungerstreikenden iranischen Asylbewerbern in Würzburg, n.d.). Networking among asylum seekers gives

rise to the idea of a protest march on foot from Würzburg to Berlin. They aim to consciously break the obligation of residence and visit other asylum seekers in their accommodation on the way. Protesting asylum seekers want to inform them of ongoing protest activities and to mobilize them to join (Third Participant Observation, 2012; *Iranische Flüchtlinge im Hungerstreik / Würzburg*, 2012).

On September 8th, protesting asylum seekers and supporters depart from Würzburg (Berliner Zeitung, 2012). One participant states that on average, about 50 people are marching at any point in time. Part of them are asylum seekers, part of them are supporters who are not asylum seekers (Second Participant Observation, 2012). Already on their way to Berlin, protesting asylum seekers develop their own audio-visual material relating to the march. In addition number of regional print, radio and television media outlets highlight the march (cf. Guyton, 2012; NN, 2012).

According to newspaper reports, about 50-70 refugee-activists and supporters arrive at Oranienplatz-square on October 5th, 2012, having marched about 500 km (Berliner Zeitung, 2012; *Die Welt*, 2012). Supporters mount tents on the square in advance. According to persons interviewed for this paper, various organizations loosely belonging to the left political spectrum play a role in picking the square as the location of the Camp and preparing for the march's arrival. Individuals associated with these organizations also perform daily chores for the maintenance of the Camp (Interview, B 2012; Interview C, 2012). One interview partner specifically mentions that so-called anti-capitalist and anti-fascist organizations contact protesting asylum seekers offering support after hearing about their protest in the media (Interview B, 2012). Another interview partner elaborates that Oranienplatz-square was picked due to it being located in a district housing a relatively large amount of organizations belonging to the left political spectrum, the ease of access to the square within the larger city of Berlin and because it offers enhanced visibility to the protest (Interview A, 2012). When data gathering for this paper is concluded in January 2013, the Camp has received a notice of toleration ("Duldung") from the administration of the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg until the end of February 2013 (Flatau 2013, Litschko 2013).

On October 24th, 2012 a group of refugee-activists moves from Oranienplatz-square to Pariser Platz-square, opposite Brandenburg Gate. They launch a registered demonstration and a hunger strike and term this move an "expansion of the protest at Oranienplatz-square" (Asylstreik Berlin, 2012e, f). Political actors arrange a meeting with decision-makers of the State Senate Departments and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, Maria Böhmer. Following the meeting, protesting asylum seekers temporarily suspend their hunger strike from November 1st to 16th. In the meantime, further public visits at Pariser Platz-square and meetings of politicians and protesting asylum seekers take place. Federal Commissioner Böhmer mediates a meeting of four refugee-activists with members of the Bundestag's (lower house of German parliament) Committee on Internal Affairs on November 22nd (Interview D, 2013; Interview E, 2013). Both sides state the meeting did not yield any results

(Fourth Participant Observation, 2012; RBB Online, 2012b).

A number of protesting asylum seekers squat an empty school building in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district, together with another group of activists, on December 8th, 2012 (Asylstrike Berlin, 2012b; Berliner Morgenpost, 2012). They obtain a notice of toleration (“Duldung”) to use the school until the end of March 2013; primarily to sleep there during winter (Flatau, 2013; Litschko, 2013). One day later, refugee-activists at Pariser Platz-square announce the preliminary end of their demonstration and hunger strike (Asylstrike Berlin, 2012c).

1.2 Field Description

This section provides a description of the Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square. The Camp is highlighted in particular, since it holds a special role within the Refugee Strike Berlin. Although part of the protesting asylum seekers base themselves at Pariser Platz-square for some time, the Refugee Strike Berlin begins at Oranienplatz-square. Once the demonstration at Pariser Platz-square ends, Oranienplatz-square remains the place that refugee-activists themselves call the central location of the protest (Second Participant Observation, 2012; Interview A, 2012; Interview B, 2012; Interview C, 2012).

The Refugee Protest Camp is located on the Southern half of Oranienplatz-square in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district of Berlin. To the North, the Camp borders on OranienstraÙe-street, to the West on Segitzdamm-street and to the East on the streets Oranienplatz and Erke-lenzdamm. In fact, the Camp only occupies a relatively small area at the heart of the Southern part of Oranienplatz-square. In January 2013, newspaper reports claim that about 130 people live in the Camp. These are said to be men, women and children of various nationalities (Flatau, 2013). Participant observations in the Camp in November 2012 and interviews conducted there in December 2012 create the impression that the majority of inhabitants are male and estimated to be between 20 and 40 years old. In addition to protesting asylum seekers, some supporters (who are not asylum seekers) regularly visit the Camp and some live there as well.

There is a degree of fluctuation among Camp inhabitants. Some protesting asylum seekers can only spend a limited amount of time away from their Federal State of residence, due to obligations arising from asylum law (cf. chapter 1.4). Others decide to end their support for the protest in Berlin. The amount of supporters fluctuates equally because of the noncommittal nature of support for the protest. The exact nature of support and the time invested is left up to each individual supporter. For this reason, this paper will not provide any estimates of its own of the amount of Camp inhabitants (Interview A, 2012; Interview B, 2012; Interview C, 2012; Second Participant Observation, 2012).

1.3 Constituents of the Refugee Strike

During data gathering, the impression arises that the movement has three main constituencies: 1) protesting asylum seekers, 2) activists who are not asylum seekers that militate for a change in German asylum, as well as 3) administrative and political actors.

Three names are used as shorthand for the constituents: “refugee-activists” for the first group, consisting of the word “refugee,” which protesting asylum seekers consistently use to refer to themselves and “activist(-s)” to underline their capacity as actors in the protest. Wherever the term “asylum seeker” is used, this includes refugee-activists and other asylum seekers not involved in the protest. Second, “supporters” refers to other activists in the protest that are not asylum seekers, in line with refugee-activists usage of the term. In contrast to these two groups, political and administrative actors include those that actively support refugee-activists’ demands, as well as those that merely engage with them in their capacity as political or administrative actors.

Inevitably, these distinctions represent a simplification of a complex reality, albeit a necessary one. In practice, the distinction of constituents based on their activity did not always work out neatly. For example, one interview partner was a “supporter” of the protest for some time. At the same time, the interview partner was engaging with the refugee-activists’ demands within her/his political role.

1.4 German Asylum Law

Refugee-activists demand changes in German asylum law. These concern a complete halt to all deportations of asylum seekers, no more accommodation in collective residences and freedom of movement within Germany. In order to properly understand these, this section briefly outlines some relevant aspects of the law.

The Federal Government has the right to legislate matters pertaining to asylum, refugees, immigration and the right of residence. However, implementation is up to the administrations of Federal States and municipalities (Schneider, 2012: 4). All demands for asylum are processed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. While an individual demand is being processed, however, the Federal State to which the asylum seeker was assigned upon entering the country is responsible for providing for him or her (Schneider, 2012: 37). Frequently, asylum seekers are placed in public collective accommodation. They usually receive in-kind benefits; cash money is only given out in small amounts (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2012: 5). While their demand for asylum is being processed, they may only leave their administrative authority’s district with permission from the Foreigner’s Registration Office at the municipal or Federal State levels. The obligation of residence (“Residenzpflicht”) stems from this rule. It should be noted that Federal States are in charge of regulating the obligation of residence, which means it is being implemented to differing extents and has been abolished

partially or completely in a few States (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2012: 7). Foreigner's Registration Offices at the municipal or Federal State levels are also in charge of deciding on and organizing deportations of asylum seekers (Schneider, 2012: 17).

2 Theory and Methods of Data Gathering

2.1 Conceptualizing the Refugee Strike As a Social Movement

The present section outlines the paper's theoretical framework. The framework presents the foundation for the qualitative content analysis retraced in chapter 3.1. The Refugee Strike is presented as a social movement to process the manifold empirical observations made during field research. According to Snow et al., social movements can be conceptualized as:

collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part. (Snow et al., 2004: 11)

Regardless of the nuances of individual definitions, write Snow et al., most cite "collective or joint action; change-oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity" as important dimensions of social movements (2004: 6). To establish that the Refugee Strike can indeed be viewed as a social movement, the applicability of the former dimensions will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

Social movements are one of many forms of collective action. The former refers to joint, goal-oriented activity of two or more individuals (Snow et al., 2004: 6-7). In its communication directed at the public sphere, the Refugee Strike calls for political actors to change asylum law to realize the movement's demands (an end to all deportations of asylum seekers, freedom of movement and choice of residence within Germany and an end to housing in collective accommodation) (Refugee Protest Camp, 2012). Various instances in connection with the Refugee Strike appear to be plausible examples of collective action. For instance, the presence of refugee-activists at Oranienplatz-square stems from the decision taken by several asylum-seekers to march on Berlin, the heart of political decision-making in Germany. Their goal was explicitly to put pressure on political decision-makers in the city. Equally, the move to Pariser Platz-square of a group of refugee-activists and their hunger strike represent goal-oriented action by a group to lend more force to their demands.

Social movements are described as challengers or defenders of existing institutional authority (Snow et al., 2004: 8-9). Upon their arrival in Berlin, refugee-activists have several meetings

with decision-makers of the municipal, Federal State and federal levels of government during which they presented their demands. According to participants' accounts, especially the meeting at parliament's Committee on Internal Affairs is confrontational, which quite literally represents a challenge to institutional political authority (Fourth Participant Observation, 2012; Interview D, 2013).

Refugee-activists cite breaking their perceived isolation from majority society as a backdrop to their protest – hence their demand for an end to housing in often remote collective accommodation. The Camp on Oranienplatz-square and the march on Berlin are explicitly mentioned as means to make themselves, i.e. the refugee-activists, visible to majority society. Furthermore, the decision to leave their assigned accommodation and to network with other asylum seekers is cited by some refugee-activists as an important step in the development of the Refugee Strike (Interview A, 2012). The above are examples of non-institutionalized action (Snow et al., 2004, 6-7).

Social movements require a degree of internal organization (Snow et al., 2004: 9-10). Observations during the first participant observation at the Refugee Protest Camp indicated that the Camp is internally specialized to provide for its inhabitants, to ensure communication among its inhabitants and with other organizations and to plan and execute protest acts (First Participant Observation, 2012).

According to Snow et al., collective action should last over time in order to be recognizable as a social movement (2004: 10-11). Note that some refugee-activists have been active in support of the Strike for over a year. They were present when the first camp was erected in downtown Würzburg in the spring of 2012, participated in the march on Berlin and spent time at Oranienplatz-square or Pariser Platz-square. As noted earlier, there is some fluctuation among refugee-activists. On the other hand, some continuity of the protest could be upheld by maintaining similar demands over time and sustaining the Camp at Oranienplatz-square.

Social movements do not happen randomly. Their emergence depends on a number of factors including the availability of resources, as well as the ability to form coalitions among different actors, issue framing and political and cultural opportunity structures (Kern, 2008: 112, 142). It is relevant to ask which resources were mobilized for the Refugee Strike, since on the surface asylum seekers appear to have very limited access to any kind of resource. Following Pamela Oliver, Gerald Marwell and Ruy Teixeira, a movement is unlikely to emerge if its potential participants have no or very little access to resources (1985: 529; Kern, 2008: 116). This is said to be especially relevant for heterogeneous groups, as in the case of the Refugee Strike (Oliver and Marwell, 1988: 508). Resources are indeed indispensable for any movement, as they are required to mobilize a critical mass for its purposes (Oliver et al., 1985: 529; Kern, 2008: 116-117, 123). Ultimately, resources serve to be translated into collective protest action that will create pressure for political change (Kern 2008: 128).

The Refugee Strike has already carried out a number of acts of protest. Hence, there is reason to probe further which resources were mobilized and how these were accessed by the

movement. Note, for example, the protest march from Würzburg to Berlin, which was covered by regional and national media or the hunger strike at Pariser Platz-square that led to talks with political decision-makers.

Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy introduce a typology of resources and their „means of access“ (2004: 133-134). The five kinds of resources covered in the following are distinguished on the basis of their “fungibility” and “proprietary” (idem: 132-133). It should be noted that the value and availability of a resource for a movement will vary over time (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 119).

Moral resources are typically „bestowed“ upon the movement by an external actor, who retains the ability to withdraw them (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 125, 126). A prominent example is legitimacy (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 126). Cultural resources are “artifacts and cultural products”, such as knowledge of how to run acts of protest, how to hold a press conference or run a meeting (ibid). Usually, cultural resources are easier to access than moral resources, since they are less proprietary (ibid). The authors distinguish three kinds of social-organizational resources: infrastructure, social networks and organizations. These include those created specifically for the social movement, as well as those that previously existed and were then appropriated by the movement (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 127). Human resources come and go with the individuals that are part of the protest movement. For that reason, these resources can be especially fleeting. They range from manpower, experience and expertise to skills (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 127-128). Material resources are rather straightforward and include money, office space and equipment (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 128).

Edwards and McCarthy describe four means through which social movements may access resources (2004: 131-135). Aggregation of resources held by individual members of the movement can turn these into collectively held ones. A simple example given would be the collection of financial donations (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 131-132). Self-production of resources includes their autonomous production by the movement in a literal sense, such as when movement participants set out to make something by hand. It also happens when value is added to resources that were previously aggregated, co-opted or made available to the movement by third parties (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 134). Co-optation refers to the apparent, permitted process entailed in borrowing resources that were previously acquired by other groups. Appropriation happens when these resources are exploited in secret (ibid). Patronage includes the “bestowal” of resources to a social movement by individuals or organizations, such as donations or the lending of staff (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 135).

2.2 Methods of Data Gathering

The empirical data is analyzed using a qualitative content analysis as described by Philipp Mayring (2010: 67-85). The goal of the analysis is not to arrive at an exhaustive overview of all resources and means of access used by the Refugee Strike in the period covered by this

paper. The nature of the data gathered does not lend itself to generalizable conclusions. What is more, such an approach is not required in a qualitative research design such as the present one (cf. chapter 4). Instead, the data available is reviewed for answers to the research question by means of theory-driven categories. This section describes methods of data gathering, their time frame, access to the field, as well as a rationale for case selection. Between November 11th, 2012 and January 18th, 2013 empirical data was gathered nine times. Four open, unstructured participant observations, three semi-structured qualitative interviews and two expert interviews were conducted (cf. annex 2).

Data gathered during the participant observations mainly provided contextual information on the development and make-up of the Refugee Strike and the Refugee Protest Camp. They provided the researcher with an impression of the atmosphere inside the Camp and served as a way to meet potential and actual interview partners. In line with this approach, the first participant observation consisted of a visit to the Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square. The three following participant observations took place at information meetings on the Refugee Strike at which refugee-activists spoke. All participant observations took place between November 11th and December 3rd, 2012. In a second phase of data gathering, five qualitative interviews were held between November 28th, 2012 and January 18th, 2013. Four out of five of the interviews were hence conducted only after the participant observations were finished.

This research builds on a convenience sample (Mayring, 2010: 53). Interview partners were selected to represent as many of the identified categories of actors as possible (cf. section 1.3). Such an approach seems warranted in light of the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research and the difficulty of getting an overview of the manifold and changing constituents of the Refugee Strike.

Empirical data gathering proceeded in an iterative manner. For this reason, the population of potential interview partners grew with time, as the researcher's understanding of networking within and beyond the movement expanded. The participant observations of information meetings were especially important in providing an overview of the movement's constituents. Additionally, previous knowledge on the policy field of asylum policy in Germany informed the choice in interview partners. Since asylum policy is legislated and implemented at different levels (cf. section 1.4), political and administrative actors of the federal and Federal State levels were included. Being physically present in Berlin was a precondition for conducting interviews, since there was no time or funds to travel for the purpose of interviewing. Hence, thinking on the sample evolved over time and were partially influenced by considerations of feasibility.

It must be noted that not all interview requests were granted. For example, it was not possible to conduct an interview with members of migrant-led organizations in Berlin that have been working towards legal changes in favor of asylum seekers for some time. An interview with a member of such an organization would have been valuable since it is known that some of them were active within the Refugee Strike at the time.

The following section (3.1) will retrace the steps of the content analysis. In this final para-

graph, the empirical material will be described briefly. The content analysis was performed on the texts of interview protocols. These were memory minutes recorded down a few hours, sometimes days after the interview. During the interviews, the researcher took written notes of participants' answers. She consciously decided against audio recording the interviews, due to the context of the ongoing protest, previous instances of confrontations of refugee-activists with the police and the activists' precarious legal position as asylum seekers. All interviews but one were conducted in person. They typically lasted 30-45 minutes. Interviews were held with two asylum seekers staying at the Refugee Protest Camp (cases A and B), one activist who was not an asylum seeker (case C), one member of parliament belonging to an opposition party (case D) and one staff member of the Senate Department for Labor, Integration and Women of the Federal State of Berlin (case E). In line with the categories developed in chapter 1.3, the researcher classified cases A and B as "refugee-activists", case C as a "supporter" and cases D and E as "political and administrative actors".

3 Analysis and Findings

3.1 Analysis of Empirical Data

Empirical data was analyzed following the steps of qualitative content analysis as expounded by Mayring (2010: 48-109). Fundamentally, the method aims at structuring the material in order to filter passages relevant to answering the research question (cf. Mayring, 2010: 98ff.). The content analysis mainly aimed at extracting statements pertaining to resources and their means of access during the Refugee Strike. In a second step, inferences were made from the information gathered in order to answer the research question on the autonomy of refugee-activists. This section retraces the actual steps of the content analysis in order to enhance replicability of results. It should be noted that the content analysis was performed manually, i.e., no coding software was used.

In a first step, categories were formed based on the typology of resources and means of access provided by Edwards and McCarthy (2004: 132-133). This resulted in nine categories corresponding to the five types of resources and four means of access. These were entered into a coding guideline. Subsequently, the data of all cases (i.e., all interview protocols) were read and text passages that seemed to resonate with the categories were highlighted. The smallest possible coding unit consisted of a sentence, the largest of an entire case (i.e., one interview protocol). In this step, text passages ("citations") were marked quite generously and it was not specified further which exact category matched the citation. The first run also generated a coding guideline containing the nine categories, their definitions (cf. *ibid*) and signal examples. The coding guideline was then tested on case A and further amended.

All citations were subsequently paraphrased and abstracted, then coded in accordance with

the coding guideline. Citations which did not match any of the codes were reviewed in order to assess whether the coding guideline needed further amending. It was found that it did not and hence these citations were removed. This also reduced the data. Citations were entered into a matrix displaying resources types at the top and means of access at the left (cf. *ibid*). This means that all citations had to be matched with a type of resource (or several) and one or several corresponding means of access. Finally, the citations were matched to the type of actor that seemed to have been crucial in their mobilization in order to get an overview of which actors typically mobilized which resource.

3.2 Findings

This paper deals with the question how protesting asylum seekers' partial reliance on supporters, as well as administrative and political actors for access to resources affects their ability to direct the movement's choice in acts of protest. To this end, it seeks to uncover possible patterns of resource mobilization by refugee-activists, supporters, as well as political and administrative actors. The results presented in the following only cover the period of March 2012 until January 2013. Due to the small number of cases results cannot be generalized beyond this period.

Overall, all types of resources are mobilized using all means of access (cf. annex 3, table 3.1). However, no type of actor covers all types of resources and means of access on their own. Instead, patterns of resources and means of access can be observed. Refugee-activists are especially active in networking with and recruiting other asylum seekers for the movement, hence aggregating human and social-organizational resources. For example, they achieved this by visiting other asylum seekers' public housing. They also co-opt supporters' human resources by using their conferences and workshops to recruit further constituents. It appears that networking amongst asylum seekers is mainly driven by themselves, whereas coalition-building with organizations active in asylum policy is initiated by the latter.³ Notably, refugee-activists produce cultural resources on their own. They use specialized knowledge on conducting protests some of them previously acquired and integrate it into the repertoire of the Refugee Strike (e.g., the hunger strike on Pariser Platz-square). In addition, networking amongst each other gives rise to new ideas such as the protest march on Berlin. In short, refugee-activists create human, social-organizational and cultural resources using aggregation, self-production and, to a lesser extent, co-optation (cf. annex 3, table 3.2).

Supporters are vital for the provision of material resources. They make material resources available both in their individual capacities as well as through organizations. For example, supporters provide financial and in-kind donations to build the Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square and to provide for its inhabitants. Furthermore, some provide a form of technical support by participating in committees that are established to run the Camp. In several instances, organizations mobilize moral resources by organizing information meetings that provided platforms

³Some supporters stem from these kinds of organizations.

for refugee-activists to tell the movement's story. However, accounts of individual or organizations of supporters contributing to the maintenance of the Camp at Oranienplatz-square are more frequent. Therefore, it appears that supporters mainly contribute material and human resources through patronage (cf. annex 3, table 3.2).

Political and administrative actors notably provide moral resources by means of patronage. They publicly pay visits to refugee-activists at Oranienplatz-square and Pariser Platz-square, hold meetings with them and mediate talks with other decision-makers. These acts legitimize the movement. By facilitating meetings with other decision-makers, political and administrative actors also bestow social-organizational resources on the movement. One interview partner in this category stands out by providing human resources in the form of a staff member who is "seconded" to Pariser Platz-square for some time. Staff members of the same interview partner also register demonstrations on behalf of the Refugee Strike. However, such acts are the exception rather than the rule. Overall, political and administrative actors primarily provide access to moral and social-organizational resources by means of patronage (cf. annex 3, table 3.2).

To conclude, refugee-activists stand out in aggregating human resources and self-made cultural resources, such as the Refugee Strike's protest tactics. Supporters provide material and human resources through patronage that benefit the maintenance of the Refugee Protest Camp. Though a cursory glance would suggest that political and administrative actors should be able to afford offering material resources with ease, they mainly bestow social-organizational and moral resources.

The following paragraph will interpret these findings in light of the research question. To recall, it asks how refugee activists' partial (forced) reliance on supporters, as well as administrative and political actors for access to certain kinds of resources affects their ability to direct the movement's choice in acts of protest. Evidence that refugee activists are able to decide on acts of protest will be seen as indicators of autonomy of these constituents within the movement.

Thomas Kern (2008: 116-117, 123) writes that the emergence of a social movement is dependent on the mobilization of a critical mass. Resources are needed to reach the latter (Oliver et al., 1985: 529). Especially in heterogeneous groups, the emergence of a protest movement is unlikely if those with the greatest interest in seeing change happen also have the least access to resources. In this case, the movement needs at least a few constituents with greater access to resources that can provide for the few with little access (Oliver et al., 1985: 529; Kern, 2008: 116). It seems warranted to call the Refugee Strike a heterogeneous movement, given the differences in social and legal status and economic disparities between the three categories of actors (refugee-activists, supporters, political and legal actors). Despite their socially and legally marginalized position, refugee-activists are able to access certain types of resources. Supporters and political and administrative actors provided others.

Remarkably, refugee-activists produce cultural resources such as the tactic of hunger striking and the protest march on Berlin. These acts of protest are quite successful in drawing media

attention, as became apparent during research of secondary sources (cf. Berliner Morgenpost, 2012; Berliner Zeitung, 2012, Der Tagesspiegel, 2012 a, b, c; Die Welt, 2012; Flatau/Berliner Morgenpost, 2013; Litschko/Die Tageszeitung, 2013; et al.). Following media reports on the Refugee Strike's protest march, supporters and political and administrative actors approach refugee-activists upon their arrival in Berlin – there was no mention of the inverse during the interviews. Hence, refugee-activists have a marked influence on the perception of the movement in the public sphere. In that sense, they have remained autonomous from other constituents of the movement by implementing their vision of the protest's shape. Meetings with political decision-makers facilitated by political and administrative actors eventually give rise to instances at which refugee-activists challenge institutional political authority by adamantly presenting their political demands.

4 Methodological Reflection

Qualitative research methods were chosen to answer the research question, since the latter required approaching the Refugee Strike as a social phenomenon within a larger context. Furthermore, the interpretive approach of qualitative methods appeared to be in line with this paper's goal of assessing refugee-activists' relative autonomy based on the subjective assessments of the movement's constituents (Mayring, 2002: 19, 24-25). Such an approach seemed warranted in light of the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research and the manifold and changing constituents of the protest.

Two methods of data gathering were used. Semi-structured qualitative interviews with the movement's constituents served to gather direct and subjective data from movement participants. Participant observations were used to gather data on the movement's context, its constituents and the shape of its protest. Only the data gathered in interviews was analyzed, since this was elicited through specific questions tailored to the research's purpose. Since the material consisted of only ten pages of text (two pages per case on average), a structuring content analysis on the basis of theory-driven categories was chosen as method of analysis.

Interview partners were selected to represent as many of the identified categories of actors as possible (cf. chapter 1.3). However, not all interview requests were granted (cf. chapter 2.2). Certainly, this constitutes a gap in the findings of this paper.

Overall, the findings of this paper cannot be generalized beyond the cases analyzed. Due to the previously mentioned fluctuation in the movement's constituents, conducting research on the basis of a representative sample would have hardly been possible. What is more, this would not have been in line with the qualitative approach chosen for this paper. However, it is plausible to show patterns of resource mobilization and their means of access within the context of the studied cases. Instead of presenting generalizable findings, this paper retraces the content analysis' steps to make the findings replicable and hence enhance their quality (cf. chapter 3.1).

Qualitative interviews have inherent limitations. It is conceivable that the researcher affected

interview partners unwittingly, for example due to assumptions or prejudices on the part of the former or the latter. These may influence interview partners' responses, which in turn biases the findings. To account for possible biases, the researcher always wrote down such perceived instances while conducting interviews. For example, interview partners may have assumed that the researcher is a German citizen. During one interview this seems to have induced the interview partner to make several remarks that could be interpreted as discounting refugee-activists' ability to mount acts of protest of their own. In another interview, the researcher had the impression that the respondent was trying to "impress" her with statements on the movement's potential power.

To conclude this section, it is reiterated that the empirical data represents only aspects of the subjective views of constituents on a social movement that changes constantly itself. However, this does not constitute an inherent limitation of findings since the research did not aim to produce generalizable findings. Instead, processes of resource mobilization and means of access were uncovered by means of a careful, replicable and theory-driven process of analysis. The findings were expanded and discussed in light of the concepts of social movement resources, means of access and autonomy presented above (cf. Introduction, chapter 2.1). Hence, the results are valid for the time period in which data was gathered and the interviewed actors.

Conclusion

How does refugee-activists' forced reliance on supporters, as well as administrative and political actors for access to certain kinds of resources affect their ability to direct the Refugee Strike's choice in acts of protest? How autonomous are they as constituents that are comparatively more socially and economically marginalized than other constituents?

This research found that refugee-activists produced cultural resources which successfully attracted media attention and shaped the perception of the movement in the public sphere. In turn, media reports on the movement brought sympathetic political and administrative actors into the realm of the movement, who mediated meetings with political decision-makers that allowed refugee-activists to momentarily challenge institutional political authority. Though it may have been a struggle, in this sense refugee-activists have remained autonomous from other constituents of the movement in implementing their vision of the protest's shape.

Across all categories of interviewed actors, all types of resources and means of access contained in the typology of Edwards and McCarthy were found (2004: 132-133). However, patterns of resource mobilization can be detected. Refugee-activists independently produced cultural resources and networked and recruited other asylum seekers, hence aggregating human and social-organizational resources. Supporters predominantly provided material resources through patronage. Political and administrative actors bestowed moral and social-organizational resources, equally by means of patronage.

Qualitative research methods are a suitable approach for appreciating the Refugee Strike as

a social phenomenon within a larger context. Their interpretive approach aligns well with the paper's research question. Qualitative interviews elicited constituents' subjective perspectives on the movement. Participant observations gave insight into the Refugee Strike's context, its constituents and forms of collective protest action. Empirical data was analyzed by means of a structured content analysis. As previously noted, the validity of the findings is limited to the time period of data gathering and the interviewed actors.

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Third Participant Observation, 26 November 2012.

Annex 1: Timeline of the Refugee Strike

Table 1: Timeline of the Refugee Strike, covering a selection of relevant events from the inception of the protest until the end of data gathering for this paper.

Date	Event	Place	Source
03-2012	Asylum seekers erect protest camps	Across various German cities	(Jakob, 2012)
09-08-2012	Start of protest march headed for Berlin	Würzburg (Germany)	(Tagesspiegel, 2012c; Litschko 2012)
10-03-2012	Start of camp construction at Oranienplatz-square in Kreuzberg-district	Berlin	(Die Welt, 2012)
10-06-2012	Arrival of protest march at Oranienplatz-square	Berlin	(Jakob, 2012)
10-13-2012	Three demonstrations with different demands merge and march from Oranienplatz-square to the <i>Bundestag</i> (German parliament), in support of refugee-activists' demands	Berlin	(Ibid; Asylstrike Berlin 2012h)
10-24-2012	Refugee-activists initiate hunger strike and protest at Pariser Platz-square, near Brandenburg Gate	Berlin	(Der Tagesspiegel, 2012a)
10-31-2012	First meeting of refugee-activists at Pariser Platz-square with mayor of Berlin's Mitte-district, State Secretary of Senate Department for Labor, Integration and Women, as well as Senate Department's staff member	Berlin	(Interview E, 2013)
11-01-2012	Refugee-activists at Pariser Platz-square meet with State Senator for Labor, Integration and Women; Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, Vice-President of German Red Cross Society and representatives of Refugee Council (" <i>Flüchtlingsrat</i> ") Berlin	Berlin	(Interview, E 2013)

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Date	Event	Place	Source
11-01-2012	Refugee-activists at Pariser Platz-square announce temporary suspension of hunger strike from November 1st, 2012 to November 15th, 2012	Berlin	(Fourth Participant Observation, 2012)
11-02-2012	Refugee-activists of Pariser Platz-square hold talks with Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration	Berlin	(Der Tagesspiegel, 2012a)
11-04-2012	Demonstration with slogan “The problem is called racism“ („ <i>Das Problem heißt Rassismus</i> “)	Berlin	(Asylstrike Berlin, 2012g)
11-16-2012g	Refugee-activists of Pariser Platz-square resume hunger strike	Berlin	(Neues Deutschland, 2012; RBB Online 2012a)
11-22-2012	Refugee-activists of Pariser Platz-square meet with members of parliament’s Committee on Internal Affairs (<i>Innenausschuss</i>)	Berlin	(RBB Online, 2012b)
12-07-2012	Protestors of Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square temporarily add to demands “recognition of <i>all</i> [emphasis in original] asylum seekers as political refugees”	Berlin	(Asylstrike Berlin, 2012d)
12-08-2012	Refugee-activists participate in squatting of vacant school building Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district	Berlin	(Berliner Morgenpost, 2012)
12-09-2012	Refugee-activists end protest at Pariser Platz and discontinue hunger strike	Berlin	(Asylstrike Berlin, 2012c, Der Tagesspiegel 2012b)
12-11-2012	Squatting of school building receives notice of toleration until March 2013 from district administration	Berlin	(Asylstrike Berlin, 2012b)

Annex 2: Instances of Empirical Data Gathering

Table 2: Overview of empirical data gathering, detailing method, date, place and occasion.

	Method of Data Gathering	Date	Organisation	Occasion
1	Open, unstructured participant observation	11-15-2012	Refugee Protest Camp, Oranienplatz-square (Berlin)	First visit to Refugee Protest Camp
2	Open, unstructured participant observation	11-16-2012	<i>Frauenkneipenkollektiv Café Cralle</i> [women's bar collective <i>Café Cralle</i>] (Berlin)	Second participant observation at information evening on Refugee Strike organized by women's bar collective
3	Open, unstructured participant observation	11-26-2012	<i>Kontakt- und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und MigrantInnen e.V.</i> [Contact and counseling center for refugees and migrants] (Berlin)	Third participant observation at public discussion round with refugee-activists of Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square
4	Semi-structured qualitative interview (Interview A)	11-28-2012	Refugee Protest Camp, Oranienplatz-square (Berlin)	Interview with refugee-activist
5	Open, unstructured participant observation	12-03-2012	<i>Kontakt- und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und MigrantInnen e.V.</i> [Contact and counseling center for refugees and migrants] (Berlin)	Fourth participant observation at public discussion round with protestors of Refugee Protest Camp at Oranienplatz-square convened by local pro-refugee and asylum seeker NGO (<i>Kontakt- und Beratungsstelle für Flüchtlinge und MigrantInnen e.V.</i>)

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continued from previous page		Instances of Empirical Data Gathering		
Method of Data Gathering	Date	Organisation	Occasion	
6 Semi-structured qualitative interview (Interview B)	12-05-2012	Refugee Protest Camp, Oranienplatz-square (Berlin)	Interview refugee-activist	
7 Semi-structured qualitative interview (Interview C)	12-06-2012	Local NGO offering support services to asylum seekers (Berlin)	Interview with supporter of protest	
8 Expert interview (Interview D)	01-08-2013	Political party represented in the German parliament <i>Bundestag</i> (Berlin)	Interview with member of parliament	
9 Expert interview (Interview E)	01-18-2013	State Senate Department for Labor, Women and Integration (Berlin)	Interview with staff member	

Annex 3: Summarized Findings

Table 3.1: Summary of findings by type of resource and strategy of mobilization. Table design and table headings after Edwards and McCarthy (2004: 132-133), author’s own content.

Means of Access	Resource Type				
	Moral	Cultural	Social-Organizational	Human	Material
Aggregation			A1	A1 A2	
Self-Production		A1			
Co-optation / Appropriation				A1 A2	
Patronage	A2 A3		A3	A2 A3	A2

Legend

↔ : indicates a combination of all types of resources and strategies of mobilization whose rows and/or columns the solid arrow transverses.

↔ : indicates a combination of only the type of resource and strategy of mobilization in whose rows the dotted arrow begins and ends.

A1: Type of actor “refugee-activists”

A2: Type of actor “supporters”

A3: Type of actor “political and administrative actors”

Table 3.2: Summary of findings by type of actor. Author's own contents (cf. Edwards and McCarthy, 2004: 132-133).

Type of Actor	Resource / Means of Access
A1	Cultural/Self-Production, Aggregation: Protest tactics Social-Organizational/Aggregation: Building networks Human /Aggregation: Recruitment of constituents Human/Co-optation: Using members of coalition partners
A2	Moral, Human/Patronage: Legitimizing protest, making it more widely known; providing staff and technical assistance to movement Human/Co-option, Patronage: Co-opting coalition partner's members; providing staff to movement Material/Patronage: Financial and in-kind donations
A3	Moral, social-organizational/Patronage: Legitimizing protest through publicly known meetings, talks Human/Patronage: Providing staff and technical assistance to movement

Legend

C.f. table 3.1