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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

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Disciplining coal resistance

– The dynamics of violence and power in disciplining the resistance against the Hambach coal mine in Germany

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Abstract

With climate change being one of the biggest challenges our society is faced with, resistance against fossil fuel companies is on the rise. One such example is the resistance against the Hambach coal mine close to Cologne in Western Germany which is the world's largest opencast lignite mine. It is the site of a long-standing conflict between the operating corporation RWE and residents being resettled, as well as forest defenders populating the adjacent Hambach Forest to stop the expansion of the mine and to protect the forest. These resisting groups are supported by the coalition 'Ende Gelände', which in 2018 blocked coal infrastructures in this mine using mass civil disobedience. In their work, they run into obstacles that serve to constrain, contain and discipline their resistance.

This thesis investigates barriers and limitations to these resisting groups drawing on the concepts of disciplining dissent, violence as defined by Galtung, and a Foucauldian interpretation of power. Semi-structured interviews supported by observatory participation build the basis for the analysis.

The thesis offers an insight into how violence and power operate as disciplining factors on various levels. It shows how direct, structural and cultural violence are strongly entangled, with cultural violence justifying structural and direct violence. Direct violence is by most interviewees not perceived as a strong disciplining factor, rather as an opportunity to change the power relations at place. Power mostly operates within the structures of society. It is operationalized as structural violence which is mostly experienced as marginalization, fragmentation and surveillance based on an entanglement of RWE with the local government. The media is, in this context, playing a crucial role, constructing public discourses by drawing on cultural norms and values and using them to diminish the resistance. The study also shows that the resisting groups have developed strong countermeasures mainly by drawing on narratives of climate justice and global warming which is considered a by-product of the capitalist ideology. All in all, the research paints a picture of a dynamic arena of contention between resisters and corporate and state violence, in which adaptation to different forms of power characterises the everyday work of coal mining resisters.

Keywords: resistance, disciplining dissent, violence, Galtung, power, climate justice

Zusammenfassung

Der Klimawandel wird als eine der größten Herausforderungen angesehen, der sich die Menschheit im 21. Jahrhundert stellen muss. Als Antwort darauf wächst der Widerstand gegen Konzerne, die durch die Förderung fossiler Energien zum Klimawandel beitragen. Ein prominentes Beispiel für einen solchen Betrieb ist der Tagebau Hambach in der Nähe von Köln, der weltweit größte offene Braunkohletagebau. Hier kommt es seit Jahren zu Auseinandersetzungen zwischen dem Betreiber RWE und Anwohnern, die umgesiedelt werden, sowie Waldschützern, die den angrenzenden Hambacher Forst bewohnen, um ihn vor der Abholzung zu schützen. Unterstützt werden diese Gruppen von der Koalition ‚Ende Gelände‘, welche 2018 Kohlestrukturen des Hambacher Tagebaus mithilfe von zivilem Ungehorsam blockiert hat. Diese Gruppen stoßen in ihrem Widerstand immer wieder auf Barrieren und Hindernisse.

In dieser Arbeit werden jene Barrieren und Hindernisse auf Grundlage von halb-strukturierten Interviews und teilnehmenden Beobachtungen untersucht. Die Arbeit stützt sich dabei auf drei Konzepte: das von Galtung entwickelte Konzept von Gewalt, eine auf Foucault basierende Definition von Macht und das so genannte ‚disciplining dissent‘-Konzept, das analysiert, wie der Widerstand diszipliniert wird.

Die Arbeit präsentiert einen Einblick, wie das Zusammenspiel von Gewalt und Macht den Widerstand auf verschiedenen Ebenen diszipliniert. Dabei wird Gewalt in direkte, strukturelle und kulturelle Gewalt unterschieden, die miteinander verwoben sind. Die direkte Gewalt wurde von den meisten Befragten nicht als stark disziplinierend angesehen, sondern vielmehr als Möglichkeit, vorherrschende Machtverhältnisse zu ändern. Dass diese Machtverhältnisse in den Gesellschaftsstrukturen verankert sind, ist besonders deutlich in der Verwicklung von Staat und RWE zu sehen. Diese sogenannte strukturelle Gewalt umfasst die Marginalisierung, Fragmentierung und Überwachung des Widerstands. In diesem Kontext spielen die Medien eine große Rolle, indem, basierend auf kulturellen Normen und Werten, durch die Medien ein öffentlicher Diskurs geschaffen wird, der den Widerstand schwächt. Diese Studie zeigt aber auch, dass die verschiedenen Gruppen des Widerstands zahlreiche Gegenmaßnahmen entwickelt haben, insbesondere indem sie starke Narrative von globaler Gerechtigkeit und globaler Erwärmung als einem Nebenprodukt der kapitalistischen Ideologie nutzen. Insgesamt wird deutlich, wie die Gewalt durch Staat und RWE und die verschiedenen Machtverhältnisse das Leben der Widerständler beeinflusst und prägt.

Schlüsselwörter: Widerstand, disciplining dissent, Gewalt, Galtung, Macht, Klimagerechtigkeit

Table of contents

1 Introduction	9
1.1 Problem formulation	9
1.2 Research aim and questions	10
2 Theoretical Background	11
3 Methodology	13
4 Results	16
4.1 Direct violence	16
4.1.1 Bodily harm	16
4.1.2 Psychological impacts	17
4.1.3 Identity	17
4.1.4 Freedom	18
4.2 Structural violence	19
4.2.1 Marginalization	19
4.2.2 Discursive obstruction	19
4.2.3 Corporate-political influence	20
4.2.4 Surveillance	21
4.2.5 Fragmentation	21
4.3 Cultural violence	22
4.3.1 Ideology	22
4.3.2 Cultural norms and values	22
4.4 Threat of violence	23
4.5 Violence as a justification for resistance	24
5 Discussion	25
5.1 Discussion of results	25
5.1.1 The concept of power	25
5.1.2 Direct violence and power	25
5.1.3 Cultural violence, corporate-political influence and power	25
5.1.4 Marginalisation and discursive obstruction	26
5.1.5 Fragmentation	27
5.1.6 Threat of violence	27
5.1.7 Buirer für Buir	28
5.2 Media coverage	28
5.3 Countermeasures	29
6 Conclusion and critical reflection	31
6.1 Conclusion	31
6.2 Critical reflection	31
References	33

List of tables

Table 1. Overview of interviews.....	14
Table 2. Overview of forms of violence.....	16

Abbreviations

BB	Buirer für Buir	Local initiative
EG	Ende Gelände	Coalition aiming at immediate coal phase out
FR	Forest Residents	Activists living in the Hambach Forest
NRW	North Rhine Westphalia	State in Western Germany
RBB	Representative of Buirer für Buir	Interviewee representing the local initiative
RWE	Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG	Coal mine operator

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem formulation

Gaining international media attention in the autumn of 2018, the conflict around the Hambach coal mine in Germany is representative of several current struggles, ranging from questions of natural protection with the Hambach Forest being a host to protected species, to larger questions of global environmental protection and climate justice (Jansen, 2017).

The Hambach Forest in the West of Germany close to Cologne is a 12000-year old forest with an abundance of species protected by the EU Habitats Directive (a.a.). With the operation of the adjacent lignite mine operated by RWE (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG), 90% of the original size of the forest has already been cleared (Ludwig & Reisener, 2018). The operation of this mine, which is the world's largest opencast lignite mine, led, furthermore, to social conflicts with residents as 5000 residents have already been forced to resettle (Brock & Dunlap, 2018) while two villages, Kerpen-Manheim and Merzenich-Morschenisch, are currently being evacuated and torn down to enable the excavation of the brown coal underneath (Jansen, 2017). As the Hambach Forest lies between the mine and these villages, it holds a key position not only as a resistance against environmental degradation, but also against the destruction of the livelihood and the culture of residents.

To stop the clearing of this key area, forest defenders from various backgrounds occupied the forest in 2012 and are, since then, constructing tree huts and houses to block the expansion of the mine (Brock & Dunlap, 2018). While the occupation has been characterized by evictions and re-occupations, it presents a permanent point of resistance against the expansion of the coal mine (a.a.). Because of the forceful eviction of all the activists and the destruction of their tree houses in preparation of the cutting season of 2018, a mass demonstration with 50.000 participants took place the 6th of October 2018 (Deutsche Welle, 2018a; Ludwig & Reisener, 2018). Just a day before, the Higher Administrative Court in Münster decided to issue an injunctive following a lawsuit raised by BUND (German Friends of the Earth) who claim that the area should be declared an EU Habitat (Jansen, 2017) which put the conflict to a temporary halt (Deutsche Welle, 2018a). As this was just a momentary solution, forest defenders have since moved back into the forest and are currently constructing new treehouses in preparation for further evictions (Ludwig & Reisener, 2018). Concurrently, environmental activists of the coalition Ende Gelände (literal translation: end to the area) organised a mass action of civil disobedience at the end of October 2018 with civil disobedience being defined as "intentionally unlawful and principled collective act of protest with which citizens [...] pursue the political aim of changing specific laws, policies or institutions" (Celikates, 2016, p. 39). In the case of Ende Gelände, thousands of activists were blocking infrastructure of the Hambach coal mine in a strictly non-violent manner to protest the use of fossil fuels and its associated environmental and social consequences (Deutsche Welle, 2018b). Ende Gelände activists are, furthermore, planning a new action in this area for 2019 to protest the detrimental consequences of coal mining (Ende Gelände, 2019a).

As the combustion of fossil fuel is the largest contributor to anthropogenic climate change (Höök & Tang, 2013), resistance is considered a crucial factor to change to more sustainable energy sources (Theodossopoulos, 2014). A great body of research, especially within social movement research, deals with strategies and tactics employed by resisting groups (e.g. Tarrow, 2011a). On the other hand, for the case of the Hambach coal mine, Brock and Dunlap (2018) investigate tactics employed by RWE and the government to diminish the resistance, focusing on visible, hard and subtler, soft forms of containment. This supports claims in Chenoweth *et al.* (2017) that states deploy a variety of actions to diminish resisting groups, including repression, but also accommodating and ignoring dissidents. While both strategies employed by social movements, as well as those employed by their

opponents have been researched, there is a lack of understanding of the dynamic interplay of the actors' tactics, especially considering if the resistance perceives these tactics as disciplinary, in particular the subtle and nonvisible forms of containment.

As this local conflict is not only of importance for the region, but also plays a role in the wider issue of climate change and environmental degradation with the Rhenish lignite mining area being the biggest carbon polluting region in Europe (Jansen, 2017), investigating these disciplining impacts is of high importance. Recognizing the plurality of containment and control the resisting groups face, as well as their ways of dealing with them, can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of activists' struggles worldwide. Investigating contentious collective action in the name of climate justice, this study adds to the field of social movement research (Tarrow, 2011b), especially by contributing to the growing research on the dynamics between oppressors and oppressed (Chenoweth *et al.*, 2017). Linking political and social challenges to issues of environmental protection, entangled with questions of unequal power relations, it also adds to the increasing amount of political ecology literature of the Global North (Robbins, 2004).

1.2 Research aim and questions

This study investigates the wide resistance against the Hambach coal mine with focus on the barriers and limitations, exploring how they are perceived by the resisting groups themselves as they undertake dissident actions, as well as their way of coping with them. Subsequently, the research questions are:

- Which barriers and limitations do participants in the resistance identify?
- Do the perceptions of these barriers and limitations differ among the different resisting groups? If yes, how?
- What kind of countermeasures do participants take to get around these barriers and limitations?

To answer these questions, I will draw on observations made during the Ende Gelände action in 2018, observations during the mass protest in October 2018, semi-structured interviews conducted with participants in both of these events, as well as with people living in the forest, a representative of a local initiative, a lawyer and a nature guide. I will apply the concepts of disciplining dissent, violence and power to this data. The distinction of violence into direct, structural and cultural violence will guide the analytical part, while the interplay of the three concepts will guide the discussion, showing how power can be used to wield violence to a disciplinary effect. Finally, I will briefly discuss measures that the resistance takes to counter-act these disciplining impacts.

2 Theoretical Background

As previous research (e.g. Chenoweth *et al.*, 2017; Brock & Dunlap, 2018) suggests that dissidents can be faced both with direct repression defined as “actual or threatened use of physical sanctions” (Davenport & Inman, 2012, p. 620), as well as subtler forms of containment, the guiding concept of this thesis is the concept of disciplining dissent. ‘Dissent’ refers to different kinds of contestation such as social movement activities, protests or resistance (Coleman & Tucker, 2011) and can range from nonviolent to violent contestation (Ritter, 2014). The definition of ‘discipline’ encompasses several interpretations, ranging from punishment or chastisement over a system of rule for behaviour to systematic training in obedience to regulations and authority (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). This is to show that disciplining works on various levels of containment, including the ways resistance is actively mitigated and counter-enforced, but also less straightforward ways, such as framing and portraying the resistance in a particular way that minimizes, dismisses, omits, demonizes or otherwise discursively contains the resistance (Coleman & Tucker, 2011). In this research, therefore, I understand disciplining dissent as ways of constraining the resistance, both more directly, but mostly in a multi-faced and only partly visible way.

Relating disciplining to chastisement and punishment and a more structural oppression of people calls for the additional use of the concept of violence. In this thesis, I will use the concept of violence as defined by Galtung (1990), separating it into direct, structural and cultural violence, opening up for subtle and non-visible forms of violence. Relating it to time, Galtung understands direct violence as an event, structural violence as a process, and cultural violence as a permanent state (a.a.). Cultural violence is expressed in the culture, for example in language or in an ideology, and builds the basis for the justification of structural and direct violence (a.a.). Structural violence is defined as exploitation, an ‘unequal exchange’ based on unequal power relations, “inherent to the structure of society” (Confortini, 2006, p. 336) including marginalization, fragmentation or penetration of oppressed groups (Galtung, 1990). Cultural violence also gives ground for the use of direct violence (a.a.), which is defined as “personal violence [...] with a subject” (Confortini, 2006, p. 336). Drawing on Galtung’s theory, I understand violence as “present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung, 1975 in Confortini, 2006, p. 336) which opens up for a broad investigation of this concept.

Disciplining can, furthermore, be understood as a modality of power, as a conceptualisation of how power is in different ways implicated in the practice of dissent (Coleman & Tucker, 2011). Following a Foucauldian understanding of power as being ubiquitous, as an essential part of our society (Hay, 2002), we cannot understand the struggles, but also the opportunities, of a resisting group without considering power relations on more subtle levels than direct police enforcement on the ground. I am using the concept of power as defined by Hay (2002) who applies a Foucauldian lens to it, recognizing power as context- and conduct-shaping. This means that power can be direct, conduct-shaping, having an immediate, visible and behavioural effect, while also operating indirectly as the “ability of actors [...] to ‘have an effect’ upon the context which defines the range of possibilities of others” (Hay, 2002, p. 185). This conceptualisation of power can be related to the definition of disciplining, working both in conduct-shaping ways of enforcing obedience, as well as in context-shaping ways by establishing a system of rule for behaviour. Seeing power in these holistic terms is also interesting in combination with the concept of violence which, itself, operates on both a direct, as well as an indirect, namely a structural and a cultural, level.

While prior research in the area of the Hambach coal mine focused on the investigation of tactics employed by RWE to repress the resistance (e.g. Brock & Dunlap, 2018), the

concepts of disciplining dissent, violence, and power build a framework to investigate the repressive tactics as perceived by the resistance. This allows for an insight into how disciplining measures work and affect a movement, which is highly useful for developing countermeasures and to inform other movements.

3 Methodology

This research is a case study investigating the resistance against the expansion of the Hambach coal mine close to Cologne in Western Germany. The research is of qualitative nature with the goal to “understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, J. D., 2018, p. 4). As mentioned before, I argue that there is a lack of understanding about how barriers and limitations are perceived by the resistance which is needed to evaluate their disciplining character. To get this understanding, the research has a phenomenological character, investigating “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell & Creswell, J. D., 2018, p. 13). Following this, I am mostly drawing on interviews with different participants in the resistance who all have the same goal of stopping the expansion of the mine but have different backgrounds and employ different tactics. To investigate their responses in relation to their context, I am also drawing on observations in the field used to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, in Kohlbacher, 2006, p. 14). Specifically, I focus on three groups involved in the resistance, namely participants in Ende Gelände, people living in the Hambach Forest and the local initiative Buirer für Buir.

Ende Gelände, abbreviated to EG in this thesis, is a German and European coalition of people from different movements with the goal of immediate coal phase-out (Ende Gelände, 2018). Starting with their first action in 2015, they have since organised mass actions of civil disobedience with the goal of blocking coal infrastructure, the most recent one organized in 2018 taking place in the Hambach coal mine (a.a.).

EG is strongly supporting the occupation of the Hambach Forest which started in 2012 under the slogan of “Hambi bleibt!” (translation: Hambach Forest stays). Since then activists, which will be referred to as forest residents (abbreviated: FR) as they expressed dislike of being labelled as occupants, build structures in the forest, starting with simple huts, followed by tree houses with the goal to prevent a clearing of the forest (Brock & Dunlap, 2018). The occupation is organized as a hierarchy- and authority-free space with independent FR living in different forest villages (Hambi bleibt!, 2019).

Buirer für Buir, abbreviated to BB, is a local initiative founded in 2007 mostly focusing on counter-acting the impacts of the coal mine on the residents but also with a strong connection to the FR and a profound interest in stopping the expansion of the mine (Buirer für Buir, 2019). I did not interview residents being faced with resettlement, as my focus was on including people who actively decided to resist the expansion of the coal mine and who connect the operation of the coal mine to more global issues of environmental degradation and climate change.

In total, I conducted 18 semi-structured, open ended interviews between October 2018 and February 2019. Interviewees were chosen either directly on the spot during actions and events that I joined or due to their relevance for the research questions. Table 1 offers an overview of the interviews with the codes being used in this thesis to refer to the different interviews.

Table 1. Overview of interviews

Code	Who?	When?	Where?	Duration
Demo_1	2 persons	5.10.2018	Train to mass demo	0:40 h
Demo_2	4 persons	5.10.2018	Vigil point at camp at mass demo	0:37 h
Demo_3	2 persons	6.10.2018	During mass demonstration	0:14 h
Demo_4	2 persons	6.10.2018	During mass demonstration	0:25 h
Demo_5	2 persons	6.10.2018	During mass demonstration	0:20 h
EG11_1	7 persons	25.11.2018	Uppsala, Sweden	1:45 h
EG1_1	1 person	13.01.2019	Kassel, Germany	0:19 h
HF1_1	1 person	16.01.2019	Hambach Forest	0:15 h
EG_HF1_1	1 person	18.01.2019	Cologne, Germany	0:38 h
EG2_1	1 person	14.02.2019	Freiburg, Germany	0:32 h
HF2_1	1 person	16.02.2019	Conference in Freiburg, Germany	0:38 h
EG_HF2_1	1 person	16.02.2019	Conference in Freiburg, Germany	0:33 h
EG2_2	1 person	17.02.2019	Conference in Freiburg, Germany	0:34 h
EG_HF2_2	1 person	17.02.2019	Conference in Freiburg, Germany	0:35 h
HF2_2	1 person	20.02.2019	Hambach Forest	0:50 h
Lawyer	1 person	27.02.2019	Cologne, Germany	1:03 h
RBB	1 person	27.02.2019	Buir, Germany	1:00 h
Nature guide	1 person	01.03.2019	Hambach Forest	0:20 h

As presented in the table, five interviews were conducted during the mass demonstration in October 2018 (Demo_1 to Demo_5) with most of these interviewees having recently gotten involved in the resistance. The same was true for the EG participants (EG11_1, EG1_1, EG2_1 and EG2_2) with most of them being new to the movement, while three having been engaged for several years already. The nature guide started his tours five years ago and the representative of BB (RBB) had been engaged for twelve years already. One of the interviewees of the FR (HF1_1) was quite new to the forest, while the two others (HF2_1 and HF2_2) had been living there for some years. The interviewees connected to both EG and the forest (EG_HF1_1, EG_HF2_1 and EG_HF2_2) were relatively new to both groups. The lawyer was interviewed due to his work representing activists from both Ende Gelände and the Hambach Forest in court.

Except for two, all interviews were conducted in German. The interview questions were open-ended, adapted over time according to the interviewees' position and answers which is a common process in qualitative research (Kohlbacher, 2006). In order to reduce repression and allow interviewees to talk freely about their experiences, all interviewees were informed that their interviews were going to be anonymized working with codes listed in table 1. The interviews were supported by additional observations during Ende Gelände and the mass demonstration in 2018 which I both joined and during two weeks spent in the Hambach Forest in 2019. The data is broad ranged as it includes a wide scope of people and formats to capture the whole milieu of the broad resistance and to explore its different

edges in order to draw a holistic picture of this case. The use of different methods, furthermore, feeds into the concept of triangulation with Creswell and Creswell, J.D. (2018) claiming that the use of multiple sources increases the validity of findings.

The data was analysed using a content analysis which offers the advantages of allowing categories to emerge out of the data and of establishing a close relation to theory, thus enhancing validity and generalizability (Kohlbacher, 2006). The material was transcribed, coded using the data analysis software ATLAS.ti (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2019) and was partly translated to English when necessary. For the qualitative content analysis, as a first step, codes were developed according to the disciplining effects that interviewees mentioned, such as physical violence or effects related to the media. In a second step, the material was coded according to categories of violence, listed in table 2. This was done to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at place that exceed a mere enumeration of disciplining effects.

The categories of violence were drawn from ideas developed in Galtung (1990), especially the division into direct, structural and cultural violence introduced earlier. The subcategories were originally drawn from Galtung (1990) but were altered and extended with new subcategories first in the beginning of the coding and after 10 and 50% of the coding to fit the data and to lead to insightful results (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Like many scholars in Environmental Communication, I can be said to be a dual activist and academic. This is not only true in the sense of wanting to enact change for social movements, but in my case, also through physically participating in acts of resistance, especially through my engagement with Ende Gelände. Creswell and Creswell, J. D. (2018) argue that there is a need to be explicit about how this might influence my interpretation. While my interest in representing my interviewees' ideas and thoughts adequately and convincing possibly influenced which information I prioritized and how I interpreted the findings, I made sure to draw on the theoretical framework and other research to guide the analysis and interpretation in order to limit this influence. At the same time, my engagement opened doors as it allowed for an easier accessibility to interview partners and first-hand observations and was, therefore, overall beneficial for the study. From the beginning, I was clear about this dual role when engaging with interviewees which I experienced as allowing for more open, more detailed and more confident responses from their part. My prior engagement also helped me overcome the general suspicious attitude towards outsiders, especially among the FR.

4 Results

Table 2. Overview of forms of violence

Direct violence	
Bodily harm	Bodily violence against resisters
Psychological impacts	Violence that has impacts on the psychological health
Identity	Violence that targets the identity of resisters
Freedom	Impacts on freedom, including the freedom to do something, as well as expulsion and detention
Structural violence	
Marginalization	Any form of separating the resistance from the mainstream of society
Discursive obstruction	Any form of framing or discourse used to mobilize the public against the resistance, especially connected to media coverage
Corporate-political influence	Any form of influence stemming from the entanglement of politics with RWE
Surveillance	Any form of surveillance
Fragmentation	Any form of splitting within the resistance
Cultural violence	
Ideology	Any form of ideology that is criticized as harmful
Norms and values	Any form of cultural norms and values that were criticized
Threat of violence	
Violence as a justification for resistance	

In this chapter, I will briefly explain the different categories used for the analysis and, by analysing the material, give an account of how they operate in the resistance against the coal mine.

4.1 Direct violence

Direct violence was experienced as bodily harm, as psychological impacts and as violence towards identity and freedom.

4.1.1 Bodily harm

This category includes bodily harm against resisters, experienced by both participants in Ende Gelände (EG) and forest residents (FR). FR reported violent encounters with RWE security guards in the course of which, for instance, an activist was hit and badly injured by a car (EG_HF1_1). These encounters, however, were reported to have decreased over the last years due to a higher police presence in the forest, replacing violence coming from RWE with police violence. During evictions, the police were reported to be disproportionately brutal, especially considering the mostly peaceful nature of the resistance.

“I had the experience that the police acted massively against people without any reason, without any form of threat against them or without anything dangerous happening and were then consciously using violence which means harming people to scare them, to break their will, to evict them from the forest.” (HF2_2)

The same interviewee reported in an emotional manner about his personal experiences with police violence during an eviction:

“The police are breaking their own principles, which they should actually have sworn in, they’re breaking and disdaining them consciously and purposefully. If a person who was passive (during the eviction) is approached by seven or eight police officers, is beaten up, handcuffed, with the hands on his back, with cable strap around his legs, the head pushed to the ground, hits to the neck, to the throat, with the thumb pushing into areas where you have a massive sensation of pain which paralyses you [...]” (HF2_2)

This excessive police violence was reported to lead to trauma and a system of fear, handled later-on. When talking about these police operations, the lawyer mentioned a general willingness among the police to use violence which grew during the past years.

This willingness to use violence was also experienced by participants in EG referring mostly to the use of water cannons, batons and pepper spray. One interviewee (EG11_1) hurt his wrist when being hit with a baton while another one talked about the painful, burning sensations of pepper spray that lasted throughout the night (EG2_1). Other interviewees compared the situation during EG where they were running across fields and over a highway with police officers and water cannons close-by to a warzone (EG11_1). Many interviewees, however, considered the use of violence against other activists as worse than being hurt themselves (e.g. EG11_1).

4.1.2 *Psychological impacts*

In contrast to violence causing bodily harm, this category includes all kinds of direct violence that are associated with psychological impacts, excluding violence towards freedom and identity, handled later-on. Many interviewees associated psychological impacts with bodily harm with, for instance, FR leaving the forest after the eviction and reporting trauma:

“I was choked quite long last summer and... maybe you can call it a slight trauma. After that, I woke up again and again because somehow the sheet was lying on my throat and I thought I couldn't breathe anymore.” (HF2_1)

These experiences were worsened by a heavy police presence at times which interviewees described as psychologically gruelling (e.g. HF2_1). This was obvious to me when experiencing FR reacting disproportionately panic when encountering seemingly harmless police due to these prior experiences. Paired with further experiences of constant presence of RWE cars in the forest, honking at times, and helicopters flying over the area, this created a system of fear and constant alertness. The FR's psychological health was also impacted by the police conducting regular clearings of ground structures which they justified by claiming these structures as being “*foreign to the forest*” (RBB). Furthermore, the police tolerated the destruction of ground structures operated by RWE (HF2_1).

During the EG action, the psychological health of activists was mostly impacted by stressful situations during the action, as well as by cutting the supply of basic needs, such as food or access to toilets.

The member of Buirer für Buir (BB) reported verbal harassment against him and his family. Furthermore, he talked about a demonstration of RWE employees who harassed another group member by protesting in front of her house and other forms of harassment during their demonstrations (RBB). Moreover, he mentioned intense harassment against residents who refused to resettle which led to a lot of them giving up.

“(To resist the resettlement) is a very energy-sapping act because you have to imagine that in this time, RWE uses every possible way of putting pressure on them. Up to the point that well-respected law firms annoy, call, send letters, push further, ‘Your neighbours already moved. Now, you must do that, too. You are destroying the local community.’ And so on. So, there is massive pressure also coming from neighbours, from local politicians, from everyone who is helpful to RWE.” (RBB)

4.1.3 *Identity*

Violence concerning identity includes consequences for resisters that follow from their identity as participants in the resistance. This might be both the loss of social relations, but also a certain treatment by others, such as insults or verbal attacks.

A loss of social relations or the fear of losing social relations through their engagement in the resistance was mentioned by many interviewees. For FR or participants in EG, these re-

relationships typically included their families, while friends were mostly reported as supportive and interested. For the local resistance, the pressure on social relations was reported to be a very fundamental aspect of the resistance:

“The breaks are going through the families. One half is working in the mine, the other half is against it.” (Demo_2)

This harsh split is mostly felt by BB with the interviewee describing their initiative as “*the biggest object of hate for some*” (RBB). This leads to direct verbal attacks tackling their identity, for instance labelling one of their members a “*windmill whore*” (RBB), as she is a supporter of renewable energies.

Verbal attacks like this are mentioned to establish themselves as polemics and prejudice, for example towards FR (HF2_2). These build on a specific image and categorization of activists and is mostly characterized by participants in EG and the lawyer as a generalized treatment. For EG participants this manifested itself mostly through a direct discriminatory treatment by police officers which they attributed to a “*de-humanization*” of these (EG11_1) and which was reported to be disproportional compared to other situations (EG_HF2_2). A generalized treatment of activists before the law was confirmed by the lawyer talking about the case of an activist called Eule who in February 2019 was sentenced to nine months imprisonment after an incident during the evictions in 2018:

“These accusations would, if it wasn’t for an environmental activist, probably mean community service, maybe a weekend arrest. [...] but the people are fundamentally classified as violent and are treated accordingly.” (Lawyer)

4.1.4 Freedom

Violence towards freedom includes freedom to do something, but also expulsion or detention, for instance imprisonment, as well as bans on demonstration or evictions.

An example for circumscribing the freedom to do something was the preliminary ban on the mass demonstration the 6th of October 2018 which was claimed to hurt the legal right for peaceful assembly (Demo_4) and which was repealed just shortly before the demonstration took place.

An attack on freedom by detention was mostly mentioned by participants in EG (EG11_1) in the form of kettles, which is defined as “a small area in which demonstrators or protestors are confined by the police [...] during a demonstration” (Oxford University Press, 2019b). Furthermore, the police installed a kettle at the train station which stopped one thousand activists for hours from coming to the EG camp site (EG_HF2_2), effectively constituting an infringement on their freedom to move. For the FR, detention was mostly attributed to imprisonment (HF2_2), as for instance the imprisonment of the FR Eule (Nature guide). According to the lawyer, the new police law in North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), which allows for the detention of activists up to seven days if they refuse to identify themselves, is also just an excuse for detention, “*so that they stop annoying you*” (Lawyer).

Expulsion was a very dominant topic, mostly associated with local residents forced to re-settle, but also among the FR with them losing their homes, their self-built tree houses, repeatedly during evictions that were undertaken in the preparation of clearings:

“They got evicted again and again. [...] And many people who have been active here, young people, have left the forest and haven’t returned until now because they lost their homes in which they have lived for years.” (HF2_2)

4.2 Structural violence

Structural violence in this analysis includes marginalization, discursive obstruction, corporate-political influence, fragmentation, and surveillance.

4.2.1 Marginalization

Marginalization, a reoccurring topic in all the interviews, is defined as keeping the resistance on the outside (Galtung, 1990). Marginalization was mostly connected to the construction of a bubble, often referred to as the “*eco bubble*” (e.g. EG2_1), and whose construction interviewees attributed to different factors. One of these is the limited access to media keeping the resistance apart from the public. This was recognized by people during the mass demonstration who stated that they had not heard about the issue before the extensive and brutal police operation during the eviction in 2018 which was covered in the mass media. Others attributed this limited access more directly to a political strategy of keeping the resistance down, of “*keeping it secret*” (HF2_2).

The construction of this bubble was connected to a specific image of the resistance in society, especially of the FR categorized as radical left (HF2_1). The lawyer summarized this public image of the FR as “*a criminal coalition that is jiggling around the forest and doesn’t stick to the rules.*” (Lawyer).

Participants in EG claimed that the creation of this specific image justified a certain behaviour, for example of police officers treating them more brutally. The construction of this image as fringe activists or outlaws is supported by the way the resistance is depicted in the media, which will be analysed in the next paragraph as discursive obstruction.

The marginalization has important consequences for the resistance, especially a lack of support, mainly in fully dedicated activists which are willing and able to spend time on the cause. This is both felt in EG in which few people are taking up the key roles and suffer from burnouts after the action, and in the Hambach Forest which is lacking permanent residents. Furthermore, the movement is generally characterized as “white, young and well educated” (Ende Gelände, 2019b) with difficult access for people that do not fit into this category.

4.2.2 Discursive obstruction

Linked to the marginalization of the resistance is discursive obstruction, the use and the establishment of public discourses through media, especially the mass media, to obstruct the resistance by mobilizing the public opinion against them and preventing activists from contesting their representations (Shriver *et al.*, 2013).

Discursive obstruction was especially mentioned by interviewees when talking about the FR being constantly labelled as “*tree monkeys*” or “*eco-terrorists*” in the media (e.g. HF2_1). Playing along with that, interviewees claimed they were portrayed as willing to use violence, connected to pictures of hooded activists and cars on fire (EG_HF2_2) that provoked fear in the public, but also among police officers. This image of violent activists, in return, was attributed to the harsh police violence during the eviction (EG_HF2_2). Interviewees, for instance RBB, even talked about comparisons with the Vietnam war used by politicians just before this eviction to create fear. One more recent example is a report published by the Interior Minister of NRW, Herbert Reul, in which he claimed 1500 police actions in four months and another 1700 from 2015 to 2018 connected to the Hambach Forest. According to the Lawyer, in reality, this report included hundreds of patrols and only 19 convictions. In this report, which several interviewees referred to, Reul labelled the FR as “*a group of criminals affine to destruction and violence*” (Selle, 2019). Through that, he criminalized the resistance, labelling the forest an “*extralegal place which cannot be accepted by society.*” (HF2_2).

Additionally, interviewees claimed that RWE and the government used other arguments to support RWE, such as power supply and employment, or arguments to undermine the resistance, such as portraying the FR as harming the forest.

“They (the police) portray themselves as environmentalists who protect the forest by expelling the people from the forest.” (HF2_2)

While this focuses mostly on the FR, EG participants mostly mentioned the partial view of the mass media, such as focussing on the two activists who chained themselves to the train tracks, portraying them as reckless and irrational, or on the amount of police officers used during the EG action painting the conflict in monetary terms (EG11_1).

All interviewees drew a strong connection between the government including the police as an executor, RWE and the media, which is connected to the topic of corporate-political influence which will be presented in the next paragraph. These combined efforts to draw a certain picture of the resistance, in return, was reported to influence the public.

“People read the news, they read the police reports, they listen to the statements of our ineffectable Interior Minister [...] And this is the image that the people come with.” (Nature guide)

4.2.3 Corporate-political influence

Corporate-political influence is a broad category that includes the influence politics and corporations have, especially through the entanglement of both. This influence includes their power to sanction, regulate, and diminish the resistance, but also to control other parts of society.

The interlinkage and power of the relationship between politics and RWE was a topic mentioned by every interviewee. For instance, as touched upon in the paragraph on discursive obstruction, interviewees mentioned that state-controlled mass media used police reports and press releases of RWE. RBB claims that “*media is used consciously to manipulate the people and the population*” and is, therefore, “*venal*”.

In general, interviewees based the corporate-political influence on a monetary interlinkage between the government and RWE, for example with cities holding high proportions of RWE shares, which, interviewees claim, led to an intense entanglement of them (e.g. Demo_2). Many interviewees linked this entanglement to a broader issue of the interconnection of the state and corporations in the capitalist system. They argued that this leads to a generalized privilege of RWE before the law and a discrimination of resisters which manifests itself, for example, in the new police law in NRW mentioned before. This law is in its justification directly connected to the “*Europe-wide network of the tree occupation in the Hambach Forest*” (Lawyer) which plays into a judiciary system that, according to the interviewees, generally discriminates activists. An often-mentioned example of this is the violence coming from RWE employees against FR which is not prosecuted by the state (e.g. HF2_2, Lawyer).

On a local level, interviewees drew very clear connections between RWE, politics, and, hence, the judiciary and executive system, calling it corrupt (e.g. Lawyer).

“If the District Administrator, who is also responsible for the police in Düren, if he is a member of the steering committee of RWE getting paid by RWE, I can just not imagine that he can take neutral decisions.” (EG_HF1_1)

Independent from this entanglement of RWE and the government, interviewees also mentioned other ways in which corporate influence showed, for example by manipulating employees with propaganda, establishing a discourse of reliance on RWE who sponsor local associations, kindergartens and schools, but also by buying into local newspapers. It also includes what the representative of BB called “*hidden agenda*”, namely a general intransparency of the operations of RWE which makes it difficult for the public to judge, for instance, society’s dependency on the coal from the mine for energy supply (e.g. Demo_1). Given these factors, all interviewees expressed a very low trust in politics, a loss of trust in the democratic system and in the independency of the division of powers.

One aspect following from corporate-political influence is the empty participation of parts of the movement:

“But I’m also a bit suspicious. When I saw the police getting there, I had the feeling they let us go on the tracks. [...] They try to control these movements [...] to make sure that people don’t get radicalised, all these negotiations all the time. I think in the long run, they would never make an agreement that is actually threatening the industry or the state.” (EG11_1).

The same feeling of strategic control arose during the mass demonstration with the court deciding the day before that the cutting season would be stopped, turning the demonstration into a celebration (Demo_1).

4.2.4 Surveillance

The category of surveillance includes both direct surveillance, as well as penetration with police informers.

Among all the FR and EG interviewees, there was a high awareness of the possibility of surveillance which manifested itself especially in the use of code names and a general awareness about communication. Except for the lawyer confirming the legal right to use phone monitoring and bugs and one EG participant (EG11_1) stating that the police is assumed to know the identity of all FR even though their use of code names, few of the interviewees had knowledge or experiences with this aspect of structural violence. This insecurity linked to a high awareness, however, played into the system of fear installed by a structural threat of violence which will be analysed in detail later. Especially in the forest, I observed a high awareness about phone surveillance with phones being excluded from the forest plenary.

Infiltration reported in the context of EG was the use of violence by police officers who joined the EG action incognito and started throwing rocks at the police in the hope that other activists would join and, therefore, justifying violence from the police (Lawyer).

4.2.5 Fragmentation

The category of fragmentation includes aspects that indicate an internal split within the resistance against the coal mine.

The people participating in the resistance have starkly different views and methods, ranging from civic resistance and legal protests over civil disobedience to radical, even militant resistance. Especially the acceptance of violence in pursuit of their goals was perceived differently. EG clearly disclaims violence against humans in the context of their actions, as they take the form of non-violent civil disobedience. The more civic interviewees (RBB, Nature guide) refused violence against other humans on a normative basis of seeing violence as inherently negative. The interviewees currently living in the forest also refused the violence against humans, claiming:

“There is a relatively large consent of ‘If there’s any violence, then it’s only against material things, but we do not attack humans.’ There are exceptions, but that has always been a large consent.” (HF2_1)

However, FR also highlighted the necessity of violence in earlier years of the forest occupation in which the media attention was lacking and during which they saw violence as a way of raising awareness and defending the forest, considering this violence a “*sacrifice*” (EG_HF2_1). With recent broad media attention, though, most interviewees claimed violence against humans as counter-productive and unnecessary (e.g. HF2_1), even leading to more destruction of the forest through intense police operations (RBB). However, most interviewees could understand violence as a reaction to violence and as a self-defence, stating that most violence comes from RWE security guards and the police (EG_HF1_1).

On the other hand, as mentioned in the first quote, another aspect of violence is violence against material things, such as the sabotage of operating machines. While the representative of BB was strictly against this sabotage, claiming that it supported the public negative image of the resistance, other interviewees among the participants in EG and the FR supported the use of this kind of violence, especially by framing it in light of a broader context:

“Machines are inanimate. And I have no problem in attacking and destroying them, because they are an expression of a waste of material, of energy, of resources which causes incredible problems on our planet. And to stop these, I think that it’s legit to attack them.” (HF2_2)

One participant in EG (EG11_1), moreover, explained the occurrence of fragmentation as a strategy of the state, splitting the resistance into “*nice activists*” and “*eco-terrorists*”, as EG (the nice activists) is getting “*too normalized*” which is why they focus on the repression of the ones leading or going a bit further framing them as violent.

4.3 Cultural violence

Cultural violence includes notions of ideology and cultural norms and values.

4.3.1 Ideology

With the definition of ideology being “a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy” (Oxford University Press, 2019a), this category includes interviewees’ statements or experiences that criticize systems of ideas and ideals which are dominant in the current society.

Generally, all interviewees criticized the current state of society in which corporations focusing on monetary gain are holding significant power, while the people, but also politics are rather powerless.

“Because what politics is doing here, is that it pretends to be able to solve the problem in a capitalistic manner, but this leads to ecocide and threatens our species. And we have to realize that in the current power affairs, economic players are way more important and bigger than the national political players.” (EG2_2).

While this quote and many other interviewees, especially among the FR and EG participants, focused their critique on the capitalist system, they further criticized systems of neoliberalism, lobbyism and meritocracy. Especially for the FR, this critique was defined as a core characteristic of their lifestyle (HF2_2).

On a local scale, RWE represented for all interviewees the flaws of these systems, a “*hunger for profit*” (HF2_2) that destroyed the environment for monetary gain. Consequently, the entanglement of the government and RWE was seen as a local representation of the capitalist system. Perceiving this entanglement as a “*wrong orientation*” of the government (Demo_1), interviewees mentioned a loss of trust in the system and claimed it as a reason for taking action.

Furthermore, many interviewees experienced the current political system as allowing for governmental authorities to define what is wrong and what is right, for instance criminalizing the resistance per se, as the Interior Minister of NRW did calling the Hambach Forest an “*extralegal place*” (HF2_2). Based on this current political system, the lawyer confirms that legally, activism against energy supplying operations can be defined and prosecuted as acts of terrorism.

4.3.2 Cultural norms and values

Beyond the critique towards ideological systems, especially connected to the entanglement of authorities and corporations, many interviewees touched upon the influence of cultural norms and values.

Examples of this were the perception of humans as “*the crown of creation*” (EG_HF2_1), valuing work only in monetary terms (HF2_1), and treasuring consumption and growth (HF2_2). These societal values were, then, seen as the justification for the focus on energy supply over the need for environmental protection. Interviewees reported that they were, therefore, either faced with a lack of understanding for their choice of participating in the resistance or with discouragement being faced with the overwhelming power of the capitalist system (EG_HF2_2). Participants in EG and FR, then, experienced their activism as “*crossing a line, a norm in society*” (EG11_1).

4.4 Threat of violence

While interviewees reported instances of directly experienced violence, many were also reporting fears surrounding the consequences for their actions. This included the threat of direct violence focusing on a specific situation, as well as structural threats of violence embedded in the current legal system which together contributed to the establishment of a system of fear.

Talking about the threat of direct violence, most interviewees mentioned bodily harm, with, for instance the representative of BB mentioning being threatened with violence, even murder, for his engagement. The other interviewees were mostly talking about being threatened with police violence. In this context, EG participants mentioned episodes of high panic and “*tunnel vision*” during the EG action, as well as the use of police horses in earlier years (EG11_1). During the eviction in the forest, the fear was mostly motivated by brutal police violence, even risking activists’ lives.

“I was well aware, that I could die any moment. And that some days that’s not even unlikely. That the police are risking my life again and again, for example by cutting on ropes, I was hanging in.” (HF2_1)

Especially in the forest, this constant threat of violence, but also of evictions, led to a persistently tense situation which had heavy impacts on the psychological health of the FR. Additional to violence from the police, FR were also suffering from the threat of violence coming from RWE security guards (e.g. EG_HF1_1). Due to this tense situation, interviewees justified the use of violence against RWE or the police as a reaction to this fear (EG_HF1_1, EG_HF2_1).

While these are examples for the direct threat of violence in a specific situation, the threat of violence was also reported to operate on a structural level installing a system of fear which impacted the resistance. Especially among EG participants and the FR, interviewees mentioned the criminalization of activism, connected to the threat of legal consequences, which “*scare people away from becoming active at all*” (Nature guide). As seen in this quote, this fear was reported to diminish the resistance by keeping people from joining, a hot topic especially for EG. Participants in EG debated this mostly in connection to the new police law in NRW allowing for the police to keep activists in detention for a week (EG_HF1_1). Legal consequences also included permanent imprisonment and high charges for activists. Apart from these legal and financial consequences, EG participants also reported the fear of losing relationships to friends and family through the engagement with activism as it was considered to have “*a big stigma*” (EG11_1).

Among the FR, the resulting fear led to a general mistrust towards externals, but was also reported to have negative impacts on the forest community, linked to surveillance:

“I really don’t like this splitting because that’s what is destroying a movement. It’s just so tiring that in a plenary, everybody is always talking about what you can say where and how.” (HF2_1)

4.5 Violence as a justification for resistance

While all these are examples for how violence influences the resistance, all interviewees justified their resistance by referring to violence against others or nature, making violence their incentive to act. This included both direct violence attributed to the operation of the coal mine, but also structural violence, connecting the operation of the coal mine to effects on a larger scale which are not directly trackable.

Considering direct violence through the operation of the coal mine, interviewees discussed the consequences for the residents, as well as the destruction of the Hambach Forest. Residents were reported to be impacted by fine dust in the air, by noise and light pollution from spotlights, but also by emissions from the power plants, such as radon and mercury (RBB). For the people affected by the resettlement, interviewees mentioned the psychological impacts of being forced to leave their homes and cultural history (HF2_1) touched upon before, connected to higher rates of depression and suicide in the area (RBB). The destruction of the Hambach Forest is caused by the cutting, but also by lowering the ground water table (Demo_3), with one interviewee stating:

“It is really bitter, but they lowered the ground water table by 500 meters. The forest is... dead. There are some species that we cannot save anymore. Some regions that we cannot save anymore. And the Hambach Forest is one of them. It's yet another nail in the coffin.” (EG2_2)

Subsequently, for many interviewees, the destruction of the forest was not only in itself a justification for resistance but also a symbol for broader, more global issues. These included the contribution to climate change, as well as structural violence towards the global South and future generations, calling it an “*environmental-ethical catastrophe*” (EG_HF2_1).

Most interviewees linked this violence to cultural ideologies, norms and values, discussed above, with the coal mine being a representative of it. This violence, consequently, is given as the justification for the resistance:

“Because the mine, the diggers, the clearing of the forest, the emission of CO₂, that is violence to me. There is such a thing as institutional violence and this violence is an expression of a society and an ideology which I don't think is right.” (HF2_2)

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion of results

After the analysis of the different forms of violence based on Galtung's theory (1990), there is a need to explore how these different categories of violence relate to one another and how they are interlinked with the concepts of disciplining dissent and power introduced in the theoretical background.

5.1.1 *The concept of power*

Drawing on Hay (2002), power is both context-shaping, "mediated by, and instantiated, in structures" (p. 186) and conduct-shaping with an immediate, visible and behavioural effect. Having said that, context-shaping power can be attributed to structural violence, which is defined as invisible and "inherent to the structure of society" (Confortini, 2006, p. 336), appearing as unequal distribution of resources and the power to decide (ibid.). Conduct-shaping power, on the other hand, is evident in direct, personal violence with a subject (a.a.). The distribution and exercise of power are "hidden, unexpressed and naturalized by the ideological structure" (Policante, 2011, p. 460), through cultural violence (Galtung, 1990). As will be shown in this discussion, power can be operationalized as violence and contributes to the disciplining of the resistance.

5.1.2 *Direct violence and power*

Evaluating which forms of violence were considered as disciplining, interviewees, mostly the participants in Ende Gelände (EG), did not perceive direct violence as strongly disciplining. Interviewees even embraced the state's display of conduct-shaping power in the form of bodily harm by claiming that this violence was a visible outburst of context-shaping power that was otherwise hidden in society's structure (Policante, 2011). In fact, EG participants framed direct confrontation as an empowering experience which was mostly attributed to the power of masses coming together to protest and resist structural violence and its unequal power relations, breaking with the "entrenched and hegemonic powers of the coal economy" (Eldridge, 2015, p. 287) and with the "belief that nothing can be done" (ibid.). This sensation was mostly associated with the experience of being able to break with the conduct-shaping forces by overwhelming the police and occupying coal structures, a sensation shared by participants in other social movements (Connor, 2012).

For the forest residents (FR), the mere existence in the forest was perceived as a break with the context- and conduct-shaping power by resisting police orders and creating a locally alternative context. Blocking the expansion of the coal mine through tree houses, as well as during EG, was, hence, used to "reduce the ability of the powerful to impose their will unchecked" and, therefore, to "directly counteract the dominating influence of the extractive industry over collective decisions" (Aitchison, 2018, pp. 673–674). Even though bodily harm executed by the state and RWE, then, played an important role for the resistance, direct violence also had negative, disciplining effects, mainly for the FR experiencing traumatizing police violence and losing their homes during evictions impacting their psychological health. It had, therefore, a double role for the FR, both being characteristic for their resistance, but also disciplining them.

5.1.3 *Cultural violence, corporate-political influence and power*

Defining violence as "present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Confortini, 2006, p. 336) opens up for subtler and more invisible forms of violence beyond direct, conduct-shaping violence. This supports findings in Nilsen (2009) suggesting that deprivation and

oppression are "clues to underlying structures and relationships which are not observable other than through the particular phenomena or events that they produce" (Wainwright, 1994 in Nilsen, 2009, p. 123). These underlying, invisible forms of structural violence justified through cultural violence showed to have stronger disciplining effects on the resistance.

For most interviewees, cultural violence was connected to the hegemonic ideology of capitalism and the immense corporate power, as well as cultural norms and values. Galtung (1990) attributes these cultural norms and values to a distinction into 'good' and evil' derived from societal ideologies and opening up for other forms of violence, such as structural violence.

Interviewees experienced this structural violence mostly in form of the strong entanglement of the government and RWE and the subsequent corporate-political influence. They saw the justification of this entanglement in the capitalist ideology allowing for an interlinkage of governmental authorities and corporations. They suggested a monetary entanglement with RWE sponsoring locally, a tactic similarly used in other coal mining areas (Eldridge, 2015), municipalities and cities holding shares, but also legalized corruption, lobbying and close relations between RWE and the police, supported by Brock & Dunlap (2018). Furthermore, RWE is the largest German electricity provider (a.a.), extending its influence to a national level.

This entanglement creates unequal power relations, with interviewees attributing high context-shaping power to RWE and corporations in general, basing this in the cultural dominance of capitalism and allowing for corporate influence. This context-shaping power became evident in the legal system, for instance by putting high charges on environmental activism which interviewees identified as discriminatory towards activists. Power was also manifested as conduct-shaping with the police having the monopoly on violence in our societal system and using it to enforce the interests of RWE through direct violence against activists in the form of bodily harm and through evictions to clear the forest and villages for a continued operation of the coal mine.

5.1.4 *Marginalisation and discursive obstruction*

With the resistance questioning the ideology of capitalism and aiming to change the current power relations, authorities aim to diminish the resistance to maintain the regime and remain in power (Ritter, 2014). One aspect of disciplining the resistance was to reduce their impact by marginalising it, either by limiting their access to media, supporting claims in Hansen (2011), or by appealing to norms and values inherent in the culture of society. This showed mostly in the construction of an image of the resistance provoking fear in the public, especially by labelling them as "*eco-terrorists*" (e.g. HF2_1) and depicting them as violent. Policante (2011) attributes this to the societal paradigm of security and the obsession with terrorism, therefore using culturally constructed fears. It also constructs a dichotomy of activists and non-activists, which Galtung (1990) identifies as cultural violence. Highlighting the use of militant resistance by the FR in earlier years can also be attributed to cultural violence: "A major form of cultural violence indulged in by ruling elites is to blame the victim of structural violence who throws the first stone [...] stamping him as 'aggressor'." (Galtung, 1990, p. 295). A further often-mentioned tactic was to claim a loss of employment that ending the operation of the coal mine would cause, provoking fears.

Shriver *et al.* (2013) label these tactics 'discursive obstruction' highlighting how state officials and countermovement members use their political and economic power to mobilize public opinion against environmentalists. This is especially true for the FR with the Interior Minister of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) claiming the forest to be an "*extralegal place which cannot be accepted by society*" (HF2_2) and, hence, criminalizing it. Here, the connection between structural and cultural violence becomes particularly clear using culturally constructed fears, a discursive separation of the resistance from the population, and the power inherent in structural violence against the resistance. Following claims of Galtung

(1990), this public image, then, justifies direct violence. The FR experienced this as intense police violence, especially during the evictions in 2018 which was justified by depicting the FR as violent and dangerous previous to the evictions. Similarly, depicting EG participants as irrational and violent justified the use of violence against them. For both, this is also vindicated by constructing mining as a national security interest (Brock & Dunlap, 2018), which interviewees attributed to heavy lobbyism and which results in the police defending the interests of RWE.

Moreover, interviewees attributed this public image of activists to a stigmatization, connecting them with “discredit and devaluation because that is how the group as a whole is viewed.” (Marx Ferree, 2005, p. 187), which especially EG participants named as limiting their engagement, hence, disciplining them.

5.1.5 Fragmentation

Policante (2011) argues that violence is hidden in the structures and ideology of a state, regarding “normality as peace” (p. 462), on which ground direct violence, visible outbursts of violence, are delegitimized. This coheres with Galtung’s dualistic definition of cultural violence (1990), allowing for a conceptualisation of direct violence as normatively bad. This conceptualisation showed to be disciplinary insofar as it led to a fragmentation among activists over the question of the use of violence. The fragmenting aspect of this became evident with interviewees stating that the acceptance of violence was the most debated difference between the different parts of the resistance with, for instance, RBB strictly refusing violence and delegitimizing FR who use violence. Even though FR interviewees claimed to, at least since recently, restrain from violence, following claims in Theodossopoulos (2014), they remained stigmatized as “violent [...] even when they evidently fall victim to brutal suppression.” (p. 420).

This fragmentation also operated by normalizing the non-violent part of the resistance, especially legal protests and EG, and further illegitimizing the FR who have an ongoing discourse legitimizing violence against machines. Again, this form of structural violence builds on the dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ activists, defined as cultural violence (Galtung, 1990), and operates through a normalization of civil disobedience. EG participants reported this as their impression that the police did not really try to stop them from occupying coal infrastructure, making their engagement feel like empty participation and hindering more radical change. This supports claims in Carey (2006) that in democracies, oppositions are most likely to be accommodated, as direct violence is costly both economically and reputationally (Brock & Dunlap, 2018).

5.1.6 Threat of violence

Even though direct violence was not perceived as particularly disciplining, the threat of such violence was considered as a disciplining factor supporting claims in Koopmans (2005) that “repression always has important deterrence and socialization components that aim not at the repressed subject, but at the wider public, to deter those who might consider committing a similar offense” (p. 161). This supports claims in Galtung (1990) that the threat of violence is an important aspect for understanding how violence operates. For EG, this threat was mostly connected to a deterrence of activists through bodily harm and high charges, but also through the new police law which excludes less flexible participants, negatively affecting the capacity for EG to mobilize (Ritter, 2014).

For the FR, the threat of surveillance has shown to be a way of disciplining the resistance, as it led to activists covering their faces and showing mistrust towards others, which played into the marginalization of the FR, especially by connecting pictures of hooded activists with violence. Policante (2011) supports these claims arguing that surveillance during the G20 protests was “instigating a climate of fear and a general anti-social attitude of distrust, therefore isolating people from their surroundings” (p. 462). Surveillance, again, is justified through cultural violence, treating protests, blockades and lock-ons as acts of terrorism on

an EU level (Brock and Dunlap, 2018). Moreover, intimidating FR through arbitrary police harassment and not prosecuting violence from RWE employees was identified as disciplining, as it contributed to a tense situation among FR with psychological impacts on them.

5.1.7 *Buirer für Buir*

While all these examples focused mostly on EG and FR, the representative of the local group *Buirer für Buir* experienced disciplining effects differently. BB is distinct from FR and EG as they are not disobeying the laws and, therefore, face different forms of repression. For this group, the corporate-political influence had the biggest impact on the resistance with strong entanglements of local politicians and RWE supporting findings in Brock and Dunlap (2018). This entanglement was reported to lead to numerous visible direct forms of violence affecting BB, such as threats of murder, verbal insults and loss of social relationships by splitting the residents. These forms of direct violence were reported to have disciplinary effects as they were subtler and less visible than the direct violence targeting FR and EG, with RBB calling it “*crossing the boundaries just a slight bit every time, crossing it bit by bit*”. Furthermore, these forms of direct violence were deeply rooted in cultural violence by creating a dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ (Galtung, 1990), splitting the population into two very distinct groups of people, “*one half is working in the mine, the other one is against it*” (Demo_2). According to HF2_2, these two groups were holding very different worldviews and different priorities. Again, through the corporate-political entanglement, RWE and the government have greater power at their hands with the possibility of using this power against the resistance, for instance, by manipulating employees and the media with local newspapers reporting in favour of RWE and against the resistance (RBB). Power is, then, especially through the media, context-shaping, creating a context and a discourse that diminishes the resistance.

5.2 Media coverage

As in the paragraph above, many interviewees mentioned media coverage as a decisive disciplining factor. This supports findings in Koopmans (2005) claiming that the relationship between dissent and repression is increasingly mediated through the mass media and the public discourse. As media was mentioned as a key factor and is entangled with all forms of violence and power, there is a need to handle this aspect in detail.

A key event to showcase the relationship of dissent and repression was the media coverage of the FR before and during the eviction in September 2018. Interviewees claimed that the activists in the forest were depicted as irrational, radical and, most of all, violent and dangerous, hence, illegitimated. This, in turn, was used as a justification for the extensive police operation to evict the forest. Interviewees, for instance RBB, connected this to the venality of the mass media, playing into the corporate-political influence and the construction of a public image of the resistance related to public fears (Shriver *et al.*, 2013), discussed above. Connecting it to the concept of violence, in this example structural violence through corporate-political influence and discursive obstruction based on public discourses and fears, understood as cultural violence, was used as a justification for direct violence. As the media influences how the public understands and interprets environmental issues and conflicts (Hansen, 2011), it holds a key position in distributing context-shaping power. According to Koopmans (2004), medial power is linked to extra-medial power relations, reinforcing the dominance of institutional actors.

However, triggering repression can also be argued to support the FR by attracting media attention and provoking reactions from the public (Koopmans, 2005), playing into the before-stated findings that bodily harm was rather embraced than perceived as disciplining. By highlight police brutality, FR are building on the dominant view that coercive tactics are not justified in democratic states, using cultural norms to fight repression (Aitchison, 2018)

and “winning hearts and minds” (Hansen, 2011, p. 8) by creating an image of the ‘bad’ police. The success of this showed with the mass demonstration in October 2018 attracting a broad spectrum of the public pushing the conflict into the public discourse and, hence, reducing the marginalisation of the resistance. The activists were using social media to frame the conflict in relation to what Hansen (2011) calls a ‘master-discourse’, to the topic of climate change, which increased their legitimacy and triggered wide support, including the subsequent coverage in national mass media. Thereby, they use the role of mass media as a central arena for “contesting claims, arguments and opinions about our use and abuse of the environment” (a.a., p. 8). Consequently, the mass media played a key role in distributing context-shaping power, as it influenced the audience’s interpretations and opinions and can, therefore, challenge hegemonic ideals and norms, and influence decision-making (Hansen, 2011).

Especially EG acknowledged the power of media putting emphasis on good media coverage and aiming for broad publicity, especially by highlighting the repressive methods employed by the police against non-violent activists (e.g. EG2_1). Therefore, media coverage in connection to dissent and repression was perceived as potentially enabling resonance in the public for their cause (Koopmans, 2004).

In this sense, media can be understood both as disciplining and empowering, being central for the production of hegemonic meanings, but also for the development of counter-hegemonic perspectives (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). This dualistic role of the media shows especially through the fragility of media interest, as the public sphere only has limited space for political communication and is characterized by high competition, reducing what is portrayed in the media (Koopmans, 2005). For this case study, this is exemplified by the high public attention after the evictions with the mass demonstration demanding a legal protection of the Hambach Forest, while the court decision in March 2019 against this demand did not reach the mass media and, therefore, passed relatively unnoticed. Concluding this discussion on the power of media coverage, the silencing of the conflict before and, now again, after the intense situation in 2018 showed to be a powerful tool in disciplining the resistance, supporting findings in Marx Ferree (2005).

5.3 Countermeasures

After having elaborated on the variety of disciplining effects used to diminish and limit the resistance, it is important to mention that all parts of the resistance developed strong countermeasures to deal with these effects.

Evaluating these countermeasures, it seems that the resistance is taking the different forms of violence into account by applying strong narratives of rooting violence in cultural and structural violence and uncovering the reproduction of structural violence within the social order (Eldridge, 2015). Seeing themselves as part of bigger issues of climate change, environmental destruction and social injustice, the interviewees questioned cultural norms and values, including the reliance on consumption and growth and rooted these effects in the capitalist system with EG and FR being both explicitly anti-capitalist. They also highlighted the structural violence of the fossil fuel industry, especially against nature, people in the global South and future generations as their justification for resistance and the use of violence, claims supported by a variety of researchers (e.g. Confortini, 2006; Connor, 2012). Through that, the resistance can be considered ‘transnational activism’ by not only focusing on the Hambach coal mine, but by seeing it as a symbol for challenging the legitimacy of coal mining itself (Connor *et al.*, 2009).

In the face of this structural violence, direct violence was not perceived as strongly disciplining, as resisters saw direct violence as trivial in comparison to the structural violence. Direct violence was also seen as a visible outburst of structural violence which, in turn, offered possibilities of changing power relations, discussed above. By using injustice frames, rooting violence in the superiority of corporations over natural laws and social rights, the

resistance created a common ground for the whole climate justice movement, as well as a base for further mobilization, reaching out to the larger society concerned with inequality and climate change (Taylor, 2000). According to Nilsen (2009), the resistance can, therefore, be considered a ‘social movement from below’ which starts from specific experiences in concrete lifeworlds, but manages to make connections to other activists in similar struggles. Through that, they develop collective identities across social and spatial boundaries, proceeding the movement “towards more encompassing forms of movement activity that seek to challenge the social totality as such.” (p. 133). This narrative, hence, was used to reduce the effects of marginalization, fragmentation, threat of violence, and direct violence.

Beyond this narrative, the resisting groups used a variety of other countermeasures developed over their years of engagement. For example, EG has created a large support structure, including legal support, emotional support, the allocation of paramedics and food supply, the organisation in buddy teams and affinity groups for support, as well as de-escalating tactics during the action. They also encouraged the use of code names to protect from repression, a tactic similarly used among the FR. These adaptations to repression support findings in Chenoweth *et al.* (2017) that “the exposure to selective repression [...] helps dissidents to develop a robust skillset that helps to maintain resistance” (p. 1958).

6 Conclusion and critical reflection

6.1 Conclusion

As demonstrated in this thesis, by using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, a variety of disciplinary factors affecting the resistance against the Hambach coal mine could be identified. Disciplining works mostly on the level of structural, invisible violence by marginalising, fragmenting and monitoring the resistance, the latter being connected to the establishment of a system of fear. These tactics are enabled through context-shaping power embedded in the entanglement of RWE and the government. Disciplining also works on the level of cultural violence establishing ideologies, norms and values that diminish the resistance and justify structural and direct violence. While Ende Gelände (EG) and the forest residents (FR) reported similar experiences of direct violence as not being highly disciplining, Buirer für Buir (BB) are more affected by direct violence, especially in the form of impacts on social relationships, rooted in structural and cultural violence. While the media plays an important role as discursively obstructing the resistance by systematically dismissing it, it also offers the opportunity of changing power relations, especially through the use of strong narratives from the side of the resistance. Beyond a broad range of other countermeasures, these narratives are the strongest in counter-acting disciplinary effects.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding the delicate interplay of violence and power, especially how cultural norms and power inherent in the structures can be operationalized to diminish a resistance. Especially the crucial role of the media adds to the field of Environmental Communication as the impact of media coverage and the construction of a public discourse answers to claims in Hansen (2011) on a need to focus on media and communication processes in the public and political definition of environmental issues. In this context, this thesis mostly contributes by showing how the use of certain narratives appealing to the public can shift power relations and counter-act disciplinary effects.

6.2 Critical reflection

As the resistance is broad and complex, composed of a variety of individuals with different worldviews, norms and methods, it is impossible to represent all these different factors in the brevity of this thesis. However, including different views and investigating into different directions and concepts, it still offers an insight into how disciplining works in the case of the Hambach coal mine. Especially the connection of using both the concept of disciplining dissent and the concept of violence prove to be highly useful in understanding the resistance's struggle, as it showed that not all kinds of violence had strong disciplining effects and that not all kinds of disciplining effects were directly linked to RWE or the state, but embedded in a cultural system that exceeds the mere influence of single players.

Additional to the external influences on the resistance presented in this thesis, I could also identify internal barriers to resistance, such as miscommunication or burn-outs, as well as conflicts between and within the different resisting groups that exceed the conceptualisation of violence and could not be covered in the brevity of this thesis. As the resistance is broad and the individual resisters are very distinct in their motives and tactics, a further investigation into this direction could shed a new light, especially by investigating which barriers are constructed externally by society, the state or media and which barriers operate internally.

With the fluctuating media and public interest, I would, furthermore, suggest, following the developments of the resistance in relation to media coverage, focusing on framing, discursive practices and cultural resonance presented in Hansen (2011), as RWE is still legally

allowed to clear the forest with the resistance currently facing further evictions and on-going repression.

While this thesis focuses solely on the side of the resistance with the goal of contributing to social movement research, it could further be interesting to investigate the other side of the conflict, the government and the corporation, focusing on their perception of the conflict and questions of climate justice.

All in all, this thesis is to be understood as a brief, but detailed overview of disciplining effects as they are perceived by participants in the resistance against the Hambach coal mine. Findings of this thesis are valuable to inform the resistance itself, but also highlights the advantage of using a combined framework of the concepts of disciplining dissent, violence, and power when investigating social movements and their barriers.

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