The making and mobilisation of interests: Doing representation in sex worker rights activism in Germany

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Nadine Gloss

Leeds University Business School

Division of Work and Employment Relations

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Declaration

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Signed

Nadine Gloss

The concept for the thesis originated with the author. It was developed with the assistance of supervision from Associate Professor Kate Hardy, Dr. Elizabeth Oliver and Associate Professor Ian Greenwood.

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Abstract

Representation is frequently the subject of debate within the sex worker rights movement, as activists are often sex workers in more privileged positions compared to the rest of the sex working population. Sex worker rights activists have been criticised for being too privileged to understand and speak up for the rights of less privileged sex workers, to the point that their activism has even been discredited from outside as well as within the movement. Therefore, the question arises as to what extent more privileged sex workers in activist roles are able to represent more marginalised and precariously-situated sex workers.

To address this issue, I expand on the concept of representation that has thus far been applied in social movement studies and in the labour union literature to understand how collective action happens or how movement leaders relate to their constituents. In the literature so far, representation has been understood as a one-dimensional process in which the interests of the broader population are a given and vocalised by a particular group acting on behalf of this population. As an alternative to this, I re-conceptualise representation as a process that is constructed by both those seeking to represent and those being represented, whereby interests are shaped and roles are constructed that enable sex worker rights activists to take action and make demands as representatives of the broader sex working population.

Based on interviews, focus groups and participant-observation designed and carried out according to a feminist participatory research-oriented methodology, this study examines the internal processes of activism to expose previously overlooked dimensions of representation and mobilisation. The study shows that representation is constructed through internal processes of activism that absorb the input of sex workers outside of formal activist organisations who may not actively participate in movement activities. This shows how needs and interests of sex workers are accounted for and vocalised even when those bearing these needs and interests are not always physically or actively present in activism.

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Acronyms

BesD *Berufsverband für erotische und sexuelle Dienstleistungen* (Professional Association of Erotic and Sexual Service Providers)

GSG German Society for Gynaecologists

ICRSE International Committee for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe and Central Asia

KOK *Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Menschenhandel* (German National Coordination Circle for Research on Human Trafficking)

NSWP Network of Sex Work Projects

PAR Participatory action research

PPA Prostitute Protection Act

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sex worker rights activists have been criticised for being in a position of privilege that prevents them from being able to understand and represent less privileged sex workers. Such criticism has been used to delegitimise the fight for sex worker rights, based on the view that sex worker rights activists glamourise sex work and their experiences are not representative of those of the wider sex working population[1],[2]. In this thesis, I show how representation is practised in sex worker rights activism in Germany by analysing how collective action happens through the activities of the sex worker rights group BesD (Professional Association for Erotic and Sexual Service Providers) and what moves sex workers to fight for an improvement of their situation. The study has found that representation has underlying dimensions that can be understood by looking at processes leading to collective action. This is grounded in the idea that representation is an act that takes place as part of the interactions between members of a social group in which some take on the role of representing the group as a whole. Interactions in this sense refer not only to direct, in-person exchanges, but also to the ways that actors' own interests interact with their perceptions and experiences of each other's interests as they orchestrate and (re-)consider their actions (Blumer, 1969). In this regard, this study challenges the view that representation is merely the act of one group of actors speaking on behalf of the wider social group to which they belong. Instead, I argue, it is the continuous process of interest negotiation and construction between members of the same social group (Loncar, 2018). Building off of Loncar's conceptualisation of representation, I show that representation as a construction of interests can be traced within processes of collectivisation. The specific processes in which the negotiation and construction of interests can be observed are collective framing, collective identity construction and the mobilisation of participation, which are also the processes that constitute the performance of collective action, as shown in social movement theory (Melucci, 1996; Benford and Snow, 2000; Opp, 2009). Within these processes, representation is a concept that allows me to uncover how exactly the interests of

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[1] "An honourable woman can very quickly be degraded as a whore" jungle.world 14 May 2020 https://jungle.world/artikel/2020/20/eine-ehrbare-frau-kann-sehr-schnell-zur-hure-degradiert-werden

[2] "Your're not representative: Identity politics in sex industry debates" by Alison Phipps 31 August 2015 https://genderate.wordpress.com/2015/08/31/youre-not-representative/

actors intertwine as they express their own interests, incorporate their perception of each other's interests into their actions and create initiatives based on these. Applying this to sex worker rights activism in Germany, I argue that the interests of sex workers as voiced by the BesD are a construction of both the priorities and needs expressed by members of the Association as well as non-member sex workers. In this view, sex worker representation is practised as a continuous dialogue and negotiation between sex workers with diverse backgrounds, motivations and experiences of sex work that merge, clash or transform to shape the projected position of sex worker rights. Through this re-conceptualisation of representation, I re-examine forms of participation in the process of mobilisation, whereby the interests of those unable or unwilling to physically or directly mobilise for sex worker rights are nevertheless integrated as a driving force for collective action.

As an example of sex worker activists' response to the criticism of superficial representation that I strive to investigate and challenge in this thesis, I present a quote from a debate streamed on the radio between a member of the main conservative political party in Germany who helped to draft the Prostitute Protection Act (PPA) and Doris, a member of the BesD. Doris' response shows how the situation of marginalised sex workers is being presented and how the BesD, as a representative body for sex workers in Germany, strives to bear the situation of less privileged sex workers when expressing the interests of the sex working population.

> *Moderator: How have your working conditions improved or would it be better to say, changed, since the introduction of the PPA?*
>
> *Doris: First of all, it's not about me personally and my own circumstances; we are talking about those sex workers who are marginalised and work precariously, and their working conditions have massively worsened. As a result of the law, many small, self-determined venues as well as sex work flats have been forced to close and those sex workers who want to continue to work have two options: they can opt to work on the street, which is often a more challenging workplace, or they can work at a large brothel for profit-hungry managers who often determine the working terms and conditions. That is all "thanks" to this new law and I find it quite cynical to claim that so-called "better-off prostitutes" in the BesD are not doing anything to support*

precarious sex work because many of our members who were working in venues

before are now being greatly disadvantaged because of this new law.

(Translated excerpt from transcription of radio debate from November 2018)

The debate excerpted above is an example of how representation happens outside of the Association structures in the public sphere, enacted as a vocalisation of interests and concerns within a formal setting. The response given by Doris shows how she used the question posed by the moderator as an opportunity to emphasise the effect of the PPA on marginalised sex workers and also more broadly as a way to draw attention to the BesD's consciousness of the situation of the wider sex working population beyond its membership base. In this way, Doris' response challenges the criticism against sex worker rights activists in Germany, that their interests are shaped solely by their own privileged perspective and experience of sex work and that they therefore have limited credibility as speakers for sex worker rights. In order to deconstruct this criticism and to show how sex worker rights activists can represent not only their own interests, but also those of the wider sex working population, the concept of representation is analysed as a multi-lateral process in which both activist as well as non-activist sex workers shape the platform for sex worker rights. What I will do in the upcoming chapters is go beyond the act of representation in the public sphere to investigate the process of representation *within* the BesD that produced performances such as that depicted in the response given by Doris above.

1.1 Significance and growth of the sex worker rights movement

This thesis analyses sex worker rights activism as a type of social movement, joining the debate on how collective action happens in social movement studies, which has so far only sparsely looked at the context of sex worker organising with reference to social movement theory (Gall, 2006, 2010, 2016; Jackson, 2013; Hofstetter, 2016). The action that crystallises within sex worker activism reveals new dimensions of collective social action and factors shaping this action that do not come out in the study of other movements. The dimension of stigma, for example, as a factor influencing identification, participation and mobilisation into activism is particularly significant in the context of sex worker rights activism (Mathieu, 2003; Gall, 2006, 2010, 2016). Stigma and the co-stigmatisation of sex workers' friends and

family were recurring themes throughout the research that are discussed in this thesis as factors influencing the processes constituting collective action.

Sex worker activism is a growing movement across the world, fighting to raise the concerns and interests of people who provide sex and erotic services commercially for diverse motivations and from all different backgrounds. The movement for sex worker rights has been growing steadily over the past forty years, having established a professional infrastructure of networks bringing together various smaller sex worker rights groups at national and regional levels. The largest umbrella organisation for sex worker rights is the International Committee for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe and Central Asia (ICRSE), whose members include sex worker rights groups and individual sex workers, academics, trade unionists, women's and LGBT rights activists from thirty-two countries. The ICRSE's mission is to support its members in the development of national and international laws that promote the rights of sex workers as self-determined workers deserving decent labour conditions rather than legal oppression. This and other organisations such as the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), also based in Europe as a project uniting sex worker rights groups worldwide, have risen and worked persistently over the past three decades to amplify the voices of sex workers to create awareness of the needs of this social group. The ubiquity of sex worker rights groups shows that sex work is indeed a global phenomenon, but despite this, sex workers everywhere continue to face discrimination, exclusion or oppression for their economic activities and also for other aspects of their being, including gender, race or disability.

Although the reality of commercial sex is still a contested topic in the mainstream imagination, the perspective of sex work as a legitimate form of work and the recognition of sex workers' agency has grown significantly in academia (O'Connell Davidson, 1998; West and Austrin, 2002; Kinnell, 2002; Wahab, 2003; Sanders, 2005; Agustin, 2006; Boris et al, 2010; Cohen, et al, 2013). This aspect of sex work as work is relevant to understanding sex worker activism as a social movement because it highlights the re-framing of sexual activity as a possible form of work that was set in motion by group of people who shared the common experience of sex as work coming together to introduce this idea into the mainstream perception of commercial sex. A number of studies have been done so far in which sex work is investigated specifically as a form of precarious work (Hardy, 2010; Pitcher, 2015; Orchiston, 2016; Cruz, Hardy, Sanders, 2016). Through this lens, the focus moves beyond the motivations and individual

psychology of the people involved and instead asks what the material, social and legal circumstances of their occupation are and how these aspects affect workers' social mobility, agency and participation in society. Taking this perspective means acknowledging that there are different realities or ways that subjects construct their reality in commercial sex and that the pertinent questions in this field of research are directly related to workers' experiences of sex work. Nevertheless, the starting point of sex work as work for research is still a political decision that must be consciously made and defended. Therefore, I make clear at this point that my research was guided by the view of sex work as work, informed by my preceding political engagement in sex worker rights activism. Regarding sex work as work does not mean denying that there are exploitative conditions in this realm of social activity, but rather understanding that poor working conditions and limitations on workers' autonomy are not inherent to commercial sexual transactions. Instead, the different contexts surrounding sex work that shape the working arrangements and rights of the people involved are what determine the extent of exploitation in sex work. In this view, studying sex work as work is a position that makes the research possible in the first place because it considers the everyday experiences of the actors of interest as a result of their agency. Working with the agency of sex workers rather than designing the research as a project of questioning their agency enables a greater diversity of perspectives to emerge from the field, generating knowledge that can be recycled back into the community from which it was derived. As I will discuss further in chapter three, this thesis follows an approach to social research that is grounded in community collaboration and sharing the results in a way that enhances the research participants' reflection and understanding of their actions.

1.2 Why this research topic

Sex work as a research topic first captured my interest during my final year as an undergraduate in cultural anthropology in the United States. At the time, I had been absorbed in a society of double standards for sixteen years, one of which was the extremely polarised attitude towards sex, sexuality and commercial sex. On the one hand, the promiscuity among young American college attendees during my undergraduate years was common, almost a given part of the experience of being an undergraduate at an American university and embedded within various rites of passage in students' social lives. Yet when a young woman

at my alma mater was outed for working in the porn industry during her first year, this became the most scandalous story of the year. This was not the first time that I had observed the hypocrisy of social attitudes towards the practise and consumption of sex during my formative years. At the same time, the fascination for the sex industry among young Americans was clear, though, as I remember two of my peers choosing to conduct observations in a local strip club for the introduction to ethnography class in my third year of study. The presentation of their observations during the last week of the class focussed on the dancers' motivations for stripping and on the way that they worked in the club. Although my peers' project was a very simple, pilot-like study of one area of the sex industry, it sparked my interest in sex work that would last for years to come.

Not only was I compelled by the moral double standards pervading American society as I grew up there, I was also motivated to understand the people involved in commercial sex more deeply. It was clear and acceptable to me from the start of my reflections on the industry that sex could be a source of income for various reasons, despite the high level of stigmatisation that sex workers faced. What I was determined to understand more precisely was how people involved in commercial sex, including workers, clients and managers, went about practising this highly controversial social activity, how they coped with the stigma, how they rationalised their decisions and basically how sex work worked for them. Also, I had read and heard that unlike in the United States, where sex work was and is still is criminalised on most states, sex work in western European countries was not illegal and in Germany, commercial sex venues had been decriminalised. This was the first indication for me that the normalisation of commercial sex was a possibility and that sex work was not inherently a traumatising, criminal activity. Furthermore, having decided for myself that it is a legitimate commercial activity and form of work, I saw no reason to exclude it from my palette of job options after relocating to Germany shortly after completing my undergraduate course. Thus, sex work became one of various sources of income to finance my life as I went on to pursue my master's degree. An interest that was initially fuelled by intellectual curiosity and a motivation to dismantle social double standards for sex and sexuality was soon motivated by personal investment and later by political reasons.

When I first started to do sex work, I was most interested in getting to know the work itself and my colleagues and their stories. The interest in the political and social context of sex work in Germany came later after meeting more workers from Eastern European countries and

learning about their struggles to integrate into the German system. Although they were most directly affected by the biases in the system and particularly by the difficulties in the social protection system that made it challenging for sex workers and especially migrant sex workers to receive adequate support, they were often uninterested in discussing political and legal issues relevant to their work. Craving discussions on these issues with other sex workers brought me to the BesD, where for the first time, I interacted with other sex workers in non-work and non-competitive situations. The dedication to activism and social justice that I witnessed among the members of the Association inspired me to explore sex work from a socio-political perspective more deeply, eventually moving me to combine my interest in ethnographic research with my urge to better understand sex work and sex workers' experiences. Influenced by my early activism through the BesD, as described at the start of this introduction, I became particularly interested in the phenomenon of collaboration and collectivisation among sex workers in light of the immense diversity that I had been observing within sex work in Germany. I was also curious to understand how sex workers experiencing varying levels of privilege and precarity could have their interests represented in the same movement for sex worker rights and to what extent more privileged sex workers could relay the demands of less privileged colleagues. This brought me to the question of representation in the sex worker rights movement. Based on these reflections, the following questions guide this thesis:

- ❖ *How is representation practised in sex worker rights activism in Germany?*
- ❖ *How does collective action happen in sex worker rights activism in Germany?*
- ❖ *What makes sex workers mobilise for an improvement of the social and political context of sex work?*

The aim of the following chapters is to address and provide insight into these questions based on one year of fieldwork undertaken as an activist-researcher immersed in the world of sex worker rights activism.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised across seven chapters tracing the processes leading towards collective action, revealing the way that sex worker representation is constructed and performed throughout these processes.

In the second chapter, I introduce the framework for analysing the insights that I have gathered in my fieldwork about sex worker collectivisation processes. Within this framework are the conceptual tools with which I have made sense of the activities of my research participants, including framing, collective identity construction and mobilisation for collective action. These concepts refer to the processes within which representation is enacted and practised as a process itself interwoven throughout the course of my research participants framing the goals and concerns of sex worker rights activism, constructing a collective identity and mobilising for collective action. With this framework, I will be able to show that representation in sex worker activism takes place as a construction of interests in which both sex workers in more vocal, leading roles in the BesD and those in less vocal positions or not involved in activism, constantly influence each other's perspectives and interests. In this way, the projected priorities and needs of sex workers in Germany are a constructed convergence of diverse needs, interests and priorities of different sex workers. This understanding of representation as a process of constructing interests rather than an act of communicating and vocalising static interests, lays the foundation for showing that sex worker representation is performed constantly throughout the practise of activism and interaction between non-members and members of the BesD, rather than simply the act of BesD members vocalising the interests of the sex working population based on members' own priorities.

Chapter Three will then be an overview and justification of the methodological approach behind the research and the methods used to elicit knowledge from the field. The research was designed and carried out using the methodology which I have called investigative co-construction, which is a novel approach based on feminist and participatory epistemological approaches. As I will argue, these approaches allowed me to engage with my research participants in a collaborative way that elicited their experiences in the process of grasping how they interacted and related to each other as they engaged in framing, collective identity construction and mobilisation. After discussing the methodology and presenting the epistemological foundations, I will discuss the methods used in accordance with the methodological design, including ethical considerations throughout the fieldwork. In the final part of the chapter, I introduce the field in which I conducted the research, including access and obtaining consent from my research participants.

In the fourth chapter, I will provide a background of sex work in Germany, including the social, legal and economic contexts framing and shaping commercial sex, as well as brief descriptions

of the main areas of sex work in which my research participants worked. I address the ongoing debate regarding the number and statistics regarding sex workers in Germany and challenge this as a measure for determining the representativeness of any one kind of sex worker. Following this, I introduce the overarching argument: that *representation is more usefully conceptualised as a multilateral process happening through interactions between more and less vocal sex workers within and outside of activist circles*, rather than the phenomenon of one group of sex workers simply acting as the voice of the whole sex working population based solely on their own interests and priorities.

Chapters Five through Eight form the empirical core of the thesis, in which I trace the processes leading to collective action and within these processes, analyse how representation was constructed through multilateral processes of influence between activist sex workers in the BesD and non-member sex worker regarding the needs, priorities and interests of sex workers that became visible through major initiatives. In Chapter Five, the first process in the construction of collective action is analysed using the concept of framing. I will show how issues and specific contexts surrounding sex work in Germany become frames that the BesD constructed and disseminated in order to justify their activism and provide reasons for sex workers to participate in the fight for more rights and recognition. Four main frames were identified through the discourse and materials produced by research participants. I then trace the construction of these frames in the discussions that I observed and participated in during fieldwork. Once the construction process has been unpacked, I then show how the frames were disseminated at three sex worker information sessions organised by BesD members in major German cities, during which BesD members attempted to align their frames with non-member sex workers' own schemes of interpretation regarding the issues and circumstances that had motivated the frames. In my analysis of frame construction and alignment, I also trace how the interactions among BesD members and between BesD members and non-members at the information sessions were sites where different interests were communicated and exchanged. These exchanges were key instances in which BesD members learned about the needs of non-member sex workers and where non-member sex workers learned about the interests and priorities put forth by activist sex workers. In this way, representation was constructed as both groups learned and thereby influenced each other's understanding of sex worker rights.

In Chapter Six, I continue to trace the construction of representation by examining varying degrees of frame resonance among my research participants to explain why frames did or did not align with different research participants' own experiences and views of sex work. Frame resonance is a process in which representation unfolds as sex workers negotiate the construction of their interests and compare their individual schema with the collective frames proffered by the BesD. I show how regardless of the degree of frame resonance (the extent to which individual schema coincide with collective frames established by the BesD), representation emerged from the process negotiating of frame resonance. Different factors drawn from the literature that affect frame resonance are applied as conceptual tools for grasping the different levels of resonance. Particular emphasis is placed on the politicisation of coming out or of occupational identity as specific facets of resonance exhibited by research participants with whom the collective frames identified in Chapter Five resonated strongly. I also examine reasons why collective frames resonated less with certain participants and why some participants did not identify or join the BesD despite high frame resonance.

Chapter Seven focusses more closely on those participants with whom the collective frames resonated most strongly and traces the construction of collective identity among them. I analyse the discussions that took place in these meetings as the communicative material from which actors collectively defined and reproduced a group identity that they embodied when mobilising for action. I identify three convergences of collective identity from these discussions based on professional self-determination, privilege and stigmatisation. For each expression of collective identity, I show how representation emerged within the construction of these identities to serve as a link to the mobilisation for collective action. Through the process of representation, collective identity is transformed or activated as a factor that makes sex workers mobilise. The collective identities that I illuminate in chapter six are the basis for BesD members defining themselves as representatives for sex worker rights, and through this role of representative, they mobilise for collective action.

In the final empirical chapter (Eight) the concept of representation continues to serve as a concept linking the interests and collective identity of sex workers to collective action. However, by turning to factors that hinder sex workers from actively participating in collective action, I investigate how the interests and concerns of sex workers not active in the sex worker rights movement still shape the process of mobilisation. Using the concept of representation will illuminate how these sex workers contribute to mobilisation without visibly and physically

partaking in collective action. This is a significant aspect in the process of mobilisation to highlight in the context of sex worker activism because many sex workers cannot directly take part in activism due to various factors discussed in the chapter, such as stigma. What will become clear in Chapter Eight is that representation is constructed through internal processes of activism that absorb the input of sex workers outside of formal activist organisations who may not actively participate in movement activities. This shows how needs and interests of sex workers are accounted for and vocalised even when those bearing these needs and interests are not always physically or actively present in activism.

Chapter Nine constitutes the conclusion to this thesis, in which I review the empirical findings and the methodology that I have developed to analyse collectivisation among sex worker rights activists. I also review the conceptual contribution that I make in this thesis, which is the re-conceptualisation of representation that reveals how input from those who are unable to participate visibly and physically in activism is becomes integrated in collective action. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my findings for both academic research and the sex worker rights movement.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Doing representation through processes of collective action: A framework for understanding the construction of interests and roles in sex worker activism

Within industrial relations, representation has often been discussed as the act of a representative body speaking for members of a particular social group (Gospel and Wood, 2003; Healy, Heery and Adler, 2004; Johnstone and Ackers, 2015). In recent work, an approach has been developed to view representation as an interplay of interests between marginalised union members and leadings members (Bewley and Fernie, 2003; Healy et al, 2004; Alberti and Pero, 2018). This perspective is still underdeveloped, however, and what remains to be explored more in-depth is the way that leaders acting as representatives and those being represented exercise influence upon each other, both engaging in an active performance of representation.

Representation is not always or only about the level of voice or the degree of active participation in an organisation. Representation can also refer to the extent to which the interests and priorities of workers are constructed and advanced through indirect representation, without the active participation of the workers (Gospel and Willman, 2003; Druker and Stanworth, 2004). Sometimes it is not feasible for workers to participate in political movements or in campaigns for the improvement of their working conditions; this can be due to structural constraints, such as precarious working arrangements or stigmatisation, that prevent workers from having the time or capacity to participate (Murphy and Turner, 2016). Also, differences in identity and cultural framings may also influence participation in formal organisations as individuals' varying identities based on social background, location in social structure and social interaction may steer the degree to which they mobilise (Stryker, 2000).

In this chapter, I bring together approaches from social movement theory and from the industrial relations literature to introduce a framework for analysing events and activities that I have observed among sex worker rights activists in Germany in order to trace how and to what extent sex workers are represented by the BesD's collective initiatives. A central aspect

in the study of collective action is the way that the interests, meanings and priorities of the actors involved become visible and vocalised (Touraine, 1985; Gamson, 1992). Using the concept of representation, I argue that it is relevant to investigate not only what the different meaning constructions or interests are and how they are advanced, but also which interests are prioritised, *how* actors shape each other's interests and how this becomes evident throughout the processes of framing, identity construction and mobilisation culminating in collective action.

To show how representation is constructed, I investigate processes of collective action using concepts from social movement theory. I engage with early and recent approaches from social movement theory for explaining collective action and construct a conceptual framework that brings together the concept of representation with the processes of framing, identisation and mobilisation for collective action. Once I have established the framework, I discuss some of the studies that have been conducted on sex worker collectivisation so far and locate my contribution to this body of literature.

2.1 Studying sex worker activism as a social movement

Before I proceed to construct the framework for tracing representation within processes of collective action, I explain why sex worker activism is a social movement, in order to justify applying the conceptual tools developed in social movement theory to make sense of and draw conclusions from my observations. A social movement is an analytic construction rather than a pre-existing empirical entity involving a conflict between the dominant and a less dominant social group regarding the appropriation of resources, meaning and social values, and that is manifested in collective action characterised by transgressing social norms (Melucci, 1980). As an analytic construction, a social movement is conceived as an interplay of actions, discourse and relations to actors outside of the movement (Melucci, 1996). Through the continuous and dynamic processes enacted by actors involved in movement activities, the social movement acquires an existence as a phenomenon that can be studied (Melucci, 1980). In sex worker rights activism, people doing sex work and their allies constitute a social minority in conflict with mainstream society, in particular policymakers who pass laws and regulations affecting sex workers. Activists engage in collective action that aims to challenge social norms regarding the view and treatment of sex work and sex workers. The

cumulative activities of those involved in the cause for sex worker rights activists over the years continuously reproduce what I have studied as the sex worker rights movement (see Chapter Four for a background of the sex worker rights movement in Germany). The fight for sex worker rights is a fight for labour rights for a marginalised group of workers and therefore intersects closely with other labour movements. However, I analyse sex worker activism as a social movement rather than as a labour movement because in the German context, sex worker activism is more than solely about the fight for labour rights. As will be shown in Chapters Five through Seven, activists in this movement also mobilise for sex worker rights as a fight for sexual freedom and for the normalisation of commercial sex, complementary to the struggle for economic and social rights. Sex worker activism in Germany is in this sense practised as a social movement for a change in cultural norms pertaining to sexuality, which goes beyond the mere struggle for equality with other workers in the labour market and under labour law.

Next, I introduce early approaches from social movement theory for explaining collective action, showing how structural approaches in the initial theoretical developments are complemented by aspects foregrounded in more recent approaches to explain how mobilisation and collectivisation take place.

2.2 Early theories of collective action from the political opportunity and resource mobilisation approaches

Social movement theory defines collective action as "the ensemble of the various types of conflict-based behaviour in a social system," implying a struggle between two actors for the allocation and direction of social values and resources, whereby the actors are bound together by a "specific solidarity" (Melucci, 1980: 36). The study of collective action is the study of the ways that people act together to pursue shared interests. The initial theories viewed collective action as a function of interests, organisation, mobilisation and opportunity (Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). Collective action was viewed primarily as the result of external structures. One of the earliest theories was rational choice theory, which emphasised the interests of individual actors and the incentives that cause these actors to engage in collective behaviour based on cost-benefit analyses of situations (Olson, 1965). Later, two further perspectives that were introduced to study collective action were political process theory and resource mobilisation theory. The former takes the political structure and the

opportunities and constraints that confront actors within this structure to be the main determinant of collective action, while in resource mobilisation theory, the ability of movement actors to mobilise and implement resources, including human resources, is taken to be the main predictor of collective action (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996). According to the resource mobilisation view, society provides the infrastructure which social movement industries make use of. Resources that are particularly crucial for instigating collective action include communication and media expense, levels of affluence, access to institutional centres, pre-existing networks, occupational structure and growth (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

In his theory of mobilisation, Tilly (1978) defines mobilisation as the process by which individuals transition from passive to active participation for a specific cause, driven by interests, organisation, power relations, and subjugation to repression, opportunity and threat. In this model, power is the extent to which a party's interest prevails over the others with which it is in conflict and contention for power is the application of resources to influence other groups. Opportunity or threat is the extent to which other groups are vulnerable to claims or the extent to which these other groups threaten to make claims. Insisting that collective action rarely consists of solitary performances, Tilly (1978) actually discourages a focus on the individual to understand collective action. This is because from the resource mobilisation perspective, the movement organisation is taken as a starting point of analysis, assumed to be a whole, prepared entity ready for action. The factors that motivate mobilisation are seen to come primarily from external or structural forces, such as government institutions imposing legal measures or economic circumstances that provoke actors (Tilly, 1978). Perceptions of these external forces among actors within a movement are considered less relevant or assumed to be unified (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, 1996). Social movement organisation and collective action were seen as given, static entities that could be pinpointed as complete developments (Touraine, 1981).

Similarly, in the political process or political opportunity perspective, the focus is predominantly on the political structures, including laws, public policy, government authorities and changes within these institutions, that influence to what extent and how collective action can take place (Tarrow, 1993). It is assumed that political structures and also contentious outbreaks, including physical protests against changes in the structure, affect the way that actors behave within a movement and the goal of inquiry is to understand how these influence the development of social movements (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, 1996). Key

independent variables in this approach include organisations of previous challengers, the openness and ideological positions of political parties, changes in public policy, international alliances and constraints on state policy, state capacity and the geographic scope and repressive capacity of governments (Meyer, 2004).

The political process perspective focusses on why a movement happens. The origins of political process theory were in studies of the fascist movements in the 1930s with the motivating question being, why social movements could emerge in apparently healthy democracies (Meyer, 2004). The driving premise was that activists' strategies and goals must be studied within a specific political context that gives more advantage to some claims over others. A higher permeability of parliamentary politics, or more opportunities for citizens to participate politically, would result in fewer protests as a result of more formal ways for movement actors to make their claims heard. In other words, if states provided enough avenues for people to voice their complaints, then there would be less reason to use dramatic means in the form of protest to make claims heard (Tilly, 1978).

Investigating sex worker rights movements from a political opportunity perspective would mean focussing on the legal climate and the political treatment of sex work in a given national context. Indeed, there have been many studies done so far looking at the influence of legal frameworks and government regulations on the practice of sex work and on the progress of the sex worker rights movement (West, 2000; Hubbard, 2006; Scoular, 2010; Jackson, 2013). Since sex work is a legal grey zone in most countries, it is not surprising that most scholarship on this activity would take the legal climate as a starting point for examining the main influences on sex workers' experiences. However, by constructing a framework that looks at sex worker activism from an angle not mainly premised upon the political or legal context or the resources available to the actors, but instead looks at the micro-level of interactions between activists, more precise insights into the underlying decision-making processes that lead to collective action can be obtained. Without the initiative of individual activists, the availability of the structural conditions is meaningless. Actors are needed to make use of these conditions in order for collective action to happen. What the resource mobilisation and political process approaches thus take for granted is the way that actors make use of the resources available to them and the political conditions within which they act (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, 2001). It is assumed that there is always enough discontent in a society to allow for the growth of social movement phenomena and the most significant factors are how

effectively organised a movement is and what resources it has at its disposal that ultimately allow collective action to happen (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). What is also taken for granted are the interests that actors have, how these interests come about and how they are sustained throughout the movement's progress. Only the action and statements projected outside of the movement is sought to be understood and not the action that happens between individual actors that generates their collectivity, thus inhibiting the ability to grasp precisely how individuals become the "we" that drives the movement for change (Melucci, 1989).

Therefore, the micro-level perspective on the construction of collective action is an important contribution because it highlights the way that individuals interact within and also change structures in the process of making collective action happen, rather than leaving the structures in which collective action happens as contexts with a given effect on the actors within. Individuals constantly (re-)engage in processes of negotiation regarding their perception of the events influencing their situations and their reactions to changes in the structure within which they act (Blumer, 1969). These processes of negotiation are the basis for the construction of collective action into a form that can be grasped and analysed and merit further investigation, as they contain underlying factors for how actors come together in the first place before acting together. This is a relevant aspect to consider because as defined earlier, a social movement emerges as a phenomenon that can be investigated through the actions of the people involved and therefore it is necessary to understand the way actors relate to each other and stay together as a social movement (Touraine, 1981). Rather than isolating specific examples of collective action and looking for external causal factors, inquiry into the way social movements emerge can be enriched by paying closer attention to the processes that enable actors to come together in the first place to pursue common goals. It is not technology (resources) or economy (structure) alone that drive social movements; it is the way that actors perceive the structure in which they act and interpret changes to this structure that brings actors together for collective action (Castells, 1983). In this vein, the question that I seek to answer in this thesis, based on the example of the sex worker rights movement in Germany is, what are the processes involved in the construction of frames, collective identity and mobilisation that lead to collective action and how can the representation of sex workers' interests be traced within these processes? In the following sections, I will introduce the conceptual tools that will be used to address this query, beginning with the concept of representation and then showing how this can be analysed within processes of collective

identity, framing and mobilisation from more recent approaches in social movement theory as well as from the industrial relations literature.

2.3 Representation: Understanding the intertwining of actors' interests

The concept of representation that is applied in this thesis takes as a starting point the harbouring of interests within frames (Opp, 2009 – see later section "Using the framing perspective"). This allows for a close look at how the individual schemes of interpretation held by potential constituents contain interests that actively shape the collective interests contributing to the construction of frames. Likewise, the act of representing is intrinsic to the process of identisation in that, as will be discussed in the next section, actors' interests and priorities are exchanged in the construction and sustaining of a collective identity (Melucci, 1996). In particular, I will show how the process of representation is embedded in the way that potential constituents receive and process collective identity in the transition to becoming active participants in the movement. The group identity projected externally both determines whether actors will merge with the group and is at the same time changed and re-shaped with the initiation of new members (Pinel and Swann, 2000). The concept of representation as an interplay of actors' interests has not yet been explicitly introduced within a framework for understanding how movement members and potential constituents influence each other. Therefore, I am introducing the concept of representation as a tool for understanding precisely how members of the same population influence each other's voices, views and interests by advancing the idea that a movement's interests are also constantly being swayed and shaped by population members outside of the movement (Loncar, 2018).

Particularly when looking at the struggle of a historically marginalised social group, such as sex workers, the concept of representation is highly relevant, as the voices of the members of a marginalised social group are more difficult to raise due to low social acceptability (de Coninck, 1980). Also considering the high diversity of service providers within sex work, those part of a formal organisation within the movement may not be from the same background or prioritise the same interests as other sex workers, which is why it is not immediately evident whether those participating in the movement speak for those not in the movement. Therefore, it is relevant to question to what extent their voices are raised and their interests represented. Representation takes into consideration the members of the population of interest who are

not members of a group that claims to stand for the interests of the wider social group and asks what relevance or utility the actions of the group has for them.

Rather than viewing representation as a response to the static interests of constituents, as proposed in early theories (Plamenatz, 1938; Voegelin, 1952; Tussman, 1960; Pitkin, 1967) it is more effective to view it as a multi-lateral, dynamic process in which representatives and constituents' shape each other's interests and perceptions of the social world (Mansbridge, 2003, 2011; Saward, 2006). An organisation both vocalises and shapes the interests of its constituents (Cianetti and Loncar, 2018). The heterogeneity of organisation members as well as of potential constituents makes the question relevant of how the interests prioritised by the organisation came to be. Therefore, it is useful to look at representation multilaterally, taking place through interactions and relationships between actors. Within these relationships, actors construct themselves as representatives vocalising interests or as constituents bearing interests, whereby both groups shape each other reciprocally. In the industrial relations literature, Alberti and Pero (2018) have implicitly applied the concept of representation as a construction in their analysis of the tensions between low-paid migrant union members and British union leaders, arguing that migrant union members' interests and needs are shaped by the webs of relationships in which they are located. In their analysis of how migrant union members are represented in union structures, they take as a starting point the perspective of workers as multi-faceted, complex agents with intersectional identities whose actions and interests shape and are shaped by their social contexts. This perspective departs from the view of representation merely as an act of one group determining the interests of the wider population and speaking on behalf of constituents, which fails to explain why, as in the case studied by Alberti and Pero (2018), some constituents decline group membership or break away to form autonomous initiatives to fulfil their needs. As this issue is present in the case of sex worker collectivisation as well, taking an analytical approach that foregrounds the diversity of interests among movement actors and the wider population that the movement tries to account for will provide a deeper understanding of what it means to represent. The attention to relationships as the basis for interest development in the process of representation is a conceptual direction that will be developed in this thesis.

Investigating representation as a multi-lateral construction calls for looking at the building blocks that comprise the performance of representation. In the context of social movements, these building blocks are processes engaged in by movement actors and potential

constituents. As explained in the opening part of this section, representation is enacted through the processes of framing, identisation and mobilisation. Within these processes are enactments or "performances of representation" that demonstrate the ways that social movement actors absorb and influence each other's interests in the pursuit of collective action (Loncar, 2018: 204). While these processes contain the building blocks for both collective action and representation, these two concepts remain distinct from each other. Collective action is the culmination of framing, identisation and mobilisation in, for example, an initiative that takes the form of an ensemble of actors struggling for a common cause. Representation on the other hand, is the construction of actors' roles (representative and represented) within a group based on the exchange and vocalisation of their interests. When brought together, analysing representation within processes of collective action reveals the way that actors come together to achieve shared goals in the form of collective action while establishing their roles as representatives or represented members of the wider social group. The process of representation allows for both a more nuanced understanding of how actors relate to each other by shaping each other's interests and collective voice. Understanding actors' interrelations more precisely contributes to a heightened awareness of the heterogeneity of actors and the corresponding differences in priorities that results in identification as well as non-identification with a group, and collective as well as autonomous initiatives within a movement. The next sections look specifically at these processes and the ways that the construction of representation is unravelled within them, beginning with the concept of collective identity.

2.4 Constructing collective identity: perspectives from social movement theory

The second main concept that I apply in this thesis is the construction of collective identity developed in more recent approaches in social movement theory (Melucci, 1996; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Flesher Fominaya, 2010. Before explaining the analytical tool offered through this concept, I will briefly discuss the theoretical underpinning of this approach based on social psychological theories and justify its relevance for understanding collectivisation. As social movement theory developed, there was a gradual turn to focussing more on the role of individual actors and how their cognitive processes underlie the crystallisation of collective action. While research at this level has been extensive in mapping the micro-level processes of how individuals form collectives, there is room to look at the same processes from the

perspective of representation. This means looking for ways that representation is performed as individual actors construct collective identity. This type of investigation takes a phenomenological approach to explaining collective action, whereby actors do not exist statically, unchanged by their social worlds, but rather are created through processes of interaction with other individuals and shaped by their context (Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1989, 1996; Gamson, 1988). There was a recognition that individual cognitive processes played a role in defining a group's goals and in creating interests in what a collective has to offer (Klandermans, 1984). Simply taking the incentives indicated by actors at face-value was not enough to grasp the path to collective action; instead, the cognitive processes that lead to the development of these incentives needed to be more closely examined (Ferree and Miller, 1985).

The social psychology approach does not deny the importance of organisation, social location and the calculation of costs and benefits undertaken by movement actors. Rather, it highlights the relevance of micro-level social interactions and cognitive processes through which individual and sociocultural levels are brought together for the emergence of collective action (Ward, 2016). These processes are happenings such as group meetings, mass media encounters, encounters with allies, encounters with authorities and encounters with opposition groups. Seeking to understand how collective identity emerges within a social movement is an attempt to uncover the role of representation in collective action, how solidarity between individual actors comes about, and how representation happens.

The case for looking at identity is based on the assumption that a pre-existing affiliational structure is a crucial factor for collective action to take place, as it provides the language and the material basis necessary for group recognition or group identity formation to take place (Melucci, 1996). This togetherness or "we" that acts in unison cannot be taken as a given in order to understand how exactly collective action happens, however, because there are negotiation processes, particularly in times of crisis, that take place in order for a unity of actors to emerge that are not visible to outsiders. Collective identity is never static; it is always evolving and being redefined through interactions between individual actors (Melucci, 1996). This understanding of identity considers the system of relations and depictions that secures the continuity of the movement by defining the actor in relation to the social environment, regulating membership in the movement and defining the criteria by which members recognise themselves and are recognised (Melucci, 1989). Therefore, understanding how

exactly actors unite before engaging in collective action calls for a focus on how individuals produce meaning, communicate, negotiate and make decisions within a field of opportunities and constraints that confirm a sense of collectivism (Melucci, 1980). Collective action is in this way constructed because actors shape their collectivity around defining a situation as susceptible to collective action and calculate the costs and benefits of taking action. The collective identity approach and the cost-benefit approach in rational choice theory are often seen to contradict each other, as the former focuses on shared meanings, values and norms, whereas the latter looks at individual interests (Opp, 2009). However, Melucci (1980, 1996) has argued that collective identity can influence cost-benefit calculations that shape interests, and vice-versa. In order to show how identities and interests are mobilised into action, research must look at the processes through which a movement emerges into a visible actor (Melucci 1996). In this way, movements can be conceived as social and not just political actors.

There are three basic dimensions of forming collective identity, which include forming cognitive frameworks regarding the ends, means and fields of action; activating relationships between people who interact, communicate, negotiate and make decisions; and emotional investment, enabling individuals to recognise themselves (Melucci, 1988). Unpacking these dimensions means to look at collective identity as a learning process contributing to the formation and maintenance of a "unified empirical actor" that can be studied as a social movement (Melucci, 1996: 74). Collective identity can be understood both as a product resulting from individuals' shared interests, experiences and solidarity and as a process whereby these shared interests are continually re-defined or reinforced through interactions between actors (Melucci, 1989; Taylor and Whittier, 2007). Both approaches are useful for understanding collectivisation because in order to explain how identity is applied or set in motion by activists to achieve their goals, it is necessary to be able to capture instances of convergence (identity as a product) within the processes of identity construction that are exported as an identity to different situations in which collective action planning takes place. However, before these instances can be isolated and referred to as results, it is necessary to look at identity as a process because this allows for an investigation of the routines, interactions, and negotiations that comprise the construction of identity. Examining collective identity as a process means looking at how actors produce common cognitive frameworks that enable them to assess their environment and calculate the costs and benefits of action, how relationships are activated and how actors recognise themselves as part of a group. In order

to emphasise collective identity as a process, I use the term *identisation* when analysing the ways that actors engage in learning and active relationships to define themselves as a collective (Melucci, 1996).

In the next section, I will shift to a discussion of framing in social movements in order to present the concepts that I will use later to show how sex workers construct understandings of their social world around which their collective identities are formed.

2.5 Using the framing perspective from social movement theory

Framing in social movement theory refers to the way that social movement actors develop frames that they spread within the movement to mobilise members, as well as outside of the movement to attract potential constituents. A frame is defined as a way of explaining a particular phenomenon in the social world, or a particular interpretation of social reality propounded by a movement or collective of actors. The frame concept is based on Erving Goffman's (1974) theory of frame analysis, in which "schemata of interpretation" or ways of organising experience are negotiated as individuals interact with each other, allowing them to construct a broader interpretation of occurrences in their social worlds (Goffman, 1974). The concept of framing has its roots in the study of interaction through verbal communication (Oliver and Johnston, 2000). Applied to social movements, collective action frames are schemes of interpreting the world developed by social movement actors that justify the movement and serve to recruit and sustain participants (Benford and Snow, 2000). According to frame theory, when individuals and movement organisations have common schemes of interpretation, frame alignment occurs and they are more likely to come together and act collectively. The empirical validity of the frames is less relevant; it is rather about how useful frames are for increasing understanding and for providing actors with a comprehensive explanation of diverse phenomena (Gamson, 1992). The framing perspective draws attention to the cognitive processes that lead to the formation of beliefs and assumptions about the world, which in turn create a foundation for individuals to collectivise and undertake action together. Therefore, the concept of framing is relevant for understanding how actors create collective interpretations of phenomena affecting them as a basis for identisation (Melucci, 1989).

As with identisation, the exchange and interweaving of interests is evident here. Frames are constructed according to actors' interests and priorities. If a group of actors is most concerned with its social standing, members are more likely to detect the potential risks that threaten or worsen their image and construct frames around these, whereas if actors' interests revolve mostly around their economic well-being, they are more likely to pay attention to events affecting financial circumstances and construct frames explaining these. In this way, frame construction is also the process of establishing interests among social movement actors as they negotiate these and influence each other through the dialogue of negotiation (Opp, 2009). The concept of representation ties in neatly to the process of framing, since the negotiation of interests involves the process of actors constructing themselves as a representative group, while at the same time shaping the other actors being represented, as both groups learn and influence each other.

Different types of frames and framing have been proposed by Benford and Snow (2000) in the social movement literature, which will now be introduced as the tools for frame identification and analysis. Frames can serve a diagnostic, prognostic, or motivational function, with which they can be identified. When movement actors engage in diagnostic framing, they define a problem in the social system that needs to be addressed in order to improve their situation. Diagnostic framing is also referred to as injustice framing[3] as it seeks to explain who is to blame for the diagnosed problem and what an alternative set of arrangements could be. Prognostic framing, or the proposal of a specific solution to the problem targeted by the social movement, is another example of a frame identified as commonly employed by activists and the task of motivational framing has also been coined to describe the way that movement actors construct interpretations of phenomena in order to provide a reason for constituents to mobilise. These variations in framing can be identified through discursive processes, including verbal and written communication between movement members during group activities, which are the main means of collective frame construction. Discursive processes can be in the form of frame articulation or amplification, whereby the former involves drawing together events and experiences in a coherent manner, while the latter refers to placing emphasis on particular issues, events or beliefs. Both types of processes complement each other so that a new angle or interpretation of the issue to be framed crystallises.

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[3] This type of framing is also referred to as the process of attribution in mobilisation theory, which will be defined and discussed in the next section (Kelly, 1998).

When individuals share their frames with each other, frame resonance or dissonance can be observed, in which individuals attempt to achieve a common definition or perception of phenomena in order to mobilise for collective action, or if frames resonate weakly, then actors are less likely to mobilise (Snow et al, 1986). If individuals' schemes of interpretation resonate with collective frames, then they are more likely to join the movement (Benford and Snow, 2000). Frames serve as a link between the structure that individuals act within and the meanings produced by individuals, which in turn shapes the structure that is framed by them (Opp, 2009). Framing also serves as a link between individual and collective identities because when actors frame issues collaboratively they are simultaneously establishing the building blocks for constructing identities that serve as the basis for collectivising (Snow and McAdam, 2000). The process of framing, however, is not equivalent to that of identity construction. Identisation, as will be shown in Chapter Five, involves the formation of cognitive frameworks among individuals, but goes beyond this process by including the activation of relationships and the investment of emotions among group members to hold a collective together or reinforce the group identity. However, collective framing alone will not solidify a collective identity (Opp, 2009). Therefore, the two processes will be analytically separated in order to highlight the distinction between the ideological foundations of collective identity established through framing and frame resonance and the continual reinforcement of collective identity that takes place through identisation. Within this process of collaborative frame construction, the interests that are expressed and negotiated also serve as a basis from which representation is enacted as actors define themselves and each other in the roles of representative or represented.

Framing is a useful concept for my framework because it allows me to look at the schemes of interpretation developed by actors that serve as the basis for communication and negotiation in internal organisational processes during which identisation happens (Benford and Snow, 2000). Frames are a prequel to collective identity construction, as actors congregate around common frames when planning collective action (Hunt et al, 1994). Processes of framing, however, are distinct from the process of identisation because frame alignment does not necessarily lead to mobilisation, as actors that share the same frames as a social movement organisation are not necessarily motivated to take action (Opp, 2009). However, a high frame resonance is a crucial starting point for actors to engage in identisation (Snow and McAdam,

2000). Therefore, movement actors practise frame alignment in order to encourage the development of high frame resonance.

Frame alignment is a strategy that social movement organisations undertake to attract and recruit constituents (Benford and Snow, 2000). There are different processes of frame alignment that social movements engage in, including frame bridging, frame amplification, and frame extension (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, 1987). Frame bridging is the process of linking congruent existing frames regarding a particular issue that are structurally separate or raising awareness among un-mobilised individuals about the parallels between their own frames and those of the movement (Opp, 2009). Frame extension is when a movement shows un-mobilised individuals how the movement goals are relevant to the life situations and interests of these individuals (Snow et al, 1986). Frame amplification, mentioned previously, can also be a type of frame alignment when it describes the idealisation, improvement, clarification or reinforcement of collective frames, especially to appeal to conscience constituents, or allies to the movement beneficiaries (Benford and Snow, 2000). The goal of frame alignment is to increase frame resonance among potential members of a social movement organisation, which is the degree to which movement frames and the frames of individual actors are the same (Benford and Snow, 2000). Therefore, as frame alignment is a process that is connected to frame resonance, it is useful to examine this process as an analytical step towards explaining why actors engage in identisation. In Chapter Six, specific determinants of frame resonance, including empirical credibility, experiential commensurability, narrative fidelity and centrality of frames, will be used to analyse the levels of frame resonance among research participants. The specific factors determining frame resonance have been categorised in the literature under two main factors – salience and credibility – with three sub-factors corresponding to each main factor (Benford and Snow, 2000). The plausibility of the interpretation or viewpoint offered by the frame is referred to in the literature as frame credibility, constituting the first main factor for predicting frame resonance (Benford and Snow, 2000). The second main factor that has been theorised to determine frame resonance is frame salience, defined as the extent to which the frame is relevant in the lives and everyday experiences of individuals (Benford and Snow, 2000). The following diagram illustrates the sub-factors identified in the framing literature that influence the strength of frame credibility and salience:
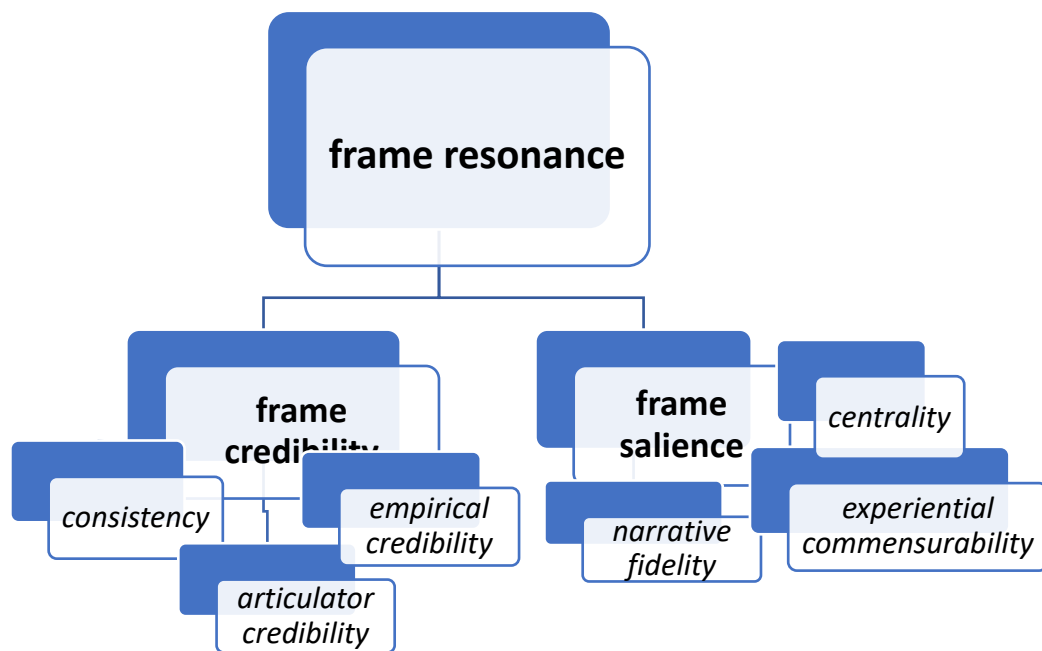
Diagram 1: Sub-factors for frame resonance (Snow and Benford, 1988, 2000)

Within the processes of frame alignment and frame resonance, actors construct themselves as representatives in relation to a wider population as their interests are communicated, received and intertwined. In the next section, I will turn to insights from the industrial relations literature by introducing the concept of mobilisation as a process connected to framing and identisation within the overall framework for understanding collective action in sex worker activism.

2.6 Mobilisation: Combining perspectives from social movement theory and industrial relations

The fourth main concept that I will use to analyse how collective action happens in sex worker rights activism is mobilisation. In the industrial relations literature, mobilisation theory seeks to explain what makes workers mobilise by asking what makes them acquire a sense of injustice and how workers achieve the realisation that their injustice is collective? At the heart of mobilisation theory is the transformation of individual actors into a collective determined to create and sustain an organisation from which to act collectively (Kelly, 1998). Mobilisation theory calls for looking at grievance attribution, leadership and social identity formation to

understand how collective action is planned, particularly how leaders promote group cohesion and identity to consistently remind actors of their common interests (Kelly, 1998). The concepts of attribution and social identification are akin to the concepts of framing and collective identity described in social movement theory (Benford and Snow, 1988; Melucci, 1988; Kelly, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, 2001). In the first process, attribution, or an explanation for an event in terms of its reasons and causes is sought, as workers or trade union activists attribute the cause of a grievance to an employer or manager, while in the process of social identification, the focus is on how actors develop a social identity from their individual identities (Kelly, 1998). The concept of framing as developed in social movement theory mirrors attribution, as it can be applied to understand how actors interpret the external phenomena that restrain their agency in order to identify a grievance (Benford and Snow, 2000). In the second phase, social identification, individuals' social identities, defined as the social categories to which individuals allocate themselves, are triggered that allow them to connect with each other (Kelly, 1998). This mirrors the concept of identisation in that actors recognise themselves through social relations and engage in comparison with other actors to construct coherence in their collectivity (Melucci, 1996). The goal of inquiry through examining collective identity is therefore the same as investigating how social identification happens, as both concepts focus on active relationships, processes and routines that actors engage in to produce cognitive definitions of the means, results and fields of action. The conceptual tools developed to understand how actors mobilise for a common cause in mobilisation theory thus allow me to connect the processes of framing and identisation in my own framework for examining collective action in sex worker rights activism.

The third process that is focussed on in mobilisation theory is leadership. Leaders are seen to play various important roles in mobilising actors for collective action including promoting group cohesion, urging people directly to take action against the source of an injustice and consistently making the case for collective action in the face of counter-mobilisation arguments (Kelly, 1998). The likelihood of actors mobilising is tied to their relationship with the leaders of a movement, as union leaders help to translate attribution into collective action (Metochi, 2002). Likewise, in social psychological approaches in social movement theory that look at interactions between individuals as a starting point for explaining the rise of collective action, leaders are key actors for balancing the risk of collective action and distributing enough compensation to encourage mobilisation (Melucci, 1996). Leaders are needed to bring

workers' grievances together as common goals and to galvanise unity in action (Darlington, 2002).

Leadership is therefore a relevant process to examine in order to grasp the nuances within interactions that constitute decision-making and consensus-building among actors. Looking at leadership as a process means looking at it as a dialogical relationship, whereby leaders are constantly engaged in negotiation with their constituents (Barker et al, 2001). When someone proposes an idea, this is received and responded to by others in an ongoing chain of social interaction in which meanings are debated and actions are planned. The advantage of looking at leadership as a continuous dialogue allows us to understand how leaders relate to a movement and how the exchanges between movement actors supports the development of practice and ideas (Bakhtin, 1986). Leadership in movements involves proposing to a set of actors with diverse perceptions how they can and should act together and identify themselves. Such proposals, and the responses they provoke, are necessary for a collective identity to form and for collective action to occur (Barker et al, 2001).

As reviewed above, leadership is conceptualised as a process in which ideas are proposed by leaders and presented to constituents in a continuous dialogue, while representation is conceptualised as a collaborative construction of interests and roles (Loncar, 2018). Both concepts contain analytical tools for understanding how interests emerge through interactions between movement actors. However, in the literature on leadership in social movements, the roles "leader" and "led" are taken as a given in the continuous dialogue between the two groups. Leaders are described as "movement intellectuals" who take on three main tasks that are diagnosing problems, appropriating action to address these problems and organising resources and alliances (Barker et al, 2001). This is where integrating representation into the framework becomes useful in order to examine the processes underlying the formation of the actors who perform these tasks. The concept of representation is employed to understand how these actors are constructed as leaders of a wider population whose interests they shape and seek to vocalise through relationships based on the negotiation of needs and priorities (Loncar, 2018). Therefore, in order to grasp the way that leaders come to be and the way they simultaneously shape and are influenced by those they strive to lead, representation is a relevant complementary concept.

Concepts from social movement theory integrated into mobilisation theory and complemented by the concept of representation offer a way to examine the crystallisation of collective action as a process within which actors relate to each other through the construction of interests. The following diagram illustrates the combination of the concepts introduced in this chapter into an analytical framework to be applied in the empirical sections of the thesis:
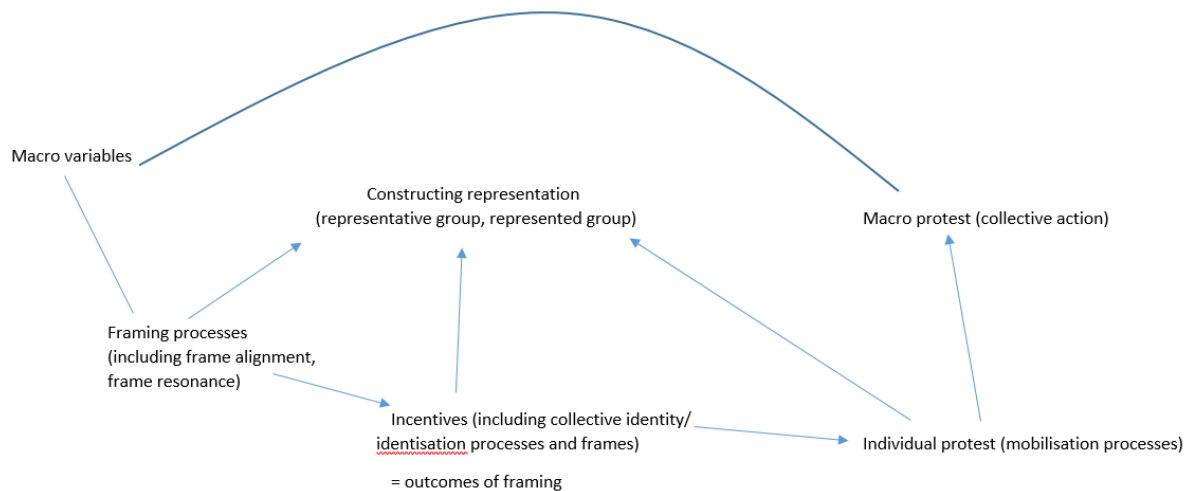
Figure 1: Arrows symbolise the flow of interests expressed between actors during negotiations and interactions

This framework connects the concept of representation with concepts from social movement theory and mobilisation theory to show how the actors at the centre of the processes brought together in these processes construct themselves as a representative group as well as the interests that drive collective action. In the next section, I will present the structural-cognitive model, which has provided the theoretical basis for the connection between the different concepts in social movement theory that I apply in this thesis, justifying the framework depicted above.

2.7 Synthesising the framework using the structural-cognitive model

The structural-cognitive model for explaining collective action brings together the relevance of resource mobilisation and political process theory, as well as collective identity, framing and mobilisation in order to offer a more in-depth explanation for how collective action is constructed as an active relationship between movement actors collaboratively shaping interests in the process of representation (Opp, 2009). As discussed earlier, theories that

concentrate exclusively either on structural or individual factors neglect to explain exactly how social movement organisations come about, taking the existence of the movement for granted and focussing immediately on the collective action undertaken by the already existing organisation (Opp, 2009). Resource mobilisation and political process theories look at organisations as a static whole, influenced mainly by the political structure in which they are located or the resources available to actors, and pay insufficient attention to the subjectivity of actors' perceptions of the structure in which they are located, including the opportunities available to them and the capacity to operationalise resources (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Following these early perspectives, mobilisation is seen as a "deliberate political process" through which actors gain control over resources rather than as the result of interactions through which individuals form a collectivity to be able to act as a unit (Ferree and Miller, 1985: 144). In order to counterbalance the exclusive focus on structural factors, social psychological factors become relevant for contributing deeper insights into the ways that collective action comes about (Klandermans, 1984). When groups define goals and when individual interest is created in collective goods, social psychological or micro-level processes between individuals are involved (Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1989). However, what is missing in the social psychological approach is a clear explication of micro-to-macro processes or how exactly individuals alter structure (Opp, 2009). This is where the structural-cognitive model becomes useful as a theoretical tool combining the different approaches in social movement theory to understand collective action (see figure 2). The basic premise behind this model is that structural phenomena and individual action are in a dialectical relationship, whereby actors perceive action, which in turn affects the way they produce action and vice-versa.
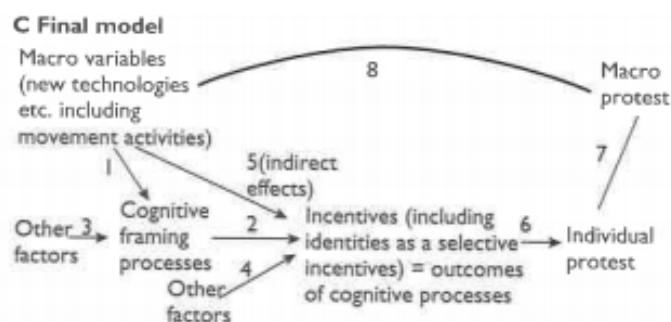
Figure 2: The structural-cognitive model (Opp, 2009)

The model relies on "bridge assumptions" to bring together changes in the structure with interactions between actors to offer a framework for understanding how both of these aspects contain explanations for collective action (Opp, 2009). Framing is an example of a bridge assumption that allows for a synthesis of analysing structural changes as well as individual processes of negotiation that lead to collective action. Thus, framing is the key concept that allows the other micro and macro-level processes to be combined into one framework. By incorporating framing as the missing link between structural and social psychological factors, the structural-cognitive model provides an analytical framework for examining individual responses to structural events for explaining collective action. In particular, the process of frame alignment reveals how components of frames, such as values and beliefs, are at the same time incentives that encourage actors to come together, but also that framing leads to collective action via interests (Opp, 2009).

I have used the structural-cognitive model as the basis for my conceptual framework for analysing sex worker collectivisation and integrated the concept of representation in order to show how actors become representatives and construction representation within collectivisation processes while at the same time shaping collective action as an outcome (see figure 1). The concept of representation introduces a conceptual tool into this model for grasping the intertwining of interests that took place and how these underlay the construction of both the representative group and the wider population. The exchange of interests is implicit within each process and using the concept of representation makes this explicit by enabling the enunciation of the underlying process through which a group of actors as representatives emerges.

In the final section, I will present an overview of studies done so far on sex worker collectivisation, identifying the ways that this phenomenon has been studied so far, as well as the gaps in the analytical methods used to study sex worker organising that I seek to fill through the application of the framework illustrated above.

2.8 Sex worker collectivisation: a budding research field

Research done on sex worker collectivisation has drawn from approaches developed in social movement theory to explain how collective action is undertaken by sex worker rights activists. One early approach to studying sex worker collectivisation is based on resource mobilisation

theory (see section on "early theories of collective action"). Scholars studying sex worker collectivisation in the US context for example, have engaged a resource mobilisation lens when assessing the potential of sex worker collectivisation to progress and evoke change (Weitzer, 1991; Gall, 2016). Gall (2016) has described the progress of the movement in the United States as historically characterised by a series of strongly motivated activists who quickly burned out and discontinued their participation in the movement. The main reason for the failure of the movement to persist has been attributed to a "poverty of resources" including financial and human capital (Weitzer, 1991). Accordingly, factors contributing to some moments of success in the movement were seen to be adequate resource mobilisation, organisational development, money and human capital. This hypothesis follows the resource mobilisation perspective from social movement theory, as it focusses mainly on the amount of resources available to be the key determining factor for the success of a movement (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Weitzer (1991) also attributes the failure of the American sex worker rights movement to the lack of media coverage of the movement's milestones, which did not allow the public to follow the movement regularly.

What has not yet been examined in depth in the research so far on sex worker collectivisation are the organisational routines and negotiations within and outside of formal organisational gatherings through which sex worker rights activists construct and perform representation as they continuously define a group identity. The approaches from social movement theory that have been applied so far also serve as useful conceptual tools for grasping the processes leading to the construction of a collective identity and within these, the practice of representation. In this final section, I discuss the beginnings of the movement in the European context and further approaches, beyond the example of the resource mobilisation approach discussed above, that scholars have taken to analysing the first sex worker protest. These include the social psychological or actor-centred approach, leadership, emotion and political process.

The earliest documented instance of sex worker organising was in France in 1975, in response to police brutality against street sex workers. The famous occupation of the Church St. Nizier in Lyon marked the beginning of the European movement for sex worker rights and has since then been celebrated every 2nd of June as the International Day of Sex Worker Rights in activist communities in Europe (Aroney, 2018). Studies done on this first documented protest for sex worker rights in the European context have depicted this event as a failure, as it did not bring

about policy changes in favour of sex workers (Corbin, 1990; Mathieu, 2001; Tilly and Tarrow, 2015). These studies draw on resource mobilisation theory, with its basic premise that the emergence and persistence of a social movement depends on the availability of resources, which it can accumulate and channel into continuing action (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

Applying this framework in relation to sex workers' choice of appropriate modes of action, their ability to mobilise participants and their ability to form alliances has led scholars to use these as the main criteria for defining the success of the occupation of St. Nizier. However, taking a different perspective on the course of the protest allows for a more inclusive interpretation of the long-term effects of the occupation for the sex worker rights movement. Protest participants consider the event a success for the movement because of the opportunity that was provided through the occupation to "know and understand each other" (Aroney, 2018: 12).

In this view, the protest should be viewed as a step towards the development of a collective identity. Despite cultural differences, sex workers across the world have identified with the French sex workers who had protested in 1975. The protest also showed that sex workers were capable of speaking for themselves and were not under the control of manipulative third parties, thus serving as a counter-narrative to the mainstream stereotype of coercion and lack of agency among sex workers. The strike in St. Nizier marked a crucial foundational moment that became a 'fortifying myth' inspiring sex workers' movements to continue mobilising in the face of defeats and forging 'a narrative of influence', which in itself contributed importantly to building and sustaining a social movement culture" (Meyer, 2009: 56).

Social psychological or actor-centred approaches to studying sex worker collectivisation have focussed on the significance of collective identity for strengthening the movement and holding sex workers together (Mathieu, 2003; Koné, 2016; Hardy and Cruz, 2018; Aroney, 2018). Citing the example of the sex worker protest occupation of the Church St. Nizier in 1975, Aroney (1975) emphasises the strength of communal ties as a positive factor for the success of collectivisation, despite social exclusion and lack of political opportunities (Aroney, 1975). Obstacles to the movement are seen to be stigma, the lower-class social backgrounds of most workers, low education levels and the precarious work and living conditions in which most sex workers find themselves (Mathieu, 2003). The most significant hindrance to mobilisation is considered the ambivalence that many sex workers harbour towards their work, which is seen

to be a result of the factors previously mentioned (Mathieu, 2003; Gall, 2016). The obstacles identified are examples of actor-centred explanations for the likelihood of sex worker collectivisation, drawing from the social psychological approaches within social movement theory that look at individual actors' perceptions of their context and identification potential with the movement as the main factors of collective action (Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1989).

Leadership is also an aspect that has been analysed in research done on sex worker rights movements (Mathieu, 2003; Koné, 2016; In the French context, Mathieu (2003) reported that leaders have generally been more privileged sex workers who were not as bound to the identity of a sex worker as other movement constituents and that these leaders have often exited the industry after a while to pursue other forms of work, leaving their activism behind as well (Mathieu, 2003). This investigation of leadership has focussed merely on the positions of leaders within the movement and on what implications their social background has on the progress of the movement. Leadership in the context of this thesis is understood to refer not only to formally designated actors at the forefront of organisational operation, but more broadly to activists who are members of a group claiming to represent the interests of a wider population. This perspective is useful because it emphasises how members in different positions within the group or with different relations to the group shape each other's interests and the implications that this reciprocal shaping has on the projected or vocalised interests of the movement. Koné (2016) has also looked at leadership development in sex worker organisations in Latin America, using the example of the umbrella organisation RedTraSex. In her study of processes of leadership within RedTraSex, she found that a significant factor influencing the progress of the movement was whether the initiatives were led by allies or by sex workers themselves. Therefore, one of the goals of this organisation is to promote sex workers as leaders in the movement, in order to have more control of funding, deciding which projects to pursue and how to shape and present their sex worker identity to the public (Koné, 2016). Examining leadership processes, including the dialogue between movement actors and the embedded construction of the leader/representative and constituent/represented roles, provides insight into how leaders as representatives both shape the interests of a movement and at the same time are influenced by the interests of constituents, or those they aim to represent.

Aside from leadership, framing and political opportunity are further dimensions that influence the progress of the movement (Hardy, 2010; Murray et al, 2010; Hardy and Cruz, 2018).

Looking at the Argentine sex worker rights movement, for example, Hardy (2010) examined the way that sex worker rights were framed by activists as they struggled for recognition by unions. The success of the movement was attributed to a strong existing trade union tradition in Argentina that was able to mobilise and represent some of the most marginalised workers in the industry, and that embedding the issue of sex worker rights in a "wider struggle for the transformation of economic social relations" was an important frame for enabling this to happen (Hardy, 2010: 171). Unlike the studies done in the US context, the explanations of the relative success of the Argentine sex worker rights movement are based on the framing and political opportunity approaches in social movement theory (Benford and Snow, 2000; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, 2001). The strong trade union tradition referred to in the study of the movement is an example of a favourable structural condition according to the political opportunity approach and the location of sex worker rights within the context of labour and social rights is an example of a frame constructed to mobilise actors and pursue collective action.

Emotions are another aspect of sex worker collectivisation that have only very recently begun to be explored (Hardy, 2010; Hardy and Cruz, 2018). In their study of the sex worker rights movement in the Argentine context, Hardy and Cruz (2018) have investigated the role of affect as a key factor for the success of the movement, introducing the concept of affective organising (Hardy, 2010; Hardy and Cruz, 2018). By embedding emotions in the conceptualisation of sex workers' collective and individual agency, it was shown that affect was key to "transforming the individual and collective well-being of workers" (Hardy and Cruz, 2018: 26). As discussed earlier in the section on collective identity as a construction, affect is a relevant aspect to consider when studying the process of identisation. The framework that I have constructed will enable me to identify the role of affect in my analysis of discussions, negotiations and routines among activists by paying attention to the micro-level interactions between actors, including instances of disagreement and consensus that are often driven by emotional reactions.

The actor-centred focus for studying sex worker collectivisation, which includes the dimensions of collective identity, emotions and leadership discussed above, has been expanded in further studies that specifically explore the demands made and strategies undertaken by sex worker rights activists and linking these to the wider, structural influences on sex worker organizing. Van der Meulen (2012), for example, looked at workplace changes

and strategies for labour organising in Canada and discovered that many of the problems that sex workers faced in the workplace were related to the infrastructure of the workplace and the contractual terms of working in venues. The main barrier to organising that was identified, echoing other studies, was the dis-identification with sex work which was related to the transience of many workers and the stigma attached to the job that made many workers wary of joining a formal organisation to fight for more rights (van der Meulen, 2012). In the US context, Jackson (2013) studied one particular sex worker rights group within the movement in the United States, the Desiree Alliance, in order to understand how sex worker rights activists continued to campaign for more rights despite the strength of the sex trafficking narrative in the United States. Jackson's research focussed on the organisational structure and goals of the Desiree Alliance, showing how the activities and organisation of the movement were an example of social movement unionism (Gall, 2006). Looking at both micro- and macro-level factors that shape sex worker collectivisation in the United States, she investigated activist strategies in the context of state-level policies, exploring how the overall criminalisation of sex work in the US, together with an increase in contingent labour and the decentralisation of worker protections in the neoliberal economy, affected worker organising. A key observation of this study was that the movement in the US not only campaigned for the decriminalisation of sex work, but also for integration into the labour market through better access to the protections of labour and social wage benefits, echoing the goals of activists in several other countries with active sex worker rights movements. Following this approach of linking actor-centred and structure-focussed approaches, the conceptual framework that I have constructed links macro-level structural factors that drive sex worker activists in Germany to micro-level processes within the practice of activism in order to explain how sex worker collectivisation and representation unfold.

Summary

In this chapter, I have constructed a conceptual framework for tracing the process of representation within framing, collective identity and mobilisation for collective action. After providing an overview of early social movement theory that focussed on political processes and resource mobilisation as the main driving factors for collective action, I turned to more recent approaches that took framing and collective identity as starting points for explaining how collective action emerges. I then introduced mobilisation theory from the industrial

relations literature and discussed how this was derived from concepts in social movement theory. Then, based on the structural-cognitive model, I combined the concepts of framing, collective identity and mobilisation into one framework. The concept of representation was also introduced as a multi-lateral construction in which the interests and roles of representative and the wider population being represented are shaped. To finalise the framework, I included representation as a conceptual tool for explaining how interests are constructed within and between the processes of framing, collective identity and mobilisation.

Finally, research on sex worker rights movements has to a significant extent drawn on the resource mobilisation and political restraint/opportunity perspectives, as well as social psychological approaches that consider the role of affect and identity to explain the way these movements have progressed or faded away. However, what has not yet been explored extensively are the decisions, routines, processes and interactions of and between individual actors in a movement that lead to the formation of a collective identity among sex workers, how the interests of sex workers are shaped by the movement and how through these activities, representation is practised. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, a more explicit application of the conceptual tools offered by social movement theory together with the concept of representation will enable a more nuanced understanding and thorough picture of how individual sex workers become collective actors and how in this process, the representation of sex workers is performed.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Investigative co-construction as a methodology for studying the sex worker rights movement

Sex work is still a highly politicised topic debated with polarised notions of sex workers' agency or coercion. Therefore, the way that research on sex work is conducted holds implications of the researcher's view and positionality towards sex work. Doing research on sex work without carefully considering the implications of the methodology and methods selected to investigate the experiences of sex workers would overlook the inherent political implications of the way research is conducted in this field. Factors such as the researcher's ingoing perspective on sex work, access to the field and epistemological approach influence not only the way research is conducted, but also the effect that this research will have on the debate about sex work. It is crucial, therefore, to preface an analysis of the findings from this research with a discussion about the methodology and corresponding choice of methods used to generate data. The methodology applied in the research for this thesis was guided by participatory action research (PAR) and feminist standpoint methodology. Drawing from both methodological approaches, I designed a methodology that enabled me to both investigate processes of representation as well as contribute to the construction of this process.

My research was guided by constructionist views of the social world that go hand-in-hand with the focus on interactions, processes, reactions, relationships and situations as the units of analysis to answer the research questions (see section 1.2). The constructionist lens allows the researcher to investigate the meanings behind actions and to trace the way social phenomena take shape. Through this lens, the focus of the research is on rituals, customs and institutions as the products of a long history of cultural and social conditioning in which people learn meanings and reproduce these meanings through interaction with each other and in the development of tools, rules, and events for achieving their goals (Blumer, 1969). The interactions between actors, processes of negotiation and decision-making, reactions to changes in the social world, and the relationships between actors were observed and thus provide data about how my research participants mobilised for collective action. Taking these phenomena as ontological building blocks allows research to uncover the underlying meanings behind people's actions and decisions in order to understand how exactly these

actions and decisions have come about. Sharing this insight into the underlying mechanisms of processes in social activity increases reflection and heightens consciousness so that actors can adjust or enhance their habits of action and strategizing to more effectively reach their goals.

A methodology based on social constructionism thus contains the aim of encouraging the research participants to reflect on their actions and to co-create knowledge as they partake in the research through, for example, interviews (Mason, 2002). The focus on processes in the social constructionist approach is also useful for challenging mainstream perceptions of patterns assumed to determine entry into sex work and that uphold binaries of choice or coercion, which have historically resulted in regressive, counter-productive legal measures imposed on sex workers. De-constructing these binaries by more closely examining the processes of action that sex workers are involved with is crucial for challenging reigning perceptions of sex work that continually disadvantage those affected by them (O'Neill, 2001).

I carried out the research as a year-long study of sex worker rights activism in Germany, during which I conducted thirty-one in-depth interviews from the fifty research participants (see Appendix 1: *List of research participants*) over the course of the year[4], held five informal interviews with workers in window brothels and observed two focus group discussions with sex worker rights activists who were members of the BesD. I also engaged in participant-observation at meetings of the BesD where I actively took part in the planning of initiatives that I subsequently participated in and observed as part of the fieldwork. Doing research on social groups that have been historically marginalised presents a methodological challenge, as their status will affect the way access is obtained to their knowledge, the way they interact with the researcher as a representative of a privileged social institution (academia), and their own perception of their situation, which are often significantly different from mainstream ideas of social marginalisation. A methodology that is able to account for these challenges must be employed in order to conduct research that generates a holistic depiction of the population of interest that does not merely reproduce dominant narratives. As sex workers are a group that has been historically marginalised and whose activities continue to be regarded as socially deviant and largely stigmatised, I have designed my research

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[4] Research participants also included sex workers who were part of the meetings and forum discussions that I joined and observed as part of the fieldwork, but who were not open for interviews due to time or capacity constraints.

methodology based on the principles of participatory action research (PAR) and concepts from feminist standpoint epistemology including the situatedness of knowledge and the exposure of relations that give rise to the construction of narratives (Haraway, 1988; Presser, 2005). In the following sections, I will further describe and justify the methodological influences and introduce the methodology that I designed to investigate sex worker representation, mobilisation and collective action. First, I discuss some of the issues in sex work research that have been identified in the literature so far as well as the most frequently used methods for studying sex working communities. Second, I elaborate on the PAR and feminist standpoint methodologies, identifying intersections between the two epistemological approaches. Third and finally, I draw together the principles of PAR and feminist standpoint that influenced my own approach and present investigative co-construction as a new methodology developed in this thesis.

3.1 Designing the methodology

3.1.1 Research approaches to studying sex work

Three major challenges that have been identified by sex work researchers are, obtaining a representative sample, maintaining privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process, and going beneath dominant stereotypes about sex work that uphold strict dichotomies of exceptionally empowered actors or helplessly coerced victims (Shaver, 2005; Sanders, 2006). The choice of methodology will have implications for the characteristics of the sample of sex workers accessed for the research, as well as the way the data is collected and handled. Sampling, data handling, and challenging dominant narratives are key aspects of research that I have kept in mind in designing my project.

Most of the research on sex work so far has been carried out using qualitative methods including in-depth interviewing, focus group discussions, case studies, and increasingly, using an ethnographic-style, participatory approach in which the researcher is personally engaged in the work or closely accompanies the lives and activities of sex workers during the fieldwork period (Frank, 2002; Wahab, 2003; Sanders, 2005; Day, 2007; Hardy, 2010; van der Meulen, 2011, 2012; Cheung, 2013; Colosi, 2010). A lesser number of quantitative studies have been done on sex work from an economics perspective, using electronically-administered surveys on a mass scale (Cunningham and Kendall, 2011; Kotsadam and Jakobsson, 2011; Cho, Dreher, Neumayer, 2012). These studies were primarily guided by questions seeking basic cause-and-

effect explanations for phenomena commonly associated with sex work and drew conclusions from relatively large samples of sex workers or people directly affected by sex work legislation, without engaging face-to-face with informants. While these studies may boast much larger samples than most of the qualitative studies done on sex workers, it is questionable whether the research has been able to challenge mainstream views of sex work or at least offer a novel perspective on these (Dolinsek, 2012). What is missing from large, survey-based studies on sex workers is the sex workers' voices themselves and the opportunity to understand the different dimensions of sex work from a practitioner's perspective. The challenge of uncovering alternative perspectives on sex work is therefore most effectively accomplished through more qualitative approaches, which I argue further in the following section, provide the research participants with the opportunity to develop narratives that reveal the underlying meanings behind their decisions and subsequent situations. It is through grasping these meanings and recording these narratives that alternative perspectives to dominant images can be introduced.

Increased involvement of sex workers in debates and discourses related to their work is already being practiced in the academic research context (Wahab, 2003; Hardy, 2010; Cruz, 2013; Geymonat and Macioti, 2016). Encouraging sex workers to participate in the research process is an effective way to include not only their perceptions on their situation, but also to incorporate their local knowledge and expertise to enhance observations made from the researcher's perspective (Campbell and O'Neill, 2006; O'Neill, 2010). By including sex workers in participation-based research projects, the importance of political "recognition" of sex workers' agency can be practiced (O'Neill, 2010). In view of sex worker activists' call for more inclusion in research and policy-making on sex work, encouraging sex workers to take part in research initiatives rather than studying them from a distance is a suitable way to enrich the production of knowledge within the research process, while demonstrating respect for the dignity and autonomy of the people of interest to the research (Dewey, S. and Heineman, 2013). As the interest in studying communities of sex workers rises within the academic community, sex workers have increasingly been demanding more direct involvement in the research projects, particularly in determining the aspect of sex work to be explored (Wahab, 2003; Jeffreys, 2009). The Scarlet Alliance, a sex worker rights group based in Australia, has published a guide on best practices for doing sex work research based on a conference gathering of sex workers in Thailand in 2009. Some of the practices recommended in the guide

for researchers seeking to study sex working communities include allowing sex workers to have a say in the aims, methods and objectives of the research, giving them control of the representation of the outcomes and avoiding exposure of identities and workplaces (Jeffreys, 2009). As sex workers' agency becomes increasingly documented in the research and as the call from within this community for a greater voice in studies conducted on their work grows, a methodological approach that responds accordingly is increasingly important. Therefore, I argue that a methodology combining approaches from participatory action research and feminist standpoint is most productive and politically relevant for doing research with sex workers, as will be shown in the rest of this section.

3.1.2 Intersections of participatory action research and feminist standpoint epistemology

The broad methodological approach on which my own research methodology is based is action research. The main premises of action research are democratic inclusion throughout the whole research process and social transformation through research (Greenwood and Levin, 1998, 2007). The goal of an action research project should be to improve the situation of the stakeholders by uncovering new perspectives and constructing solutions together with community participants (Bradbury Huang and Reason, 2003). Based on these premises, the key elements of action research include collaboration between academic researchers and community members in defining the research question and problem to be examined, practicing social research techniques together, and interpreting the results together (Greenwood and Levin 1998, 2007).

Central to action research is the idea that social theories are continuously put to the test throughout the research process as researchers and community members engage in frequent reflection on their ideas. Thought and action are seen to be closely intertwined, summarised by Paolo Freire (1970) as the concept of conscientisation to describe the inquiry process as a way of shaping knowledge that is relevant to action (Khan et al, 2013). The specific strand of action research that has most strongly informed my methodological framework is referred to as participatory action research (PAR) and is based on research done with populations in the Global South. Sometimes referred to as southern PAR, this approach has a strong focus on power, social reform, community development and confronting oppression (Freire, 1970;

Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Developed by social researchers studying communities in the Global South, PAR is based on a Marxist-inspired theory that inequalities in developing countries are based on capitalist exploitation and earlier colonialism and that the populations affected by these processes must be empowered to raise their voices against oppressive forces (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991). Adopting the view that the greatest injustices stem from power imbalances, PAR's central aim is to rebalance power differentials by restoring the status of popular knowledge, stemming more from different experiential and practical processes that take place within "class conformations and rationalities" and that differ from academic knowledge based on rationalism (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991: 4).

As social science comes under increasing pressure to produce research that is relevant to the community outside of academic circles, participatory approaches that engage community members and emphasise sharing rather than imposing social science techniques become more relevant (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). In order for social science to increase its relevance to the community, it is necessary to challenge the boundaries of research, particularly the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the research design process and the dissemination of results (Nowotny, Scott, Gibbons, 2001). Research that sets out to be interactive and constantly attuned to the potential of local knowledge, rather than based on a separation between researcher and subject of interest in the name of objectivity, is better able to benefit both academia as well as the community (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). In the face of social challenges, particularly among marginalised and less privileged populations, it no longer suffices to enter these communities as researchers simply to make observations and extract information without giving back to those opening their lives to the researcher's curiosity (Maxwell, 2014). By encouraging input from those being researched, participatory research approaches take clear consideration of the needs and voices of community members and work with these throughout the entire research process. In this way, a useful impact to the community can be effectively achieved.

PAR shares many similarities with feminist approaches to social inquiry that work to dismantle uneven power relations in traditional social science approaches by giving a voice to minorities and historically oppressed social groups. Feminist research promotes a view of social research as a tool for raising the consciousness of the group being studied (Gunnarsson, 2007). Through a commitment to undermining oppression and routine silencing, feminist scholars have contributed most significantly to the development of participation and inclusion in social

research, which are also core elements in PAR (Frisby, Maguire, Reid, 2009). Feminist standpoint epistemology, which was influenced by the women's liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s, is guided by the core principles of exploring power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, challenging social inequalities, and exposing the perspectives of marginalised social groups (Harstock, 1983; Harding, 2009). A central tenet of feminist standpoint is the democratisation of knowledge generation by engaging closely with research participants in order to elicit their local knowledge as a contribution to academic research done on their experiences (Harding, 2009).

Standpoint is not merely a perspective, but rather much more about achieving an understanding of another person's situation or context (Hartsock, 1983). Standpoint projects start from the perspective of those whose narratives are oppressed by the dominant group (Harding, 2009). Being aware of one's and others' standpoint and thereby situating knowledge as a researcher from a particular context will enable an open disposition when confronted with differing perspectives from the community (Haraway, 1988; Burawoy, 1998). Feminist epistemology makes use of dialogue to uncover the material structures that shape the way people understand social relations (Hartsock, 1983). Rather than striving towards a single authentic narrative, the goal of research should be to expose as many of the relations in which the research participant is involved that lead to the construction of a narrative (Presser, 2005). The multiplicity of perspectives and the situatedness of knowledge is a further key principle of feminist standpoint epistemology that grounds my methodology as I work with rather than try to overcome subjectivities of experiences and views expressed in the field by myself and research participants (Haraway, 1988).

A specific critique of feminist standpoint epistemology is the inclination observed particularly in standpoint research, of giving epistemic privilege to marginalised voices, or validating oppressed views more than dominant ones (Rolin, 2006, 2009; Nencel, 2016). As discussed earlier, the role of local knowledge is to complement the knowledge that I bring into the field of accessing and understanding sex workers. My intention was not to depict the voices of stigmatised or marginalised sex workers as superior to the views of non-sex workers, but rather to bring forth their perspectives as an alternative to those that tend to overshadow these. In sex worker activist circles, the voices of sex workers who are more marginalised or who come from backgrounds differing from activists are often missing. Actively seeking these voices through the research and bringing them into activist spaces would therefore balance

and strengthen the discourse of sex worker rights. Novel perspectives or experiences of sex work that I encountered in interviews and focus group discussions were consistently questioned, reflected and compared with views encountered through other sex workers or in published research on sex work. Furthermore, including this variety of perspectives was crucial for developing the concept of representation as a construction of interests from different sex workers within as well as outside of activist structures.

PAR intersects closely with feminist standpoint methodology, allowing for the combination of the two in a methodological framework for investigating sex worker activism. Both the participatory action and feminist standpoint approaches agree that social inquiry is inherently a political activity and share a commitment to guiding the community of interest to a state of emancipation that will enable them to become self-sufficient in improving their situation beyond the research phase (Hekman, 1997; Harding and Norberg, 2005; Harding, 2009). The theoretical basis of PAR combined with feminist standpoint epistemology, with their emphases on engaging and empowering marginalised populations, is well-suited for researching representation among sex workers, and in particular for grasping the intersection between precarity in sex work, the legal context, and worker mobilisation.

3.1.3 Investigative co-construction: combining participatory action and feminist standpoint approaches

Based on the elements of PAR and feminist standpoint discussed previously, I have designed a methodology that is most precisely understood as *investigative co-construction* that enabled me to investigate the process of representation among sex workers while at the same time employing the research techniques to contribute to the construction of this process. In this section, I identify which aspects and practices of PAR and standpoint methodologies have shaped my own methodology before defining the unique elements of investigative co-construction.

In the context of my field, BesD members constructed themselves as representatives for sex worker rights in relation to the wider sex working population in Germany. In order to understand how interests were constructed and how the role of representative was defined and shaped by BesD members, I needed a methodology that would enable me to elicit and

more deeply understand the concerns, needs and priorities that sex workers had. Moreover, a methodology that enabled me to communicate these interests among sex workers was necessary in order to understand how they responded to each other's interests. The elements of the PAR and standpoint approaches that prioritise raising marginalised or historically silenced voices, considering a multiplicity of perspectives and intertwining thought and action were therefore optimal influences for designing a methodology that allowed me to closely examine how representation emerged between the BesD, its newest members and sex workers outside of the Association.

The use of dialogue to reveal the social factors that shaped the way that sex workers understood their relations to each other and to society was a crucial influence from feminist standpoint that shaped my methodology. By creating spaces of dialogue with different sex workers (see section 3.4) I was able to elicit their interests as units of analysis for understanding the construction of representation. Within these spaces of dialogue, I strived to elicit and recognise a variety of interests and to achieve an understanding of the development of each research participant's interest as a result of their individual context. It was important to me that during the dialogue with each research participant, that knowledge was shared by both of us and that participants' felt that they could ask me questions as well. In this way, the concept of the situatedness of knowledge, the process of arriving at a standpoint and the dismantling of power imbalances were further key influences from feminist standpoint on my own methodology.

There were two specific ways that I included the PAR approach in my fieldwork. Collaborating with BesD members to decide on the overall theme of the research was an important way that PAR influenced my research methodology. Collaboration meant that I worked together with the BesD to organise events and supported their goals by taking on short-term tasks throughout the fieldwork that contributed to the group's activism and allowed me to observe which themes and issues were most relevant significant to the group. A second way that I included the PAR approach in my research was through developing initiatives with the Association that brought them in contact with sex workers outside of activist circles. The information sessions about the PPA and the Whores' Congress were the two main projects that I helped to organise (see Section 3.4.3). These initiatives were constructed as a space in which I both examined how representation was constructed through the interactions between sex workers and where the perspectives that were generated during the interviews with

individual sex workers influenced the creation of these initiatives. By participating in the events organised by the BesD and collaborating with core members in the organisation of sex worker rights-related activities, I engaged in social inquiry as a political activity. In this way, my research was designed according to the key idea advocated in feminist standpoint research, that scientific inquiry and political commitment are inseparable and compatible with knowledge of social realities (Smith, 1990; Harding, 2009). The reciprocal intention implicit in my research of supporting community members' goals through collaboration in projects that in turn inform the research, reflects approaches in PAR related to giving back to the people being researched by structuring data collection techniques as opportunities for exchange rather than one-sided extraction (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). In this way, the intertwining of thought and action, as propounded in PAR, was incorporated into my methodology. Since the completion of the fieldwork for this study, I have continued to be involved in the BesD by supporting them with various projects in the development of the organisational infrastructure. My main area of involvement has been in the expansion of their network with the sex work research community in Germany by communicating with researchers and students looking for participants in their studies on sex work. I also maintain the online archive of studies done on sex work on the BesD website. Future projects include working to strengthen the network with public health agencies and health care professionals in Germany, to sensitize them to the needs of sex workers, and the launching of more German language courses for migrant sex workers.

As shown above, the methodology *investigative co-construction* that I have developed was born out of the PAR and feminist standpoint approaches. Investigative co-construction allowed me to both investigate representation as an outsider as well as contribute to the process of representation as an insider. Employing this methodology was successful and challenging in a number of ways. Constructing the spaces in which I investigated sex workers' interests and the ways that BesD members negotiated the role of representative turned out to be a straightforward process. The Association had already established good relations with the counselling centres where the information sessions for sex workers were held, so my efforts in organising these sessions could be more directed towards preparing the content of the sessions and on encouraging sex workers to attend in the different cities where the sessions took place. Securing interviews from sex worker attendees after the session was also unproblematic, as they were generally already concerned about the legal changes and happy

to be able to express these concerns more in-depth in the context of an interview. Conducting interviews shortly after the sessions also proved to be particularly successful because during the information sessions, sex workers were introduced not only to the legal changes, but also to the BesD's activism and efforts for sex worker rights. By being exposed to these perspectives, sex workers already had the chance to reflect on their interests in relation to the BesD and sex worker activism more broadly, which prepared them to articulate these in the interview. In this way, the aim of the methodology to get sex workers to reflect more deeply on their concerns and interests as part of the process of representation worked well.

On the other hand, the main challenge that arose when putting the methodology into practice was the issue of attracting a diversity of sex workers to the information sessions, in order to have a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives from different areas of sex work. Sex workers who operated in venues were generally unwilling to come to the sessions, or cancelled at the last minute, due to the venue working hours clashing with the session times. As a result, all of the sex workers who attended came from areas of sex work, such as escorting or in-calling, in which work hours were more flexible. At some of the sessions, managers attended and claimed that they would relay the information back to the workers in their venues. This meant that the interviews following the sessions were done with sex workers from a handful of areas of sex work, contrary to the goal of reaching a greater variety of areas of sex work through the information sessions. This then resulted in the perspectives constructed during the interview coming from sex workers mainly working in the same area of sex work, which skewed the intention of investigating interests from a diversity of areas. Sex workers who worked in more precarious situations and couldn't afford to miss clients to attend the sessions or who were more marginalised due to having a migrant background or lacked the language skills necessary to participate in the sessions were also unable to attend. Engaging the PAR element in my methodology by including the voices of more marginalised members of the population therefore proved to be more challenging than expected.

Before I further elaborate on the application of investigative co-construction through my chosen methods, I explain my positionality as an insider in the field at the same time engaging in the outsider perspective, and how this influenced my access to the field.

3.2 Shifting roles: constructing insider and an outsider perspectives

Being a member of the BesD, I entered the research field of sex work and sex worker activism as an insider, meaning that I was already familiar with the structure and culture of the Association before commencing the research. The benefits of the insider position included being able to identify routines and practices within a social group that would have been much more challenging to access from an outsider position, not to mention the propensity to gain group members' trust that is facilitated by being an insider. However, as I engaged in various fieldwork situations, I was also able to take on the outsider perspective. When I commenced the fieldwork, I was relatively new to sex worker activism and unfamiliar with the politics and positions of the movement. I had joined the BesD just a year before and had not acquired a confident level of knowledge about the discourse and ideology of sex worker rights until the middle of the fieldwork period. The outsider position enabled me to view the activities and priorities set by the BesD from a perspective that was not indoctrinated by long-term activism experience, which was important for being able to reflect critically on what I observed and what was disclosed to me throughout fieldwork. The roles of insider and outsider are fluid and often depend on the context of interaction with research participants (Ergun and Erdemir, 2010; Bruskin, 2019). As I navigated through my field, I found myself taking on both roles according to the type of setting and situation. Setting boundaries, or making clear to myself how to communicate and to what extent to engage emotionally with my research participants, were techniques that I used to distinguish between the insider and outsider roles. According to Cuomo and Massaro (2016), boundary-making is a technique that involves "actively creating boundaries and producing distance, both emotional and physical, to (de)attach ourselves from our 'familiar fields'" (97). Throughout the research process, I found myself constantly balancing between the two positions, depending on the method I took to elicit knowledge. In interviews, for example, taking the insider position helped me to empathise with my research participants, encouraging them to speak more openly about their perspectives. During member meetings, on the other hand, it was often more fruitful to take the outsider role, as this put me in a position to ask basic questions and also to question the proceedings in a way that allowed me to reflect on them analytically later. I also refrained from attending socials that happened after BesD member meetings during the period of fieldwork, in order to be able to make my role as a researcher clear to myself after the meetings and to avoid hearing off-the-record reflections of the meeting that were meant to remain confidential that might influence how I recorded fieldnotes.

As I became involved in the information sessions, I found myself negotiating the insider and outsider roles most clearly. When presenting at the information sessions, I veered towards the insider role as a member of the BesD who was offering information about the legal changes to other sex workers. Taking on the insider role in this situation helped me to connect more intimately with potential interviewees by distinguishing myself as an activist, different from social workers or public health workers who generally advised sex workers, yet who themselves were not directly affected by the legal changes in their working lives. When helping to prepare the information sessions, however, I slipped into a more distanced outsider role by focussing on logistical tasks, such as coordinating with the counselling centres to organise rooms and times for holding the sessions, while Sophie, the BesD member in charge of the information sessions focussed on creating the content of the sessions. As I intended to investigate the content of the information sessions given at the information session as material constructions of the BesD's framing of the legal changes, exercising too much influence on the content of the presentations by creating them myself would have interfered with this research intention. The main challenge of shifting between these roles was constantly making decisions about which type of knowledge that I had recorded in my notes would be appropriate to include in the data analysis and which to leave out to protect confidential internal views.

Shifting between the insider and outsider roles meant alternately emphasising my positionalities as a researcher or as a sex worker activist. The novelty of the methodology that I have designed lies in the way that it explicates the fluidity of insider and outsider roles that enabled me to both generate knowledge about how representation was constructed in sex worker rights activism, while at the same time furthering this process as I was studying it. By eliciting research participants' interests and then sharing these with the BesD as they planned collective action for sex worker rights, I facilitated the intertwining of interests of the Association and individual sex workers, which I argue in the thesis is a key part of how representation works. Representation as a construction of interests and a construction of the role of representative as well as the wider population was in this way supported by my role as a researcher-activist, acting as a liaison between the BesD and the wider population of sex workers. At the same time that the process of representation was facilitated through reaching out to sex workers outside of the BesD as well as to new member sex workers in the Association, I investigated the way that this process unfolded through the spaces that I created

in the context of my research. Both components of this methodological approach constituted the collaboration between research and activism and moreover, the contribution that research can make to the community. This approach not only demonstrated how the researcher constructs the field being studied or inevitably influences the field in which s/he is immersed, but also how this influence can be performed in a way that supports the goals and social progression of the people in the field (Madden, 2010; Watson, 2011).

Acting as both an investigator of the field as well as a subject directly shaping the field has been a central way that the researcher-role has been designed in PAR studies (Fals-Borda, 1979; Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Wahab, 2003; Busza, 2004). Fals Borda (1979) emphasises that when adopting this approach, the researcher must "emphasize one or the other of these roles within the process, doing so in a sequence in time and space which includes approaching and keeping distance from the groups, action and reflection in turn" (37). By negotiating the insider and outsider roles throughout my research, I was able to make the methodology of investigative-co-construction effective for accomplishing both aims of generating new knowledge in academia as well as helping my research participants to progress further with their goals. As discussed earlier (section 3.1.2), collaboration and contribution are key, established practices in the PAR approach for conducting research in an ethical way that also sustains the network between researchers and community members for future cooperation.

3.2.1 Critiques of the participatory approach: addressing "insider bias"

Despite the ethical aspects of collaborating with community members in the research process, the notion that researchers entering the field as insiders influence and shape the field while studying it has been problematised. The most frequent criticism of insider-conducted research is that developing too close of a relationship with research participants may result in an "insider bias" that prevents the researcher from viewing and interpreting the findings in a scientifically valid way (Greene, 2014). Too much familiarity with the field and community members is argued to narrow the researcher's perception, limiting the analysis of structures and patterns (Aguiler, 1981). Moreover, critics claim that the researcher risks making assumptions about the field based on prior knowledge and experience, which reduced the credibility of the findings (DeLyser, 2001).

However, specific techniques can be employed to mitigate the risks of insider bias, which I have consistently incorporated into my own fieldwork. Constant reflexivity on the role of the researcher in the field in relation to research participants is one practice that can help the researcher to remain conscious of how s/he perceives situations and processes research participants' words and actions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In order to manage the influence of both investigating and being part of the field, it is also helpful to engage in "stream of consciousness writing" and posing questions to oneself throughout the research process (van Heugten, 2004). Directly after an interview or an event during fieldwork, I took time to jot down as many reflections as possible, including open questions that I still had. At a later time, I went back to these notes and analysed which parts of my reflections were shaped by my prior knowledge and experiences with the people involved in the situation I had recorded. This process helped me to remain conscious of the effect of positionality as an insider on the way I observed the field and interacted with my research participants.

Triangulation of methods is another technique that can be used to strengthen the credibility of the research (Guba, 1981). In my own study, I employed this technique by engaging in three different methods, including interviewing, conducting focus groups and participant-observation of events and meetings hosted by my research participants. This meant that I investigated my research participants' activities in different ways in which their forms of interaction with myself and with each other varied. Interacting with my participants in various ways helped to ensure that the knowledge generated during fieldwork was derived from both the insider and outsider perspectives as I negotiated and shifted between both roles, as discussed previously.

The close participation of the researcher in the activities of community members has also been viewed as a point of contention in social science, particularly with regards to the validity and verifiability of knowledge produced through the PAR approach. Frideres (1992) has criticised PAR as being ideologically biased in favour of the knowledge produced by oppressed people and that community members lack the skills to produce scientifically valid knowledge. This type of criticism is premised on the conviction that scientific knowledge is only valid and verifiable if produced through a process in which subjective views are set aside as specific hypotheses are presented and tested to arrive at laws and facts about the social world (Frideres, 1992). The epistemological approach taken in PAR and feminist standpoint research fundamentally deviates from such a premise, instead seeking a variety of perspectives and

interpretations, or subjectivities, of the social world. The notion of "truth" is understood to arise from a consensus of subjective perspectives. Seeking only a single interpretation of a phenomenon would mean denying other perspectives that do not inherently carry less validity (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). These subjectivities arise from accepting an explicit value-ladeness as a basis of departure for doing research, which disrupts the long-held position of maintaining distance and disengagement with the research subjects as a requirement for producing non-biased, credible, scientific results (Frisby, Maguire, Reid, 2009). Therefore, action research-based approaches emphasize engagement with local knowledge and reflection on community views as crucial for the production of a variety of perspectives (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Bradbury Huang, 2010). With regard to my own research approach, I maintain that my status as an insider was helpful for gaining insight into a variety of perspectives over a long-term basis that enabled me to draw robust conclusions about mobilisation and collectivisation patterns among sex workers. In the next section, I discuss more precisely how I accessed my research participants in light of my positionality in the field.

3.3 Access

Gaining access to a social group is the first challenge encountered by researchers, particularly when doing participatory research. The researcher must gain the trust of potential research participants before the study can begin, which can demand a lot of time until group members feel comfortable enough to open themselves to a researcher (Madden, 2010). Particularly with a social group that has been historically marginalised and is the target of social stigma, gaining access and subsequently permission to conduct an in-depth, participatory study is a sensitive challenge. This became especially evident during my visits to window brothel venues as I attempted to engage in spontaneous interviews with the workers there. While I was able to conduct five short interviews[5] in these venues across different cities, most of the workers there were reluctant to speak with me after I had introduced myself.

I had been involved in sex worker activism for about one year before the fieldwork began and was thereby already in touch with the BesD and the members who participated in my research. As a member of the BesD, I received the newsletter, invitations to the group's events

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[5] Recorded as „field conversations" with Bella, Lena, Lula, Rosi, Tia (see *Appendix 1: List of Research Participants*)

and member meetings, and also access to the online discussion forum to report on individual activism. These areas of access all provided opportunities for participant-observation of group interactions and to get in touch with potential interview partners. My status as an Association member before commencing the fieldwork proved to be an advantage when proposing and planning the research one year later. As I had already attended meetings and expressed a commitment to sex worker rights activism, the other members had already gotten to know me and trusted that my intentions were not solely a desire to voyeuristically track their activities and sensationalise them as peculiar figures. It was as important to me as it was to them that any long-term study done on their activities would contribute to the cause of sex worker rights, an expectation of research that has become common across the field of sex worker rights activism (Hubbard, 2006; Jeffreys, 2009). Therefore, gaining access to this group for my proposed study was contingent upon my preceding interactions with the group as a non-researcher member.

Paying close attention to my positionality as well as the positionality of my research participants was highly relevant for the research. The perspectives expressed by BesD members were only a fraction of the sex working population in Germany. Therefore, it was crucial to take note of the situatedness of the knowledge expressed by sex workers in the BesD compared to that of non-member sex workers in order to account for these differences for analysing processes of identisation. Learning the positionality of my research participants was accomplished through face-to-face interaction with them by way of interviews and participant-observation during collaboration on BesD projects. Taking close consideration of the different backgrounds and perspectives of sex workers drew attention to the diversity of experiences within sex work. Furthermore, illuminating this diversity served an important political purpose as well in breaking down exaggerated narratives of exploitation and coercion as the dominant narrative of sex work. In the next section, I show how the methodology of investigative co-construction was put into practice through the specific methods that I employed during fieldwork.

3.4 Methods in Fieldwork

Three methods of eliciting knowledge from research participants were used during fieldwork, including interviews, focus groups and participant-observation. Each method placed the research participants in differently located relationships to me as the researcher and thereby

resulted in different forms of knowledge generation. In the following sections, I will elaborate on each method, explaining the advantages and shortcomings of each in terms of researcher-participant interaction and the co-construction of data.

3.4.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with thirty-one research participants in semi-structured format in different locations, depending on the location and preference of the participant. I designed a semi-structured interview format by preparing an interview schedule around specific themes and also planning time for interviewees to address other themes that were important to them (May, 2011). The interview questions fit into four themes, which I introduced to interviewees as general experience of sex work, communication about sex work, networking with other sex workers and relationship with sex worker rights activism (see Appendix 2: *Interview Questions*). Most of the questions that were prepared beforehand were addressed, but in all interviews, sex workers were encouraged to pursue themes that were most relevant to them and some questions were omitted if it became clear through previous responses that the theme in which the question was placed was not of interest or relevance to the respondent. Although many participants expressed unsureness about their ability to discuss sex work in a political context at first, opening the interview with basic questions regarding their own experience, history and motivation for sex work helped to ease them into thinking about more technical aspects of the work, such as networking, resources available for sex workers and the legal context. In the final part of the interview, position statements formulated by the BesD were read aloud to elicit reactions from respondents. This format followed the technique of the problem-centred interview to encourage participants to reflect on their reactions more deeply than simply agreeing or disagreeing with a statement (Witzel and Reiter, 2012).

The interview was not simply an opportunity for the researcher to garner information or knowledge from others, but rather a space for both sides to construct and negotiate meaning and to engage in reflexivity (Foley, 2012; Way et al, 2015). Interview questions and themes oscillated between critical consideration of the present situation and perceptions of an ideal situation (Nielsen and Lyhne, 2016). This approach not only uncovered reified structures, or institutionalised patterns of action and thought, it also paved the way for action (Nielsen and Lyhne, 2016). When doing interviews with sex workers, my aim was to construct a situation in which my informants perceived themselves on a socially equal basis to me by explaining specific aspects of my profile—such as my positionality as a member of an official sex worker

rights group and academic ambitions. Therefore, I decided to proceed with a more open interview structure with room for balanced exchange and dialogic spontaneity, in which the interviewee was encouraged to ask me questions as well, rather than according to the conventional structured interview that followed a standard, one-sided question-answer format. Through the semi-structured format oriented towards the thematic priorities of the research participants, the interviews were constructed as spaces of dialogue in which sex workers could reflect on and express their understanding of the structures that shaped their situations and social relations (Hartsock, 1983).

Interviewees were recruited partially though the BesD, as the experience of new members was of particular interest for the research in order to trace patterns of frame resonance, identisation and mobilisation. The participants were self-selected as they responded to my call for interviews, usually via e-mail or through an online platform for sexual services. It was also crucial that they possessed enough English or German skills for the interview, as there were no translation services organised for the fieldwork. As discussed earlier, consent was obtained verbally for all interviews due to the pseudonymisation of interview participants' personal data, which would have made formal written consent requiring the participant's signature obsolete. The main challenge in recruiting interviewees was encountered frequently in the online sexual service portals, as many of the service providers whom I contacted messaged back to me that they did not identify as sex workers and therefore did not see how they could help me[6]. It was also difficult to connect with service providers in the venues that I visited, as most of those that I approached spoke only limited German or English and often displayed apathy towards the prospect of discussing their work. Those with whom I did manage to speak were often unsure about how to respond to questions about how they perceived the social, political and changing legal context of sex work. I often found myself re-phrasing questions, leaving many out and instead conversing with them about aspects of their daily work lives that they were more open to discussing. As the aim of the research was to gain insight into the perspectives of both non-organised as well as activist sex workers, I

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[6] I came across many service providers online who identified as „hobby whores," or women who engaged in paid sex occasionally, but otherwise had other sources of income. This phenomenon has been studied as „incidental sex work" (Morris, 2019). Although these service providers were legally categorised as sex workers, they could not be consulted in my project as they themselves did not identify as such.

sought out participants from each group and adjusted the thematic foci according to the knowledge, priorities and interests of each participant.

Galvanising interviewee participation was straightforward and efficient when sending out a call through the BesD or through the sex worker activist networks in Germany, but more challenging when going through non-activist channels, such as commercial sex platforms or directly in sex work venues. A specific critique of participatory methods is that they are likely to have a "strong selection bias" due to the lengthy time commitment requested of participants and the potential for people with "louder voices" to speak over those who are more reserved (O'Shaughnessy and Krogman, 2012). Among sex workers, those who proactively seek advice from counselling centres or those who join the movement out of their own interest in the political and social context of their work tend to be heard most frequently. Since these sex workers tend to be the most accessible to researchers, new knowledge that is published about sex work may often stem from a handful of particularly political, reflective sex workers with a unique approach within their field of work. While contributions from politically active, vocal sex workers have certainly been and continue to be valuable, it was just as important to reach out to sex workers who are not involved in activism or not as visibly or vocally present in activist structures in order to include their perspectives as part of the demands for sex worker rights.

A key way that I mitigated the risk of selection bias was by reaching out to sex workers outside of the BesD rather than speaking only to members of the Association. The method of interviewing and the process of recruiting sex workers for interviews became intrinsic to the aim of investigating and constructing representation throughout the research, as my methodology was set out to achieve. Encouraging sex workers not formally involved in the BesD or not vocal members of the Association to voice their views, needs and interests was a process that both allowed me to better understand what might motivate sex workers to mobilise for their rights (see 1.2) as well as opened a space for representation to take form. During the interviews, sex workers expressed, reflected and defined their interests in conversation with me about their work experiences and their relationship with activism. The interviews were a technique supportive of the methodology of investigative co-construction pursued through my research because they served as a space in which sex workers could share and develop their interests and demands from activism, which I then subsequently communicated to the BesD in order to observe how the Association received and processed

perspectives from sex workers new to or outside of the group[7]. At the same time that I was able to investigate new perspectives, I shared them further so that they could be integrated into collective action planning, thereby contributing to the process of representation. In this way, the method of interviewing sex workers was interwoven with the construction of representation as varying perspectives were elicited from sex workers within as well as outside of the BesD, broadening the spectrum of interests and bringing different types of interests together for negotiation.

In the next section, I discuss the organisation of two focus groups that were designed to specifically elicit the perspectives of activist sex workers.

3.4.2 Focus Groups

In this study, I look at representation as a process of constructing not only interests, but also of constructing the roles that sex workers took on when expressing and vocalising these interests. While the interviews enabled space in which individual sex workers constructed interests through the exchange with me as I elicited their reflections on their experiences in sex work and relationship with activism, the role of representative was constructed through the exchange between sex workers amongst each other. Therefore, focus groups were carried out specifically with BesD members to observe how the role of representative was constructed through the exchanges between the focus group participants as they reflected on their activism and on their relationship with sex workers outside of the Association. Two focus groups were carried out with sex worker activist members of the BesD. Both were planned and conducted together with two other researchers based in Germany, who were also doing research on the topic of sex worker representation and collectivisation. The guiding questions were formulated together with the other two researchers and the three of us shared the moderation of each focus group and the subsequent transcription labour. Collaborating with two other researchers not only bore the benefit of efficiency and support in the process of organising the focus group method, it was also a valuable opportunity to discover different angles of eliciting knowledge from research participants through slightly different, but related

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[7] The insights that were developed through the interview were summarised in a community report that I shared with the BesD at the end of the research period. The identity of the interview participants was not exposed in the report, so as to respect their desire to remain anonymous in the research process. They were informed that their views would be shared with the BesD. This was a key purpose of the research, to introduce perspectives from sex workers outside of the Association or not vocal within the Association, so that their views and experiences could be taken into account as the BesD continued to refine their demands and create new initiatives for sex worker rights.

questions from the other projects. Furthermore, organising the focus groups with other researchers helped me to adopt the outsider perspective during the focus group situations. Although I was familiar with all of the participants, on the days when the focus groups took place, I presented myself as part of the research team that facilitated the discussions. Clearly taking on the researcher role in these situations enabled me to slip into the outsider role for this part of the fieldwork, adding a new perspective from which I listened to and processed the reflections of my research participants. This was useful for creating a balance to the insider perspective that I took on in other fieldwork situations, in order to mitigate the risk of insider bias (see section 3.2).

The focus group discussions were a useful technique for observing the construction and reinforcement of a collective identity among BesD members and how this collective identity in turn shaped the role of representative that they constructed to mobilise. Focus group discussions are an effective way to elicit social experiences from several participants at once in a way that allows people to respond to each other, rather than to just one person (the researcher) (Wilkinson, 1998). An important advantage that emerges in the use of focus groups is their ability to give voice to marginalised groups through the way that interaction between participants—rather than just between the researcher and one participant—offers insights into the extent of consensus and diversity within the community (Morgan, 1996). Moreover, by allowing participants to pursue their own interests and thematic priorities, rather than relying on the themes put forth by the researcher in a one-to-one interview setting, focus groups take the perspectives of community members as a starting point in social inquiry (Wilkinson, 1998; Montell, 1999). The approach afforded by this method was therefore conducive to the goal of raising consciousness among community members through the research and taking into account the multiplicity of perspectives that drives knowledge generation (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2009). In the next section, I will discuss how the method of participant-observation was also applied according to the foundations of feminist standpoint and PAR discussed earlier that shaped investigative co-construction.

3.4.3 Participant-observation

The third method that I employed alongside the interviews and focus groups was participant-observation. As the aim of the research was to examine the organisational routines and negotiations within and outside of formal organisational gatherings through which sex worker

rights activists construct and perform representation as they continuously define a group identity (see 2.8), including the method of participant-observation was an effective way of carrying out this aim. Being a participant-observer allowed me to both examine as well as contribute to the routines and specific practices of activism that constituted the construction of representation, following the methodology of investigative co-construction. By being present in the various activities of my research participants, I was able to immerse myself in the field and become more familiar to members in the Association with whom I had not interacted with much prior to the research. This helped to facilitate the recruitment process for interviews throughout the fieldwork. I actively participated in the events and meetings organised by my research participants and in this way, was able to gain an impression of the way they related to and interacted with each other, and also enabled me to trace routines and the progress of planning, as well as the crystallisation of ideas into activities. The most frequent situations in which participant-observation took place were at member meetings of the BesD, information sessions, and meetings for planning initiatives outside of formal member meetings. In the fieldwork period, which lasted for twelve months, I participated in three member meetings over the course of two days each, five information sessions for sex workers, two board member meetings and eight meetings for planning the Whores' Congress. The board meetings and meetings for planning the information sessions and the Whores' Congress generally lasted one to two hours each. The member meetings that lasted for two days included various work groups focussed on specific issues or campaigns being organised, of which I participated in the same three in each meeting. These were the work group for inclusion of migrant sex workers, the work group for refining demands and writing position statements and the work group for new member mobilisation. I attended these meetings as a member of the BesD and received permission to analyse the discussions for research purposes. Field notes were generally taken after participating, but sometimes also during meetings when I was asked to take minutes of the discussion as a form of active participation and contribution to the group. The field notes were mostly written digitally, but depending on the situation, also taken by hand and later transferred into digital form. Field notes were the materialisation of the data generated by myself and my research participants, as a way of translating the complexities of the social world into an analysable form (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). Writing field notes was also part of the process of constructing the field itself, as

I chose and elaborated on the events that I deemed relevant for fulfilling the aim of the research (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001).

Two large-scale initiatives that presented important opportunities for participant-observation and also reaching out to non-member sex workers were the Whores' Congress and the sex worker information sessions. The Whores' Congress brought together sex workers for three days to exchange practical knowledge about sex work and also about coping with the new legal context. While helping with the planning and organisation of the Congress, I was able to study the different routines, negotiations, challenges and resources that were a part of making the event happen. During these planning phases, I paid attention to the way organising members reached out to different allies and forged new alliances to secure space and resources for the Congress, as well as how decisions were made regarding the schedule and content of the event. At the Congress itself, I helped to keep the event running smoothly and attended workshops on the final day, which offered opportunities to speak with the attendees to learn how they perceived the Congress and what needs and interests were fulfilled by attending. As I engaged in the Whores' Congress, I both investigated as well as constructed the event as an example of collective action through which the process of representation was enacted. The perspectives that I learned from sex workers during the interviews were communicated with BesD members throughout the planning process, which in turn shaped the way the Congress was planned. In this way, the voices of sex workers new to the Association or not involved in activism were integrated into activist structures.

Likewise, applying the method of participant-observation during the sex worker information sessions was carried out according to the approach of investigative co-construction. Through a series of information sessions in different German cities organised by the BesD, non-member sex workers received the opportunity to learn more about the BesD and its reasons for contesting the new legal regulations affecting sex work. As described earlier, the BesD collaborated with sex worker counselling centres around Germany for the venues where the sessions took place as well as for communicating the event to sex workers who frequent the centres. The main idea behind these information sessions was to provide an exchange of useful work-related information by and for sex workers, and to increase awareness of the BesD as a voice and a platform for sex workers in Germany. As with the Whore's Congress, I helped with the planning and carrying out of these sessions and received permission to analyse the processes involved for research purposes. During the planning meetings, I

observed how the content of the sessions was planned and put into a presentation format and also how connections were made with allies for space and resources to make the sessions happen. During the sessions I observed closely how information about the PPA was disseminated and how BesD members interacted with non-member attendees. The information sessions were a valuable opportunity to see how the interests and priorities of the BesD were received by non-members and also to connect with them for one-to-one interviews to understand their experience of the information presented in more depth following the session. The interviews that I conducted with sex worker attendees following the information sessions also provided an opportunity for them to share their impressions of the sessions, particularly how relevant they were to sex workers' own circumstances and how their perspectives might have changed. These impressions were fed back to the BesD throughout the period during which the sessions took place so that each session could be altered or improved based on what the interviewees had shared with me. In this way, the method of planning the information sessions and subsequent interviews followed the principle of intertwining thought and action throughout the research process, as emphasised in PAR and which served as a foundation for investigative co-construction (Freire, 1970).

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was recorded in the form of field notes and interview transcripts, as well as documents produced by sex worker activists, including online publications. The interviews were conducted in either English or German, depending on the main language of the research participant. The focus groups were conducted in German and transcribed according to discourse analysis format, as the other two researchers planned to analyse the transcripts from a discourse analysis perspective. The individual interview transcriptions were transcribed in preparation for content analysis, as my research questions did not call for an investigation of the way research participants spoke or the emphasis on particular phrases to draw conclusions about their approach and relationship to sex work and sex worker activism. Instead, I focussed on the themes and interests being expressed during the interviews in the context of the background information they provided about themselves in the first part of the interview, and also how they responded to my remarks about my own experiences throughout the interview. Field notes were divided first by event and corresponding time period of observation and subsequently into themes or issues that were prioritised by research participants. Most of my field notes were first drafted as meeting protocols that I took during

BesD events and member meetings and subsequently elaborated for later analysis. Research participants generally had a look at the first draft of the notes, which I uploaded into the internal forum following the meetings for members who could not attend. I had originally planned to engage my research participants in the process of data analysis more deeply, following the principle of co-interpretation in the PAR approach. However, although I offered them the opportunity to look at the more detailed notes later on, this was never followed through due to time constraints and shifting priorities.

The transcriptions and field notes were later compiled and uploaded into NVivo for coding and analysis. I used an inductive coding process based on the ideas expressed by the research participant, deriving descriptive codes to group similar ideas into blocks for subsequent analysis. The codes were labels that summarised the data in a word or short phrase (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014). I chose this particular coding process because it allowed for the creation of categories and indexing across a variety of data forms that I collected throughout my research including interview transcripts, field notes and documents. A major advantage of the inductive, descriptive coding process is the openness to novel perspectives emerging within the data, allowing for more creativity in the interpretation process. By coding inductively, the influence of pre-established terms and concepts is limited, which may otherwise guide interpretation in a set direction, leaving little room for deviating from a pre-conceived repertoire of categories. Although a clear strength of inductive coding is deep engagement and reflection with the data, I was aware that becoming deeply absorbed in the data in the process of seeking patterns presented the risk of overlooking the greater context of the data. A way that I mitigated the risk of missing the context through inductive coding was to consistently refer back to the research questions and to reflect on how the data could answer the question. This helped to avoid becoming too immersed in individual expressions and interpreting passages out of context.

Once all of the data had been coded, I looked for patterns in the codes referring to observations of interactions that I made as well as the intensity of themes discussed by each research participant, which enabled me to draw conclusions about how my research participants related to activism, what determined their approach to sex work and (non-)involvement in the BesD and how their statements related to their (non-)mobilisation in the form of planning and carrying out initiatives. In the next chapter, I will show how the themes emerging most prominently from the codes reflected individual schemes of interpretation

regarding the current challenges for sex workers in Germany and how these were constructed as frames that motivated and justified collective action. Before closing this chapter, I will provide an overview of the field in which I did research, including the way access and consent were obtained from research participants and where the research was conducted.

3.6 Pilot fieldwork

Prior to conceptualising my research questions and goals, I undertook a short pilot fieldwork trip at a BesD member meeting in October 2016. The purpose of this trip was to pay particular attention to the priorities of the BesD at the time for developing the research questions and also in order to gauge how to negotiate the dual role of researcher and activist. I had been to a member meeting before in 2015 as a new member, but at the second meeting, I introduced my research intentions and was thereby able to slip into the role of the researcher to see how I could accustom myself to studying a group of people with whom I had thus far been interacting in a non-research context. Pilot fieldwork was also a way to practice techniques of observation and taking field notes, to get a sense of my research style and how to begin to grasp the relations and interactions between my research participants. Conducting research following the methodology that I designed involved constructing the field in which research took place, which meant identifying the types of situations and activities that constituted fieldwork (Watson, 2011). As a researcher, I was simultaneously the instrument of research and the assessor of my methods (Madden, 2010). Therefore, pilot fieldwork was an important step in the process of preparing my role as a participatory researcher experimenting with different methods of discovering connections or divergences between actors' words and actions.

The meeting lasted for two days with twenty active members and myself. During this time, I discussed my research intentions with them and made suggestions for possible ways of involving the BesD in my project. The main points of discussion were the changing legal context and how the BesD planned to respond in the coming months, re-designing the Association's public image, and reaching out to a greater diversity of sex workers. One work group that took place was about inclusion of migrant sex workers, during which participants reflected on the member demographics in the Association and the challenges of reaching out

to sex workers whose backgrounds and motivations deviated from the profiles of Association members. One theme that arose and would later become a running thread throughout the research was the question of interest representation. Participants in the work group discussed how difficult it was to reach out and relate to migrant and more precariously working sex workers due to the privileged, highly political image that they perceived themselves to emit as activist sex workers. In this way, the topic of collective identity was introduced and emphasised as a factor for connecting with non-member sex workers. One participant stated at one point during the work group, "We must offer them a culture," referring to non-member sex workers who were more difficult to reach. The idea that there was a kind of group culture that could be cultivated and shared with potential members encouraged me to delve more deeply into the question of what processes held Association members together, how participation was mobilised among new members and how sex workers' interests were represented through collective action planning. Based on the feedback I received from different members about my research intentions and the Association's priorities expressed through the main discussion topics, I began to develop the focus of researching representation through collectivisation and mobilisation. In this way, the concerns and interests of the research participants were considered in an early stage of the research process.

3.7 Research spaces

Within the activist community, there are several different groups, including loose networks of activists, who all fight for sex worker rights. To remain focussed and precise, I looked at the practice of representation and collective identity of one organisation rather than of an entire movement. In this vein, the main field in which research took place was the BesD's spaces of activity. These included both physical as well as digital spaces, as will be described in this section. Each type of space posed different challenges and enabled different types of observation and interaction between research participants. Digital spaces did not allow for the observation of the full range of interaction between participants, including gestures, facial expressions, pauses of reflection between input offered by participants and were therefore much more filtered, resulting in more polished versions of the ideas expressed by participants.

Digital spaces included the online discussion forum, the BesD website and video conferencing spaces. The online discussion forum was the main platform for exchange between BesD members, as they used this to report their activism to the rest of the Association. The Association website was the space in which the BesD presented itself to the public through official position statements and long-term goal descriptions. There was also a space for members to submit blog contributions about anything on their minds regarding sex work or sex work activism. This provided a valuable resource for discovering individual members' schemes of interpretation (see 2.5). The video conferencing spaces, such as Skype, were mainly used for interviews with individual members across Germany. This was not only an efficient way of reaching out to new members, but it also enabled us to organise interviews spontaneously from their workplaces in between clients.

Physical spaces on the other hand, left room for spontaneity and improvisation in the exchange of ideas, which allowed me to observe how research participants responded to each other immediately. This provided rich insights into how group members related to each other, which was relevant for understanding collective identity formation. The physical spaces of the interview included mainly the rooms in which the member meetings and meetings for planning initiatives took place, interview meeting spaces, and counselling centres where the information sessions took place. During the fieldwork period I attended three member meetings, where I participated in various work groups, one of them initiated by myself on the topic of outreach to new members (see 3.4.3). The in-person interviews took place in various locations, depending on where was most convenient for the interviewee, whether that was a nearby café or bar, or directly at home. Many participants felt most comfortable meeting in their homes due to the desired discretion when discussing their work. The counselling centres for sex workers were spaces in which a large part of the fieldwork took place when I observed and helped with the information sessions for sex workers. These were organised and operated by social worker allies of the BesD. The centres were generally well-known to sex workers in their respective cities or regions in Germany and were therefore chosen as an optimal space for an event that was also intended to reach out to non-member sex workers. In the next section, I present basic information about the research participants that I encountered in these physical and digital spaces of fieldwork.

3.8 Profile of research participants

The following chart shows some of the relevant characteristics of the fifty research participants, organised into five categorical descriptions that were provided to me during the interviews or revealed during other forms of interaction, such as during member meetings or in online discussions in the Association forum:

Nationality	German national	39
	Non-German national	11
	TOTAL	50
Activist status	Activist	27
	Non-activist	23
	TOTAL	50
Type of sex work	Escort	24
	BDSM	14
	Brothel	7
	Other	5
	TOTAL	50
Membership status	Member	31
	Non-member	19
	TOTAL	50
Gender	Female	47
	Male	2
	Trans	1
	TOTAL	50

Table 1: Profile of research participants

The high frequency of participants who identified as native Germans and who were activists can be attributed to my connection with the BesD as an important source for reaching out to new members as potential interviewees, as most of the new members tended to be German sex workers. The notation "overlap" indicated that although research participants identified mainly with one specific area of sex work that they communicated to me during the interview, many also worked in other areas of sex work. Many new members of the BesD whom I interviewed indicated that they worked across different areas of sex work, often to diversify their sources of income as well as their skill set within sex work. The graphic below, produced by one of the coordinators of the BesD, displays the distribution of BesD members across the different areas of sex work, as well as the proportion of sex members who were also managers and who identified as migrant, trans and/or male during the period of fieldwork (2018):

Table 2: Distribution of areas of sex work among BesD members in 2018

(Translation: Who are our members? Total members, tantra massage, BDSM/Fetish, escort,

brothel/window brothel/club/apartment, street, managers, migrant background, trans-sex workers, male)

The vast majority of participants identified as female, mirroring the gendered demographic landscape of sex work in Germany. Furthermore, most of the members, as displayed in the graph above, came from the escort, BDSM and tantric massage areas of sex work. The high proportions of sex workers in the escort and BDSM areas corresponded to the most frequent work areas of my research participants, more than half of whom were new members of the BesD.

3.9 Ethics

It is important to take consideration of the people at the centre of research as they, like the researcher, have interests and needs that may be compromised or fulfilled through the research (Banks and Manners, 2012). Therefore, a discussion of the ethics of doing research is necessary to make clear how the involvement of the researcher in the field will affect those being researched. The design of participatory research is oriented towards an ethics of contribution to the population being studied because it considers the importance of research participants' perspectives as well as their needs.

Confidentiality and anonymity are particularly important aspects to consider when doing research with sex workers (Jeffreys, 2009). Particularly groups that are socially marginalised, such as sex workers, place great value on anonymity to deter stigma. Since sex workers are seen as a generally vulnerable population by most people, including university ethics committees, particular attention was paid to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of stigmatised participants' identities. It was crucial to keep this in mind throughout the research process and to incorporate measures to protect respondents' identities from the start of the research. To mitigate the risks of data exposing the identities of the research participants, researchers can remove identifying information early on in the field notes by using pseudonyms and altering non-relevant details (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). In order to protect the identities of my research participants, the names attached to all statements made by them were anonymised early in the research process by assigning pseudonyms and refraining from reference to their location in Germany or their affiliation to any specific workplaces. In general, all statements made by BesD members and external sex workers that would be of interest for my dissertation thesis were brought up personally with the corresponding person before using the statements. Particularly when looking at the internal forum, I made sure to get permission from the forum contributors before using any opinions voiced on this platform. This was done by approaching forum members in person at a meeting, referring to a comment that they made online and asking if I may reference this.

As soon as I had announced my research intentions, I made sure to obtain explicit consent to observe specific activities for research purposes. Written consent was obtained to observe the information sessions for sex workers[8], as these were events that took place outside of the Association in the allied counselling centres for sex workers. For activities that took place within Association structures, such as member meetings and intermittent planning meetings for upcoming activities, it was agreed that verbal consent would be most efficient. I took notes for my field diary and sometimes also as part of official minutes for the participating members to refer to later, and if there was anything that I wanted to quote or analyse specifically for my research I would approach members individually for permission to quote expressions or ideas made during these meetings that were later relevant as evidence for an interactional pattern that I had identified. With the exception of one interviewee who requested a formal

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[8] See later section „Methods" for a description of the information sessions.

written consent form signed by both of us prior to the interview, the rest of the interviewees agreed to verbal consent, as they were disinclined to sign anything with their birth names in order to maintain anonymity as research participants. Verbal consent was also sought to quote member's statements in the online discussion forum, if I had come across a post that was relevant to my research questions. From the start of the research, I realised that the participatory approach to research posed a challenge to the standard consent process that suits the interview method of data collection best, as a series of temporally limited interactions with research participants. As I was frequently in the field for long periods of time that often transitioned into social situations with research participants that were excluded from research-related participant-observation, it was crucial that I remained conscious of the boundaries of research and non-research situations throughout the time spent in the field without constantly having to announce the start and finish of my observational mode as a researcher (Braithwaite, et al, 2007). This might have made the process uncomfortable for my research participants, which is why the most non-intrusive method of setting clear boundaries for research and non-research situations was to obtain consent separately for specific situations that I knew I wanted to investigate more closely or interactions that I wanted to quote later in the thesis.

When interacting with sex workers outside of the BesD, verbal consent was obtained for any statements they made that I intended to include in my dissertation. Obtaining written consent was too formal of a process for them, given that the situations in which we interacted were informally structured. Participants were consistently informed of the motivation of the BesD to reach out to more sex workers, and that as part of this outreach, I was supporting the Association as a member-researcher to get a sense of non-member sex workers' views of activism and more generally on the meaning of collectivization for them. I also informed them that the views gathered would be used to compose a report for the BesD on member recruitment as well as a more in-depth thesis on sex work in Germany.

As discussed earlier (see 3.4.1), the research participants were self-selected in the sense that they chose to participate if they identified as sex workers and if they did not, then I would respect their non-identification rather than imposing a label or category upon them that may have been legally accurate but not corresponding to their self-understanding. In general, some key principles paving the ethical foundation of the research were mutual respect, equality and inclusion, democratic participation, active learning, making a difference, collective action and

personal integrity (Banks and Manners, 2012). In the context of sex work research, respect also meant demonstrating support for the cause of sex worker rights and the promotion of these as human rights. This was clearly embedded into the research process from the very start by taking into consideration the thematic priorities of the BesD during the pilot fieldwork phase described earlier.

Another crucial aspect of research ethics that I reflected upon and addressed as I interacted with my research participants was the influence of social background and experiences on the balance of power between us. Being aware of power relations between the researcher and the community members is crucial for upholding an ethically sound research process. The researcher exercises a form of externally-derived power upon entering the field, by representing universities or other institutions with social influence, and generally claims authority in writing up and publishing findings from the community. However, community members are in control of what they choose to reveal and what information to withhold from the researcher (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). In this way, power must be seen as a two-way process of negotiation (Dillon, 2014). Power should not be viewed as an inherently oppressive dynamic, as it can also take the form of a constructive force for organising human relations, perceived as a management of possibilities and a question of government (Foucault, 1975). Following the principles of feminist PAR, I engaged in a co-constructive process of exchanging knowledge with my participants and of negotiating possibilities for holding the interview with regards to location, time and focus (Dewey, S. and Heineman, 2013). This approach helped to distribute power between myself and participants as I moved away from the role of interrogator to merely extract knowledge and instead provided signals throughout the interview that they could in turn ask me questions and that I could relate to their experiences. Showing that I could relate to them was a particularly crucial way of evening any perceived power advantages at the start of interviews, as my initial introduction as a researcher and member of a formal activist organisation evoked the impression of greater knowledge or experience among some research participants that made them insecure about their insights or more hesitant to be open. Once I opened up to them first, they were more able to recognise their own power in our interaction as they shared their knowledge with me.

While traditional guidelines for research ethics emphasize "doing no harm," to the community and individual participants, the PAR approach comes from a different angle that places importance on "doing good" or giving back to the community being studied (Brydon-Miller,

2008). Echoing positions taken in the ESRC's most recent research programme on knowledge co-production (2016), the PAR approach takes as its starting point the needs of the community and encourages research that directly addresses specific challenges. Research is undertaken with rather than on people and research is framed less as an extractive process, and instead as an interactional process between researcher and research participants (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). Moreover, the social world is not static and will certainly continue to change as the research project goes on (Campbell and Vanderhoven, 2016). An action research approach is well-suited to accommodate fluctuations in the social environment. The methodology of investigative co-construction paved the way for an ethical research approach in that the researcher's role is not only an observatory, but also a contributory one throughout the fieldwork, ensuring that the researcher's presence may also benefit the community.

As I conducted my research, I provided an open space through interviews for new activists and through focus group discussions for more experienced activists to reflect on their relationship with activism. This encouraged them to think of more effective ways to work together or to reach out and become more involved in the fight for sex worker rights. I particularly sought out new members of the BesD to find out what had moved them to join the Association and throughout the interviews with them, I motivated them to think about what they wanted out of membership in the BesD and how they could contribute to the group. This process supported the BesD in integrating new members into their activities, which was something that the Association had been struggling with due to lack of time and capacity. After speaking with new members within the context of the study, I observed that a number of participants gradually became more vocal in the BesD, either by contributing their views and suggestions in the internal forum, taking on specific roles in the Association or by starting their own initiatives. Garnering the insights of non-members, who remained outside of the BesD even after the interviews, was also a core way that my research contributed to the movement in that the voices of sex workers not partaking in activist structures were brought closer to those activist sex workers at the forefront of campaigns. This was crucial to diversifying the positioning of sex worker rights and for making the platform for sex worker rights more inclusive. At the end of the research phase, it was agreed that I would summarise the key findings in a report for the Association to take into account for future outreach initiatives to non-member sex workers or for ways to encourage participation among new members.

Summary

Based on the methodological principles in PAR and feminist standpoint, I have developed the methodology of investigative co-construction, which enabled me not only to gain insight into the practice of sex worker activism, but also paved the way for an inclusive, contributory approach to the sex worker community. By highlighting the positionality of being an insider-outsider doing the research, investigative co-construction allowed for me to both examine as well as actively shape the process of representation that I sought to grasp in this thesis. Using this methodology, the research supported the goal of the BesD to raise the voices of sex workers and to draw attention to their agency and especially to the different realities in sex work. As I have shown in this chapter, this methodology was carried out with the tools of interviewing, organinsing focus groups and participant-observation. These methods allowed me to investigate processes of action over an extended period in order to understand how representation was constructed in sex worker activism and and also to contribute to the process of representation. In the chapters that follow, I will elaborate on the findings derived based on the approach of investigative co-construction, showing how representation unfolds through processes of framing, collective identity and mobilisation for collective action.

Chapter 4: Background

Sex work and sex worker rights in Germany

Sex work is embedded within and influenced by many different contexts in society and recognising this is part of achieving a nuanced understanding of the role of sex work and the experiences of sex workers. There are a variety of areas of sex work in Germany that also provide a relevant context for understanding not only how sex workers work, but also how they relate to each other and to the legal situation. In this chapter, I provide a background overview of the different aspects of sex work and sex worker rights activism in Germany that will locate the actors and events analysed in this thesis within their social world.

I begin by discussing the social context of sex work in Germany, where sex work is legalised and accepted as a form work, yet still pervaded by social stigma. A detailed discussion of the legal context will focus on the provisions of the Prostitution Act (2002) and the Prostitute Protection Act (2018) and the impact that these have had on sex workers since their implementation. I then provide an overview of the economic culture and recent economic trends in sex work in Germany to show in what ways and under which conditions transactions are organised. Following this, I turn to a discussion of stigma as a pervasive factor affecting the agency of sex workers and then give a brief introduction to the different areas of sex work in which my research participants were involved.

In the second to last section, I discuss the differentiation between self-determination and coercion within the sex worker activism discourse that leads into the question of representation among sex workers through activism. Finally, a discussion of the history, activist network and recent activities in sex worker activism in Germany will provide the reader with an understanding of the main actors and events.

4.1 Social context: migration, stigmatisation and digitalisation

> *"The draft bill of the new Prostitute Protection Act stigmatises sex workers and not only limits their agency, it robs us of the little power that we do have available to us as stigmatised subjects. Considering that most sex workers are*

migrants, a large proportion of sex workers are being silenced as their strength and agency are being denied and in this way they are devocalised…"

-(translated) Speech given by a sex worker rights activist at the opening of the Sex Work Congress 2014

The social context of sex work refers to factors and characteristics of the social environment in which sex work takes place that are relevant to understanding the actions of sex worker rights activists that will be analysed in this thesis. In the above excerpt of the speech, two key social factors affecting sex work and sex worker rights activism are addressed. These are the social stigma and the migrant participation in sex work in Germany. During the speech, the link is made between stigma and the ability of sex workers to raise their voices, as well as the connection between the social stigma and the demographics of sex work. Migration and stigma are two key aspects of sex work related to the social that I will elaborate on, as well as a third factor not mentioned in the speech, digitalisation, that also has a significant impact on the way sex work and sex worker activism is practised.

Sex work is still a highly stigmatised social activity and the social stigma of doing sex work impacts sex workers' agency and how they relate to outsiders (Sanders, 2005; Scambler, 2007; Benoit et al, 2017; Bowen, 2018). Stigma also impacts the course of activism, including the priorities that activists set in their activist agenda and their level of participation in initiatives, as will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Stigma is a process that refers to the rejection of certain members of society due to certain strongly discrediting attributes that deviate from the norm (Goffman, 1963). Stigma functions as a mechanism for social control, as a way of maintaining conformity, as the act of stigmatising implies an exercise of power in which the more powerful person is discrediting a less powerful, abnormal person (Solanke, 2017). For centuries, sex workers have been the target of social stigma, often being viewed as a necessary evil, as victims or as morally challenged figures disturbing the social order (O'Connell Davidson, 2014; Gira Grant, 2014). Although sex work is part of almost every society around the world, it continues to be one of the most stigmatised professions, albeit not recognised in most countries as a profession. In the German context, however, sex work is recognised as a profession, yet the level of stigma faced by sex workers still remains high (Macioti, 2014). Sex workers have been documented to construct double lives for themselves in order to avoid being stigmatised and the negative consequences resulting from the stigma, as many sex

workers are not open about their sex work to those in their social networks (Schuster, 2003). As will be discussed in the analysis of the research findings, stigma was a factor that impacted the way sex workers approached their work, considered their future in sex work, how they responded to the law and the level of their participation in sex worker rights activism.

The second relevant factor to consider for grasping the argument to be made in this thesis is migration. A high number of sex workers in Germany have a migrant background. However, as the demographics of my research participants showed (see 3.8), not many of these migrants were physically present in sex worker rights activism. Following the expansion of the European Union in the early years of the twenty-first century, the number of mostly women migrating to Germany to pursue sex work has steadily increased (Czarnecki et al, 2014). Although many of the migrant sex workers in Germany come from Eastern European countries, many also come from non-EU countries (König, 2017)[9]. Most of these women speak limited German as they are either able to use their English skills to navigate through their work and private lives in Germany, or they only plan to stay short-term to earn enough money to bring back to their home countries. Migrants face many hurdles as a result of their limited language skills and are often unable to integrate fully or properly into German society, often leading them to work informally or even illegally (Hussein-Kantorowcz, 2014). This frequently puts them at risk of deportation and makes them wary of seeking assistance from government officials or law enforcement authorities in times of crisis. The high level of migrant participation in sex work and the correspondingly high level of precarity experienced by them has implications for the priorities of sex worker activists and the question of representation, as will be elaborated in this thesis.

Finally, the growing digital landscape of sex work has influenced not only the distribution of the spaces of sex work in Germany and how sex workers market themselves, but also how they communicate with each other, and how they gather information and acquire knowledge about sex work and the context of their work. Marketing for sex work in Germany has shifted significantly from print to digital form and as a result, the sex market has expanded and diversified, undergoing three transformative processes as clients and sex workers connect through portals, new kinds of services that complement sex work are rising, and the sex

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[9] This is a commercial sex portal for workers in the north of Germany that compiled statistics about portal users in 2016 and made these available to the BesD. The statistics show a large proportion of users originating from non-EU countries.

worker rights movement uses the internet as a medium of communication (Döring, 2014). It has been hypothesised that the internet has encouraged an increase in the labour supply, as those who might previously have been wary of connecting with the "milieu" can now gather information safely and independently online and also market themselves online without ever having to come into contact with third parties (Döring, 2014). Moreover, the anonymity and discretion provided by the internet has caused commercial sex to grow as well as diversify, resulting in a higher proportion of sex workers across different areas with different social backgrounds, often working in isolation (Jones, 2015; Sanders, Connelly, King, 2016). There is a myriad of online portals for commercial sex in Germany, on which sex workers advertise their services and connect with clients. Some of these portals, as was discussed in the methods chapter (3), were used to find interviewees. Many of these portals were also affected by the changing legal context, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 Legal context: German laws addressing sex work

In 2002, the Prostitution Act (ProstG) was passed, stipulating that sex work was no longer "morally threatening," which set the basis for accepting sex work as a legitimate form of work. There are two important clauses in the Prostitution Act, the first making it possible for sex workers to be employed in venues and work under employment contracts, thereby paving the way for access to social protection. The second clause made it possible for sex workers to appeal disagreements in business transactions with clients in the German court system. Although there has, since then, only been one case of a sex worker taking a client to court, this measure was an important confirmation of the legitimacy of sex work as a source of income (Kölnische Rundschau, 16.04.2013). A third change that was brought about along with the introduction of the Prostitution Act was the amendment of Paragraph 181 of the German Criminal Code, which penalises third party involvement in sex workers' involvement in sex work. Previously, the clause stated that all third parties living off of the avails of prostitution would be charged with pimping and coercion, but since 2002, this has been changed to specify economic exploitation as a crime rather than simply receiving a portion of sex workers' earnings. This effectively decriminalised brothel-keeping and the operation of related sex and erotic businesses, which was a necessary step to making the first clause of the Prostitution Act regarding employment possible. Through these changes, the Prostitution Act accorded new rights to sex workers and managers in the sex industry in Germany. However, since its

implementation in 2002, the Prostitution Act has been criticised for not being effective in bringing about progressive changes to the situations of sex workers in Germany. Critics mainly harp on the claim that the number of trafficking cases has not decreased since the Act took effect, citing this as key evidence for its failure (Kavemann and Steffan, 2013). Scholars and sex worker rights activists, however, have explained that the law was meant to empower prostitutes and to protect them from social and legal discrimination, rather than as a legal tool to combat trafficking (Laskowski, 2002). It has also been pointed out that most sex workers have remained self-employed rather than opting for employment contracts, meaning that most of them still cannot access the same level of social protection as employees in other areas of work in Germany. Moreover, the ProstG provides no advantage for non-EU nationals migrating to Germany to do sex work because they cannot easily get a permit to enter a standard employment relationship. This leads to a schism between legal and illegal sex workers, as many non-EU migrants simply work illegally (Laskowski, 2002).

In response to the widespread criticism of the Prostitution Act, the German government was pressured to introduce further measures to regulate the sex industry that would bring about changes in the way sex work was organised and pursued. This led to the passage of the Prostitute Protection Act (PPA) in 2017, which took effect in 2018, the year of my fieldwork. The introduction of this new Act therefore served as a significant contextual background for my research. Although sex work in Germany has been legal since 1929, the Prostitute Protection Act is the first attempt by the government to regulate the industry. The Act includes four major changes, the first being an official registration requirement for all sex workers providing sexual services in the direct presence of clients[10]. The registration requirement is contingent upon attending a health counselling session at a local public health agency, which is the second major change brought about through the new Act, as before, sex workers always had access to free and anonymous health counselling. As the health counselling under the new Act would be connected with registration, however, there was no longer a way to guarantee the confidentiality of sex workers' personal information being detached from the session. As will be discussed in the findings, this and other procedures related to the registration obligation became points of contention for sex worker rights activists, who argued that the new Act was a violation of sex workers' privacy and data security. The new Act also

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[10] The specific wording of the clause excludes a number of service providers such as striptease dancers, porn actors and webcam models, who nevertheless may identify as sex workers.

made the use of condoms obligatory during service provision, thereby penalising clients for going against this clause, and also enforced a series of licensing requirements for commercial sex businesses. While all of the clauses in the PPA are viewed critically by sex worker rights activists in Germany, the criticisms that will be focussed on specifically in this thesis and that provoked the activism that I observed were against the registration requirement and health counselling obligation. In the final section, I discuss the economic context of sex work and how the PPA influenced this, particularly through the new licensing requirements for brothels.

4.3 Economic context: workplace closures and service prices

The economic context of sex work refers to the structures in which transactions are carried out in sex work and under what financial expectations sex workers operate in Germany. As a result of the licensing requirements for businesses discussed above, many small businesses in sex work have been forced to close due to the inability to comply, leaving the market to be dominated by large "mega brothels"[11] (Tagesspiegel, 11.02.2018; Radio Lippe, 05.06.2019). Some owners of small studios have also chosen to close due to an unwillingness to inspect sex workers' registration cards out of protest against the PPA (de Riviere, 2018). Therefore, the PPA has been criticised by activists for benefiting big businesses to the detriment of small ones, which has implications for the types of workplaces available to sex workers in the future. Sex workers who are not registered will no longer be able to work in venues and must either work independently or in illegally-operating venues. The reduction in the diversity of workplaces and the subsequent monopoly of working conditions that this entails has been heavily contested by activists as a blow to the self-determination of sex workers and their mobility between different areas of sex work (Dona Carmen, 2018; de Riviere, 2018).

Sex work is still mainly based on cash transactions, which is a symbol of the discretion and privacy crucial to those involved in this exchange. Since sex workers' earnings are mostly in cash, this frequently evokes scepticism from the authorities, particularly from tax officials, who in the past have frequently audited sex workers under the presumption of evasion. This has resulted in a deeply conditioned mutual distrust between sex workers and tax authorities in Germany, which has affected the way that sex workers have responded to the new registration requirement. Upon registration, sex workers' personal information is sent

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[11] The requirements stipulate several infrastructural changes that are quite expensive and inconvenient for small businesses to implement, but that bigger venues are nevertheless able to integrate.

automatically to the tax authorities, who then compare their records with all new registration notifications. This is expected to result in a spate of audits very soon, which has been a cause for concern for many sex workers in Germany. Due to unconventional bookkeeping and the general lack of documentation of client bookings, it is difficult for sex workers to provide proof of income in ways that the authorities expect in order to accurately quote a level of taxation, in which case the authorities follow a policy of overestimation. Many sex workers fear being overestimated in their earnings and falling into debt, causing them to try to avoid the authorities as much as possible. Therefore, being forced to engage with authorities regularly in light of the PPA has stirred unease among many sex workers.

Within the past decade, service prices have decreased steadily within the industry as well. Particularly on one popular platform for commercial sex, sex workers have reported a decline in service prices over the years, as reported by research participants during interviews. This has not only affected sex workers' average yearly income from sex work, it has also intensified stereotypes within the sex industry about the demographics within sex work and the connection between sex workers' social background and the level of their service prices. Generally, service prices have tended to be higher in areas of sex work such as escorting, BDSM, and tantra massage, and lower in brothels, in street work or in more casual, call-girl-style escorting. The varying income levels reflect the way the whorearchy is imagined and perpetuated among sex workers, and consequently in the way that they relate to each other (Gira Grant, 2014). The declining income levels in sex work ironically echo the precarity in the rest of the working world that many sex workers seek to escape by entering sex work. Another process that exacerbates and produces precarity in sex work is stigmatisation. In the next section, I look at stigma as a further contextual factor that shapes sex workers' relationship with society, providing the background for showing how stigma influenced participation in the BesD, as I will argue in Chapter Eight.

4.4 Stigma

As discussed earlier (Section on social context), stigma is one of the most frequent aspects of sex work discussed by sex workers when talking about their work (Alexander, 1998; Schuster, 2003; Sanders, 2005; Gira Grant, 2014; Macioti, 2014). Moreover, it is an example of a factor or a condition that is arguably dealt with and estimated differently by different sex workers, making it a prime example of a factor influencing collective action and mobilisation that can

be analysed as both structural as well as agency-induced. The fear of stigma may may make sex workers more vulnerable to precarious circumstances, such as lack of social protection or exploitative working conditions, when sex workers are reluctant to approach authorities that may be able to assist them. Sex workers without health insurance for example, may be unwilling to approach health insurance companies to register for insurance out of fear of discrimination or being outed as sex workers.

Research on sex work has frequently found that strategies undertaken by sex workers to avoid social stigma, such as leading double lives in order to conceal their sex working identity, often limit their agency and push them into isolation (Schuster, 2003). Stigma limits agency in the sense that sex workers who are open about their source of income risk being discredited by other members of society on whom they may depend for social mobility, professional advancement or emotional support. Most sex workers perceive this risk as too high to take and as a result, choose to conceal their occupation from those not involved in sex work or the industry. Isolation and the pressure of maintaining a double life as mechanisms to avoid stigma increases the risks of sex work by making sex workers more susceptible to blackmail, violence and suboptimal working conditions (Sanders, 2005). Furthermore, the co-stigmatisation of sex workers' relatives and family members is a concern that was often brought up during interviews as a factor influencing the level and type of participation in activism that will be analysed in-depth in Chapter Eight. The phenomena stigma and co-stigmatisation, and how different sex workers deal with these in significantly diverging ways, is a strong example of how the influence of social stigma on collective action, participation and mobilisation in the sex worker rights movement varies according to the way it is weighted or to what degree it is internalised. Stigma is a common theme that arises in sex work research and that has been theorised and discussed extensively in the academic literature on sex work so far, including the literature on the sex worker righs movement (Doezema, 1998; Gall, 2010; Weitzer, 2017). The stigma of doing sex work makes it difficult for sex workers to integrate into the system and to demand equal treatment to other forms of work, particularly provisions in labour law available to benefit workers. In the next section, I provide an overview of the different areas within sex work in which my research participants were involved, in order to contextualise the specific perspectives and interests based on which sex workers engaged in processes of representation through collectivisation, as will be discussed in the empirical chapters.

4.5 Areas of sex work

Sex work is comprised of a variety of different services, corresponding to different areas and working arrangements within the sex industry. This diversity was reflected in the varying backgrounds of my research participants, which I will contextualise by briefly describing the main characteristics of the areas of sex work in which they were involved. Understanding these different areas of sex work will provide a clearer understanding of how sex workers work, the skills they require and how the different spaces of sex work give rise to different needs, priorities and occupational identities. One of the goals of sex worker rights activists in Germany, and particularly the BesD, is to unite sex workers from all different areas, as expressed in the collectivisation frame introduced in Chapter 4. Before grasping the similarities between sex workers, it is first useful to understand their differences. As most of my respondents worked in the areas of escorting, BDSM and erotic massage, I will specifically describe the arrangements and type of service in these areas.

4.5.1 Escort

The form of sex work known as escorting is not bound to a specific type of location, but generally takes place either as an in-call in the escort service provider's home or as an out-call in the client's home or in a hotel. In this area of sex work, service providers accompany their clients to meals and/or cultural events, often followed by sexual entertainment. Escorts are generally expected to possess physical as well as verbal seduction skills, as well as being able to assimilate and hold conversations on various topics in different social situations. The level of emotional labour involved in escorting has been found to be very high, as escorts often spend several hours with their clients or accompany them on holiday (de Riviere, 2018). Escorts in Germany work independently on an appointment-basis, either through an agency or through their own websites on which they arrange their own marketing and booking. In both arrangements, they rarely meet other escorts, however. There are several internet platforms for commercial sex in Germany, on which escorts create profiles and advertise their services. One of the largest platforms is designed as a social media website, on which clients also create profiles and must become members of the website in order to interact with and book escorts. There is also a forum for the escorts to interact with each other and to share

work advice and experiences. Such additions to commercial sex platforms have been initiated to mitigate the high level of isolation frequently reported by sex workers operating independently. Due to self-employed working arrangements, most escorts work alone and lack consistent exchange with other sex workers. As most escorts are self-employed, they are also responsible for their own tax declarations and experience the same level of access to social protections as self-employed people in Germany.

4.5.2 BDSM

The second area of sex work that was common among my research participants was BDSM, which stands for bondage/domination/sado-masochism. This form of sex work is highly diverse in the type of service provision, as it is closely dependent on the client's and service provider's imagination and fantasies. The time with clients is referred to as a "session" and services are often characterised by the experimentation with power dynamics between the client and the service provider. Often the service provider takes on a dominant role whereby the client willingly submits to treatments evoking pain, pleasure or a mixture of both. Communication and also more complex skills are also required of the sex worker, depending on the type of fantasy or fetish the client would like to experience. The variety of material accessories used in BDSM service provision is also relatively high, making a spontaneous entry into this area of sex work relatively challenging compared to other types of sex work. Although most pro-dommes (service providers who play the role of dominatrix) don't engage in sex, their public image is still commonly associated with prostitution and some commercial BDSM practitioners are even stigmatised within the recreational BDSM community for accepting money for sessions (Levey and Pinksy, 2015). Workers in this area of sex work often work in studios, but also independently by in or outcall appointments, similar to escorts. Due to the variety of roles and services within BDSM, workers tend to have unique niches and marketing styles, yet are united by their specialisation with human sexual preferences on the extreme end of the spectrum. Whether they work in studios or independently, BDSM workers are also self-employed and subject to the new registration requirement under the PPA. This presented a controversy for many workers because they saw themselves unjustly thrown into a pot with full-service sex workers, with whom many BDSM workers did not identify.

4.5.3 Erotic massage

Five of my research participants also worked in the erotic massage area of sex work. In this type of sex work, the workers engage with clients through sensual full-body massages that may or may not finish with sexual intercourse. In Germany, there is a distinction between erotic massage parlours and brothels, the latter explicitly including sexual intercourse as part of the service offers. However, under the PPA, erotic masseuses, like BDSM workers, are categorically merged with full-service sex workers for the registration requirement. Erotic masseuses often work in parlours in Germany, but independent service providers may also include erotic massage as part of their service offer when they take clients. As in the other two areas of sex work discussed previously, physical exertion as well as communication skills are both required for masseuses to work successfully, as clients may request special treatments that may be more complex to fulfil or completely outside of the masseuses boundaries, both of which must be communicated clearly. As the material needs for performing work in this area are relatively low, erotic massage is a relatively unchallenging area to enter for people new to sex work. However, for the variation of erotic massage known as tantra massage, the expectations of skill and technique are quite high for practitioners, making it nearly impossible to offer this form of erotic massage without a training certification from an established studio. For this reason, many tantric masseuses tend to view themselves as distinct from most other sex workers and reacted particularly sensitively at being classified as "prostitutes" for registration under the PPA (Association of Tantric Masseuses, 2017). While it is possible to be employed at an erotic massage parlour, as in a brothel, most masseuses work on a self-employed basis and like other sex workers, are responsible for reporting their earnings to the authorities self-sufficiently. This is often a challenge for many workers coming from outside of Germany and new to the system.

4.5.4 Other areas of sex work

Other research participants worked in areas such as striptease, in brothels or from private flats. Those working from home are similar to escorts doing in-calls, but in Germany they are generally referred to distinctly from escorts as "appointment ladies" (Termindamen) working in "Appointment flats" (Terminwohnungen). Often, one apartment building may contain several appointment flats and some workers may share a flat to share the cost of rent. Since the PPA included new regulations for brothels, which were defined as two or more service providers working together, many appointment ladies were concerned that they would no

longer be able to work together legally without complying to the expensive new licensing requirements. Brothel workers were immediately subject to registration from the first day of implementation. One of the new rules is that managers are required to inspect sex worker ID cards, as non-registered workers discovered in a brothel could result in the venue being closed by authorities. Both brothel workers and appointment ladies were often migrants who came to Germany for a short period to earn money to take back to their home countries. By having to register, many were forced to out themselves to the state, which posed a risk for them as the data from registration could easily be shared with authorities in their home countries (for double taxation policies), where sex work was often illegal.

One area of sex work that was also represented in my respondent pool, but was not subject to registration was striptease, which takes place in clubs and is also quite popular among migrants. Striptease dancers in Germany entertain clients through erotic movement on stage and in private booths. The barriers to this area of sex work are relatively low in terms of the material accessories needed to perform the work, but a relatively high amount of physical stamina is required for long shifts at night, making it less attractive for older sex workers. Although the physical strain of working is high, stripping also involves a high amount of emotional labour, as dancers are expected to engage intensely with several different clients during one shift. This often involves quickly gauging the character, preferences and spending potential of the client and making use of this knowledge in a way that will enable the dancer to appeal to the client and yield income for the dancer. Since this form of sex work is limited to the visual arousal of sexual fantasies rather than involving sexual acts, workers are officially exempt from registration under the PPA.

The differences and similarities between the areas of sex work show on what basis the whorearchy exists and persists and also how sex workers relate to each other. The diversity of areas in sex work is often overlooked from the outside. In the mainstream imagination, images of full-service, street-based sex work continue to persist. However, as the overview of the different areas shows, there is significant variation within sex work that shapes the way service providers do sex work. Therefore, paying attention to the variety of services and types of sex workers sheds light on the different approaches, experiences and client relations within sex work that in turn form sex workers' priorities, needs and identification as sex workers. These differences will become more apparent through the analysis of respondents' words in the interviews, focus groups and meetings for planning collective action. In the next section, I will

focus on the topic of working arrangements in sex work, specifically discussing the differentiation between self-determination and coercion and the implications of this duality for sex worker activism.

4.6 Working arrangements: Implications of self-determination or coercion

Linked to the question of the morality of sex work that continues to pervade mainstream discourses of sex work is the question of self-determination or agency in sex work. Critics of sex work and allies of sex workers continue to debate the extent of agency possible in sex work and the level of coercion that takes place. Sex workers who are also activists find themselves constantly having to make statements about trafficking cases, to explain their positionality in sex work and ultimately are urged to agree that their privilege is exceptional and that they are a lucky minority within an industry of destitute victims of coercion or within a mostly under-privileged mass with limited agency. Therefore, addressing the topic of self-determined and coerced working arrangements is relevant to understanding which mainstream discourses sex worker rights activists are confronted with and that they must respond to alongside their own thematic priorities for changing the narrative surrounding sex work and achieving material changes in the industry.

When poor working conditions are discussed in mainstream discourses about sex work, such as in the media, the focus is usually on cases of coercion and human trafficking (Spiegel Online, 2016; Deutsche Welle, 2018). What they are referring to are extreme cases in which people are smuggled from their home countries against their will and forced to perform sexual labour without any compensation. The victims at the centre of this narrative are almost always migrant women who are reported to be working on the street under the control of pimps or in brothels under the management of organised criminals. A great deal of research on the sex industry over the last two decades has deconstructed this narrative by showing that not all migrant women in the sex industry are victims of trafficking and that their situations are much more complex (Agustin, 2007; Weitzer, 2007; Mai, 2009; Verhoeven, 2016). Most recently, the German National Coordination Circle for Research on Human Trafficking (German acronym: KOK) has released a report about procedures of identifying trafficking victims carried out by authorities in the German Ministry of Migrant and Refugee Affairs. The main findings were that the way that migrants communicate about the circumstances of their journeys to Germany varied greatly among the counselling centres interviewed that were called upon to

assist identified victims and that often, migrants were unaware of their rights and how to exercise them (Mitwalli, 2016). This shows that the concept of trafficking is difficult to homogenise because it is understood differently among those considered by authorities to be victims and that confounding factors, such as lack of knowledge about the rights and the legal situation in Germany regarding sex work make migrants hesitant to speak openly about their experiences to authorities. As a result, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the situations of migrants coming to Germany to do sex work if many do not speak for themselves and cannot confirm having gone through the type of experience depicted in mainstream trafficking discourses.

Still, the image of coercion remains powerful in outsiders' perceptions of sex work and continues to influence policymaking and the course of sex worker activism. While sex worker rights groups in Germany have pursued visions of normalising the sex industry and expanding professionalization opportunities for sex workers, they are still constantly faced with accusations of disregarding or glossing over the phenomenon of coercion or even receiving support from trafficking rings. One activist remarked during a workshop that I observed during fieldwork, "Why is it that we (sex worker rights group) are constantly asked to make a statement about cases of coercion and inhumane working conditions in our branch of work? Does anyone ever ask representatives of the meat-packing industry[12] to make statements about slavery-like working conditions?" This remark shows how exasperated some activists have become about constantly having to mitigate negative stereotypes about their work and to justify the case for sex worker rights as if this were merely a radical demand made by a minority of privileged workers. This remark also raises the question of representation, which is at the core of this thesis, regarding the way priorities are voiced in the sex industry, by whom and on behalf of whom.

The distinction between self-determined and coerced sex workers has become more amplified as sex worker rights movements grow and establish themselves against the victim narrative that has historically denied their agency. More privileged sex workers in Germany tend to participate in sex worker activism and are initially inclined to assert their agency in the face of

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[12] This specific example was raised because reports in the media have recently been increasing about exploitative working conditions for migrants in Germany's meat-packing industry. (https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/fleischindustrie-zwei-schichten-arbeiten-nur-eine-bezahlt.766.de.html?dram:article_id=351326) See also Wagner and Hassel, 2015: "Labor Migration and the German Meat Processing Industry: Fundamental Freedoms and the Influx of Cheap Labor"

negative stereotypes with which they are confronted through political engagement. However, sex worker rights activists have criticised the insistent differentiation between "free" and "trafficked" sex workers that is made in some circles within the movement, arguing that this division actually serves to confirm anti-trafficking approaches devised by carceral feminists (Mac and Smith, 2018). The argument is that when self-determined sex workers fervently emphasise their freedom of choice in doing sex work while agreeing that there are indeed others in the industry who are not as free, they are distancing themselves from these "others" and leaving them behind in the fight for sex worker rights. Instead, the focus of activism should not be to empower sex workers by championing the narrative of free choice as a reality in sex work, but rather to reiterate the work aspects of sex work that unite all sex workers within a broader paradigm of work in a capitalist system (Mac and Smith, 2018). In other words, by strengthening the discourse of sex work as work, sex workers can solidarise more effectively with each other as well as with other types of marginalised workers.

Nevertheless, the proportion of self-determined sex workers and coerced victims of trafficking is still the subject of much debate in Germany. There are no reliable figures regarding the number of erotic and sexual service providers in Germany. This has in large part to do with the social stigma that still repels sex workers from coming out or even identifying as sex workers. Moreover, because workers tend to be quite transient throughout the industry, it is difficult to capture the number of service providers over a long period of time. Even the volume of trafficking cases is challenging to grasp, as these must first be reported by the victims in order to be classified and recorded as trafficking cases. The German Federal Police releases a yearly report summarising crime statistics for the previous year that is available for download on their website (Bundeskriminalamt, 2017). Within the section on trafficking, statistics are available for trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, which are frequently cited by sex worker activists in Germany when asked by journalists or other outsiders to make a statement regarding trafficking into the sex industry. The uncertainty regarding the number of sex workers in the industry, and especially regarding the numbers of trafficking victims in the industry means that there are only estimates circulating as to the proportion of self-determined workers in comparison to those coerced into the industry. The level of migrant participation is also estimated to be significantly higher than the level of native German participation in the sex industry (St. Pauli Protokoll, 2008; Santos-Hövener and Unger, 2012). Depending on which perspective is consulted, the estimates regarding migrant participation

may be higher or lower; those sources stemming from groups disapproving of sex work are more likely to estimate the migrant population to be much higher than that of German sex workers, whereas groups with rights-based perspectives offer more even estimates (Schwarzer, 2013; Czarnecki et al, 2014). The debate about the proportion of native to migrant sex workers or coerced versus self-determined sex workers, or generally about the number of sex workers overall in Germany is implicitly about the search for the representative sex worker. The idea of a representative sex worker seems to be connected to the notion of representation as being mainly about numbers and therefore a representative sex worker being someone who mirrors the profile of the numerical majority of sex workers. However, does it make sense to think of representation in terms of figures in view of the difficulties in grasping a reliable count that can be cited in the long-run as well? Furthermore, even if a representative sex worker could be identified, how would this change the fight for sex worker rights? Given the diversity of work areas described in the previous section, I argue in this thesis that it makes more sense to look at representation as a dynamic process and a construction of interests and priorities involving all sides, rather than as an act in which one group of representatives voices the claims and interests of a static majority. In the final part of this chapter, I give a background of the actors who take on representative roles in sex worker activism, which will prepare the reader to understand my analysis of the relationship between sex workers and sex worker activists in Germany.

4.7 Sex worker activism in Germany

4.7.1 History of the sex worker rights movement in Germany

The sex worker rights movement in Germany has a relatively recent, but lively history, beginning in the 1980s as a collaboration between sex workers and feminist allies. The first groups in the movement were self-help organisations such as Hydra, Huren wehren sich gemeinsam (Whores defends themselves together) and Rotstift, whose mission was to bring people together who were socially marginalised in different ways to support each other (Heying, 2018). Throughout the 1990s, counselling centres for sex workers sprouted across Germany, initiated by sex workers together with women who sympathised with their cause. Feminists from different areas of work, including public health, law, education, social work

and psychology sympathised with the cause for sex worker rights in the German context and paved the way for the movement as it is today.

The movement for sex worker rights in Germany is closely intertwined with the founding of various social work organizations and counselling centres for sex workers over the last thirty-five years. These counselling centres formed the backbone of the sex worker rights movement in Germany. Inspired by the prostitute's strike in Lyon in 1975, the first autonomous organization for prostitutes was founded in 1980 under the name "Hydra" by a group of female sex workers and their allies. The founders were supported by other women's rights groups at the time, that were motivated to combat the whore stigma and to contest sex workers' lack of rights in the face of social double-standards for women (hydra-berlin.de). The women who founded Hydra were also motivated by the determination to counter the rising culture of competition that they perceived to accompany the advancement of the capitalist work mode in Germany, by fostering solidarity among sex workers (Hydra, 1980). Since 1985, Hydra has been receiving continuous state funding, with which it was able to open a counselling centre in Berlin with six social workers. Through various activities designed for sex workers who volunteered and frequented the centre such as language courses, a monthly newspaper writing team, and public outreach work, Hydra worked to strengthen solidarity among the sex working community in Berlin. Today, Hydra is still active and well-known in the sex working community throughout Germany, regularly hosting talks and discussions related to sex worker rights that are open to the public. Most recently, the counselling centre has also opened its own café and project space for sex workers to use for activism-related events, meet-ups or just to go to meet other sex workers.

In 1985, Hydra organized the first National Prostitutes Congress, an assembly of social workers, researchers and sex workers who got together to discuss current issues in sex work and served as a networking opportunity within the sex worker rights movement. From 1999 to 2013 the Congress took place once or twice a year and beginning in 2014, the organization of the Congress was taken over by the Association for Erotic and Sexual Service Providers (German acronym: BesD). The third such Congress was organised last year during the period of fieldwork for this thesis. As this was a major event hosted by the BesD, I was welcome to participate in the lengthy planning process several months before, which I took as an opportunity to both offer my own energy and resources to the fight for sex worker rights, as well as an example of mobilisation for collective action to study in the fieldwork.

4.7.2 The Whores' Congress: individual efforts, collective results

In the autumn of 2018, the Whores' Congress took place in Berlin as the first of its kind. Although there had previously been several Whores' Congresses in Germany over the past thirty years prior to this one, they were generally much smaller and specifically focussed on discussing the political context of sex work in Germany and strategizing the fight for more liberal legal conditions (Heying, 2018). The Whores' Congress was modelled after the Sex Work Congress that had taken place twice within the preceding four years, in that workshops were organised around popular topics related to sex work and speakers were invited to share their expertise working with sex workers. There was very little focus on sex work itself and low participation from sex workers. The organisers of the Whores' Congress 2018 strived to change this. What was different about the most recent Congress then, was that the focus was much less political, the workshops were themed around skills and knowledge relevant to the labour process of sex work and sex worker participation was higher than at any of the Congresses in previous years. There was also a sex worker-only day during which participants were invited to propose their own ideas for short workshops organised spontaneously. Another aspect that made the Whores' Congress 2018 unique was that it was planned largely without the organisational support of allies, save for a panel discussion about the PPA, which was organised by a researcher ally, who also helped to secure a space for a portion of the Congress. Although the bulk of the funding for the Congress came from allies, unlike in previous years, their input into the planning of the Congress was minimal. The Congress was planned by sex workers, for sex workers with the goal of increasing solidarity and creating a space for sex workers to network. A dedicated handful of BesD members planned the Congress over the course of five months, during which I observed and supported the planning activities as part of my fieldwork and finally took part in the Congress myself. Through the discussions, negotiations and decision-making involved in making the Congress happen as well as through the interactions between attendees at the Congress itself, I observed the way that the group identity shared among the members planning the Congress and between the participants during the event continually fuelled the planning process and served as a basis for commitment to the initiative.

4.7.3 BesD

Shortly before discussions about the drafting of the Prostitute Protection Act (PPA) began, the BesD was founded in 2013 as the first sex worker rights group comprised entirely of active and former sex workers. The Association considers the main issue in the social and legal situation of sex work to be the continuing stigma and discrimination of sex workers, and that the mainstream view of prostitution continues to be moulded by images of coercion and criminality. The BesD sees its mission to be the distribution of a "realistic" image of sex work in Germany today, whereby choice rather than coercion is more usual in sex workers' experiences (berufsverband-sexarbeit.de). The anchoring of these views into frames justifying collective action will be the subject of Chapter Five, in which I analyse the construction and diffusion of sex worker activism frames.

Over the past three years, more than 200 sex workers have joined the BesD, of which about 30 are consistently active. Since the passage of the PPA, membership has risen steadily, as reported in the membership coordinator's presentation at the last member's meeting during the fieldwork period. Three core members comprise the Association board, which holds crucial decision-making power over the finances, positioning and priorities taken by the BesD. The board is kept in check by a series of thematic advisors who lead ongoing initiatives or projects, such as research collaboration, public health collaboration, migrant inclusion, media collaboration and international networking. Members meet in-person twice a year altogether during the official member meetings and in separate work groups according to how members prefer to channel their activism. All members are encouraged to report regularly on their individual projects in the Association's online forum, which is the central hub of communication and exchange for the BesD. This is where new members introduce themselves as well and begin to get to know the Association by reading through the different threads and contributing posts themselves. Some members, particularly those who are not or minimally out about their sex work, participate exclusively in the forum as a form of activism by offering knowledge, sharing their experiences and morally supporting other members who report about their public activism. Offline, BesD members organise events for sex workers to meet and also network with allies, such as the Whore's Congress mentioned earlier. During the period of fieldwork, the BesD also revived regular sex worker meet-ups in different cities across Germany to offer informal opportunities for sex workers to solidarise. Alongside organising events and meet-ups, BesD members have frequently appeared in the German

media on talk shows, televised debates, in news reports on the sex industry and have given interviews about their work.

Since its founding, the BesD has acted primarily as a political lobbying group, building ties with constitutional lawyers who guided them through the process of filing a lawsuit against the state for passing the Prostitute Protection Act[13]. This was the Association's first reaction as soon as the new Act was passed. A handful of the core members consulted with legal advisors regarding which specific clauses to target in the complaint. Eventually, it was agreed that sex workers would have the best chance if they protested the Act as a violation of three different freedoms guaranteed under the German Constitution. First, they could argue that the registration requirement violated the freedom of occupational choice as well as the freedom of personal development by imposing a barrier to entering sex work. Furthermore, the Act could be contested as a violation of the privacy of the home, as police were given the right to search commercial sex venues at any time on the grounds of mere suspicion of illegal (unregistered) sex work. Activists contested this new surveillance right because many sex workers worked from home, meaning that if ill-meaning neighbours filed complaints to authorities, then police would be able to enter sex workers' homes without search warrants. During the period of fieldwork, the constitutional complaint was rejected by the Supreme Court, meaning that further review was turned down by the judges and the complaint could not go on to become a formal lawsuit. This was taken as a major blow to the movement and immediately criticised as a symptom of the current anti-sex work climate in Germany. BesD and autonomous activists have criticised the court's decision to turn down the complaint as a display of contempt for sex work and disrespect towards sex workers. Nevertheless, this was the first time in German history that sex workers had attempted to fight for their rights by taking their case to the Supreme Court.

Summary

This chapter has provided the context in which sex worker activism in Germany takes place and in which the research was conducted. Social stigma, high migrant participation and increasing digitalisation are the main factors characterising the social context of sex work in Germany. The Prostitution Act (2002) and the Prostitute Protection Act (2018) together

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[13] The complaint was turned down in late 2018.

comprise the legal context of sex work, the former paving the way for a liberalised, rights-based approach to integrating sex work into German society, while the latter imposes regulations on sex workers and venue managers, including a registration requirement for all service providers. From an economic perspective, sex work continues to be a primarily cash-oriented business, reflecting the importance of discretion and privacy for both sides of the transaction, but also causing the authorities' scepticism of sex work to persist. Also relevant within the economic context of sex work is the change in working arrangements that the PPA is causing through the more stringent brothel regulations imposed on venues, causing small venues to close and paving the way for a monopoly of large, corporate-style venues.

Social stigma was discussed as a process that exacerbates precarity and also influences participation in the movement, as sex workers fear being exposed by standing up for labour rights. Although neither exploitative working arrangements nor a history of trafficking were a reality for any of my research participants, the existence of this reality was acknowledged by all of them, albeit highly contested as one that should characterise the industry. The debate within and outside of sex worker activism regarding how much solidarity and attention should be granted the trafficking narrative raises the question of representation, specifically which sex workers speak for others with which experience and with which authority.

The different working arrangements and corresponding spaces in which sex work takes place are often accompanied by varying levels of autonomy and conditions within the industry. The different workspaces also reflect the implicit hierarchy among sex workers and the divergent approaches and relationships with sex work that provide a foundation for understanding collective identity formation and mobilisation, and how representation emerges through these processes. Finally, the movement for sex worker rights has a recent, but active history propelled by feminist allies from other areas of work that created strong roots from which the activism today continues to grow. The main association in focus in this thesis, the BesD, has grown out of the history of this movement and has become a major contact point for the media, policymakers and the public on the topic of sex work in Germany. In the chapters that follow, I elaborate on the findings derived from my study of long-term sex worker activists in the BesD, new members of the BesD and sex workers outside of the Association in the social, legal, economic and historical contexts described in this chapter, using the approach of investigative co-construction developed in Chapter

Three. The findings show how representation of sex worker needs and interests unfolds through processes of framing, collective identity and mobilisation for collective action.

Chapter 5: Frame construction

Framing the case for sex worker rights

Framing has been discussed in the social movement literature as a process whereby actors construct collective interpretations of the social world (called 'frames'), including the phenomena that influence their lives and drive them to change the system. So far, framing theory has not considered the influence of those not actively engaged in the movement, yet who are subjects of the movement's cause and purpose. As a result, only the views or individual schemes of interpretation (see 2.5) of movement actors are analysed in the process of frame construction, overlooking the influence that actors outside of the movement may have on frame construction.

To address this neglect, I argue that absenting the influence of actors outside of the movement misses significant input in the process of frame construction. Instead, I propose an understanding of framing as a negotiation of schemes of interpretation and interests from individuals within as well as outside of the movement. By analysing framing as a negotiation process in which the resulting collective frames are influenced by those not actively participating in the movement organisation, the way that movement actors learn about and incorporate the interests of the people that they seek to represent becomes clear. Therefore, I argue that the process of representation is embedded within the process of frame construction.

In the first part, I introduce the four main collective frames that I identified through my research and provide examples of instances during fieldwork. These include:

- the 'normalisation frame' (Sex work is work and should be treated as a normal occupation equal to other forms of work.)
- the 'stigma frame' (The main problem with sex work is the social stigma and the most effective way to improve the situation of sex workers is by breaking down the stigma.)
- the 'collectivisation frame' (All sex workers can come together and fight for their rights.)
- the 'data protection frame' (The Prostitute Protection Act is a violation of sex workers' data privacy.)

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss how these frames were disseminated and how my research participants engaged in frame alignment. To do this, I present three case examples of information sessions for sex workers that I observed, during which the four frames were communicated by BesD members and received and interpreted by sex workers attending the information sessions. To conclude the chapter, I reiterate how the process of representation became evident through my analyses of frame construction and alignment.

5.1 Normalisation frame

The normalisation frame is the BesD's collective understanding of the role of sex work as essential in society and part of the service sector in the world of work, laying the foundation for their belief that sex work should be normalised, or viewed as legitimate and equal in value to other occupations. The normalisation frame is a diagnostic frame (Benford and Snow, 2000) that propounds that in order for sex workers to achieve better circumstances and be treated like other workers under the law, sex work must be normalised in society. The frame arose as a consensus among the members based on their common approach to sex work as work and the experience that, despite providing a service to society and paying taxes, they are subject to special regulations and laws that prevent them from accessing labour rights and protections guaranteed to other types of workers. Using examples from my observation of a work group discussion among BesD members in which they negotiated the re-formulation of their demands, I show how the normalisation frame was constructed.

Exhibiting a strong liberalist approach to sex worker rights (Cruz, 2013), the BesD strived to spread a normalising discourse around sex work as a strategy for fighting social stigma by further legitimising commercial sex in the mainstream public perception. A key strategy that was used to construct this frame was to actively locate sex work in labour policymaking debates by showing how many existing regulations for other types of workers could also apply to and benefit sex workers. At a members' meeting, the drafting of new political demands contained examples of placing sex work in labour policy debates. Many of the demands were about extending various social protections to sex workers and lobbying for sex work to be treated like other freelance professions under the law and that commercial sex businesses be regulated just like any other businesses. The social protection that the BesD demanded for sex

workers included health insurance, unemployment insurance, occupational hazard insurance and pension. The demand arose from the observation that since many sex workers are self-employed, they must pay for health insurance themselves, which is relatively expensive in Germany for self-employed people and difficult to afford for many sex workers who work precariously and live from hand to mouth. In order to justify lower health insurance rates for sex workers, BesD members framed this demand as an issue relevant to the broader population of self-employed people in Germany. The argument underlying the frame was that by making health insurance more affordable for self-employed people in general, sex workers would also benefit from this measure. At the same, this framing strategy had the effect of aligning sex work with other types of work in terms of the needs and regulations required to make it decent.

Addressing this issue presented an example of prognostic framing with the goal of normalising sex work by demanding ways that the same standards and regulations apply to sex workers as other types of workers. In the following excerpt from the field notes that I took during the work group for re-drafting the BesD position statements, the participants discuss how to phrase the demand for improved access to social protection for sex workers:

> *Position statement: Social protection contributions from sex workers should be as affordable as for other workers.*

> 'We do not want it to sound like we are asking for an extra benefit for sex workers through this demand for lower social protection rates,' Saskia remarked.

> 'We are in favour of lower social protection rates for all self-employed people, including sex workers,' Maria clarified. 'In our statement we should write that we demand lower rates for all solo-self-employed workers and easier access to health insurance.'

> *(Field notes, April 2018, work group for reformulating position statements)*

This exchange between Saskia and Maria shows how the formulation of the position statement was negotiated in the discursive context of normalising sex work. Saskia's initial

concern that the position statement might actually only enhance the marginalisation of sex workers as a particularly vulnerable group in need of special conditions was quickly contested by Mara, who emphasised the phrase "all self-employed people" to locate sex workers within a broader group of workers. In this way, similarities between sex workers and other self-employed people were stressed through Maria's clarification. This particular exchange between Maria and Saskia was selected because it shows how members of the BesD attempted to locate sex work and the discourse on sex worker rights as part of the broader category of self-employed workers in Germany. This is a strategy for normalisation because the goal is to put sex workers on par with other types of workers regarding their needs and interests, so that the focus shifts from the sexual labour aspect of sex work to the conditions accompanying the work that affect how sex workers live off of their work, which are similar to those of non-sex workers. By showing how sex workers need social protection, health insurance and other conditions to work decently, just like other workers, the foundation is created for normalising sex work as work in the mainstream imagination.

As the discussion turned to other demands, the normalisation of sex work as a frame was reinforced through further negotiations between members about how to demand fair legal treatment without appearing to call for the exceptionalisation of sex work. As the discussion below shows, Saskia again interjected the discussion with a reminder not to oppose too many regulations that might lead to more discriminatory treatment of sex workers.

The last task for the day was to go through the "No" statements:

No to sex worker registration!

No to special licensing requirements for commercial sex businesses!

No to client criminalisation!

No to restricted zones!

No to special taxes for sex workers!

No to other special regulations for sex workers!

Saskia spoke up. 'We should be careful with how we formulate some of these...' she started. 'On the one hand we want to be seen as normal workers and have our work treated like other professions, but on the other hand we oppose many different regulations that might also apply to other jobs as well. It's like saying 'wash me, but don't get me wet.'

'We're not trying to get exceptions to all labour regulations,' Svea responded, 'but there are clearly regulations that are unique only to the sex industry that are in place for discriminatory reasons, and that needs to change.'

'It's just that we cannot insist on being normalised and at the same time demand all these exceptions...' another participant reiterated.

(Field notes, April 2018, work group for reformulating position statements)

The process of discursively contextualising sex work within *labour* policymaking allowed BesD members to reproduce the frame of sex work as work. However, as the exchange revealed, demanding too many exceptions might contradict the goal of normalisation, as this would make sex work stand apart from other types of work in the same way that current regulations specifically designed for the sex industry exacerbate the view that sex work should be handled differently from other work. This is what Saskia tried to convey through the metaphor of "washing without getting wet;" if the goal was for sex work to be normalised, then this also meant being prepared to face regulations applying to other areas of work that may not have applied to sex work before. In the excerpt above, Saskia was joined by Svea in the concern that sex workers might be depicted too exceptionally through the myriad of statements rejecting various regulations. Both argued that successful normalisation of sex work entailed abiding to standards and rules for other categories of workers as well. Svea responded in agreement with this view as well but in her response, she pointed out the other aspect of normalisation, which also meant resisting rules and standards that only applied to sex work.

The dialogue depicted above provides an example of how the normalisation frame was derived from negotiations between activists about formulating the perspective that sex work should be included in the debates about social protection reform applying to other types of work and specifically how this should be communicated to outsiders. The normalisation frame was reproduced in other situations as well in which BesD members discussed ways to change

public perceptions of sex work in legal as well as in social contexts. While the Association's demands were continually refined, altered or taken out altogether, the framing of sex work as a normal occupation underlying the discussions about the demands remained constant. The conviction that sex work should be viewed and treated equally in social value to other types of work served as the key motivation for the BesD's founding in the first place. In this sense, the normalisation frame as a guiding collective ideal of how to change the status of sex work in society was a stable construction that was reflected in different ways through the revisions of specific demands undertaken annually by the Association.

5.2 Stigma frame

The stigma frame expresses the BesD's collective belief that social stigma is the main challenge that sex workers face and that by reducing the stigma of doing sex work, most of the other difficulties faced by sex workers in their work and private lives can be alleviated. This frame is both a diagnostic as well as a prognostic frame (Benford and Snow, 2000) in that it identifies a specific problem or injustice experienced by sex workers and proposes that combatting this particular injustice will improve sex workers' lives overall. Social stigma is the injustice at the centre of the frame and its removal represents the solution put forth in the frame. One of the workshops that was given during a general meeting of the BesD was a workshop for members interested in doing public relations work and wanting advice from more experienced members for how to deal with typical questions from journalists. That the BesD found it necessary to hold a workshop for communicating with the press showed that they perceived the mainstream views of sex work that perpetuated negative stereotypes to be the main source of grievance and injustice for sex workers. In response, members participating in the workshop believed that the best solution to this was to use media performances, such as interviews with the press, to shift the image of sex work and to counter stigmatising views. This activity provided an example of diagnostic as well as prognostic framing undertaken by the BesD (Benford and Snow, 2000).

As exhibited in the excerpts below, the workshop began with a discussion of the issue to be addressed, which was how to deal with typical queries from outsiders about sex work and how problematic it was that most of the stereotypes about sex work were negative. In this way,

the negative stereotypes about sex work were framed diagnostically as perpetuating the stigma. After a consensus was reached around this diagnosis, the group moved on to discussing ways to break down these negative stereotypes that perpetuate stigma. The process of deciding the most effective ways to combat negative perceptions of sex work was an example of how the problem of stigma was then framed prognostically in that solutions to this problem were negotiated that would be applied in public relations initiatives, such as in interviews with journalists (Benford and Snow, 2000). The discussion excerpts below are from field notes taken during the workshop that recorded how participants responded to commonly asked questions from outsiders, particularly from journalists. To open the discussion, the workshop leader Ruth encouraged the other participants to call out mainstream images of sex work that they had come across.

> Everyone took turns calling out different stereotypes, from "necessary evil" to "victims" to "virus incubators." When we had collected enough stereotypes, Ruth passed round notecards and asked everyone to write down three common questions that people like to ask about sex work.
>
> *(Fieldnotes, media training workshop, September 2017)*

By encouraging the workshop participants to reflect on the different negative stereotypes about sex work that they were frequently confronted with, Ruth (the workshop leader) tried to get BesD members to acknowledge the challenges that the Association faced when communicating with outsiders about their work. This activity served to reproduce the view that the stigma surrounding sex work was the main challenge that sex workers faced and that in order to effectively counter other problems in sex work, stigmatising stereotypes first needed to be broken down. The activity proposed by Ruth was a method of producing the stigma frame because it encouraged participants to vocalise their own schema (see 2.5) as the building blocks of constructing a frame. Furthermore, as the three examples of common images of sex work showed, BesD members mainly perceived the mainstream views of sex work to be negative. This reinforced the view of pervasive social stigma as a major point of tension that sex workers were constantly confronted with. As the following excerpts show, the responses to the questions suggested by workshop participants were mostly offered by those with the most experience in public relations, who also happened to be the more senior

activists in the BesD. The reason for this was because the purpose of the workshop was to support new activists interested in media communication by providing them with advice and confident responses to common queries from journalists that would effectively gear these interviews towards the goal of changing the public image of sex work. Thus, the construction of the stigma frame was performed as a collaborative contribution of views and experiences communicating about sex work from older and newer sex worker activists in the Association. As the workshop continued, participants went on to discuss the common questions that they had written down.

Ruth picked up the first card and read the question aloud.

"How did you get into this type of work?"

"It's okay to say that you started because you needed money," Ruth reassured the group. "Just because you started for the money doesn't mean there was coercion involved. A lot of people experience a sense of freedom or relief, financially, once they can finally afford things that they couldn't before doing sex work."

(Fieldnotes, media training workshop, September 2017)

The question regarding how sex workers started to do sex work in the first place was one that the workshop participants had identified as a typical question from outsiders that implicitly contained the suspicion that sex workers suffered from past trauma that drove them into sex work or if their motivation was primarily financial, then they must be in a situation of coercion from third parties. In Ruth's response to the question, the goal was to try to break down the negative stereotype that people who join sex work purely or mainly for financial reasons are always in situations of coercion through third parties, fuelled by the stigmatising perception of sex work that workers have low levels of agency. The notion of exchanging sex for money was also a fundamental part of the stigma of doing sex work, of which the workshop participants were aware and determined to counter. By reassuring the workshop participants that being honest about the financial needs motivating sex work would not exacerbate the stigma of coercion, Ruth proposed a strategy of re-framing the financial aspect of sexual service provision as a reward for sex workers that gave them a "sense of relief" and enabled them to "afford things that they couldn't before." Disseminating this perspective of the

money-sex exchange was intended to emphasise sex workers' agency and self-determination, which BesD members saw as an effective way of countering social stigma. Re-framing financial motivation as a legitimate reason for pursuing sex work represented both a recognition that the money-sex combination was a stigmatising part of doing sex work and at the same time displayed a resistance to stigma. In this way, the stigma frame was reproduced through the process of the workshop participants addressing this particular question as an example of a stigmatising query from outsiders. Another question that was addressed during the workshop as an example of a query that held stigmatising perceptions of sex work was about the number of clients serviced by sex workers.

Ruth read aloud another commonly-asked question: *"How many clients do you see per day?"* She turned to Jordis first, who had a lot of experience speaking with journalists.

"You can emphasise, when they ask how many customers you have per day and whether you are allowed to turn down customers, that the right to sexual self-determination also applies to sex workers," Jordis stated.

(Fieldnotes, media training workshop, September 2017)

In the response suggested by Jordis, the strategy taken to break down this stereotype was to remind outsiders that there are laws guarding sexual self-determination that indeed overpower business laws regarding service contracts. The mainstream view that sex workers have little to no agency was challenged by raising awareness of the idea that sex workers determine their own sexual activity as much as any non-sex workers. In this way, stressing sex workers' self-determination was an example of how group members engaged in preparation for frame transformation, or aiming to change the public's old understanding of sex work by generating alternative images of sex work through journalistic communication (Benford and Snow, 2000). This strategy of frame transformation went hand-in-hand with the prognostic framing of stigma as the main problem for sex workers by emphasising ways to break down the stigma as the key solution for improving sex workers' lives. The determination to change the way people think about sex work as a coerced activity to a self-determined occupation was a clear expression of Jordis' and Ruth's interests, which they promoted into the agenda of the BesD as a whole. In this way, they defined their position as experienced activists with

the will and ability to vocalise the interests of sex workers. This was an example of how representation is constructed not only through the act of the BesD giving a publicised interview in which they stated the demands of sex workers, or when they communicate with policymakers in a lobbying context, but also in less formal settings, such as the workshop discussion depicted above, in which members are only amongst each other reflecting and planning their actions.

5.3 Collectivisation frame

The collectivisation frame asserts that all sex workers can come together and fight for their rights. This frame represents the core structural vision of the BesD, which is to bring together sex workers from all different areas of sex work, of all different backgrounds, income levels and motivations for doing sex work. The collectivisation frame is a prognostic frame (Benford and Snow, 2000) that takes collectivisation as a key strategy for progressing in the fight for more rights and for maintaining unity in the movements' demands. The belief underlying this frame also represents a clear resistance to the legal categorisation of sex workers that is implied in the PPA, which the BesD foresees as creating divisions between sex workers in terms of the types of services provided, German vs. migrant sex workers and coerced vs. non-coerced workers. The collectivisation frame is also a rejection of the whorearchy (Gira Grant, 2014) that continues to divide sex workers amongst each other.

I observed how the collectivisation frame was constructed through the BesD's material productions. The BesD produced flyers containing information about the Association to be distributed externally. The flyers were intended as a strategy for raising awareness of the Association's existence and for attracting new members to join the Association. Member recruitment or the mobilisation of sex workers into the movement was a key priority for the BesD in order to be able to act as a voice for sex workers in Germany and to consider as many different interests and priorities of workers in different areas of sex work as possible. The process of re-designing the flyer involved work group meetings in which the layout and content of the flyer was negotiated. The work group convened during the member meeting and after the main points were agreed upon, work group participants continued to communicate online through the Association's discussion forum to confirm and add the final

details. During fieldwork, I observed and participated in the first part of this process at the member meeting. The negotiations about the layout and content of the new flyer contained relevant insights into the way that the collectivisation frame was constructed and upheld by BesD members.

The creation of the flyer presented a good case example for tracing the emergence of this frame because it was an activity that was centred around the BesD presenting itself to potential constituents as a sex worker rights group, meaning that in the dialogue about creating the flyer, actors expressed ideas and attitudes regarding the group's purpose, concerns, self-understanding and relation with non-member sex workers. The underlying idea driving the creation of the flyer was that when sex workers collectivise, they are a stronger force standing up for their interests and making demands. The notion of collectivisation relates to representation through the concept of solidarity in the sense that solidarity among group members is fostered by collective emotion that involves workers to coming together, sympathising with and fighting for each other's interests (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2000). In this way, collectivisation provides the basis for the construction of representation because when workers come together, they are able to learn about each other's needs and priorities and understand these in a way that allows them to vocalise these for themselves and for each other. In the work group discussion about re-designing the flyer, participants were exchanging ideas about the main needs of sex workers and the long-term goals of the sex worker rights movement. By initiating such a discussion, BesD members shaped their role as representatives in relation to a larger population of sex workers with diverse interests.

Prior to the work group meeting during which the flyer re-design was discussed, I observed the expression of individual BesD members' views and perspectives regarding the old flyer and the prospect of attracting new members through an adjustment of the Association's image. These views and perspectives constituted members' schema (see 2.5). Frames are shaped by individual schema expressed during dialogue (see 2.5), which are shared and negotiated in the process of frame construction. These individual schema were observable in different spaces in which BesD members expressed their views about different aspects of sex work and reflected on activism. One such space was the internal discussion forum, in which members' posts contained members' schema that were often referred to again when they

met in-person at member meetings. Shortly before the work group for flyer re-design, Janine published a post in response to a letter of criticism that the BesD had recently received on social media from a sex worker. The sex worker claimed that the Association was not accessible to most erotic and sexual service providers and that she did not feel represented by the BesD because she perceived most of the members to be overly glorifying sex work and in this way distancing themselves from the many sex workers whom she claimed did not identify positively with the work. In her post, she revealed her thoughts on the BesD's relation to different sex workers in light of the Association's external image.

> „What I noticed during the media training workshop was that the image we transport to outsiders is very polished and almost air-brushed. There are very few hints of vulnerability or just human-ness where our colleagues (*other sex workers*) can find intersections between our and their realities...people like people who are similar to them or at least who they think have similar experiences to them."
>
> *(Discussion forum, September 2017)*

By referring to other sex workers as "our colleagues" Janine showed that she wanted to reach out and relate to them, even though her own motivation, working arrangement and earning level differed vastly from theirs. Janine's quote from the forum shows how the collectivisation frame was constructed through the discussion on group image because from her perspective, the reason that the BesD is struggling to attract a greater number and variety of sex workers is because the Association projects an image that is unrelatable for many sex workers. She uses the terms "air-brushed," and "polished" and lack of "human-ness" to bring across this point in the discussion forum. Her reflection on the way that the image that the BesD projects and the effect that this may have on sex workers outside of the Association shows that she is keen on making the BesD more accessible and appealing to different sex workers. The determination that she displays to include more and other sex workers reflects the key belief contained in the collectivisation frame that all sex workers can come together to fight for their rights.

Janine's reflection on the issue of the BesD's external image helped her to understand why many sex workers might not identify with the BesD and also strengthened her own schema

that it was possible to reach out to other sex workers and be solidary with them. This is the schema that she later brought with her to the work group for flyer re-design, contributing to the collective framing of the fight for sex worker rights, as will be evidenced in the following excerpt from the workshop on re-designing the BesD flyer.

"It should definitely be less wordy and not so political," Janine insisted. "We don't want to be so political all the time! Not all sex workers want to join a political lobbying group."

"There should be more pictures, too," another participant added. "Perhaps a photo of current members holding red umbrellas on one page of the flyer, just to show that there are people involved in the BesD and that it's not just some mysterious professional association."

"Yeah, sometimes it's hard to imagine what sorts of people are actually in this group if the only contact point is the internet," Mia remarked.

"We can also replace all of the political blurbs on the old flyer and put down more benefits of being in the BesD," Janine continued.

(*Field notes, work group for re-designing the flyer at the member's meeting September 2017*)

As shown in the analysis of Janine's quote in the discussion forum, her critique of the "polished, almost air-brushed" image that the Association emits indicated her awareness that this may repel non-member sex workers and that in order to be able to increase the member diversity, the BesD would need to appear more "human" or approachable. In the excerpt of the discussion during the work group for re-designing the flyer, she once again expressed her perspective that the BesD appeared unapproachable to other sex workers. She did this by proposing that in order to make the Association appear more approachable, the flyer should contain the "benefits of being in the BesD" rather than a series of "political blurbs." This would attract sex workers who did not explicitly want to join a political lobbying group. The excerpt from the work group discussion shows how the collectivisation frame was produced through members' input regarding the content of the new flyer because the perspective of other sex workers was taken into account in terms of what would motivate them to join the BesD. Through the flyer design process, it is clear that the BesD wanted to reach out to sex workers who were not necessarily similar to them and thereby constructing the frame that collectivisation was necessary for strengthening the fight for more rights.

The belief in collectivisation with all other sex workers despite the diversity of services was emphasised through the decision to include photos of current members in order to show the group's member diversity and also to make the Association appear more familiar und human, rather than an abstract collective of anonymous actors. Members framed the fight for sex worker rights as a movement for building more community and solidarity between different workers, as opposed to a purely political movement. The process of deciding which expressions and images on the new flyer would attract new members was also an action of motivational framing (Benford and Snow, 2000), as these were meant to encourage potential constituents to collectivise into the BesD. The decision to shift away from focussing on political positions and instead more towards the types of services that the BesD offers sex workers further demonstrates the community-oriented re-framing of the Association, away from the political lobbying image. By choosing to give attention to sex workers' needs relating directly to the labour process as opposed to abstract political needs in the new version of the flyer, the BesD showed an attempt at collectivisation with sex workers in all different work areas with varying conditions. The consensus was reached to convey a less political image of the BesD and more of an image of service provision, diversity and inclusion because these were dimensions that were perceived to be more accessible to a greater number of sex workers. Reducing the political image was an expression of solidarity because it showed that BesD members were considerate of what sex workers outside of the Association might want from a sex worker rights group and how they would feel most comfortable joining the fight for sex worker rights. BesD members could have decided to move forward with their main orientation to political lobbying, but instead they took consideration of sex workers outside of the Association who may not be so political by making efforts to appeal to their preferences for collectivisation. This awareness of varying needs and preferences within sex work according to the area of sex work and the circumstances of different sex workers was part of the way that BesD members constructed themselves as representatives for sex worker rights based on their knowledge and sensitivity of the needs of sex workers outside of the Association.

5.4 Data protection frame

The data protection frame is the BesD's collective stance towards the PPA as a violation of sex workers' privacy. This frame has a diagnostic purpose in that it identifies the PPA as an injustice and problematises the registration requirement (see 4.2) as a breach of data protection rights. The underlying need that is asserted through this frame is privacy and anonymity for sex workers to mitigate the risk of stigmatisation. The data protection frame highlights the importance of confidentiality of personal information for sex workers as a condition for social survival. In this way, the frame makes data protection a sex worker rights issue, creating an intersection between the sex worker rights movement and the data privacy movement.

By framing the new law and social stigma as injustices, the BesD has created a discourse around phenomena that impede sex worker rights. The PPA was framed as a violation of sex workers' privacy because the new registration requirement forced sex workers to out themselves to public authorities, which created records linking people's sex worker identities with their non-work identities. The lack of data security guarantees in the new law was frequently raised as a concern by activists through written materials created for distribution at events and protests. In these resources, the registration requirement was framed as a careless, stigmatising measure intended to surveil sex workers more than protect them. One example of a document created by the BesD that criticised the PPA was the sex worker mock identification card. One year before the PPA was passed, activists created and distributed fake sex worker IDs according to what they imagined the real IDs would look like when they were officialised. The mock IDs were simultaneously informational pamphlets summarising the provisions in the PPA, as well as the criticisms against these and demands made by activists as more effective solutions for improving sex work. On the back of the document was the following imprint addressing the risk of outing through the new ID:

"Registered" (stamp) You are now an officially registered whore and obligated to carry this

By suggesting that readers "have fun" with various body search measures, the imprint employs sarcasm to convey the urgency of the data protection problem caused by the PPA. By drawing attention to the order that sex workers must carry the document with them at all times and implying that this would pose a risk of outing in different spaces, such as clubs, hospitals and airports, where body searches were common, activists framed data protection as a sex worker rights issue. The framing of the PPA as a data security risk and a violation of sex workers' privacy involved the construction of a distinct interest in privacy and anonymity, based on which the BesD defined its role as a representative group within the wider sex working population, as I will show by tracing the letter drafting process in this section.

Much of the online and offline discussions between members revolved around the new obligations under the Act, in particular the registration requirement. In the online discussion forum, members expressed concern about the implications of registering as a sex worker and frequently exchanged updates about the implementation of the registration requirement from the different regions in Germany. One of the initiatives for clarifying data transfer and storage under the PPA was to draft an official request for information to the Ministry of Finance and subsequently to the regional branches of the Ministry (see Appendix 4: *Draft letter to data protection officials*). The letter requesting clarification was addressed to the financial authorities because the PPA stated that the data from sex worker registration would definitely be transferred to the tax authorities and the BesD wanted to know whether the data would be passed on to other authorities. The letter contained an explanation of the concerns that the BesD had regarding the collection of sex workers' data under the Act, followed by a long list of questions for the authorities to answer, pertaining to different aspects of data usage and transfer. An examination of the discussion resulting in the decision to draft this letter reveals the construction of the data protection frame.

Sophie: A few weeks ago I heard about a case from the counselling centre **** that the tax authorities in Bremen wrote to a woman, who was registered as a masseuse, to inform her that they had changed her job title to "prostitute." It is unclear how the authorities discovered that the woman was offering erotic and sexual services...recently I saw in the sex worker group on

Facebook that the tax authorities in Berlin are doing the same thing...changing job titles from "hostess" to "prostitute" and assigning a new tax number. I'm wondering now if the BesD should react to these cases and try to contact the authorities...I think I'll just informally call the authorities in Bremen and Berlin and inquire...please let me know what you all think and especially if you have received notice from the authorities similar to these cases.

Gina: That looks like an abuse of authority to me. The PPA has nothing to do with the tax laws and should only define people as prostitutes according to the regulations that it imposes, namely the mandatory health counselling and registration. The sex workers who submitted discrete job titles that have been renamed as "prostitutes" without their permission should complain.

Anita: That is something that has been happening before the PPA...there are a few cases of women at (name of counselling centre) who reported having been contacted by the tax authorities regarding their job titles.

Saskia: I've been contacted by them before and asked what exactly "escort service" means.

(BesD online discussion forum, June 2017)

What the exchange above shows is that the concern for data security was first expressed by one member (Sophie), who was joined by three other members in her view that data protection and data sharing between authorities was a legitimate concern for sex workers, particularly in light of the PPA. The agitation regarding the word "prostitute" revealed that BesD members consider this to be a stigmatising term and that only euphemisms or other job descriptions that were regarded as less loaded with stigma should be used by the authorities. The exchange between the four discussants above shows how one activists' perception of the tax authorities' actions towards sex workers was shared by other activists as they expanded this perception by offering their own knowledge, interpretations and experiences with explaining their job titles to the authorities. Gina agreed with Sophie that the spontaneous change in job titles by the tax authorities was problematic when she immediately diagnosed this as "an abuse of power." Her final suggestion that all affected sex workers should complain framed the occurrence in both an unjust as well as motivational way, reproducing the wider

belief that the PPA posed a breach of data security. Anita then attested to the empirical credibility of this frame by recounting reports made by other sex workers at the counselling centre where she volunteered as a peer social worker, which Saskia confirmed through her own experience in communication about her escort work with the authorities (Benford and Snow, 2000). As a consensus was built around the problem of the tax authorities changing sex workers' job titles to "prostitute," a diagnosis of the PPA as posing a threat to sex workers' anonymity and privacy was made, which fuelled the production of the frame that data protection is a sex worker rights issue.

The process of drafting the letter (see Appendix 4: *Draft letter to data protection authorities*) to demand transparency regarding data handling under the PPA also contained ways that BesD members positioned themselves as representatives within the wider sex working population in Germany by establishing a specific interest in data protection and then emphasising this interest to outsiders. In the process of putting together the letter, BesD members articulated their interests and voiced these by summarising them in a form intended for public authorities – an external audience with the power to influence the legal circumstances causing concern. In the final section, I show how the data protection frame constructed by the BesD was disseminated and how attempts were made to align this frame with those of non-member sex workers during a series of information sessions about the PPA that was organised by the BesD to reach out to non-member sex workers.

5.5 Case examples of frame dissemination and alignment: Information sessions for sex workers

In an effort to inform sex workers about the obligations and rights under the new law, the BesD organised a series of information sessions in different cities in Germany. The information sessions for sex workers were a site where the data protection frame constructed by the BesD was exported and where frame alignment was undertaken. The information sessions were selected as an example of the process of collective frame reproduction and dissemination because they were a space constructed by BesD members to come into contact with non-member sex workers for raising awareness of the group while offering knowledge on how to cope with the legal changes. Frame alignment describes the process with which a group

attempts to create a link between its collective frames and those of potential constituents through various strategies such as bridging, extension and amplification (see 2.5). Throughout the process of frame alignment, BesD members also shaped their role as representatives for sex worker rights, as will be shown in the following analyses of exchanges during the information sessions. During these sessions, variations of frame alignment, including frame bridging, extension and amplification (see 2.5) were observed as strategic processes for transmitting collective frames to individual sex workers. As the data protection frame was disseminated through the presentation about the provisions under the new law, Sophie (the main presenter at the sessions) frequently engaged in frame bridging and extension through her interaction with the session attendees. The thematic focus of the information sessions on the legal changes and the effects on sex workers as well as the launching of this initiative around the time of passage of the new law embodied the BesD's amplification of the data protection frame. This showed how urgent the BesD considered these new developments to be and how crucial they perceived knowledge about the new law to be for all sex workers, particularly regarding data protection. As exhibited in the field note excerpts from the first information session below, the data protection frame was disseminated through an exchange of questions and answers between Sophie and the sex worker attendees.

5.5.1 Information Session 1

After going over the basics of the PPA during the first part of the information session, Sophie went into the specifics of data collection and storage under the registration requirement.

> "The data from registration will definitely go to the tax authorities," Sophie stated. "They are forwarded immediately from the registration authorities," she reiterated. "The data is also given to the authorities in all cities or communes that you indicated during the registration appointment, which is why we recommend putting down states rather than specific cities where you'll be working. This is because there is not just one registration authority responsible for all sex workers in a given state," Sophie explained.
>
> *(Field notes from information session, 31.01.2018)*

As shown in the first part of the excerpt above, knowledge about data transmission was offered together with a specific recommendation for action from the BesD on how sex workers should go through the registration process in a way that minimised data disclosure. In this way, the data protection frame was extended to the session attendees through a prognostic strategy in that Sophie assumed that sex workers who planned to work in multiple cities across the country would not necessarily want their personal information distributed to a myriad of authorities due to the increased risk of outing that this would entail. As the session continued, the participants engaged more closely with the frame through the questions they posed to Sophie.

"To which tax bureau does the data get forwarded to?" asked one participant.

"To the one in your town or city of residence!" Sophie answered.

The participant widened her eyes. "That would be really bad if they did that in my case…" she said. "I live in a small town and my aunt works at the finance bureau! She also has friends working there who know my mother and I'm not outed with either of them…"

(Field notes from information session, 31.01.2018)

By reiterating how data would be transmitted after registration and emphasising how the data is spread to different authorities across the country, Sophie explicitly transported the BesD's framing of data protection as a sex worker rights issue. By showing the participant how the legal changes would influence her future as a sex worker, Sophie actively extended the frame to a potential constituent. What Sophie relayed in her presentation fit what the inquiring participant considered a likely consequence of registering as a sex worker in light of her social circumstances. In this way, the escort's reaction was an example of experiential commensurability, or how her own perception and experience of the financial authorities matched that propounded by the BesD through the data protection frame (Benford and Snow, 1988). A major part of the way that the BesD argued through the data protection frame that data collection was risky for sex workers was by taking the example of the non-outed sex worker living in a small town or city and being forced to out herself to authorities who were likely to know her and her family. The participant's predicament confirmed precisely this example that was commonly named, reinforcing the credibility of the data protection frame.

The commensurability of her experience with the predictions of data leakage contained within the data protection frame were also an example of a merging of interests between the BesD and a non-member sex worker. Both were concerned with the implications of the registration requirement and expressed an interest in avoiding the transmission of sex workers' registration data to local authorities. This comparison of interests was part of the process of how sex worker representation was constructed, in that the BesD provided a space in the form of an information session to express their own interest in data protection and to give non-member sex workers an opportunity to respond to this and voice their own concerns.

In response to the escort's concern, Sophie further enhanced the frame's credibility by offering a solution in a way that implied how seriously the Association took the anonymity and privacy of sex workers' data.

> "I think there will be a lot of cases like these as a result of the new law," Sophie said. "We recently made a complaint form on our website to collect cases of sex workers negatively affected by the new law. If you want you can report your case on the form. It will help us to write the evaluation in five years. Everything you put down is anonymous. You just need to provide an e-mail address to confirm that you're a real person, it ends up with me and as soon as I get a confirmation e-mail from you I'll delete the e-mail address."
>
> *(Field notes from January 2018)*

By emphasising that she would delete the e-mail address of all respondents on the complaint form as soon as she had saved the anonymous responses, Sophie wanted to show that the BesD took data security and confidentiality seriously. There was a clear congruency between the data protection frame and Sophie's action of reiterating data security for those filling out the complaint form because both were based on the prioritisation of data security. This was an important symbolic gesture for demonstrating the earnestness of the BesD's intent to show non-member sex workers that data protection is indeed an issue that must be taken seriously in all spaces of communication. By launching the form and encouraging sex workers to partake in its completion, the BesD constructed the role of representing sex workers' needs and

interests. Recommendations for how data could be protected were continually expressed throughout the session, particularly for those advertising online.

> "We recommend that those working online without registration (as a sex worker) encrypt all communication with their clients. There are cryptoparties organised by the Chaos Computer Club where you can learn these techniques," Sophie added.

> Steffi put up her hand. "Do you know if the authorities have the right to ask portals for the IP addresses of the users?" she asked.

> "Even if they did, there are ways to hide your IP address," Henrietta piped up.

> "I don't think there is a legal basis for doing that…yet" Sophie answered.

> *(Field notes from January 2018)*

The questions asked by the sex worker attendees regarding data security on internet platforms for advertising escort services in light of the PPA reflected the shared concern between sex worker attendees and the BesD regarding the consequences of the new law. By mentioning the Chaos Computer Club as a resource for sex workers to increase their data encryption skills, Sophie also created a link between the cause for sex worker rights and the data protection movement, of which the Chaos Computer Club was a part. In this way, the exchange of questions and answers during the information session demonstrated how the data protection frame was extended to non-member sex workers as well as bridged to relate to the goals of the data protection movement.

5.5.2 Information Session 2

At the second information session, the data protection frame was further amplified as the data protection question was the main topic of discussion and participants expressed similar framings of this issue.

Sophie moved on to talking about data transmission after registration. After she'd given her spiel, Hanna piped up again. "Now let's be honest…" she started. "This law is not about protection…it's all about money. They want to make sure we'll all registered with the finance agency and paying our taxes regularly. They want to surveil us."

(Field notes from February 2018)

In this part of discussion, Hanna expressed suspicion of the PPA that exhibited parallels to the BesD's framing of the new law as a risk for sex workers, rather than a guarantee for protection. Hanna's frame did not quite align with that of the BesD though, as she interpreted more of an agenda for financial surveillance in the new law than a data security risk. Although her suspicion could be traced back to a concern about data transmission, she did not explicitly reflect this herself and chose to focus on the implications for taxation that the registration requirement carried. As shown in the previous section, this was a specific issue addressed by the BesD that supported the frame about data protection being a sex worker rights issue. In this sense, the data protection frame could be linked to Hanna's own concerns in a process of frame extension, as the grievance vocalised through the frame was extended beyond the BesD's primary interest in data protection to accommodate the issues that Hanna vocalised regarding income taxation and social benefits. Hanna had mentioned at the beginning of the information sessions that she was most concerned with the connection between registering under the PPA and receiving social benefits. Therefore, her reaction to the new law reflected her current, personal circumstances in relation to the legal changes, which was commensurate with the way the BesD framed the new law. As in the example from the first information session, the commensurability of Hanna's own circumstance with the predictions made by the BesD through the data protection frame also exhibited a merging of interests between those of a non-member sex worker and those of the BesD. The intertwining of criticisms that took place through Hanna's response to Sophie's presentation was in this way also an example of constructing representation because the BesD's criticism of the PPA was mirrored in Hanna's reaction to the registration requirement, reinforcing the specific interest in protesting the new law as a priority to be pursued through sex worker rights activism.

5.5.3 Information Session 3

In the third information session, attendees were more vocal about their criticism of the registration obligation under the PPA, which was evoked in the presentation slides by the visual framing of the procedure as authoritative and power-skewing, as the following excerpt shows:

> Sophie moved on to the next slide about the registration appointment and explained what happened in the appointment required to receive the ID. The picture she had included was one of a bigger lamp towering over a smaller desk lamp.
>
> When Jasmin saw it she burst out laughing.
>
> One participant who had already registered took out her sex worker ID card and showed it to the rest of us. It was a foldable paper document, un-laminated.
>
> 'It's valid for two years,' Sophie said, 'so every two years you need to renew it.'
>
> 'What?!' Jasmin cried. 'Just two years?' She shook her head in disbelief.
>
> *(Field notes from December 2017)*

Jasmin's laugh when she saw the picture of the big lamp towering over the small lamp as a symbol of authority and the shaking of her head when she learned that she would have to re-register regularly as a sex worker showed that she shared the view that the registration process under the new law was a bureaucratic burden for sex workers. One of the first criticisms against the new law from the movement was that sex workers were being denied their expertise and skill abilities by being forced to undergo counselling in the registration process that was carried out by government officials who did not have a clue about working in the sex industry. The photo of the big lamp towering over the small lamp on the slide with details about the registration process was an implicit critique of the new law as a

condescending measure, revealing the way the BesD disseminated the data protection frame during the information sessions. Jasmin's reactions to the way information about sex worker registration was disseminated by Sophie showed how her own aversion to the legal changes coincided with the BesD's criticism of the new law. Similar to the exchange with Hanna in the previous section, Jasmin's reactions and interactions with the BesD regarding the new law were part of the process of representation in that Jasmin's interest in criticising the registration requirement as a non-member sex worker were mirrored in the BesD's own interest through the information sessions in framing the PPA as a detriment to sex workers' circumstances. As the session continued, Jasmin became increasingly expressive of her disapproval of the PPA.

> Jasmin expressed little bouts of outrage throughout the info session. "Yes, I get that there are probably a lot of sex workers who need this new law, who need protection, but not the residents! What do we need protection from?" Jasmin cried.

> *(Field note, from December 2017)*

Jasmin's outrage at the burden she perceived through the new law echoed the view that the BesD held of the new law as a failure to actually offer protection to sex workers, contrary to the name of the law. However, her view that the goal of protection was actually valid, but only for certain (foreign) sex workers deviated strongly from the way the BesD criticised the PPA. Since Jasmin worked in an area of sex work that had, until the passage of the new law, always been categorised differently from other types of sex work, it was a shock to her—as she also expressed during the interview—to be categorised as a prostitute. This circumstance contributed to her outrage and somewhat radical framing of the measures for protection under the PPA. The BesD's framing of the new law was an overall criticism of the idea of protection idealised by the state which was disadvantageous to all sex workers, whereas Jasmin actually perceived the law to be sensible for certain groups of sex workers. While a connection could be made between the data protection frame and Jasmin's own framing of the new law, this connection remained superficial as the underlying rationale diverged from that of the BesD. Such incongruencies between BesD frames and individual sex worker

schemas will be more closely explored using the concept of frame resonance in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter I have analysed how the four key frames that drove sex worker activism through the BesD have been constructed and disseminated. As I have shown, the frames identified were visible on the written materials published by the Association, such as a flyer for attracting new members emerging from discussions between members during work groups. Within the process of frame construction, representation was also enacted through the act of shaping interests according to BesD members' thematic priorities combined with their perception of non-member sex workers' needs. By analysing the verbal exchanges between BesD members, the way frames were constructed and reproduced became evident. Frames were in this sense both constructions and manifestations of interests.

The interest in protesting the registration requirement as a priority in sex worker rights activism was constructed through question-answer exchanges between the BesD and the attendees at the information sessions. Through the reinforcement of this interest, Sophie acted as the main member of the BesD at the information sessions defining the role of the Association as a group representing sex workers. As I have shown in this chapter, the information sessions as a site of frame construction and alignment also served as a space in which representation was constructed through the exchange and merging of interests between the BesD and non-member sex workers. Through this process, the BesD both reinforced its representative role within the sex working population in Germany and advanced the issue of data protection as a sex worker rights issue based on the input received from non-member sex workers.

After the information sessions, I was often able to interview some of the sex workers who had attended the sessions. With sex workers who attended these sessions, I was already able to observe their exposure to the BesD's collective frames and could refer to this during the interview to gauge how they partook in the frame alignment process. Through the questions I posed during the interview, I was able to gauge to what degree their own schema resonated

with the frames constructed by the BesD and based on this, to compare how this was observable during the information sessions. Although the process of frame alignment took place in each information session, it did not always result in a seamless congruency of frames between the BesD and the session participants. As exhibited by the reactions of Hanna and Jasmin in the last two information sessions, the frames transported through the BesD's dissemination of information about the PPA were acknowledged and often met with agreement, but in the remarks made by participants, it became clear that their own schema deviated at distinct points from the collective frames communicated by the BesD. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the level of frame resonance held by individual sex workers in the following chapter, to gauge how closely the BesD's collective frames, and particularly the reasoning behind these frames, were shared by different sex workers. Examining the factors affecting frame resonance will also lay the foundation for tracing the construction of a collective identity among BesD members in Chapter Seven.

Chapter 6: Frame resonance and alignment

The Political Sex Worker – Factors for Frame Resonance

The concept of frame resonance has previously been used to analyse how collective interests coincide with individual interests. In this understanding of frame resonance, the degree of resonance is an indicator of the extent to which individual schemes converge or diverge with collective frames, as a result of different sub-factors for resonance (see 2.5). In this chapter, I expand on this conceptualisation of frame resonance to show how representation is a dynamic relationship between sex workers expressing and negotiating their interests that is interwoven into the convergence and divergence of individual schema and collective frames. In this way, frame resonance is understood not only as an indicator of how individual and collective interests converge or diverge, but also as part of a process through which representation was constructed.

I argue that negotiation takes place between individual sex workers and the BesD regarding their respective interests and that it is from these processes of negotiation around frame resonance that representation unfolds. Looking at frame resonance thus means looking at the process of how interests are expressed and constructed differently, which reveals how both the identisation, or the process of constructing collective identity, is instigated (see 2.4) and how representation is performed. On the one hand, whether the frames have high or low resonance with individual sex workers constitutes the relation between frame resonance and identisation. On the other hand, the connection between frame resonance and representation can be defined as the specific ways that interests are constructed during the process of frame resonance. In this way, analysing frame resonance reveals the different ways that representation emerged through the construction and sharing of interests embedded within the process of identisation.

In what follows, I will identify and discuss the factors that contributed to frame resonance among research participants who were new members of the BesD. The collective frames identified previously (Chapter Five) will be referenced in order to analyse the degree to which these frames resonated with research participants' individual schema. The chapter is divided

into four sections. The first two sections look at factors for high frame resonance among research participants who were also members of the BesD. I introduce the processes of politicising *being* a sex worker and politicising *coming out as* a sex worker as specific expressions of frame salience in the lives of the research participants. The third section analyses low frame resonance among some research participants, showing that shared interests do not necessarily correspond with the same understanding of injustices. In the fourth section, I investigate high resonance among research participants who chose not to join the BesD and discusses why people still did not choose to participate despite high resonance. I close the chapter by summarising how representation is constructed within the process of frame resonance.

6.1 Factors for frame salience: politicising occupational identity

When respondents reflected on their work, how they communicated about their work to outsiders and on their relation to activism, it became evident that they perceived being a 'sex worker' as a role with political meaning. This section looks at interview data with individual sex workers whose schema resonated highly with collective frames, focussing on how a strong politicisation[14] of occupational identity and of coming out as a sex worker among many respondents was a facet of individual schema that shaped frame resonance. To capture the specific process through which individual schema resonated strongly with the BesD's collective frames, I use the sub-factors 'centrality' (the extent to which a frame is relevant to an individual's life situation), 'experiential commensurability' (the extent to which the injustice claimed in a frame corresponds to an individual's own experiences) and 'narrative fidelity' (the extent to which the interpretation of a particular social phenomenon contained within a frame coincides with an individual's own understanding of the phenomenon) (Benford and Snow, 2000; see Diagram 1, Chapter 2.5). I argue that the schema of politicising the occupational identity as a sex worker and of coming out enabled the frames to have salience and thus resonance in individual sex workers' lives. Furthermore, the concept of representation illuminates the link between the politicisation of occupational identity, coming

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[14] Politicisation in this thesis means communicating about coming out as a sex worker and perceiving occupational identity as a sex worker with political meaning. The sex worker identity is portrayed as a political statement.

out and frame resonance, as the interests becoming visible through participants' schema of politicisation corresponded to the BesD's interests contained in the frames.

I define having a politicised occupational identity as meaning that the respondent reflected on and talked about sex work not only as a source of income, but also as an occupation with strong political implications for the meaning of feminism, labour and commerce in a liberal society. With regards to feminism, being a sex worker means taking the stand that an important part of feminism is about empowering female sexuality and women taking control of their sexual prowess. Secondly, being a sex worker also means taking control of one's labour power and the conditions surrounding the exercise of labour power. Politicised sex workers make the point that in a capitalist work society in which everyone is forced to find sources of income to survive and earn a living, it does not make sense to define which activities count as work and which do not. Finally, sex workers operate within the logic of free market commerce, in that they respond to a demand for sexual and erotic services by supplying their ability to deliver such services. From this perspective, politicised sex workers argue that instead of being subject to moral judgments and standards, their occupation must be understood as an expression of the extent and innovation of commercialisation.

Politicising occupational identity as a sex worker served as a gateway to the centrality and narrative fidelity of the collective frames put forward by the BesD, as will be shown in the following examples of how respondents talked about their sex work. A politicised occupational identity was most frequently indicated by associating the occupational title „sex worker"[15]with the understanding of being a service provider who commercialises their sexuality. During the interview, I asked participants which term best described their work. Many initially responded with a label that indicated their specific area of work, such as escort, erotic masseuse or stripper, and also endorsed the title „sex worker" as well. Smilla, for example, stated that she identified with the term "sex worker" because it was important to her that the term "work" was implicated in the title of her occupation.

> Generally, I find that the term "work" is important because in the end it is all about work.

> *(Interview with Smilla, 17 May 2018)*

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[15] The term "sex worker" was coined by American sex worker rights activist Carol Leigh with the political intention of emphasising the work involved in commercial sex in order to locate the cause for sex worker rights within the context of the fight for labour rights (Chateauvert, 2014).

Emphasising that "it is all about work" showed that for her, the "work" aspect of providing sexual services for money was a crucial aspect to be reflected in the way she described herself. This revealed her awareness of the political significance of identifying with the term "sex worker" as an expression that distinctly insisted on the inclusion of commercial sex into the notion of work. Similarly, Stella explained her identification with the term "sex worker" because the political meaning behind this was important to her.

> Nadine: How do you feel about being called a sex worker?
>
> Stella: Absolutely, yes, I use this term. I find that this is the most appropriate term for me because it is political, I think, and I think it is important that there is a political label for this work.
>
> (Interview with Stella, 26 July 2018)

Stella's use of the term "sex worker" was clearly linked with her political consciousness of being a sex worker, as she blatantly stated that it was important to her that her occupational self-description was a "political label." The acknowledgment of the political significance of using the term "sex worker" to describe her work was later reflected in her response to how she felt about the PPA.

> Nadine: What do you think about the registration requirement in the new law?
>
> Stella: I have concerns regarding data protection because I'm really sceptical about how my data will be used and I've heard of cases of escorts who have registered and then shortly thereafter had trouble securing a visa to go the USA, for example…so mainly I'm worried about the data protection.
>
> (Interview with Stella, 26 July 2018)

Stella's perception that data security under the new law was not guaranteed demonstrated that her concerns regarding the PPA resonated with those of the BesD's PPA frame that data protection as a sex worker rights issue (see 2.5). She justified her concern by citing her belief that data from sex worker registration would influence the likelihood of receiving a visa to

travel outside of Germany, showing that she perceived the PPA to hinder her global mobility. The centrality of the frame was therefore strong for Stella in that the data security risk preferred by the frame was something that she observed to pose a real potential problem in her own life. Centrality as a sub-factor for frame salience (see Diagram 1, Chapter 2.5) thus indicated that the PPA frame resonated strongly with Stella, which in turn contained her interest in challenging and criticising the registration requirement. The criticism of the PPA as an expression of frame resonance revealed a common interest between Stella and the BesD, contributing to the basis for constructing a platform to challenge the new law in the fight for sex worker rights. In this way, the resonance of the PPA frame with Stella's own schema of the new law shaped by her politicised understanding of being a sex worker presented an instance of how representation was constructed.

Jana, a respondent who had been working as an agency escort for twelve years at the time of the interview, explained at the beginning of the interview that her motivation to join the BesD was sparked by her decision to quit her office job at a company and move to full-time escort work. Now that her work life was focussed on sex work, she had a bigger stake in the industry. During the interview, she reflected on her earlier political activism in other groups before joining the BesD, as a way of expressing her politicised identity as a sex worker.

> I used to be a member of Terre des Femmes (laughs) but I cancelled my membership at the point when I no longer agreed with their position towards prostitution. I could not stand for that anymore.

(Interview with Jana, 1 February 2018)

Terre des Femmes is a women's rights organisation in Germany known for their radical prohibitionist views regarding commercial sex. When Jana stated that she did not agree with Terre des Femmes' position "towards prostitution" she displayed an awareness of the diverging political views towards sex work and by exiting the group, she showed that she identified with an experience of sex work that did not coincide with that propagated by Terre des Femmes. While Terre des Femmes views commercial sex as inherently exploitative, degrading for all women and upholding gender inequality[16] Jana experienced the exchange of

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[16] „7 Myths about Prostitution" https://www.frauenrechte.de/unsere-arbeit/themen/frauenhandel/mythen-der-prostitution

sex for money as a relief and a source of feeling successful, as she described during the interview when asked how she felt about her work:

> Sometimes I get a date request and I'm getting ready and I think, 'ugh I'm really not in the mood, I'd rather just stay at home and do something else,' but then I go on the date anyway and just let it happen and when I come back home I'm always in a good mood. I have this feeling of success, that I made someone happy, that I earned good money, that I provided a service well.
>
> *(Interview with Jana, 1 February 2018)*

Jana's response above reveals two things about her approach to sex work. The first is that sex work, like other types of work, can feel burdensome, but can also be something that provides a feeling of accomplishment. This is conveyed through the way she describes not being in the mood sometimes before meeting a client, but taking the date request anyway and feeling good about it afterwards. Secondly, her response revealed that sex work makes her feel successful and skillful, depicted through her remark that she was able to "make someone happy, earn good money and provide a service well." For Jana, sex work is both a job with tasks that are sometimes motivating and sometimes tedious as well as a source of empowerment. Being a sex worker is both about taking control of the investment of her labour power by pursuing a source of income that suits her, as well as acknowledging her sexual prowess as a skill that enables her to be successful. Both of these approaches indicate that her self-identification and self-understanding as a sex worker are imbued with political significance for the practice of labour and feminism. The politicisation of her identity as a sex worker as a facet of her individual schema had directly influenced how she decided to orient her energies in activism by exiting Terre des Femmes and later joining the BesD. This decision showed that her understanding of feminism had changed in that she clearly did not agree that sex work was contradictory to feminism. Thus, by joining the BesD, she embraced the identity of sex worker not only as a job, but also as a political orientation. In her own experience of sex work, it was a job that fulfilled her and that she had committed to full-time in the belief that this was the most productive use of her labour power and skills, showing that she had an interest in sex work being recognised and treated as normally as other types of work. Expressing the political meaning of being a sex worker through the understanding of labour

and feminism that she conveyed through her approach to sex work was an indication of the centrality of the normalisation frame in her life, presenting a key sub-factor for the high resonance of this frame for Jana. As the contributions from Smilla, Stella and Jana have revealed, politicising being a sex worker meant reflecting on one's work not just as a provider of sexual services, but also as a subject with political significance. Viewing sex work politically meant understanding that being a sex worker meant taking the stand that sex work and feminism are not opposed to each other and that choosing to do sex work can be an expression of determining the investment of one's labour power.

Respondents with a politicised occupational identity also often exhibited a sharp consciousness of the wider sociopolitical implications of exchanging sexual services for money. This consciousness was embedded in their individual schema, harbouring an interest in addressing the political and legal treatment of sex work for an improved situation for sex workers. Svea, for example, was very invested about being open and out about her sex work, using her activism to campaign heavily for the normalisation of the job. During the interview, she reflected on the way that social stigma shaped the experience of being a sex worker in German society and when asked what the main challenge was for her in sex work, she discussed the idea of persistently challenging norms as a form of activism.

> The challenge of coming out outside of work and having to deal with that. It's not something everyone can do. Not everyone can live against society or constantly prove to society that a particular popular view is false, that the mainstream is wrong. We are confronted with the fact that sex work is surrounded by clichés…there is stigma, so in this way, we are up against a broad stream in society. It is a constant challenge to have to bear with this emotionally.

> *(Interview with Svea, 17 November 2017)*

From her perspective, the decision to be a sex worker was a decision to bear with living contrarily to social norms, which was an emotionally challenging experience because one constantly had to convince society of the acceptability of one's existence. By describing her experience as a sex worker as living "against society," Svea indicated that doing sex work was inherently a form of political protest. From Svea's experience, being a sex worker involved challenging stigmatising clichés by actively communicating with non-sex workers about sex work.

> I don't only talk with journalists, I also talk to people in my social circles. I tell people what I do, just so that there is more of a consciousness in society that it (sex work) exists…I believe that

often it is more impressionable to talk to people about sex work at a party for instance than in an interview because it's more authentic…

(Interview with Svea 17 November 2017)

Making an effort to speak with people about sex work reveals that Svea understood her identity as a sex worker to also be about showing people a less visible side of society in order to break down negative images of sex workers. She stated that it was important to her that there was a greater "consciousness in society that sex work exists," showing that she was committed to normalising and de-stigmatising sex work. Particularly her preference for speaking about sex work in non-medial settings, such as parties, that she found more "authentic" showed that it was important to her that the public understood that sex workers were just like any other people that they could meet and get to know outside of stories depicted by the media. This perspective supported the centrality of the normalisation and stigma frames in Svea's life in that she saw part of being a sex worker as a pervasive battle against mainstream, sex work-exclusive sexual norms that constituted the root of the hardships experienced by sex workers. Svea's politicised understanding of her identity as a sex worker also served as a foundation for the resonance of the collectivisation frame with her belief in the importance of coming together with other sex workers to challenge negative stereotypes about sex work.

Nadine: How did you decide to join the BesD?

Svea: It's always been clear to me that workers should unionise to achieve more rights if there is a possibility to do so. There are so many self-employed professions that do not have any kind of union structures to represent them and that has terrible consequences! So if there is an opportunity to collectivise, then workers should definitely support this, even if they don't get along on a personal level…

(Interview on 17 November 2017)

In her response above, Svea clearly indicated her support for unionisation structures and her belief that unionisation could bring benefits to workers. By adding that she perceived "terrible consequences" for many self-employed people who often did not have unions to turn to, she emphasised her belief in the importance of and commitment to supporting collectivisation among sex workers. As the collectivisation frame urges, all sex workers can come together and

fight for their rights (see 5.3). The perspective contained within the frame held narrative fidelity with Svea's own view that workers should "definitely support" collectivisation structures, which she stressed even further when she added that it did not matter if "they don't get along on a personal level." Since the frame's message coincided with Svea's own narrative that collectivisation was a crucial step towards improving the situation for sex workers, the frame exhibited high resonance with her schema regarding the potential for sex workers to fight for their rights. Overall, the centrality of the stigma, normalisation and collectivisation frames led to the high resonance of their messages for Svea. Her interest in fighting stigma and campaigning for the normalisation of sex work through collectivisation was reflected, reproduced and reinforced within these frames. Moreover, the process of the frames resonating with Svea's own schema also involved the construction of representation through the clear overlap of Svea's interests with the goals of the BesD.

As shown through the responses given by Smilla, Stella, Jana and Svea, having a political occupational identity thus meant being attuned to the influence of politics on one's work and on the implications of choosing the term „sex worker" on the social and political status of sex work. Their politicised occupational identity enabled the centrality and narrative fidelity of the normalisation, stigma, PPA and solidarity frames, showing how these frames came to resonate strongly with these respondents. The high resonance of these frames in turn revealed how the interests contained in each of the three respondents' individual schema converged with the interests of the BesD embedded within the frames. This convergence of interests drove the process of identisation and was central to the process of representation, which will be further developed in the following section investigating the politicisation of coming out among research participants.

6.2 Factors for frame salience: the politicisation of coming out

Participants who regarded their coming out or reflected on the prospect of coming out with political meaning were conscious of the broader social and political consequences of coming out, beyond the effects that this had on their personal lives. Being politically reflexive about the coming out process meant that participants considered the process as a way to make a statement that sex work is legitimate. Alternatively, they saw coming out as a type of contribution to the movement. It did not necessarily mean that they had come out completely to everyone in their social environment, but rather that the process of coming out had a political significance for them within a wider social context. When a sex worker's reflection of

coming out is imbued with political meaning, this signifies that coming out as a sex worker is about more than just being open about a source of income. Instead, coming out means making a political statement about identity and the right to embody such an identity. Seeing the process of coming out as a sex worker as political, meant using one's identity to break down stereotypes about a marginalised social group. It meant showing society that being a commercially sexualised person did not necessarily indicate coming from a socially disadvantaged or traumatised background.

Samuel, for example, talked about being conflicted when it came to coming out and how he saw it as a gradual process in which he slowly tried to relinquish control over information management regarding his involvement with sex work (Goffman, 1963).

> Ehm...I'm at the point where I actually just want to keep doing the escort job even though I just found another job I can somewhat live off of because I find it good and because it's fun and overall reasonable—I mean because I find a purpose in it for myself...and because I sort of actually want the two (jobs) to clash and things to fall apart so that I can then see what will happen next? Will I actually be fired and what is—like what will confrontation be like? And for what reason? What would be the argument for me being fired? For doing sex work?

> *(Interview with Samuel, 10 July 2018)*

For Samuel, who advertised online and had conflicting views regarding openness and coming out, the commitment to challenging stigma and increasing normalisation was a reason that he discussed for remaining in sex work. He justified the decision to remain in sex work, despite starting a new job, through his willingness to risk an outing that might result in losing his other job. The risk of outing that he chose to take was based on an inclination to provoke a confrontation between mainstream and alternative views of sex work ("What will confrontation be like?"). In this way, he showed that coming out or being outed for him was closely connected with making a statement about being a sex worker and creating an opportunity for debate about discrimination and stigma against sex workers. This demonstrated the commensurability of the stigma and normalisation frames with Samuel's experience as a sex worker.

The politicised approach to coming out or risking an outing as a sex worker paved the way towards the salience of the stigma frame in Samuel's life (see Diagram 1, Chapter 2.5) as a sub-factor explaining the high resonance of these frames for him. Through his reflection on activism later in the interview, he came to the conclusion that the reason he felt like he could

stand up for sex worker rights was because the movement was not about setting a new norm and convincing people that the world should work a certain way. Rather, it was about urging more tolerance and openness in society and for more acceptance of differences in sexuality and deviations from sexual norms. Within his reflection he expressed a schema that contained an interest in fighting stigma and normalising sex work that converged with the collective frames resonating with his views and experiences. The convergence of these interests, as revealed through the determination of frame resonance, constituted a construction of representation taking place between Samuel and the BesD. At the end of his reflection he concluded that "it's just a job," indicating his view that sex work should be normalised. In this way, the BesD's normalisation frame was particularly salient for Samuel, exhibiting congruence with his own experience of sex work.

> I'm still not really sure what exactly I want from activism, like…I want it (*sex work*) to be more accepted, but in more complex situations of sex work…like how to help sex workers with monumental drug problems, where do we start? What do they need? What do they want? Do they even want to be helped? I find it hard to prescribe a solution for this…but basically, I think activism should aim to fight for more acceptance and less of telling people how to live their lives or how something should be in the world, and more of working towards people being more ok with it (sex work) and aware of it and that…just in general that it is more accepted. It's just a job.

(Interview with Samuel, 10 July 2018)

At the time of the interview Samuel was not a member of the BesD, but had joined an informal network of sex workers in his home city that occasionally organised casual sex worker-only gatherings. What was notable in his reflection was that he initially was not sure what he wanted to do as an activist or how he wanted to contribute, but then he began to describe what activism meant for him in general and how that related to his interest in sex work activism before being able to identify a specific motivation for him to engage more in the movement. What was also significant about Samuel's response was that he expressed an interest in addressing the needs of more precarious sex workers than himself. This awareness initiated the process of defining himself as part of a group pursuing activism within the wider population of sex workers and striving to understand the interests of non-activist sex workers as well in order to define the role of sex worker activists as representatives. What was particularly striking about Samuel's case was that he initially mentioned that he had become less inclined towards political activism lately and was not sure what he wanted by being

involved in sex worker rights activism, but by the end of the interview he was able to state the goals, values and norms he was willing to challenge or fight for and subsequently became increasingly involved in activism through the BesD.

Samuel's path from the reflections expressed during the interview to his gradual engagement with the BesD following the interview was an example of how the role of representative was constructed as individual sex workers joining activism reflected on their approach, needs and motivations in sex work in relation to other sex workers not involved in activism. As the example of Samuel's entry into sex worker activism shows, the interview was a space in which research participants' schema were elicited. This revealed the unfolding of frame resonance as a measure of the congruency of interests between interviewees' schema and the frames developed by the BesD. In this way, the concept of frame resonance served as a tool for grasping the construction of representation as an interplay of interests between the group and the individual.

Participants who communicated to outsiders about sex work in a political way already held beliefs about the deeper significance of disclosing their sex worker identities for sex worker rights activism in a broader sense. During the focus group interview, Britta talked about her experiences with different types of coming out. Based on these, she had learned that the more openly she communicated about her sex work, the more likely it was to be received normally by outsiders than if she made a concerted effort to remain discrete about it.

> Britta: …I had my first coming out as bisexual when I was about 13 and since then I have also come out as being disabled, like with a mental illness and later as being polyamorous, so I've had several coming outs in my life and what I have learned from these is that the more naturally I have spoken about these subjects, the more positive the reactions were. It was only when I made a big deal out of it that the reactions were negative, like when I was like "oh um I have something to confess and it's sort of awkward."
>
> Sophie: Yes, there is probably some truth to that…
>
> Britta: I mean, I'm not trying to say that it's their (outsiders) own fault, right? But I think it's a way of influencing people's reactions.
>
> Sophie: Yes, you are setting the tone, sort of. If you wallow in self-pity and problematize something constantly it will resonate like this with others too.
>
> Britta: Yes, exactly.
>
> *(Focus Group, October 2018)*

The implicit intention of normalising sex work by communicating about sex work as casually as possible was Britta's expression of politicising her coming out. Through this strategy, her schema of supporting the effort towards normalisation resonated with the goal that the BesD also strived towards through the normalisation frame. By comparing her coming out as a sex worker to past experiences of coming out regarding other aspects of her identity, Britta revealed how central the normalisation and stigma frames were in her experience and therefore resonated with her approach to sex work. Sophie's response that coming out about sex work could be done in a way that "set the tone" then re-emphasised the way that the process of coming out could be used as a way of streaming outsiders' perceptions of sex work towards a more normalised view. In this way, the exchange between the two showed how experiences of stigma were salient for the both of them and that the urge to normalise sex work also had narrative fidelity for both of their schema on the status of sex work in society. This explains how the stigma and normalisation frames were resonant for both of them. Both participants revealed an interest in talking about sex work as openly as possible as a strategy for advancing normalisation and destigmatisation. As both Sophie and Britta were active members of the BesD, the elicitation of this interest served as a reproduction of their role as representatives for sex worker rights because as active members of the Association, they had contributed to the construction of the stigma and normalisation frames in the first place. The significance of showing the resonance of these frames with their individual schema then, is to demonstrate how the role of representative was reinforced through the reiteration of these interests.

6.3 Factors for low frame resonance

Of the thirty-six research participants interviewed, twelve were not involved in sex worker rights activism in Germany and accordingly, did not display an inclination to join any formal organisation, such as the BesD. As was revealed during the interviews, the collective frames produced by activists had low resonance with these participants. Even when frames found low resonance with participants' individual schema, there were nevertheless shared interests within the schema and frames. What made for low resonance, though, was that the view or underlying experience that shaped the participant's interest diverged from the perspective underlying the interest within the frame. In cases of low resonance, the narrative or experience from which the frames were constructed were often not commensurate with the

views of individual sex workers. For example, a research participant might share the interest that sex workers should be treated as normally under the law as other types of work, but might hold the view that sex work is a deviant, special type of occupation that should not be accepted as a 'normal' profession. In such cases, when the motivations for the interests shared by individual sex workers and the BesD did not align, we can see how representation is still constructed independently of the frame resonance level. Through the process of frame resonance, the nuances in interest construction can be revealed and analysed more precisely to understand how representation is constructed based on actors reflecting upon and negotiating interests.

The data protection frame had low resonance with five respondents in that they agreed that the PPA was harmful to sex workers, but for reasons that diverged from those of the BesD. During the interviews, they clearly stated that they saw the PPA as a threat to German sex workers' social status, but believed that the law was actually appropriate for keeping watch over migrant sex workers. The interview excerpt with Jasmin, an erotic masseuse, below shows how the data protection frame was central to her experience, yet lacked narrative fidelity, resulting in overall low salience in her life. When I asked her how she felt about the registration requirement, she expressed indignation at being categorised as a prostitute as well as a pessimistic outlook on the effects of the law on the sex industry.

> It's a total shock! There simply IS a definite difference....it's just not fair and not appropriate to be labelling someone who clearly is not a prostitute as such. I feel stigmatised and I think that others do as well because this law is making us look like an ominous group all over again…there will be more unregistered street workers who will offer services without protection for more money because they won't be able to work in the brothels and clubs without registration anymore. This law will only cause what it is trying to prevent…

> *(Interview with Jasmin, 14 December 2017)*

Jasmin expressed what a shock it was for her to be lumped together with sexual service providers under the PPA because as an erotic masseuse she saw herself as distinct from other workers who offer full service. Emphasising that she felt stigmatised as a result of the new law showed that she viewed stigmatisation as a major challenge that was only worsened by registration, resonating with one of the main criticisms made by the BesD against the new law. In this regard, the stigma frame was very salient in Jasmin's experience of sex work. However, making a distinction between herself and other sex workers showed that she perceived a

definite hierarchy among different types of sex workers (sometimes referred to as a 'whorearchy'), based on the level of intimacy with clients through different services. This was an example of low frame resonance regarding the effects of the PPA. On the one hand, her outrage with the burden that the new law caused sex workers showed that the frame was quite central in her life, but at the same time the frame's narrative fidelity was low with Jasmin because her interpretation of the new law's detriment to sex workers was based on her perceived increase in "unregistered" non-resident sex workers for whom she understood the PPA to be implemented. This view diverged significantly from that of the BesD, which framed the PPA as being unjust for all sex workers, not just German nationals.

What was revealed through the responses given during the interviews was that when frames had low resonance with participants, then this was often because the participant did not politicise their identity as a sex worker, nor did they make any political associations with coming out or reflect about coming out in a political way. This meant that even if they had come out, as in Alina's case in the next example, this had no political significance for them in terms of making a statement about the role of sex work in society or to present a face of sex work to the public. Lack of politicisation of coming out as or of being a sex worker led to low centrality of the frames in respondents' lives. These participants did not reflect upon their experience as sex workers in terms of the way social, political or legal attitudes and circumstances affected their agency, nor did they see themselves as part of a more diverse population of sex workers facing similar struggles. Low centrality meant that the frames lacked salience for participants in that the frames put forward by the BesD appeared less plausible or applicable to participants' lives, resulting in a lower degree of resonance. During the interview with Alina for example, she reflected on the social stigma of being a sex worker. As the interview excerpt below shows, she acknowledged that social stigma was an issue, but held a uniquely different view of how to handle it than many sex worker activists.

> Well on the one hand I have the ability to portray sex work in a particular way through the way I present what I do. Mmm…in my case everyone knows what I do. My parents know, my sisters know, my grandparents know. Everyone I know, knows what I do because I have nothing to hide about it. As I was growing up I was never told to think a certain way about this job, so I had to paint my own picture and experience it myself, which I am satisfied with. I explain to everyone who wants to know more about my work that it's not always what they might think.
>
> *(Interview with Alina, 19 September 2018)*

As Alina talked about how she communicated openly about sex work and insisted that this open communication about her work inevitably influenced how society viewed sex work, she showed that her understanding of social stigma was strongly based on individual experience and personal relation to sex work rather than solely on a problem caused by society. The example of Alina showed that schema are shaped by an individual's personal context and experiences, which in turn shape the interests held by the individual. What also became clear through the passage above is that although Alina had no problem being open and out about her occupation, unlike Britta and Sophie, she had no political motivation for being open and out. Instead, she said that she simply "has nothing to hide about it." The lack of politicising her coming out shaped Alina's schema regarding sex work in a way that led to low centrality of the stigma frame in her life, meaning that the stigma frame was only partly salient for her. Being out was mainly about being honest and open about the way she was. This was different than coming out as a sex worker in order to challenge mainstream views about sex work and sexual norms the way that Svea did, for example. In this sense, Alina acknowledged that stigma was a challenge faced by sex workers, but did not discuss it as a particularly major problem accompanying sex work. Instead, she perceived it to be surmountable through individual efforts. For Alina, stigma might have structural roots, but the solution started from the individual. Thus, the stigma frame was not central or commensurate with her own experience of sex work and therefore lacked salience, which explained the low resonance of this frame for Alina.

In the process of investigating the low resonance of the stigma frame for Alina, what came through was her interest in communicating about sex work as part of an effort to normalise it. This interest became particularly evident when she said in the end that she liked to explain to everyone willing to listen that sex work "is not always what they might think." This was an interest that she shared with the BesD, as expressed through the normalisation frame. This shared interest showed that despite the low resonance of the stigma frame for Alina, the inclination to advance the normalisation of sex work was something that she had in common with sex workers in the BesD. The overlap of this interest of hers with the BesD's normalisation frame constituted an example of representation, despite Alina's non-involvement in the BesD, in that the call for sex work to be normalised was a key part of the movement sex worker rights in which she had identified a stake as well.

The collective frames of the BesD also found low resonance with the workers in the window brothel venues with whom I spoke during my fieldwork. Many of the workers I approached had a migrant background and spoke limited German or English. I quickly realised that they had little to no awareness of sex worker rights groups, apart from the counselling centres that they sometimes visited, because when I showed them the red umbrella (the symbol for sex worker rights) and asked them if they recognised what this stood for, the five workers who agreed to speak with me had no associations with this symbol.

During member meetings, BesD members often speculated about non-member sex workers' interests based on what they had heard from colleagues or allied social workers. Conducting the research with the combined purpose of eliciting non-member sex workers' schema through analysing frame resonance and reaching out to non-member sex workers to raise awareness of the BesD, was a way of engaging in the construction of representation (see 3.1.3). Particularly when it came to responding to the registration requirement and drafting a position statement that would correspond to the demands of the sex working population, the BesD could only speculate how non-members reacted to the new law. Going to different venues and asking workers directly was therefore a way to find out how they responded to the new legal measures. When asked about the new registration requirement, one worker there called Bella, did not express any criticism and instead perceived a positive outcome of the new law. She was most attentive to how many colleagues had left the brothel as a result of the new law.

> "I have registered already. Many women don't register, so they leave. There are less women here now. It's good!"
>
> *(Fieldnotes, February 2018, conversation with Bella)*

As the exchange above revealed, the data protection frame had no centrality for Bella as her response to the new law was void of any acknowledgement of the potential risks for sex workers through the registration requirement, as proffered through this frame. The lack of politicisation of her occupation as a sex worker corresponded to the incommensurability of the data protection frame with Bella's experience as a sex worker, leading to the frame's overall lack of salience with her. Rather than criticising the new law as other respondents had done, she simply stated that she had registered and even made a positive remark about the effects of the new law that she had experienced in her work life. There was no trace of concern

about the implications of data transmission through the new law. Her response contained no sign of reflecting on the social and political context of doing sex work, nor on any structural circumstances influencing her work. The divergence in Bella's schema regarding the legal changes and the BesD's framing of the PPA was a finding that could be taken into account in the Association's framing of the legal situation and for the future planning of initiatives and lobbying efforts to influence policymaking. Moreover, the interests revealed through the exchange with her provided useful knowledge about non-member sex workers' priorities, that could be carried back to the BesD for the construction of their platform for an improvement of sex workers' situations. In Bella's case, a priority was client acquisition, which she perceived to become greater as a result of the new law. This priority in her daily work experience became evident again when I asked her about what the most challenging part about sex work was.

> "When I don't make enough money…When there's not enough, how do I pay rent? I have to
> pay all these things and when there's no money, I can't pay…"

> *(Fieldnotes, February 2018, conversation with Bella)*

The concern about not making enough money to be able to cover her rent and other expenses, for example, could be addressed by investigating the room rental prices in the venues and in future, starting an initiative to negotiate more manageable room rental prices for sex workers in venues. This would mitigate the risk of losing money by going to work when sex workers were not able to make enough to cover the price of their working space. Eliciting these concerns through the interview and communicating them back to the BesD during member meetings or in the online discussion forum created a way for them to be woven into the discourse that shaped the demands articulated for sex worker rights.

As shown through the examples above, the main difference in the perception and reflection on sex work between those respondents whose views and experiences of sex work resonated highly with the BesD's collective frames and those whose schema resonated less was the way that they reflected on their occupation as sex workers and on their coming out or communication about their work with outsiders. The weak congruency between individual schema and collective frames that was indicated by low frame resonance pointed to a divergence of interests between the individual respondent and the BesD. However, by reaching out to sex workers outside of the Association through the research process, interests that deviated from those of the Association were not disregarded. Although Bella's interests

per se, for example, were not in line with those of the BesD, eliciting these when speaking with her at her workplace and then making BesD members aware of sex workers' priorities and concerns in a work context such as Bella's, contributed to the process of representation. This is an example of the meaning of representation as a process of eliciting interests and presenting them for negotiation with other interests rather than as an act of merely conveying interests that are already shared (see 2.3). Representation was practiced through the interview process as the interests of individual participants were elicited through the interview and collected to construct an understanding of the needs, demands and priorities of the wider sex working population, following the methodology of investigative co-construction (see 3.1). In the final section, I show the construction of representation happening among sex workers whose schema aligned with the BesD's frames despite their decision not to engage with the Association.

6.4 Tracing frame resonance among non-member sex workers

During fieldwork I spoke with five autonomous activists who were ideologically engaged with the cause for sex worker rights and shared the collective frames proffered by the BesD, yet did not act or speak as part of the Association when practising their activism. These participants were loosely associated with other activist groups or networks that cooperated with the BesD, but themselves did not join the Association. The BesD's collective frames were generally quite salient for these respondents in that they agreed that sex work should be normalised, cited social stigma as the biggest challenge in doing sex work and were critical of data security under the PPA. They were also quite engaged in sex worker rights activism in Germany, subscribing to the view that sex workers from all different areas of sex work should recognise their similarities and collaborate for an improvement to the whole industry. Therefore, a closer investigation becomes relevant as to why, despite high frame resonance, they practised their activism autonomously. During the interviews, they revealed what made joining the BesD a less possible or attractive option for them and in what ways their interests diverged from those of the Association. Furthermore, analysing the factors contributing to high frame resonance with autonomous sex worker activists in conjunction with factors for their disinclination to join the Association sets the foundation for exploring the relation between the processes of mobilisation and representation in the following chapters.

The three respondents who identified as migrant sex workers cited language barriers as the main hindrance to joining the BesD as the main working language was German. Michaela, for example, who had been working in Germany for a little over a year when I spoke with her, had become quite involved in the activist community in that she helped to organise information sessions for migrant sex workers in English through a counselling centre and participated in protest organising and rallying. During the interview she discussed the language barrier to joining the BesD, despite the high resonance of the Association's frames with her own experience in sex work.

> It does seem pretty easily accessible. Maybe just the language barrier. Um…I feel as though if I wanted, someone would still translate for me, but it's still a barrier.

(Interview with Michaela, 27 September 2017)

The language barrier had been acknowledged during BesD meetings that I attended before, showing that the Association was aware of this factor hindering more migrant sex workers from joining. When sharing the findings of the research with the Association, I included this perspective emphatically as a way of contributing to the process of representation. During the interview I elicited Michaela's schema through questions about her experience and perception of sex worker activism and summarised this together with schema elicited from other interviewees for communication to the BesD. The schemes elicited provided useful insights to the Association for their sex worker inclusion initiatives. Thus, the elicitation and subsequent transmission of sex workers' schemes then not only served as a way to determine frame resonance, these were also part of the process of performing representation.

As shown through the example above with Michaela, representation took place as a communication of interests and perceptions of activism that were received and discussed through interviews with non-member sex workers and shared with sex worker activists in the BesD as input for enhancing the Association's appeal and relations with non-members (see 3.1). These interests and perceptions also included dimensions related to the BesD's external presentation. Unlike the other respondents who were active for sex worker rights, yet did not join the BesD, Rose did not experience a language barrier to joining the group, as her native language was German, but did express criticism of the Association based on its public statements and external image.

I find it to be a very privileged Association, obviously…I mean, it's not a problem that these are the people who happen to have the capacity and resources to run the Association, but I find that they too often speak for other sex workers without understanding their situation or that they don't even try to understand other sex workers' situations.

(Interview with Rose, 8 May 2018)

Rose clearly perceived an elitist bias in the BesD when she described it as a "very privileged Association." She did not identify with the group, finding it hypocritical to the fight for sex worker rights due to the distancing she perceived BesD members to be exercising in relation to less privileged sex workers. In her case, the collectivisation frame had low credibility for her, although she in principle agreed with the idea that all sex workers should be able to collectivise for better legal and working conditions. Her own schema that collectivisation of workers from all areas of sex work was possible and beneficial was congruent with the BesD's collectivisation frame, yet she perceived an inconsistency in the underlying perspective contained in the frame and the BesD's approach to acting upon this frame. The inconsistency that she described was mainly based on her perception that rather than including different sex workers, the Association was mainly speaking for the wider sex working population. She was clearly very affected by statements made by certain sex workers in the BesD that she described as "unreflexive" and "condescending" towards other sex workers, citing these as reasons for not wanting to join the Association. In this sense, the BesD had low credibility in her eyes, which resulted in the solidarity frame having low resonance for her overall. Although she had described herself as a privileged sex worker during the interview, she did not work in an area of sex work typical of more privileged sex workers in Germany and therefore did not identify with these "high-class" areas of sex work or with the associated practitioners.

The divergence of Rose's schema with the BesD's collectivisation frame, signifying low resonance, implied an incongruency of interests in the way that collectivisation for sex worker rights was practised. Rose's interest was focussed on the active prioritisation and encouragement of precariously-working and migrant sex workers mostly working in venues or outdoors, whereas the BesD's interests were shaped more immediately by the needs of member sex workers' in independent working arrangements. By expressing this interest as a contrast to that of the BesD, Rose constructed her position as an autonomous activist who refused to join the Association, yet who demanded greater consideration of her interests in the Association's activism. As Rose's case showed, interests may not be congruent between

individual sex workers and the BesD, despite high frame resonance. Moreover, Rose's case was an example of how, through the expression of diverging interests, non-member autonomous sex worker activists still constructed themselves as members of the sex working population that the BesD strived to represent. I communicated the views of respondents such as Rose's to the BesD during meetings throughout the fieldwork, particularly the disillusionment that she expressed in the Association's ability to understand non-member sex workers. Doing this fed into the process of representation construction, in that BesD members were pushed to reflect on their role within the sex worker community, in particular their collective identity based on privilege, and on how to more effectively include sex workers who did not participate in their activist structures. This will be examined more precisely in the following chapters (see specifically 7.3.1).

Similarly, Timo was an autonomous activist who viewed the BesD's public relations strategies critically. He did, however, join the BesD one month after the interview. However, aside from introducing himself briefly in the internal forum, he did not participate further in the Association during the period of fieldwork, preferring instead to mobilise autonomously, as he had done before joining the BesD. Like Rose, his schema regarding the potential for collectivisation among sex workers across different areas of sex work resonated with the BesD's collectivisation frame. His ardent personal resistance to the PPA was also echoed by the Association's data protection frame. In this sense, high frame resonance explained his decision to join the Association, yet as the following interview excerpt shows, he was critical of the parliamentary focus of the BesD's political strategising and preferred more grassroots organising.

> I think one of the problems is that the activism is often limited to parliamentary politics…which only leads to a dead end, I think, because as a collective we should try to develop our own politics instead of busying ourselves with the politics coming out of the Parliament the whole time, even though we do have to react to this…but this should be in the form of a collective political position from us.

> *(Interview with Timo, 17 November 2017)*

By emphasising that sex worker rights activists should not focus so much on the politics coming out of institutional structures Timo showed that the Association's approach to activism did not appeal to him. The BesD's main strategy of activism rested on using the structures available to them to call for change, as exemplified by the drafting of the

constitutional complaint against the PPA (see 4.7.3). Timo, on the contrary, was drawn to more grassroots activism that involved organising public protests and supporting community events. Although the underlying ideology of the frame resonated with him, the data protection frame lacked consistency for Timo as the actions undertaken by the BesD were inconsistent with his own schema for invoking legal change and the correspondence between the BesD's framing of the PPA and the action that they pursued in accordance with the frame he perceived as weak. Therefore, he was less inclined to collaborate with the BesD, indicating that his interests regarding strategies and practices in activism diverged from those of the BesD.

By critiquing the BesD's repertoires of collective action as being too reactive to parliamentary politics and leading to a "dead end" he clearly laid out his schema as an activist and constructed himself as part of the sex working community that the BesD strived to represent. His case was different from those of the previous respondents because he eventually joined the BesD following the interview, thereby becoming part of a sex worker group that understood and constructed themselves as representatives for sex worker rights. Despite being critical of the Association's strategies and style of activism, he had decided to become a member as a symbolic gesture of solidarity despite incongruencies in his activist political approaches and those of the BesD. As a member, albeit less active at the beginning, he had the possibility to speak in the name of the Association at events, vote on issues determining the structure and future of the BesD, propose priorities and shape the activities of the main sex worker rights group in Germany. Bringing in his own interests for sex worker activism including his own perspectives for effective activism, he initiated a combination of these with the interests and priorities of other BesD members. Put another way, by joining the Association he opened the possibility for an intertwining and negotiation of his and the BesD's interests and activism approaches. In this way, his move to become a member of the BesD was an example of how representation was practised. His membership signified the collaboration of autonomous sex worker activists and BesD activists and the infiltration of varying interests into the activist discourses within the BesD.

Summary

In tracing the process of frame resonance as a prerequisite for identisation, I have shown that representation was constructed during the interviews as well as during the exchanges

between BesD members in focus groups as they expressed their schema and revealed the interests embedded within these in response to the collective frames with which they were confronted in these settings. In this way, frame resonance has been re-conceptualised as a process within which representation also emerged as a collaborative construction between new member and non-member sex worker interests converging or diverging with those of the BesD. Regardless of whether the frames resonated strongly or weakly with respondents' schema, different sex workers' interests were elicited and communicated to the BesD for a more diverse overview of sex workers' priorities to be taken into account when campaigning for sex worker rights. Thus, while frame resonance was a process driving both representation and identisation, the construction of representation progressed independently of the resonance level, whereas identisation was more contingent upon the degree of resonance.

As I have shown in this chapter, respondents' politicisation of coming out and occupational identity were facets of individual schema underlying the resonance of the BesD's collective frames with research participants. High resonance of the frames was a result of their salience and credibility in respondents' lives and experiences of sex work, which was often enabled by respondents' politicised understanding of themselves as sex workers or coming out as sex workers. The examples of Stella, Jana, Svea, Samuel and Britta from the first sections showed that high frame resonance often explained identisation with the BesD. A high frame resonance was, however, not the sole determinant for sex workers joining the Association. Examples from three respondents who exhibited high frame resonance and were autonomously active for sex worker rights, but who were not active in the BesD, showed that language barriers as well as a divergence in interests for strategies of activism were factors that kept some sex workers from joining the Association. Thus, while high frame resonance was a crucial determinant of joining the Association, it was not a guarantee in view of other confounding factors.

In the next chapter, I will focus on respondents with whom the BesD's frames resonated strongly and who became members of the Association. Through these cases, I show how through discussions and negotiations with each other in focus groups, meetings and in work group settings, BesD members constructed and converged around specific expressions of collective identity that they embodied when mobilising for collective action. Through the construction of collective identity for the mobilisation for collective action, the role of

representative continued to be constructed and reinforced as respondents negotiated both their own interests and the interests of non-organised sex workers.

Chapter 7: Collective identity

Constructing the role of the representative for mobilisation

In social movement studies, the concept of collective identity has been used to explain the mobilisation of movement actors. Within this, the idea that a group identity is constructed in relation to the wider population of which the group is a part has been established (see 2.4). However, attention has scarcely been paid to the implications of the constructed identities on the *way* that actors organise and advance their own interests as well as those of the wider population. As a result, the specific link between the group's construction of an identity and the group's mobilisation activities remains obscure or unclarified. Therefore, the process through which a collective identity is activated as a factor for mobilisation remains to be identified.

In order to address this gap, in this chapter, I propose that the concept of representation serves as the missing link between collective identity and mobilisation. I argue that within the process of 'identisation' or constructing a collective identity for mobilising collective action, sex workers in the BesD simultaneously constructed the role of representative for themselves and the wider population of sex workers. Representation is thus re-conceptualised as the *making* of a group of representatives and the population they claim to represent. This is in contrast to the assumption that a given group of people merely speaks for a wider population with static interests. Furthermore, I argue that representation is embedded within the construction of a group identity and serves as a conceptual link between collective identity and mobilisation for collective action.

In what follows, I build on the theory of collective identity by uncovering the dimension of representation constructed within the processes of identisation that drives mobilisation. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I review the concepts that I employ to analyse the construction of representation within the process of identisation. The following three sections each analyse one specific expression of collective identity, referred to as "convergences" to emphasise the processual aspect of their development. The main convergences of collective identity emerged through the group discussions observed during fieldwork: 1) a professional, self-determined group of workers. 2) recognition of their privileged status relative to other sex workers 3) a stigmatised group in need of measures that

reduced the risk of social rejection. To close the chapter, I summarise how research participants who mobilised most actively in the BesD were brought and held together by these three convergences of collective identity.

7.1 Constructing representation within convergences of collective identity

As discussed in the previous chapter, a high frame resonance explained a number of research participants' decision to join the BesD. The collective frames served as an initial basis from which BesD members then continued to develop a group identity held them together and justified their collectivity. Coming together and remaining together based on a collective identity were the first steps preceding BesD members' collective and individual mobilisation. Between the construction of a collective identity and mobilisation, there is a process that drives actors to act collectively for a common cause. The goal of the analysis in this chapter is to identify and analyse this process in order to explicate the connection between collective identity and mobilisation. The issue of determining this connection has been addressed in studies of mobilisation theory, in which the missing element between experiencing injustice and engaging in mobilisation has been problematised (Atzeni, 2009). In a study of worker mobilisation in 1996 in Argentina, Atzeni (2009) contests the claim made in Kelly's (1998) mobilisation theory that injustice on its own suffices as a factor for mobilisation. In his findings, he reports that solidarity needs to be constructed among workers in order for a sense of injustice to be translated into mobilisation. Solidarity is the key to transforming individual injustice into collective injustice, which is what drives mobilisation (Atzeni, 2009). With regard to the role of leaders, he writes that "Leaders will not be able to activate and sustain a mobilisation without a reframing of workers' interests in collective terms" (Atzeni, 2009: 13). In this vein, I argue that it was the construction of the role of 'representative' emerging within the convergence towards a collective identity that drove BesD sex workers to mobilise for their interests, *while also integrating the interests of sex workers outside of the Association*. The "role of the representative" is an identity that was constructed by BesD members with which they justified speaking out for sex worker rights and leading initiatives to fight for improvements in the legal framework for sex workers and for more acceptance of sex work in society. This particular role emerged through the construction of specific aspects of collective identity. The role of the representative was conceived as a catalysing attachment to the

collective identities of stigmatisation, privilege and self-determination, serving as a mechanism that drove BesD members to pursue collective action together. Through this role, BesD members made sense of and activated their collective identities as a stigmatised, privileged and self-determined, professional group of workers by organising themselves to create initiatives to further the cause of sex worker rights. In this way, the role of the representative links collective identity to mobilisation.

Through the cognitive frameworks that were revealed by research participants during group communication, their interests were also verbalised and exposed to each other. In this way, the intertwining of interests that provided the basis for constructing a collective identity simultaneously became the process of defining themselves as part of a group representing sex worker rights. Interests, or the outcomes of dialectical processes of interpersonal exchange, were the building blocks for both the processes of constructing collective identity and representation (Melucci, 1996). These interests were not a given; they were shaped and altered through perceptions and interactions between actors in the process of framing before they were publicised as collective interests (Chapter Six). What is meant by the 'construction of representation' then, is *an examination of the processes that make actors take on the role of representative of a wider population and through which their interests, and those of the population they aim to represent, are shaped and subsequently advanced*. By tracing the process of identisation, I show how representation was enacted through the way that BesD members defined their role as representatives as they constructed their interests regarding sex worker activism and solidified a collective identity. The active relationships that constitute a component of ongoing collective identity (see 2.4) are conceptualised as 'relations of representation' in that *representation was developed as sex workers engaged in dialogue with each other about the meaning of sex work, activism and their status in society* (Melucci, 1996).

The BesD's collective frames were most strongly resonant with respondents whose individual schema included the politicisation of their occupational identity and the act of coming out as a sex worker (Chapter Six). Many of these respondents were members of the BesD, whose interactions are more closely examined in this chapter. When BesD members discussed sex worker activism and Association-related goals and activities during group meetings or in the focus groups organised for the research, they reproduced the frames that drew them to the Association while at the same time producing a collective understanding of who they were as a group. Having shown how frame resonance determines the likelihood of participants

identifying with the BesD and joining the Association (see 6.1), the task in the following sections is now to investigate how members constructed and sustained a collective understanding of their group membership and within this, their role as representatives for sex worker rights.

7.2 Collective identity 1: self-determined professionals

The belief that sex work should be normalised, contained in the normalisation frame (see 5.1), fuelled the collective identity around self-determination. Sex workers who believed that sex work can and should be treated like any other occupation realised that in order to be able to determine their working arrangements and navigate through society as self-determined workers, sex work must be normalised. In this regard, high resonance of the frame laid the foundation for a collective identity of self-determination, the development of which I observed in discussions related to fundraising and the implications that this had on the group's image. One of the ongoing projects of the BesD that was meant to uphold the existence of the Association was the securing of funds for initiatives. Through discussions between members about how to approach fundraising, negotiation of group identity and the defining of interests for collectivising took place. By debating how to present the BesD in fundraising applications and from which sources to apply for funding, questions arose as to how exactly the Association wanted to position itself as a sex worker rights group and particularly which aspects of their group identity they saw the need to downplay or emphasise in order to receive funding. The discussion about how the source of funding reflected the Association's group image was echoed during conversations about re-thinking fundraising strategies that took place between Sophie, Janine, Doris and Ruth. By negotiating the link between group identity, external image, and the strategy for fundraising, members also constructed themselves in the role of the representative as this process held implications for the way the cause for sex worker rights was portrayed and pursued and how the BesD related to potential constituents:

> I for one am totally sick of begging for money from foundations," Sophie declared. "We've written four applications that have all been unsuccessful… writing to foundations that fund NGO projects and non-profits just isn't working. We need to look for other ways…maybe crowdfunding should be our next move or turning to clients. There was this idea once of offering dates to clients who donated money to the BesD, like a win-a-date-offer with one of our members.
>
> *(Field notes from February 2018)*

Sophie's brainstorming of fundraising strategies that did not depend on the approval of funding bodies that generally sponsored "NGO projects and non-profits" presented an example of an impetus within the Association for finding more innovative ways of acquiring financial resources. As the applications written so far had been "unsuccessful," there was clearly a need to think of alternative ways of fundraising, but the specific alternatives that she suggested also revealed an image of self-determination that united BesD members. In particular the suggestion that clients might be a source of fundraising showed that the sex workers in the Association felt that they could appeal to their clients not only for sexual service provision, but also to support the cause for sex worker rights. The idea that clients would be supporters of sex worker activism shows that BesD members communicated with and presented themselves to their clients as workers and that clients viewed them as such as well. This notion presented a clear contrast to the stigmatising stereotype of sex workers being taken advantage of and degraded by their clients that anti-prostitution activists liked to propagate. Instead, the message accompanied by Sophie's suggestion was that clients could indeed be supportive of sex workers' political and social demands and that sex workers could appeal to clients as self-determined service providers. Therefore, pursuing the strategy of appealing to clients as potential donors to sex worker activism was not just a new way of acquiring funds, but also held the symbolic significance of sex workers being acknowledged as workers fighting for labour rights and social acceptance. Moreover, the suggestion to offer dates as an incentive for potential client donors showed that Sophie perceived a willingness among sex workers in the BesD to service clients in order to benefit the cause of sex worker rights. Members who might be willing to do that were sex workers who believed in the potential for activism to improve their working conditions as self-determined workers and who could afford to donate their time and labour capacity to the cause. In this way, Sophie's idea to approach clients as a source of funding for the BesD contributed to the construction of the collective identity of self-determination that brought and held BesD members together.

As the discussion continued, Janine developed Sophie's critique of the current fundraising strategy by elaborating on why appealing to NGOs was unlikely to be successful. In her expansion of Sophie's suggestion, Janine constructed an understanding of the BesD's collective group identity as professional service providers:

> Janine nodded. "With our image, it's hard," she said bluntly. "I mean we're called 'The
> Professional Association' and we project an image of self-determination and strength. But on

the other hand we need money. In the eyes of donors, this might seem paradoxical, almost contradictory. That might be why they're unwilling to fund the BesD. Donors like victims. The victims always get money. Like the organisations that help trafficking victims, or AIDS victims, and whatnot."

"Well, I don't want to play victim. I don't think we should have to go to that level to get money," Sophie stated firmly. "There must be another strategy, a way not to remain in the victim-lane in order to get funding…"

(Field notes February 2018)

The dialogue between Sophie and Janine about why seeking funding from human rights organisations was not an effective strategy for the BesD produced a shared understanding that they did not identify with the image of sex workers as victims. I argue that through the pursuit of alternative fundraising strategies, BesD members constructed a collective identity based on self-determination. By making a conscious decision to no longer pursue money from foundations that were known to donate to victimised groups, they rejected the victim image. The decisive shift in approaches to fund searching became clear from Sophie's declaration that she refused to "play victim" and didn't want to "remain in the victim-lane" just to increase the BesD's chances of receiving funding. Instead, she was determined to pursue fundraising strategies that reflected their self-image as self-determined, professionals, which was articulated by Janine as she perceived the Association to "project an image of self-determination and strength." Sharing this particular self-image set the foundation for a collective identity around which BesD members converged.

The process of drafting demands for sex worker rights that took place during member meetings contained another example of how BesD members converged around the identity of self-determination. During the work group for re-formulating position statements, one of the demands that was discussed was good working conditions. The issue was that the current demands called for "good" working conditions, but BesD members present in the work group saw the need to use a more precise term that reflected the subjectivity of working conditions for different areas of sex work:

'What's good in one workplace may not be appropriate for another workplace,' one participant pointed out.

'We agree that there are different types of good working conditions,' Ruth summarised. 'But how do we want to formulate this into one statement?'

There was silence as the rest of the participants thought about this. Gradually, different words were suggested to replace 'good.'

'Suitable?' one participant suggested.

'Or what about decent?' someone else suggested.

'Self-determined!' Svea called out.

The others nodded. 'We demand the right to determine our own working conditions,' Ruth drafted a formulation. She recorded the statement onto the flip chart.

(Field notes from work group at BesD member meeting, April 2018)

The excerpt above shows the process of how BesD members arrived at an agreement for how to formulate one of their key demands and within this process, how they converged around the identity of self-determination. As recorded in the field notes, there were instances of reflection among the work group participants, indicated by the silence during which they thought of alternatives to the term "good" that they perceived to express their demands regarding working conditions most effectively. The third term that was suggested by Svea was "self-determined." I interpreted the nodding among the other participants observed in response to this suggestion as an indication of approval and self-identification with this term. Ruth then immediately incorporated the notion of self-determination into the demand by writing down the statement "We demand the right to determine our own working conditions." The act of writing down the demand was a materialisation of the convergence around the collective identity of self-determination, which constituted the key idea within this demand. At the same time, the role of the representative emerged within this convergence through the way that BesD members connected the collective identity of self-determination with a concrete demand for action. The consensus around the term "self-determined" formed the basis for the action of re-formulating a core demand for sex worker rights. Ruth's question "How do we want to formulate this into one statement?" in which she used the word "we" to galvanize a collective effort, instigated the other work group participants to shape the way the BesD demanded an improvement to working conditions for sex workers. By collectively formulating a specific demand for sex worker rights, BesD members constructed themselves

as representatives. In the next section, I analyse how the role of the representative fuelled BesD members' mobilisation for planning the Whores' Congress.

7.2.1 Mobilisation around the collective identity of self-determination

In the discussions about fundraising strategies and formulating demands in the previous sections, I analysed collective identity as a dynamic process (Melucci, 1988), rather than as a static entity that is reached once and upheld consistently in all interactions between group members. The concept of collective identity was an active process sustained by interactions in which definitions were shared and whereby actors influenced each other, negotiated and made decisions together. The convergence of values, beliefs and goals expressed in these processes resulted in a collective actor (Melucci, 1996). The BesD's image was negotiated and constructed into an identity of self-determination. This then served as a basis for BesD members defining themselves as representatives, with which they mobilised for collective action. As I show in this section, the role of the representative was set in motion through the approach taken to planning the Whores' Congress.

One of the activities undertaken to prepare for the Congress was publicising it among as many different sex workers as possible and encouraging input from sex workers outside of the BesD. For this, Doris sent out a call through various social media channels, intending to galvanise participation in the planning process. As the previous section showed, the role of the representative was shaped by an urge to shape the image of sex work while securing financial resources for initiatives that advanced destigmatisation and the fight for decriminalisation. This role then emerged in the call put out for planning the Congress.

> We (BesD) already raised some money for sw-only activities, so we will do a Hurenkongress (whorecongress) in (name of city) on the same date!!! Yay!
>
> We usually operate on the philosophy of: Do what you want, how intense you want, and what you can, meaning stuff will happen if people make it happen and sometimes stuff won't happen, because no one gets together doing it or loses interest or time during the process. So we would be very grateful to get you on board to do what you can, want and would like to do.
>
> *(Excerpt from call for Whores' Congress planning on Facebook, 14.05.2018)*

In each part of the excerpt, the role of the representative was produced in two different ways. In the first part, the announcement that the Association had raised funds for the Whores' Congress showed that the BesD was prepared to take the lead in organising a space to bring

sex workers together in the context of strengthening the cause for sex worker rights and saw themselves in a position to create an opportunity for sex workers to vocalise their perspectives and plan initiatives collectively. In the second part of the excerpt, the call for non-member sex workers to participate in planning the Congress showed that the BesD encouraged voices from outside of its formal organisational membership base. Part of doing representation involved including as many different voices as possible from the sex worker community, which is what the call hoped to achieve. Moreover, by presenting the Congress-planning as a low-commitment activity, the BesD showed that being involved in planning the Congress was welcome in different ways and to varying degrees. This aimed to reassure non-member sex workers who may not have been sure how much they could take part, or what they could contribute, that their input could still be included in any way and at any level. In this way, the call for participation in planning the Congress was an example of how BesD members defined and enacted the role of the representative in mobilising for the Congress and in encouraging participation from sex workers from outside of the BesD.

The initial stages of planning the Congress were quite uncertain, as the Congress was originally supposed to be planned with the support of the social worker allies, but due to changes in the social workers' own organisational structures, the BesD was left to plan the rest of the Congress on its own. Before it became clear that the social workers would no longer have time to assist the BesD, there was much confusion and miscommunication between the two groups. During one meeting, Sophie vented her frustration to the other members. A week before the meeting, she had received an e-mail from one of the social workers who had agreed to support the BesD in planning the Congress. The e-mail contained a document with a list of workshops and presentations, and a column designating who was in charge of inviting which presenters and organising which workshops. Most of the ideas were geared towards social workers, leaving only one space open for a sex worker-only workshop. The dialogue that took place as a result of this issue showed how emotionally-laden expressions between members induced the construction of a collective identity of self-determination.

> "I find it completely unbelievable how they have just utterly disregarded everything we've
> done for the past year!" she declared.
>
> Sophie immediately unloaded her frustration as Joan listened patiently.
>
> Saskia spoke up. "I think what was unclear from the very start was who exactly should be
> making final decisions about the Congress. I often had ideas over the past year but was

unsure with whom to bring these up and when the decision would ultimately be made to develop the idea or not," she explained.

"Why can't it be that the BesD just does its own congress and the social workers are welcome to input some ideas? Being dependent on them for even the simplest things is just so frustrating!!" Sophie spluttered.

(Field notes Congress planning, April 2018)

This excerpt from the discussion about separating from the social workers to plan the Congress independently contains an example of the process of projecting an identity of self-determination as a basis for mobilising. The excerpt contains strong statements demonstrating how BesD members perceived their relations with the social workers and marks a significant transition in the Congress planning process that I observed, through which the role of representative was developed strongly. The way that Sophie opened the planning meeting by expressing her concerns about the coordination difficulties with the social workers emphasised the communication problems with the social workers in the planning of the Congress, particularly (as Saskia mentioned) that it was unclear who was responsible for final decisions. The frustration expressed showed that BesD sex workers expected clear roles to be defined for the planning of the Congress and as Sophie's final remark showed, were determined to take on the leadership role themselves. Furthermore, addressing this rift in communication with the social workers served to emphasise the BesD's collective understanding as the group responsible for sex worker representation at the Congress, as they did not see the social workers as reliable partners in integrating sex worker interests in the Congress. This was made evident through Sophie's view that the social workers had "completely disregarded" the ideas that she and other BesD members had proposed. Sophie and Saskia's expressions of frustration and confusion revealed a desire for more communication and clarity in leadership in planning the Congress that was grounded in their understanding of being part of an organisation of self-determined service providers who represented the interests of sex workers.

The decision to plan the Congress independently, without the support of the social workers showed that BesD members were determined to design the Congress according to their own thematic preferences and priorities, in contrast to previous years, when the social workers had a larger influence on the content of the Congress. This shift reflected BesD sex workers' self-understanding as a group of self-determined workers capable of taking things into their

own hands and organising things on their own terms. Applying this approach to the Congress was thus a direct reflection not only of how they saw themselves, but also of how they demanded to be seen and treated under the law, as shown in the previous section when they formulated the demand for self-determined working conditions. In this section I have analysed the planning of the Congress as an example of how BesD members mobilised in the role of the representative constructed based on the collective identity of self-determination. In the next section, I analyse how a collective identity was constructed around the recognition of having a privileged status as sex workers and how this shaped the role of the representative that BesD members continued to define when mobilising themselves for the Whores' Congress.

7.3 Collective identity 2: recognising collective privilege

As discussed at the start of this chapter (7.1), there is a missing link between the construction of a collective identity and the act of mobilisation (that is, when people come together to act). People in a group share an understanding of who they are and why they are together, they might stay together, but they will not necessarily act together, so there needs to be something more that drives them to pursue collective action. I argue that the very thing that drives them to pursue this collective action is constructing themselves as representatives (in this case sex worker rights representatives). In this role, they become active together and create projects and initiatives to pursue common goals. In the case of sex worker rights activists, this "role of the representative" is shaped within the process of constructing collective identities around stigmatisation, privilege and self-determination. In bringing this into view, it becomes clear how the concepts of collective identity and representation are related.

In this section, I now focus on the second aspect of identity that members converged around, which was the acknowledgement of their privileged position vis-à-vis other workers. The construction of a collective identity of privilege was connected to the belief contained in the collectivisation frame that all sex workers can come together and fight for their rights (see 5.3). This belief brought sex workers together who indeed had the time, resources and other kinds of privileges to engage in political activism. This mindset laid the foundation for the construction of a collective identity around being privileged as members reflected on their motivation and capabilities for collectivising and especially which positionality they shared in relation to sex workers outside of the Association. In the following exchange, Sophie, Anita and Britta (two longer-standing members and one new member) are reflecting on their status as sex workers in comparison to other sex work colleagues and how this privileged status was

part of the collective identity of the BesD, affecting not only their approach to sex work, but also their outlook on activism.

> Sophie: We have a relatively high level of education, we are relatively well-organised, despite our chaos. I mean, we can communicate with the authorities, we have gotten our lives more or less together and quite realistically, most of our colleagues are not set up this way.
>
> Britta: Mhm.
>
> Sophie: Most of them [sex workers] also come from a different socioeconomic background…
>
> Britta: Yes…
>
> Anita: Although I think it is completely legitimate for some sex workers to say "Hey, I'm just here to work and earn money as a migrant and will not work my arse off for your politics."
>
> Sophie: Absolutely! I didn't mean that as a critique, just as an observation and a perspective on the whole thing (approaches to sex work).
>
> Anita: I also think that the legal conditions in Germany for our work are seen as far too good by most of our migrant colleagues and not enough to motivate them to want to improve anything, so they probably just think "What's the problem? Everything's fine…"
>
> Sophie: Yeah…
>
> *(Focus group, October 2018)*

As evidenced by the discussion excerpt, Sophie, Britta and Anita constructed themselves as part of a distinct group of sex workers by articulating a collective identity of privilege. This echoes the discussion about seeking alternative funding sources between Sophie and Janine in the previous section, through which a collective identity based on self-determination emerged. At the same time, the wider sex working population that the Association strived to represent was defined through the way that BesD members perceived and articulated non-member profiles and corresponding interests. In both the excerpt about fundraising and the excerpt above about non-member migrant sex workers, differences between sex workers according to their social contexts were reinforced as BesD members defined and shaped their group identity. Through these discussions, I observed how self-determination and privilege merged as foundations for constructing a collective identity. Sophie's references to a high level of education, language skills and coming from a socioeconomic background that provided the basis for a more organised life set-up expressed her perception of the meaning of privilege. This was met with agreement by Britta and provoked a reflective response from Anita about less privileged sex workers' motivations and approaches to work. The perception that many

non-organised sex workers came from "a different socioeconomic background" was accompanied by the perception that their main interest lay in working to earn money rather than in activism for political change. The articulation of their understanding of the profiles and interests of non-member sex workers was an example of how BesD members constructed 'other' sex workers whom they strived to reach through their activism.

The excerpt of the focus group discussion above shows how the relations emerging through the construction of representation constituted the process through which the role of the representative was defined. *The BesD was not just a collective of sex workers that represented the sex working population in Germany because they proclaimed to do so, but rather because they actively constructed interests based on their own as well as non-members' experiences and perspectives of sex work.* Rather than 'representation' being confined to the publicising of statements about sex workers' demands or to interviews in the media given by BesD members, representation also took place *within* internal spaces in which members negotiated interests and considered those of actors not actively part of the group's collectivity. By negotiating these interests and vocalising not only their own priorities and needs, but also those of non-member sex workers, the BesD enacted representation continuously throughout their activities and meetings.

In the literature on leadership in social movements, specific rhetorical techniques are discussed with which social movement actors communicate in order to negotiate decisions and plans of action (Barker, et al, 2001). One of these techniques is described as a dialogic relationship through which ideas and views are constantly proposed and responded to between members of the movement and it is through this process of proposing an idea, reflecting upon it, responding and then adjusting the idea according to the response that a consensus is reached (Bakhtin, 1986). The expression of a viewpoint with which the exchange was initiated, followed by agreement, reflection and re-interpretation of their position and background in comparison with other sex workers served to reinforce the identity of privilege that brought and held Sophie, Anita and Britta together as activist sex workers in the BesD. In the social movement literature, collective identity is analysed as a construction which is developed from a group of actors in relation to a wider population, in the sense that identity is defined through a comparison between groups or between the individual and the group (Melucci, 1996). In the dialogue between Sophie, Anita and Britta, the three used the comparison between their own mentality and situation as sex workers to those of other, non-

member sex workers to delineate a specific group identity. In particular, Anita's observation that migrant sex workers may not be motivated to be politically active, due to their more lenient perception of the legal conditions for sex work in Germany, served to distinguish between activist and non-activist sex workers, allowing for the construction of a distinct sex worker activist identity. The act of agreement and reflection between the three shows how Sophie's understanding of privilege was received and processed by the other two participants, whose input deepened the notion of privilege and in this way provided a common understanding of this aspect of identity around which to converge. At the same time, as the three engaged in an attempt to understand the approach to sex work and the situation of other sex workers, they constructed their own positions as members of a specific (privileged) group of sex workers in relation to sex workers outside of this group.

During the interviews as well, respondents who were members of the BesD reflected on their identity as privileged sex workers, which was reflected in the way they later participated in the Whores' Congress. Britta, for example, discussed the position of privilege that she recognised with herself as a sex worker and reflected on this for a bit during the interview and later during the Whores' Congress as well. When I asked her about other sex workers with whom she had come into contact so far since commencing sex work, she described the backgrounds of the colleagues with whom she generally mixed.

> …overwhelmingly with privileged sex workers, like mostly sex workers with university degrees, German native speakers, or from other western European countries…those who can demand a relatively high hourly rate and work independently. I mostly come into contact with these sex workers.

> *(Interview with Britta on 18 August 2018)*

Britta's recognition of her tendency to mix with sex workers from privileged social backgrounds showed that as an individual she bore an identity of belonging to a specific (privileged) part of the sex working population, that reflected her decision to join the BesD. The first activity in which she took part as a fresh activist and new member of the BesD was the Whores' Congress. During the Congress, Britta proactively proposed a workshop to discuss dealing with privilege and how privileged sex workers can use their status to benefit the cause for sex worker rights.

7.3.1 Mobilisation based on the collective identity of privilege

Britta's workshop focussed on privilege and confronting criticism for being exceptional, privileged activists who cannot speak for the supposed majority of non-privileged sex workers. There were ten participants in the workshop, half of them BesD members including myself and the other half non-member autonomous activists or sex workers new to the activist community. During the workshop, participants took turns sharing their understanding of privilege and how they dealt with confrontations about being privileged sex workers. A large part of the workshop was spent talking about how to deal with accusations of privilege used to discredit many sex worker rights activists' legitimacy in representing the voices of the sex working population. One of the main criticisms from outsiders that was discussed was that privileged sex workers were not eligible to speak for less privileged ones in the fight for better working conditions and more rights. The following excerpt shows how through the collective reflection on their privileged status as sex workers and what implications this had for their activism, the participants constructed the role of the representative that motivated them to mobilise.

> "I don't think it makes sense to focus on the guilt or shame of being privileged…we can use this position to be more effective in our activism," one participant stated.

> "Despite being privileged, it is still completely legitimate to demand policy changes to benefit all sex workers negatively affected by legal measures," another participant added.

> *(Field notes Whores' Congress, 30 September 2018)*

The way the participants rationalised their privileged positions and shared ideas for how to make use of their privilege to contribute to the cause for sex worker rights showed how they converged around the identity of being privileged. The first suggestion made about using privilege to be more effective in activism showed how the identity of privilege was linked to the role of the representative, as the participant proposed using this identity as a leverage for standing up for sex worker rights. This was reinforced by the second participant's remark about "demanding policy changes to benefit all sex workers." The way that this was phrased with reference to the benefit of "all sex workers" showed how the participants were thinking not only in terms of improvements for their own situation, but rather for the broader sex working population. In this way, their dialogue about privilege and how this influenced their

role as activists functioned to construct the role of the representative. As the discussion continued, participants ventured into deeper reflections about how the BesD related to migrant sex workers and non-member sex workers. At one point I suggested that launching a network of German language trainers could be a first step to paving the way for more inclusion of migrant sex workers in activist structures, who often enjoyed less privileges than their German colleagues. This evoked strong viewpoints about how BesD members came across to non-member sex workers and what should be taken into consideration when trying to be inclusive of migrant sex workers.

> "We shouldn't start with the mentality of wanting to help other sex workers…this only mirrors patriarchal, controlling approaches that abolitionists use against sex work," one participant pointed out.

> "You know, some sex workers don't feel comfortable joining or approaching the BesD because they do not personally identify with the group…they perceive it as being an elitist group that does not communicate in a way that is accessible or open to most sex workers," one participant commented.

> "That is interesting to hear…" remarked one of the BesD members partaking in the workshop. "We have discussed this before…how to work on our external image, presentation and outreach to other sex workers so that it is more open to sex workers from all backgrounds and income levels."

> *(Field notes Whores' Congress, 30 September 2018)*

The first viewpoint expressed showed how the participant perceived a crucial part about the role of the representative for sex worker rights to be *avoiding the mentality of helping*, which only placed them on par with anti-sex work prohibitionists who also claimed to speak for sex workers. Through the technique of contrasting the approach taken by prohibitionist feminists with those of sex worker rights activists, sex worker participants in this work group at the Whores' Congress strived to construct and adopt the role of the representative. Furthermore, the following comment made by another participant about the BesD being "inaccessible" to many other sex workers because of its "elitist" image alluded to the Association's privileged position within the sex worker activism community, echoing the view expressed by Rose in the previous chapter (see 6.4). This remark came from a non-member participant, which is significant because it exemplified the possibility of a direct confrontation of the Association's approach within a space constructed by the Association itself. As a result, participants who were members of the BesD were prompted to respond to criticism against the Association

regarding their understanding of and relations with non-member sex workers. The BesD member's response that external image and self-presentation had indeed been a discussion topic within the group before showed that Association members were aware of their privileged positionality and particularly how this posed a barrier to reaching other sex workers. What also became evident through this confrontation was how the role of the representative as well as the wider community of sex workers were constructed during the exchange. One participant remarked on the way some sex workers viewed the BesD as "an elitist group" that is relatively inaccessible to most sex workers, in this way positioning the wider sex working population as less privileged than the BesD. The BesD member responding to this remark then confirmed this discrepancy by stating that the Association was working on being more open to sex workers from "different backgrounds and income levels." In this way, responding to confrontations about the challenges induced by being a privileged group was a way that the collective identity of privilege was defined and at the same time problematized in a way that drove BesD members to reflect on how to construct themselves as representatives for the wider population of sex workers.

At the end of the workshop, six of the participants agreed to exchange contact information and keep in touch to draft actions to better include less privileged sex workers into the activist community. The act of exchanging contact information through the creation of a list that was passed around at the end of the workshop showed that participants were inclined to mobilise for a solution to the dilemma they were faced with as a result of their collective privilege. In this regard, a shared recognition of privilege among the group participants was an aspect of identity that drew them together and encouraged discussions about how to act as representatives for sex worker rights. By constructing the role of the representative in this way, based on the collective identity of privilege, sex workers participating in this work group set themselves up for mobilisation.

Although BesD members were aware of their privilege and the advantages that this afforded them as sex workers, they nevertheless experienced disadvantages stemming from the social stigma attached to doing sex work that affected all sex workers. As I will show in the next section, the perceptions and reactions to the social stigma that were revealed in discussions between group members also served as a basis for defining their role as representatives for sex worker rights, with which they were able to mobilise.

7.4 Collective identity 3: stigmatised workers

The relational dimension of collective identity became evident in the analysis of the focus group discussions in which BesD members took part. This means that actors' relations to and interactions with each other constituted the building blocks of constructing a collective identity. Particularly in the focus group discussions, the depth with which the subject of co-stigmatisation was discussed by the participants revealed how strongly stigma impacted not only on the friends and family members of sex workers, but also how empathy for each other reinforced the drive for activism. During these group discussions, active relationships became visible in which the meaning of activism, as well as the goals and purposes of the BesD were stated and re-negotiated among members, producing their role as representatives for sex worker rights.

The experience of stigma for doing sex work or being sex workers was frequently discussed among BesD members. In the first focus group, Anita, Sophie and Britta exchanged experiences with communicating about sex work to their family members and the reactions that they received by coming out themselves over the years. Most of the discussion was centred on the issue of co-stigmatisation, or the way that the whore stigma was extended to friends and family members of sex workers (Pheterson, 1993). After posing the first question about spaces of communication about sex work, the subject very quickly shifted to an intense exchange about coming out and how this had exacerbated the stigmatisation of friends and family. The three participants had very different experiences from each other, ranging from repulsion and frustration to sympathetic tolerance from family members. In the following excerpt, Anita recounted the disappointment and frustration she experienced from her brother for being an outed sex worker and the stress that this had caused her. The other two participants sympathised with her as she recounted her experience.

> Anita: I was outed in that part of the country, otherwise my brother would not have known. So he found out and then wrote me an e-mail asking if I could stop doing sex work and that I did not need to be doing this kind of work (*sigh*), like it wasn't good for me, although he never used to care at all what I did (*long sigh*)…but I never got around to talking to him about it before. When I finally did have a talk with him, he was piss drunk and he asked me to please not do any open activism and not to show my face in the media (Britta: *long sigh*) because he claimed that he would be the one who would be stigmatised and discriminated as a result. He said if I do continue to do activism, then I should put a dagger in his heart beforehand. (Sophie: *giggle*)

Sophie: That just goes to show how powerfully the stigma affects even our nearest and dearest ones!

Anita: Yes…

Sophie: That is a strong example of why we cannot speak everywhere about sex work all the time, although we might feel the urge to…

Anita: Yes, and my brother said that the young women his age even accused him of being the brother of a hooker—that's the term he used (Sophie: Oh that is brutal!) and that that is the reason why they don't want to associate with him. And my mother said that her boss at the hospital even asked her "how business is going in (name of German city)."

Britta: Oh my, what an asshole!

(Focus group, October 2018)

The exchange above shows how the three participants bonded with each other around the concern about the stigmatisation of their relatives and how strongly the stigma extended to family as well. As Anita's account showed, the co-stigmatisation that her brother experienced had even influenced her engagement in sex worker rights activism. Later in the discussion she added that the co-stigmatisation of her family and of also of her partner was preventing her from "doing the kind of activism" that she actually wanted to be doing, out of consideration for those nearest to her. In this regard, co-stigmatisation was a factor that influenced how sex workers' social networks played a role in sex worker mobilisation. Signs of sympathy for Anita's experience were expressed by Sophie and Britta through their comments of acknowledgment and understanding throughout Anita's rant. The affective aspect of this exchange showed that a degree of emotional investment factored into the reinforcement of a collective identity (Melucci, 1996). Particularly the strong reaction that Britta expressed at the end when Anita talked about how her mother was co-stigmatised by her boss at work, was a display of how BesD members connected with each other emotionally around the issue of stigmatisation, reinforcing the participants' sense of injustice as a basis for uniting.

 Through this exchange of affective reassurance and confirmation, a collective identity on the basis of being a stigmatised group was re-constructed (see 2.8). Discussing their stigmatising experiences reproduced the stigma frame (see 5.2) while creating a bond between each other within this process. In this way, the stigma frame served as a basis for constructing and strengthening a collective identity of stigmatisation. By reproducing the frame in their discussions, BesD members simultaneously constructed a collective identity around

stigmatisation. Furthermore, the priority given to privacy and anonymity in the data protection frame was an interest shared by BesD members that also fuelled their collective identity around stigmatisation. As a stigmatised group, they relied on data protection as a way to avoid stigma (see 5.4). Coming together in the BesD, they both constructed a collective identity based on stigmatisation while reinforcing the data protection frame as a way to address the stigma that they collectively experienced. As I will show in the next section, stigmatisation was a further aspect of collective identity through BesD members' understanding of themselves as representatives for sex worker rights was shaped, which in turn supported their drive to mobilisation.

7.4.1 Mobilisation based on collective stigmatisation

The phenomenon of sex workers collectivising as a result of their stigmatised condition has been observed in other national contexts, in which social cohesion is described as a space in which de-stigmatising narratives could emerge that helped sex workers to cope with the stigma and regain a sense of agency (Carrasco et al, 2017). Svea, for example, expressed the strength that being in the BesD gave her to pursue activism, saying that she would not have been able to do what she did without the moral support of the other group members.

> I hope that I was able to support the BesD this year…without all of your support I probably would not have dared to go the independent route in sex work, much less to come out. But with you behind me I know that I am not alone and that I'm not an exception, but that there are many of us.

(Contribution from Svea, BesD online discussion forum, December 2018)

In her post, Svea mentioned "support" twice, showing that the BesD was important to her as a source of support for her own activism and progression in sex work. Her relationship with the group was often complex, as she expressed during her second members' meeting as a relatively new member, that she sometimes did not feel like she could be completely open, but then later remarked during the closing discussion that she really liked the BesD and hoped that the other members would accept her despite her admittedly controversial outbreaks sometimes. However, as expressed in her forum post, she needed the Association in order to have the courage to be open about her sex work. The resonance of the stigma frame with her own experiences of stigmatisation drove her to become part of the BesD and the assurance that she was not alone in her stigmatised experience drove her to progress not only in her sex work, but also politically by coming out as a sex worker (see Chapter Six).

During the course of a meeting with other members in which a controversial documentary about sex work in Germany was discussed and how the BesD wanted to respond to it, Svea volunteered to lead a work group devoted to dealing with negative media depictions of sex work. ZDF, a major German news corporation, had released a new documentary news report about sex work in Germany. Like many of these mainstream televised reports on sex work, it painted a shadowy, dubious picture of the commercial sex business in Germany. Svea had already written an infuriated review of the documentary, fully expressing her disgust and horror at the biased depiction of her profession. The following field note excerpts from the meeting trace how social stigma drove Svea to take on an active role in the BesD by initiating a work group to respond to stigmatising media portrayals of sex work.

> "At one point in the documentary, ominous-sounding music played and then the BesD logo came on…and then the narrator described us as a corrupt lobbying association," Svea recounted angrily. "They also interviewed some women who worked at flat rate brothels[17] who said they didn't mind what they did and had chosen their work freely, but then the narrator commented that although these women might have stated that they chose their work freely, a lot more was masked behind their claims. It's just unbelievable how he denied their autonomy! How the documentary is basically suggesting that there is no way that anyone could choose to do sex work freely," Svea ranted, becoming increasingly emotional.

(Field notes from members meeting, April 2017)

Svea's ardent concern about the documentary showed how stigmatised she felt by its skewed portrayal of sex work. By specifically taking issue with the narrator's sceptical interpretation of the interview with the brothel workers, Svea showed that what she found particularly stigmatising was the denial of sex workers' agency. She took this as an affront to her own decision-making ability and the path that she had chosen in her life as a long-term escort, which translated into a feeling of stigmatisation. Although the narrator of the documentary had obviously not commented on her type of sex work or on her directly, Svea's reaction cast her as a target of stigmatisation because her identification as a sex worker caused her to relate to the sex workers interviewed in the documentary and feel affected by the way they were presented in the report. Her outbreak led to her suggestion to take legal action by seeking a lawyer who would represent the Association's case.

> "I understand how upsetting this is," Doris started, "but what do you suggest we do now?"

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[17] A business model in the sex industry where clients pay a set fee to be at the brothel for a certain number of hours with as many service providers as they want/can and the workers are paid a set salary at the end of each shift.

> "We should file a legal complaint against ZDF," Svea stated. "It's just not right that they think they can go ahead and spread all this fake news about our work and I won't stand to put up with such distorted portrayals and lies, especially from news media for which I regularly pay TV licensing fees!"

(Field notes from members meeting, April 2017)

The swift decision to mobilise against the German news media giant was instigated by Svea's feeling of being stigmatised. Her immediate suggestion to contest the denunciative claims made in the report about sex work and about the BesD by pursuing legal action against ZDF showed how stigma served as a basis for Association members to define themselves as representatives in the fight for sex worker rights and for the public image of sex work. By referring to "our work" when stating that she saw the media giant as spreading "fake news" about sex work, Svea defined herself as a sex worker expressing dismay at the portrayal of sex work overall in a way that was detrimental to other sex workers as well. By transmitting her feeling of stigmatisation into a role through which she spoke out against the stigmatisation of other sex workers as well, Svea was driven to mobilise against the negative media depiction of sex work. As the discussion continued, the steps for opening a new work group dedicated to the issue were proposed and agreed upon.

> "There's a list of lawyers in the forum that can be contacted, compiled by (name of BesD member)," Doris said. "Someone would need to put in time and effort to contact them and see what they're willing to do for us and how much. Would you be willing to take this on?" Doris asked Svea directly.
>
> "Yes, I could look into that," Svea agreed.
>
> "What should this new project be called?" Doris asked.
>
> "Work Group for Media Law," Svea answered promptly.
>
> "Ok, so we're appointing you the new coordinator of the work group and opening a discussion category for this in the forum," Doris said.

(Field notes from members meeting, April 2017)

As the exchange between Svea and Doris shows, the micro-level steps involved in mobilising for action included decisiveness and commitment in establishing the fundamental structures (the work group and the forum category) from which to take action. Doris suggested the action that needed to be taken in order to begin countering the stigmatisation inflicted through the documentary film and immediately asked Svea to take the lead on this. The act of contacting legal advisors with whom to consult regarding the possibilities for advancing the right of sex workers to claim compensation for negative media portrayals of their work was possible

because Svea had defined herself as part of a representative group for sex workers. Moreover, starting a work group dedicated to this issue was also an example of how the role of representative was enacted by Svea, as this initiative was intended to monitor and influence the media discourse on sex work overall. Despite no lawsuit being filed in the end due to financial constraints and more pressing priorities for the BesD, the work group continued to exist and Svea combined this initiative with more frequent media activism, in which she volunteered for interviews and talk shows to share her own experience and in this way, provide an alternative view of sex work and sex worker motivations for working.

In this section, I have traced the way that the collective identity of stigmatisation experienced by Svea was transformed into an urge to remain a part of the BesD and to define herself as part of a group representing the voice of sex workers. By constructing this role, Svea was then driven to take the initiative to start a work group that aimed to influence future media depictions of sex work and sex workers as a way of combatting stigma against the sex working population in Germany. Although the stigmatised identity did serve as a basis for commitment to the cause for sex worker rights that also drove individual mobilisation among some research participants, such as Svea, it was at the same time a factor discouraging other BesD members from mobilising more proactively. This will be examined more closely in the next chapter, in which factors for non-mobilisation will be addressed.

Summary

This chapter has traced the way that collective identity was constructed within discussions among BesD members, who had come together on the basis of high frame resonance. I indicated in each section which frames contained the beliefs and viewpoints that BesD members shared as a foundation when developing each of the three aspects of collective identity. Within the construction of collective identity, I showed how the role of the representative was shaped as BesD members converged around self-determination, privilege and stigmatisation which drove them to mobilise for collective action. Based on this analysis, I have shown that the main factor driving the collective as well as individual mobilisation of sex workers in the BesD was the construction and sustenance of representation as a role that was defined and taken on by research participants. In this way, representation served as the conceptual link between collective identity and mobilisation, which had previously not been theorised in the literature. In the next chapter, I will turn to factors that deterred other research participants from mobilising, including both members and non-members. Despite

their disinclination to mobilise, these research participants nevertheless took part in processes of representation as they reflected their relationship with the BesD and with sex worker activism in general. Through their reflections, they expressed their needs and priorities, thereby defining their interests and constructing themselves as part of the sex working population that the BesD strived to represent. In this way, I will argue that non-mobilisation does not necessarily signify a lack of representation, as the interests of non-mobilising research participants were often received and integrated into the Association's activism. In what follows, I will investigate more closely how the representation of sex worker interests still takes place, despite sex workers not actively mobilising.

Chapter 8: (Non)Mobilisation

Understanding participation as part of the process of mobilisation

Analyses of mobilisation in the social movement context tend to focus on the actors physically present and participating in collective action. However, what is missing within such a focus is an understanding of how people who are *not* physically and actively part of collective action *also* exercise an influence on the process of mobilisation. These 'non-participants' may not be engaged with the movement, yet they are *addressed by* the movement and *affected by* the movement's activities. I argue therefore that *the influence of non-participants is a relevant aspect in the process of mobilisation to analyse, particularly in the context of sex worker activism, as many of those who are the subject of the movement's cause may not be willing or able to participate directly.* Nevertheless, I posit that they can and do influence movement mobilisation.

In this final chapter, I propose that through examining the process of representation, this additional factor for mobilisation can be uncovered: the way that the interests and priorities of sex workers not participating actively and directly were still integrated into the mobilisation activities of the BesD. I argue that representation happens through the integration of interests from sex workers outside of the BesD. As representation is continuously being practised within processes connected with mobilisation for collective action, *it reveals how, despite low or non-participation, sex workers' interests are integrated into the way that mobilisation is strategized and carried out by active participants.* Even when sex workers do not mobilise directly within activist structures, they participate in the construction of interest representation through the expression of their needs and priorities, which are integrated into the BesD's intiatives. The investigation of their needs and priorities through this research project created an additional platform for them to express their interests, which were shared with the BesD to shape a better understanding of non-member sex workers' circumstances and work-related interests (see 3.1).

First, I will look at specific factors identified through interviews and group discussions with BesD members that discouraged active mobilisation or direct participation in Association initiatives. The three main factors that I identified were stigma, time management and level of activist skills and experience that specifically deterred research participants who were new

members from becoming more active. The final part of this chapter will analyse more closely how, despite the factors discouraging more active participation from new and non-member sex workers, their interests were included in the BesD's activism planning activities and were factored into the design of the Red High Heel Campaign and the Whores' Congress.

8.1 Factors impeding participation

8.1.1 Stigma

Social stigma was a factor that drove sex workers to collectivise (Chapter Seven), but I argue here that it simultaneously held them back from participating in mobilisation. A commonly cited reason given by my respondents for not participating more in activism was the fear of being outed and the accompanying stigmatisation. The limiting effects of stigma on sex workers' agency has been documented extensively (Schuster, 2003; Agustin, 2006; Scambler, 2007; Koken, 2012). For sex workers who had not come out, or were minimally out and wished to keep it this way, engaging in activism as part of a formal organisation posed a risk. Silvia, a new member of the BesD, talked about how for a long while she did not want to risk being publicly associated with the BesD, as she had not come out to her family or friends. Her main concern before joining the BesD was being outed as a sex worker. She finally did decide to join the Association and stated that since the passage of the PPA, she realised more than ever how important the work of the Association was and that she "really wanted to support this." In this regard, her opposition to the new law was a part of her schema that motivated her to identify with and finally become a member of the BesD. Nevertheless, her hesitance to partake actively in the BesD's initiatives, even after joining, showed that the fear and the accompanying stigma of being a sex worker influenced her participation in the group's activities. Silvia described her experience when registering officially as a sex worker under the PPA, revealing the internalisation of the 'whore stigma' (Pheterson, 1998) that cultivated her uneasiness with joining the BesD for a long time:

> I realised when I registered (as a sex worker)… that was a strange procedure. The man at the registration office…I mean he was nice, but when I left the office I felt really bad. I think this had to do with the general image of sex work…with my own perception of my work…I am still uneasy…it's like I still feel like I'm doing something forbidden or something unacceptable, I don't know, like I'm dirty now because I officially do sex work.
>
> *(Interview with Silvia, May 2018)*

The uneasiness that Silvia reported with the registration process was reflected in her apprehension about being more active in the BesD, due to the risk of outing that she perceived by becoming more active. Voicing how she felt about the registration process and how this made her feel more stigmatised echoed the narrative that the BesD had been advancing regarding the effects of registration on sex workers. Silvia's own experience was amplified by the BesD's criticism of the registration process and also contributed to the narrative that the Association constructed about the negative effects of registration (see 5.4). In this way, the vocalisation of her experience of the new law contributed to the narrative that the BesD constructed regarding the experience of sex workers under the new legal requirements, even though her fear of social stigma limited her active participation in mobilising against the PPA.

During the first focus group, fear of stigma was also a lengthy topic of discussion among participants. Anita discussed how the risk of stigmatisation of her friends and family kept her from participating more openly in sex worker rights activism (Goffman, 1974):

> There are things (in activism) that I don't do out of consideration for my friends and family and that really bothers me! It's a big dilemma for me because on the one hand I want to do more for us (BesD) and just accept the stigma for myself, but on the other hand I don't want to exacerbate the co-stigmatisation of my family. This really affects my activism, because I am of course not doing the activism that I would like to be doing.

> *(Focus group, October 2018)*

While sex workers who had not come out fully still found ways to engage in activism, the range of activities and initiatives open to closeted sex workers was limited, as revealed through Anita's reflection above. When she mentioned the kind of activism that she "would like to be doing" but that she could not, Anita was referring to public outreach activism that included press interviews and appearances in various media. This type of activism required a high level of visibiity which Anita was not prepared to accept. The excerpt shows the reflective process that Anita entered during the focus group, as she discussed the effect that her activism had on her family members and also the effect that the stigmatisation of her friends and family had on her level of participation. Her statement that she was faced with a "big dilemma" by the risk of her family being stigmatised as a result of her activism demonstrated the magnitude

of stigma as a factor against mobilisation, because she was directly confronted with weighing the importance of two priorities in her life which she viewed as mutually exclusive: her family and sex worker rights. Anita's reflection also showed how she constructed herself in the 'role of the representative' for sex worker rights when she reiterated that she wanted to do "more for us (the BesD)" and that she was unable to "do the activism that I would like to be doing." These expressions revealed that she had established a definite idea of what it meant to do sex worker activism and that she had an interest in improving the situation of sex workers through public activism. Her dilemma regarding the stigmatisation of her friends and family as a result of her activism resonated with the BesD's stigma frame (Chapter Five). Despite the barrier to doing the kind of activism that she wanted to be doing in the BesD, her interest in fighting stigma and her narrative contribution to the stigma frame were examples of how she participated in the process of mobilising for sex work rights.

Jana, also a new member of the BesD, expressed similar concerns with engaging in public activism, which was linked to the stigma of being a sex worker. During the interview I asked her with whom she talked about her sex work, in which she revealed that she had only come out to a few people.

> Well, my best friend, my husband and another friend who has also done sex work…so just 3 people.
>
> *(Interview with Jana, January 2018)*

As she was only open to three people in her life about doing sex work, it was clear that Jana chose to remain discrete about her sex work. Her decision to maintain discretion was related to her fear of the stigma of being a sex worker, which was expressed later in the interview when I asked her how she felt about doing activism.

> Well, if it were a completely respected form of work without all of the stigma, then I would have engaged more in activism earlier on. I don't really see myself in a prominent position or function in the Association, like I wouldn't do interviews with the media. I really can't imagine doing that, but I think I could do some things in the background, just to contribute a little and offer some support.
>
> *(Interview with Jana, January 2018)*

Jana's response showed that the stigma surrounding sex work limited her participation in activism, as she stated that if it weren't for the stigma, she would have been inclined to become politically engaged earlier in her sex work career. After finally joining the BesD, she was still careful about how she participated in activism. Like Anita, she was reluctant to do any kind of activism that involved showing her face publicly in association with being a sex worker and preferred to do things "in the background" meaning that she would rather support the BesD with internal organisational tasks that did not involve interacting with outsiders. In this way, stigma restricted the way that Jana participated in the BesD, as she chose to focus on non-public ways of supporting the Association's activities.

As the reflections from Silvia, Anita, and Jana have exemplified, stigma was the most largely discussed reason for sex workers' hesitance to participate more publicly in the process of mobilisation. Although the frame resonated with their views and experiences with stigma, originally motivating them to join the BesD, stigma also kept them from becoming more active once joining the BesD. Communicating such concerns to the BesD, as I heard them from respondents throughout the fieldwork, contributed to the Association's understanding of the reasons for low participation among new members and helped to instigate ways for encouraging them to engage more. The online members' forum contained a thread in which design of the recruitment flyer was discussed (see 5.3). In this part of the forum, I summarised the reflections that I elicited from new members during interviews, such as those cited above, regarding fear of stigma as a barrier to more active participation. One response to the feedback that I posted was that the BesD should make a more consistent effort to emphasise anonymous ways for new members to participate in initiatives. This response was transmitted to the new flyer design process, in which the possibility of anonymous membership under an alias was clearly printed on the flyer:

The assurance of anonymity that was subsequently indicated on the new flyer for attracting members showed that the BesD took consideration of prospective as well as new members' concerns about stigma and maintaining anonymity regarding their involvement in sex work. The process that I observed of how feedback in the discussion forum regarding new members' participation potential was later reflected in the Association's publications, such as the new flyer, provided an example of how the concerns and priorities of individual sex workers were taken into account in the BesD's activities. Feeding back the responses from interviews to the BesD was also a key part of the combined research-activism approach using the methodology of investigative co-construction with which I conducted the fieldwork (see 3.1.3).

In the next section, I discuss two further factors that hindered BesD members' participation: time constraints related to financial insecurity and level of (in)experience in activism.

8.1.2 Time constraints and prioritisation of sex work

The prioritisation of sex work before activism was a phenomenon that I observed as well when attempting to mobilise sex workers to come to the information sessions (see 5.5). The main reason for not coming to the information sessions was that the sessions clashed with working hours of venues or in the case of independent sex workers, that they did not want to risk missing a client to block time off for attending the information session. Similarly, new members in the BesD discussed challenges in making time for activism alongside doing sex work as a reason for not participating in BesD initiatives. Reluctance to become more active in the fight for more labour rights due to uncertainty about the ability to commit fully in the long-term has been documented before among minority ethnic women in the labour union context (Healy et al, 2004). When I asked new members of the BesD specifically about their participation in initiatives and what kinds of activities they preferred the most, many of them downplayed their level of engagement and talked about the challenges of committing to activism alongside their sex work. Ida, for example, talked about how her time and organisational skills prevented her from being more active overall.

> I think I will have phases when I won't have so much work and when I'm a bit more organised…I think it actually has a lot to do with the way my life is organised. I mean if I were more organised I would have more time available to invest in things like activism, like going to a demonstration or so, which realistically only costs like five hours…yeah, it would be better to be more politically active I think.

(Interview with Ida, September 2017)

She mentioned the significance of being "organised" and her self-perceived struggle to fulfil this ideal three times within the interview response in reference to her scattered time management style, to which she attributed her low level of participation in activism. In the interview she reflected on this for a bit, which showed in the way that she quickly calculated the concrete time that it would take to invest in going to a protest, concluding that she did recognise the necessity of becoming more politically active, but lacked the ability to prioritise this. When I probed further, it became clear that time commitment was a factor that was related to the time needed to do sex work in order to make a living. New members needed to juggle their own work alongside activism, which was a challenge for many of them with low income. Sex work or earning enough money to live was understandably a priority for many, which interfered with the commitment to activism. When I asked Ida about the prospects of getting more involved in the BesD since joining, she mentioned that at the time it was actually more economical for her to pay the membership fee each year (25€ for low income members) than to organise initiatives, as this would take time away from sex work, which she needed to pursue to improve her financial situation.

> By paying the yearly membership fee, I feel like I can contribute at least something and still have enough time to sort out my own financial difficulties and come up with more ideas for service offers in sex work that I have been putting off…

(Interview with Ida in September 2017)

Other new members also discussed time management and prioritisation of sex work as a reason for their delay in mobilising as well. Stella, a new member who worked as an escort,

reflected on her level of participation in the BesD when I asked her what membership in the Association meant for her.

> Well, I joined because I wanted to participate in projects and just be more active… not like a second job in which I am investing a ton of time, but just helping out with projects every now and then or helping to start projects. It's just that there are so many things to do for my sex work right now, but I can imagine being more active at some point.

> *(Interview with Stella, July 2018)*

As shown through the excerpt above, Stella had joined the BesD with the intention of partaking more actively in the movement. However, at the time of the interview she was constrained by commitments to sex work and foresaw herself being more active in the future, when she had more time to commit alongside sex work. In her response, she realised that activism could be quite demanding when she stated that she could not pursue it as "a second job." By concluding that she could "imagine being more active at some point" she made it clear that doing sex work took priority over activism for her. Both the examples of Ida and Stella showed that despite their identification with the BesD, this did not lead immediately to participation in the process of mobilisation. In both cases, time constraints related to the prioritisation of sex work, or financial security, explained the slow transition between joining the BesD (identisation) and becoming active members (mobilisation).

The relation between participation in activism and the time commitment to sex work for new member sex workers showed that respondents felt like they needed to be able to afford to do activism. It was a commitment that they were ready to engage more in once they felt financially secure. Members of the BesD who were most active were also aware of the trade off between activism and sex work that they had to negotiate. There was one instance during fieldwork when this negotiation process became evident when BesD members were deciding who would go to a meeting at the government ministry that had drafted the PPA to discuss the implementation of the new law[18]. In the internal forum thread, members talked about the importance of attending this meeting as an opportunity to criticise the PPA directly in the presence of the policymakers. Only a handful of active members indicated that they had the time to attend, including Ruth, who wrote that she "had cancelled her work trip to Switzerland

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[18] Shortly after the passage of the PPA in 2017, the BesD received an invitation as stakeholders from the Ministry of Women, Youth and Family Affairs to attend a meeting to discuss the next steps for implementing the PPA.

(where she worked in a venue for one week each month) to accompany Doris" to the meeting at the ministry (Forum post from October 2017). Ruth's decision indicated that she was able to afford to take time away from sex work in order to prioritise activism, which was not something that all members had the liberty of doing. This shows that privilege in choosing how much time to devote to sex work was an indicator of members' participation levels in the BesD. Active members, such as Ruth, were more likely to be able to cancel sex work bookings or had other sources of income, which allowed them to commit to activism, whereas members who felt less financially secure, as exemplified by Ida and Stella, were less keen to take on long-term projects in the BesD. The connection between high participation rates in the BesD and having a high level of privilege as a sex worker also reinforced BesD members' convergence around the collective identity of privilege (see 7.3), as those who participated actively in the Association were also the main actors shaping the group's identity. In the next section, I examine how new members' perceptions of their experience in activism influenced their willingness to participate more actively.

8.1.3 (In)Experience in activism

Two new members, Helene and Smilla, reported that their perceived low level of experience as activists made them hesitant to engage more proactively in the Association. The new members of the BesD who previously had not been involved in sex worker activism often expressed caution in becoming too active too quickly after joining the Association, seeing themselves as lacking enough knowledge of the political history of sex work activism or enough experience in being an activist. As Helene reflected in her response to my question about what activism meant for her and what motivated her to join the BesD, it became clear that she had doubts about her ability to contribute much to the BesD.

> Helene: I want to make it better for us….but I must also admit that I feel a bit too young at
> this point…I am planning to open my own studio soon, so I can say that I have more of a stake
> in it (sex work). I am getting better at arguing for sex work and I just think—when I've
> reached a certain age I will become more active, but at this point I have the feeling that most
> people would just think "oh that little girl, she has no idea what she is talking about" and I
> think that's why I haven't been as active as I'd like to be one day….I can imagine doing media

work one day, like being in TV documentaries or news reports, I think I'd like that, but only when I'm a bit older and more mature.

(Interview with Helene, August 2018)

Although she expressed support for the goals and activities of the BesD, Helene acknowledged that her participation level was low. At the start of the interview, she stated that she was in her late twenties and had been doing commercial BDSM work for the past eight years as an independent freelance service provider. Despite her years of experience in sex work, she still felt that she was "too young at this point" to contribute fruitfully to sex worker activism in the way that she perceived other BesD members to be fighting for the cause. By stating at the end of her response that she wanted to do "media work one day, like being in TV documentaries or news reports," it became clear that she perceived effective activism to be in the form of public engagement and the ability to "argue for sex work." Before Helene had joined the BesD, she mentioned that she had come across the BesD several times when reading up on the movement for sex worker rights. When I asked Helene what made her finally decide to join, she revealed that her dream was to open her own BDSM studio one day and she wanted to connect with sex workers who had experience doing this.

Before joining, I read a lot about the new law and what was being done about it on the internet and kept coming across the BesD and then yeah, I finally joined, also because I have this dream of opening a studio and I wanted to know how other people have done it, especially now since the new law[19]…

(Interview with Helene, August 2018)

Helene's determination to open her own studio and her belief that she would find guidance for this endeavour by joining the BesD revealed her impression of the Association as a group of politically active, but also entrepreneurial sex workers. Through her online research about the PPA, she mentioned that she "kept coming across the BesD," indicating that she had seen the many press releases, interviews and commentaries on social media published by BesD

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[19] The PPA contained several new regulations and standards for commercial sex businesses that made opening a sex work venue a more complex process than before the law was passed.

members criticising the new law. Both her ambition to become a studio owner herself one day together with her exposure to the BesD's online publications therefore explained her perception of activism through the BesD as being heavily focussed on media outreach. Most BesD members were between the ages of 30-49 (see Appendix 3: *Age Distribution in the BesD*) and many of the older members actively engaged with the media and the public. Helene was seeing these older members in the media who had abundant experience in giving interviews and in debating publicly for sex worker rights. This sheds an explanation for why she believed that sex worker activism was focussed on public interactions and mainly carried out by older sex workers. Moreover, observing mostly older sex workers fighting for sex worker rights in the media also explained why she felt that she was not ready to participate actively in the BesD, as she specifically lacked the experience of giving interviews and engaging in debates about sex work. Her remark that she was "getting better at arguing for sex work" showed that she considered a certain level of eloquence to be necessary to being more active in the BesD and that she felt she needed to improve this skill before engaging more. BesD members frequently participated in televised interviews and debates about sex work with various figures in politics, academia and anti-prostitution activism[20] in which they constantly justified the sex worker rights discourse in the face of direct and often harsh challenges. Helene witnessing these debates explained her belief that it was important to be able to speak confidently about sex worker rights and to defend this position in order to practice activism effectively.

Another new member, Smilla, also expressed uncertainty in her capacity to contribute to activism based on her perceived level of experience. When I asked her how she acquired knowledge about different aspects and contexts of sex work, she started to reflect on whether she could contribute some of her own knowledge to the sources that she consulted.

> Sometimes I read the blogs on (name of German escort platform). I have thought about whether I could write something too, just to get feedback or something, but I have talked myself out of it because…well…what should I write about? What can I tell?
>
> *(Interview with Smilla, May 2018)*

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[20] https://berufsverband-sexarbeit.de/index.php/medien/medienspiegel/

By asking herself "What should I write about? What should I tell?" Smilla revealed an insecurity about her level of experience. By concluding that "she talked herself out" of writing a contribution to the blog page of the platform on which she was registered, it showed that she felt her experience in sex work so far was not relevant or rich enough to publish. When I met her at her first member meeting, she told me that she had been working for one year as an escort before deciding to join the BesD. I asked her how she had come across the Association and what made her decide to join:

> I always looked on the (BesD) website and found the different contributions there and the events that were planned really inspiring. I just found everything super fascinating and I wanted to be part of that somehow and take part in the discussions.
>
> *(Interview with Smilla, May 2018)*

As the excerpt above shows, Smilla had been exposed to the BesD's online presence before joining and had read the material written by members. Her impression that what she saw of the Association as "super fascinating" and "inspiring" showed that she admired the BesD's work. Like Helene, Smilla's perception of the materials published by the BesD shaped the way she imagined how to participate effectively in sex work activism upon becoming a member. By stating that she wanted to "take part in the discussions" she expressed that she found the Association's work worth supporting. However, when she said that she "wanted to be part of that somehow," it revealed that she wasn't sure how exactly to participate, reflecting her self-doubt in the previous excerpt about publishing a text. Smilla eventually decided to write a blog article for the BesD website a few weeks after her first member meeting[21]. Her motivation to write the article came after encouragement from other members after the meeting, who asked her if she wanted to write something for the blog. As one of the work groups at the meeting was focussed on attracting new members to the Association, Smilla decided to write an article describing her impressions of the BesD as a new member, which would be published on the website for prospective members to read. In her contribution, she described her

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[21] https://berufsverband-sexarbeit.de/index.php/2018/05/02/mein-erstes-mal-bei-einer-mitgliederversammlung-das-kennenlernen/

motivation to join the BesD, reflecting on her entry into sex work and also on her experience at the member meeting. When recounting the meeting, she wrote that BesD members "worked diligently" and that the "strict moderation" kept members in line throughout the meeting. She also wrote about the "intellectual depth" that she perceived during the discussions and the "engagement, respect, modesty and warmth" that she experienced at the meeting. The impressions that Smilla expressed about the BesD showed that she felt welcome by the group, but also perceived the members to be professional and focussed, as indicated by the words "diligent," "strict," and "intellectual" that she chose in her contribution. This echoed the way she talked about her decision to join the BesD during the interview and initial unsureness of how to participate. Smilla's initiative to finally publish a blog article showed that although new members such as herself may have been uncertain about how to participate at first, encouragement from long-time members of the BesD could help newly joining sex workers to become active sooner. Moreover, it showed that there were ways of participating in activism that did not involve exposure to the media and that this was something that long-time members of the BesD could make new members aware of.

The impression given by BesD members in the media and on their website of being experienced and professional in their activism reflects the group's external image that laid the foundation for constructing a collective identity of self-determination (see 7.2). Helene's and Smilla's cases were examples of how non-members and sex workers new to the BesD responded to this image and might have been hesitant as a result about how to approach and contribute to the Association. In this way, their responses exemplified how the BesD's image of professionalism and corresponding identity of self-determination influenced members' perception of their level of experience as activists, which in turn affected participation in mobilisation.

In the final sections, I examine more closely how the interests of new members were later factored into the initiatives planned by the BesD. I will also draw attention to the interests of non-member sex workers again and show how these were also factored into the realization of BesD initiatives. This will allow me to show how the process of representation through the integration of new and non-member sex workers' interests into collective action opened a less visible dimension of the mobilisation process, in which sex workers who could not participate or were uncertain of actively participating nevertheless exercised an influence on the mobilisation for these initiatives.

8.2 Linking representation to the process of mobilisation

New members' low participation levels in the BesD or non-member sex workers' non- or low level of engagement with activism did not necessarily imply that their interests were not heard or disregarded. Representation continued to be constructed through the way that new and non-members' specific interests were integrated into the process of mobilisation when members of the BesD planned campaigns and initiatives. On the surface, the privileged positionality of BesD members raised doubts among outsiders that sex worker activists could raise the interests of the wider sex working population (see Chapter One). However, as I have shown through the analysis of framing, frame resonance and collective identity, representation is not merely the act of voicing the (static) interests of constituents, but rather a process of shaping and making interests visible through the construction of representation (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). Interests are malleable and not necessarily in competition with each other, but rather constantly influencing each other and shaping the wider platform of advocacy (Loncar, 2018).

In what follows, I show how long-term BesD members, as representatives in the main sex worker rights organisation in Germany, practiced representation by integrating the interests of new member sex workers into their initiatives. I specifically show examples of how the interests expressed by sex workers during the interviews I did with them fed into the planning of initiatives, which I analyse as central to the mobilisation process for progressing the movement for sex worker rights. This demonstrates how the methodology of investigative co-construction (Chapter Three) was woven into the construction and practice of representation throughout the research. Two initiatives that were organised by the BesD during the period of fieldwork will be analysed as examples of collective action in which the practice of representation as an active process of communicating and integrating interests shaped the content of these initiatives. These were the Red High Heel Campaign and the Whores' Congress.

8.2.1 The Red High Heel Campaign: Combatting stigma in health services and therapy

In response to the interest of destigmatisation as a priority among sex workers, the Red High Heel Campaign was first introduced by a senior BesD member together with a gynaecologist and an allied social worker. The project was taken over by the BesD in 2018 and developed gradually by three active members in the following year. The idea for the campaign was originally conceived during a conference of the German Society for Gynaecologists (GSG), where a BesD member took part and voiced the concern that sex workers felt apprehensive about speaking openly about their work with their local gynaecologists.

> "Most of my colleagues are afraid to come out to their gynaecologist because they cannot tell how the doctor will react and if the doctor is even aware of the different infection pathways resulting from particular sexual practices."
>
> *(Quoted from the first press release statement announcing the Red High Heel Campaign on the website of the GSG, March 2017)*

In the quote above, the BesD member who originally sparked the idea for the campaign addressed the apprehension that sex workers had with being open with gynaecologists about sex work when she stated that "they cannot tell how the doctor will react." This point summarised the risk that many sex workers were apprehensive about as a result of the stigma surrounding their work, which was precisely what the campaign aimed to mitigate. The targeted outcome of the campaign was the creation of a list of gynaecologists who were sex worker-friendly, which would be compiled and either circulated to sex workers upon request or posted directly on the BesD's website.[22] As part of the campaign, stickers with a red high heel logo were also printed for distribution to gynaecologists to display in their offices so that new patients who were sex workers would know that the doctor was sex worker-friendly. To launch the campaign, a seminar for gynaecologists was planned by the BesD with the help of the GSG, with the aim of increasing these doctors' awareness of sex workers' professional circumstances and potentially specific treatment needs. The planning of the seminar showed the BesD's active intention to alter the way sex work was viewed by gynaecologists by providing an educational opportunity for them to familiarise themselves and develop an

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[22] Whether the gynaecologist's professional details appeared in the list circulated among sex workers or directly on the BesD's website depended on how openly the gynaecologist wanted to be listed as sex worker-friendly, as some gynaecologists who were approached at the start of the project voiced concerns of co-stigmatisation by being associated with sex workers.

acceptance of sex work that they could adopt in their approach to sex working patients. As will be shown shortly, this goal and the campaign launched to achieve it were directly related to the demands made by individual sex workers, including those who did not participate actively in the BesD's initiatives.

In line with the BesD's normalisation and stigma frames, this initiative supported the fundamental goal of the Association to challenge the mainstream image of sex work among medical professionals, who associated sex work with trauma and disease in treatment and diagnostic approaches. By embodying a strategy for furthering the normalisation and destigmatisation of sex work, the campaign was an example of how the interests of new member sex workers were integrated into the planning of a specific initiative. Ida, as a new member, discussed the challenges that she faced in the health service context. She revealed the complications that she encountered when making appointments at the public health centre for STI-testing, recounting that the social workers there tended to ask many questions about her sex work that she found irrelevant and stigmatising:

> What bothers me is how the public health officials in (name of German city) are. It's really important to me to get tested regularly, even if nothing risky happened. Maybe I don't need to get an HIV-Test every month but I'd like to… and even if I had to pay 40-50 euros or so for it each time, that would be fine, but the discussions and the waiting time about whether a test is necessary or not and how I've been working with my clients are just unbelievable!
>
> *(Interview with Ida, September 2017)*

Ida's response contained a clear criticism of public health agencies' paternalistic and stigmatising approach and how this interfered with the precautions that she chose to take. Although Ida was a new member who was slow to become active, her difficulties with the public health services and her demand for a non-stigmatising consultation when seeking STI tests were not left unaddressed. In fact, these were precisely the driving factors for the Red High Heel Campaign. One month after the interview, Ida participated in the thread created for discussing the campaign in the BesD's online forum:

I would like to know that I can come out to a gynaecologist without being stigmatised. As a sex worker, I personally take more risks with my sexual health than I do in my non-work life. And in view of that I would like to be able to speak openly when seeing a gynaecologist without having to beat about the bush about what I do. I just think this is much less stressful and more effective and that is why I'd like to go to a gynaecologist, where I won't be scowled at when I come out, unlike the one to whom I've been going so far.

(Contribution from Ida, BesD online discussion forum, October 2017)

In her post, Ida emphasised the importance of receiving non-stigmatising medical assistance when seeing a doctor as a sex worker and that openness was a vital factor for her when choosing a gynaecologist. Raising the issue of openness and mentioning that her current gynaecologist "scowled" at her when she came out showed that finding a sex work-positive doctor was not a given. Moreover, her experience indicated that there was a need to create more sensitivity and awareness among medical professionals about sex workers' circumstances. As discussed earlier, a crucial component of the campaign was to organise a seminar for gynaecologists to make them more aware and sensitive to the needs of sex workers, so as to avoid stigmatising questions and aversive treatment. As I observed in the discussion forum, this component in the campaign was drafted and refined more and more following Ida's and other new members' posts about their experiences with gynaecologists.

3. Thematic Immersion:

Gynaecologists must be informed more precisely about the specific health-related needs of sex workers through a special training. The training will be about breaking down prejudices that may lead to false diagnoses or poor advice. Some points to include are:

- Common work practices in sex work
- Main health risks of sex work
- Health examinations that are most necessary for sex workers
- Sex workers' demands from the medical system (acceptance, professionalism, non-judgmental, no language barriers, etc.)
- Insights into how sex workers work -> for developing useful preventive measures

(Excerpt translated from the draft concept for the Red High Heel Campaign, BesD online discussion forum November 2018)

The points drafted in the planning concept for the Campaign echoed Ida's and other new members' call for non-stigmatising treatment by gynaecologists. The points directly addressed the problem of stigma through the proposal to inform gynaecologists about work practices and health risks faced by sex workers. This was intended to encourage them to better understand the situation of sex workers and break down any negative or exaggerated views about sex work. The concept was gradually developed by two members of the BesD who submitted it in funding applications to the Berlin Senate for Health. In this way, individual sex workers' interest in destigmatisation and in spreading a more normalised view of sex work, particularly in health services as she expressed above, were echoed in the realisation of the Red High Heel Campaign. Even though Ida did not partake directly in the organisation of the campaign herself, her needs and interests were represented in the conception and strategizing actions undertaken by BesD members in the mobilisation process. As I have traced above, Ida's interest in sensitizing health professionals to the needs of sex workers that was elicited during the interview was again vocalised and elaborated in the discussion forum, which in turn fed into the planning of the campaign that happened in the forum. The transmission of Ida's concern and interest in improving gynaecological treatment of sex workers into the Red High Heel Campaign was an example of how representation was constructed through a new member's participation that fuelled the process of mobilisation. In the final section, I will turn to the Whores' Congress as a further example of collective action constructed by the BesD in which the interests of sex workers not directly participating in the planning of the Congress were still integrated into the mobilisation process.

8.2.2 The Whores' Congress: a space for normalisation and collectivisation against stigma

In Chapter Six, the reasons for non-member sex workers sharing high frame resonance with the BesD's collective frames, yet not identifying and joining the Association were established. Recalling the interests of non-member sex workers is relevant for emphasising the point that the interests of individual sex workers that shape the process of mobilisation come not only from within the BesD, but also from outside of the Association. As shown in the previous section, the interests of new member sex workers were strongly centred on the destigmatisation and normalisation of sex work as priorities in sex worker activism. While

these were also interests shared by non-member sex workers (Chapter Six), many of the non-members interviewed also expressed specific interests in improved health and safety measures for doing sex work. In this section, I trace how non-member sex workers' specific concerns for safety when doing sex work were integrated into the thematic content of the Congress. Tracing this process shows the construction of representation as a process an active relationship between BesD sex workers who mobilised for collective initiatives and sex workers who did not engage directly, yet participated in this process by vocalising their interests and demands from activism. Incorporating the concerns of non-member sex workers into the Whores' Congress reflected the collectivisation frame (see 5.3) in that BesD members made the effort to advance the interests of non-member sex workers who did not actively participate in the Association's initiatives. In line with the collectivisation frame, this showed how BesD members acted upon the belief that all sex workers could contribute to and participate in the fight for sex worker rights.

The Whores' Congress was organised across two days as a series of workshops (see 4.7.2). In addition to being a space in which sex workers could speak freely and normally about their work without fear of stigmatisation, the workshops at the Congress closely catered to specific work-related needs and interests expressed by non-member sex workers as well. The inclusion of sex worker-led workshops in the Congress showed that it was important to the organisers that the Congress was designed as a space in which sex workers could focus on and learn more about the topics most relevant to them. This was a significant progression from the Congresses in the previous years, which were more strongly focussed on political issues than on practical, work-related topics that sex workers could take back with them in their daily work routines (see 4.7.2). As with the Red High Heel Campaign, the Whores' Congress was an example of an initiative that was conceived on the basis of individual sex workers' specific interests, which BesD members factored into the selection of workshops at the Congress. By again tracing how the interests of sex workers that I elicited during the interviews fed into the content of the Congress, I further examine the way that sex workers' interests were received and processed by BesD members who mobilised to make the Congress happen. In the following analysis, I focus on interview data from Rose and Elisa, two non-member sex workers who talked about the importance of safety when doing sex work and show how this concern was integrated into the Whores' Congress.

During the interview, I asked which specific topics were most relevant to respondents and what kind of support would be most interesting to them that the BesD could offer. Rose immediately indicated an interest in self-defence workshops:

> Self-defence…like what should I do if a client on top of me turns violent, how should I poke the eye out? Practical knowledge that sex workers can exchange, workshops, yeah, it would be cool to have things like that.
>
> *(Interview with Rose, May 2018)*

Rose's account of a potential scenario with a problematic client showed that she had imagined such a situation in detail before or possibly been in one such as the one she described. Being able to protect herself from risky situations with clients was therefore a main interest that she expressed. Elisa, another non-member sex worker whom I interviewed also talked about improving self-defence skills as an interest of hers.

> I have definitely thought about taking self-defence courses at some point…I think this is really important because imagine if I'm with a client in bed and all of a sudden he starts to choke me or something. I'd like to know techniques for how to break free in a situation like that. In the forum on (name of German escort website) I have read stories like that and it really scares me to be in such a vulnerable position.
>
> *(Interview with Elisa, April 2018)*

In both their responses, Elisa and Rose depicted similar potential situations of violence during work that they wanted to avoid. This showed that they had imagined or possibly even encountered clients with whom they felt that they were put at risk and were not yet confident of their ability to defend themselves successfully in such a situation. Elisa's emphasis at the end of her response that it "really scares me to be in a vulnerable position like that" reiterated her priority of safety at work. I took note of these reflections in a separate set of notes prior to transcribing the interviews, which grew into a collection of interests from non-member sex workers expressed during interviews. During meetings with the BesD members who planned

the Whores' Congress, I referred to these notes to offer ideas on ways to make the Congress appealing to sex workers from outside of the Association.

Parallel to doing interviews, I also participated in and investigated the planning of the Whores' Congress (see 3.4.3). My role in the planning committee was to support the three BesD members who led the planning process by translating flyers and calls for input to the design of the Congress from the non-German-speaking community of sex workers in Germany. I also informed the committee that I was doing interviews with non-member sex workers and that their responses to some of the questions that I posed regarding their interests and demands from sex worker activism could be relevant for determining the content of the Congress. In this way, I was able to link my research with the process of mobilisation that I was investigating through the research (see 3.1). As the committee convened frequently during the second half of my fieldwork period to plan the Congress, there were several opportunities to communicate to BesD members what I was learning during the interviews about non-members' impressions of the Association's work and which sex work-related issues were most relevant for them. Communicating these responses during the committee meetings influenced how they determined what to include in the Congress, in particular the types of workshops that were selected.

The workshop themes were initially gathered by the organisers through a call for workshops sent through the sex worker activism network Germany-wide (see 7.2.1). Several workshop proposals were received by the planning committee, from which they decided to choose six[23]. During the meeting in which the list of workshops to be offered at the Congress was being finalised, I mentioned that self-defence was an interest that had been mentioned to me frequently during the interviews with non-member sex workers. One of the proposals that had come in was from a non-member sex worker who offered to lead an "introduction to self-defence" workshop at the Congress.

> "I, (name of workshop proposer), am a sex worker and have been organizing self-defence workshops by and for sex workers since 2015. I studied feminist self-defence in (name of country) with (name of group). With colleagues from different communities (street workers,

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[23] The number of workshops was limited to six due to logistical restrictions on the amount of time that the space where the Congress was held could be booked.

escorts, migrants, trans…) we have recently "given birth" to our unique self-defence method, based on feminist self-defence principles and improved by our experience. This confidential method, only by and for sex workers, is meant to be shared with the community only."

(Description of a workshop from the proposal e-mailed for the self-defence workshop, May 2018)

The proposal revealed that the sex worker who had sent it in had given self-defence workshops before and that her approach to self-defence contained a political component ("feminist self-defence principles"). In her proposal, she made it clear that her workshop was meant to be sex worker-only when she described it as a "confidential method…meant to be shared with the community only." This indicated that the technique was specifically designed for sex workers to apply in sex work-related instances of violence, either from clients or the state, but in the proposal there was no indication of whether the techniques would be physical or also psychological. The interest in improving self-defence at work from non-member sex workers (that I had communicated to the planning committee) was mainly focussed on physical self-defence methods, as exemplified through the excerpts from Elisa and Rose earlier. This affected the planning committees' decision-making process regarding the workshop selection, as they were keen to include workshops that were relevant to sex workers' experiences and corresponding needs. Upon further communication the proposer indicated that the workshop could focus on an introduction to physical self-defence techniques. Both the input that I provided from the interviews about the interest in self-defence being evident among non-member sex workers as well as the details about the methods included in the workshop influenced the decision to finally include the workshop in the Congress programme (see Appendix 5: *Programme Brochure, Whores' Congress 2018*).

The integration of non-member sex workers' interest in safety by confirming the self-defence workshop exemplified how input from the research process fed into the planning process for the Whores' Congress. Through this process, I argue that representation was constructed beginning from the time that the interest in self-defence was elicited in the interviews to the time when this interest was integrated into the decision-making regarding the workshops at the Congress. By tracing how the concern for safety elicited in the interviews with Rose and Elisa was transmitted into the realisation of the self-defence workshop, I have shown how the interests of non-member sex workers shaped the direction of mobilisation that BesD members

engaged in to create the Whores' Congress. In this way, the methodology of investigative co-constructive was applied to both contribute to the process of representation while at the same time examining how representation continued to unfold as BesD members mobilised to make the Whores' Congress happen.

Summary

This chapter has presented key factors that impeded participation in the mobilisation process, including stigma, time constraints related to prioritising sex work and perceptions of inexperience in activism. While stigma was a factor that brought and held sex workers together, it also proved to be a strong reason why new members were hesitant to participate more in the BesD. Reflecting on these factors, I went on to show that despite the lack of direct participation in mobilising processes, new and non-member sex workers' interests and concerns were received and integrated into initiatives such as the Whores' Congress and the Red High Heel Campaign by more active members of the BesD. In the second part of the chapter, I analysed these two initiatives for which BesD members mobilised during the period of fieldwork. I traced how the interests of new and non-member sex workers were elicited during interviews and then communicated to BesD members who organised the Congress and the Campaign. Tracing these processes showed how new and non-members vocalisation of interests was a form of participation that shaped the direction that the mobilisation of long-time BesD members took. I argued that representation was constructed through these processes as interests were expressed and incorporated into action that constituted mobilisation for sex worker rights. Linking participation to representation in the process of mobilisation has revealed how new and non-member sex workers hesitant to partake visibly and directly in activism—due to the factors identified in the first part of the chapter—were still able to contribute their interests and concerns to the conceptualisation of collective action. Revealing this aspect in the process of mobilisation for collective action was significant in order to account for variance in the ways that sex workers shape or partake in activism, particularly in light of obstacles hindering many sex workers from visibly engaging in the movement for sex worker rights.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The impetus for this study was to better understand how collective action happens in sex worker rights activism and how through processes of mobilisation for collective action, sex worker representation is constructed. In undertaking the thesis, I have made three core contributions. First, empirically, I have shown how the sex worker rights movement in Germany operates to achieve its goals by presenting insights into the micro-level routines and processes that constitute the work of activism in the BesD. Second, conceptually, I have re-examined 'representation' as a connective process enabling the transformation of sex worker interests and concerns into the construction of frames and linking collective identity with mobilisation for collective action. Using the concept of representation, I have also demonstrated how sex workers who are not visible in collective action still participate in activism through the vocalisation of their interests, which are integrated by sex workers active in the mobilisation process. Third, methodologically, I have shown how researchers can support the practice of representation, in particular through the construction of the interview as a space in which sex workers' interests and needs were elicited and later fed back to the BesD as input for orienting mobilisation and planning collective action. To conclude this thesis, I will address each of these in turn. I will also discuss the contributions of these findings for both sex work and social movement research and reflect on the implications of this study for sex worker rights activism in practice.

Uncovering social relations within sex worker activism

While there were no academic studies done previously on the sex worker rights movement in Germany, there have been books published by activists within the movement, tracing the progress of sex worker activism in the political and legal context since the 1980s (Biermann, 2014; de Riviere, 2018). What I have done in my research is to illuminate the social relations within this movement, specifically showing how the main sex worker-led activist organisation in Germany pursues collective action, constructs itself as a group vocalising sex workers' demands and how it relates to the wider sex working population in Germany. Through the fieldwork, various forms of collective action were explored, including flyer design and the formulation of demands at member meetings, information sessions for sex workers, the Red

High Heel Campaign and the Whores' Congress. All of these examples of collective action provided insight into the operation of the BesD as a key actor in the sex worker rights movement in Germany. The link between the sex worker rights movement and the issue of data protection was identified as a particularly significant aspect of sex worker activism in Germany. Through the research, I uncovered how the BesD frames data protection as a sex worker rights issue and how this frame is disseminated to the rest of the sex working population as a strategy for encouraging mobilisation for sex worker rights.

My research has also revealed that the BesD was largely perceived as a privileged group of sex workers that took on a professional approach to activism, which influenced non-members' hesitance to join and new members' lag in participating upon joining. The language barrier or lacking German language skills, was found to be a main factor discouraging non-member sex workers, who were also migrants, from joining the BesD. New members of the BesD frequently mentioned time constraints related to the need to prioritise sex work and having limited experience in activism as the main factors keeping them from becoming more politically active when asked to reflect on their participation. Furthermore, the finding that many young sex workers perceived a high level of experience necessary to engage as an activist in the BesD is something that might be useful for the Association to consider when thinking about initiating new members into the group and encouraging greater levels of participation. Incorporating ways to help new members build confidence and skills for effective activism would be useful for expanding the number of members willing to do more public activism.

The research revealed that stigma was a factor that both drove and hindered sex worker participation in the mobilisation process. Stigma was analysed as a structural factor influencing the way sex workers perceived their work in relation to the rest of society as well as their agency and mobility throughout society. The stigmatisation of friends and family members was found to be a major demotivating factor for participating in activism, while at the same time the realisation among others that stigma was a common grievance motivated them to collectivise. Despite the factors hindering some sex workers from mobilising, the research showed how their interests and concerns were still integrated into the BesD's initiatives and thereby contributed to the process of representation.

In the field of sex work research, future studies on sex worker activism could further explore the extent to which the interests of sex workers differ across various areas of sex work or according to other factors that have been considered in this thesis, such as the approach to sex work or the degree of 'outness'. While the focus in this thesis was on how representation is practiced, what remains to be investigated more concretely are the intersections and potential discrepancies of interests between organised and non-organised sex workers. This could be completed through a large-scale survey, for example, enquiring into sex workers' needs, views and preferences regarding their work and comparing this with the strategic foci and activities of sex worker rights activists. Further research in this area would not only offer more clarity into the complexity of representation from a theoretical perspective, it would also provide useful empirical insights into the capacity of activists to speak for a very heterogeneous industry. Such knowledge could help activists to understand how they can better relate to potential constituents.

Investigative co-construction as an approach supporting the construction of representation

The methodology of *investigative co-construction* that I developed to guide my fieldwork activities also provided a basis for supporting the process of representation *during* the interviews. My double role as a researcher and activist-member of the BesD allowed me to both interact with my research participants as an enquirer of their experience and perspective as well as a communicator of the interests of sex worker rights activists. As shown in Chapters Six and Eight, telling non-member sex workers about the BesD when they expressed curiosity during the interview provided an opportunity to convey the interests of the Association with them. This was developed into a technique for eliciting their reactions to these interests and for encouraging them to vocalise their own interests. In this way, a comparison—and at times a negotiation—of differing interests took place that was part of the process of representation as the interviewees reflected on the BesD's interests while I took note of their responses and communicated these during meetings with BesD members.

Implementing this approach came with challenges, as research participants did not have the time or the capacity to participate in the design of the research. Therefore, I adjusted the

parameters of the participatory approach by joining initiatives that were already in planning, rather than starting a whole new initiative of new member engagement, as I had originally envisioned. The challenges of following the ideals of participatory research have been documented in the action research literature as the "paradox of participation" (Arieli and Friedman, 2009). The paradox points out that researchers employing this methodology subconsciously impose their own concept of participation upon the community of interest and assume that members will want to participate without considering that community members do not immediately see themselves as potential co-researchers or may not have the interest or time to take part in the project. This phenomenon became quite clear from the start of my fieldwork and was a persistent issue that I had to accommodate by inquiring specifically about the capacity and availability of my research participants in order to adjust my research activities accordingly. For the most part, their input into the design of the research was in the form of feedback to ideas that I had pre-proposed. In future, in order to encourage more direct and engaged participation in the research design, it would be useful to spend more time clarifying with the research participants how they can contribute and also organising enough funding for participant compensation beforehand to encourage long-term participation.

Despite the challenges in securing consistent participation in the design of the project, I have shown how research can be used to encourage participation from sex workers previously less inclined to take part in activism. Based on the principles of PAR, my methodology was designed to include sex workers involved in the BesD (as the main group of sex workers that I was researching) in the study as much as possible. At the beginning of the research, it quickly became clear that the Association was struggling to achieve the same goal as my research, which was to integrate more diverse voices and experiences of sex workers into their initiatives more. By adjusting the orientation of the participatory approach from garnering participation among long-time members within the BesD for my project to focussing more on reaching out to new and non-members, I showed how the participatory research approach could be used both to progress my study as well as to support the goal of the BesD of encouraging participation from more sex workers in activism. In this regard, the methodology of investigative co-construction that I have developed introduces a dimension in PAR, whereby voices that are less visible within a marginalised social group itself can be raised and the interests behind these voices represented.

Parallel to the goal of expanding academic knowledge on sex work and adding to participatory methodologies, it was equally important to conduct research that would yield results useful to the sex work community itself, without whom my project would not have been possible. Accordingly, the findings have been summarised in a report written in German that will help the BesD to better devise ways of mobilising new members, reaching out to non-member sex workers and for developing the direction of their activism to correspond more closely with the needs of the wider sex working population. In the report I highlighted the finding that new member sex workers who had not come out were wary of the risk of stigma if they participated too openly in activism. Since the report was circulated, the Association has come up with more opportunities for members to participate in activism internally, without having to be out and willing to appear with the media. These include various writing projects that are published weekly in the online discussion forum. I also included the finding that language barriers were a factor keeping migrant sex workers who were interested in activism from joining the BesD. In the Autumn of 2019, when a new strategy group for lobbying against the Nordic Model was established, BesD members set the discussion language to English in order to be more open to sex workers who could not speak German. This was also in response to the growing awareness that there is a large community of English-speaking sex workers in Berlin who have started their own activist networks, with which the BesD wanted to connect.

Re-conceptualising representation

Using concepts from social movement theory to explain how collective action happened, I traced the process of representation through the micro-level actions that took place within the BesD and showed how this served as a connective process linking *framing* and *collective identity* to *participation and mobilisation*. Rather than thinking of representation as a one-directional response to static, consistent claims made by a wider population, I have shown through this study that it is more revealing to conceptualise it as *the process of actors constructing themselves in the role of representative in relation to the wider population* and how within this process, interests are constantly being shaped and constructed. As shown in Chapter Five, BesD members' own interests shaped the demands for sex worker rights that were vocalised in media interviews and other public statements made by BesD activists. Likewise, BesD member also acknowledged and integrated the interests and concerns of non-

member sex workers into their initiatives, as shown in Chapter Eight. However, as I showed in Chapter Six, low frame resonance and the disinclination to join the Association despite high frame resonance among some respondents showed that the construction of representation was not always a straightforward process. Even when the diverging interests of non-member sex workers were made known to the BesD, these were not always immediately incorporated into the Association's initiatives. Future research could investigate more closely which factors or circumstances might have hindered the BesD from addressing specific concerns of non-member sex workers, despite their awareness of these.

The construction and reinforcement of a collective identity among BesD members throughout group interactions that I observed was a significant driving force for participation amongst individual members that led them to mobilise for collective action. Collective identity was a dynamic process in which BesD members converged around self-determination, privilege and stigma that were transformed through the process of constructing the role of the representative into mobilisation for collective action. The BesD's collective identity was shaped by old and new members' interests and priorities, as shown through the process of framing and frame resonance in Chapters Five and Six. Within the processes of frame alignment as analysed in Chapter Five and frame resonance in Chapter Six the process of representation functioned as a link between frames and individual sex workers' schemas, illuminating the transition between the presentation of frames and their reception. During the process of identisation, as shown in Chapter Seven, BesD members simultaneously constructed and reinforced themselves as part of a group of representatives for sex worker interests. A collective identity of being a stigmatised group was continually reinforced, but BesD members also constructed a collective identity around being privileged and reflected on this frequently throughout the focus group as well as during the workshop at the Whores' Congress. As members of a group constructing themselves as the voice of sex workers, they acknowledged their privileged backgrounds and thereby the definition of their interests against this background. At the same time, the circumstances of non-member sex workers in less privileged situations was considered in the planning of initiatives and in crafting the Association's platform for sex worker rights, showing how perceptions of the needs of sex workers coming from different backgrounds than members of the BesD influenced the cycle of activism. In Chapter Seven, the process of representation was revealed as a link between

identisation and mobilisation, whereby the construction of representation enabled the transformation of the different facets of collective identity into mobilisation for collective action.

 In the final chapter, the concept of representation was linked to the process of mobilisation by showing how new and non-members' vocalisation of interests were integrated into the BesD's initiatives. By examining how interests were still included in the shaping of collective action, I demonstrated that despite low or non-participation in activism, the concerns and priorities of sex workers were addressed. This was a particularly relevant process for understanding how collective action happens in the sex worker rights movement because various factors including stigma strongly hindered some sex workers from visibly participating in collective action. Yet their interests were still integrated into the routines, decisions and negotiations that constituted the process of mobilisation.

One aspect that the research was not able to cover in the investigation of collective identity construction was disidentification with the BesD among sex workers. As seen in Chapters Six and Eight, low frame resonance and factors discouraging mobilisation were explored in order to present a more thorough analysis of both the processes of frame resonance and mobilisation on the pathway to collective action. However, factors causing once-active members to exit the BesD could not be explored, as such research participants were difficult to find and engage in the research. One interviewee disclosed that she had been a member of the BesD during the early years of her activism, yet decided to leave the Association soon after its founding. When I probed further, she only vaguely mentioned that group activism did not suit her. If more such cases could have been identified, this would have provided a more enriching insight into understanding the dynamics of collective identity and the implications of disidentification on the practice of representation and is a topic for further research.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

In this thesis, I have examined sex worker rights activism by participating in the daily routines of being an activist and have therefore been able to provide a rich account of different meanings, perspectives and motivations within this community, as well as witnessed the micro-processes of negotiation that brought these differences together. By offering an insider perspective on the practice of activism, I have been able to contribute a unique in-depth

account of the way that sex workers engage with the political and social context that shapes sex worker rights activism. By joining the body of literature on sex worker collectivisation, my research also contributes to the increasing attention given to the political and social aspects of doing sex work and being a sex worker that helps to cast sex workers as agents within the structures they act.

My study also contributes to social movement theory, in which the sex worker rights movement has only been investigated to a limited extent (see Chapter Two). I have introduced the concept of representation as a process interwoven within the processes of framing, frame resonance, collective identity and mobilisation that have already been observed and analysed in social movement studies. I have shown how representation is constructed within processes of collectivisation and how it serves as a concept that opens previously overlooked connections and dimensions between collective identity, framing and mobilisation. Applying the concept of collective identity from social movement theory to the study of sex worker activism has revealed how stigmatisation can be both a factor drawing and holding marginalised people together as well as a factor hindering them from engaging in collective action. Future research on movements might further explore the stigma dimension as a structural as well as cognitive factor that influences the way movements form, the way action is planned and carried out and the extent to which constituents participate.

Finally, through the research that has gone into composing this thesis, I have illuminated new perspectives for both understanding and improving the steadily growing movement for sex worker rights. The study set out to challenge the criticism that sex workers who are vocal and visible in activism come from a privileged minority that does not understand the situations of the wider sex working population and therefore fails to include the interests of the majority of sex workers into the agenda for sex worker rights. In my research, I have provided evidence that while sex worker activists are indeed brought and held together by an identity based on privilege and self-determination, this does not mean that they overlook the needs of sex workers outside of their activist structures. Even when sex workers do not directly partake in mobilisation for collective action, their work-related concerns and interests are integrated into initiatives for sex worker rights. Furthermore, my study has shown that stigma continues to be a major factor that silences sex workers and keeps many sex workers from participating in activism. This reinforces the vitality of those sex workers who have come out and can afford to face the stigma, for the progression of the sex worker rights movement. While there are

ways of doing activism and remaining closeted, the long-term achievement of sex worker rights requires actors who are visible and able to communicate with the public. However, as long as the stigmatisation of sex work and sex workers persists, we cannot await that most sex workers openly join the fight for their rights. What my study has shown is that the challenges of representation cannot solely be attributed to shortcomings within sex worker activist organisations, but instead largely arise from structural circumstances that put sex workers at a disadvantage. Instead of criticising those who do stand up for sex worker rights, no matter what their position, it is more productive to criticise the social conditions impeding those who cannot stand up for their rights and improve these so that more sex workers can speak up visibly. For this to happen, increasing awareness and support for the sex worker rights movement becomes more important than ever.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Research Participants (pseudonymised)

	Area of sex work	Time in sex work (years)	Interviewed (I) Field Conversation (FC)/Focus Group (FG)	Position
Alina	Erotic massage	10>15	I	Non-member
Andrea	BDSM	1>5	I	Non-member
Anne	BDSM	1>5	I	member
Anita	Escort	5>10	FC/FG	member
Bella	brothel	1>5	FC	Non-member
Britta	escort	1>5	I/FG	member
Carolin	Multi-disciplinary	1>5	I	Non-member
Christina	Escort/porn	1>5	I	Member
Diana	escort	1>5	I	Autonomous
Doris	BDSM	15>20	FC	member
Elisa	BDSM	1>5	I	Non-member
Gina	Escort	15>20	FC	member
Finja	escort	10>15	I	Non-member
Greta	BDSM	1>5	I	member
Hanna	In-call	<30	I	Non-member
Heidi	Sexual assistance	5>10	FC	member
Helene	BDSM	1>5	I	member
Henrietta	escort	1>5	I	member
Hilde	Bizarre	1>5	I	member

Ida	escort	1>5	I	member
Jana	escort	10>15	I	member
Janine	Escort	5>10	FC	member
Jasmin	Erotic massage	10>15	I	Non-member
Jordis	Bizarre	20>25	FC	member
Judith	escort	<30	I	autonomous
Julia	BDSM	1>5	I	member
Lana	escort	25>30	I	member
Lena	brothel	1>5	FC	Non-member
Linda	striptease	1>5	I	Non-member
Lula	brothel	1>5	FC	Non-member
Maria	Escort	<30	FC	member
Michaela	escort	1>5	I	autonomous
Mia	Escort	5>10	FC	member
Rose	striptease	1>5	I	autonomous
Rosi	brothel	20>25	FC	Non-member
Ruth	BDSM	20>25	FC	member
Samuel	escort	1>5	I	member
Saskia	escort	1>5	I	member
Selma	Sexual assistance	<30	FC	autonomous
Silvia	BDSM	1>5	I	member
Smilla	escort	1>5	I	member
Sophie	Escort	5>10	FC/FG	member
Steffi	escort	1>5	I	member
Stella	escort	1>5	I	member
Svea	escort	5>10	I	member

Tia	brothel	5>10	FC	Non-member
Timo	Escort/porn	5>10	I	autonomous
Vera	BDSM	5>10	FC	member

*There were also sex workers who participated at BesD member meetings, in the information sessions and in the work groups at the Whores' Congress with whom I had no one-to-one interaction beyond the group setting. As I did not acquire information about their area of sex work or time in sex work, I have not included them in this table. They are referred to as "participant" throughout the thesis.

Appendix 2: Interview questions

(English – non-member)

What kind of sex and/or erotic work do you do? Since when?

How would you describe yourself as a service provider? Does this depend on who you are speaking with?

How do you perceive your work? How does work make you feel?

What are the main advantages of your work? What do you enjoy most about work?

Have you worked/Do you work in a venue? What are your thoughts about working with others?

What do you like least about work?

Is there anything specific (social, material, political circumstances) that makes work difficult sometimes?

What would you need to work better or more successfully?

Apart from the work with clients (or the sex/erotic work itself) is there any other kind of labour or other tasks that you do regularly that your job as a xxxxx involves?

How long would you like to keep working as a xxxx?

What are your thoughts on professionalization opportunities for sex workers? These are things like workshops and seminars for specific practices.

With whom do you talk about your work?

Do you spend time with colleagues outside of work?

Do you ever speak with colleagues about social perceptions of sex work or the political treatment of sex workers?

What do you think about how outsiders perceive sex work, and does this have an influence on how you work?

If you are trying to find out what's new in the business, where you search/whom do you ask?

How do you network with other workers, with clients, managers, or other people involved in the business? These can include internet platforms, portals or other websites.

What are advantages and challenges of networking for you?

Do you come into contact with workers in other areas of the sex and erotic business?

What similarities do you perceive with workers in other areas of the business? Which differences?

Are you interested in the political situation of sex work in Germany?

What do you know about the legal treatment of sex work in Germany?

Do you think it is worthwhile for sex workers to collectivise for their rights?

I will now read a series of position statements and would appreciate your reaction to each one:

Sex work should be considered a freelance profession under tax, business and building laws.

Sex work should be regarded and treated as a normal job, like any other.

Sex workers should not be subject to special regulations, such as police or government registration, nor subject to advertising restrictions.

A separate concessionary process for venues is unnecessary. Regular business licences, such as for other businesses should suffice.

Mandatory condom usage goes against sex workers' right to self-determination.

What kinds of services should a collective of sex workers provide for sex workers?

Which benefits and/or disadvantages do you perceive for yourself in joining a collective of sex workers?

Which topics are most relevant/important for you in relation to sex work?

(English – autonomous)

Which type of sex work do you do?

What is your preferred title as a service provider?

Since when have you been doing sex work and did you do other types of sex work before?

What made you decide to do sex work in Germany?

What are some of the challenges in doing sex work in Germany? These can be social, political, personal, or economic.

With whom do you speak about your work?

When communicating with co-workers, what are the types of things you find yourselves talking about with each other?

Do you speak with colleagues outside of work?

Are political and social issues surrounding sex work ever a topic of conversation with co-workers?

When you want to know more about political and social issues affecting sex work in Germany, where do you usually look?

When you have questions about doing sex work, like specific practices of ways of working, where do you find yourself looking or asking?

What was your first encounter with sex work activism?

Have you volunteered or been involved with political activism for another cause?

Could you tell me about a specific experience you've had related to sex work activism? (Like going to a demonstration, joining a debate, writing a position paper, posting on social media, etc.)

Are there any hurdles you've experienced so far in doing sex work activism?

What kind of value does activism have for you?

What is your most preferred way of practicing activism?

Have you been able to observe any specific effects of your activism work so far?

How do you think sex work activism in Germany can be more effective?

In which networks related to sex work are you involved in Germany? These can be erotic portals, platforms, forums, etc.

What are some of the advantages and shortcomings of these networks?

How much do you encounter sex workers from types of sex work other than the type you do

How did you first hear about the BesD? (Short anecdote?)

What is your impression of the BesD, especially as a migrant sex worker?

In your view, what is the role of a professional association for sex workers?

What do you see as ways that a group like the BesD can do for sex workers in Germany?

What do you think the BesD can do to include more foreign sex workers?

Do you plan to comply with the new legal obligations?

What do think might change for you as a result of the new legal situation in Germany?

(German – non-member/autonomous)

In welchem Bereich arbeitest du? Seit wann?

Wie beschreibst du dich als Dienstleisterin vor anderen wenn du über deine Arbeit sprichst?

Was ist dir am wichtigsten wenn du arbeitest?

Welche Dinge oder Umstände brauchst du für die Arbeit?

Was gefällt dir am besten/am wenigsten bei deiner Arbeit?

Möchtest du langfristig in der Sexarbeit tätig sein?

Hast du schon mal von Gruppen gehört, die für die Rechte von Sexarbeiter/innen kämpfen?

Wie ist dein Eindruck von diesen Gruppen?

Was würde dich motivieren bzw. was hält dich davon ab aktiv für politische Rechte zu kämpfen?

Warst du schon mal bei einer Beratungsstelle? Wie war deine Erfahrung dort?

Was können Beratungsstellen und andere Initiativen am besten tun um Sexdienstleisterinnen zu unterstützen?

Was hältst du von Weiterentwicklungsangebote in der Sexarbeit? Z.B. Workshops, Seminare zu Praktiken

Was hältst du von Angeboten des Gesundheitsamtes für Sexarbeiter/innen?

Welche anderen Services wären für dich als Erotikdienstleisterin nützlich?

Wie viel Kontakt hast du mit Kolleginnen außerhalb der Arbeitszeiten?

Welche Vor- oder Nachteile hat die Vernetzung mit anderen im Gewerbe für dich?

Wenn du über Neuigkeiten in der Branche erfahren möchtest, wo schaust du hin/ wo liest du nach?

Was denkst du darüber wie deine Arbeit in der Gesellschaft gesehen wird? Hat das einen Einfluss darauf, wie du über deine Arbeit sprichst oder wie du arbeitest?

Wie findest du die folgenden Positionen?

Die Sexarbeit braucht keine Sonderregelungen, wie eine Anmeldung bei der Polizei, beim Ordnungsamt, oder ähnliches. Auch bestimmte Werbeverbote sind diskriminierend.

Die Sexarbeit sollte als normaler Beruf gesehen und behandelt werden.

Konzessionen oder besondere Auflagen für Bordelle sind nicht notwendig, sondern lediglich die Vorgaben unter §14 der Gewerbeordnung.

Die Kondompflicht stößt gegen das Selbstbestimmungsrecht von Sexarbeiter*innen.

Welchen Sinn hat einen Berufsverband für Sexarbeitende?

Was hältst du vom neuen ProstSchG? Hat das einen Einfluss darauf, wie du arbeitest?

Welche Themen, die mit Sexarbeit zu tun haben, sind für dich am wichtigsten?

(German – new member)

In welchem Bereich arbeitest du? Seit wann?

Wie würdest du dich als Dienstleister bezeichnen?

Wie stehst du zu deiner Arbeit? Welche Gedanken oder Gefühle werden durch die Arbeit ausgelöst?

Was sind die größten Vorteile an deiner Arbeit? Was gefällt dir?

Arbeitest du lieber alleine oder mit anderen zusammen bzw. in einem Betrieb oder in der eigenen Wohnung/online?

Gibt es etwas, was dir das Arbeiten als xxxx erschwert? (Das kann alles mögliche sein, z.B. persönliche Umstände, soziale oder politische Umstände, oder auch gar nichts)

Was würdest du dir wünschen, um erfolgreicher oder besser arbeiten zu können?

Abgesehen von der Arbeit mit Kunden, welche anderen Aufgaben erledigst du regelmäßig im Zusammenhang mit deiner Arbeit (z.B.: Verdiensttabellen, Steuern, Terminplanung)

Möchtest du langfristig in der Sexarbeit tätig sein?

Was hältst du von Weiterentwicklungsangebote in der Sexarbeit? Z.B. Workshops, Seminare zu Praktiken

Mit wem sprichst du über deine Arbeit?

Wie ist der Kontakt mit anderen Sexarbeitenden außerhalb der Arbeitszeiten? Zu Dienstleister*innen aus anderen Bereichen?

Sprichst du mit anderen Sexarbeitenden über den politischen Kontext oder den gesellschaftlichen Status der Sexarbeit?

Wie hast du vom BesD erfahren?

Wie hast du dich entschieden mitzumachen?

Welche Bedeutung hat der Aktivismus für dich? Was motiviert dich?

An welchen Aktionen machst du mit, die mit der Sexarbeit zu tun haben? Gibt es Anekdoten dazu?

Warst du vorher schon politisch aktiv oder ehrenamtlich tätig?

Was erhoffst du, wird dir die Mitgliedschaft bringen?

Hast du schon an irgendwelchen Aktivitäten des BesD teilgenommen?

Machst du bei anderen Aktionen mit, die mit der Sexarbeit zu tun haben?

Was sind deiner Ansicht nach, die Aufgaben eines Berufsverbandes?

Was kann der BesD am besten für erotische und sexuelle Dienstleister/innen tun?

Wie vernetzt du dich mit anderen in der Sex- und Erotikbranche? Damit sind auch Foren, Portale und Plattforme im Internet gemeint.

(*Falls nein oder kaum, warum ist der Bedarf an Vernetzung eher gering bei dir?)

Was bringt dich in diesen Austausch mit anderen? Was hast du davon?

Welche Gemeinsamkeiten bzw. Unterschiede empfindest du mit Sexarbeitenden in anderen Bereichen?

Wenn du Neuigkeiten aus der Branche wissen möchtest, wo schaust du hin/ wo liest du nach?
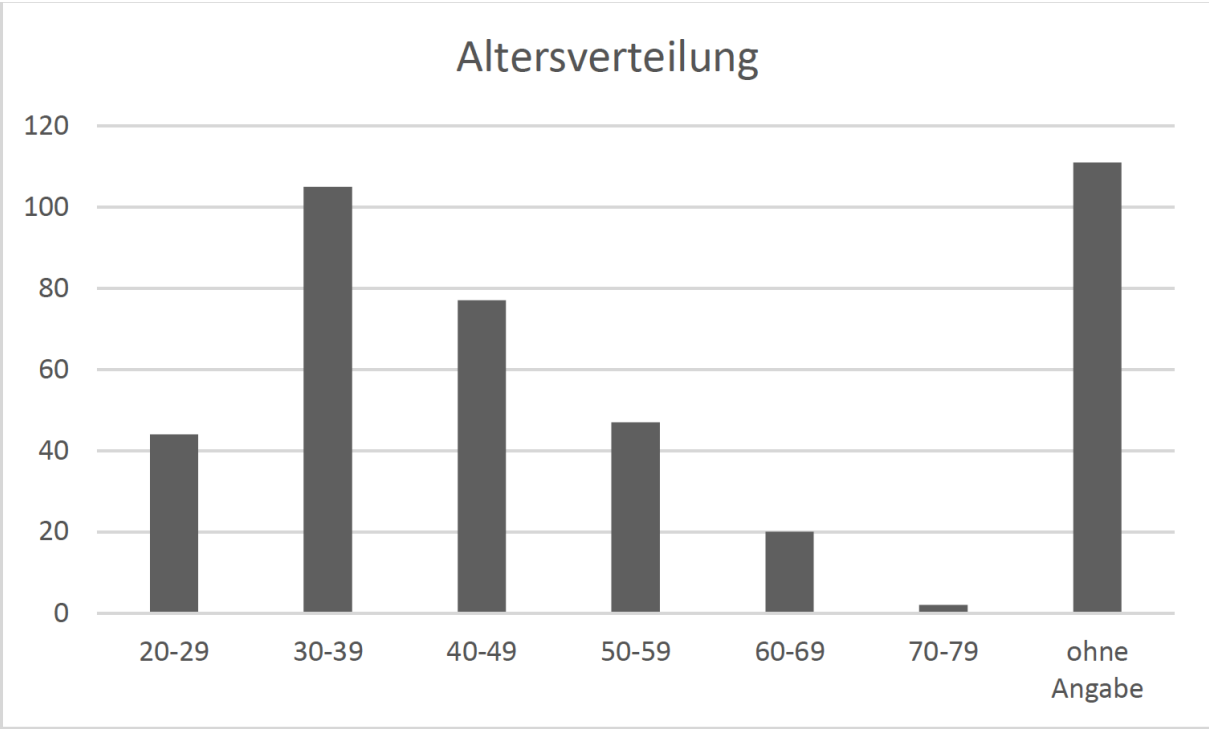
Welche Themen, die mit Sexarbeit zu tun haben, sind für dich am wichtigsten?

Hast du vor dich anzumelden?

Was wird sich für dich ändern nach dem ProstSchG? Wird es voraussichtlich Auswirkungen auf die Herangehensweise deiner Arbeit geben?

Was sind deine größten Bedenken zum neuen Gesetz?

Altersverteilung

Source: Report on BesD member statistics (BesD, 2018)

*Information about members was collected when sex workers contacted the membership coordinator about joining the Association

Translations: Altersverteilung – *age distribution*; ohne Angabe – *no response*

Appendix 4: Draft letter to data protection officials in Germany (translated)
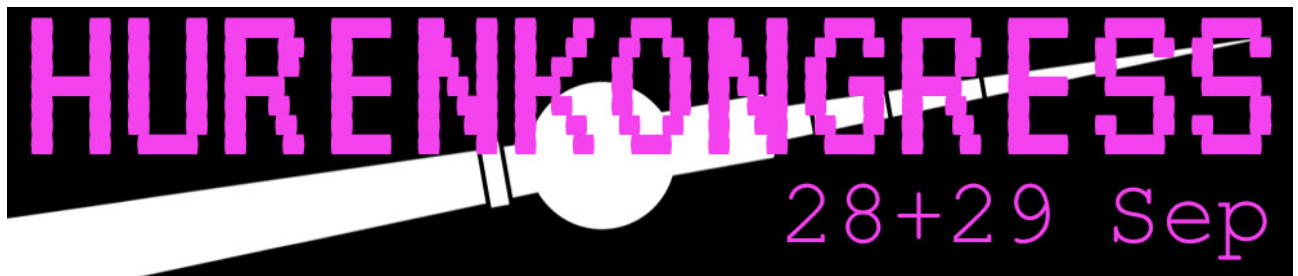
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Prostitute Protection Act has been in place since July of this year, which was passed despite massive opposition from those affected. At the moment we all feel very insecure. We are all very concerned about the security of our data, as it is essential for many of us to keep our work secret from even our closest friends and relatives, as the fear of social exclusion, including blackmail or children being mobbed at school due to a parent's an outing as a sex worker is too great. Sex work is one of the most stigmatised occupations ever, even in a relatively liberal society such as in Germany. Being expected to carry a "whore ID" around with us is an unreasonable demand! Rather than protection, this policy puts sex workers in danger of an unwanted outing and if the ID lands in the wrong hands, it can be used as an instrument of blackmail.

1. *Many health insurance companies deny applications from sex workers, despite the guarantee for social protections under the Prostitution Act (2002).*
2. *Because many sex workers keep their work secret from their partners and children, among others, a written document explicitly revealing their sex work can land in the wrong hands and cause ruptures in sex workers' personal lives.*
3. *The tax authorities frequently transmit personal data to the local commerce chambers. We would like to make sure that the job title "prostitute" does not appear in these records.*
4. *For migrant sex workers, it could be very dangerous if their homeland authorities find out about their work in Germany if sex work is illegal there. This is the case in almost all southern eastern European countries, where sex workers are socially ostracised and persecuted.*
5. *We would also like to know if the job title "prostitute" will appear in police records or in other official records in the event of tax-related disputes.*

We would appreciate clarification of the following questions:

1) *To what extent is it necessary to use the job description "prostitute" within the tax authority?*
2) *How can we be sure that the above-mentioned job description will not be named in any data transmission outside of the tax authority? This includes post to the homes of sex workers as well as to the authorities overseas and correspondence with the commerce chambers. Thank you in advance for your effort.*

HURENKONGRESS 28+29 Sep

program

Friday, 28. Sep

ab 10.30	Check-In			
11°°-12°°	Get together and brunch in room 211			
12°°-13°°	Opening			
	Dispersal to different rooms			
	WORKSHOPBLOG 1			
	room: 107	room: 311	room: 211	room: 312
13.15-15.15	Madame X - Bodies Talk: How to work with body-language (English)	Lady Amber & Mademoiselle Ruby - Self-Care & Mental Health in Work Life	Kristina Marlen - Cockless Penetration	Marlen Löffler - Qualitative Methods for Sex work Research (workshop with researchers)
15.15-16.15	Afternoon break with lunch			
	WORKSHOPBLOG 2			
	room: 211	room: 311	room: 107	room: 312
16.15-18.15	Pesha - Selfdefence for Sexworker (English) until 19:15!!	Undine de Rivière - Dirty-Talk	Ines Lückert - Introduction to Sexual Assistance	Christine Preiser - Interview Techniques for Sex Work Research (workshop with researchers)
18.15-19.00	Closing & 21°° WORLD OF WHORECRAFT-Party			

Thursday, 29. Sep

Barcamp: ███████████████████████████████████
███████

███████████████████

12°°–13°°	**Arrival and Brunch**
13°°–13.30	**Introductions**
13.30–14°°	**Gathering of workshop topics**
14°°–15.30	**Sex worker open space Part 1**
15.30–16°°	**Break with lunch**
16°°–17.30	**Sex worker open space Part 2 + output phase**
17.30–18.30	**Presentation of workshop outputs**