Stuart Hall, Gramsci, Foucault and Social Struggles: Two Case Studies[1]

SIMONE BORGSTEDE

Hamburg, Germany

When I first came across Stuart Hall's engagement with Gramsci in his analysis of Margaret Thatcher's struggle for power, I was excited by how much his theoretical framework provided new perspectives to reflect on my own experiences of social and political struggles. Here was somebody who analysed social change in its contradictory fluidity as something in the making. Not from 'out there', but as someone acting on it. It haunted me how valuable his approach was for understanding the unexpected outcomes and victories of social movements – not only for a better understanding of history and society, but also with a view to actively partaking in these movements and shape them.

Stuart Hall utilized Gramsci's concept of hegemony and connected it with elements of Foucault's analysis of the relation between discourse and power to make sense of change in certain political conjunctures. He stressed how important the struggle for the 'hearts and minds' of the people was in order for the ruling class to gain the necessary consent without which it could not install new regimes of power and maintain old ones. He perfected his analytical instruments when examining Margaret Thatcher's rise to power. She was the Conservative leader who took far-reaching steps to undermine the societal consensus on Keynesian politics and end the people's limited share in society's riches which the establishment of the welfare state after World War II had enabled. Hall showed how the politics of Thatcherism fundamentally attacked the welfare state by playing on the people's discontent with its bureaucratic nature (cf. 1979). He demonstrated how it availed itself of discourses of Englishness that emphasized a class-unifying racist superiority against 'alien others' and had been nourished through a 'moral panic' about 'mugging', and utilized both of these issues to organize the fundamental turn to neoliberal politics on a big scale (cf. Hall et al. 1978). Some politicians, like Margaret Thatcher, were just better than others in drawing on and, actually, shaping people's fears and desires without which it would not have been possible to install and maintain their repressive neoliberal politics. However, power

[1] This text is based on a paper from February 2016 and was finished in early October 2018.

relations are always contested. To Hall, Thatcher's victory was also due to a lack of initiative and inspiration among the political left regarding the mobilization of the people for emancipatory goals in solidarity.

While Stuart Hall was always highly aware of the necessity to consider historical specificities, the analytical framework he developed in the process of understanding Thatcherism provides extraordinary general insights into the dynamic character of power and, as I will demonstrate in this paper, can also be used both for understanding the conditions under which social movements challenge neoliberal hegemonies and estimating their chances to successfully oppose them. In "Gramsci and Us", Hall himself thought in this direction. Against an "entirely bureaucratic conception of politics", he focuses on "how people become empowered by doing something: first of all about their immediate troubles; then, the power expands their political capacity and ambitions, so that they begin to think again about what it might be like to rule the world …" (Hall 1987: 21). He invites us to see how the people involved in social struggles make experiences that go beyond their immediate goals and allow them to gain a wider perspective and to imagine and make other people see that 'another world' is possible. What, in his view, is central to every analysis of social processes is the realization of this dynamic – that change is always a realistic option. We should focus on that side of social, cultural and political struggles. We need these experiences to inspire us and develop our capacities of anticipating and working for change in times like ours.

Hall also highlighted the importance of 'representation' for the outcomes of social struggles (cf. 1997). Part of the battle for hegemony is always about meaning. It makes all the difference whether protests represented in the media are, for instance, understood as social upheavals against racist exclusion or labelled as 'gangsta culture'. According to him (cf. Hall 1992), there are only limited possibilities to counter discriminatory stereotypes; one of them is to accept the given 'name'/signifier and subvert the meaning connected with it. Such practices are about questions of 'identity'. When, in a specific conjuncture, many people start identifying with those who initiate such a process of subversion, even small groups from within social movements can suddenly stand for the longings of thousands of others.

In this paper, I will demonstrate the strength of Hall's approach for highlighting the chances of social movements to achieve their alternative goals although they fight from a position of weakness against powerful adversaries. I have been (and still am) an active part of the two movements I want to explore. First, I will discuss the success of the squatters and their allies in defending 'their' houses in Hamburg's St. Pauli Hafenstraße, where I still live, in the 1980s and 90s, and, second, the current[2] struggle of the refugee

[2] The group Lampedusa in Hamburg emerged in spring 2013. This text concentrates on the first years, yet also covers the development until October 2018.

group 'Lampedusa in Hamburg' for the right to stay in Germany despite the 'Dublin' regulations which force refugees to stay in those countries where they first arrived. Both of these struggles had to engage with and counter stereotypical representations. Both of them, as I will show, started by addressing "immediate troubles" and led to a deeper understanding that another world is not only needed, but also possible – "an entirely new form of civilization" (Hall 1987: 21). Therefore, I think it is worthwhile to engage with them.

How to Read the Hafenstraße-Mobilization with Hall[3]

When, in the early 1980s, about 100 quite different people occupied the empty houses and flats of St. Pauli Hafenstraße in the centre of Hamburg, next to the river Elbe, most people thought this would be a short episode. Hegemonic politics in Hamburg[4] allowed no house to be occupied for more than 24 hours. This order had been introduced after the violent eviction of a squatted house in 1973. The Hamburg Senate wanted to avoid a situation similar to Berlin, with more than 100 squatted houses. The plan was to build the headquarters of important companies, like that of the big publishing house Gruner & Jahr, at the waterfront.

However, the squatters had come to stay. They developed the empty houses into good places for living, repaired broken windows and worked at improving the buildings. Publicly, they stressed that the right to live in the city could not be limited to rich people, and they claimed to requisition these houses as a group, which went against the neoliberal politics of individualisation and the regulation of human relationships by way of the market. They wanted to live together in a more collective manner and therefore needed common space. These were aims other people in the city understood and sympathized with, or, in Gramsci's words: they did not go against 'common sense'. Nobody wanted to be forced from the inner city areas to the periphery of the city because of the interests of big companies or high rents. Not just the squatters, but also many others had ideas of and hopes for a life beyond the normalities of a capitalist society characterised by competition, the pressure to function economically and the repression of desires.

Thus, though the squatters had to fight being turned into an object of hate-propaganda by politicians and parts of the media, who represented them as 'parasites' that had to be prevented from growing like a 'cancerous tumour', they did not become as

[3] This section is mainly based on Borgstede 2010, 2013 and 2015; Küllmer 2013; Prömmel 2013; Sigmund/Stroux 1996.
[4] Hamburg is not only a city but also a state of the Federal Republic of Germany; its government, the Senat (senate), therefore is not only a municipal government but that of a Federal German state.

isolated as those in power intended. In fact, not even the campaign by the head of the secret service, who denounced them as offering a haven for members of the Red Army Faction, a militant urban guerilla group still active in the 1980s in Germany, succeeded in this (cf. Borgstede 2010: 853). The squatters were too connected to diverse communities: people knew them directly because of their public interventions in all kinds of social and political struggles. When the city government started to evict them one by one and had their belongings pushed out of the windows into garbage containers in the autumn of 1986, protests started to be organised on a broader basis. First, pupils from diverse schools came to show solidarity, then an alliance was formed, the 'Initiativkreis Hafenstraße'. Subsequently, the squatters were joined by anti-imperialistic and autonomous groups, groups from the anti-nuclear movement and a neighbourhood initiative, but also by critical jurists, 'Mieter helfen Mietern', an organization for tenants' rights, the newly founded GAL (Green party), the Communist party, as well as the Social Democrats' youth organisation. At the peak of this mobilization, a demonstration in solidarity with the Hafenstraße-people, comprising about 13,000 people, marched through Hamburg.

The activities of the solidarity-movement included a common day of action, which opened up new perspectives and brought the Hafenstraße-people out of a defensive position. In the summer of 1987, the squatters and common activists would occupy the evicted flats again. They had developed the houses into fortresses and it was clear that any attempt to evict them would entail a dangerous clash with the police. The Hafenstraße-people went to the Town Hall and asked to speak to the mayor to find a political solution. This was widely supported in the city. Notables asked why, indeed, a political solution should be out of the question. Evidently, public opinion had changed and power relations were being challenged. After another week of barricading the streets around the houses, a contract was signed – though one with terrible conditions – for leasing the flats. The contract was heavily criticised before it had even been signed. The CEOs of big companies meeting in Hamburg suggested that an experiment like this could only be tolerated outside of the city. But in the end – after another eight years of mobilizing, in the middle of the 1990s – the new mayor, who had been one of the harshest opponents of any consensual solution, publicly acknowledged that an agreement was needed which no longer involved the state as owner of these houses. We, the Hafenstraße-people, bought the houses as a housing cooperative with the help of hundreds of citizens of Hamburg for a 'political price'.

What had happened? As we saw it then, the 1980s were offering a great experience of courage and solidarity, which it surely was. We recognised that it had been important that we managed to keep pacifist and militant activists together in one campaign without major quarrels by maintaining a culture of open debate. And of course we also considered the historical conjuncture. Several aspects had come to the fore at the same

time. For instance, many people held the opinion that the state had unduly acted in the interests of huge companies – not least with regard to the anti-nuclear movement. In addition, we criticised the police brutality against people who merely mobilised themselves in order to fight for their rights and were, e.g., imprisoned for more than 12 hours in an encircled area, the so-called 'Hamburger Kessel' (1986). Moreover, there was the emergence of the Green-Alternative-List, a new party that attempted to articulate the democratic demands of social movements in the city parliament and challenge the Social Democratic party, which had continually been in power after WWII. All of this together, we thought, had helped us to resist. And this resistance had mobilized many people to support us, which showed that we were not alone. The simple slogan *Hafenstraße bleibt!* ('Hafenstraße is here to stay!') had become a kind of focal point for all kinds of social and political activism. 'Hafenstraße' had become known as a space of resistance all over the country and beyond. In the next few years, we became part of a mobilizing process, and demanded, as well as created, better living conditions for poor people in the neighbourhood of St. Pauli quarter. We succeeded in demonstrating publicly that, together, we, the people of the area, had better solutions for a town-development scheme which met the people's needs than the government. In fact, this was a scandal – the government did not want to be presented as careless and incompetent by a bunch of ex-squatters and their friends.

Is it possible to re-evaluate our past experience by looking through the lens offered by Stuart Hall, drawing as he does on Gramsci and Foucault alike?

1. Without noticing, we had led a 'struggle for the hearts and minds of the people' over a long period of time (cf. Borgstede 2010, 2013, 2015). In doing so, we had become attractive for many people as a stable anchor of resistance against hegemonic politics. Though we could not make our aims hegemonic themselves, in this process, we succeeded in making the politicians lose the legitimacy for evicting us violently – this would have put both the police officers and ourselves at risk and therefore endangered the majority consensus (cf. Gramsci 1991: 120).
2. Responding to the propaganda of those in power – a sort of propaganda that was meant to isolate and finally destroy us in a rather personal and direct way – we had made friends and got people to question the constitution of society. We drove, e.g., with a car equipped with loudspeakers to quarters at the outskirts of the city to come into contact with the people there and give them the opportunity to talk with us critically about our so-called 'scrounging', or we visited a meeting to which the Social Democratic party had invited workers' councils to engage them in direct debate. This could be seen as an attempt to displace and undermine hegemonic discourses through which we finally changed power relations. By then, the focus was no longer on us

stealing electricity and living parasitically off the means of others; instead, our fight was now interpreted like that of David against Goliath, or, maybe better, like that of a small village of Gauls against mighty Rome. Many sympathized with our approach to articulate our needs as *rights* and fight for them. In other words, we won the battle for representation.

3. For brief moments, we were able to create a space in which, first, the wish for a peaceful solution for the barricades and, later, for a political solution became hegemonic; a political solution that would not insist anymore on eviction as the only passable mode of action but would instead allow for alternative ways of living. At first, this only gave us a break and changed the conditions for our continued fight. Later, though, after another struggle for the hearts and minds of the people, especially in our neighbourhood, an eviction was no longer politically sustainable. We established a housing cooperative to take over the houses and developed ideas for a social town- development in St. Pauli against the senate's plan of developing a 'chain of pearls', copying the Docklands concept from London. To save their faces, the government at first did not accept the cooperative St. Pauli Hafenstraße but at the end of the negotiations asked us to establish a new cooperative together with some well-known citizens of the town who gave their names to the cause because they wanted to support a peaceful solution and assist the attempt to organize alternative ways of living. Together, we bought the houses but paid less than we gained for the renovation. Internally, the houses were always self-organized.
4. Our cause had become a battlefield on which we fought for much more than these houses. Our struggle had, in fact, become something like a 'floating signifier', which explains some of the hatred against us from within the ruling class. Since power, as Foucault (cf. 1999: 115) explains, is not something to gain and keep, we had to fight all the time, which, in itself, is much easier for those on the ruling side, with their institutions and apparatuses of repression, than for us who, as private persons, also needed to care for the necessities of our daily lives. For example, we could not even enjoy our victory after the mayor, during the barricades, had given us his word that a contract would be made with us, for, directly after we had removed the barricades, the police entered the houses, searched for the infrastructure of the pirate station Radio Hafenstraße, and made us feel helpless. At the peak of the mobilization, the ruling side had already gathered its power again (cf. Hall 1988: 54; Forgacs 2000: 220).

Be that as it may, we had found the necessary means to show solidarity and proved that a bunch of very different people can struggle tenaciously and achieve limited aims. This was only possible because we never gave up the struggle for representation, countered

the propaganda and the physical attacks by the governing forces and, thus, undermined the legitimacy of their actions and hence the homogeneity of the 'hegemonic bloc'.

For those who experienced it, not only in the houses, but also in the solidarity-movement, the neighbourhood and beyond, this was a valuable insight. The analytical tools developed by Stuart Hall are helpful to identify the nodal points for the movement's successes. At the same time, such analysis makes it easier to understand the dynamics of similar struggles in which, at first sight, even short-time success appears to be impossible. One such struggle is the one by the refugee group Lampedusa in Hamburg, upon which I will elaborate in the following (cf. Borgstede 2015, 2016). I have accompanied it since the refugees' first interventions in public space in late spring 2013.

'We are here to stay!': Lampedusa in Hamburg and the 'War of Position'

For more than five years, a group of migrant workers from Sub-Saharan countries, who had to flee Libya because, amongst other reasons, the NATO intervention in 2011 had escalated the civil war and who came, via the Italian island of Lampedusa, to Hamburg, have been fighting for their right to stay and work (cf. Borgstede 2016).[5] The Senate of Hamburg has not accepted their claim but so far has not dared to attack and deport them as a group because of the support and solidarity organized by people in all areas of civil society. 'Lampedusa in Hamburg' was the first large self-organized group of refugees in Hamburg. They developed their own voice and succeeded in being recognized in the city. Suddenly, the idea of 'the refugee' received another connotation – it stopped being a synonym for somebody deprived of all rights who had to be thankful for every outstretched hand and became a term designating somebody struggling for something fundamental to every democratic society: what Hannah Arendt, the German-Jewish philosopher, called the 'right to have rights' (Arendt 1998: 614).[6]

None of us understood why the mayor and the Senate of Hamburg did not recognize these refugees' need for work permits. It would even have been quite possible to provide them with a group solution as they demanded – a solution based on §23 Residence Law which would give them the right to stay. However, from the very beginning, the governing politicians only saw that such a solution might have set an example and 'lured' other so-called 'Dublin refugees' to Hamburg. Instead, the police initiated a campaign of racist controls in the autumn of 2013. In response, for days, diverse groups in support of the refugees intervened in public life in Hamburg; the mayor and the

[5] This section is mainly based on Borgstede 2016, 2015.

[6] In her analysis, the denial of the right to have rights was the condition which made it possible for the National Socialists to first exclude and then exterminate millions of Jews, as well as hundreds of thousands of Sinti and Roma and others, during the time of the Third Reich.

minister of the interior were confronted by them wherever they showed up. An international appeal against these controls and for the refugees' right to stay was set up; two of the first who signed were Stuart and Catherine Hall. In the end, the Senate made a rather strange 'offer' to the refugees, and most of them refused it because it involved giving up their Italian status of subsidiary protection as refugees of war. However, the Senate never made a general attempt to enforce Dublin regulations against this group of refugees again, though it applied them where possible against single members. All in all, it had not succeeded in gaining political consent for a politics of deportation.

Over the course of more than five years, supporters and friends have tried to help the members of Lampedusa in Hamburg in their struggle to cover the basic needs of shelter, food, access to work etc., yet without really succeeding. As it is, a diminished group of refugees still holds on. For them, Hamburg is the place where they organized themselves and it is the first place where they experienced so much solidarity. In June 2018, they published a city map showing important places of their resistance, celebrating five years of Lampedusa in Hamburg (cf. Lampedusa in Hamburg 2018b). Though the group is no longer strong in numbers, its activists still play a significant role in the self-organized refugee struggles. For instance, they participated in the organizing of the international parade United against Racism on 29 September 2018 in Hamburg which assembled more than 30,000 people on the streets and was called 'das erhoffte Signal' (the awaited signal) against the galloping move to the right in official politics by the daily, *die tageszeitung* (*taz*) (cf. We'll Come United 2018; Jakob 2018). They are among the initiators of a European refugee and migrant parliament meeting at the European Parliament in Bruxelles in October by invitation of the United European Left / Nordic Green Left (cf. Lampedusa in Hamburg 2018a). In 2017, activists of the Lampedusa group called for a refugee-demonstration against the summit of the G20 states in Hamburg where refugees from many countries accused the politics of the G20 as cause for flight (cf. We are here! 2017). In February 2016, they initiated and co-organized the International Conference of Refugees and Migrants at Kampnagel, a huge theatre building, with more than 1,000 refugee-participants (cf. Badrnejad 2016). They have already fundamentally changed the city and its discourses on flight and migration. We became highly aware of this when, in late summer 2015, more and more people arrived from war-regions like Syria, East Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq, besides the Roma from the Balkans. Even in the conservative protests against new settlements for refugees, which the Senate planned with up to 4,000 refugees each, traces of the 'refugees welcome' discourse made it impossible to mobilize on a large scale without arguing in favour of refugees' rights (cf. Plenum 2016: n. pag.).

Let us take a closer look at the beginnings, development and substance of this struggle and the mobilization of solidarity between and with refugees it initiated and see to what extent Stuart Hall's way of working with Gramsci's concept of hegemony helps

to understand their political dimensions. Though Susi Meret and Elizabetta Della Corta work with Gramsci, too, in their account of the beginnings of Lampedusa in Hamburg, they focus on what they call a 'misplaced alliance' (2016, 206) with 'the church' and discuss whether the negotiations with the senator of the interior and the bishop, as well as the media appearances of the vicar of St. Pauli, obscured the group's public voice (cf. 2016, 214-17). My interest, however, is in exploring the challenges to hegemonic European refugee politics this group's struggle initiated and still fuels.[7]

The refugees who organized Lampedusa in Hamburg had found themselves on the streets of the city when the winter emergency programme ended, which had given them shelter in the winter of 2012-13. First, they went to the town hall to speak to the mayor, without success. Second, they tried to build a camp in front of the head office of the governing Social Democratic party but were hindered by the police; they could only install an information tent near Hamburg's central station. Since they were driven out of the public gardens by police, some of them asked the vicar of St. Pauli church for permission to sleep in the churchyard. As it was very cold, the congregation decided to give them shelter inside of the church (cf. Gliemann 2014). From then onwards, all kinds of people came to organise the daily necessities, and solidarity spread throughout the neighbourhood and the city. The local football club FC St. Pauli (2014), well known for the antiracist culture of its fans, invited them. The crew of the established Thalia-Theatre staged a reading of Elfriede Jelinek's new play *Die Schutzbefohlenen* (2013) in the church, in which the refugees participated as the choir (cf. Thalia Theatre 2016). Demonstrations and other public events for their rights turned into festivals, the refugees became one of the major themes covered by the media in Hamburg on a daily basis, and the group became well-known throughout Europe and beyond (cf. BBC 2013; Al Jazeera 2013; Modern Ghana 2013).

Of course, there were attempts to install counter-discourses to discredit them and destroy the solidarity with them – first of all, by spreading the rumour that they had all been Gaddafi's mercenaries (cf. Hackensberger 2011; Renner 2013; Lampedusa in Hamburg 2013a)[8]. Second, they were accused by the Senate and mainstream media of refusing to give their personal data to the police. Third, there was the suggestion that

---

[7] In my opinion, Meret/Della Corte (2016) oversimplify the role of 'the church'. For other literature discussing the Lampedusa group's experience, see also Odugbesan/Schwiertz 2017, who put the struggle of Lampedusa in Hamburg into context with other refugee struggles. For an inspiring discussion of Hall's understanding of identities as always in the making based on interviews with activists of the Lampedusa group and exploring its transnationality, see Colombini 2018.

[8] This rumour was already spread by international media in 2011. Libyan rebels had invented this accusation against blacks and imprisoned them in internment camps. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both declared that this was a lie. In 2013 it was nevertheless revived, e.g. by Stefan Hensel, the former Vice-President of the Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft, who maintained it was the reason why they would not give their personal data to the police. The allegation was hinted at in diverse media reports. Lampedusa in Hamburg deals with it in a letter to the union ver.di.

they wanted to be granted a special status, different from that of other refugees, and, related to this, the claim was put forth that they all wanted to live at the expense of others. However, these attempts at discrediting them were not fruitful in a situation that had generated so much public interest, a situation in which a huge group of refugees organized weekly demonstrations and talked back. They went to schools, universities, neighbourhoods and church-congregations to open a dialogue, and most of them joined the German United Services Trade Union, ver.di, which initiated fundamental discussions about unionist solidarity with *sans papiers* (Twickel 2014; Völpel 2013). There was much face-to-face communication. Ultimately, the image that the public had formed of them was such: this was a group of people who had worked in Libya to support themselves and their families back home and had had to flee because of war. They wanted to work and to rebuild their lives; and if this was not possible in Italy because of the economic crisis, why not in Hamburg, one of the richest cities in Europe, where they were already included in society through the massive solidarity movement? This fight could not easily be represented as 'unjust'. On the contrary: it was the Dublin regulations that were now perceived to be against 'common sense'.

Thus, the Lampedusa group somehow won the battle for the hearts and minds of a huge number of the citizens of Hamburg. Nonetheless, even this huge surge of sympathy was not enough to secure them 'residence status'. At the peak of the movement, about 15,000 people walked through the city of Hamburg in solidarity with the refugees. However, it was not possible to keep up this level of support, since such kinds of discourse-related power relations are always fragile. When the bishop welcomed the offer of the Senate to the refugees to apply for 'residence status' and, for the time of the legal proceedings, accept 'Duldung' (i.e., the temporary suspension of deportation), the media suggested that the refugees in St. Pauli's Church would go along with it. However, as a group, Lampedusa in Hamburg (2013b) refused the Senate's offer since it did not offer the prospect of permanent residence for all and meant risking the loss of their Italian papers. People started wondering: what does this mean, why this divisiveness? Was there maybe some truth to the suggestion that this group wanted to surreptitiously gain 'privileges'? As a result, there was bad blood for a time, which also made it difficult to turn the Senate's initiative around. But the struggle went on. One of the campaigns tried to highlight the working experience of the refugees, supporting their demand for a work permit and, in doing so, appealing to 'common sense'. The affair generated widespread media coverage (Mikuteit/Haarmeyer 2014; Tangermann 2014; von Appen 2014a, 2014b), but there was no success in bringing together again all the people who had once been involved in the solidarity movement. A new opportunity seemed to open up when the Green party negotiated the conditions for joining the Hamburg government in 2015, but they entered the coalition with the Social Democrats without achieving a political solution for the Lampedusa group (only the 2013 offer to accept the status of 'Duldung' was renewed). Meanwhile, some of the refugees found individual solutions

like marriage to a German citizen. The group became one of the strongholds of the alliance *Recht auf Stadt – Never Mind the Papers!* ('Right to the City – Never Mind the Papers!'), which supported refugees' demands for better living conditions and organized powerful demonstrations in 2014 and 2015 (Recht auf Stadt 2015), with many refugees from the big camps taking part. Their claim 'we are here to stay' is still valid, though the conditions under which most of them have to live are miserable and insecure. Their alliances with other refugee activists, common societal interventions and in particular the International Conference of Refugees and Migrants entitled "Struggles of refugees and migrants – how to go on!" showed how inspiring they still are for refugees and other activists in social movements alike (Robert Bosch Stiftung 2016).[9]

Today, activists of the group Lampedusa in Hamburg participate in everyday activities of the antiracist struggle and the networking for equal rights for all in the city; there is hardly any demonstration without them speaking. Against the increasing pressure of right-wing and racist mobilizations in society and on the streets, they have developed their own voice and are respected for their tenacious resistance not only in Hamburg, but on a European level.

In summary, an application to this complex situation of Stuart Hall's methodology yields the following results:

1. Marginal groups can lead a successful battle for the 'hearts and minds of the people' in civil society. However, this does not always entail material gains in the form of political solutions. The sympathy the refugees provoked led to a stalemate in terms of power relations. But this 'war of position' is much easier conducted by a government with all its resources than by a group of refugees without basic rights, who need to struggle to survive.

2. Discourses can work in different directions at the same time. From the summer of 2015, the discourse of a German *Willkommenskultur* ('welcoming culture'), which Lampedusa had helped to establish, focused on the newly arriving refugees while unfortunately eclipsing the concerns of those already in the country. The media reported stories about failure or success of 'integration' and later about the struggle against the deportation of Afghan refugees. In this atmosphere, the African refugees, who had been fighting for their right to build up their lives anew in Hamburg, fell into oblivion. The struggle they initiated was presented by the mainstream media as singular and unimportant compared to the arrival of so many other refugees of war, instead of understanding it as the spearhead of refugee struggles against the Dublin regulations;

[9] Refugee women groups criticised at the conference that they did not get the space they needed for speaking for themselves publicly and took the opportunity the conference delivered (cf. Schipkowski 2016).

regulations which still make it impossible for tens of thousands of refugees all over Europe to go on with their lives since they cannot build up a new existence in the countries in which they arrive, like Greece or Italy, both because of the high rate of unemployment there and because they are not allowed to do so in other countries. The example of Lampedusa in Hamburg and the solidarity it gained, however, has empowered other refugees to instigate processes of self-organisation in the camps and still inspires refugees all over Europe to fight for their rights.

3. The 'common sense' implied in the demand for a European work permit for refugees might become a challenge to hegemonic European politics if developed by more initiatives in diverse countries. Such a change would also be in the interest of companies looking for employees and of the border-countries in the south of Europe, like Greece and Italy. Yet, now, there are even discussions on the EU level to end the already restricted freedom of movement for refugees in Europe (Pro Asyl 2016) – by scrapping the three-month allowance to visit other states. Hegemonic and nationalist forces in the EU are establishing an even more restrictive 'fortress Europe' through 'deals' with Erdoğan's Turkey, the Afghan government and diverse African national leaders (some of them dictators) in order to keep refugees in camps outside of Europe and to regain control after having supposedly lost it in the "long summer of migration" (Hess et al. 2016: 6-8).

Conclusion

Stuart Hall's analyses provide essential insights not only for researchers of social change but also for the agents of such change. Understanding contested power relations is important because it allows us to see the opportunities to act even under conditions that seem to make change towards a society with equal rights for all impossible. One realizes how important it is to be flexible in pursuing one's aims and to keep going even when this seems undoable.

In this age of social media, one photograph of a dead refugee child can initiate a shift in direction of the hegemonic discourse (cf. Hall 1987, 1992, 1997). However, the same can be done by the media, as becomes evident in the case of the story that refugees sexually assaulted women on a mass scale on New Year's Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne. It is of course much easier to initiate such a media campaign when one is in power and can use its instruments than when one is on the margins. As it is, we see that laws against refugees are gradually tightened, often resulting in the annulment of much positive change refugees have struggled for for years, like the abandonment of the law that forced them to remain in a certain 'residence' or the practice of not giving out money but coupons or food instead. Yet, from marginal positions, too, struggles can bring about

change. Nobody would have thought, a while ago, that it would be possible for nearly one million refugees to arrive in Germany. This is a new challenge to German and European societies in which the newcomers are not only victims but also agents of change. We witness a new social movement struggling for "an entirely new form of civilization" (Hall 1987: 21; cf. Tsianos/Karakayali 2014). This struggle centrally includes caring for the people and fighting to secure the networks and organizational structures they have developed, as one of the Lampedusa refugees formulated it. It also means recognizing the pressure the government is under because of one's initiatives, though these may not succeed in obtaining concrete social and political solutions for all. On the one hand, it is important to notice the clear shift to the right the whole discourse on refugees has taken since the creation of a "moral panic" (Hall et al. 1978: 16, using a phrase created by Stanley Cohen in his 1972 *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*) after the Cologne affair, in which the racist image of the "black man as rapist" (Wigger 2007: 78) was once more mobilized and knotted together with the stereotype of the Islamic patriarch, thus nurturing racism against Muslims and Africans alike – a case of "ethnosexism", as Gabriele Dietze (2016) calls it. This has increasingly reaffirmed the separation into 'good' refugees of war and 'bad' scroungers, which had already been installed by right-wing politicians and journalists, and which is used to legitimize the new exclusionary laws and increasing deportations of Roma to the Balkan countries and, since December 2016, of Afghans, too. On the other hand, (most) politicians of the ruling parties still deemed it necessary to keep articulating their nationalist and repressive aims within the bounds of a universalist and antisexist framework, because public opinion and common sense had brought about a reversal in the direction of solidarity with refugees against calls for 'Obergrenzen' (upper limits) on immigration.

Since the general elections of 2017, however, an openly racist party is part of the Bundestag, the parliament of the Federal German Republic. The governing parties took over this party's calls to close the borders and deport as many refugees as possible; thus, exclusionary and increasingly racist politics have been legitimized. All over Europe, there is a clear move to the right in official politics and hegemonic discourse, against newcomers, especially Muslims. Even sea-rescue, a field in which non-governmental organizations have long showed that considerable parts of European civil societies did and do not accept the deadly exclusionary 'fortress Europe' politics in the Mediterranean, is being increasingly criminalized; refugees are left to die or pushed back to Libyan camps financed by the European Union, where rape and torture by the Libyan coastguard are daily fare. Today, politicians like Italy's minister of interior, Matteo Salvini, use a language in their stirring of hatred against refugees which reminds one of the dark times of Nazi-fascism. Germany's minister of the interior, Horst Seehofer, publicly announced that he was glad about the deportation of 69 refugees on his 69th birthday. Though many people still work in the direct support of the newcomers, for a moment, it seemed as if this kind of political cynicism that turns refugees into 'the other'

was already becoming the new “normality” (cf. Agamben 2004); many people felt paralysed. But meanwhile, a new political movement has started to develop on a broad scale which clearly says no to all violations of human rights and starts to understand that racism makes a society impossible in which people can live together peacefully. We witnessed this in the spontaneous mobilizations of tens of thousands of people all over Germany in the campaign ‘Seebrücke’[10], or the parade organized by the network ‘We’ll come united’ on 29th September 2018 in Hamburg that mobilized thousands of refugees and migrants, as well as tens of thousands of people from all sectors of society – altogether more than 30,000 – against exclusion and deportation, for a society that grants equal rights to all. Moreover, what is really new in the present movement is that the newly arrived people, like the group Lampedusa in Hamburg, are centrally involved.

That power relations are fragile is an insight Stuart Hall clarified for me. His special way of working with Gramsci and Foucault to understand the close relation between discourse and power, focusing on conjunctures in which power relations are challenged and might change, is crucial if we want to understand these difficult and complex times and not fall into despair. It allows for a ‘pessimism of the intellect’ and an ‘optimism of the will’, as Stuart Hall, referring to Gramsci, would have put it (cf. 2012). We will not always win as we did with the Hafenstraße struggle. But we might learn to go on even when ‘lying in the trenches’. This is something essential to be learned, the basis for being able to highlight what is going wrong in society and to find solutions in future conjunctures, besides having the important personal experience of working for common aims and trying to live in solidarity with each other in our daily lives. This is the only way to live in a situation like ours today, in which our societies are invited almost daily to accept ever more violations of human rights and to submit to a new undeclared state of emergency which legitimizes the exclusion of more and more people from a decent life not only because of the so-called ‘colour-line’ (W. E. B. Du Bois), but because of their worthlessness as huge subaltern masses for global capitalism, as Achille Mbembe (2014) claims. Stuart Hall did not only show us ways to develop a deeper understanding of the fragility of power relations. He made us sensitive to societal change and challenged us to accept the responsibility to take advantage of all kinds of opportunities for intervention. Moreover, he took active part in this struggle on the side of the marginalized and encouraged others to do so as well. As should we.

---

[10] The alliance ‘Seebrücke’ calls for secure ways for refugees to come into the country – like bridges across the sea. It is a movement which is growing rapidly in support of all those who still try to organize sea-rescue despite criminalization, against European politics that accept the death of refugees.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio (2004). *Ausnahmezustand*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Al Jazeera (2013). "Migrants struggle to make Germany new home." *Al Jazeera*. No longer available. [Accessed 18 Nov. 2013]

Arendt, Hannah (1998). *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft: Antisemitismus, Imperialismus, totale Herrschaft*. 6th ed., München: Piper.

Badrnejad, Kian (2016). *NDR Hamburg Journal*. 27 Feb. 2016.

BBC (2013). "Hamburg blames Italy over 300 homeless African refugees." BBC, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22694022>. [accessed 28 May 2013]

Borgstede, Simone Beate (2010). "Der Kampf um die Köpfe und Herzen der Menschen: St. Pauli Hafenstraße, 1981 bis 1987." *Das Argument* 289.6: 849-58.

— (2013). "Der Kampf um das Gemeinsame: St. Pauli Hafenstraße." *Häuserkampf II: Wir wollen alles – Hausbesetzungen in Hamburg*. Ed. Willy Baer and Karl-Heinz Dellwo. Hamburg: Laika, 105-49.

— (2015). "Geschichte ist immer offen: Denken und kämpfen mit Stuart Hall." *Stuart Hall: Aktivismus, Pop und Politik*. Ed. Dagmar Brunow. Mainz: Ventil, 66-73.

— (2016). "'We are here to stay': Reflections on the struggle of the Refugee Group 'Lampedusa in Hamburg' and the Solidarity Campaign, 2013-2015." *Migration, Squatting and Radical Autonomy*. Ed. Pierpaolo Mudu and Sutapa Chattopadhyay. London: Routledge, 162-79.

Colombini, Jacopo (2018). "Lampedusa in Hamburg: Representing Lampedusa in a Transnational Context." *Transnationalizing Lampedusa: Representing Migration in Italy and Beyond'*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of St. Andrews, submitted September 2018: 158-212.

Dietze, Gabriele (2016). "Ethnosexism: Sex-Mob-Narrative um die Kölner Sylvesternacht." *Movements* 1.2. <http://movements-journal.org/issues/03.rassismus/10.dietze--ethnosexismus.html>. [accessed 2 Oct. 2016]

Forgacs, David (2000). *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935.* New York: New York University Press.

FC St. Pauli (2014). "Bauwagen für Lampedusa-Flüchtlinge eingeweiht." FC St. Pauli. <http://www.fcstpauli.com/data/news/verein/home_page/kiezhelden/bauwagen_einweihung>. [accessed 29 Sept. 2016]

Foucault, Michel (1999). *Der Wille zum Wissen: Sexualität und Wahrheit* I. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Gliemann, Doreen (2014). "Nothilfe für Flüchtlinge: Hamburger St. Pauli-Kirche war ein Jahr lang rund um die Uhr geöffnet." 27 May. <https://www.nordkirche.de/nachrichten/nachrichten-detail/nachricht/hamburger-st-pauli-kirche-war-ein-jahr-lang-rund-um-die-uhr-geoeffnet/>. [accessed 6 March 2018]

Gramsci, Antonio (1991ff.) *Gefängnishefte*. 10 vols. Ed. K. Bochmann, W. F. Haug, and P. Jehle. Hamburg: Argument.

Hackensberger, Alfred (2011). "Die Mär von schwarzafrikanischen Gaddafi-Söldnern." *Welt*. 31 Aug. <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article13576988/Die-Maer-von-schwarzafrikanischen-Gaddafi-Soeldnern.html>. [accessed 17 Sept. 2018]

Hall, Stuart (1979). "The Great Moving Right Show." *Marxism Today*, January issue: 14-20.

— (1987). "Gramsci and Us." *Marxism Today*, June issue: 16-21.

— (1988). "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 35-73.

— (1992). "Encoding/Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During, London: Routledge, 90-103.

— (1997/2003). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London et al.: SAGE and Open University.

— (2012). "The Saturday Interview: Stuart Hall by Zoe Williams." *The Guardian*, 11 Feb. <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2012/feb/11/saturday-interview-stuart-hall>. [accessed 29 Sept. 2016]

Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Hess, Sabine, Bernd Kasparek, Stefanie Kron, Mathias Rodatz, Maria Schwertl, and Simon Sontowski (2016). "Der lange Sommer der Migration: Krise, Rekonstitution und ungewisse Zukunft des europäischen Grenzregimes." *Der lange Sommer der Migration: Grenzregime III*. Ed. Sabine Hess et al. Berlin and Hamburg: Assoziation A, 6-24.

Jakob, Christian (2018). "Antirassistische Demo in Hamburg: Das erhoffte Signal." *taz*, 30 Aug. <http://www.taz.de/!5536664/> [accessed 3 Oct. 2018].

Jelinek, Elfriede (2013). *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. <http://www.elfriedejelinek.com/> [accessed 29 Sept. 2016].

Küllmer, Hella (2013). "Zusammen leben, zusammen kämpfen." *Häuserkampf II: Wir wollen alles – Hausbesetzungen in Hamburg*. Ed. Willy Baer and Karl-Heinz Dellwo. Hamburg: Laika, 75-89.

Lampedusa in Hamburg (2013a). Letter of Lampedusa in Hamburg addressing the union ver.di. 10 July 2013. <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/de/brief-von-lampedusa-in-hamburg-an-die-gewerkschaft-ver-di/>. [accessed 17 Sept. 2018]

Lampedusa in Hamburg (2013b). "Open Letter to the Senate." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, n. pag. [accessed 2 Jan. 2017]

Lampedusa in Hamburg (2018a): Facebook page, <https://de-de.facebook.com/lampedusainhamburg> [accessed 3 Oct. 2018].

Lampedusa in Hamburg (2018b). *City Map: "5 Years of Struggle"*. June 2018.

Mbembe, Achille (2014). *Kritik der schwarzen Vernunft*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Meret, Susi and Elisabetta Della Corte (2016). "Spaces of Resistance and Re-Actuality of Gramsci in Refugees' Struggles for Rights? The 'Lampedusa in Hamburg' between Exit and Voice." *Solidarity without Borders: Gramscian Perspectives on Migration and Civil Society Alliances.* Ed. Óscar García Agustín and Martin Bak Jørgensen. London: Pluto Press, 203-20.

Mikuteit, Hanna-Lotte, and Jan Haarmeyer (2014). "Lampedusa-Flüchtlinge: Wir wollen arbeiten." *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 25 June: front page.

Modern Ghana (2013). "Stranded African-Refugee in Hamburg." *Modern Ghana*. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/469522/stranded-african-refugee-in-hamburg.html> [accessed 2 Jan. 2017].

Odugbesan, Abimbola, and Helge Schwiertz (2017). "'We are here to stay': Refugee Struggles in Germany Between Unity and Division." *Protest Movements in Asylum and Deportation.* Ed. S. Rosenberger et al. IMISCOE Research Series, 185-203. <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-74696-8_9> [accessed 7 Oct. 2018].

Prömmel, Erdmann (2013). "'Hamburgs größtes Problem' oder wer war Hermann Nyenkerken?" *Häuserkampf II: Wir wollen alles – Hausbesetzungen in Hamburg*. Ed. Willy Baer and Karl-Heinz Dellwo. Hamburg: Laika, 189-207.

Plenum des Hamburger Recht auf Stadt-Netzwerks (2016). "Migration findet Stadt: Gegen die Hysterie – für eine andere Planung." *Recht auf Stadt*. <http://www.rechtaufstadt.net/recht-auf-stadt/migration-findet-stadt-gegen-die-hysterie-fuer-eine-andere-planung> [accessed 29 Sept. 2016].

Pro Asyl (2016). "Geplante Reform des Dublin-Systems: Verschärfungen stellen Flüchtlinge schutzlos." *Pro Asyl*. <https://www.proasyl.de/news/geplante-reform-des-dublin-systems-verschaerfungen-stellen-fluechtlinge-schutzlos/> [accessed 2 Oct. 2016].

Recht auf Stadt – Never mind the Papers (2015). *Nevermindthepapers*. <nevermindthepapers.noblogs.org> [accessed 2 Oct. 2016].

Renner, Valery (2013). "Auf keinen Fall dulden." *Junge Welt*, 22 Oct. <https://www.jungewelt.de/loginFailed.php?ref=/artikel/209527.auf-keinen-fall-dulden.html> [accessed 17th Sept. 2018].

Robert Bosch Stiftung (2016). "Flüchtlinge nehmen ihre Zukunft selbst in die Hand." *Robert-Bosch-Stiftung*. <http://www.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language1/html/51775_66470.asp#> [accessed 3 Mar. 2016].

Schipkowski, Katharina (2016). "Eklat bei Flüchlingskonferenz Hamburg: Frauen ergreifen das Wort." *taz*, Section Hamburg. http://taz.de/!5282015/ [accessed 29 Sept. 2018]

Sigmund, Monika, and Marily Stroux (1996). *Zu bunt: Wandbilder in der Hafenstraße*. Hamburg: St. Pauli-Archiv e.V.

Tangermann, Geli (2014). "'Lasst uns arbeiten'." *Hamburger Morgenpost*, 25 June: 13.

Thalia Theater (2016). *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. <https://www.thalia-theater.de/de/spielplan/repertoire/die-schutzbefohlenen/> [accessed 29 Sept. 2016].

Tsianos, Vassilis S., and Juliane Karakayali (2014). "Rassismus und Repräsentationspolitik in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 13.14: 33-39.

Twickel, Christoph (2014). "An Lampedusa zerschellt: Der Richtungsstreit bei ver.di um die Flüchtlinge tut der Stadt gut." *ZEIT Online*, 8 May, <https://www.zeit.de/2014/20/hamburg-fluechtlinge-richtungsstreit-verdi> [accessed 29 Sept. 2016].

Von Appen, Kai (2014a). "Knackpunkt Arbeitserlaubnis." *taz*, 7 July. <http://www.taz.de/!329092/> [accessed 13 Oct. 2018].

— (2014b). "'Wir wollen uns einbringen'." *taz*, 25 June: 24.

Völpel, Eva (2013). "Ver.di und Lampedusa-Flüchtlinge: Die Grenzen der Solidarität." *taz* <http://www.taz.de/!5052397/> [accessed 29 Sept. 2016].

"We are here! AntiG20RefugeesMarch24062017" (2017). YouTube, uploaded by FCMC, 27 June <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJR8fYi8rX0&feature=youtu.be> [accessed 17 Sept. 2018].

We'll Come United (2018). "United Against Racism." https://www.welcome-united.org/de/well-come-united/ [accessed 13 Nov. 2018]

Wigger, Iris (2007). *Die "Schwarze Schmach am Rhein": Rassistische Diskriminierung zwischen Geschlecht, Klasse, Nation und Rasse*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.