

**Abstract:**

The paper concerns the inquiry of the autonomous part(s) of social movements and reflects the shift of theoretical interest while doing field – work. Looking at the field of study revealed that there are heterogeneous forms of radical democratic grassroots-action and pooling those within a scheme calls for a differentiated, empirically rooted insight into movements and the emerging political subjectivities. Empirical insights showed the feasibility to develop gendered „subject positions“ evolving from gendered political experiences, roles and gender relations within activists´ experiences and a linkage between the emergence of political subjectivities and the notion of “political emotionality”. These considerations are going to be theorized including approaches coming out of cultural studies, as well as intersectional and post-colonial perspectives.

**1. Introductory description: The Starting Point of Analysis and Changes of the interest while doing fieldwork**

The proposed paper is an outline of theoretical ideas that emerged doing fieldwork within an ethnographical research project about the autonomous political scene in Vienna. It concerns the discussion and examination of gendered political subjectivities within new social movements including the subject-positions of activists in various political grassroots-action groups. Starting point of the project was the analysis of social movements as collective actors within the field of radical democracy. It has been assumed that the direct-democratic and consensual organizational form, chosen in most of these projects, would lead to the emergence of new democratic practices and interlinked political subjectivities. Therefore the field – work started with an examination of different strategies and organizational forms of political grassroots-action as practices within the field of “radical democracy”, a concept which can be shortly defined as the broadening of democratic practices within society, while producing and performing new practices of grassroots-democracy (Laclau/Mouffe 1985). A further topic of interest are political subjectivities, which emerge in the explored field of democratic political action (Laclau 1994, 1997, 2002; Mouffe 2000). The empirical research of my dissertation was originally concerned with the “grassroots-level” of democracy, or in other words with non-state forms of democratic and political organisation. Therefore the first theoretical interest focused on a theoretical framework, which deals with theories of democracy and the interlinked emergence of political subjectivities (Laclau / Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1994, 1997, 2002; Melucci 1996; Mouffe 2000; Graeber 2004). Part of the core question was the interest for the political and democratic impact, which is exercised by new

social movements on organisational forms of democracy and the interrelated political subjectivities. The questions to be answered are the following: *How do radical democratic practices on a societal micro-level look like?* And: *Does the form of direct-democratic political self-organisation lead to the emergence of political subjectivities and practices, which enable people to apply forms of radical democracy?*

Using an ethnographic approach, participant observations were conducted in two left-wing, autonomous political groups which are organized according to the principles of direct democracy or, to put it clearer: according to anarchist principles of self-organisation. This means that there are periodical assemblies, in which the participants discuss problems and negotiate the group's or initiative's actions. These democratic practices that are developed and applied within the observed political action are defined as radical-democratic practices and therefore constitute the micro-level of radical democracy as defined by Laclau / Mouffe as the broadening of democratic practices within society (1985).

After entering the field the focuses of interest got enlarged, which was due to several empirical observations and considerations: firstly political subjectivities seemed to be crucially influenced by different positionalities, which appeared to be gendered and intersectionally influenced. This led to a shift of the theoretical interest toward the inclusion of feminist theorizing of activism and intersectional approaches to „transversal politics“<sup>1</sup>, which is more and more discussed within the Austrian autonomous political scene. Furthermore, political conflicts within the field of study led me to the notion of a linkage between „political subjectivities“ and a phenomenon, which I came to call „political emotionality“. Political emotionality refers to the fact that political values and beliefs are emotionally underpinned and considered to be emerging out of political protagonists' experiences prior and during the political activism; furthermore the positionality appeared to me to lead to a certain „framing“ of politics and political events. These two notions led me further to an examination of frame analytical approaches coming out of political science and to an examination of the inclusion of the category of „emotions within such approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> „Transversal Politics“ is a term used for “hybrid” movement politics, i.e. for transnational coalitions, coalitions between scholarly points of view and concrete movement politics, arts etc.. This notion should constitute an alternative to “universalistic movement politics” of the Left and “identity politics” (Yuval-Davis 1999).

Furthermore the ethnographical experiences led to the decision to broaden the analysis further and include experiences and motivational factors of politically active women with a migration background. This was due to several observations, which are shortly outlined. The empirical work consists of participant observations in the field, combined with biographically oriented qualitative interviews with protagonists. Within the interviews a strong focus lies on motivational factors to organize politically and on politization-processes. The observed autonomous political scene in Vienna consists mainly of protagonists with „Austrian“ background and can therefore be described as a „white middle-class scene“ (see for the U.S.: Graeber 2008). Nonetheless there is much concern about „migration issues“ and / or anti-racist issues within the scene, furthermore there is an increasing number of autonomous political action groups with a „migration background“, which are only fractional part of the autonomous scene but which pursue similar political goals. There have been some attempts to collaborate, but most of these did not work out. Migration, racism and so called „transversal politics“ are increasingly discussed within the autonomous political action scene(s) in Vienna and therefore also started to be a topic of interest. Empirically notable phenomena concerning this issue are furthermore the development of political action groups which are not exclusively „austrian“, secondly the increasing number of persons with migration background within „austrian“ action groups and thirdly discussions about „the missing others“ within „austrian“ political action groups. There is for example a strong awareness of this fact which gets expressed in term like: „We have got a ‘whiteness-problem’ in our group“!. The deciding actuality, which led me to the idea to look closer to political subjectivities of protagonists of „non-white“ projects was the fact, that within one observed political action group there were participating – foremost male - protagonists with a Nigerian background. These people did not have the chance to participate in the same manner like „Austrian“ or „white“ protagonists due to „structural factors“ like the exclusively use of German as language of communication. Furthermore these protagonists got labelled within the group as homogeneous group, which reveals racist frames of perception. Lastly, some of the male protagonists were not only labelled but also exposed to racist stereotyping like being “aggressive black men” or “hyper-sexual black men” (e.g. Collins 2005).

In summary, looking at the field of study revealed that there are heterogeneous forms of radical democratic grassroots-action like women’s movements, migrant

movements, transnational movements or local action groups etc., and pooling those within a scheme calls for a differentiated, empirically rooted insight into movements and the emerging political subjectivities. Furthermore empirical insights showed the feasibility to develop gendered „subject positions“ evolving from gendered political experiences, roles and gender relations within activists’ life-experiences *and* within political action groups. All these factors intensified my interest in a sort of “comparison” of the protagonists’ motivational factors and experiences within the group within a “non-Austrian” political project. Since the two already observed projects are foremost male-dominated and “Austrian – dominated” projects, there are two feminist projects which are considered for this “comparison”: the first project is called “Schwarze Frauen Community” (“Black Women Community”), an autonomous political project of African-Austrian women with different countries of origin, founded in 2003. The second one is called MAIZ (Autonomous Centre for and of female Migrants) founded in 1994. Due to the decision to ask women of these two projects for biographically oriented interviews the theoretical interest shifted to post-colonial theoretical approaches to tie the empirical data to theories, on which the protagonists themselves are relying, some of them also contributing to postcolonial, feminist theorizing (Caixeta 2003). Contemporaneously the idea of including an intersectional perspective into the analysis of the personal accounts of motivational factors concerning the decision to organize politically arose.

All these considerations finally led to a critical discussion of the originally used theoretical concepts (foremost Laclau /Mouffe) by introducing a post-colonial and intersectional perspective, pointing out the concepts’ shortcomings regarding the neglect of its possible functionality and dis-functionalities at a societal micro-level and questioning its postulated universality. Laclau’s and Meluccis post-marxist considerations about political subjectivities (Laclau 1994, 1997, 2002) and the notion collective counter-hegemonic identities (Melucci 1996) constituted the starting point of my theoretical considerations and are therefore discussed first. After first empirical insights the categories of “intersectional political subjectivities” and political emotionality linked to certain positionalities within the field of study emerged as a topic of interest and therefore my theoretical interest shifted more towards the discourse-analytical inspired framing approach which focuses on shared patterns of interpretations and the interlinked political subjectivities (Gamson; Benford / Snow and for the German - speaking area: Haunss 2004). Post-Marxist and framing

concepts are finally critically discussed introducing views coming out of cultural studies, like postcolonial and intersectional approaches – all of them rooted in views shaped by concrete political activism. The postcolonial and intersectional perspective is coming out of women's movements (Yuval-Davis, Crenshaw, for German-speaking settings: Eggers et al. 2005; Caixeta et al. 2003), whereas the approach embracing points of views developed within cultural studies focus on the ambivalent question of identity politics and anti-racist politics (Hall 1990, 1994, 2000). These views were also introduced due to concrete empirical insights: they became a topic of interest due to the fact, that the protagonists of the studied field themselves rely on the discussed concepts and that there is a vivid debate going on about the notion of identity politics versus subversive modes of representational politics and transversal politics (Caixeta et al. 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

## **2. The Theoretical Starting Point: Social Movements as Fields of Radical Democracy and Interlinked Political Subjectivities:**

The interest in the topic of “social movements” within the field of democratic theory is best explained referring to the “movement-history” of the 20th century. Since the beginning of the century and rapidly increasing since the 1950ies, a large number of different social movements emerged and emerges in so called western countries. According to della Porta, social movements with the overall aim to decentralize the political power, can influence the way in which political systems function and can become influential stakeholders within the field of democratic debates (della Porta 2006a: 223ff). The author uses the terms “movement society” or “globalisation and democratisation from below” to emphasize the relevance of social movements as collective political actors, stressing questions of democracy (della Porta 2006a: 1f, 2006b; see also: Neidhart / Rucht 2002). Melucci (1996) stresses that within the highly complex post-modern societies there are new forms of decision-making processes developed and he emphasizes, that decision-making processes always work via representation which inevitably produces a gap between the represented and representative. The author concludes, that “this chasm therefore signals that democratic political transformation, in whatever form, must be able to absorb the tension between the structures of representation and the demands and interests of the represented; and that it must devise social and political measures to reduce the

distance that separate power from social demands” (Melucci 1996: 212). The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that this question poses a big challenge for democratic theory and - above all – practice; he concludes that the sole way to uncover agonistic needs and dissent within the society and thus a matter of negotiation, is the enhancement of the openness of “channels of representation with access to decision making-processes that allocate resources” (ibid.: 212). Social movements in his view perform the task of the direct expression of public demands through collective action, but they are only functioning when they are connected with some forms of political representation. In my opinion, this relationship between expressing demands and representation is the crucial interface to shape the form of democracy. If it would be possible to integrate social movements in the process of deliberated decision-making and to develop forms of movement’s integration in decision-making, which do not destroy their “nature” and thus eradicating their capability to create real protest and reveal societal antagonisms, this would be an important step towards a radical democratic society. According to Melucci social movements are therefore not to be institutionalised, but there have to be elaborated mechanisms, which “enable society as a whole to assume its inner dilemmas precisely as its own, to transform them into *politics*”, a process, which the author calls the construction of a “public space of representation” (Melucci 1996: 221). In other words, social movements could represent the other half of the coin of decision-making processes within an open, democratic society. The states answer on the demand to include the public in political decision-making processes would be to develop concepts of “governing democracy” via the establishment of guarantees, which provide the maximum involvement of concerned stakeholders. But there is always to be considered that a liberal-democratic state would never be able to grasp really antagonistic standpoints concerning the political, because “systemic power can never be wholly transparent and it cannot be directed against itself” (ibid.: 216). Della Porta (2006a) f.e. points out, that the public perception of new social movements and the state reaction concerning the “policing of protest” reveal a shift from acceptance to an accentuation of a movement radicalization and its dangers for the society (della Porta 2006a: 195). On the one hand this is a thread to radical democratic practices, on the other hand that development reveals, that social movements are indeed political actors, which have the ability to reveal the antagonistic structure of society which is rooted in unequal power-relations and growing social inequalities within capitalist liberal democracies.

The task of a liberal democratic state on the other hand would always be to maintain f.e. liberal economic structures and this is exactly the reason why it would never be able to act really antagonistic or emancipatory in the sense of anti-capitalist and really socialist (Holloway 2002: 24ff). The social movements' points of view would be different: in the case of anti-state collective actions the concept of "radical democracy" is not to be filled with concepts concerning democratic governance but with the practices of direct democracy on a grassroots-level always combined with further political demands. Social movements as counter-actors to state action therefore would face the task of expressing the antagonistic demands that exist within society and to challenge and influence state action (Melucci 1996: 215). Finally the envisaged "public space of representation" would always mirror the double-bind situation of an open democracy: on the one hand it would have to consist of elements of participation, on the other hand of elements of representation - a somewhat antagonistic situation, because the one excludes the other but to be solved only via shifted modes of democratic organisation (ibid. 220). The research interest on a theoretical level therefore was it to examine the role and impact of social movements within the changing field of liberal democracies as form of "democracy from below". Therefore Mouffe's and Laclau's ideas of a "radical" and "agonistic democracy" are combined with the exploration of social movements, which reflect the functionality of agonistic struggles and decision-making processes, i.e. with "democracy from below" at a societal micro-level. The empirical approach of the PhD-project is therefore concerned with the "daily routine" of non-hierarchical self-organisation. Shortly outlined, the research is concerned with group processes, hierarchies, the handling of antagonistic points of view within a group and consensual group-decisions; or in other words: with democratic decision-making processes within social movements.

Laclau/Mouffe (1985) provide a theoretical framework to classify the phenomenon "social movements" from a socialist perspective and develop the concept of "radical democracy" as form of collective democratic and political action, which is at stake in (post-)modern societies. "Radical democracy" is a concept, which refers to the broadening of democratic practices throughout the society while accepting antagonistic positions, which are constitutive for "the political" (Laclau/Mouffe 1985: 139ff). Referring to the antagonistic form of "the political", Mouffe (2005: 17ff) develops these thoughts further and provides a scheme of "agonistic democracy", with which she challenges consensual points of view within democratic theories like e.g.

Habermas' conception of a "deliberative democracy". According to the author, consensual approaches draw on a "post-political" vision of a "reconciled global society" and thus endanger real democratic approaches, which have to recognize antagonistic interests within the society and transform them into agonistic ones (Mouffe 2005: 13 / 64ff; for this criticism see also: Melucci 1996: 221). Laclau continues his analysis concentrating on the question of "subject positions" (Laclau 2007), which is discussed later, when referring to emerging political subjectivities.

In the PhD-project the concept of "radical democracy" is used to comprehend the contribution of new social movements to western democracies and to examine their organisational forms, but it is to be criticised concerning one important point: The authors develop a scheme to investigate the role and impact of social movements and developing the concept of radical democracy they give a possible Marxist answer to the new challenges of building hegemony in postmodern capitalism. But when it comes to the point where it would have to be cleared of what exactly such a radical democracy should consist, the only answer is a broadening of democratic practices within the society. In my opinion this very "spongy" answer is due to the fact, that the authors are never concerned with the real functionality of radical democracy. Concerning the concrete realisation of a socialist and radical-democratic project, the authors do not offer any strategies, how such a radical democracy could or should look like on a meso- or a micro-societal level. They are never concerned with the question what organisational structures (and what processes of collective learning) underlie such a democracy. Demirovic points out, that within such a radical democracy there have to be developed "rational forms of bargaining" but he does not either go into detail what that "rational forms" should look like and how they should be learned (Demirovic 2005: 62f). Newer anarchist theories concentrate on exactly this topic and comprehend anarchism as a theory of direct democracy concentrating on the very practices of non-hierarchical democratic decision-making processes on a micro-level.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, newer anarchist theory can be described as "grounded theory" of direct democracy and non-hierarchical political self-organisation and therefore provides the theoretical frame to grasp the *practices of democracy*

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<sup>2</sup> Within anarchist political self-organisation there is a huge amount of techniques developed, which are used to guarantee the maximum involvement of every individual taking part in an assembly. Strategies like the "fishbowl-meeting", talking stick, rotation-rules within the assembly and many more are developed to assure equality during an assembly and the maximum socially inclusive form of diffusion of information.

developed and executed within new social movements. Burnicki (2002) and Graeber (2004) examine the anarchist approach of a direct and consensual democracy within groups and point out, that the consensual approach on a group level is the only approach, which tends to include every concerned person in the processes of direct democratic decision-making and that it is perfectly functional within groups (Burnicki 1998; Burnicki 2002: 143ff; Graeber 2004: 83f). Relating to my fieldwork the starting point of analysis concentrated on the question of the functionality of radical democracy and interlinked political subjectivities.

According to della Porta (2006a) the two observed political action groups can be defined as parts of social movements, because of their specific characteristics. The author defines social movements according to three aspects and firstly she points out that social movements “are involved in conflictual relations with clearly defined opponents”, which is the case in the forms of political organisation which are studied in the PhD-project. Concerning the collective actions of social movements they are characterized by a non-institutionalised collective protest-behavior. To use the means of protesting / demonstrating as a form of collective action f. e., is part of the self-understanding of individuals within new social movements and the practice, which is mostly used while communicating the movements’ concerns to the public (della Porta 1999: 14f). The second aspect is the fact, that social movements consist of “informal interaction networks between a plurality of individuals, groups and / or organisations” (della Porta 1999: 15) and have to be linked “by dense informal networks” (della Porta 2006a: 20). Since the relatively small anarchist action groups with which I am concerned in my study are part of a far bigger network of groups and individuals, it is adequate to refer to them as “social movements”, or as one fraction of social movements. The third aspect the author refers to, is the requirement of “a *shared and distinctive identity*”, which is also definitely the case in my field of study and which turned out to be one of the most evident empirical findings and one of the core questions of further analytical concern. There exists a form of political consensus within the studied groups, which is best described as: anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, anti-antisemitic and anti-. But the third point not only refers to a set of values, which are to be adopted by the movement-participants, but also to the practices of “value-production” within movements. Social movements provide the frame for a collective development of new orientations on existing issues and for the rise of new public issues (ibid.: 22). The notion of political movement - subjectivities

led to further considerations about the importance of collective identities and the contested notion of „identity politics“. Interlinked with the importance of identifying oneself as political actor with a certain set of political values, the category of „political emotionality“ emerged as a topic of interest.

Following the development of the concept of “radical democracy” Mouffe and Laclau take separate directions of thought: Mouffe concentrates more on the general functionality of democracies and she introduces the interesting notion of democratic behaviour as corresponding to a emotionally underpinned subjectivities: „what is really at stake in the allegiance to democratic institutions is the constitution of an ensemble of practices that make the constitution of democratic citizens possible. This is not a matter of rational justification but of the availability of democratic forms of individuality and subjectivity” (...) „by privileging rationality (...) [liberal concepts of politics / democracy, J.E.] leave aside a central element, which is the crucial role, played by **passions** and **emotions** in securing allegiance to democratic values“ (Mouffe 2000: 10). Laclau concentrates in the question of political subjectivities from a post-marxist perspective, which is discussed in the next section.

### **3. Political Subjectivities and the ambivalent Question of Identity within Post-Marxist Approaches**

Discussing the micro-level of radical democracy political subjectivities, which emerge within that direct democratic and consensual form of self-organisation, become a topic of interest. According to post-Marxist standpoints and the framing approach, political subjectivities always refer to certain form of “political identities”. It has been pointed out, that the provision of identification is a crucial process within social movements which distinguishes the movements’ participants from other people and therefore creates the possibility to get part of a social movement adopting certain political convictions and values and start to identify with them (della Porta 2006a, Melucci 1996). Laclau /Mouffe call this collective production of values and orientations “articulation” and the emergence of a real societal antagonism, i.e. the emergence of really huge movements against / in favour of political topics like e.g. the socialist restructuring of the society, is called the establishing of “chains of equivalence” (Laclau/Mouffe 1985). These “chains of equivalence” produce an

alignment of political demand, orientations and values, which on their part are interlinked with the emergence of political subjectivities. One of my hypothesis in the PhD-project is the assumption, that within the libertarian form of protest where direct democratic and consensual modes of organisation are used, there are special political subjectivities emerging, which share convictions and values as: “anti-racist”, “anti-sexist”, “anti-capitalist”, “anti-hierarchical” and “anti-state concerning the form of organization”. Laclau / Mouffe call these convictions and orientations “subject positions”, which are manifested in political subjects (i.e. subjectivities) – but what exactly is the difference between the two? Laclau (2002) develops the concept further and clears the relation between “subject positions” and “subjects”. The first refer to systems of political convictions, values, orientations etc. which influence individual decisions. This individual ability to decide is the link to the concept of “subjects”, which refers to the “capacity to hegemonize” via certain decisions, which can not be influenced by the structure. So every historical structure produces different subject positions and subjects can emerge via individual decisions and actions. Important in this process is the notion, that a “subject” does not have a fixed identity prior to its constitution, but that it becomes a subject through identification, which implies on the other hand, that every emerging subjectivity is strongly interlinked with the historically given subject positions and a contingent one. Some of the developed political convictions, beliefs and values are not easily to be altered - therefore they constitute the discursively generated “fundament” of the emerging political subjectivity. The adopted political attitudes are furthermore the outcome of struggles for hegemony, therefore discursively generated and hegemonized within concrete political subjectivities. Laclaus´ notion of these subjectivities is therefore not a fixed one, but a fluid, a contingent one: „An examination of the subject´s forms of presence in the structure must therefore be an exploration of contingency´s discursive forms of presence in the field of objectivity – or more precisely, the ways in which objectivity is converted by contingency (Laclau 1990: 61). Concerning the hegemonic component (or in other words: the discursive construction of political subjectivities / identities), Laclau argues further that political convictions are always linked to a sort of „political utopia“, which is a „principally empty place” and which is discursively filled to be an “imaginary horizon”. Ideas like a „promised land“ or a „socialist society“ would therefore fulfill the task of such a filled imaginary horizon – these utopias stand for the possible achievement of “fullness”. Political subjectivities

therefore are constructed within the dialectic of absence (dislocation of the structure) und „presence“ (identification with an unachieved fullness) and are constructed via hegemonic processes in which subject positions form political subjectivities (ibid.: 67).

Melucci (1996) is another post-marxist theorist is also focussing on the processes of achieving a certain political subjectivity and its linkage to forms of radical democracy. Political subjectivities in his point of view are linked to a concept of counter-hegemonic collective identities. He stresses the core ideas, which are to be included in a concept of democracy in highly complex societies and emphasizes that a real democracy would include the following rights: “Democracy means freedom to belong, freedom to construct social spaces of recognition. Thus defined, democracy is also freedom to be represented, freedom to express identity in systems of representation which preserve identity over time (...) but also the right to refuse to belong - the freedom not to belong, as the right to withdraw from ones constituted identity in order to create a new one, and the freedom not to be represented, as the right to reject or modify the given conditions of representation” (Melucci 1996: 219f). Meluccis approach is strongly relying on the concept of a productive counter-hegemonic form of collective identity emerging within new social movements, a notion which he shares with framing approaches in which “collective political identities” are studied via collectively shared “frames” or shared interpretational patterns. But this notion of “collective identities” and the interlinked concept of “identity politics” is challenged by movements protagonists´ themselves as well as by feminist scholars engaged in the analysis of intersectionality and themselves coming out of womens´ movements politics, i.e. out of concrete political practices (e.g. Yuval-Davis 1999). Yuval-Davis also discusses the hazards of constructed collective political identities” stating that „the discourse on social locations (...) cannot be conflated with the belonging discourse on identifications and emotional attachments, and any attempt to do so is essentialist and often racialized (Yuval-Davis 2006b: 202). It is noteworthy that apparently the discussed post-Marxist concepts focus on some notion of “identity”, though „identity politics“ is a contested and condemned category. Laclau is strongly arguing against identity politics as he engages in theorizing the issue of identity, affects and the critique of identity politics. Drawing on the difference between particularism and universalism the author criticizes liberal and also post-colonial approaches – the former for their “absolutization” of principles

and values coming out of enlightenment and thereby constructing “universal values”; the latter because of their “absolutization” of particularisms (Laclau 2002: 10). In Laclau’s view both neglect the hegemonic and discursive component of political identities – the universal is an empty space and following Gramsci it is to be filled with particularisms, which are transformed into universalisms via the construction of hegemony. In this process affections play a decisive role – it is affections that make people stick to a certain hegemonic political point of view (Laclau 2005; Stäheli 2007). In consideration of the fact that Laclau sees social movements as one possible contributor to transform society in an emancipatory way he developed this conceptions particularly for the analysis of social movements with regard to his personal “empty signifier” emancipation. In doing so he fears the every absolutization of identity issues but demonstrates a very “hegemonic” and “white malestream” perspective concerning identity politics and an undifferentiated form of criticism concerning what he calls the “paradox of identity politics” (Laclau 1996: 84). I argue that the criticized postcolonial approaches are much more differentiated then it is presented by Laclau and want to continue my theoretical examination of the categories „identity“ and „political emotionality“ drawing on approaches coming out of cultural studies (foremost: Hall 1994, 1996, 2000) and postcolonial approaches (Caixeta 2003; Eggers et al. 2005) and intersectional approaches (Anthias 2001, Yuval-Davis 1992, 2006a, 2006b) developed within movement politics. This decision is on its part due to my examination of empirical data: on the one hand empirical data shows multiple subversions of “identity politics” and the contemporaneously occurring reference to “strategical identities” as a strategy to subvert hegemonic discourses. In my opinion post-marxist and framing approaches tend to leave out these ambivalences and contradictions occurring empirically, these approaches tend to be blind concerning the multiplicity of semi-identificational approaches which could be due to the fact that they kind of lack empirical grounding. Furthermore the empirically observable handling of the issue “identity politics” by political protagonists seems to include ambivalences which seem to be interlinked with gendered political subjectivities and points of view mostly expressed by political protagonists with a so called “migrant” background. These approaches are adopted by protagonists by parts of “Austrian autonomous” political action groups which had been the original field of study. In doing so the political protagonists develop a form

of “strategic essentialist” and contemporaneously “subverting” politics, which Yuval-Davis came to call “transversal politics” (Yuval-Davis 1999).

#### **4. Transversal Politics: Postcolonial and intersectional Challenging of „Identity Politics“ and the „Politics of Belonging“**

The last section of the paper mixes empirical data and theoretical considerations. This is due to the fact, that it has been empiricism, which caused the inclusion of cultural studies, postcolonial and intersectional approaches dealing with political protagonists relying on these concepts. Furthermore there are approaches discussed, which are rooted within movement politics themselves and the last section should illustrate the mentioned linkage.

Hall reflects upon the consequences of identity politics, which he himself had promoted for years stating that the construction of a form of “collectivity” of course essentializes and obscures the heterogeneity of actual social positionalities and political subjectivities (Hall 1994; 2000). On the other hand he states that one should consider that actual movement politics needs some collectively shared frames to be constituted and to enable the protagonists to develop political claims. Reasoning about the meaning of “postmodern cultural studies” the author is therefore developing the notion of “specific, local politics of gender, race and class” (Hall 1996: 315), which cannot be based on essentialist notions of these categories. Furthermore Hall is including his own positionality and the alteration of his points of view into analysis. Due to his own positionality he is occupied with emancipatory struggles of marginalized groups and reflects upon their political interventions which affected on the one hand hegemonic regimes of representations but on the other hand the movements’ themselves: alterations concerning the inner-movement reflections about “identity politics” are certainly included (Hall 1994: 72; 2000: 13). Hall uses Gramsci for his examination of racism and political self-organization of marginalized (often migrant) political action groups, which strongly relied on “identity politics” as a tool for building hegemony. Discussing the emergence of the political category “black” Hall clarifies the importance of such politics - throughout the 1970ies identity politics could be used as a tool to build up “counter-hegemonic” discourses and to enable marginalized groups to analyse and theorize their internalized “self-colonization” (Fanon 1966) and go beyond it (Hall 2000). Identity politics therefore can be

described as political pathfinder which paved the way for differentiating postcolonial debates about identity issues, “critical whiteness studies” (Egger et al. 2005) and also for intersectional perspectives (Anthias 2001, Yuval-Davis 1992, 2006a, 2006b) like they started to emerge in the 1990ies.

Hall of course rejects the notion of an essentialized, fixed political subject and rather constructs it as decentralized and hybrid. Nonetheless he argues that a political subject, constituted within a „majority society“ which constructs it as „the other“ requires a clear positionality. Introducing the notion of „marginalized positionalities“, which tend to intermesh and hence contribute to the formation of a political subject, he anticipates even intersectional perspectives concerning the analysis of (migrant or in other forms marginalized) social movements and their protagonists. Regarding political action this introduction of intersectionality would mean, that one would have to acknowledge that every counter-hegemonic local politics which tries to mobilize people exactly **because** of their differences has to be a positioned one. This notion would include a continuous discursive struggle about positions like e.g. anti-racist, anti-sexist and “anti-classist” standpoints and practices - like Gramscis notion of „static warfare“. This notion of hegemony **through** differences is one of the most interesting arguments and the bridging link to empirically observable movement politics. Looking at so called “migrant” political self-organization the notion of post-colonial points of view and/ or racialization is a crucial topic which is often discussed - for sure using another perspective as “white mainstream” political action groups are doing. Empirical observations show that this “forced positioning” may lead the protagonists to a sort of “strategic essentialism” which is to be subverted again and again (Caixeta 2003). My empirical analysis therefore is going to concentrate further on the „area of conflict“ between „pseudo-essentializing“ strategies of self-representation and their subversion through (discursive) practices. One example would be the political practices of the autonomous, self-organized feminist project MAIZ, where the protagonists are in parts relying on a form of „strategic essentialism” in parts subverting it through their political activism and thus creating forms of political subjectivities which transcend the possibility of “othering”. The ambiguous use of “identity narratives” of political protagonists positioned between being othered, self-othering (Hall 1993: 255ff) and its subversion (vgl. Caixeta 2003; Steyerl 2007) is to be analysed and theorized further. The above described ambivalences between the rejection of “identity politics” and the preservation of

certain forms of “strategical essentialisms” are reflected within empirical observations: there are still traces of identity politics, even if constantly challenged and contested and this ambivalence is to be examined.

Probably the first to criticize essentialist identity politics within postcolonial theory and especially concerning the work of Edward Said has been Ahmad (Ahmad 1992: 198). Furthermore the postcolonial frames of the “evil west” and the always oppressed “subaltern” South is to be criticized. Postcolonial theory certainly has advanced and includes much more differentiated points of view concerning the notion of “centre” and “periphery”. Castro Varela / Dhawan (2005) put up for discussion that the “centre” is also heterogeneous once the categories of “race, class and gender” are considered. Therefore a pluralization of networks and transversal alliances can be observed. Consequently there would emerge political action groups, which contemporaneously could be part of “periphery” and “centre” (Castro Varela / Dhawan, 2005: 126). Castro Varela / Dhawan (2005) also broach the issue of post-colonial “politics of belonging” stressing the need to overcome essentializing identity politics (ibid. 127). Newer postcolonial points of view go even further and rely on a notion of „politics of resistance“, rooted in the awareness of internalized identities arising from „self-racialization“ or “self-othering” (Fanon 1967) and its possible overcoming via political performative political activism (for German speaking contexts: Eggers et al. 2005). Within theoretical and activists’ approaches coming out of movement politics there are various examples of subversion of the identity issue (Caixeta 2003). As empirical example I draw on the strategies of the autonomous Women’s Centre MAIZ. The activists of MAIZ constantly challenge hegemonic structures of representation via the means of “performative subversion”. In 1999 the action group received an intercultural award of the region of Upper Austria and prepared a performance for the award show: The whole group of more than 20 protagonists appeared on stage, afterwards distributing hearts with the following inscription: „Austria we love you! We are never going to leave you!”. In the annual report of MAIZ co - founder Luzenir Caixeta states the following:

*„As a strategy to become visible MAIZ provokes and tries to break the structures of representation und tries to bother the harmony, for example using the slogan: Austria we love you! We are never going to leave you!” (MAIZ annual Report 2006).*

All the mentioned considerations and subversions relate to the notion of “transversal movement politics” which is a frequently discussed topic within movement politics as well as within intersectional theorizing since the late 1990s, which are outlined in the following. Anthias (2001) discusses the necessity to reformulate concepts of intersectionality “in the light of current developments” which include the growth of non-class forms of collective struggle (hailed by the new social movements) and a growth in interest and debate on gender and ethnic divisions and identities (Anthias 2001: 368).

Yuval-Davis distinguishes between theorists of intersectionality strongly focusing on the experiences and positionalities of women of colour (e.g. Crenshaw, but also Davis 1981) and publications widening the focus in order to develop intersectionality as an „analytical tool“ (e.g. Anthias, Yuval-Davis) with which also different forms of identity politics are to be questioned (Yuval-Davis 2006: 201). The first to introduce the concept within a broader scientific community is the African - American feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, then also focusing on the questioning of „identity politics“ when she states that, „race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination - that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. According to this understanding, our liberatory objective should be to empty such categories of any social significance” (Crenshaw 1991: 1242). The author continues by arguing, that the concept of identity politics would negate differences **within** social groups and that it therefore negates the differences between personal experiences of oppressions, e.g. within political activists with different “ethnic” backgrounds. This statement holds also true for my own empirical findings concerning political activism within the autonomous scene and related parts of civil society in Vienna. Yuval-Davis emphasizes this point of view by stating that via the integration of the multi-layered differences within movement(s)´ politics one can avoid „conflating positionings, identities and values, as well as „attributing fixed identity groupings to the dynamic processes of positionality and location“ and „political construction of categorical boundaries on the other“ (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 200). Yuval-Davis rather suggests an accurate analysis of „how specific positionings and (not necessarily corresponding) identities and political values are constructed and interrelate and affect each other“ (ibid.) as well as the meshwork of the different social divisions. In her approach „identity politics“, which are often

discussed as underpinning frame of orientation within social movements, are part of the problem: they relate to discourses structured by hegemonic power and are therefore essentializing, racializing or both. Theorizing this issue further she outlines an analytical framework for the study of what she calls „belonging“ and the „politics of belonging“ (ibid.: Yuval-Davis 2006b: 197). She introduces the concept of „emotional attachment“ to a – always socially constructed – “community of belonging” and discusses the risks of the development of “politics of belonging” via “identity narratives” from an intersectional perspective. Yuval-Davis differentiates three levels of analysis to study the notion of belonging: social locations; identifications and emotional attachments; and ethical and political values. The second level relates to “identity narratives”, i.e. to “individuals’ identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings” (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199). Those identity narratives have a “performative dimension”, which means that they are constantly reshaped, altered via repetitive social practices. Furthermore they reflect the duality of “the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to Belong” (ibid. 202). To become functional they therefore have to be emotionally underpinned. Yuval-Davis notions of “identity narratives” and related emotions are used as theoretical and analytical framework of further empirical work because they relates to positionalities of political protagonists and their handling of identity issues, which is to be examined further within the dissertation project.

Drawing again on empirical findings I want to emphasize again, that especially organizing within social movements tends to be induced by emotional legacies to a certain form of “political subjectivity” (or “identity”). Emotions in Yuval-Davis’ article are exclusively discussed in terms of “belonging”, but also regarding the motivational factors to organize politically they can be an explaining factor. Ethnographical interviews with protagonist of the SFC (“Black Women Community”) show for example, that the main motivation to found the organization had been a reaction to two racist killings, which occurred in 1999 and 2003. The first murdered person was Marcus Omofuma, a Nigerian asylum-seeker, who died during his deportation due to the fact that the police officials had tied him up and had stuck up his mouth with tape. The second killed person was Seibani Wague, a Mauretian physicist who got killed during a police operation where six police officials fixed him on the ground while standing on his chest. Present ambulance men first injected Wague a strong sedative and did not intervene. These racist incidents are only two

within a very long history of racist oppression and endangerment of people with African background. Within the self-representation of becoming political activists two co-founders of SFC relate to these murders as the most important motivational factors and also include the emotional component:

*It took us 10 years to start this ambitious project, 10 years of different attempts to set up such an initiative. During our years of study Ishraga Mustafa Hamid and myself started to think about such a project. In the meantime there have occurred the tragic killings of Omofuma, Ibikwe and recently Seibane. Those tragic incidents revealed that we had been waiting way too long! We should not wait for financial support to speak out for ourselves and to strengthen our self-empowerment, our self-organization and our autonomy! (Interview with Mag. Beatrice Acheleke, Founding Member of SFC, 2005)*

*„Unfortunately it was only the tragic killing of our brother Scheibani which broke the ice. We became aware of the fact that we had to make our mourning public, that we had to scream our anger out and let the world hear it. Black women became visible concerning all decisions and collective actions following the killing. Day and night they got active, organizing demonstrations and pickets. Scheibani's killing would be the alarm signal to make us ready to defend ourselves“. (Dr. Ishagra Mustafa, Founding Member of SFC, Annual Report of SFC, 2004)*

The empirical analysis is going to focus further on personal accounts and representational texts concerning the motivation(s) to organize politically, strongly focusing on the emotional component as the protagonists themselves narrate it. Methodologically, I propose to combine frame (or discourse-) analytical approaches with ethnographical data – an idea which comes out of empirical experience during nearly two years of field - work within the autonomous part of Viennese social movements. Drawing on ethnographical empirical findings it became clear that political cleavages within various autonomous parts of social movements are mostly based on political frames, i.e. beliefs, interpretational patterns, which are emotionally underpinned. Therefore the category of “political emotionality” emerged as a topic concerning the development of political subject positions. Looking at the framing approach (e.g. Benford / Snow 1992; Gamson 1998, 2005; for Germany: Gerhards/Rucht 1992, Rucht 2001; Haunss 2004) or post-marxist theorizing concerning collective identities (Laclau 1994, 1997, 2002; Melucci 1996) reveal that the category of political

emotions is scarcely considered. Drawing on mass-psychology Laclau (2005) introduces the notion of “affects” as crucial factors for the capacity to hegemonize, but this is the only example for such an attempt. According to Jasper and Haunss the exploration of political emotionality is also a blind spot within the frame analytical approach addressing social movements (vgl. Jasper 1997; Haunss 2004: 42). Drawing on empirical findings emotions constitute a big part of experiential accounts concerning the motivation to organize and the experience of these emotions differs according to gender and ethnicity. Therefore I propose to combine frame (or discourse-) analytical approaches with ethnographical data. An analysis of political magazines and internet - pamphlets is conducted and combined with data emerged while conducting participant observations and qualitative interviews with political protagonists. Drawing on Naples (2003) the framing approaches are discussed as potentially combinable with ethnographic approaches. Ethnographical information thereby consists of personal, experiential accounts concerning motivational factors to organize politically, the personal role within the action group, etc.. Therefore experiential knowledge is a crucial source of data. Of course, one could question the „originality“ and „truth“ of experiential knowledge; this is problematized for instance within the post - structuralist paradigm, where scholars discuss the discursively pre-structured and therefore determined „nature“ of experience (f.e. Butler / Scott 1992, cited in: Smith 2005: 126). It is true, that experiences and how people talk about them are always shaped by their self-construction as a certain personality and furthermore they are always told out of the perspective of a special historical point within the course of life: I would reflect about myself and tell my personal story differently within five years. Though those reflections are justified on the one hand, on the other hand I would pose two questions: 1. Does it really matter that much, as long as I am reflexive about the situatedness of the produced knowledge? And 2. Is it possible to conduct a militant investigation about political action without believing in the individual's capacity to act? Since the answer would be clearly no, I use Smith's dialogical approach to discourse and action. Drawing on Bakhtin (1986) the author offers a solution to the mentioned problem: „In Bakhtin's view, every utterance is a dialogue between the givens of language or discourse and the speaker's intentions (...). The speaker's or writers part in the dialogue is that of finding in discourse the resources she or he needs; the part of discourse is to make the speaking / writing of intention possible and at the same time constrain its utterance“ (Smith 2005: 127).

Drawing on her experiences within the second women's movement, Smith reflects about the reciprocity and the „fluidity“ which shapes the relationship between givens of the discourse and the protagonists' intentions. In that way the standpoint – epistemological approach reintroduces the individuals' capacity to act and it is therefore used as ontological and epistemological framework, in which I want to situate this investigation.

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