Performing and Counter-performing Borders: Feminist Stories of Migrant Rights Activism in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the performance and performativity of migrant rights activism resisting and challenging the state bordering practices in the UK and providing a grid through which we can comprehend the multi-various migrant solidarities and struggles across the UK. The study presents an array of female voices, rising out of the current migrant rights movement. These include: a) nine women, whose journeys to becoming committed activists at the forefront of the movement are examined; b) an evaluation of the performances of Nine Lives Theatre and how it challenges conformity to dominant political scripts and c) the symbolic performances of three significant acts of resistance: Hope Space, the Yarl's Wood demonstrations and the Refugees Welcome march. By exploring this chorus of narratives, the research enquires into the emergent interventions and developments of activism, and asks what materials, physical as well as symbolic, can be drawn upon in the ongoing task of un-scribing the state's border markers. Situated within the feminist anti-bordering research tradition, the study combines narrative and performance-based methodological approaches and tells a story about multiple articulations of migrant dissent, whilst capturing more fully the dynamic quality of the struggle. The findings of this study point to a complexity of contingent and predisposed practices of state bordering in the asylum system and beyond. As borders are not static, so the migrant rights struggle is responsively fluid to counter them. Through narrative means and performance analysis of individuals and groups in the movement, this thesis seeks to articulate the necessity of counter-performance for sustained activism.

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Chapter 1: Histories and trajectories of migrants' border resistance: a theoretical response

1.1 Defining and contextualising borders and border performance

Borders and border-crossings are a much debated and contentious issue in the social and political life of the UK. Borders– once thought of as something static and geographical – have started to creep into society at large, with borders existing in spaces which previously were not thought to contain them. 'Border performance' and 'bordering' are the terms used interchangeably to describe the dynamic processes, which create and maintain borders. The UK border can be found on a map: it is an absolute. However, the process of creating, maintaining and policing that border is something that increasingly happens in the everyday, with multiple state and social structures involved in its maintenance, through social procedures and ritual-like activities.

Border performance is therefore experienced as ubiquitous: it is this that gives rise to dramatic political struggles associated with this process. For migrants, who are constantly negotiating with the ever-changing practices, procedures, rules, restrictions and processes that relate to border performance, bordering is part of their everyday existence.

This study seeks to gauge the trajectories of these struggles by providing insights into different aspects of bordering in the everyday lives of migrant communities in the UK. Bordering is arguably a product of the multiple conflicting agendas of both the state and society; it utilises complex communication and propaganda tactics, multiple layers of meaning and the manipulation of psychological and cultural symbols. Given the performative character of bordering – in that, efforts to create and maintain borders are as much a performance with a perceived audience, as they are anything else – this thesis employs the lexicon of theatrical performances and dramatic productions to discuss and describe these processes.

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'Bordering' is inherently performative, in that it exerts efforts to artificially create social realities by simply acting as if such things are true, by 'performing them into being'. Performativity (Austin, 1962) emphasises how authoritative statements have power to describe and define, form and shape. Thus, one can suddenly focus upon an arbitrary distinction, invest it with tremendous emotion, and, by one's behaviour, make it seem as if it has – and has always had - great importance, despite any objective reality to the contrary. In this way, performativity is found in the processual realities of bordering, as the distinctions made as to who belongs and who does not, whilst arbitrary in many senses, are performed as if they are absolute and objective. The investigative journey of this thesis documents the migrant experiences of bordering, examining this through a variety of activist actions and individual stories.

1.2 The context for the research: Windrush - the act of making every migrant 'illegal'

The journey of my research took place between 2014 and 2018, which co-occurred with huge changing global and local political events relating to migrant and asylum seeker rights and concerns. It is worth tracking some of these events as they set the wider context for the research.

I began my graduate training in September 2014 during 'blood summer', in which the mainstream media finally caught up with and reported the increasing numbers of migrants drowning at sea whilst attempting to reach the shores of the UK and Europe. These stories shook the world and provoked activists to respond, calling out the inaction of the UK government to send sea rescue missions to the migrant boats.

A summit of committed migrant rights activists from across the UK gathered in Birmingham on November 15th, 2014 in an effort to find visionary alternatives that could be actualised in response to the crisis. The event occurred hardly two months into my

research and I attended this summit to observe and participate in discussions, all of which highlighted the emerging migrant crisis.

Discussions at the summit focused on the increasingly aggravated response to refugees and migrants in the UK and Europe. The systems and tactics utilised in the asylum system included indefinite incarceration and detention, and increased destitution, exacerbating the considerable struggle for migrants and asylum seekers to find belonging and community. The summit highlighted to me that charting the trajectories of border resistance by migrants needed to consider not just the physical location of the border, but also the multiple functions of the border and who is caught up in it: borders did not manifest in a straightforward territorial logic, but through the actions and inactions of the state, and through what is said and left unsaid.

As my research was nearing completion in the summer of 2018, the harshness of the state bordering practices had greatly intensified into the multi-scalar staging of borders. This was epitomised by the Windrush scandal, whose unfolding features are relevant to the arguments made in this thesis. The forceful deportation of former British subjects who migrated to the UK from the Caribbean before 1973 had been going on silently and unnoticed for many years as part of Home Office deportation policies until it became a public scandal in April 2018. Following a series of parliamentary questions in March 2018, it became public knowledge that on average 991 people were being deported each year. In May 2018 the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, admitted to knowing of about 63 people who may have been wrongfully deported to the Caribbean. The actual number of UK citizens who have been wrongly deported remains unknown, and the unjust treatment of many of them has gone unnoticed for decades.

To contextualise the depth of the scandal, between 1948 and 1970, nearly half a million people were recruited and relocated to Britain following huge labour shortages after the

Second World War. Britain desperately sought help from its former colonies to rebuild the shattered infrastructure and get public services up and running again. In addition to working-age adults, many children arrived to join parents or grandparents in the UK. The term 'Windrush' generation references the 492 immigrants who were first to arrive in the UK, travelling on HMT Empire Windrush. The immigration status of those who arrived was determined by the British Nationality Act 1948, which granted citizenship and the legal right to settle in the UK to everyone who had come from a British colony. All such persons neither needed nor were given any documents upon entry to the UK, and the only official records of their arrival were boarding cards collected as they disembarked from ships in UK ports. Many of the countries from which the immigrants had come became independent of the UK after 1948. Therefore, people who had been born in such countries were technically no longer British subjects.

However, these territories of the former British Empire maintained 'special relationships' with their 'mother country' and Great Britain remained influential in the domestic affairs of these former colonies. A series of legislative measures in the 1960's and 1970's limited the rights of citizens of these former colonies, now members of the Commonwealth, to relocate, live and work in the UK. However, anyone who had arrived in the UK from a Commonwealth country before 1973 was granted an automatic right to permanently remain, unless they left the UK for more than two years.

The 2018 Windrush scandal highlighted the issue of the shifting lines of state exclusion and inclusion. It fuelled national debates about migration and race, and about the ways in which the 'sense of belonging' has to be negotiated in everyday life, by both settled and newly arrived populations. It highlighted that the intensification of state border policing activities (including deportation) directly impacts racialised citizens and non-citizens. In many senses, the simplicity of the injustice focused the issue: a community that had been

invited to come the UK, had established itself over several decades and generations, was suddenly having to prove their rights to residency and citizenship or face deportation – some being forcibly returned to a country they had never been to. This was bordering in action.

Yuval-Davis (2011) states that, at its core, everyday bordering is the enactment of political agendas of governance and belonging, such as the process of nation making or a particular ideological vision of the country. Selective border control mechanisms and related political and media discourses are all components of a coordinated policy, which makes a migrant illegal. These activities represent the state's political agendas of place and belonging; these agendas are structurally created, performed into being and maintained. The parameters setting who and what belongs in the country, and the criteria under which this is reinforced, continue to pose a great challenge for migrants time and time again. The enactment of such policies compels us to change how we understand inclusion. There is little doubt that the struggle around bordering practices is only intensifying in the UK. Such is the context within which this thesis is situated.

These events prompt us to consider what structural and spatially anchored intersections furnish the criteria of belonging. Not only did the Windrush scandal highlight how the UK migration policy has increasingly changed in tone and emphasis but also that these changes can no longer be disconnected from broader contemporaneous racial anxieties. It prompts the consideration of whether the removal of the first generation of Windrush migrants from the UK was an act comparable with other similar exclusionary and 'migrant-targeted' campaigns; this is discussed further in Section 1.4.2.

Against this backdrop, a migrant's ability to cross the 'border' completely and leave it behind seems less and less likely, regardless of their circumstances. Such state border performances continually threaten the construction of migrants and their identities,

creating hegemonic imaginaries of who and what a migrant is. Identity, citizenship and belonging are redefined by these state practices over time until they become entrenched and normalised in an array of structural dynamics affecting the everyday lives of racialised immigrants in the UK. As borders appear or disappear, and de/materialise at any given time or space, living in interaction with these ubiquitous borderings makes the experience of migrants – of any generation - inherently insecure and unsettling, making lasting notions of 'belonging' and 'sanctuary' seem unlikely.

1.3 The contemporary global and local context of bordering

While the main empirical thrust of this thesis is on research from and about the UK, the timing of my research coincided with increasing pressures in the West emanating from neoliberal globalisation; these are worth exploring – as borders and bordering are inherently connected with the history and geography of nations.

Specifically, this research began during the Brexit campaign (Sept 2014). The result of the 2016 Brexit Referendum (52 per cent for and 48 per cent against leaving the EU) underscores the political and economic malaise of Western politics. Leaving Europe was seen as a way to regain 'sovereignty', which included 'regaining control of our borders'. Yuval-Davis (2012) notes that regaining control of borders is a promise to reject the rise of globalisation - economic, cultural, and political, and its (supposedly) associated crisis of governability and governmentality. This rejection has led to a resurrection of nationalist political rhetoric in many sections of British society: the altered and narrowed national boundaries have facilitated a renegotiation of who is included and who is excluded. Historical and spatial shifts have given rise to the proliferation of bordering in the UK and globally; this has been in response to the rise of neoliberal globalisation.

Globalisation led to political and economic matters spilling across the borders, making national borders feel both limitless and a great deal smaller. Since the end of the Second

World War, a new political and social order involved a geopolitical and geo-economic reconfiguration of global relations. It led to global economic interdependence through free movement of capital, goods and simpler regulations. The democratising power of technology further extended the opening of the world to corporate expansion across borders. The expansion and restructuring of global capitalism, which has depended on global mobility and flexibility of labour, has also led to the proliferation of borders intended to operate as a regulator of complex and shifting flows of a heterogeneous labour force (Mezzadra and Nelson, 2012; Yuval Davis, 2011, 2012; Sassen, 2006). In this period of growth and expansion, and the rise of the First World and Third World, the border was entangled with imperialism and neoliberalism which not only polarised social and economic inequalities both globally, (between the North and South), and within each society, but which also had a profound effect on local and global bordering processes. Over time, a counter-narrative emerged highlighting the rapid installation of borders everywhere. More sophisticated systems of surveillance were installed both at the physical borders and everywhere else, in and outside territories (Broaders, 2007).

The viewpoint of globalisation that knows no boundaries, led to the growth of transnational cultural formations. As Anthias (1998) notes, the movements of bodies (as well as capital) led to new configurations of ethnic and 'race' boundaries in an era of global transformations, such as transnational movement and ties as well as non-nation-based solidarities in the contemporary period. Some historical developments in late modernity, such as decolonisation, contributed to cross-border movements. The rupture between the historical past of empires and the legitimisation of independent nations created major refugee crises related to anti-colonial struggles on both the Asian and African continents as well as in the Middle East. These refugees sought to rebuild their lives in neighbouring countries as well as in Western societies. Uneven development of global capitalism forced

portions of the former colony populations to migrate to Western nations as a racialised reserve army of labour (Virdee, 2014, 2018). Consequently, borders were very much open for 'attractive' movement of people and goods but absolutely closed for the unwanted; transnational stratifications of border encounters were constructed through different regimes of border permeability. Within the context of the British Empire, the international pressures of globalisation have led to the creation of new cosmopolitan constituencies and new national identities (Anthias, 1998).

Brexit's call to tighten the borders was partially in response to the UK's discontent with neoliberal globalisation and the associated economic global catastrophe. However, it was also a reaction to a crisis of national identity emanated from the neoliberal identity formations: 'each time the boundaries of the nation were extended to include more members of the working class, this was accompanied and legitimised by a racialised nationalism that excluded more recent arrivals' (Virdee, 2017b). This anxiety can be seen manifested in the construction of the migrant as an economic threat to the domestic working-class taxpayer and other similar historical representations that perceive the migrant as a security threat to the British population. This is further illustrated by the rise of the far right in the West, and in particular, the far-right wing political parties in Britain, whose expressions of anti-foreigner sentiments and discourses were emboldened and amplified by Brexit.

Historically, a sustained class-coalition of social forces opposed the presence of migrants in Britain throughout the twentieth century (Solomon, 2003). For example, the arrival of Jewish migrants from the Tsarist Empire was widely opposed; this sentiment continued through later opposition to the migration of Caribbean Asian migrants. Ideologically, such opposition was cohered and mobilised through narrations that effectively condemned such groups on the grounds that they were not Christian in the case of Jews, or not White

in the case of Asians and Caribbeans (Virdee, 2014, 2017a, 2018). The similarities between racialised citizens and non-citizens as subjects of migration discourse in post-war race-making and migration, and more recently, as amplified in ever-increasing anti-foreigner sentiments manifesting in Brexit discourses underlines the continuity of racism in the UK (Erel et al., 2016).

Parallel and similarly complex developments can also be observed in the US with the rise of support for Donald Trump in the presidential election in 2016. Trump's popularity has benefitted greatly from the existing pressures and resistance to neoliberal globalisation. His promises to build a wall along the US-Mexico border resonated with nationalist populism and discourses regarding the control of national borders. His pledge to build the wall and augment immigration enforcement in numerous other ways was directly connected to the election victory that promised to 'bring jobs back home'. This is comparable with the UK's targeting of immigrants as the source of unemployment, a discourse underpinning the Brexit debates.

However, these hostilities and anti-immigrant sentiments were not created overnight by Trump or Brexit. The liberal, pro-European and inclusive discourses of social solidarity have led to rapid change; these posed huge challenges for social cohesion and integration. The evolution of earlier post-colonial prejudices and uncertainties (Erel et al, 2016) prevailed through the catalysts of Brexit and Trump. This manifested in sharp rises in hate crime and the creation of new racialised vulnerabilities (Fekete, 2017). This has marked a pivotal point in the identity of the UK, and declining support of multiculturalism in Europe. Not only has this imposed recognition of racism as an entrenched structuring feature of European societies, but also makes it necessary to examine such issues in order to address how European migration regimes articulate and are articulated by racialisation and coloniality. The linkages between race and migration have generally

shifted from a focus on postcolonial migrants to a focus on newer groups (Erel et al., 2018). However, recent events, such as the Windrush scandal, further point to the fact that migration and contemporary racialisation are still co-constructed.

Additional anxieties have also been growing across both Europe and North America, regarding the place of Islam in the West; the fear of the 'Islamisation of Europe' is particularly apparent in the heightened anxiety over borders (Kaufman, 2017; Erel et al., 2018). This growing discourse, which took root during 'the War on Terror', seems to have shifted from the construction of Muslims as the enemy outside, to the construction of Muslims as an enemy inside. This is illustrated by the US entry prohibition of all migrants from specific majority Muslim countries, among other restrictions, in recent administrations. Such a process of differentiation has raised new debates about cultural otherness in terms of toleration (Meer, 2013) and increased uncertainty about citizenship rights on both sides of the Atlantic.

Identifying the proliferation of borders embedded in historical and global processes can facilitate our understanding of the UK in a wider context. As has happened in the British context, bordering is the method used by nation-states as a technique of governing border movement, which, at its core, emanates from the growing hegemony of neoliberal ideologies and policies, and from the strengthening of the neoliberal global market forces. This period of global optimism has involved re-marking territories, a phenomenon Yuval-Davis (2012) calls re-bordering and de-bordering, which implies the relocating of borders and the control of bordering to almost everywhere the state deems necessary.

Reflecting upon the context of what was happening nationally between 2014 and 2018, the time during which this research project was being conducted, new techniques of migration governmentality within the UK and on the UK territory were being implemented which sought to cement a hostile environment. In 2012, the then Home Secretary of the

United Kingdom, Theresa May, pledged to create 'a very hostile environment' for immigrants in the UK in order to manage and control further immigration. In particular, two mutually reinforcing forms of rationality played a key role in implementing this hostility: one rationality involved scripting laws and legislations, and the other involved the implementation of these harsh laws through staging military-like operations. In the following section, I describe the local context of legislations and operations that were in effect between 2014 and 2018. This is crucial in order to understand how these contemporary everyday methods of bordering have affected local political and social relations, and in turn have inspired resistance that opposes the atomising and socially disruptive scripts of governmentality.

1.4 The UK context: new laws and new implementations

1.4.1. Scripting the law and legislation

An examination of the Immigration Laws, Acts and Bills introduced between 2014 and 2018 clearly identifies the establishing of landscapes of exclusion during this period, in which material spatial boundaries exist for particular subjects and not others. The Immigration Act 2014, which in part sought to create a 'hostile environment' for undocumented migrants in the UK, projected particular representations: the state declared that it aimed to disrupt the ability of undocumented migrants to secure a settled lifestyle or establish themselves in the UK by depriving them of resources, services and employment opportunities, such that they would either choose not to come to the UK, or, if already in the UK, they would remove themselves voluntarily.

The Act also extended further powers to identify and remove people who managed to illegally enter the UK. These representations were further enhanced in a new bill introduced in 2015. This introduced new criminalisation regarding the labour market and

the work of migrants, with a new expectation that immigration checks were 'a society-wide responsibility'. For instance, banks and building societies were required to undertake immigration checks.

It also initiated new enforcement measures and increased penalties in relation to access to services, including the leasing of properties, introducing a proposed penalty of a fine and up to five years' imprisonment for leasing a property to an undocumented migrant. Private citizens were being required to do the work of government with eviction powers extended, enabling landlords to take possession of a dwelling. Reports also proliferated of landlords who avoided renting to individuals based on appearance or difficulties with providing documentation for fear of prosecution.

New 'stop and search' powers were created for police and immigration officers, leading to reports of abuse and warrantless arrests. The new powers gave permission for police officers to enter premises and search for a driving licence when an individual on the premises did not have permission to be in the UK legally. Convictions of unlawful driving carried a sentence of 51 weeks of imprisonment plus a fine; vehicles could be confiscated. Immigration officers were given powers to arrest - without a warrant - individuals who commit, or whom they reasonably suspect of committing, this offence. No guidance was given as to what would constitute a 'reasonable suspicion'. This exposed vulnerable groups to a real danger of discrimination within their communities, resulting in migrants reporting cases of prejudice and racial profiling (Institute of Race Relations, 2016).

Furthermore, changes to judicial policy increased migrant vulnerability and susceptibility to dangerous lifestyles (Benson, 2016). For instance, the 'deport first, appeal later' policy was extended to all immigration cases, even when human rights-based claims were raised. All this was further exacerbated by the discontinuation of legal aid in April 2018, leaving the UK in serious danger of risk of breaching their human rights obligations.

The 2015 law also impacted businesses. Employees were required to pay £1000 sponsorship per year for non-EEA / non-Swiss migrants for 'immigration skills', making it difficult and costly for businesses to employ individuals with the right skill-sets within a practical time frame. A 'community of values' was introduced in the public sector, which included the requirement to speak 'fluent English'. Each of these policies and legislative changes contributes to the government's subtext: to make the UK a hostile environment to all migrants, not just illegal migrants. It involved a drastic expansion of restrictions, and potentially criminalised failures in border-guarding as well as unsanctioned border-crossing (Yuval-Davis, Cassidy and Wemyss, 2017).

Arguably, the hostility that - in name at least - is aimed at illegal migrants, has been affecting both policy and the experience of entirely legal migrants, as demonstrated by the antagonistic representations towards new migrants, businesses and many long-established citizens. These representations resonate with the disturbing ideologies of nationalism, nativism and protectionism which are on the rise in the West, as well as reinforcing the xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism and Islamophobia, which are a barrier to a healthy, open and inclusive society. While scripting laws have been an effective tactic of governmentality to maintain a hostile environment, various technologies are used by successive governments that aimed to reduce 'illegality' in the UK.

1.4.2. Staging operations: 2012-2018

My research began at the time when people were still dealing with the shock of Operation Vaken, a 'pilot operation' implemented in 2012. Operation Vaken's goal was to increase the uptake of voluntary departures. The campaign placed vans in targeted London boroughs displaying slogans such as: 'go home or face arrest'. These operated as mobile billboards, informing immigrants that UKBA could arrange their repatriation either the

'easy way' (by their volunteering to be sent back), or the 'hard way' (arrest and deportation); these became the source of repeated pranks, with people calling up asking to be repatriated from the pub to their bed and so on. Dubbed 'racist vans' by the public, the government eventually recognised that Operation Valken was a PR disaster and it ceased.

Following this, a campaign entitled Operation Centurion - a high profile, two-week crackdown on 'illegal immigration' - was implemented in June 2014. This campaign also involved media participation. Operation Centurion is still generally regarded as having been a failure, as leaked information allowed activist networks to mobilise and warn people in advance, ensuring there were few arrests.

Following Operation Centurion came Operation Skybreaker, lasting for the final six months of 2014. It was much subtler and quieter, receiving no media attention regarding efforts to target and deport illegal workers and to prosecute businesses and employers. Skybreaker was implemented in four main stages:

1. Immigration team engagement with community groups, faith leaders, police safer neighbourhood panels and safer neighbourhood boards;
2. HOIE officers offering 'support to employers';
3. Preventing people from accessing services and benefits;
4. Raids and enforcement, including HMRC, police, fire brigades and other agencies.

In the first stage of Operation Skybreaker, civil and faith organisations were 'consulted' in five targeted London boroughs: Brent, Ealing, Greenwich, Newham and Tower Hamlets. The second stage involved approaching the targets and asking them to volunteer for a HOIE audit: companies and groups, which did not accept the soft invitation, were subsequently subject to warrants and raids.

As a reaction to these governmental tactics, legal defence and support was organised by migrant rights activists in the targeted boroughs. Workshops were organised and 'bust

cards' were distributed in order to create a network of people armed with legal information with which to defend themselves and others against immigration enforcement officers. Targeted individuals were given advice on how to navigate the challenges and protect themselves from forced deportation. Campaigning on the streets about Operation Skybreaker also aimed to raise general awareness about the Home Office operations. This sought to challenge the racist myths being touted by the mainstream political parties in the run-up to the general election, in which immigration was a key issue.

1.5. Framing state border performance: performativity, visibility and multi-spatiality.

1.5.1. Framing and method

The framing and method of this study was informed by sociological studies which have acknowledged the complexity, historicity and political situatedness of borders. Cohen (2002) describes how immigration controls in the United States and Western Europe 'combine the most historically lengthy, juridically refined, technologically supported and brutally enforced systems of control'; these controls operate like a vortex 'into which are sucked and then spun out all those the nation defines as "unlawful"- those modern outlaws whose labour is unneeded (or no longer needed) and whose presence is unwanted' (Cohen, 2002: 518). The outer rim of the vortex encircles the globe, consisting of state functionaries, such as those who police and criminalise asylum seekers or entry clearance officers, who control entry through the issuing and denial of visas. In the core of the vortex 'are a panoply of internal controls managed partially by the local state' (Cohen, 2002: 518), some taking place on the level of welfare. This captures the multifaceted context in which local authorities implement internal immigration controls, which impact targeted social groupings. Similarly, Anderson (1998) suggested the

'inverted telescope' as a useful metaphor for understanding various manifestations of nationalism, borders and bordering processes as derivatives of state territorial power.

The terms 'borderlands' and 'borderscapes' are commonly used in border studies to describe the notion of spatial tropes or the imagery of borders, including the complexity and versatility of borders. De Genova, Mezzadra and Pickles (2015) provide the theatrical term 'border spectacle', which is particularly productive for defining the governmental performance of acceptance or exclusion of those who have been deemed 'aliens'.

To fully understand the role of bordering in contemporary society, Wemyss (2017) suggests that analysis of macro-social structures and processes should encompass the perspectives of differentially situated migrants and of people who are affected by them. In this thesis, I argue that, despite the interdisciplinary acknowledgement of border complexity, existing conceptual and methodological approaches still lack the necessary heuristic devices that can allow a full understanding of the macro-social structures and processes of borders. This thesis therefore adopts the lexicon of performance to describe and understand borders. In doing so, I seek to chronicle the performance aspects of the structural practices of the sovereign state, through which expressions of codified legitimacy are staged. Immigration politics are effectively made into a 'make believe', performed for an audience comprising both citizens and noncitizens to witness. I will demonstrate how the structural similarities of politics quite easily lend themselves to theatrical performance metaphors (Rai, 2014).

The fact that so much of politics is symbolic must be examined against the backdrop of contemporary disillusionment with political processes and democratic institutions. Rai (2014) argues that sovereign state politics is performative through deployment of 'the sovereign grammars' (rules, codifications): a set of rules or techniques are performed or deeply implicated in performances that can produce and sustain distinctive social and

political orders (or their effective disruption) (Rai, 2014: 217). Such performances are rehearsed in order to draw special attention to the alleged existence and character of entities such as nation-states (ibid), whilst deflecting attention away from more questionable actions. It is through these performances that public authority is scripted and staged, designed to be visible, and to reach all the parts of the polity. Sovereign political authority is established and maintained through a grammar of a single unified narrative of state and citizen, in which there is only one 'we,' - an ideal-typical citizen characteristic and outlook. This 'we' is one which confirms and conforms to a singular and largely homogenous picture (Rai, 2014: 219).

In short, sovereign grammars of performative politics seek to create a sense of unity, however illusory, out of a potential, and even acknowledged, diversity (Rai, 2014: 219). This method attempts to forge a unity of citizen character types, of destiny, of belonging, of permanent authority and its locus. In so doing, these grammars create a citizen audience, which appreciatively observes and receives sovereign performances (ibid).

Rai's (2014) multi-faceted and nuanced sovereign grammar has been instrumental for the framing of this research. Indeed, this research sought to uncover this complex picture in order to anchor more effectively the subsequent discussion of migrant rights counter-performances (later reviewed in the empirical chapters) as 'critical grammars'. Rai (2014) explains that critical grammars are deployed 'in the performative politics of actors who question, criticise or seek to transform the foundations, dominant understandings of sovereign or authoritative structures' (p. 218). Critical grammars offer an alternative 'we': new and alternative 'publics' which also need to be taken into account politically. In this thesis, the key task guiding the identification of these grammars has focus on those emerging from varied analyses, which has included the following activities: (a) the constitution of subjects, objects and audiences (i.e. identities), and (b) the performative

deployments of, and challenges to, time, space and visibility. Performance can be thought of as a 'continuum' that is broad and inclusive, including ritual and aesthetic genres but also one that extends from conventional artistic texts and practices to any other forms of interactions framed 'as performance' (Schechner, 2003; Mckenzie, 2001). Performances are 'actions, events or behaviours that are self-conscious but also are relational' (Schechner, 2002).

The use of performance as a metaphor in this study serves as a way of knowing. The relationship between performance and knowledge is complex and multi-faceted; it is not just an object of study, but also an epistemology. By epistemology, Taylor (2003) means a way of knowing which alters the subject in the process of seeking knowledge of another:

'Part of what performance and performance studies allow us to do, then, is take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge...it's not simply that we shift to the live as the focus of our analysis, or develop various strategies for garnering information, such as undertaking ethnographic research, interviews, and field notes. Or even alter our hierarchies of legitimation that structure our traditional academic practice (such as book learning, written sources, and documents). We need to rethink our method of analysis' (Taylor, 2003: 26-27).

This research echoes the recent 'cultural turn' in the humanities to recognise the notion of performance as an epistemological lens. Studying 'performance as object' must be expanded from studying texts to studying embodied or lived culture and practices.

In order to illuminate how borders are constituted through specific intersections between history and geography, a performance-oriented border research needs to be conceptualised through dimensions of history (the historicity of the technologies of control), as all too often, contemporary bordering processes are analysed without

sufficiently acknowledging their historicity, (hence the extensive cultural and historical contextualising in Sections 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4).

Thus, thus, the task of framing and method by means of the performance metaphor would necessitate turning the (inverted) telescope around. Thus, this thesis considers the larger issues of the universal grammars of shifting nationalism and ethnicity in an age of mass global migrations and instant electronic communications (Anderson, 1998), whilst also considering the performative dimension of politics. The examination of activism within this context understands that the continuum of bordering practices is inherently fragile and thus vulnerable to challenges. The framing and method of the study underlines the importance of a performative, multi-spatial and aesthetic understanding of bordering.

1.5.2. Borders are effectively performed into being

This thesis posits that the realm of migrant rights activism occupies an inherently dramatic space. It considers immigration politics, including the carefully orchestrated spectacles of management and control enforcement, as performance and performative. Thus, the events reviewed earlier - the Windrush scandal and the 'Go Home' vans - are perceived as elements and 'props' within a larger dramatic production.

These techniques stage the 'spectacle of illegality,' in which the concept of a racialised migrant 'illegality' is rendered visible (De Genova, 2002: 436). In this way, migration and the figure of the migrant are imagined as threats to sovereign grammars: a threat to the identity and culture of the nation, to national security, to the economy, to welfare systems – as well as a threat to the traditions, norms and values of British society. These techniques are simultaneously imbued with power: the iterative historical ritual of the legal admission, or otherwise, by the sovereign state into the domain of its authority and protection (Vaughan-Williams, 2009; 2012). As such, these events and processes are

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intimately linked to sovereign projects of governance and belonging and produce different constructions of identity and hierarchical state citizenship.

The technologies deployed by the state perform the border into being (supposedly) to make people feel safe by keeping out those who do not belong. Belonging can be understood as a feeling of safety, feeling 'at home' - but there is also a material connection and an affective connection to a specific space, which tends to be naturalised and incorporated as part of everyday mundane practices (Yuval-Davis, 2011). By performing borders, state citizenship becomes a separation of the 'full members of a community' who enjoy its associated 'rights and duties' (Marshall, 1950: 14). The division between 'us' and 'them' comes into being, determining the legal status of those allowed to cross the border and those who are not. Thus, this performative character of borders is something that cannot be dismissed nor treated simplistically. It is what makes borders problematic and is experienced very often as a violence in the lives of migrants.

Focusing on perspectives of how bordering practice is actually experienced by refugees, migrants and asylum seekers (Wemyss, 2017) can shift our thinking about borders from an emphasis on ontology to an emphasis on function. This addresses not just how human mobility is governed, but also considers the complexity and equivocality of borders. These issues will be reflected in interrelated concerns that revolve around the political projects of belonging, inclusion or exclusion. The act of making 'every' migrant illegal through performativity of legislation demonstrates how borders are performed into being, in which a natural transition to citizenship is denied through enforced procedures as part of sovereign grammars. The examples from migration struggles provided in the later empirical chapters of this study will further demonstrate that such struggles emerge in opposition to the sovereign grammars – grammars that represent migrants as problems, who need to be deported, detained, excluded, regulated or silenced.

Migrant struggles disrupt how the sovereign state operates, its edges and limits; they challenge notions of who the ideal citizen is, who 'the other' is. The findings of this research present interviews with nine activists and data collected from research conducted during two protests - Refugees Welcome and Shut Down Yarl's Wood – as well as data from Hope Space, a sanctuary for female asylum seekers. These are all situated in spaces and temporalities in which disruption is rendered possible. The findings of this study show the inevitability of these struggles in the light of how borders are created, enacted, justified and articulated. The small victories won over the years by activists point to the fact that, though borders can seem to be stable demarcations, and although they seem to have extended to everyday reality and practice, they also can be unmade, contested and altered. Although historically charged, borders are continually being countered and migrant struggles have persisted over the past six decades in challenging the homogenising sovereign discourses and grammars about belonging.

1.5.3. State bordering practices are highly visible

Visibility is an important feature that permeates bordering practices. In contemporary western societies, communication - whether online, in the media or in the public eye - involves the politics of looking and being looked at. Identifying and accentuating differences has become a key feature of sovereign performative politics: it is through such performances that 'an elaborate array of bureaucratic and physical impediments to cross-border travel and a vast armoury of technologies of control and exclusion' are mobilised against asylum seekers (Nyers, 2003: 1069). It is the identification and construction of the stereotypical figure of the asylum seeker which secures the imaginary borders of the UK today. Hence, visible control emphasises the sovereign efforts required to continuously establish authoritative interpretations of spaces of difference.

In order to achieve political visibility, the skilled use of places and spaces is crucial. The repeated use of visible sovereign performances in appropriate spaces and at appropriate times reinforces the interpretation of place as mattering, as well as communicating that what is invisible does not matter (Neil and Rai, 2015). The recent mediatisation of the world has served to circulate a constellation of images and discursive formations, which repeatedly supply migrant 'illegality' with the semblance of an objective fact (De Genova, 2011). Thus, visibility is accomplished through the visual staging intrinsically tied to symbolic material forms. Such visual staging can serve as a locus that points to deep meanings that resonate with the audience (Alexander, 2011).

Visibility can be thought about variably. On the one hand, the visibility through mediatisation is real: 'we are condemned to live out our lives in an age of artifice, a world of mirrored, manipulated and mediated representation, but the constructed character of symbols does not make them less real' (Alexander, 2011: 13). On the other hand, in a world saturated with imagery, in which we are confronted by an abundance of migrant imagery without reference or contest, we are all involved as willing or unwilling witnesses. Interestingly, it is often on social media - Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp – that highly visible staged performances from the state are perceived as inauthentic or unacceptable and rejected (Jones, Gunaratnam, Bhattacharyya and Davis, 2017). For instance, anti-migrant operations previously staged by the Home Office (the most recent being Windrush), were followed up by the state attempting to artificially create the impression of 'doing the right thing for the citizens'; however, this backfired magnificently (Alexander, 2011). Rejecting such representations and meanings deployed by the state point to the potential role of the audience-citizen not as a passive spectator, but as a critical observer, something which led to some of these events now being widely thought of as scandals.

The empirical chapters included later in this document demonstrate that political visibility can also be accomplished by counter-state performative politics. Border control and bordering practices are concerned with the enactment of politics in the public sphere where the performative nature of the event is crucial to the process, both symbolically and politically. This suggests that appropriating space can also be a useful tactic for those engaged in counter-performances.

1.5.4. Borders on our streets

A third concern of the thesis is that of the multi-spatiality of border performances: the view that borders are everywhere (Balibar, 2002). This highlights the enormity of the task migrant struggles face in order to undo the impacts of the borders. The processes of bordering are multi-scalar, materialising and vacillating unpredictably, such that the manifestations of borders and bordering must be located and detected.

Moreover, as borders manifest at local, regional and national levels as well as on a global scale, they are now being multiplied and reduced in their localisation. They have been observed changing as the spatiality of politics and societal transformations change. Thus, borders are 'no longer the shores of politics but can be located in the space of the political itself' (Balibar, 1998: 220).

Vaughan-Williams's distinction of geopolitical borders and biopolitical borders suggests that it is 'border thinking' that pervades our lives, rather than the borders themselves. Biopolitical borders are those that we as humans carry within us: humans carry in their minds borders in the form of various identities ascribed to them through their linkage with the territory from where they originate, from where they derive their citizenships. Such borders are embedded in the human psyche, whether they are geopolitical or biopolitical. To reinforce such border thinking, instances of bordering and being bordered play a

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critical role. The usefulness of this distinction helps explain the impact of bordering processes on humans as mobile sovereign subjects: as borders simultaneously take place both in physical location and in the mind.

The diverse resistance performances for migrants' rights which I review in this thesis emerge precisely at the places where migrants' bodies are excluded, racialised, told they do not belong or otherwise oppressed. These counter-performances question the borders ontological, ethical and political existence (Dillon, 1999a: 95-96) as they uncover unconventional sites where the activity of bordering is currently taking place.

 Mapping multiple spatialities of bordering has implications for the ways they can be read and thought about. 'We cannot attribute to the border an essence, because they have a polysemic nature' and as borders are becoming diffused and difficult to locate, 'they do not have the same meanings for everyone' (Balibar, 2002: 81). The production and construction of border meanings takes place everywhere and all the time: a continuum of border meanings, discourses and practices being constantly produced, so that everyday life is the border (Paasi, 1999). Borders have arguably now permeated our streets, demarcating landscapes in which material and spatial boundaries exist for particular subjects and not others. As border procedures target border-crossers, migrants and members of racialised minority groups are required to prove the legitimacy of their claims to citizenship and belonging. This spatial escalation, however, has inspired new forms of resistance. It is my hope this thesis provides a contextualised lens on the most recent resistances of bordering, demonstrating that the powerful grammars, performances and visibilities of the state can and are being countered.

1.6. A border-counter performance

Borders are not just a means of marking territorial boundaries but determine how belonging is politicised for each migrant. This politicisation affects all aspects of their lives,

regardless of how long ago they crossed the border. In many senses, migrants seem to never cross the border completely: the border instead crosses with them, defines their lives and stays with them forever.

This thesis tells a story about multi-spatial and multi-vocal expressions of political mobilisations for migrant rights in the UK. I will examine key initiatives organised by women activists in different spaces of migrant struggles, which I will refer to as 'border counter-performances.' By examining these migrant struggles, I investigate how activism is formed, developed and articulated. I also investigate the various perspectives from which it is possible to understand the role of bordering in contemporary society. This offers a theoretical response, which narrates the work done individually or in coalitions, as these activists engage in various forms of advocacy and resistance around the enforced destitution, detention and deportation of migrants in the United Kingdom.

These counter-performances challenge the state policies. They do so from an anti-racist framework, which affect refugees, asylum seekers and migrant communities. The activists march, they petition, they lobby, they occupy, they stage performances and they publicise. They strive to influence the court of public opinion and the politicians and therefore bring about change.

The motivation for conducting this research was borne out of my own personal and professional experience, and as a response to the paucity of stories of activism that focused on bordering practices in relation to immigration. Those affected by the asylum system, as well as those who work in support of asylum seekers and refugees, are all too familiar with the processes of border violence and the reactionary rise of border solidarity. I was curious about what constitutes critical counter-political activism, wanting to explore the protests against the deteriorating conditions for migrants and refugees (with a focus on asylum seekers). I wanted to highlight the work of those who seek to expose the

violence engendered by border controls, and who challenge the abstract and 'fetishized political rhetoric of 'illegal' immigration' (De Genova, 2002). In addition to this, it has been my conviction that the perspectives gained from women activists might be jointly explored through a narrative study and a performance-oriented exploration.

I have situated my research in the widest context of contemporary feminist, migrant rights activism and their corresponding epistemology. Historically informed feminist accounts have been under-represented in the literature on migrant rights activism. By focusing on the voices and actions of women activists, this thesis contributes to the knowledge and discussion of the changing understanding of feminist organising and the implications for migrant rights activism in the contemporary UK.

1.7. Thesis structure

Although this thesis is conventionally structured, half of the study will explore narrative (Chapters 4-5), and the other half will explore performance (Chapters 6-7). The thesis seeks to understand, as a consequence of the intensification of border security measures in the UK in recent decades, how contemporary state border performance and the restrictive immigration and refugee policies of the UK are being actively contested, challenged, and, at least in some cases, overturned, by an equally-energetic and fierce counter-performance.

Chapter 2 explores how questions revolving around state borders and bordering practices have been explored by a variety of scholarly traditions and disciplines. It discusses the current trend in studying borders as performance and how this may be relevant to this study. The chapter also provides insights into the social, economic, and political context of the women activists who participated in this study. It will explain how the current debates in literature are the foundations upon which the activists build their arguments, frame their interventions, and carry out their varying acts of resistance. The notion that

resistance acts of migrants can be conceptualised as counter-performance, including the value and relevance of the concept of performance, is also developed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 builds on the transdisciplinary theoretical framework. It combines the narrative and performance dimensions of analysis to address the methodological concerns of this study. This chapter discusses the research process as a set of choices that were made with regard to generating empirical data, managing relationships, and adopting the language of performance analysis and interpretation. I will show how life-history methods of data gathering and narrative analysis complement the performance approach that was used in the activist spaces.

The findings are presented in chapters 4 – 8 and are arranged as themed collections of stories and theatrical performances.

Chapter 4 explores the journeys of six key activists who play front-stage roles in the migrant rights movement. This chapter reveals their individual journeys in 'becoming' activists, and the construction of their roles and identities. This chapter will argue that they purposively assume roles to establish collective representation (dramatis personae) and ensure that migrant stories are told and heard in the unfolding public drama. Their personal stories illustrate the contextual prefacing, perspectives and paradoxes that underlie historical and intergenerational struggles for the rights of migrants in the UK. These stories also highlight the multiple shifting terrains of border politics and performance. Their stories do not represent a model or fixed identity of one single 'pure' migrant rights activist, but they do help illuminate the nature of resistant performance in the migrant rights movement. It is of paramount importance to discern the multi-dimensional personalities and attributes of the ordinary people engaged in sustaining the movement for the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The

narratives and personas described in this chapter provide a glimpse into the sort of 'back-stories' and motivations of the activists discussed throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 5 expands on the epistemologically distinct and creative micro-histories of women to reflect on how they express commitment through distinct acts, praxis, affect, scripts, strategies, vision, successes and contradictions.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the role of performance through various spatial strategic interventions. Chapter 6 highlights the role which Nine Lives Theatre has played in charting the experiences of asylum seekers in the British public consciousness. It explores the political impact of the production and delivery of the Nine Lives play, and its effects in 25 locations across the UK. The findings demonstrate that the Nine Lives Tour was shrewd enough not to try to instil opinionated ideas, but rather questioned the deeply ingrained negative attitudes that British society has about immigrants and asylum seekers. The pain, trauma and violence of the system, as experienced by the individual, were presented in the context of political action and provocation. This was done so that the audience was invited to witness the current system and imagine future possibilities. Nine Lives sought to disrupt the status quo, offering a symbolically framed alternative for how people can re-imagine sanctuary.

Chapter 7 focuses on the space of migrant dissent. It examines both the symbolic and material practices of conventional protest by drawing upon three distinct fieldwork experiences. The Refugees Welcome demonstration and the Yarl's Wood demonstration represent two direct actions. In addition, Hope Space is a place for destitute women seeking asylum. These spatial interventions make room for a new kind of reading of political expression. By exploring how both citizens and non-citizens connect with spatial strategies for resistance, resilience and defiance within the public sphere, this chapter highlights the significance of space in order to propose that it was the manipulation of

theatrical strategies and vocabularies by the creators of the events which produced potentially radical interventions. Furthermore, the three interventions reveal much about the ways in which one can read symbolic political performance and the regimes of appearance, representation and visibility.

Chapter 8 begins by briefly revisiting the policy and discursive contexts in which this study is situated, exploring the rationale for the research. It examines the implications of the findings and the relevance of performance and stories in the emergence, articulation and sustaining of activism. It acknowledges the limitations of the study and points out potential research trajectories that might be undertaken in the future. This chapter concludes the thesis by re-addressing the research questions, highlighting the originality in scope and methodology, and outlining the value of the contribution to further knowledge about refugee and migrant rights activism.

Chapter 2: Theorising state border performance

2.1. Introduction

This chapter describes my approach to the concept of state borders and analysing migrant resistance. It also describes my approach to examining the performance and performativity of border power in immigration politics as experienced by migrants. The study is positioned within a theoretical and conceptual framework that has a feminist basis, but which is also mindful of and informed by theoretical constructs and critiques of borders from across different disciplines, such as the Critical Border Studies, Race Studies, Citizenship Studies and Performance Studies. As it has developed in this thesis, the contributions from these disciplines are utilised to address specific aims and objectives of this thesis, such as:

1) to explore how migrant struggle emerges and such struggles are articulated,

2) feminist understanding of such resistance,

3) the role of performance in the pursuit of migrant rights.

Not only does an interdisciplinary approach enable us to understand the significance of borders in the social and political life of the nation state, but such an approach also offers a glimpse of the border and its effect on migrants, whilst simultaneously allowing us to avoid being limited by the boundaries of any particular discipline.

Two main strands of literature are considered in this chapter. In the first strand, the selected literature mainly engages with the situated border on the European continent, particularly the border of the UK. The chapter begins by defining the border, and then locates where and how the work of bordering appears in junctures of academic traditions. I particularly draw upon some of the influential texts in the wider field of border research,

including the social sciences, whose material provides a historical and contemporary account of how the experiences of and conditions at the border affect migrants who are subject to immigration control. By linking this discussion of influential texts to wider feminist border research, this allows us to track, map and chart some of the prominent debates. Doing so helps demonstrate why borders matter, why we should pay attention to this topic, and how understanding the inner workings of border-power or border politics presents an opportunity to investigate how migrant resistance emerges, as well as how and why it is articulated and sustained as counter-performance.

The second strand of literature addresses the work that forms part of the canon of what is sometimes called politics and performance research. This work aims to examine the co-constitutive nature of performance and politics by drawing predominantly on the application of performance theory in social sciences. More specifically, the notion of performance has become broader and more inclusive (Schechner, 1970; 2006), and this type of inclusion has allowed for the de-emphasising of literary, text-based criticism in favour of more performance-based analyses. The observation that performance and social sciences often overlap makes a case for analyses that are guided by 'artistry, analysis activism', or 'creativity, critique and community' (Conquergood, 2004). Such analyses take account of ritual and societal contexts such as citizenship and civic struggles for social justice. As Schechner (2006: 2) argues, the notion of performance drawing on interdisciplinarity allows analyses to open out into an exploration of the visual arts, textual materials, art objects, and wider culture as performances 'in ongoing relationships.

In my analysis, my definition of 'performance' is not limited to productions that are formally designated as performing arts, nor do I restrict the scope of analysis only to such 'artistic' productions. Instead, a looser and more expansive definition of performance is utilised

which includes any social activity that exhibits the characteristics of a performance or a publicly enacted social role and allows any such 'choreographed' social activities to be analysed as performance (Schechner 2006: 2).

In my engagement with research on how border politics is enacted, it was important to draw upon work which conceptualises politics as performance. Notably, I make reference to the work of Shirin Rai and Janelle Reinelt (2015), in *Grammar of Politics and Performance,* which focuses predominantly on the communicational base of politics and its performance as a set of behavioural practices.

However, exploring performance theory and its application in politics is not something to be done in isolation. Instead, it is important to connect these concepts with those of border theorists to raise questions about state border performance. Therefore, a deconstruction of Rai's (2014) *Politics and Performance Framework* (PPF) is necessary to engage two axes of analysis. The first of these maps the markers of representation which encapsulate political performance, and the second maps the effectiveness of political performance. To clarify the place of performance in this research, a further explanation of this PPF application will be provided in the context of methodology in Chapter 3.

This chapter represents my attempt to conceptualise and frame the ways in which various enactments of border practices can be better understood. It also helps conceptualise migrant experiences of the border in specific spaces of intervention, which I review in the empirical chapters. I argue that interfacing existing border literature with cultural/performance studies is the most productive way to conceptualise and discern the undetected performative aspects of politics when researching how the state communicates its political information related to bordering and control of migration.

2.2. Border research literature

2.2.1 Defining border and bordering

In the existing literature, particularly that related to border scholarship, borders are commonly understood as markers of territorial limits of the state that represent, control and manage social relations, institutions and spatial formations. Traditionally, a variety of scholarly disciplines have been used to research the border and have all focused-on analysing and interpreting activities that occur on borders located at the physical edge of the state. However, in the more recent decades, a common insight has emerged that borders are not, in fact, *only* at the peripheries of the state (i.e. geographical territorial markers), but that borders actually impact a multiplicity of areas of life and discourse.

As such, broadening the understanding of the ontology of borders is a serious concern of researchers. Parker and Adler-Nissen's (2012) definition of borders posits that borders are a subcategory of boundaries, even though these two things are distinctly different. Making a distinction between a border and a boundary can be very useful: although all borders are boundaries, not all boundaries are borders. For instance, boundaries of personal space would need to be unusually explicit if one was to call them borders. Arguably, for a boundary to become a border, the boundary would need to be made more evident and formal. States excel in their ability to make things formal. Parker and Adler-Nissen (2012) demonstrate that enactment is a key characteristic of a border and can be observed in various types of 'formal' (state) enactments. They offer some examples of enactment one can see witnessed in various formal actions of the state:

> 'from the grandeur of the monarch and the state buildings; to the legal and constitutional documents (so carefully prepared, revised and announced); to the meticulously drafted inter-state treaties; to the public offices in military, police and state service; to the public finances. (Parker and Adler-Nissen, 2012: 775).

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In such ways, defining borders is in part reflective of the meanings and functions borders have always been enacting.

The effects of borders have increasingly emerged in many analyses pertaining to the period of heightened capitalism and globalisation of the world economy. Borders can also be understood in relation to this rapidly changing interconnectedness and can be viewed as processes attempting to define and seize control of social, economic and political spaces in highly specific ways. Such analyses allocate much attention to the all-pervasive stage of globalisation and related processes of mobility of people and the flow of capital, information, and goods. In doing so, they reveal how borders create the binaries of inclusion and exclusion, mobility and immobility, domestic and foreign, national and international, us and them, internal and external. Consequently, this ability to alter the landscapes concerning economics, politics, geography, demographics and politics has made borders critical to the study of society. At the same time, borders are being transformed by changes in society, economics and politics.

In the literature, borders are also understood to be socially constructed to serve particular (political) purposes (Paasi, 2013). Borders can be constructed by the political elite to protect their position (Massey, 1995); at the same time, borders constrain the scope of possible political actions. Borders are imbued with power, and in fact, borders do exercise power (Sibley, 1995), but they do not embody any 'eternal truth of places' (Massey 1995: 67). The act of bordering by the state reflects politics in many different ways. The act of bordering not only reflects the politics of delimitation and classification, but also reflects the ways that the politics of representation and identity come into play (Johnson et al., 2011:62). Such political factors are networked through society and borders always reflect and exert an impact upon the changing power relations (Wood, 1992).

Borders consist of a set of present practices drawn primarily from a lengthy history of past enactments. These practices are carried out by various actors: state actors and non-state actors who both participate in 'borderwork' (Rumford, 2012). In the context of such borderwork, borders can be understood to not hold a static or territorial fixity. In addition to being the product of past or present enactments, borders are also practices which are enacted both intentionally and unintentionally (Parker and Adler-Nissen, 2012).

Turning to the conceptualisation and definition of borders used in this thesis, it is impossible to ignore that all the aspects of borders mentioned above make up the messy reality of borders. Borders can be understood as territorial limits of the state within which a spectrum of institutions, social relations and spatial formations are classified, delimitated, represented and subordinated. However, borders can also mean different things to different people, and enacting a border can allow certain expressions of identity and memory while blocking others.

Borders have been conceptualised in many different ways. All of these factors reveal much about the operation of geopolitical borders and highlight the very real and often violent practices connected with biopolitical borders. It is this type of enactment activity associated with bordering that determines what happens to the physical bodies of specific people. Such enactment activities will be the focus of this study, for these activities give rise to conflicts, disputes, struggles and drama involving migrants at the level of state and in everyday life.

With this in mind, a conceptualisation of borders is sought which seeks to shed light on the work that can potentially be done to counteract the negative psychological impact of borders upon the everyday lives of migrants. Arguably, the capacity to make or unmake borders becomes a major source of political power (Rumford 2011, 2012), for borders are increasingly becoming 'sharp' markers of difference (Scott and van Houtum, 2009).

2.2.2 Influential research on bordering

This thesis aims to increase the understanding of the character and inner workings of borders. Several influential texts from critical border studies and feminist border research, notably, the work of Étienne Balibar (2002) and Gloria Anzaldua (1987, 1999) seem particularly useful in this endeavour. Their work encourages us to ask how we might think of the current intensifying migration border policing and control, to consider the kinds of experiences migrants have, and the different experiences of different people. What accounts for these different experiences of different people? What meaning do people ascribe to these differences? It is hoped that such an increased understanding can not only benefit activists in their efforts to counteract the discursive patterns related to the increasing efforts to 'secure' and militarise borders, but can also bring new knowledge that offers a more accurate interpretation of the work of border counter-performance.

2.2.2.1 Balibar's texts of bordering

Étienne Balibar (2002) claims that the border is the thing that defines. In his essay 'What is a border?' Balibar writes that any effort to define what constitutes a border is absurd, because a border actually has no essence. Therefore, any answer would necessarily construct a border. This warning is further elaborated:

> 'To mark out a border is, precisely, to define a territory, to delimit it, and so to register the identity of that territory, or confer one upon it. Conversely, however, to define or identify in general is nothing other than to trace a border, to assign boundaries or borders (...) The theorist who attempts to define what a border is is in danger of going round in circles, as the very representation of the border is the precondition for any definition' (Balibar, 2002: 76).

Balibar (2002) discusses three distinct characters of borders: (1) the 'over-determination' of borders, (2) the 'polysemic' nature of borders, and (3) the heterogeneity and ubiquity of borders. He argues that in each instance of border-crossing, every border is not the same, and each experience of crossing is not the same for everyone. The over-

determination of borders means every border has its own history and within that history, 'the demand for the right to self-determination and the power or impotence of states are combined, together with cultural demarcations (often termed 'natural'), economic interests' (Balibar, 2002: 79). In addition, each border between states is different, and can be experienced differently at different moments of history. Balibar (2002) conveys the complexity of experiences across time and space and in relation to different crossers, and therefore any generalising or universalising of borders ontology (or any attempt at conceptualisation/definition of borders) is inherently problematic. Borders are 'world-configuring', performing specific functions: so that any real constitution of borders must be alert to the multiple 'configurations' into which borders squeeze the world of border crossers, particularly those caught up in the border (with or without secure status).

Balibar (2002) elaborates that the polysemy of borders simply implies that they do not have the same meaning for everyone. If you cross a border as an academic travelling to a conference, your experience of doing so will be quite different from your experience if you cross it as a businessman on a sales trip. If you cross it as a young unemployed person, your experience will be quite different from that of a migrant. For each of these people, the border will have nothing in common but a name (Balibar, 2002: 81). Therefore, a border is not what it seems, or it appears to be, for it can take more than one identity. This informs what Balibar calls the 'equivocal character' of borders (2002:78). In other words, borders are ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation.

Balibar (2002) states that 'wherever selective controls are to be found', that is where borders materialise (2002: 84). Borders are designed to perform precisely this task of providing selective controls. They do not just provide different experiences of the law, of the civil administration, of police behaviour, and elementary rights, such as the freedom of circulation and freedom of enterprise, but also serve to actively 'differentiate between

individuals in terms of social class' (Balibar, 2002: 82). This is not a new phenomenon, but rather has been so for a long time over the course of history. Balibar (2002) makes us see that borders and other components of the apparatus of control are instruments of discrimination and triage. This differentiating character is actually something essential to the functioning of the border. Hence, we come to realise that the true function of borders is to differentiate people. Such differentiating of people used to be experienced mostly at various checkpoints, but one could argue that wherever such differentiation is administered, these sites of administration are in fact borders.

Balibar argues that some borders are no longer situated at the borders at all, in the geographic-politico administrative sense (Balibar, 2002: 84). Instead, borders can be found everywhere: they have been dislocated to less obvious sites, becoming something that is enacted/performed at numerous locations inside a state, rather than something located only at the specific geographical boundary between one state and another state. This is very relevant to the inquiries of this research, as it enables the consideration of the viewpoint of a migrant with questions examining what specific sites the border might move to from their perspective. If the border is no longer at the entry checkpoints, where are these 'less obvious' sites? What interpretation is given to such a border? How do they appear?

The third important characteristic Balibar (2002) describes is his explanation of borders as being heterogeneous and ubiquitous. The ubiquitous nature of borders implies that borders can appear and reappear anywhere in a particular space at a given time. This emphasises that the appearance of a border can be heterogeneous and can emerge and be visible by enactment of some sort of measure controlling of the mobility of bodies. In relation to the performative inquiry I am pursuing, Balibar's articulation of the need to pay attention to border enactment is very useful.

2.2.2.2 Anzaldua and feminist border research

Feminist analysis of borders has arrived at similar conclusions, stating that borders are to be understood as human practices implemented for some individuals 'everywhere' or 'anywhere', but not implemented at all for other individuals. The writings of Gloria Anzaldua (1987, 1999) provide a situated understanding of border experience and ask us to think of borders as something that is enacted upon bodies. Her valuable theorising about borders can be understood particularly from the context of borderland studies including post-colonial feminist writings, Black, Chicana and Third World feminists. In her influential analysis entitled Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987), Anzaldua suggests a new way of viewing and theorising the border as a psychic, social and cultural terrain that we inhabit and that inhabits all of us. Focusing on the situated border of US/Mexico, Anzaldua says:

> 'The US-Mexico es una herida abierta [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country - a border culture' (Anzaldua 1987/1999: 25).

Of significance here is this description of the border as a site of injury. It has an 'open wound' characteristic and presents the disturbing idea of haemorrhaging each time the border is re-enacted as an operation of differentiation (distinction). Like Balibar (2002), Anzaldua (1987) stretches this familiar notion that the border is in fact constructed. Furthermore, it has been constructed to perform divisions and certain functions, some of which leave marks of violence on the body as well as on the psyche. Like Balibar (2002), Anzaldua (1987) posits that the border (the enactment of differential bordering) has various effects on these bodies. Anzaldua goes on to discuss critical issues related to

Chicana[1] experiences of the border, including heteronormativity, colonialism and male dominance.

Anzaldua further develops the idea of the 'new mestiza' as a 'new higher consciousness' that overcomes these 'border' challenges. Although Anzaldua's analysis has greatly influenced scholars interested in studying the borders and border experience, it also has been criticised for essentialising the border experience. Vila (2003) argues that those influenced by Anzaldua's (1987) work view borderlands as sites that can enable those dwelling there to negotiate the contradictions and tensions found between cultures, class and other forms of difference, something which Vila (2003) suggests cannot/should not be generalised. However, in her defence, Naples (2010) notes that Anzaldua's framework must be read from a feminist epistemological point of view.

Naples goes on to caution those who draw on these approaches to research borderland living without recognising the broader feminist epistemological frame that informs their analysis may, inadvertently, interpret Chicana feminist work as essentialist rather than materialist. Naples says that the point of this argument was that unless the border research engages directly in feminist theoretical debates, scholars are not likely to find a more nuanced reading of Anzaldua nor non-essentialist analyses of the mestiza consciousness and 'la frontera'.

There is no such a thing as a single construction of women's perspective in studying border experience. As an alternative, Naples (2003) suggests a strategy for negotiating these challenges through praxis. She says this would generate, 'a materialist feminist theoretical approach informed by postmodern and postcolonial analyses of knowledge, power and language that speaks to the empirical world in which ethnographic research

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[1] Chicana or Xicana is the chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the US.

takes place' (2003: 24). It is also important to mention that Anzaldua is telling her own story of her traumatic experiences as a Chicana migrant, a racialised identity, which, in her view has something to do with how (to what extent) she experienced the border. What this tells us, is that a feminist reading of border experience is key, for it attempts to lay the foundation for an understanding of what borders do in terms of embodiment and experience. It also suggests the significance of departing from praxis-focused inquiry.

For the purposes of this thesis, I find emphasis on praxis very productive and, as has been suggested previously, border studies is indeed a field that has been shaped by praxis (Stoddard, 1986). Praxis remains a driving force in many contemporary border research projects and scholars on borderlands and those located in academic sites near the European or Mexico/USA borders have increasingly become involved in the everyday struggles of people living on the border. Therefore, the writings which connect struggles across locales arguably do produce knowledge that takes into account how different border experiences can be from the perspectives of different border-crossers.

This thesis aims to investigate the experiences of migrant women, among others. Researching border experience entails de-constructing and dismantling the production of singular monolithic 'third-world' women subjects (Mohanty, 2003). In doing so, every stage of the investigation should avoid attempting to study the experiences of migrant women as if they were all a single, unified, coherent phenomenon.

It is also important to avoid homogenising the experiences of social groupings when dealing with differently situated identities (Yuval-Davis, 1994, 1997). Borders are in fact enacted -not just spatially - but also as various expressions of belonging (i.e. social, political, and economic) (Yuval-Davis, 1994). Yuval-Davis (1994) warns that, when analysing situated everyday narratives of different social groupings, it is important to pay

attention to how the spatial operations of power function differently in relation to distinctly spatialised bodies. This is useful, relevant advice within the context of the thesis.

Arguably, feminist theorising broadens and expands Balibar's (2002) thinking. Balibar's (2002) view that borders are enacted only in terms of administrative review does not address the full picture. Considering a wider array of possible characteristics of borders and bordering practices, it is reasonable to suggest that migrants or racialised social groupings do in fact experience these practices in many different ways -not just in terms of the administration of border. This great diversity of experiences cannot be generalised or essentialised. Genuine insights into these experiences can be obtained by paying attention to macro- and micro-structures through which these border practices become possible. Thus, any attempt at conceptualising borders can benefit from feminist praxis.

In the following section, I will outline key feminist debates which focus on the extent of the relationship between borders and the human bodies that cross them, particularly expanding our understanding of spaces of the border to include more than just geography and physical spatiality. This discussion includes debates on the border experiences related to citizenship, 'us vs them' divisions, debates on the racialisation of borders, illegality and dehumanisation issues, and anti-colonial frameworks to read and understand borders. Examining the core of each debate informs a consideration of borders as 'human practices that constitute and represent differences in space' (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2002: 672). Thus, we can understand how these divisions actively produce borders - politically, structurally and emotionally.

2.2.3 Why borders matter: key feminists' debates and arguments

In addition to providing an understanding of the inner workings of the borders, interdisciplinary work around borders has more recently been geared towards practical

strategies for countering them. Some debates have emerged from feminist scholarship which directly engage with work that study borders, bordering and regulated migration. Such work seeks to understand the gendered and racialised characteristics of these processes, particularly in relation to the formation of nation-states. Other debates are mainly concerned with arguments from a diversity of disciplines which seek to critique and destabilise hegemonic concepts of borders, citizenship and the nation state. Revisiting these debates can not only highlight and contextualise what borders do but can also provide a map of strategies that can work effectively (albeit temporarily) towards un-doing the effects of bordering - both on macro and micro levels.

At the heart of these debates under review is the citizenship question, and this is posited as a series of interlocking and contingent separations through which borders are made and remade in multiple ways. It can be argued that as citizenship comes in contact with differential treatment reserved for 'different' categories of people within border spaces, the meaning of citizenship also shifts. Such debates also point to the ways illegality and vulnerabilities are produced through legislation aimed at sorting populations. The debates also argue that the increasing multiplication and proliferation of statuses both reflect a state-centric community as well as capitalist technics of labour desirability, thus conditions and distributions of legality arguably produce and sustain inequalities. From this point, debates argue that asylum systems can be understood as part of these processes, for they perform the most important function of managing arrivals seeking asylum and other migrants with insecure or irregular statuses.

2.2.3.1 Citizenship as separation

The notion of citizenship has always posed a moral and ethical concern, as it highlights the practices and experiences of marginalisation, misrecognition and oppression that condition lives (Roseneil, 2013). The early Marshallian (1950) conceptualisation of

citizenship consists of key elements such as membership of a community and the rights and obligations which flow from that membership and equality. This is not simply in regard to a set of legal rules governing the relationship between individuals and the state in which they live, but also a set of social relations between individual citizens (Nyers, 2013).

However, feminist scholars have historically argued that Marshall's (1950) understanding of citizenship as 'full membership of a community' must not be limited only to legal status and associated rights and responsibilities, but must also be concerned with subjective experiences of participation and belonging in relation to both the state and civil society (Lister, 2007; Lister et al., 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1999;). More recent theoretical formulations have argued for a synthesis of the rights and participatory traditions, linked through the notion of human agency (Lister, 1997). In recent decades, proposed definitions of citizenship have expanded into multi-layered concepts (Yuval-Davis, 1999), and progressively involved arguments for definitions of citizenship that extend far beyond strictly legal definitions. These claims have led to some interesting proposals which include interrelated dimensions of citizenship, such as political, social, economic, multicultural, bodily and intimate (Roseneil, 2013). An illustrative example has been redefining citizenship for women in the 20th century in Europe, which has been achieved by incorporating the central fields of the struggle of women's movements. Among other things, this has allowed access to formal politics, expanded social benefits and welfare, opened up economic participation and the possibility of financial independence, granted new forms of self-determination in intimate life, and transformed the legal and cultural regulation of sexuality (Roseneil, 2012).

While this widening and deepening of the understanding of citizenship seems commendable, citizenship remains a contested concept with no single definition. Isin, Nyers and Turner (2009) have suggested that any attempt 'to define citizenship

definitively is probably a serious intellectual mistake because we (almost) all know that citizenship is a contested site of social struggles' (2009: 1). For these authors, it is by inquiring into what citizenship does, (rather than attempting to define what it is) which will give us a better understanding. Arguably, by examining various constructions of citizenship, one can recognise and expose the limitations, restrictions and violence enacted by states through citizenship.

2.2.3.3. Debates on illegality, differentiation and dehumanisation

The concept of irregular or 'illegal' migration exists because policies determine which types and levels of migration are permitted and which are not. Illegality - not having legal rights to remain in a country - is understood as a significant problem within neo-liberal states, remaining central to policy debates and the primary object for border policing strategies globally. However, a nation's policy stipulating what is legal or illegal migration is fraught with tensions arising between demands for labour and immigration restrictions, between institutional goals and individual aspirations, between state definitions of persecution and individual perceptions, and between flexible lives and inflexible immigration rules and bureaucracies (Duvell, 2014). It is these tensions that bring irregular migrations (Duvell, 2014).

The ways in which a state identifies somebody as a refugee, 'illegal immigrant' or even as a 'migrant' has been the subject of much critique and controversy. Pro-migrant activists have been lobbying sovereign states in the West to adopt a fair and clear distinction between legal and illegal migrants, with some suggestions that the terms 'legal' and 'illegal' should be replaced with the more accurate terms, 'regular' and 'irregular' (Global Compact for Migration, 2018).

The denoted status – 'legal' or 'illegal' - has arguably been employed as a weapon for bordering, particularly as migration has increased and borders hardened. Status has

made the politics of citizenship an essentialist politics of difference: citizens are marked by their status and associated rights, with the ensuing values and benefits; these have been institutionalised in immigration law. Thus, this has made the politics of citizenship unequal and unfair, and responsible for producing migrant illegality.

Irregularity can be thought of as a social, political, and legal construct; which implies it can also be deconstructed: that which was once declared illegal can also be declared legal (Duvel, 2014). Duvel (2014) points out that when 10 states joined the European Union in 2004 and the EU borders shifted east, irregular migration from states such as Poland and the Czech Republic became regular overnight. Thus, it was through regularisation that millions of people who did not have legal statuses before became regular migrants and obtained legal status (2014: 20). De Genova (2002) summarises the situation with clarity:

> Illegality is the product of immigration laws and it is not merely in the abstract sense that without the law, nothing could be construed to be outside of the law; nor simply in the generic sense that immigration law constructs, differentiates and ranks various categories of 'aliens', but it is in the more profound sense that the history of deliberate interventions that have revised and reformulated the law has entailed an active process of inclusion through 'illegalisation' (De Genova, 2002:439).

Illegality is the product of immigration laws, as it is the law that produce its subjects. Examination of the social and political conditions under which people are constructed as 'illegal' illuminates how the state distinguishes between groups of migrants. The term 'migrant' itself brings some confusion, as it seems a straightforward assumption that a migrant is someone who has crossed a border, or someone who is not a citizen of the country where they live. The Windrush scandal (examined in Chapter 1) was an example of citizens of a country who had lived in the UK all their lives, some of whom had never been to the Caribbean, being ascribed 'illegal immigrant' status and deported. This scenario perfectly illustrates how legality and regular status can change to illegality - and back - very quickly: they are constructions of the state (De Genova, 2002).

The construction of status is also illustrated by the asylum systems and the huge difficulties associated with the transition from asylum-seeker to citizen (Nyers and Rygiel, 2012; McNevin, 2011; 2013; Varsanyi, 2006; Sager, 2011). The criteria for granting asylum tends to be extremely rigid, whilst the system is completely predicated upon suspicion, to the extent that it is reasonable to contend that the asylum regime produces a mass of 'bogus' asylum seekers. As a consequence, asylum regimes disproportionately disqualify asylum seekers and convert them into 'illegal' and 'deportable migrants' in a systematic and predictable way (De Genova, 2013).

> 'All such officially "unwanted" or "undesirable" non-citizens are stigmatized with allegations of opportunism, duplicity and undeservingness. The compulsive denunciation, humiliation and exquisitely refined rightlessness of deportable "foreigners", furthermore, supply the rationale for essentializing the juridical inequalities of citizenship and alienage as categorical differences that may be racialised' (De Genova, 2013:1-2).

Thus, the asylum operations and systems can be understood as 'part of a larger socio-political production of migrant "illegality"' (Coutin, 2000; De Genova, 2002, 2003). Thus, there is a deep inequality in migration controls, as not all migrants are identified as 'illegal immigrants' or are subject to migration control in the same way (Dauvergne, 2008). One of the ways in which these differences and inequalities can be examined is through the stories of individuals: answering these questions from the situatedness and standpoints of those subject to immigration control can reveal how illegality is denoted and experienced.

Coutin (2000) posits that illegality is imposed on migrants. She identifies a variety of ways in which surveillance of migrants occurs, and how this is increasingly displaced from immigration authorities into national spaces: ordinary citizens are implicated forcefully in doing policing work. Coutin (2000) notes several dimensions in which the contradiction between undocumented migrants' physical and social presence and their official negation as 'illegals' generates 'spaces of nonexistence'. These dimensions include:

- The delimitation of reality to that which can be documented
- The 'temporalization of presence', whereby the undocumented come to be qualified or disqualified for adjustments of legal status according to the accumulation of continuous, verifiable (documentable) 'illegal' residence
- 'Legal consanguinity', whereby immigration policies nullify the legal legitimacy of certain kinship ties
- enforced clandestinity
- the transformation of mundane activities - such as work, driving or travelling – into illicit acts, related to compounded legal ineligibility
- restricted physical mobility, paradoxically effected as a consequence of the initial, unauthorized mobility of undocumented migration, which signifies a measure of captivity and social death and restricted social mobility related to compounded legal ineligibility (Coutin, 2000: 27-47)

These dimensions create experiences of uncertainty and anxiety for migrants, preventing them from making any long-term plans and leaving them frozen in time, with no promises for the future. As De Genova (2002) articulates:

> 'the disciplinary operation of an apparatus for the everyday production of migrant illegality is never simply intended to achieve the putative goal of deportation. It is deportability, not deportation per se, that has historically rendered undocumented migrant labour a distinctly disposable commodity… [migrants live with] a palpable sense of deportability, which is to say, the possibility of deportation, the possibility of being removed from the space of the nation-state' (De Genova, 2002:438-9).

Migrant rights activists have taken up these concerns about everyday surveillance. The state encouragement for members of the public to be vigilant, check on and report 'illegality', deeply exacerbates migrants' sense of vulnerability, depriving them of any security and living in fear of deportation from moment to moment. Activists have been concerned with the accompanying images and discourses that supply the rationale for border enforcement and the associated structures and systems. These can be thought of as a 'spectacle of border enforcement' where migrant 'illegality' is rendered spectacularly visible (De Genova, 2002).

'*Border spectacle*' is the term coined by De Genova (2013) to denote and describe how migrant illegality is practically and materially enacted through various forms of border and immigration law enforcement. These rely significantly upon a constellation of images and discursive formations, which may be taken to supply the scene of 'exclusion' (De Genova,

2013: 5). These discursive formations (complex languages, images, rhetoric, text, subtext, accusation and insinuation) uphold and propagate the notion of migrant 'illegality' which serves as a condition of possibility for the larger procedures that generate and sustain this 'illegality'. A constellation of visual and discursive grammars upholds and enhances the iconicity of particular fetishised figures of 'illegal immigration', painting a picture of migrant illegality with the semblance of an objective fact. Moreover,

> 'a proliferation of spaces for the production of the border spectacle may be generated by a mundane inspection of documents, accompanied always by the interlocking threats of detection, interception detention and deportation' (De Genova, 2013:4).

Borders are enacted (and thus performed) through such border spectacles, and produce relations, subjects, inclusion and exclusion. Thus, the idea of citizenship itself is a form of governance (De Genova, 2010). This makes the undoing of the borders complex and multi-layered; there are multiple entangled power struggles implicit within border-making and sustaining, not least the normative underpinnings of citizenship. After all, borders are not only exclusive. They are also inclusive, though the inclusion is differential.

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) coined the terms 'differential inclusion' or 'differential exclusion' (Castles, 1995) to describe these processes. Differential inclusion speaks to how:

> 'borders are equally devices of inclusion that select and filter people and different forms of circulation in ways no less violent than those deployed in exclusionary measures' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2012: 70).

From this one can understand that the proliferating external and internal borders are differentially inclusive, and this plays out differently. Differential exclusion describes the exclusion of migrants from areas of national society, such as in the ways immigration laws in receiving countries may endow immigrants with certain rights in some domains but not in others. The US laws, for example, incorporate migrants (with no status) into the labour market while at the same time excluding them from welfare social services or (full)

citizenship. Bordering, thus, is not only about who moves and who does not but also about who is in a position of control of the movement.

Activists find the continuity of exclusion and inclusion illuminates the violence that underlies the multiplication of migration control devices and the temporal control of migrant passages through detention or deportation. Distinctions and differentiation can both channel and foster mobilities while at the same time they 'may involve a various degree of subordination, rule, discrimination, racism, disenfranchisement, exploitation and segmentation' (De Genova, Mezzadra and Pickles, 2014: 25). Côté-Boucher (2010a) argues that this speaks to the 'multiplication of authorized identities' on the global border control stage - the proliferation of moving privileges for transnational elites - faster border crossing, preclearance and frequent flyers schemes for business travellers - who get a better, different treatment.

Agamben's (1995; 1998; 2005) work discusses the control mechanisms in the asylum system, particularly in relation to sovereign power. Scholars such as McNevin (2013), Mountz (2011), Vaughan-Williams (2010) and Darling (2009) have drawn on Agamben's (1995) ideas to critique the politics and ethics of immigration control in the UK. Agamben (1995) refers to asylum seekers using the latin term, 'homo sacer', which means 'the accursed man' – a man who is banned and may even be killed. For Agamben, the homo sacer exists within a 'bare life'. He also refers to 'camps' – evoking the concentration camps of the second world war – spaces in which the exception becomes the rule. Agamben (1995) argues that the power of sovereignty comes not just from being able to materialise authority, law and order in a bordered space, but from the very fact that the state can decide when those laws can be suspended. The legal systems allow the state to act aggressively both inside and outside the legal system to impose order and authority.

It is within this system that binaries of power frame the world: citizen-alien, nation-foreign, here and there, us and them (Jones, 2012).

The process of instituting sovereign authority through bordering occurs when selective measures are administered to differentiate the deserving/desirable and undesirable/undeserving, and to regulate bodies and goods in and out of the territory (Balibar, 2002). This exposes those denied legal inclusion to violence. The parallels made between asylum seekers and homo sacer's bare life existence have highlighted the way in which marginalisation is tied to status. Darling (2009) notes that asylum seekers who are denied asylum and the right to live in the UK have all forms of support – that which was previously granted to them whilst the asylum claim was being processed, including housing, social and financial support - immediately withdrawn. He compares this act to an 'Agamben sovereign act of abandonment' (2009: 652). He further writes that, when placed outside the law in this way, the refused asylum seeker must struggle to survive in destitution and become nothing humanity can fathom. This is indeed a form of dehumanisation further exacerbated by legal prohibition to work or remain in the UK, as all the attendant withdrawal of permissions and support are reinforced (Darling, 2009: 650).

Dehumanisation occurs through rigid mechanisms of control. It has been discussed in relation to detention, deportation and destitution - which have become an integral part of the migration regime in the course of the last decade. These are forms of exclusion that leave asylum-seekers marginalised, alienated and socially excluded – i.e. homo sacer placed outside of the law (Bloch and Schuster, 2005) and subjected to treatment by the state that would be unacceptable for citizens, with little to no recourse or access to legal protection (Whitley, 2017: 3). The level of dehumanisation that emerges when exclusion

from protection occurs condemns further the use of such rigid control practices (Whitley, 2017: 4).

2.2.3.4. Anti-racist and anti-imperial/colonial frameworks

Debates on racism and state bordering have been discussed in relation to the racialisation of migration control policies and practices, unequal recognition and distribution of citizenship, the hostile environment politics, the multiplication of border spectacles in the national space and, more recently, in relation to citizenship deprivation. The relationships between race, racialisation and migration require analysis, particularly in an era of overlapping national and international border controls and increasing levels of migration from countries within and beyond Europe (De Genova, 2013; El-Tayeb, 2011; Erel, 2009; Erel et al., 2016; Walia, 2010; Wilpert, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2003). Reviewing some of these debates on race (and ethnicity) in relation to borders, aids a better understanding as to how racialisation shapes regulations and border policy. This association is also connected to the notion that the history of and response to the Immigration Acts introduced since 1962 shows that current migrants face the same restrictions as previous migrants (see chapter 1 for further context).

Three ways have been identified in which the connection between race and migration can be perceived:

> The first approach emphasises historical linkages between post-war race making and migration, underlying similarities between racialised citizens and non-citizens as subjects of migration discourse.
>
> The second approach focuses on racialisation that differently shapes migrant subjects to effect disadvantages unique to their citizenship status. It also highlights intersecting formations of race, exploring how connections between racialisation and migrations are shaped through gender, class and geography.
>
> The third approach raises the question about the post-racial migrations, whether race, racism, and racialisation are still relevant to making sense of distinctions between host and immigrant, old and new migration discourse (Erel et al., 2016: 1341-1342).

The first approach emphasises the continuity of historical debates on bordering and associated practices. These debates perceive racism in migration management and control, pointing to colonial legacies in relation to increasingly restrictive asylum measures introduced from the 1980's onwards. The long-standing argument includes the logic that, from the 1980's onwards, rising numbers in air travel made it hard to tell who was 'legitimate'. During the same period, in which applications for asylum from non-European countries began to increase, refugees began to be categorised as a 'problem'. Yuval-Davis (2003) further illuminates how colonial anxieties impact on identities and how anti-immigrant notions tend to invoke 'cultural incompatibility'. She notes that borders factionalise heterogeneous communities and rigidify allegiances to artificially homogenised statist nationalisms. It has also been suggested that it is not the fact that they are marked as different as a consequence of their difference but the colonial discourses that marked them as such (Mayblin, 2017). Erel et al. (2016) expand these thoughts further:

> 'The key theme in such research is how the subjects of post-war racialisation continue to be produced through contemporary migration regimes. It highlights the role of selective migration policies, arguing that the same logic of official and popular racism separating citizens "who belong" from those who do not (Hampshire, 2017) is reproduced through current migration regimes. Where migration legislation of the post war period restricted entry of black commonwealth citizens while largely continuing to allow white migration through the Patriality Act (1968), the current points-based system indirectly favours "EU…entrants"' (Erel et al., 2016: 1344).

Erel et al. (2016) continue their line of argument, pointing out that migration policies are also responsible for creating or reinforcing classed and racialised occupational pathways for new migrants. Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Kofman (2005) concur, arguing that such policies effectively preclude non-EU, low-skilled workers from entry, except through non-work-related routes such as family migration, asylum or undocumented migrants. Lack of citizenship and vulnerability to deportation push migrant workers into grey areas of the economy where wages are low, benefits are non-existent and basic workplace

protections are limited. Anderson (2010) argues that, 'immigration controls function as a mould, helping to…produce "precarious workers" over whom employers and labour users have particular mechanisms of control' (2010: 300).

Furthermore, De Genova (2013) posits that racism in relation to bordering is the 'obvious' foundation of these practices, acknowledging how race and racism are structural in the functioning of nation-states, bordering and detainment practices. Borders can be viewed as imperial formations - the persistence of a global socio-political order. Within these socio-political orders, new dynamics of racialisation and new formations of racism increasingly become inextricable from the social production of migrant differences in ways that, as often as not, dissimulate their racisms and dis-articulate 'race' and 'immigration', through a politics of 'nativism'. Nativism is simply the identitarian promotion of natives on no other grounds than their being such (De Genova, 2005: 56-94). As such, every question of migration and border securitisation - even if these are overtly differentiated in terms of 'culture' or national origins - inevitably presents the concomitant question of migrants' racialisation (De Genova, 2013).

De Genova (2013) further points out, that generic figures of immigration and foreignness suffice to reanimate race in terms that commonly are articulated as nation - in terms of the national identity of natives. Hence, racist far-right parties in Europe tend to articulate their anti-immigrant populism, not only in terms of a pluralistic and differential incompatibility between their putative national culture and the foreignness of migrants, but also in the idiom of the purportedly legitimate (democratic) politics of citizenship (De Genova, 2013). This is illustrated in the rise of new populist movements and the far -right politics in Europe in recent years such as the British National Party in the UK, the National Front in France, the National Alliance in Italy, the National Democratic Party and People's Union in Germany, and likewise, the Swiss People's Party and the Danish People's Party,

which have raised question of belonging at the centre of these debates and claim making: who belongs? who doesn't?

De Genova (2013) notes that, although some of these nativist movements may officially disavow their racism against migrants, their nationalism is itself exclusionary and it enunciates an anti-immigrant racism even as it may disarticulate race as such. The mere affirmation of the identitarian project upholds the priority of the natives against all presumed outsiders (De Genova, 2013:14)

The debates on differential racialisation in literature emerge in contrast to continuities of racism. This 'makes visible the ways immigrants and settled communities are uniquely racialised subjects through distinct, yet overlapping status, gender, culture, class, and social space, facilitating politically discontinuous subject positions' (Erel et al., 2016: 1348). The key feature of this nexus is how the stratifications are mapped. For example, it can bring into focus how citizenship and legal residence status play out as a mechanism of racialisation. Unlike the figure of the economic migrant or British racialised other, Garner (2007), argues that,

> 'the racialisation of an asylum seeker is based precisely on their lack of group identity, instead this identity emerges as a state of exception, so that the racialised figure of asylum seeker has the unique effect, to enable the state to present itself as sovereign in the face of an increasingly 'borderless world' (Garner, 2007:21).

Thus, the ways in which a migrant is constructed suggests they are differentially positioned with multiple consequences.

The racialisation of policies and practices which dictate detention and deportation mechanisms have been likened to modern day 'camps' (Agamben, 1991). This suggests that the sovereign 'operation of power is performatively to produce and secure the borders of political community as the politically qualified life of the citizen as defined against the bare life' (Vaughan-Williams, 2009: 116).

Therefore, for migrant activists, using anti-racist frameworks can be productive, as it avoids analysing borders as a generalised condition. Instead, it highlights how borders are mobilised inside of national space and draws attention to how power operates within and without national space, not only on the edges of the territory or in discrete spaces. This facilitates the examination of the ways in which populations are produced in relation to power and differentiated against one another, and particularly how citizens come into being in contrast to, and against, the figure of bare life. In border spaces where legal protection is revoked by law, such as detention centres, one can examine what particular mechanisms of power are enacted. Who is detained in the camp? How does race and racism play out in the way power is meted out?

In contrast, other literature argues that race does not matter in relation to bordering and migration management. Such arguments assert that 'racial hierarchies have been overcome' and that contemporary migration regimes make no more distinctions based on migrant's colour (Goldberg, 2015). This is sometimes linked to the observation that society is increasingly diverse, and well represented in political and media discourses. In particular, Goodhart (2013) suggests that the problem of migration is not in racial practices but rather the capacity of the local community to provide the housing, healthcare and schooling that is necessary to handle the influx of people (Erel et al., 2016: 1353); the argument that race is neither central nor an important variable for inequalities: since there are advantages and disadvantages within and between different ethnic groups in Britain therefore the systemic racialisation cannot be discerned.

Despite this, the race-migration analyses point to a need for developing an anti-racist approach. This is useful for identifying overlapping and discrete colour and culture lines which manifest through multiple migration pathways, as well as the citizenship and residence rights they are bound up in. Further analyses from anti-racist and post-colonial

studies also point to the race and migration configurations as co-constructed, providing ways in which to organise a movement against racialised bordering.

Walia (2013) combines the anti-capitalist critique of borders with a critique of borders as racialising practices. She argues that capitalism and imperialism are to blame for the mass displacement of impoverished and colonised communities, which resulted in asymmetrical global power. This has undermined the stability of communities and compelled people to move in search of work and survival. Walia (2013) asserts the need to build a holistic movement to oppose anti-immigration oppression and argues that 'anti-immigration xenophobia, white supremacy and settler colonialism are mutually reinforcing in ways that actually prevent us from seeing how these logics are fully connected' (2013: xiii). The framework she proposes seeks to analyse these interrelated logics of 'border imperialism' in order to dismantle them. Walia (2013) argues that the border imperialism framework places an emphasis on the fact that global capitalism produces massive human displacement that is exacerbated by the fortification of borders. As an analytical framework, it encapsulates four overlapping and concurrent structurings:

1. The mass displacement of impoverished and colonised communities due to asymmetric global relations and the securitisation of borders;
2. The criminalisation of migration with severe punishment and discipline of those deemed 'illegal' or 'alien';
3. The entrenchment of a racialised hierarchy of citizenship by arbitrating who legitimately constitutes the nation-state;
4. The state mediated exploitation of migrant labour, akin to conditions of slavery and servitude by capitalist interests (Walia, 2013: 6).

Walia (2013) equates the positions and oppressions of indigenous people and current unauthorised migrants with border imperialism. The experiences of both take place in the context of border systemic forces: '[the] apartheid system', which is produced and enforced by global capitalism and asymmetrical relations.

There are important aspects that Walia's (2013) framework touches on which can be beneficial for understanding migrant rights in this thesis. First, this framework originated from the struggle and was conceived of by activists drawing on their knowledge of political action, experience and practice. Thus, there are likely to be lessons, strategies and praxis that can inform practical aspects of activism. Second, Walia's (2013) suggestion that one should interrogate discursive and embodied borders - their social construction and structures of affect - reveals how we are not just spatially segregated but also hierarchically stratified. Such a suggestion can be useful in understanding where bordering practices delineate zones of access, inclusion and privilege from zones of invisibility, exclusion and death. Third, Walia (2013) offers activists insights on effective strategies to overcome the barriers and borders within movements in order to cultivate fierce, loving and sustainable communities of resistance striving toward liberation. Each of the above structurings must be examined in order to be challenged.

2.2.3.5. Belonging and the rethinking of citizenship

The debates highlighted above imply that the insightful analyses of borders and bordering may lead to better strategies on how bordering practices operate and are experienced by differently situated migrants. The struggle for citizenship permeates the debates, leading to suggestions that citizenship requires rethinking, deconstructing and expanding as a theoretical and practical strategy to counter the exclusions of borders (Dietz, 1998; Sager, 2011; Lister, 2003). Beyond the status granted by the nation state, citizenship comprises acts such as social and political engagement and being part of a community, which entails rights and duties that may also apply to people who are not formally recognised as citizens.

Citizenship is not only enacted on the national state level, but globally and locally – although, the state is not the only source from which citizenship emanates (Nyers, 2012;

McNevin, 2011; Balibar, 2004). Thus, questions can be raised as to whether acts of citizenship can be a route of contestation upon which nation states decide on migration or on the question of who belongs.

Isin (2008) coined the term 'acts of citizenship' to highlight that doing acts can include political mobilisations by unauthorised migrants. These might include mobilisations not directly related to their own situation, such as, improved working conditions, better wages or other political causes. As such, 'doing citizenship' (Balibar 2004; Sager, 2011, 2013; Rugiel, 2011) can be rethought of to include participation in local communities (Nyers and Rygiel, 2012). This might include contributing to paying taxes, participating in military service or contributing to public knowledge. These can form duties of citizenship upon which one can claim entitlement to the rights of citizenship.

This alternative conceptualisation of citizenship by pro-migrant scholars, suggests a promising route beyond the legal definition of citizenship. The state is often viewed as the most central actor (and therefore having the power) in the determination of citizenship, inclusion and associated rights. However, these alternative conceptualisations show that other actors can also act, rather than waiting for the state to change their mind. It suggests local actors can play the role of the state in expanding citizenship to those acts of migrant survival.

An illustration of this can be found in local forms of inclusion, in which a person's formal exclusion is overlooked or rendered irrelevant (Nyers and Rygiel, 2012). For example, the US 'sanctuary cities' are cities in which local municipalities decide that everyone, independently of legal status, should have access to the services and provisions at the national level (Walia, 2013; Nyers and Rygiel, 2012). While debates around rethinking citizenship are encouraging, activists must apply them to find practical strategies towards pathways which can be beneficial to people with insecure status. These local forms of

citizenship will not protect them from threats or the actualities of deportation or detention, and so it remains that status defines and structures the lives subject to migration control. Without legal status, there is no adequate protection against bordering practices despite well-meaning or even overwhelming support and solidarities in the communities.

2.2.4. Current trends in researching borders

For more than twenty years, scholarly work in border studies has conceived of borders not simply in spatial locations (fixed lines), but rather 'a sum of social, cultural and political processes' (Johnson et al., 2011: 61). Borders have increasingly been considered in terms of practices and processes that are also social, economic and political expressions of belonging and exclusion. More recently, Johnson et al. (2011) propose that understanding borders in terms of interconnected themes of place, performance, perspective and political 'will allow a more coherent, interdisciplinary agenda and…address a need for a more sophisticated conceptualisation of borders in light of the recent trajectories of border scholarship' (Johnson et al., 2011: 62). These '4 P's' are considered in turn:

Place:-Considering and exploring the theme of place locates borders away from or beyond conventional sites of bordering. This requires examining where evidence of bordering practices might be found, what impacts they have on the places in which they are found, and the politics behind those locations. Mountz (2011) argued that to put an emphasis on place provides a means of interrogating material manifestations of borders. Similarly, Amoore (2009) writes that the spatial and conceptual complexity of borders and contemporary bordering processes have gone through a 'spatial stretching' and 'temporal orientation' under global neoliberalism. To understand the performance of borders requires an examination of the relocation and reconstitution of unconventional border

sites offshore and border sites internal to sovereign territory. Thus, bordering processes need to be analysed in such a way that recognises the shifting and expanding nature of the border in the space within which it manifests, including the proliferation of sophisticated borderings which essentially appear and disappear through the social and cultural structures that contain them.

Performance: -Borders are performed into being, enacted and materialised in a variety of ways. Putting an emphasis on the performative and performance aspect of borders by state and non-state actors, provides insights into what borders are and what they do (their functions). Salter (2011) identifies three registers of border performativity: formal, practical and popular performances. This tri-faceted performance of borders, he argues, shares the same assumptions about the need for the constant articulation and rearticulating of the central claim of the sovereign state: i.e. that there is an inside/outside division in global politics: a) First, formal performances of border include the description and defence of particular territorial borders; b) Second, practical performances of the border include the actual politics of enforcing the admission/expulsion and filtering process of the border; c) Third, popular performances of the border include the overtly public and political contestation over the meaning of the border'(Johnson et al., 2011: 66).

By the same logic, Paasi (2013) also suggests that borders are enacted and performed not only as 'discursive or emotional landscapes of social power' but also as 'technical landscapes of control and surveillance' (Johnson et al., 2011:62). Like place, building analyses that focus on the tri-fold performative aspects of borders can reveal how and where they can be located and resisted.

Perspective: -An emphasis on perspective is concerned with how best to gain access to borders methodologically, or which perspectives can provide the most fruitful openings to borders and border work. Rumford (2008) in particular, suggests that the existing perspective of 'seeing like a state' is a constraining lens conceptually, given the increasing heterotopia of contemporary borders. Rumford (2008) thus proposes a shift in emphasis towards 'seeing like a border'. This perspective, he argues, would allow disaggregating the state and the border in order to conceptualise the multiple actors and sites of borderwork.

Like place and performance, the emphasis on perspective - 'seeing like a border' - addresses the seemingly simple question 'who borders?' For Rumford (2008), this is a complex question since borderwork is less and less the exclusive domain of the state and its agents. Those who are involved in the daily work of making borders might not necessarily be working in the service of the state: private actors, including media, businesses and ordinary people or affluent citizens also make borders, often for their own advantage. Similarly, in biometric bordering, 'the sovereign decisions of the borders' are as likely to be made by programmers and mathematicians who write computer codes as they are by uniformed border guards (Amoore, 2006).

The world of bordering is not governed by consensus: there is no guarantee that the borders constructed by border-workers will be recognised by everyone (Rumford, 2008: 897-898). Thus, a multi-perspective lens is required – one that also brings into view those borders that remain invisible to many but extremely pertinent for a few (Rumford, 2008). The proliferation and dislocation of bordering practices occurs wherever selective control is enacted, creating a continuum of border meanings differently deployed to different people (Balibar, 2002). For these reasons, Rumford (2008) argues, viewing borders from a multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory) perspectives can cover views from the state,

views from the border, as well as views from civil society where invisible borders are visible and pertinent for a selected few (Rumford, 2008: 894).

Politics: -The shifting nature of borders has not made them less politicised, nor lessened the need for scholars to be mindful and critical of the complicated relationship between state power and space (Johnson et al., 2011:62). This relationship is perhaps most apparent at the borders, wherever they are found. An emphasis on politics (like place, performance and perspective) involves ongoing interrogation of the transformations of state power with critical and politically attuned eyes.

Relational thinking of borders:-Acknowledging borders as relational, in the sense that their meanings and impacts are based on social relations and networks, is important (Paasi,2016).Bordering practices can include and exclude certain collectivities, as the construction of meanings and imaginaries of borders can range widely. Borders can be constructed as desired barriers against the demonised 'other' and as a means of exclusion or as an institution that maybe is in need of reform but is essential to economic survival (Yuval and Stoezel,2002). Exploring these perspectives in research can arguably lead to a more critical analysis of the location and dislocation of borders as a means through which to interrogate the experiences produced through them. In the next strand of this literature review,I explore further the perspective of performance and performativity of borders (Salter,2011) drawing on scholars from politics performance studies.

2.3 Framing borders as a social performance

Recent discourses in border studies have shifted away from focusing on the legal boundary drawing and cross-border economics of borders and towards the performativity of the border (Johnson and Jones, 2011; Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012; Salter, 2012). The shift emphasises enactment of the border: the notion that borders can be

performed and reproduced in various ways through bordering practices (Lefebvre, 1991; Paasi, 2013) and that these are the result of multiple historical and geopolitical developments (Kolossov, 2005).

The performativity of borders resembles Butler's (1988) idea of the stylised repetition of performative acts (Salter, 2011). Salter (2011) notes that the border is the primary institution of the contemporary state, the construction of a geopolitical world of multiple states, and the primary ethico-political division between the possibility of politics inside the state and the necessity of anarchy outside the state (Vaughan-Williams, 2009). The inscription of the border and indeed of the state requires constant deployment of resources: the writing of the border, the state and the world again and again (Walker, 2010).

> 'In this sense, governments, citizens, and other agents perform the border, by which I mean that they enact and resist the dominant geopolitical narratives of statecraft as they cross, or are prevented from crossing, borders' (Salter, 2011:66).

This is also reflected by a multiplicity of work emphasising the importance of bordering practises (Miggelbrink, 2014; van der Velde and van Naerssen, 2011; Van Houtum & Pijpers, 2007; Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002; Vaughan-Williams, 2008).

2.3.1 The meaning of border performativity

The meaning of performativity most often invoked by critical border scholars comes from the sociological work of Goffman (1959) and the philosophical work of Butler (1998) (Parker et al, 2009; Salter, 2008). Goffman argues that 'power of any kind must be clothed in an effective means of displaying it, and have different effects depending on how it is dramatized' (1959: 241). He points to dramaturgical analysis of particular social situations: roles, acts, audience, frontstage and backstage areas. Butler (1988), from a Foucauldian position, argues that 'gender is in no way a stable identity or the locus of

agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts' (Butler, 1988:519). Furthermore, gender is instituted through the stylised repetition of the body, and hence, must be understood as 'the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self' (Butler, 1988: 519). Sovereignty, like gender, has no essence, and must continually be articulated and rearticulated in terms of the 'stylized repetition of acts' of sovereignty.

As reviewed in Section, 2.2.4, there are considered to be three registers of border performativity: formal, practical and popular (Johnson et al., 2011). Salter (2011) argues that each of these – formal, practical and popular performances of the border - can be found and resisted at the dispersed and heterogeneous sites at which the border functions and at which exclusion from the political community takes place (Salter, 2011: 67). This can be achieved by not taking sovereignty and its territorial inscriptions as givens, and instead studying the formal, practical and popular geopolitics through which sovereignty is performed (Hughes, 2007; Salter, 2011).

2.3.1.1. Formal border performativity

Formal border performativity is reflected in the way the state, through its policies, actions and customs, performs itself as sovereign. It is particularly visible at borders when the self-evidence of the state's control over populations, territory, political economy, belonging and culture is so clearly in question (Salter, 2011:66). The role of the sovereign state is to define and control its territorial borders. Therefore, it is critical for scholars studying borders to analyse border politics highlighting the formal extra-legal powers of

states to determine the limits of the territory, the population, and indeed the political. Such has been central to research inspired by Agamben's (1995) work[2].

2.3.1.2. Practical border performativity

Border performativity gives meaning to state policies. As Wonders (2006) argues (cited in Salter, 2011), although states attempt to choreograph national borders, often in response to global pressures, these state policies have little meaning until they are performed by state agents and by border crossers. Wonders (2006) notes that borders agents and state bureaucrats play a critical role in determining where, how and on whose body a border will be performed. Border agents each perform complementary and antagonistic roles, some which can be understood in terms of confession (Salter, 2011). Some work focuses on the 'thought-work' of bureaucrats (Heyman, 2001) others focus on the field of lawyers, security professionals, and advocates that constitute the complex zone of decision, such as Bigo (2002, 2007) whose work seeks to understand specific practical performances of the border, and in particular *border security*.

While it can be suggested that some work demonstrates the particular dynamics of the actual policies at the border, Rumford (2006) has also suggested that one should not radically underestimate the role of ordinary people in carrying out these popular bordering practices. He cautions, 'borderwork is no longer the exclusive preserve of the nation-state' (2006: 164).

2.3.1.3 Popular border performativity

The popular performances of border politics, or borderwork, is their political impact - and whether this challenges the key workings of sovereign authority or is simply representative of its dispersal (Balibar, 2002: 67). Its performance and performativity

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[2] See for ex Minca, C. (2006) Taylor, S. (2005), Rosas, G. (2006), Feldman (2007)

suggest greater understanding involves theatrical inscriptions, which can be both 1) a force that effectively unveils all representations as theatrical, and 2) an instrument of coercive power that naturalises authority and thrives on the capitulation of the spectator to its capacity for mimetic illusion. In the following strand it is important that we investigate details of what performance is and how to study border politics using performance lenses.

2.4 Performance Literature

2.4.1. Understanding performance

'What a melodrama!' This was one of the striking comments I read back in 2013 from an online forum criticising the 'Go Home' Vans. The British Government organised vans reading 'Go Home or Face Arrest' to tour areas of London with high migration as part of Operation Vaken, their summer immigration enforcement campaign in 2013 (see also Section 1.4.2 of Chapter 1). The staging of this campaign included an order to stop, search and forcibly deport 'illegal' immigrants. The performance backfired considerably, provoking criticism from all side of the political spectrum and widespread public outrage, forcing Theresa May, the then Secretary of State, to admit that the vans had been 'too much of a blunt instrument'; she confirmed they would not be extended nationwide.

This staging of the borders in the public sphere by the government and the online assessment that it was a 'melodrama' lends itself, in unusually concrete terms, to the framing of bordering as performance. It highlights how concepts of 'melodrama', 'theatre' and 'performance' have shifted their original meaning from the theatre into the world at large, and that 'performance' as a lens to study the world is now commonplace.

In addressing such questions of production and spectatorship, I will trace specific ways of examining the practices and beliefs of the theatrical performance in the space of migrant dissent. Performance will be applied as both the object of inquiry and my primary

analytical concept of selected spatial interventions. Thus, as the core framework for analysis and the chosen lens through which to view the data, it is important to unpack the concept further.

2.4.2. Studying the world through the lens of performance

The application of performance concepts for understanding social and cultural issues has become widespread across many disciplines, led by the work of performance theorists, which have increased accessibility and applicability (Auslander, 2003; Bennett 1997; Carlson, 2004; Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Schechner, 2006; Taylor, 2016). There has been extensive inter-disciplinary engagement with the application of performance concepts, synthesising approaches from the performing arts, social sciences, feminist studies, gender studies, history, psychoanalysis, queer theory, semiotics, ethology, cybernetics, area studies, media and popular culture theory and cultural studies. Anthropologist, Victor Turner (1965) and Sociologist, Erving Goffman (1959) are often cited as early influences. Scholarship has used performance and theatre to engage with and examine aspects of feminism (Case, 1988), theatre and politics (Kelleher, 2006), linguistics (Butler, 1990) and psychology and cognitive science (Baars, Koskinen and Pihlanto, 2008). The work of Davis and Postlewait (2010) entitled 'Theatricality (Theatre and Performance Theory)' tracks the early use of the term through a six case study analysis. More recently scholars interested in the intersection of political studies and performance have applied the concept of performance when discussing and analysing political and cultural events and philosophies (Lichtenfels, Edkins and Kear, 2013; Rai and Reinelt, 2015). The growing interest indicates that there is significant crosstalk that enables scholars to offer and articulate a political critique on today's politics. In Social Sciences and humanities, theatre and performance have been deployed as key metaphors and practices with which

to re-think sociological areas of migration, gender, economics, language, social justice, performing peace or conflict and one's sense of self.

The attractiveness of performance studies is its inter-disciplinarity both in application and discipline; this thesis intends to draw on disciplinary thinking from across the spectrum. Furthermore, performance theory argues that each of us engages in performance even in an individual sense in our day-to-day lives (Goffman,1959). Our face-to-face interaction is a performance and can be expressed in our public activities that are meant, at varying levels, to influence those around us. Goffman (1959) suggests that in this human interaction 'one can negotiate the politics of identity through the performance of the self' (Goffman, 1969: 28). The concept of performance enables an assessment of the ways in which individuals act and react within and to the world. It is a means of understanding how people situate themselves in the world, for themselves and for others.

Butler (1993) and Derrida (1990) expand on this by suggesting that we communicate and fortify our identities in society performativity. Butler's (1997) work defines succinctly the concept of 'performativity', as a study of the discourse used in identity formation and law-making; it is through repetition of performance that one's gender is constructed: 'such is the emphasis on the power of words and language to exploit, resist and assist individuals' (Butler 1997: 23). This draws on the work of Austin (1962) who states that objects should be considered, in some circumstances, to be akin to constituting those objects: what we say is what we do and who we are. 'I name this ship', or, 'I now pronounce you man and wife', are examples of both authoritative statements and how words perform events (Austin, 1962:16). Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis focus on how women activists see themselves, see the world around them, past and present and how they act in the world of activism. Considering performativity, therefore, involves investigating how words are used to describe and define. Particular attention is paid in the empirical chapters to the

consideration of the past – the effect of the words chosen to describe the past and how the structure of the interpretations of past events assists the women interviewed to 'perform' the past to the public (including the researcher / interviewer).

One of the criticisms of the use of performance as a tool for analysis is that it tends to lend itself to mixed-method research and interdisciplinary theorising, potentially leading to a scattered methodology and ontology. Performance theory's wide reach means scholarships engaging with it can end up drawing from all over the place, creating a sense of instability and disparity. To address this concern, and situate my thinking clearly, I will focus on the similarity between the practice of performance and politics, particularly considering what constitutes the politics of making, spectating and participation. This will be informed primarily by Rai's (2014) framework, which is outlined in the volume of collected work on the topic: 'The Grammar of Politics and Performance (Interventions)'.

Whilst acknowledging that the study of the intersection of politics and performance is still underrepresented, Rai's (2014; 2015) work provides theoretical and practical insights which are critical to this study. On the one hand, the framework usefully condenses together key ideas and debates associated with the 'performative turn' in political studies and the concept of 'the political' in performance studies, drawing from a wide range of scholarly exploration. It therefore enables one to construct a research model that engages key theoretical and methodological questions on politics and performance. On the other hand, understanding the complex world of migrant rights activism necessitates an inter-disciplinary approach. Rai's framework was conceived and developed to examine the ritualistic and ceremonial performance in a political institution (i.e. parliament). In contrast, this thesis will apply the framework to empirically researched, non-symbolic institutions, i.e. social movements and activist protests.

In short, performance theory – and namely Rai's (2014) Politics and Performance Framework (PPF) - provides a useful framework to explore the engagements of political resistance and protest and a critique of power and power relations embedded in the immigration border politics in the UK.

In search of a definition for politics, one has to remember that politics is relational. Border Politics are processes imbued with power. Border struggles, also, are imbued with power. Power, in this context, also implies different meanings. Starhawk's (1988) work is useful here, as it suggests the different facets of power one has to identify in order to act upon that knowledge to create positive change. Starhawk names three distinct kinds of power:

1) Power from within (the personal power each of us has, our energy, self-knowledge, character and discipline);

2) Power with (that sees the world as made up of changing relationships and our collective energy and ability to act together being essential, pertaining to social power or influence among equals).

3) Power over (domination, control and oppression)

Starhawk's (1988) three-way distinction of power is valuable to this study, as it includes a recognition of individual and collective power, alongside a recognition that power is often unequally distributed, resulting in powerlessness, domination, oppression or control. The limitation of this description however, is that it does not specify the geographies or 'space' where power relations takes place. In light of this shortcoming, Collins (2004: 67), noted and quoted in Kelleher (2006), usefully defines politics as 'the important, inescapable, and difficult attempt to determine power relations of power in a given space'. Collins' attention to a 'given space' is helpful, as part of the task of this research is to map the space where political performance takes place and to track how focus is pulled from one space to another, as part of the struggle for narrative and performative dominance. By implication, we can think of politics as the organisation of power and relations of power in a given space, namely, in this study, 'migrant rights activism space'

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The ontology and epistemology also draws on Bourdieu's (1989) concepts of 'symbolic power' and 'communicative power', and Case and Reinelt's (1991) observations that power is a spectacle: 'Theatricality as metaphor, or analogy, accommodates the materialist perception that there is a "playing out" of power relations, a "masking" of authority, and a "scenario" of events' (1991:x). As such, one cannot usefully examine power without looking at the various elements of performance so to assess how political actors – individually and institutionally - produce a 'grammar' that is both accepted and challenged by different audiences and how the interactions between performance and its reception generate politics (Rai, 2014:3). This understanding informs my choice to explore the terrain of migrant rights activism within the proposed 'theatrical' or 'performativity' framework.

While the framework does not exhaustively offer the theoretical and interpretive orientation that is required in this study, I am aware that alternative theories might challenge my perspective due to the limitations associated with PPF. To address this problem and offer a holistic conceptual framework, a large body of literature and ideas from other theorists in social sciences is transferable to the political context that I am studying. In Chapter 3, I will address further epistemological and methodological implications, particularly in relation to knowledge and how to apply the proposed research design to access the knowledge.

2.4.3. Tracing performance landscapes, understanding the ground rules

'Can theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance' (Grotowski, 1968:32).

It is not just theatre that cannot exist without audience: Rai (2014) argues that politics too cannot exist without an audience. Tracing performance landscapes involves exploring all

the visible features of what counts as a performance, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal. Schechner (2017) notes performance is evolving as a concept; along the continuum, new genres are added whilst others are dropped. One can begin with the underlying notion that any action that is framed, enacted, presented, highlighted or displayed is a performance (Schechner, 2017). Examples range from a 'broad spectrum of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet' (Schechner, 2017:2).

This conception of performance as covering a continuum (Schechner, 2017; Brady, 2013:2) has been significant to many scholars in performance studies, as well as in the Social Sciences.

Schechner (2012:2) describes how an American football player, as he scores and celebrates, is both 'performing a dance and enacting a ritual as part of his professional role as athlete and popular entertainer'; thus, 'the act, the spectacle, the happening' can all be thought of as performance. A key component of the performance is the audience and without spectators it would not exist; at the same time, the performance itself has myriad ways to be discerned. Taylor (2016) notes that performance can be thought of as a process by some, whilst for others performance is the end result of a process. For some, performance is that which disappears, while others see it as that which remains as embodied memory (Taylor, 2016). It is by approaching the concept of 'performance' in this varied way that informs the framing of this study and my analysis.

Adapting a definition as broad and inclusive as Schechner's (2017) allows an expansive understanding of how performance can manifest, thus conceiving performance as action, act, activity, process, ritual or event that is 'relational, reflexive and self-conscious'

(Schechner, 2017:22). Performance is therefore 'an activity done by an individual in the presence of another individual or group' (Schechner 2003:22). Performativity can therefore be understood as a philosophy (Rai, 2014) which marks the efficacy, success or failure of whether performance achieves its intended effects (Reinelt, 2002).

2.4.4. Politics and Performance Framework-PPF

Similarities between politics and performance are broad and structurally significant for sociological research: both need at least one audience member to evaluate, judge and react to the actions displayed. Both require actors to deliver the act and are concerned with the issues of aesthetic, representation, transformation and deliberation. The proposed PPF framework is, arguably, a useful tool for deploying or operationalising the concept of performance for political inquiry.

PPF not only demonstrates that performance is, and always was, a means in which discourses of ideology and politics are bodily, verbally, visually or nonverbally communicated and promoted (Rai, 2014), but it does so by mapping two main axes: the axis of performance and the axis of reception (and its effect).

In order to use this framework, it is crucial to 'disaggregate the component parts of the political performance...once these components are made visible, we are able to reflect upon more complex processes of its re-aggregation into our analysis of politics' (Rai, 2014:1).

PPF is, thus, a fitting portal to accessing a deepened understanding of my theoretical and methodological standpoints.

Performance Claim-making in Democratic Systems[3]				
The body				
Space/place/stage	*	*	*	*
Words/Scripts/Speech/Voice				
Performing/performance labour				
RECEPTION/AUDIENCE	Authenticity of representation	Mode of representation	Representative liminality	Resistance to representation

The boxes represent different aspects of this framework that can be combined to empirically research how claims are made

Table 1: Politics and Performance Framework (PPF) (Rai, 2014:11)

2.4.5. Mapping the political performance –PPF deconstructed

2.4.5.1. The first axis maps the issue of representation

This first axis in PPF is constituted of four intersecting markers: (1) the body, (2) the script, (3) the space and (4) performative labour. Together these four markers of representation encapsulate political performance (Rai, 2014).

The body in / on view

PPF conceptualises the body as a marker of performance. Performance is embodied and also socially embedded; the actor is embedded in social relations and positioned in relation to other bodies, which are historically specific and culturally framed and affect the ways in which bodies are viewed, as well as the ways bodies represent or are represented, consent and resist. PPF suggests that bodies must be read as 'coded text' (Rai, 2014:5). The focus on the body helps us reflect upon power relations, for example, in the context of the democratic processes. This enables or disables political performers' ability to re-present, as well as represent, their constituents, their interests and, indeed, themselves. As such, viewing the body allows one to discern power relations circulating

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[3] Table taken from: Rai, S.M. (2014:11) Political Performance: A Framework for Analysing Democratic Politics. *Political Studies.*

within institutions. Rai (2009) notes that the way in which bodies affect communication is especially important, as the body alerts us to the corporeal standards that operate within political institutions. PPF suggests that how 'identity is performed reveals the layered identities of political actors and also invokes new identities in the making' (Rai, 2014:5). The operative, corporeal norms in such settings, 'play out differently in bodily performances and their reception' (Rai, 2014:5).

Staging Representation (The space/place).

PPF suggests that the body performs in space, place and time which is co-constituted as the performance takes shape. Though spaces of political and activist performance are varied, they shape the kind of politics that is performed. As such, the backdrop, the stage, the symbols, the entry and exit points, shape the performance (Rai, 2014); this includes who constructs, reflects, claims and polices the space of politics. PPF also suggests the performing body's ability to bring the stage into being by occupying it, speaking from it and creating a deliberate aesthetic: i.e. it matters whether claim-making takes place in or outside state buildings, particularly event spaces or historical non-state spaces. Commonly known as the 'setting' in the theatre world, this includes spatial spheres (imagined or real) in which interaction takes place. It is a space where competing ideas collide. Different settings will have different audiences and will thus require the actor to alter his performances for each setting. In this study, analysing spatialities where politics is performed allows one to understand different claim making and how it is generated.

Words/Script/Speech.

PPF pays attention to words and how words 'both sustain and threaten the body through modes of address' (Butler, 1997:5). Declarations and rhetoric – institutional and individual – 'require scripts and speech, which are learned and re-produced for affect'(Rai,2012:11).

PPF suggests that considering the embodied identities, allows the voice to be heard and analysed, including the appropriateness of the political clams the voice makes, and where listening in itself invokes the voice to speak (Rai, 2012).

PPF suggests that the script of political performance can bridge the public and the private: arguments can be made about, say citizenship, from the personal perspective, whilst continuing to be highly politicised. As Goffman (1959) described, scripts tend to become institutionalised in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations they contain. Certain situations or scenarios have social scripts that suggest how the actor should behave or interact in that situation. Goffman (1959) further notes that individuals tend to follow pre-established scripts in new situations, even if it is not completely appropriate or desired for that situation. In the context of the current study, it is important to pay attention to different scripts, how they are written, re-written and re-enacted in 'oppositional' or in affirmative way.

Performative Labour.

Performance is an outcome of labour. PPF suggests that there is labour involved in making a performance a success, such as the tenacity to assimilate play scripts by the performers, connecting the target audience with the performance, search and setup of the performance stage and other essential processes that have to be secured with little or insufficient resources (Rai, 2009). There is also a human cost to performing – that performing itself costs something of the individual giving the performance – and that the personal cost to the individual increases with the levels of hostility from the audience (Rai, 2009). PPF's proposed axis of performance argues that it takes an amount of labour to pull off a performance, and each marker (the body, script, space, cost) has implications for its delivery and eventually its reception.

2.4.5.2. The second axis maps political performance and its effect

The framework suggests four concepts through which to analyse the second axis, (the effectiveness of political performance): (1) the authenticity of representation; (2) the mode of representation; (3) the moment of liminality and (4) resistance to claim making (Rai, 2014). Performance is for an audience; thus, the framework advocates considering the interrelatedness of theatre, actors and audience, to the extent that one does not look at one without looking at the others.

Authenticity of Representation

PPF suggests that, in order for performance to be effective, meaning making has to be seen to be smooth and convincing: represented claims must appear authentic, e.g. political actors' claimed representation of citizens. Political legitimacy and authority rests upon a convincing performance: 'it must be representative of a particular political stand; it must engage the audience as a particular target; satisfy formal rules, rituals and conventions of the institutions through which the meaning is being projected; and be received as logical and coherent' (Rai, 2014:2). PPF suggests also that 'performers give authenticity to performances through their assuredness, their conformity with the somatic norms, their sense of entitlement to the cultural landscape in which they perform, and the social relations they reflect' (Rai, 2014:7). They also perform to legitimise challenges to these social relations.

Mode of representation

Through a combination of aesthetic conventions and discursive practices, things and actions, peoples and places are rendered theatrical (Baines, 2001). PPF suggests that the role of the audience is crucial, for it has to have a certain acceptance of the mode of representation, and it has to be perceived it as it was intended by the actor. In terms of

this study, spectators' reflections are significant as they may indicate whether or not the meaning of the text has made a more enduring impression on the spectators.

Liminality and resistance (of and to) political representation

PPF suggests that not all performance is well received. Performance can be counter-performed, misrecognised or misread by the audience, implying that political performance is vulnerable and risky. A good example of this was the 'Go Home Vans' largely de-legitimized and challenged by the audience. Political performance is critical to our reading of politics itself, as a change in the grammar of performance may lead to a bad reception. In the case of the 'Go Home' vans, the adoption of right-wing tropes delegitimised the claim-making and led to counter-performance.

This emphasises the importance of the audience. In Rai's (2009) parliamentary case study, she demonstrates that the audience for the parliamentarians is not the audience inside the building alone, but also their constituencies, the viewers on TV who follow their debates and others. This study needed to grapple with the question of who the audience should be considered to be. Each empirical chapter demonstrates varied performances to varied audiences: some are willing participants (Nine Lives audiences –Chapter 6) others are just implicated as unwilling participants (witnesses of Go Home Vans /Windrush deportation on London streets). It is also important to pay attention, as PPF suggests, to the complexity of audiences. Finlayson's (2015) work on audiences identified what is termed as 'ghostly performances' and 'ghostly audiences': the idea that the actor has a particular audience in their mind to whom they are performing. Unpacking all the components of performance, therefore, is crucial to making sense of the process of the performance. PPF provides an important framework to understand performance in relation to this study of migrant's rights activism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction: rationale for the methodology

This chapter gives an account of how I conducted this research and how decisions and choices were consciously made in order to make the process a success. The chapter is also about the coming together of the story of the whole thesis. The knowledge material produced seems very different and it is indeed different in each of the findings' chapters, but each chapter contributes a perspective from the lives of those impacted by and resisting bordering.

The foundational questions of my inquiry – the questions in my mind at the research's conception – were questions such as, how can the border be seen? Who can see the border? Who is it politicised around it? Within these questions, the issues of immigration, race and feminism were inseparable: issues labelled 'black and immigrant' and those labelled 'feminist' seemed to be intertwined. However, the meanings of the situations and relationships conveyed by all three, when they could be separated and extracted, were transformed.

At the heart of this sociological study is the politics of bordering practices in the UK, and how migrants experience them, particularly in the asylum system. Investigating social lives in social sciences has always been about attending to issues of methodology, method and the epistemology of social justice. I understood early on in the research that migration is a complex global phenomenon, which continues to shape the world and to attract scholarship due to the field's multifaceted social dimensions.

Prior to the commencement of this research, I had been involved in numerous works of refugee activism. Peer to peer support and advocacy were integral parts of my experiences of activism, and my participation was through the particular lens of my lived

experience of bearing the status of a migrant woman. I took part in research related projects aimed at tackling issues of identity, subjectivity, rights and agency - some of which used artistic activities. Therefore, I embarked upon the project, conscious of the requirements expected at the practical level, and, as a feminist researcher, cognisant that research is 'fully a part of the social life it investigates' (Stanley, 2003:1).

Feminist scholarship often challenges research about how the lives of women and men in society are analysed, with particular concern about knowledge production (Harding, 1987, 1991; Hill-Collins, 1991; Stanley, 2003). This study situates at the forefront knowledge which emerges from migrant rights activism and from migrants and minorities living their life at the border, i.e. the situated and constructed knowledge emanating from lived experience is sought and preferred.

Post 9/11, discourses around migration have been moving gradually from the realm of the vulnerability seeking protection to the realm of a 'threat to the physical safety, economy and identity' of host countries (Innes, 2010). In this period, discourses around migrations have also been increasingly concerned with gender, particularly in terms of asylum determination and protection gaps (Asylum Aid, 2014). Contestations around migrant criminalisation and incarceration were intensifying following successful inquiry reports into 'dehumanising' treatments and the sexual abuse of female detainees, exemplified by the scandals (and ensuing furore) connected with the detention centre at Yarl's Wood (Women for Refugee Women, 2015).

In 2014, at the start of my studentship, my original concern was with feminist organising for migrant rights, and my intention was to research how feminism informs migrant solidarity and what bordering means for women, particular those with insecure or no status. This focus shifted slowly towards examining political performance and the contextualisation of performance and how it assists in the understanding of migrant

solidarity. I understood that the border is performed and that the performative character of borders suggests a focus on praxis (see Chapter 2). As such, an analysis of feminist mobilisation between 2014 and 2018 has enabled me to examine and elucidate border performance and counter-performance (see Chapters 4 and 5). I was particularly interested in what a counter-performance is, particularly within the notion that counter-performance (or migrant struggle) occurs because of, and in reaction to, the state's ongoing border performance.

At the heart of the research is the inquiry into how my participants have come to understand performance, including state border performance, and how this has influenced them to become politicised and counter-perform borders as a resistance. I discovered, through the various research sites and participants of my research, that the notion of counter-performance is embedded into contemporary organising, whether through actual artistic performances or through counter-narratives. The landscape of migrant solidarity activism is increasingly becoming multi-method, multi-varied and multi-scalar.

Thus, the aims and objectives of the study are:

> O1: To examine how contemporary migrant women's rights activism is formed, organised and articulated in the UK.
>
> O2: To explore the role of performance in campaigning for asylum seekers and refugees.
>
> O3: To investigate the ways in which performance becomes activism in the pursuit of migrant rights.
>
> O4: To examine the role of feminist activism in the UK-based movement for migrant rights.

To fulfil these objectives, I began to investigate contemporary expressions of activism, maintaining a broad lens in terms of what sorts of research sites and types of activism the research might capture. The political landscape was changing fast in 2014 and I soon found that activists were employing a variety of different techniques to counter the state's

narrative regarding borders, seeking to create spaces for the voices of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in order to change popular consciousness. It was a significant moment in history for fieldwork, with huge opportunities to document critical voices rising during a particular juncture in history.

My first opportunity was to work with Nine Lives Theatre, touring with them nationally, providing me with a key opportunity to consider and examine this intentional counter-performance as they enacted a politics of solidarity across different locations, including protests, peer-to-peer support and underground politics. Engagement with Nine Lives prompted the inquiry into how a theatre performance can also be a protest counter-performing the border. I wanted to understand the connections my participants were making between the state's performing of the border and the hostile environment to migrants in the UK. There was a paucity of information relating to how the contemporary perspective of migrant solidarity was arrived at in the UK. Thus, it was efficacious to collect the histories of different migrant generations and activists; these provided a sense of the history and journey towards contemporary activism, as well as a fuller picture of the historical and contemporary politics sustaining and scaffolding border counter-performance in different generations. This knowledge was key in terms of learning the landscapes of migrant solidarity activism - both the contemporary landscape but also, the historical arc from Windrush migrants to the most recent. Understanding the heritage of activism also gave a broader perspective about the way in which activists negotiate with the ever-changing state technics. It helped illuminate that, whilst policy changes are myriad, the overarching narratives of state border performances have taken decades to arrive at their current form.

Thus, the rationale for the research and the methods was arrived at through a reflexive process, seeking the optimum method and approach in order to generate empirical data which addresses the research questions and objectives.

The performance metaphor is a useful tool for studying state bordering processes and counter-mobilisation. The components of the performance metaphor can be used as a vehicle for an interpretive understanding of bordering reality. In addition, the performance metaphor provides an analytical framework that captures the visibility, multi-spatiality and performativity of borders, as well as the subsequent migrant struggles. To that end, I outline how the methodology combines performance and narrative approaches to gather, interpret and analyse the data collected. I utilised life-history interviewing techniques and semi-structured interviews to gather data from participants. Narrative analysis was used, as it complements the performance and performative approach. Finally, I describe the practicality of the fieldwork process including ethical dilemmas, limitations and data handling and analyses. I conclude with a summary of researching visibility, multi-spatiality and performativity of rights activism for refugees and asylum seekers.

3.2. Methodology in theory

3.2.1. State bordering as performance: theoretical and methodological mapping

This thesis is rooted in an understanding that borders are ubiquitous, heterogenous, and polysemic in nature (Balibar, 2002). Borders are constructed in the everyday through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2018). The understanding of borders also extends to include what Van Houton and Van Naerssen (2002) term 'bordering, ordering and othering'. This denotes the severity and exclusionary consequences of migration control practices that are situated and performed within the

asylum system and beyond, which increasingly define and structure the lives of those with insecure status or without status. The everyday life performance of borders imposes constant negotiations, as they are intimately linked to political projects of citizenship governance and belonging (Yuval, 2011, 2013).

By nature, the practices of state bordering can be understood as processual, taking place at multiple levels. They can be read in terms of: a) a politics of identity that furnishes criteria of who is in and out; b) as a geographical marker of difference that distinguishes neighbours, partners, rivals, or friends; and c) as a politics of interests in which security, political stability and economic self-interest play a key role (Yuval-Davis, 2013). Borders determine the criteria of a 'community of value' (Anderson, 2013) and of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006), performing differential inclusion and exclusion. Thus, borders can be understood as 'sites of conflict, as complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing' (Mezzadra and Nelson, 2013: 3). As a site of struggle, the border can be 'a method precisely insofar as it is conceived of as a site of struggle. Struggles of this kind emerge as a response/consequence of bordering's double character: one that is a political project of governance and as a political project of belonging' (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2018).

The meanings of borders vary and narratives about the constructions of these meanings should be read through their historicity and relationality (Doevenspeck, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2013). Countering border-inflicted injustices requires an understanding and interpretation of the border, what borders do, how they appear and are experienced, so as to ensure the repertoire of their strategies are understood and to establish and extend the scope and range of possibilities for necessary spatial interventions. Thus, in order to capture and understand how borders are enacted upon the individual, and the

implications of borders for 'border lives', a methodology must be employed which fully considers the different hierarchies of power and situated positionalities. Thus, it has been essential to choose a methodology that inquires about the everyday experiences of activists and border lives, which captures and conveys their situatedness, in order to avoid homogenising members of collectivities and to facilitate accurate differentiating amongst them.

3.2.2. A performance and narrative approach to methodology

The title of this research - 'Performing and Counter-performing borders: Feminist Stories of Migrant rights Activism in the United Kingdom'- infers that both performance and narrative are inherently a part of the research inquiry. Thus, the methodology embraces both narrative and performance approaches. Narrative and performance complement each other: the former attending to stories, discursive frames and meanings, whilst the latter considers the symbolic and aesthetic description of how things appear. Activism involves a multi-layered range of 'acts', 'actions', 'events' and 'processes' taking place at multi-level scales – consequently, this research avoids setting limitations on the methods of data gathering, rather employing multiple methods in order to maximise the quality of the data.

The first part of the title 'performing and counter-performing the borders' speaks to the resistance to immigration politics and refers to activism literature, which maps issues of political mobilisation and protests against the markers of borders in migrants' everyday lives. Such studies have traditionally been characterised by a methodological dominance in grounded, empirically dense approaches drawing on social movement literature, feminist studies and performance studies. Indeed, activism in its literal and philosophical definition is more associated with action than words – 'doing', rather than merely thinking

or talking about doing. Researching activism tends to require self-immersion in two senses: firstly, an activist researcher uses the practice of participant observation, and does so in an almost visceral sense – in that the researcher is a thinking, feeling body interacting in the performance space; secondly, the researcher immerses themselves in the activists' words when collecting and constructing narratives through observation or field interviews, photographs or 'things' collected in the field.

Schechner's (2006) perspective on performance is a broad and inclusive term, including much more than theatre and encompassing an entire spectrum of acts and activities ranging from everyday life to rituals and art. 'Performing borders' within the context of performance, can be understood as being the 'as if' whereby the imaginary becomes real. This is not to imply that phenomenon within the context of immigration politics and counter-mobilisation spaces are treated as imaginary. Rather it emphasises the politics of the production and reception (spectatorship) of borders, which includes repetitive stylised acts deployed to project certain meanings for a target audience.

The second part of the research title refers to accessing the political worlds of activists through feminist narratives: 'feminist stories of migrant rights activists in the UK'. This values personal, narrated stories as a mode of knowing about our lived experiences (Bruner, 1988; Eastmond, 2007; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008), but also takes into account feminist epistemologies dictating how knowledge is or should be accessed and represented.

Thus, the thesis title has informed my choice of methodology, acknowledging that such a multi-method approach, embracing performativity and narrative, also provides a diverse approach to capturing the diversities of activism and the experiences of counter-performing borders. To an extent, the empirical evidence from this combination of performance and narrative outweighed the theoretical assumptions – as the approaches

chosen produced a sizeable amount of rich data. Ultimately, the data necessitated a revision and streamlining of my theoretical conceptions. In the next section, I will explore how I approached the political narratives captured from interviews and theatrical performances.

3.2.2.1. Political narratives

Scholars describe political narratives as the stories of our lives that we tell about politics: stories we communicate to others regarding our political worldviews (Andrews, 2007). In telling such stories, we give insight into the political frameworks that form the content of those stories; such stories tackle issues of power and domination. Political stories reveal how people view struggles for power and their attempts to resolve them, and often how women locate themselves within this process. This includes the consideration of who has power, over whom and to what end – as well as whether the power is legitimate or not. The 'kind' of stories told about how the political world works are crucial to explain the engines of political change and the role each one plays individually or collectively. Indeed, since the narrative turn in feminism in the 1970's and 1980's, the use of narrative not only gave voice to new political subjects and their awareness, but also contributed to renewed notions of subjectivity, embodied self and the relation between self and others. Stories of feminist activists included political and psychological aspects such as political statements, beliefs and ideologies, situated in past and present and which justified their political mobilisation.

Although the concept of narrative itself is still open to debate as each discipline brings its own range of meanings (Hazel, 2007), it is fundamentally useful as a mode of knowing about our lived experiences (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008), and hence appropriate to this research inquiry. Exploring political narratives can reveal truths about insufficiently reported events for the purpose of social change. In order to know something

of the intersection between narration and politics, it can be useful to collect 'unheard' stories in the forms of testimonies and evidence of differently situated subjects in relation to power; this allows researchers to represent these experiences in ways that do them justice.

3.2.2.2. Narratives as expressions of lived experience

The stories in this thesis emerge from varied contexts. The narratives collected show the interplay between experience and expression (Eastmond, 2007): it is the experiences that gives rise to the narratives, but it is also in the organisation and telling of them – the way the narratives are expressed – by which the meaning is discerned. Thus, consistent with qualitative traditions, meaning is ascribed to phenomenon through being experienced and, furthermore, one can only know something about other people's experiences 'from the expressions and constructions they give them' (Eastmond, 2007: 249).

Analytically, it has been suggested that one must make distinctions between life *as lived,* life *as told* and life *as experienced.* These distinctions are key, because each person ascribes meaning to what touched their life (the flow of events) and also draws on other experiences to frame and articulates their experience. Thus, lived experienced is lived, experienced and then told within a particular cultural frame and to a specifically contextualised audience (Bruner, 1988).

Eastmond (2007) writes that past experience is always remembered and interpreted in the light of the present as well as the imagined future. Although a phenomenon, through being experienced, is known to us through its expression, what is remembered and told is arguably *situational.* This implies that stories can be shaped through the contingencies of the encounter between narrator and listener and the power relationship between them (Eastmond, 2007: 249). Additionally, the researcher's role of interpreting and presenting the story can also shape *life as text.* Consequently, 'an experience is never directly

represented but edited at different stages of the process from life to text' (Eastmond, 2007: 249).

Narratives typically present activities and events with form and coherent order, imposing on reality a unity which it does not inherently have. In other words, stories can never fully reflect life as lived: this is firstly because in retelling the story one is constructing or interpreting the past, generating it within the specific contexts of the present, and secondly because narratives reduce the vitality and richness of experience, as experience always exceeds the expression a person can give it (Bruner, 1986, cited in Eastmond, 2007:259).

3.2.2.3. Understanding narratives in context

Narrative provides agency, as the narrator has the power to create their own story and tell it within the situatedness of their particular socio-history. Culture is central to lived experience, and therefore impacts how a story is told and understood. The way a person constructs a story also reveals something about their understanding and experience of cultural conventions, institutional framings and the multitude of other narratives in which they are embedded. Thus, narrative can be understood as a form of representation of self within a particular context. The various experiences in one's life thereby acquire meaning in the context of the whole story (Elliott, 2005).

People use narratives to provide their own explanations as to what occurred to them and the intentions and goals of the actors involved (Ritivoi, 2009). In this way, narrative can be understood as a 'form in which self-conscious agents make themselves intelligible to themselves as agents persisting through time' (Rudd, 2007: 63). As personal self-conception emerges in the narrative, it can help make oneself intelligible within that context. By narrating the self in time and space, identity can be shaped and claimed.

Narratives may include imagined ends and resolutions (Good, 1994: 134). In life changing circumstances in narratives can serve as a cognitive model for creating continuity in shattered life courses: narrating the existing struggle offers the possibility of instilling a sense of hope by linking it to the continuity of the past. Therefore, if the context of the immediate future is surrounded by uncertainty and threats, narratives can create a sense of continuity.

3.2.2.3.1. Stories by/ of refugees and asylum seekers

Narratives by/of refugees and asylum seekers (particularly in the context of forced migration) have specific utility and value for two reasons: firstly they provide a way of knowing something about lived experience in times and places to which we have little other access, secondly, they tell us something about how people themselves as experiencing subjects make sense of violence and turbulent change. Personal accounts are likely to provide diversity instead of over-generalised notions of refugee experience (Eastmond, 2007: 249). However, in order to understand the stories people tell us and tell one another,

> 'We must relate them to the social and political contexts that have shaped and continue shaping the circumstances of their lives and which engage their comments' (Eastmond, 2007: 252).

By respecting the social and politic contexts of the narratives of migrants, and relating to them within these contexts, we can 'explore the radical discontinuities in the lives of displaced people, as well as the struggle to make sense of disruptive change' (Eastmond, 2007: 251). Thus, stories can be important sites, not only for negotiating what happened and the meaning of it, but also for seeking new ways forward. Storytelling itself can be a way to bear witness: to remember or see, to restore continuity and identity. Narratives can be a symbolic resource to alleviate suffering.

In stark contrast, legal stories from the asylum process are deeply problematic. In an asylum-seeker hearing, telling the story of one's experience to a sceptical audience who are assessing the story for specific criteria in order to make decisions about the narrator's future is a very different experience; recounting the story in this context would necessarily affect the narration.

Narratives therefore, become methodologically complex – because they are representation not documentation - but this opens up more interesting possibilities. Firstly, they make room for a more dynamic view of the individual as subject, acting in the world and reflecting on that action; secondly, they provide an opportunity to grasp the interplay between society and self; thirdly, they let the 'listener' or 'witness' see the 'subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture and a social system' (Behar, 1990: 225) and finally, they can tell us how social actors, from a particular social position and cultural vantage point, make sense of their world. Thus, narration investigates the relationship between the object of study (life as lived), its representation (life as experienced) and its re-narration (life as told).

3.2.2.3.2. Narratives of processes of change

Fine (1995:3) has argued that narrative is neglected and underrepresented in social movement research; it is a vital form of movement discourse and a crucial analytical concept. The analysis of narrative,

> 'overcomes key limitations in the framing perspective and illuminates core features of identity building and meaning-making in social activism…it also sheds new light on movement emergence, internal dynamics and public persuasion, and addresses cultural aspects of activism that get short shrift in movement research' (Davis, 2002:3).

Whether stories of individuals or collectives, one creates and makes sense of events by showing their temporal or causal relationship to other events within the whole narrative

and by showing the role such events play in the unfolding of the larger whole (Davis, 2002: 12).

Many approaches to narrative exist. Narrative as representation - a prescribed sequence of events, or a 'plot', in the traditional sense - focuses on the principles of narrative structure. Narrative can also be approached as a manner of speaking about events - a 'discourse' produced by the narrator, focusing on certain technics of narration (point of view). A third approach treats narrative as verbal acts in a social transaction which are highly sensitive to context: something constructed between narrator and audience (Davis, 2002: 10). Additionally, the relationship between stories and human experience can also be conceptualised in different ways: stories can be conceived as simply after-the-fact representations of the experiences they recount, as cultural scripts that supply guidelines for understanding and action or as performances that create as well as comment on prior experiences (Davis, 2002:11).

Suffice to say that there are definitional challenges in terms of narrative as it is not a simple or fixed concept. However, this highlights the generative complexity of narrative and the possibility of multiple analytical strategies. However, unifying characteristics include that narratives are a form by which human experience is made meaningful and that narrative explanations work through emplotment. Indeed, social science research suggests that:

> 'narratives are analytical constructs ….that unify a number of past or contemporaneous actions and happenings, which might otherwise have been viewed as discrete or disparate, into a coherent relational whole that gives meaning to and explains each of its elements and is, at the same time, constituted by them' (Griffin, 1993:1097 cited in Davis, 2002: 11).

Approaching narratives of social change therefore emphasises a similar focus on plot structure, in which 'past events are selected and configured into a plot, which portrays them as a meaningful sequence and schematic whole with beginning, middle and end'

(Davis, 2002:12). Establishing a relationship between a teller and an interpretive audience is important. This idea informed the analytic focus in Chapter 6, which recounts not just the story told by Nine Lives, but also the reception by the interpretative audience. The relationship is created by the teller's engagement of the audience's 'narrativity', their ability to fill in connections that are required to make sense of the characters and events in the story. By engaging the audience, the storyteller draws the audience into a story, and they can feel involved and care about characters even when they are very far from the audience's own experience. Chapter 6 documents this connectivity and relationship between the audience and Nine Lives.

In summary, whether the narrative is about individual stories or collective stories of change, stories are socially produced and function to mediate action and constitute identities. They are also a method of studying of social lives, which can serve as a window through which other aspects can be accessed or revealed. Stories are powerful vehicles to articulate or produce meaning. The stories told in this research tell us something about how people come together to mobilise, they tell us about the internal dynamics of the movement, about the connections made between narrator and audience and how people see themselves and their identity as part of social change.

3.3. The practicalities of the research process (method)

As this research project set out to understand the experiences of the border from different situated perspectives, the choices of methods also sought to reflect the complexities and implications of various perspectives of the border. Additionally, since the conceptualisation of activism involves a multi-layered range of activities, some of which can take theatrical forms, this research sought to be a multi-voice text avoiding setting limitations on the methods of data gathering, and allowing multiple methods in order to maximise the richness of the data.

In this section I provide an overview of the research process and methods used, explaining the strategy for recruiting participants, data collection and analysis. Each part of the process was designed to ensure good research quality and that ethical procedures were observed.

3.3.1. Overview

Different data collection methods were utilised for different research sites and settings. As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, in order to understand perspectives of differently situated individuals or collectives, one must consider personal narratives and their subjective interpretations within the broader contexts in which they occur, paying attention to the relationship between the particular and the general and considering situated intersectionality.

For the political stories collected from asylum seekers, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were the chosen methodology. A different approach was used with the female rights activists from various sites: in order to make sense of the wider, more differentiated and more complex texts and contexts of their experiences, interviews used a life histories methodology (Brockmeier and Harre, 2001:40). Additionally, stories were collected during the Nine Lives Theatre tour between 2015 and 2016. These stories explored various ways in which activists engaged with the audience and influenced public opinion; it was important that the data illuminated the activists' understanding of their practical strategies of countering border politics. Finally, participant observation was conducted at two major pro-refugee protest events between 2015 and 2016. Stories of defiance were collected alongside stories describing a politics of welcome and people-to-people solidarities.

3.3.2. Preparing for fieldwork

I began preparing for fieldwork by doing archival work. The intention behind this was to trace past histories of migrant movements (and activisms) in order to be able to track the continuities of migrant rights activism. Archival research is concerned with the collection of documents (of any kind); it involves analysing and interpreting these documents in order to explore a particular topic or concern (Tamboukou, 2016). Since the objectives of the study involved investigating how activism was and is formed, developed, articulated and sustained over time, it was necessary to adopt an approach that attempted to trace the stories from the archives and histories recorded (Tamboukou 2016:5).

I started paying weekly visits to the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) in Brixton (London), in order to learn about histories and struggles and about the different generations of migrants in the UK. The past campaigns started to emerge, starting with the women's liberation movements. The archives told me who was at the forefront of these movements, what their concerns and demands were and the context of the immigration politics at the time. However, the BCA did not only allow me access to the collated archival information, but also to the curators – many of whom were the activists involved in campaigns during the 1980's and 1990's and who continue to be actively involved in activism. They still write, organise conferences, join marches, and do acts of activism in a variety of ways. These relationships and connections opened up opportunities for me to attend organised events. In 2015, I attended a conference to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Claudia Jones' birth. I had the privilege to chat with some of the activists, who were members of the Windrush community, and I received a guided tour of the archives. Thus, the archives and archival team gave me a historical aspect of migrant struggle, alongside some exposure to long-term activists who knew the history and remained involved in organising. This highlighted to me that I needed to map key campaigns and organisations

currently at the forefront of migrant rights activism, to interview and understand those who were actively involved.

3.3.3. Mapping the terrain of activism

Preliminary fieldwork included mapping the terrain of activism to identify key players and activists. Through the review of existing documentation, literature and fieldwork, I created a database of organisations working in the area of activism for migrant rights, approaching activists working specifically in the areas concerning asylum seekers for advice about the best place to begin.

Deborah Singer, the coordinator of Asylum Aid's research, recommended that I should pay attention to the Women's Asylum Charter and the work of the organisations who are signatories. The Charter was developed out of necessity to address asylum protection gaps, for which the Refugee Convention did not specifically make provision (see Section 5.4.3.3 of Chapter 5 for more details). There are 355 signatory organisations signed up to the charter, collectively calling on the UKBA to consistently treat asylum seekers with fairness, dignity and respect. To gather data from the whole coalition was outside of the scope of this research, and so a sample of 5-10 organisations was sought, which was within the scope of the time and resources available. First and foremost, I sought a sample of organisations that were migrant led. There were very few examples (most refugee and asylum-seeker movements are led and supported by people from diverse backgrounds rather than just migrants), so I sought organisations with significant migrant involvement. The final sample of organisations became the source for the participants from whom I took life histories interviews: six feminist activists from Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC), Right to Remain, Asylum Aid, Glasgow Girls, Migrants Organise and Institute of Race Relations. The findings from these interviews are presented in Chapter 4.

3.3.4. Recruitment

3.3.4.1. Activist participants

To gain some insight into the history of female activism, I sought informants who were long-term committed activists. Criteria were established to ensure that participants were recruited who could inform the perceived knowledge gap identified by the study. I needed activist participants who had some understanding about the changes that have occurred in feminist organising over the past four decades. I was aware that, even during the current period in which feminism is redefining itself again, it is rare to find a female asylum-seeker at the centre of contemporary women's organising and activism. Thus, I was interested in uncovering who was visible and who was virtually visible in the accounts of contemporary feminist struggle and why this was. Ultimately, I needed informants from whom I could gather life history data, which might illuminate the chronology of migrant women's concerns in relation to bordering practices and legislative changes. Sampling was therefore purposive, and the inclusion criteria were:

- A woman
- Involvement in the migrant rights movement for 3-4 decades – whether through community or activism
- Self-identifies as a feminist activist.
- Identifiable by partner organisations as a feminist activist (i.e. some recommendation from other organisations as a feminist campaigner)
- Extensive experience organising different strategic interventions alongside racialised communities, including asylum seekers and refugees in UK
- An expressed willingness to contribute their knowledge and practice for the duration of the research process

3.3.4.2 Asylum-seeker participants

I also sought participants who were asylum seekers to participate in interviews and focus groups. I was particularly interested in recruiting participants who could share their narratives as expressions of their lived experiences, as discussed in Section 3.2.2.2. Criteria were established to ensure that participants were recruited who could inform the perceived knowledge gap identified by the study.

Access and recruitment depended on gatekeepers from the organisations supporting asylum seekers. I approached some of the organisations I had identified through my research into the signatories of the Women's Asylum Charter, focusing on the women to women organisations that organised activities in which asylum seekers were notably involved. I was invited by one organisation to activities where I could be linked (introduced) to my respondents in person. Through these means I was able to recruit participants and gain informed consent under the supervision of a coordinator. The coordinator was present whilst I explained in detail the kind of research I planned to do, which made the meetings easier for me. Each of the respondents I approached agreed to participate. It was a convivial atmosphere and crucial to establishing early on the necessary trust for the interviews and focus groups.

3.3.4.3. Nine Lives participation

The Sanctuary Summit, which was organised in Birmingham in November 2014, changed the data collection process for the better, through a fortuitous encounter. During the summit, I met the Nine Lives' director, Alex Chisolm, and learnt about her pledge to use performance for refugee activism. Through the relationship that started that day with Alex Chisolm and the ensuing conversations with the team, it was agreed that I would join the tour and use ethno-methodologies such as participant observation to gather data.

Nine Lives represented an excellent opportunity for me to examine how activists engaged with various audiences on refugee issues - and I was particularly interested in examining how personal stories of border lives could be staged for communities of non-theatregoers and theatregoers alike. The ways in which data was collected and analysed is told in detail in Chapter 6. However, following Nine Lives became an excellent example of following and capturing a distinct articulation of current activism for asylum seekers.

3.3.5. Data collection

3.3.5.1. Life history data collection

The typical way to conduct life histories data gathering involves in-depth interviewing over time and, if relevant, documents, photographs, artefacts or observation (see for example, the British Library's project 'Sisterhood and after' https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood#). Data is ideally gathered on an individual's context: 'context itself is not the "unit of analysis", but a reference point, an essential backdrop that helps us understand an individual's life' (Knowles, 2001: 79).

I scheduled life history interviews with women activists according to their availability and in their chosen natural setting for interview. I interviewed each woman activist once: four at their offices, one at a café lounge, two on tour during the break between performances, and one at university. The participants cooperated readily with the project and seemed at ease when discussing their personal lives with me - some gave up to four hours of their time to listen to and answer my questions. During interviews, I had some photographs I had collected about previous demonstrations and activists' activities, which I thought would provoke some response or relevant reflections from my interviewees. At different times in our interviews, I interacted with my interviewees, which I feel developed our rapport further. Interviews were audio recorded, with permission from the participants, and later transcribed verbatim.

At the suggestion of one interviewee, I attended the Amnesty International Conference. This was an opportunity to understand activists' immediate context by immersing myself into their world and natural settings. Similarly, I was invited to direct action events and marched alongside some of the participants and their colleagues to get a sense of how, in practice, they mobilise and organise.

3.3.5.2 Focus group and interview data collection

To gather data from the asylum seeker participants, I travelled weekly to the host organisation's venue for 4 weeks. I started by conducing focus groups with the participants. I opened the focus groups with some ice-breaker questions, which were open-ended, allowing the women to relax and open up. As participants relaxed, the topic quite naturally turned to more serious discussions, particularly as they were aware of the focus and purpose of my research. As the participants began to share some of their stories, I used open-ended questions to clarify aspects of the story or focus on their experiences of the border. The focus group exceeded my expectations in many ways, as the women seemed glad to share ideas, reflect and reminisce together. So much contextual information came out of these conversations: many of the participants wanted to tell their 'legal' story – the story of their interactions with the legal system. They also shared stories about their experiences of detention, life as destitute women and, for some, their mental health challenges. It was hugely informative for me to take a non-state-centric view of these experiences.

For some of the participants who had raised particularly pertinent points that I was keen to follow up, I was able to arrange one-on-one interviews. This allowed me to have a little more space with the individuals whose stories I felt I hadn't heard fully, maybe because of the often-messy interruptions that happen during focus groups that adopt a relaxed, conversational tone, as this one had. The one-to-one interviews also allowed me to pay attention to individual accounts rather than generalising experience. From there I was able to explore themes from the general to the particular. Data from the focus groups was recorded on my digital recorder and I made summaries and notes on my train back home from these sessions trying to get a sense of border-inflicted experiences from their

standpoint and situatedness. Focus group data was transcribed verbatim. Interview data was also digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.3.5.3. Nine Lives Theatre data collection

The aims of the study included exploring the role of performance in campaigning for asylum seekers and refugees, whilst investigating the ways in which performance becomes activism in the pursuit of migrant rights. The story of the Nine Lives tour, which I joined to explore activist performance and evaluate its efficacy, forms the basis of Chapter 6.

In evaluating the tour, qualitative data was collected from the audience via feedback forms, post-theatre discussions, question and answer sessions (Q&A) and interviews. Quantitative data was collected on the number of participants across different activities, including workshops, post-show discussions, inter-disciplinary symposia, performances and talks. In addition, I conducted unstructured interviews with Alex Chisolm (the director and co-producer of Nine Lives), Zodwa Nyoni (the playwright) and Lladel Bryant (the actor), collecting narrative accounts of their experiences. My evaluation of Nine Lives primarily focused on audience feedback from people who attended, participated and discussed their experiences of the live performance; this sometimes included reflections on the meaning of the performance in relation to their own stories of border experiences. Themes were organised to include the successes, opportunities and challenges of the tour in relation to the thesis objectives.

I was also able to visit most venues to talk to participants or staff. During each visit, I observed and participated in activities, recorded field notes and helped in the collection of feedback forms from the audience. Data from the live-streamed performance was not collected, due to the platform not supporting data collection or audience feedback. Thus, the data collection was exclusively from the live audiences, who volunteered to fill the

audience feedback forms post-show (see Chapter 6). Some of the participants preferred to take the feedback forms with them, and later emailed their responses directly to either the box office or to the director. In examining the data from the feedback, I identified themes which contained salient ideas and stories which responded to or resonated with the research questions.

3.3.5.4. Participant observation at protests events

I attended protest events which were organised as part of refugee or migrant rights activism in response to invitations from the feminist activists I was interviewing, who insisted that I come along to see them 'in their element'.

Prior to conducting this research, I had participated in direct action and similar protesting events and was comfortable and familiar with participating in such events, considering myself as having an 'activist' identity. Thus, using participatory observation seemed like an appropriate tool, as I was inevitably going to be adopting both the 'insider' and 'outsider' stance appropriate to participatory observation. However, in another sense, I understood that, through researching these issues and immersing myself in this world, I was also in the process of 'becoming' an activist; thus, an immersive approach, such as participant observation, was appropriate.

Literature on activism has typically stressed that, in order to write about the struggles of activism or activists, one ought to experience the pursuits of activism, and by doing so contribute to the cause of activism (see, for instance Wiley, 2012). This participatory approach immerses the researcher as a body in the practice at hand and creates a detailed account of these experiences.

Out of these invitations, two case studies were collected, which form the findings from Chapter 7: The Refugee Welcome March - a Momentum event, and one of the monthly Shut Down Yarl's Wood demonstrations at the detention centre in Bedford.

These two became my case studies, which form part of Chapter 7. In collecting data for analysis, I took fieldnotes, recorded ad-hoc interviews and pertinent comments and sought to establish a rapport with the activists present on site to get a sense of their event meaning-making. One of the organisers of the Shut Down Yarl's Wood demonstration from Movement for Justice eventually became a key informant, which provided some in-depth context of activist practice, which is presented in the findings in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.3.6. Ethical considerations

This research project adhered to ethical procedures and guidelines as outlined by the University of East London's ethical compliance office, with attention paid to ensuring that my access to the field, recruitment of participants and my conduct during fieldwork reflected ethical procedures regarding both my participants' and my own wellbeing. My research ethics proposal was submitted and approved by UEL's research ethics committee (see appendix).

Participants all received participant information sheets, which provided thorough information and explained the purpose of my research. The participant information sheet explained how the research would be conducted, how data would be used, the risks and benefits of the research and the purpose of the study. It also explained the rights of participants to ask and voice any concern and withdraw from the project should they wish at any time and without giving an explanation.

The informed consent forms clearly laid out what the participant was consenting to, that the consent was voluntary and also the parameters of confidentiality. Participants

demonstrated that they were able to make informed consent and voluntarily consented to participate, as per ethical adherence. No breach of agreement occurred. I maintained a good rapport with both the activists and the host organisations I worked with, which facilitated the research.

The issues of confidentiality, anonymity and truthfulness were clearly discussed in both the informed consent letter and in ongoing discussions with respondents. I explained all available choices as well as limitations such as the use of pseudonyms or changing some of the events that might make participants identifiable. In addition to anonymisation, other ethical procedures were also explained, such as the audio recording of the interviews, transcription, and secure storage of the material.

While seeking informed consent, I was aware that perceived coercion through power dynamics or false assumptions can occur inadvertently, and that, instead of ending inequalities, researchers can reinforce it. Gunaratnam (2003) challenges researchers to avoid situations where an interviewer produces and reproduces complicated and contradictory inequalities in power (2003:174). I understood that consent was processual and remained mindful of the need to continue to consider the consent of the participants throughout the research. Copies of ethics letters are appended.

3.3.7. Transcription, analysis and dissemination

All the verbal data collected through interviews, focus groups and participant feedback were transcribed and reviewed. I used the summer period (June-September 2016) to go through all the audio files, listening multiple times and transcribing the life histories, focus groups discussions as well as ad-hoc interviews at rallies or post show discussion.

I then began to identify emerging themes, summarising and grouping the essential emerging themes to be analysed. From the interview data emerged some strong themes

around ideology, belief, political action and opportunities, challenges and setbacks, and vision for the future. Contextualising life histories into themes followed a similar pattern that had emerged from the interview questions. I listened to the audios repeatedly, which provided a glimpse of the political contexts of the women's stories. These themes are reflected in the headings of Chapter 4 and 5, in which the activists talk about themselves, as well as a range of areas of intervention in policy, anti-racism, refugee activism, education, research and publication.

3.3.7.1 Setbacks and challenges in handling data from interviews

Transcribing audio files was extremely challenging. I initially employed the services of an online transcription agency, as I was recommended to do. However, when validating the authenticity of the transcriptions with the audio, I found significant inaccuracies and inconsistencies, leading to me rechecking through all of the transcriptions and correcting the inaccuracies. This was hugely time-consuming and set me behind schedule considerably. However, it enabled me to develop a familiarity with the materials and strengthen my ability to produce summaries of the biographies of the research participants with greater ease.

Coding was done manually, which allowed me to work on themes while drafting my case studies with clarity (see Chapter 7). At this time, the setbacks turned into an opportunity, as I had reinvigorated my understanding of the stories of individual participants and had an empirical idea of what their stories as a whole communicate.

3.3.7.2. Data revision and validation with participants

I kept in contact with all the activists in order to share updates on my research and follow up with the development of their activism processes. I also sought validation of data transcripts, which had been enshrined in the consenting process. The collaboration with activists has been successful and straightforward throughout. However, there have been

some changes in circumstances among the members of the women's focus groups. Some of my participants in the focus groups have been deported and others dispersed elsewhere. The group also received new members. While I have made a summary of the discussions we had and arranged these into themes, I was not able to gather data around all the individuals that had participated previously. This made data validation difficult with some and impossible with other participants, and this impacted on my confidence in the data.

3.3.8. Organising Data

As I had collected data from various sites and using various methodologies, I began by organising the data according to the different sites of collection, and then by the method of collection. Thus, data collected from one site formed part of one political narrative about migrant rights activism. The process of analysis began with immersion into the audio recordings to familiarise myself with the data. Themes and subthemes were developed using the strategies outlined by Andrews (2007) and Shenhav (2006) for evaluating narratives and deconstructing interviews to understand political realities. Themes developed are reflected in the headings and subheadings in the presentation of findings in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3.3.8.1 Life Histories

Life history analysis treated the data thematically and temporally, considering a series of episodes as reflected in the stories. A summary of activists' stories was prepared, touching on each stage of their chronological account of becoming, their formative experience, early organising, education, political action and associations. I then identified six key themes that related to the aims, objectives and research questions. In my analysis, I considered the themes: political formative experience, feminist practice and identity, political action, commitment and vision for the future, modes of engagement and

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representation. Data was collected into a spreadsheet, including the characteristics of each participant. This allowed me to group them according to generation (based on age range) and patterns relating to their politics during organising experiences. These groups allowed me to present and discuss their stories thematically. Thus, whilst the biographical data served as the initial tool to group them, I was able to also search for similarities, tensions, and absences in their political actions and tendencies.

3.3.8.2. Focus groups

Analysing the focus group data was simplified by the fact that I analysed the discussions after each meeting, allowing fresh ideas and recollection of events to flow freely. Further ideas emerged through the analysis process, and the substantive and discursive content is presented in the 'Hope Space' section in Chapter 7.

3.3.8.3. Nine Lives Theatre

The data gathered from the Nine Lives tour was prolific and diverse, as I had gathered data through the life of the Nine Lives production across 45 performances in 25 locations. Data had also been collected, in collaboration with the venues, from participants across the workshops, discussions, open days, performances and talk. This extended to continual email correspondence for data validation and following up pertinent feedback comments. Data was in the form of online surveys, post-show feedback forms, Box Office statistics, pertinent reviews and comments made in the Q&A. While collating data went smoothly, developing the correct strategy to handle and analyse the data was a lengthy, difficult process. Once again, analysis and themes were related back to the research questions of the thesis, as well as the aims and objectives of the tour, articulated by the director in terms of her vision to inspire refugee sanctuary across various communities in the UK.

3.3.8.4 Protest events

Data collected for protests events included my fieldnotes from participant observation and interview transcriptions. These events were analysed using the performative analysis techniques outlined by Pavis (2003) drawing on the conceptual tools outlined for understanding a range of performances, with an awareness of the roles of social context in the interpretation of such performances. These tools allowed me to structure my data soon after each 'experiential' participation in the activist's 'performative' event. This formed the beginnings of the process of data analysis and allowed me to sustain a full understanding of the performance material from one method to another. Overall, the original aims of the thesis were my anchor, enabling me to organise and analyse the different data from different methods to address the various objectives articulated and establish a coherent yet multi-layered story of migrant rights activism.

3.3.9 Dissemination

My good relationship with the production of Nine Lives has been maintained. My evaluation report that recorded the success of the tour was sent to the sponsors - the British Arts Council. After securing additional funds, Nine Lives went on a second tour, which started, from September 2015. I was invited to share with my preliminary findings in Manchester and Stratford Circus Theatre in London and co-chaired a post-show discussion. Other dissemination opportunities will be sought for publications and presentations over time.

Chapter 4: Developing dramatis personae: a contour of key women at the forefront of Migrant Rights activism

4.1. Activists' journeys to politicisation

This chapter seeks to deepen understanding of the key challenges of the state border performance in the UK by examining six personal accounts from long-term women activists engaged in the contemporary narrative of social justice and social change through the migrant rights movement in the UK. It examines their individual journeys in 'becoming' committed organisers, as well as the construction process of their roles and identities. Stories explored in this chapter are from Zita Holbourne (Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC)), Lisa Matthews (Right to Remain), Debora Singer (Asylum Aid), Amal Azzimul (Glasgow Girls), Zrinka Bralo (Migrants Organise) and Liz Fekete (Institute of Race Relations). Brief reference is also made to Alex Chisolm and Zodwa Nyoni (both from Leeds Studio) and Antonia Bright (Movement for Justice by Any Means Necessary –MFJ), though their stories are told in subsequent chapters.

Politicisation denotes the development of a particular framework of political meanings and beliefs; in the case of the women presented in this chapter, this has included a developing understanding and perception of self as well as the development of views, which challenge dominant ideologies and empower political action. Central to this chapter is the analysis of how the individuals move from their everyday experiences to develop an oppositional consciousness. The activists in this chapter purposively assume roles to establish collective representation (dramatis personae) thus ensuring that the complexity of migrants' stories is told and heard in the unfolding public drama.

The chapter is divided into several sections. First, it presents a conceptual overview (Section 4.2) which considers the concept of 'dramatis personae' and its relevance to the

relationship between narrativity/tellability and activist identities. This establishes conceptually how the women in my interviews can be thought of as central characters in the migrant rights drama. Becoming committed activists stems from a deepened understanding of social phenomena rooted within particular cognitive-cultural framing structures, which make movement concerns understandable and attractive to potential constituencies (McAdam, 1988, 1999; Anheier, 2003, 2001). This arguably requires a radical immersion in the phenomena but also needs sufficient grounding in local milieu, including existing organisations and networks.

Section 4.3 presents the findings from the interview data. Through narratives of the women's biographies with particular focus on their relationships with individuals and social political influences, Section 4.3.1. examines the development of the interviewees' political consciousness. As these activists formed and developed their particular worldview, so their holistic analysis of their interpretive learning influenced their cognitive ways of knowing and doing. The activists' self-perception and self-definition are then explored (Section 4.3.2), examining how activists view themselves particularly in relation to their commitment to migrant rights activism. This allows a discussion of the interplay of external conditions, internal conditions and power struggles in relation to the production of each activist's dramatis personae.

Section 4.4. discusses how the interviewees understand the meaning of commitment and the embodiment of 'dramatis personae'. This facilitates the presentation of six distinct aspects of the meaning and enactment of commitment.

Section 4.5. concludes this chapter, gathering the multiple personalities and commonalities that have allowed the participants to establish the personae of a committed activist. The women's narratives shed light on the contours of various forms and complexities of identity, beliefs and constructed values; these not only configure the

landscape of this thesis, but also link complementarily to the subsequent chapter examining practice.

4.2. Conceptual overview

Dramatis personae are the characters of a story: those who make a narrative tellable. It has been argued by scholars influenced by the pioneering work of sociologist Ervin Goffman (1959), such as Benford and Hunt (1992, 1994), that the process of developing dramatis personae is indeed an important stage of scripting, as it centres on 'constructing identities and roles for a cast of characters associated with the movement' (1992:38). Actors in social movements arguably define and communicate power and their interactions concretise perceptions of social movement dramas. Women activists in the migrant rights movements, given their position in the collective construction, their images of power and their identities as activists can be viewed as dramatis personae, who make the refugee and asylum seeker story more tellable.

In narrative studies, the relationship between narrativity and tellability has recently received more attention. Herman (2002:90-92) has linked the degree of narrativity to the degree to which expectations regarding the storyline are violated, the former aspect being closely related to tellability. Fludernik (2003), who grounds her conception of tellability in 'experientiality', argues that a story is tellable when the events of the narrative start to mean something to the narrator on an emotional level, enhancing the emotional experience. However, Sternberg (2001:117) attributes tellability to suspense, curiosity and surprise in a narrative, asserting that there is a reliance on the interplay between the temporalities of actional and discursive sequences. It can be influenced by the search for truth within the narrative, dependent on the nature and context of specific features in the story selected as meaningful by the storyteller and that can be believable to those listening.

In my search for the truth, my interest goes beyond pragmatic studies of tellability, conversational analysis and framing: it is concerned with how the interviewed activists assert their identity in the telling of their life trajectories. Andrews (2007) notes that when the narrator (i.e. women activists) tells the story, the temporal perspective of self must be explicated in order to ascertain if the 'self' the activist describes is the self that was or is or the self they aspire to be. Thus, temporal framing must be considered when analysing political narratives of social change. While studying lifetime commitment of activists, Andrews (2007) found that sustaining activism in the long-term (as the women activists in this study have done) is not common. Where lifetime commitment from activists is attained, there is typically an interaction between the psychobiography of the activist and the situatedness of their values in the process of identity formation. By paying attention to the activists' narration of the process of their politicisation, most particularly their psychobiography and situatedness, it can be ascertained how these contribute to the formation of their identity as activists (Andrews, 2007).

Considering the broader contexts against which these cultural constructs are projected is pertinent to this study. Indeed, Ollis (2008) observed that activists act with agency. Their interpretive, transformative and critical learning is purposive and resolute: they are there and act for a reason. Furthermore, 'this learning is not only cognitive but also embodied; it is learning often associated with the emotions of passion, anger, desire and a commitment to social change' (Ollis, 2008: 318).

Activism for migrant rights is a process whereby individuals act to have an impact on significant social change. It generally requires challenging state policies that affect migrants and resisting state apparatus or state systems related to migration control and management. The role of an activist is therefore assumed by individual actors or groups who seek to resist what they consider to be discriminatory acts or acts which violate

human rights and dignity; this resistance uses various tactics from contained to transgressive acts. At different times in history, people have come together to challenge these injustices and have used sociological ideas about inequality, identity and intersectionality to understand and form these alliances and to propose political and social change. Andrews (1991) notes that as individuals direct their life focus to activism, various aspects of their lives become intertwined in multidimensional efforts to create change. Similarly, Dutt and Grabe (2014) have found that inherently intersecting psychological mechanisms and influences do contribute to a sustained commitment to creating social and political change. In their study of lifetime activism, socio-psychological concepts of social identity, positive marginality and consciousness have been examined to understand the oral histories of three women activists from the United States, India and Nicaragua. The study asserted that although these women's lives and experiences vary considerably, concepts within social psychology (psychosocial theory in particular) can aid our understanding of how and why individuals become increasingly committed to creating change.

Mayo's (1982) theory of positive marginalisation articulates how the experiences of being marginalised may equip individuals with a wider lens and unique knowledge of consciousness. Because experiencing marginalisation often entails being exposed to and navigating barriers, one may gain, through this experience, critical insight into how inequality is substantiated in societies thereby facilitating a deeper psychological investment in transforming social obstacles into opportunities for change (Mayo, 1982; Dutt and Gabe, 2014). Personal experience of marginalisation can therefore become a source of psychological strength for both a critical awareness of injustice and action, potentially leading to a belief that one can contribute to bringing about change. Parallels with this can be drawn with the ways in which black women in the United States (African

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Americans) refuted the assumption that marginality only leads to oppression and disempowerment. Patricia Hill-Collins (1990, 1986) has shown that African American women in the 1960s and 1970s sought to use the experience of oppression and marginalisation to empower each other. By harnessing their situated experiences, they were able to identify intersecting axes of oppression and worked towards the eradication of such injustice. The experience of having both insider and outsider status as a member of a marginalised group situated in a dominant culture can potentially provide a vantage point from which individuals can better understand and serve their communities (Hill-Collins, 1986; Mayo, 1982; Dutt and Gabe, 2014). Rather than succumbing to marginalisation, one can reconceptualise marginalisation as a potentially advantageous position when harnessed to facilitate the creation of foundational tools and the conviction which motivates efforts to restructure society; it is this bottom-up process upon which activism thrives.

Such an understanding of the ills of society alone is not necessarily enough to explain how over time individuals continue their commitment to the causes for which they campaign. The concept of critical consciousness (Freire, 1972) in addition to activists possessing a vantage point, is associated with awareness and responsiveness to one's surroundings, including the awareness of how political structures create and support systems of inequality. Scholars have examined the mechanism in which consciousness rises in response to political situations (Andrews, 2002; Hammack, 2010b; Burton and Kagan, 2004). It can be understood that critical consciousness not only allows people to create bottom-up change, but also can be useful in understanding activists' responses and actions in their community. Through such a process, a critical consciousness of the individual's social and political realities is developed, evolving through experiences that

inform how injustice is supported through socio-political structures (Freire, 1972; Gabe and Dutt, 2014).

The intersectionality of these two concepts is useful in examining political and psychological locations from which activists launch their efforts for change and activism growth. A person's sense of who they are is pivotal in motivating a healthy interaction between the social and the self: for those involved in migrant rights movements, understanding the interrelatedness of those involved is crucial to facilitate action towards a shared goal. Social identity theory suggests that a person's social identity is formed through membership in particular groups, as well as how one's groups are valued within society. Activists are often motivated to enhance or sustain their affiliation and each sees one's potential as connected rather than isolated, which encourages collective action and can potentially lead to actualising goals (Drury Reicher, 2005; Dutt and Gabe, 2014).

In this study, all the mechanisms discussed are important in understanding how each woman's journey and trajectory influenced and enabled them to become lifelong migrant rights activists. Tracing the life histories of interviewees, I demonstrate the influence parental heritage, associations and social political factors had on determining effects on how the interpretation of justice, or the absence of it, was made – all that which prompted activism. Furthermore, the accounts of women activists for migrant rights show a correlation between how their consciousness awakened and internal and external factors. By exploring the expressions of positive marginality, consciousness and social identity, the journey and life course on which the women activists found themselves, leading to them becoming an activist 'dramatis personae', is illuminated. Such insights are valuable because lifelong activists hold the potential to extensively influence their communities both through the direct work they perform and by serving as models and mentors to others who join their efforts (Andrews, 1991; Morris, 2000; Dutt and Gabe, 2014). Effective

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migrant activism requires a critical analysis and interpretation of bordering processes, as well as the capacity to harness this understanding and analysis into efforts that effect change. It has been suggested that the extent to which one feels empowered and seeks to continue working collectively relates to how much one feels involvement is an expression of identity (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Indeed, for migrant rights activism to be effective, joining hands with like-minded people is required, thus activists are always seeking to encourage, motivate and recruit supporting cast members.

4.3. Presentation of the findings

Interviewees' own accounts will be drawn on to illustrate the various trajectories on each woman's politicising journey. Each woman's dramatis personae unfolds through their unique re-scripted narrative about themselves, their work and their world as they describe their journeys from transitioning from an informal involvement with migrant rights activism in the UK to a more sustained commitment. When conducting my interviews, the women activists were informed, beforehand, as per ethical requirements, that I was going to use a life history method where I would be asking about their life chronologically. I wanted to hear them tell their stories to get a sense of who they are and what influenced them. I asked an icebreaker question to start them off:

> Question: If you were listening to an interview about your life as an activist, what would you want to feature or hear?

> Responses:

> 'I suppose I'd want a sense of working to influence change and particularly change with vulnerable people with a particular focus on human rights'. (Debora Singer, January 2016)

> 'I guess what led me to be an activist, what led to the decisions I made in my life, what caused me to have the passion to do the things I do'. (Zita Holbourne, August 2015)

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'How fortunate I was to find myself uhm in the middle of this organisation, the Institute of Race Relations, and through this to be able to make a contribution to the issue of social justice, because I think that in many ways it was my saving grace. If I tried to imagine my life if I haven't had the fortune to come here and to meet wonderful people that I have done through coming here and through campaigning I think my life would have taken a very, very different turn indeed and I wouldn't be as content as I am today'. (Liz Fekete, January 2016)

Their accounts began with biographical information; most of the women activists described their childhoods as marked by early critical awareness of their social-political positioning and context. At various junctures, there was evidence of these women consciously constructing their narrative, selecting the stories, which demonstrated their politicisation. Two themes emerged: 1) early influences and affects through key relationships and 2) ideological leanings influenced by the national, political context combined with their particular institutional context, whether work, education or otherwise. There was variance in each woman's dramatis personae: the contextual specificity of what it means to be an activist differed in terms of politics, practice and background; also, each activist's values were different. By taking into account such a variance, it can be noted that the genesis of these activists' dramatis personae cannot be easily encapsulated by socio-psychological theories of identity. However, though emphasis varied between stories, the two themes above emerged alongside a common thread – that of the participants' journeys towards commitment to migrant rights activism. The findings are organised in three sections: first, the influence that individuals and social political settings had on each woman's journey to politicisation is discussed; this is illustrated through the biographical stories of the six women. The narratives track early childhood to current day, focusing on the interplay between the social, the self and the political. Secondly, the development of the women's self-perception as reflected in their self-positioning as women and feminists, alongside their particular values and beliefs are examined; the role and influence of class is also considered. Finally, the meaning the interviewees ascribed to commitment is presented. The chapter ends with an analysis of

the journey to 'becoming' dramatis personae and how the microhistories presented in this chapter add to the study as a whole.

4.3.1 Significance of others and social political settings

4.3.1.1. Zita 's Story

> 'There was no conscious effort made to become an activist' (Interview with Zita H., August 2015).

Zita Holbourne is an anti-racist, feminist activist and co-founder of BARAC (Black Activists Rising Against Cuts). She is a second-generation migrant of mixed heritage, born in South London (UK) in 1966. Growing up, her white English father was an educator while her Jamaican black mother was a homemaker. Early on in our interview, Zita provides the context of her childhood experiences, focusing outwardly on social and cultural aspects and then looking inwardly to reveal a deep understanding of self. Her account connects her past to her current active involvement with asylum seekers and refugee rights activism. Zita has recently become engrossed in raising awareness of the plight of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK alongside her anti-racism campaigning. At the time of our interview (2015), she was making solidarity visits to refugees in the Calais Jungle with BARAC, taking much needed food, essential items and other aid to people in the camp. BARAC also made similar visits to refugees in Dunkirk, another French camp where refugees, whilst in limbo, occupy what is effectively a shanty town with inhumane conditions.

In her narrative, Zita's childhood and adolescence are highlighted as important stages in informing a logical progression of Zita's awareness of social justice. She reflects on recursive struggles for racial justice growing up, particularly struggles for citizenship which the migrant communities shared in the 1960's.

> 'There was never any conscious effort to become an activist. Well, what I had from a very young age and still do, was a strong sense of what injustice is and when I witnessed injustice {I would challenge it} I was also raised by a mother who would challenge and question and respond to any injustice she saw…So, {coming back to your question} I think that all those things, they stay with you…You're subconsciously learning from that without knowing' (Zita, 2015)

The nature of Zita's engagement with political activism stems from her growing experience of witnessing injustice around her and how people, particularly her mother, reacted to these circumstances which greatly impacted her. She states:

> 'I was very conscious from a very young age that I'm a child of what was considered to be an immigrant, somebody who is 'othered', treated differently…the consciousness was there partly because of the values - you still do go back home, and come back, do all the cultural things - and then having a black mother and a white father you can see the difference culturally… the other thing that makes it painful… is the fact that abuse is heard on the street, racism - of being told 'go back to where you came from, are you a monkey? do you live in the jungle? do you live in a tree? all of those kinds of things are constantly instilled in your mind or, you don't belong here. Or people ask me 'where you from?' as in 'where are you REALLY from?'

South London, where Zita grew up, was and still is quite a multi-cultural area. However, the 'go back to where you come from' abuse can be understood as reflective of postwar race politics, racial anxieties and the anti-Blackness of a White British metropolitan society, which saw black people as the source of Britain's problems. Race and anti-Blackness at the time were conditioned, in part, by imperial ideologies of White supremacy, which led to discrimination in housing, employment and access to public resources (Perry, 2016).

Zita's childhood recollections are embedded in a specific socio-historical period, so the narrative is told from her own standpoint and positionality. For example, she talks about how, at the time, there was a fascination with being different in her primary school, which was predominantly white. Zita recalls experiences of 'bullying' as a child; she found it quite isolating at that young age, *because there were virtually no black people*'. It was also something of an anomaly having a mixed heritage family back in the 1960's. Hence,

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she was confronted with discursive reproductions of racism in questions such as, '*what are you, really?*' These experiences forced Zita to feel somehow 'out of place' and to reflect more and more on projected meanings of not belonging.

Living in this South London, multi-cultural, predominantly Caribbean community also impacted Zita positively, playing a huge part in her earliest formative experiences. It allowed her to develop her own theories of justice, coinciding with the era when black consciousness was gaining momentum and black identity was becoming established as a basis for a political movement for change in Britain. It equipped Zita with mechanisms to navigate everyday discriminatory practices later on in life, from stereotyping to explicit racism. Her sense of positive marginality in regard to her ethnic identity can be seen to have influenced her desire to pursue the causes that seek to challenge injustice and discrimination.

Zita's story tells of transitions in place and time, from the London multicultural influence in her childhood to life in England's countryside, where her family moved when she was young, and then back to London for college. Her growing consciousness is illustrated in numerous stories connecting her upbringing, social context and education, which made her aware that she possessed unique knowledge and a desire to act upon it:

> 'I wouldn't say I knew everything about that [political consciousness], not at the age of five or six or seven. I'm not gonna know that. But by the time I got to secondary school, I was like a student representative/counsellor - I was already starting campaigning about small things such as uniform. There were things around gender where boys' and girls' uniforms. There were those things around those things around the food…and it was practical things to do at the school. But it was still sort of grounding, how to campaign yeah, how to do petitions and things like that'.

The first major campaign involvement for Zita began when she was 19: as a national student's representative in her Art School, she joined thousands of students marching to hand in a petition to Downing Street. The students protested against the government

because 'they were going to take away grants for education'. She notes '*lots of students were brutalised by the police – the police officers that time were quite brutal*'. It is clear from her story that her intolerance of unfair treatment was evident early on, even before her consciousness developed at a deeper level. After graduation from Art School, Zita joined a UK trade union and worked on solidarity campaigns that sought internal reforms around issues of representation and racial equality within the union. At the time, Zita's own union group had not established black committees, though it was a requirement to do so:

> 'Even though they knew this was to be set up they couldn't be bothered to set it up. So, what I did is, I tried then to get some of the black activists on the left (in my group) to, you know, fight with me. And they really weren't that enthusiastic to begin with. So, I kind of was on my own, a single lone voice trying to do this.' So, I set up an organisation with two other black activists and we called it 'ethnic majority'... then black people started joining. Other people also wanted to join and signed up to it. In the end, it forced them to setup the black committee…. They eventually set it up because of that force, because our organisation acted but (sadly) they imposed a white chair to chair a black committee.'

Having a black representation in UK trade unions was significant to migrants of colour; organising through the union provided opportunities to mobilise and build strong alliances which could push for policy change and expose the problems of racism, violence, prejudice, and discrimination encountered by Black Britons. Zita's involvement in ensuring the black committee was established in her union catalysed for her an awareness of the structural roots of inequity and was a key part of her own process of increased consciousness, impacting her early organising. Her understanding of power and agency grew as she found herself on the National Black committee, with implicit leadership responsibility. This offered more opportunities for analysing society and navigating social political environments.

A second defining influence can be located in Zita's first affiliation with the Labour Party, which she joined at the request of her mother. Zita recounts how, as a teenager, her

mother taught her the importance of analysing the internal/domestic policies in the UK and the impact they had on minorities. She was shown through her mother's narrative how certain policies were designed to put communities of migrants in a marginalised position. The Labour party was the only political party Zita found which demonstrated some willingness to advancing the rights of black people, particularly subsequent to Enoch Powell's now infamous *'Rivers of blood'* speech in 1968. Alongside the internal politics of Powell's era, there were transnational politics of colonialism and imperialism, which concerned migrant communities. In fact, Zita's parents were actively involved with the anti-apartheid movement in the UK and she found herself in conversations about socio-political structures that historically contributed to inequity transnationally. As she notes, the anti-apartheid movement in Britain had begun the boycott campaign (boycotting South African products to protest the apartheid regime in South Africa) and her mom was someone who led by example, raising awareness of the issue in their neighbourhood:

> 'My parents campaigned against apartheid. They were part of the boycott campaign. So, from a very young age, I was taught 'do not buy any South African products. For instance, if you go to the shop, I would be with my mum, you know, you are on the market store and you have Cape, Cape was the big company obviously from South Africa. My mum never said: 'I don't want Cape' she would say: 'I would like a pound of apples please, and, not SOUTH AFRICAN!!!!' She would say like that with that tone. I remember that from a very young age. But what I also knew was that it was more than my life was worth to come back with anything from South Africa, so I knew from a very young age to ask: 'is this South African? I don't want it!'

These experiences coincided with her father's work for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which involved him going *'to developing countries and reinvigorating traditional crafts and handicrafts and textiles to make products that were suitable for exports so the country could be self-sustainable'*. This gave Zita the opportunity to spend her teenage years travelling, spending summers in whichever countries her father was working. Going to South Africa during the apartheid regime

brought her face to face with the realities and consequences of a racist system:

> 'And there was apartheid in the departure lounge which I haven't prepared myself mentally for because I was told no, it's international, you know, you're going to be safe. You're going to be fine. And there is no apartheid in the other part of the airport, there wasn't. So, in this part there was. They didn't have Coloured, Asian, whites and black. What they had they cut down the semi-thing. They did whites and black. So of course, I sat in the black area there's no way I'm was going to sit in the white area. So, it took about four hours or five hours waiting for the plane. So, it wasn't very pleasant'.

Knowing first-hand experiences of the brutality of apartheid in South Africa and being under curfew in war-torn countries such as Lesotho had a lasting impact on Zita's worldview and her activist work:

> 'And then that experience taught me something else about the world because: 1) Okay, because he was working for the UNDP, you had that experience of issues of development, poverty and global inequalities … that gave me a different understanding as well. … It was really a different perspective. 2) if you have that better understanding of a culture and religion you feel more connected to those people. So, when you come back home and there are migrants in that country, you've got a better connection with them. You understand their story better where they're coming from and culturally what they stand for, what their religion is about. And to respect different religious requirements so, certain ways you have to conduct yourself or dress yourself in certain countries'

Zita was compelled to become involved in the anti-apartheid movement; she shared her personal experience of segregation in South African to recruit more supporters of her political action:

> 'I then went to art school a couple of years later, or whatever, and there I was involved in boycotting campaigns against Barclays, boycotting supermarkets and anyone that was involved with apartheid regime. And I couldn't believe that many students at my art school, students of the same age as me said that they've never heard of apartheid. Many didn't know anything about what was happening in South Africa. I'm thinking I've always known - from day of birth, it has been instilled in me. How can you not know! I asked myself. But, then because I have that first-hand experience actually I was more able to convince them of why they should stand up against it. Then if I hadn't, if I just been talking in the abstract way, it wouldn't have had the same impact'.

Effectively engaging other students in her campaign demonstrates the progression of consciousness and dedication. As Zita notes, putting a campaign together required some

research to build a persuasive and well-informed argument. The brutality she witnessed of the apartheid system which had affected her personally provided a strong testimony about the racialised violence of the apartheid regime.

A succession of significant life experiences from childhood to adulthood facilitated a more direct ideological commitment to anti-racism organising. She was a child that dreamed of becoming a singer or performer; she was *'creative and loved performing and art',* with a keen interest in literature. However, as Zita began to view her own fate as connected to the opportunities and wellbeing of the marginalised, it became clear that she would put her childhood dream aside to become a change-maker. Although Zita's faith in her ability to transcend structural constraints was established early on, it was not until motherhood that Zita felt an intense awakening, a point of no return, which made her calling sure and established activism as her life's purpose. When her son was born, Zita notes, she became more engrossed in the compounded marginalisation of people of colour:

> '…so, you see, it was all these different things that happened, like, that built up and gave me a strong sense of awareness of injustice. So, I never was consciously going to become an activist but all those things, life experiences, had an impact on my political formation' (Zita, 2015).

Zita's experiences highlight the interconnectivity of social identity theory, consciousness and an intersectional understanding of marginalisation through compounded barriers of racism. This triggered a desire to create change which grew from her early years. Activism for Zita stems from experiential awareness and an evolving ability to analyse institutional, physical, discursive or ideological tropes that threaten the opportunities and wellbeing of migrants of colour of all generations in the UK. These aspects of her biographical narrative illustrate all that sustains and grows Zita's activism.

4.3.1.2. Debora's Story

> 'It is probably not a total coincidence that I'm working with refugees coming from a refugee family' (Interview with Debora S., 2016)

Debora Singer is the Policy Research Coordinator at Asylum Aid. She is responsible for a series of creative campaigns on the rights of women seeking asylum spanning over two decades. She was born in London in the late 1950's to Jewish parents who came to the UK as children fleeing Nazi Germany. Growing up, Debora's family *'very much sort of just settled into British life'*, but *'kept up their friendships with other people that came here as refugees and they very much expected her and her sibling to grow up within the English culture'*. Her family history and context, which included the loss of her grandfather at Auschwitz, influenced her understanding of racism and discrimination, as well as her commitment to human rights and social justice. Growing up, politics was talked about at home; it was also a time of political turmoil, racism and police brutality:

> 'The discrimination that was going on back in the 80's that was resulting in the events such as the riots in Brixton and …hmmm… a huge sense of injustice and inequalities…it was also a time when there was a lot of discourse around racism and how it worked and the thing about how white people understood racism and how they understood that differently to black people who experience it'.

Like Zita, Debora locates the occurrence of her early political awakening as a response to family relationships and experiences, although she felt it did not fully develop until much later in life:

> 'Both my parents have got sort of a strong sense of people's rights. My mom was a teacher who campaigned for things like state education and she was the first person I ever went in a demonstration…I do think that my sense of commitment to human rights must come from the fact that my parents, you know, survived persecution. I think, I probably didn't realise it at the time but I think, you know, there is probably not a total coincidence that I'm working with refugees coming from a refugee family, even though I didn't, it didn't really strike me at the time'.

Debora's mother was her biggest influence. She involved her in campaigns for state education and anti-discriminatory policies. She involved her in direct action, such as the

Falklands War protests and CND marches (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.). Through consistently role-modelling political participation in voting, her mother encouraged her to always cast her vote and personally, she ensured Debora understood why.

After graduating with a degree in psychology in 1981, Debora focused more concerted energy on addressing injustice and discrimination. She worked for a community relations council, now the Race Equality Council and also volunteered with her local Amnesty International group, from which she learnt democracy at work through small campaigns. During this time, it was acknowledged for the first time that gay or lesbian people who were persecuted, or became political prisoners because of their sexuality, should be counted as prisoners of conscience. Debora notes:

> 'And it's interesting to think they weren't. And then, what was then called the British section of Amnesty International adopted that resolution, it just came from a meeting, you know, a small meeting really and then they took it (resolution) to each section. The British section took it to the international committee and it was agreed, …I just think that's amazing that it started in a scene of a school hall…a classroom in fact… in Islington and ended up as being a part of the International Mandate of Amnesty International'

Debora's account demonstrates that she was drawn deeper into understanding systemic change through working for a variety of organisations such as Race Relations, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) or running voluntary services at Saint Thomas' Hospital. Working for different activist-oriented organisations provided her opportunities to launch small campaigns for equal opportunities and against discrimination, such as pushing for the establishment of non-rejection policies as an anti-discriminatory mandate. After spending a further ten years with Victim Support, it became clear to Debora that working in policy would provide her greater opportunities to influence change most effectively. She took the policy job at Asylum Aid after graduating with a Master's degree in Refugee Studies, a job which actualised and facilitated a more sustained ideological

commitment to justice. Debora reflects that she didn't for a second think she would end up as a policy researcher or human right campaigner. Indeed, when looking back, her dream in her formative years was to *'become things I'd heard of, like a teacher, or an educational psychologist'*. It was her work experiences in the voluntary sector which caused her to increasingly view her opportunities and wellbeing as intimately tied to increased involvement in anti-discrimination and anti-racism. Debora adds: *'I think I was pretty clear that I wanted to do something worthwhile, something with people, something change the world-ish, you know, smaller scale!'*. The drive and commitment to achieve that can be traced back to her family background and formative experiences, demonstrating a gradual progression of her consciousness, and a growing understanding of how embedded injustices were within particular social structures and reflected in state policies. In her current work with Asylum Aid, Debora has led efforts to establish the 2008 charter for women seeking asylum, alongside a dozen other small charities. She also led a successful national asylum campaign on asylum protection gaps, which sought to encourage the Home Office to include the campaign demand in their action plan. This includes, for example, providing childcare during interviews and paying attention to specific gendered issues affecting women during the asylum determination process. Debora has used and still uses her vantage point as a policy researcher to underscore the pressing need for change in society.

4.3.1.3. Liz's Story

> 'I didn't have a great knowledge. I was just rebellious. Thinking that things weren't as they should be'. (Interview with Liz F. 2016)

Liz Fekete is an anti-racist and migrant rights campaigner. At the time of the interview Liz was the Research Manager at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR). Liz was born in South London in 1959, the third and last child of refugee parents from Hungary and Romania

who settled in the UK after World War II. On arrival, Liz's parents could not speak English, which presented significant societal barriers inhibiting work opportunities. Despite her father's previous Law profession and qualifications, they had to take work as housekeeper and gardener to a wealthy family, which was followed by subsequent manual and factory work. From her experiences at school, Liz began to understand that it was common for parents (like hers) with a refugee background to be highly motivated to ensure their children excelled educationally. Liz's sense of positive marginality was fostered through the perspectives shared and lived within her family: *'what was very, very clear was we were sent out to out-perform in a lot of ways the other children in our school'*. Educational attainment was felt by Liz as a tool which would not just undo the limits implied from being from a refugee family, but it also was the basis for high expectations for her future.

When discussing her family influence, it is not surprising that, like Debora and Zita, parental and family influences played a significant role in Liz's political awakening. However, contrary to Zita's experiential-stemming activism, Liz's gradual consciousness or journey to politicisation was heavily influenced by her environment and the socio-political climate:

> '… I would define that, because - thinking about it philosophically - I don't think your consciousness is gradual. Or I don't think your consciousness suddenly comes with a great, big epiphany. I think consciousness is expanding and contracting elements. I would say that you always have consciousness but gradually it expands, and it grows. That's how I would say it'.

The progression of Liz's consciousness began with her understanding from a young age that the social political environment was noticeably different; the post-war attitude towards migration and refugees was highly politicised: arguments against the movement of refugees or the attitudes towards them is not a recent phenomenon.

> 'It was not a multicultural society…my primary school was, erm, very much a white school, because our parents spoke really bad English with a really strong East

European accent, I would say that we would be exotic. We would be other. We were the different ones'.

While in college, Liz joined a student-led direct action: an occupation to demand a nursery for students with children. She explains:

> 'It wasn't out of any great understanding it was just a sort of sense of rebellion - things weren't right... I didn't like the way people would be interested, I wasn't the member of a political party or I didn't have a great, you know, knowledge. I was just rebellious. Thinking that things weren't as they should be'.

Whilst this initial involvement did not particularly influence her understanding, it provided her networking opportunities and association with a more diverse group of people, which she recognises as her earliest significant influence politically:

> 'I started to go out with the young man who was president of the, uhm, the student union... He would bring in outside speakers who would tell us about the anti-racist issues in the world. So at this point - and this is where I think I came to see I have this kind of raw understanding around class but I didn't come from a background which was multiracial however - I had a sense of difference because we were different and then I came to Uni and I began to hear about the racism in the world and I think at this point I began to see that the racism for me can be the central issue, the central dividing issue in the modern class, it was race'.

Peer influences transformed and expanded Liz's politics, through exchanges and learning that brought Liz deeper into the issues of social justice and racism. Her politics became more concretised with the political climate inflamed by the 1981 uprisings, so that when she was offered a voluntary position with the Institute of Race Relations by her boyfriend Liz accepted immediately as she *'wanted to be part of them'*. The early 1980's black resistance and black consciousness were heightened by influences from external social political events such as the anti-apartheid struggle within and outside the UK:

> 'I remember it was just it was a militant time because it was the point when, eh, we had the anti-apartheid struggle. …I remember going with, you know, lots of us here went to a huge meeting where Robert Mugabe and, eh, who was the other guy David ...?, Robert Mugabe and… anyway, the other guy was speaking… and hundreds of hundreds of people were there and they had a lot of self-defense movement here around policing and racial violence…'

Different anti-police brutality campaigns at the time were often fuelled by deaths in police custody of young black men. The militant socio-political climate of black consciousness drew attention to entrenched racism that was of great concern for migrant communities in the UK. The perspective Liz gained during that time led to her joining the local community Hackney Police Monitoring Group and actively getting involved in those campaigns:

> 'it was a brutal- it was a very, very, very brutal time then, and there were lot of racist murders-so you would have been having these demonstrations everywhere and this real militancy everywhere…there was the first ever strike of school children in this country against racial violence...the young kids went on strike and they left school for the day because the young kids were been beaten up by fascists and racists on the way home from school…Gradually, I was getting involved in anti-racism, self-defense campaign or campaigns around police harassment, and then the British national parties started to come on the scene and, hum, so a number of us were active in this self-defense campaign then became active in a group with anti-fascist action to challenge the fascist at the time - but It was all one, it was all - it was like a rolling, rolling - going from one area of London to another…it was such a militant time'.

From the early 1980's until the present, Liz has been at the forefront of anti-racist work through the Institute of Race Relations and beyond. Her activism is sustained by this ever-increasing commitment to praxical activism and research. Her belief, life experiences and social position equipped her with a vantage point to create change, making intellectual and ideological contributions in response to the sociopolitical realities. Her published work continues to be a valuable resource, utilised in policy and academic circles.

4.3.1.4. Zrinka's Story

> 'I had a sense that, politically, something wasn't right' (Interview with Zrinka B., 2015)

Zrinka Bralo is responsible for co-founding many refugees and asylum networks and forums across the UK and most recently founded one of a few migrant-led organisations called *Migrants Organise*. Born in the former Yugoslavia (now Serbia), Zrinka worked in her native country as a journalist until she was forced into exile in the UK in 1993 as a

war refugee. She remembers Serbia, from the years she grew up there, as a country in flux: though a communist country, the failing economy was making space for nationalism and the *'right wing forces were coming back onto the political scene under this label democratisation'*. With such an ideological instability, and the constant threat of punishment for political dissidence, it always seemed to Zrinka that politically, something wasn't right:

> 'So, I could see from an early age, from like when I was a teenager. For example - getting a place in a good high school: although if you were a good student, it wasn't guaranteed. So, your parent had to know somebody who knows somebody and, or either, give them a lot of money. The same was for health care. It was a very corrupt system… So that was the kind of accepted culture and we now refer to Bosnia as kleptocracy'.

Her first experiences of organising campaigns *'kind of happened'* when Zrinka was still at the university in Bosnia:

> 'Well, there were mostly, kind of, international campaigns such as Student Rights campaigns. It was mostly to do with injustice within the student system. A lot of campaigning I have done was slightly different because I had a profile and I was a radio presenter. I could do stand-alone campaigns because I had a platform (radio station). So, I could mobilise people easily. But then closer to the war that didn't work anymore'

It was after graduating with a degree in politics and social science that constant 'risky' opportunities to discuss politics occurred through Zrinka's work at a radio station:

> 'The freedom of speech was regulated by criminal law. So, it wasn't guaranteed. As a young journalist, from a political point of view that was an interesting challenge as to what you can or cannot say. The censorship was very opaque. …this was the kind of late 80s and early 90s. So, the world was changing, the Berlin wall came down. I lived in Germany in 89 and 90. I was in the horror of what was happening before the wall came down and after the wall came down. So, I felt very optimistic about the change. It felt like change is possible through peaceful means'.

During the war, Zrinka's city was under siege, with the UN maintaining lives in the city through daily food deliveries. Having previous work experience in the media facilitated her to secure UN accreditation and leave the war-torn country with refugee status, an

opportunity she insists was afforded to few people. The turning point in her political

campaigning began as soon as Zrinka arrived in the UK as a refugee. She states:

> 'My first campaign was for myself really! My first organising in the UK was around
> me being refused the asylum. Well I just felt that I needed to fight back. I was
> approached in the same week by trade union and Jesuit as well as my university
> which is London School of Economics. And they all say can we help. Because I
> spoke about it in the newspaper. It's in the Guardian because I have loads of friend
> who were journalist who were totally shocked and appalled that someone from
> Bosnia could come and be refused to sign. That should tell us a lot about our silent
> system. So basically, I decided to fight back. I spoke out publicly. As a result, I was
> out going to involve all kinds of nice people who wanted to support me. In order to
> harness that support I had to start thinking about what next. How I can write letters,
> campaign etc. so my first campaign in sum was for myself really. I was trapped,
> visible in the media'

People noticed her and started reaching out asking for her help to publicise their cases:

> 'Once I have done my campaign, and I was very visible in the media and the kind
> of campaigning circus; there was people coming to me for advice and were sharing
> their story who were in a similar or even worse situations. Then what became clear
> to me immediately is that black people were treated worse. They were treated as
> criminals and locked up. For example, I was detained where many people from
> African countries were detained. That was when I realised how xenophobia
> crosses into racism and that was really what made me feel really angrier than I
> already was. So, I didn't plan… I didn't want to do this. I was doing Master's in
> media and communications; I made a documentary for channel 4 and I was
> supposed to go back to being a journalist… but through that anger and
> spontaneous kind of opportunity I started. So it wasn't that conscious process of
> saying 'oh am now going to do this'. It was just 'let me do this one more thing and
> then let me do this one more thing (laughs)… and then 23 years later here we are'.

Zrinka became increasingly focused on creating pathways to improve the conditions of

migrants, refugees and asylum seekers both through her campaigns and her current work

leading *Migrants Organize*, an award winning, grass roots platform. Through this

organisation, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees connect, build common ground and

work strategically to organise and mobilise. They build alliances and work in solidarity on

local and national policy level, tackling diverse and multiple issues of concern. In addition

to engaging in evolving processes of awareness and political action, Zrinka's account

also highlights the politicisation of the personal: how her subjective experiences of the

asylum system operated in deepening her commitment to activism. In some ways, it developed into her personal mission: seeking improved treatment and opportunities for those who find themselves where she was years ago, those with less structural power who can't defend themselves. Though her experiences are in the past, Zrinka can arguably view herself as a member of this community, and any loss or victory made through campaigning is intimately connected to her own wellbeing. There is a sense of intimate connection between her personal values and her past experiences and political consciousness, which are reflected in her praxis. This connection is embedded within Zrinka's efforts to lead movement towards effective change.

4.3.1.5. Lisa's Story

> 'I think my kind of empathy doesn't actually rely on personal experience...I felt it quite strongly even if I have no connection to them' (Interview with Lisa M., 2015).

Lisa Matthews is the coordinator at Right to Remain, formerly known as National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns. Born in Worcester in 1983 from a *'very mainstream middle-class family, a very professional family'*. Lisa's description of her childhood and adolescence focuses on an awareness of social inequities and how this shaped her motivation to bring about change. This influence was fostered at home, where politics was frequently discussed during her upbringing. Her Dad, an educational psychologist, instilled values surrounding justice and education, having been a member of the socialist party during his university years (*'but has kind of become more conservative'*)*;* her mother was also concerned with issues of injustice and inequality. Lisa linked key moments of critical awareness with her family's inter-generational views and politics. She reflects on witnessing that *'there was a lot of racism in the extended family'*. For example, she recalls how her dad constantly confronted her grandparents' views, trying to educate them on racial issues. Lisa recalls: *'it was a kind of joke in our house about how my grandpa*

wouldn't let the TV be on if Nelson Mandela was on the TV'. It was also a general reflection of her neighbourhood, Worcestershire, in the Midlands, which was conservative politically at the time:

> 'And, um, it's probably not huge number of people where I am from who got involved in migration rights activism. It's a very white, especially when I was there, Um, quite conservative. It's like, it's quite in contrast to now'.

The differences between her parents' and grandparents' beliefs caused her to reflect. Lisa's awareness of, and faith in, her ability to transcend cultural constraints was established early on, although it was not until she became interested in environmental campaigning that her politicisation really began. From a young age, she would strategically petition dog-walkers from outside her house, letting them know about the anti-whaling campaigns. She explains how this shaped her motivation and interest in environmental protection. While on vacation in New Zealand, Lisa recalls her dad telling her of a Green Peace Boat being sunk, allegedly by the New Zealand Government: *'that kind of struck me'*. For Lisa, simultaneous political events did not impact her so profoundly: *'the Berlin Wall was coming down and Hillsborough was happening, but none of that kind of really resonates as much as the boat'*.

Lisa recounts her transition from environmental activism to human rights during a period of *'figuring out where to start getting involved in activism'*. She relates a complex interplay over time of various social and individual influences, conversations with family, watching the news, popular culture, reading novels and *'writing Amnesty letters from quite a young age'*: she perceives that all of these inputs have interacted with the development of her consciousness. Through an encounter with an amnesty group, Lisa was able to broaden her perspective and interest in human rights issues; at the age of 15 or 16, Lisa became increasingly interested in gay rights. By 17 or 18, Lisa *'became more comfortable talking*

about feminism', which led to her taking part in HIV-AIDS campaigns throughout her university life. Lisa notes:

> 'I had a period of knowing I wanted to work in this kind of, in some kind of human rights field…, um, and also wanting to work internationally because of the kind of experience I had, then becoming very doubtful about kind of international humanitarianism and international development in the kind of neo-colonial lens. And [I was] quite figuring out how to reconcile with what I just found more interesting working with people of different countries. But I'm British, what could I do in Britain? and started thinking about migration rights as actual things in the UK that needs challenging'

Lisa's description highlights an awareness regarding the sources and consequences of inequality and underscores her analysis of the pressing need for change in society. It became important for her to become active in challenging the laws and domestic policies in the UK, highlighting how societal barriers inhibit opportunities. Educational spaces developed Lisa's consciousness:

> 'So, I was very interested in international issues. And, probably actually in international human rights issues, I was already interested in them. I think my travelling had more of an impact on my understanding of the world, yeah'

Lisa was nominated to be part of the National Youth Parliament, leading to her spending two months on the Ship for Youth - a Japanese-run initiative bringing young people from 15 countries together to discuss political issues. This connection with an international peer group was influential and affirmed certain beliefs which later were complemented by her university degree in History. Lisa began to volunteer at Refugee Action in Manchester during her master's studies, finding that working with refugees was more rewarding than the academic research. Lisa describes how she dropped her ambition of pursuing a PhD to fully commit to working with refugees. Her decision was caused by multiple iterations of increased awareness regarding the unfairness and structural injustices affecting refugees. Putting the knowledge she had gained and ideas she was exposed to into

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actual action was more rewarding than further study, as it allowed her to open up opportunities for those most marginalised in society.

Lisa's past experiences were not as formative for her as they maybe were for Debora, Zrinka or Zita; however, the journey taken in constructing her own value system and sense of justice was still considerable. As Lisa puts it, she's *'gone through quite a revolution in her thinking'*...in which *'I've become a lot more left wing, a lot more radical as I got older'*. The early consciousness that was there has been shifted more by political action than political thought. Lisa has involved herself in activism which has in itself shifted her thinking. While inconsistent with social identity theory, which assumes a certain connection is linked to shared experience, Lisa's connection to the marginalised groups and her high levels of empathy *'doesn't actually rely on personal experience but I feel strongly about injustice'* even if she has no biographical connection to those who are experiencing it. She has since worked with a variety of refugee organisations and groups before her current role as Coordinator of Right to Remain in London, demonstrating deliberate and enduring commitment to migrant rights activism.

4.3.1.6. Amal's Story

> 'I remember feeling so angry ...angry that a child was detained!' (Interview with 'Amal A., 2015)

Amal Azzimul is a refugee rights activist known for setting up the Glasgow Campaign when she was only 14, together with her school friends. *Glasgow Girls* is responsible for a series of anti-deportation and anti-detention campaign initiatives across the UK. Amal was born in Somalia to Yemeni migrants, and her family was forced to flee war-torn Somalia following the intensification of the civil war that ravaged Somalia for decades. When Amal's family arrived in the UK seeking asylum, they were moved to Glasgow after spending two years in London. She enrolled at Drumchapel High School where she

befriended Agnesa, whose Kosovan family was seeking asylum in the UK. Amal's family was granted Leave to Remain in the UK in 2004. Amal's political awareness, rather than being gradual, was triggered when her 11-year-old friend Agnesa was dawn-raided, handcuffed and taken to an immigration detention to be deported alongside her family. At the time, child detention was still practiced by UKBA which prompted widespread outrage and anger among her peers. Amal describes the event and how it forced her to act:

> 'Basically, fourteen Home Office officials went to her house, handcuffed her father. They were all wearing bulletproof vests. They took her, two younger brothers and her mom in a separate van, pulled her father in a separate van, drove them to Yarl's Wood Detention Center in England and locked them up for three weeks. Now, obviously at that time I had my leave to remain. There was no need for me to worry about everything like that, but I remember being absolutely outraged that a child was being treated like that. I kind of knew there was injustice in the world. I didn't know to what extent that's why I didn't really pay attention but when it came to children I thought, no, no, no, this is just-- this cannot be justified at all.
>
> …I think that's where my humanity awakened and that's when my political conscience awakened actually…so I remember going to Mr. Garvin, our bilingual teacher, and I just said to him: "Look, Mr. Garvin, I don't know what's going on. I don't know why she is been treated like this, but she's a child. You can't treat children like that. This is a country that champions human rights but if you go and lock children up, what the hell? No way!" And he was like, "Yeah, this is not good." …but my mom was like, "Look, we just got our leave to remain, you know, like you can't challenge the government. They're going to take it (Leave to Remain) away from us." And, you know, she was worried like any other mother worried, yeah. But I think quickly she found out that I wasn't going to give up (big laughter) When I put my mind to something that has to go through, I follow it through. That's when it happened, and then that's when the other girls came together'.

The impact created by the incident triggered an atmosphere of solidarity while also breaking barriers of isolation with '*the indigenous girls… because all the asylum seekers tended to stay in one group and everybody else in the other group. So, there was no integration before that incident*'.

Amal describes:

> '[It] all happened in Mr Garvin's class, then a word was spread around, students talking to students, teachers talking to their class about it and the majority of the school were supporting it, which was amazing. Emma came up with the idea to

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start a petition to get Agnesa Back, and the whole school signed it, which was great. And that's when we presented it to our local politician MSP, Bill Butler and he took it to the parliament. There was, um, a debate about another family that got taken away from our school. That was after Agnesa came back where she got released. So basically, what happened was when we started the campaign I was on the TV, I was giving interviews in the newspapers. It was crazy. It was absolutely crazy'.

After only three weeks of intense pressure, Agnesa and her family were released and granted their leave to remain. Amal's connection to this group of peers provided a supportive network and encouraged her to continue to work for refugee wellbeing, regardless of the obstacles. The publicity and the support of the school motivated Amal and the *Glasgow Girls* to take up other cases they were introduced to and the campaign grew. As Amal went to university, her campaigning continued:

'Because I had already established my own kind of working groups and networks I was involved in so it's kind of—well, a lot of students were interested in my campaigns, many knew who I was and they heard my story or I would share it in class. I would speak about it in class. Just in class even through subjects and just given experiences and things like that but now I get asked a lot to go back and speak to new students which is nice'.

The barriers Amal describes during this time grew in frequency and intensity; this was particularly case since the summer of 2015, during which the immigration politics was characteristic of an increasingly hostile environment. Looking back at her journey to becoming a committed activist for refugee and asylum seeker rights, Amal finds it impossible to detach herself from her personae as an activist. She views her own rights and wellbeing as connected to the most marginalised. It is now part of who she is and who she has become:

'My activism I think it defines me. I think it plays a huge part, it's me; it's who I am. It's made me who I am. Without it I would have been somebody else probably. But it's so part of me to the extent that I've refused to take a full-time job so that I can spend time being an activist, you know. I work four days a week with The Mental Health Foundation and then I have Friday, Saturday, and Sunday as my activism time, save the world days [laugh]'.

While continuing to work on refugee issues and more recently involved in the

humanitarian intervention following the European refugee crisis, Amal has become engrossed in the activism but also has learned how *'difficult* [it is] *to change anything'.* Creating change requires patience and enduring commitment because of *'how complicated and how bureaucratic the political world is and all the complexities that come with it'.* Amal's growing connection seems to stem from the interconnectedness of her social identity – Amal sees herself working on this cause on behalf of refugees/asylum seekers and as a member of a group of activists for migrant rights in general. Her consciousness triggered by her friend's detention exposed her to a new lens through which to view the world and she has since dedicated herself to pursuing this.

Reflecting on the current refugee situation, she states that while the situation may seem to be deteriorating, which may discourage involvement with activism, she insists that people must *'believe'* that they can actually make a difference. Developing and sustaining her activism is not something that happens easily. For her, it came through an evolutionary process in which she became exposed to new experiences, prompting her to take a stand and keep on fighting. As of 2018, Glasgow Girls' story has been depicted in popular culture through a BBC musical about the life of Amal and her friends. Their story has also been turned into a learning resource for education and to facilitate exploration of the issues relating to asylum and immigration.

4.3.2. Development of self-perception

The process of politicisation described and illustrated in the biographies of six women in Section 4.3.1 demonstrates that they each had particular experiences which drew them further into committed activism. While early influences can be traced back to their heritage, associations, friendships and immediate milieu, the political settings in which they found themselves also had an impact. Various socio-political contexts alongside

particular issues developed their consciousness, whilst unfolding differently for each woman.

In the following section, I will focus on aspects from the women's accounts which indicate that a distinct 'persona' was taking shape. This is revealed through the ways in which the interviewees described themselves as 'becoming'. I will describe the influences the women felt impacted or influenced this transition. Self-definition is a strong theme permeating the interviews with women activists. The women activists are constantly negotiating with and reconciling the internally defined image of self and the many hats they wear (the dramatis personae) as they attempt to express the totality of self. I was able to identify three dominant intersecting influences: gender, values and beliefs and class. There were cementing factors of their emerging personae, providing a fuller analysis of women at the forefront of refugee and migrant rights activism.

4.3.2.1. On being a woman/feminist

Women's perception of womanhood differs widely. The intersection of race and gender creates unique experiences influencing how an individual might define themselves and the meaning they ascribe to this. Zita conceives of her identity as intrinsically interconnected with her organising, resisting the boundaries that some might draw around an activist identity. As she describes, she clearly wants to belong outside the box:

> '…. I mean some people would describe me as a black nationalist [laughs] I don't describe myself as anything, but people like to put labels on you. Yes, I am a socialist. Yeah, yes, I am anti-racist, yes, I am black, yes, I am campaigning for black communities, but I don't label myself or describe myself anyway or say I'm pinpointed here…No! Don't pin me down to anything. I am me, I'm Zita, I am free. I stand for justice, I stand for equality, I stand against racism, I stand against injustice and discrimination. Don't try and label me and put me in the box, in one box. Because I don't belong in the box I belong outside.

Individual's understanding and experience of one aspect of identity (e.g. gender) may be shaped by the context and experiences created by race (Settles, Pratt-Hyatt & Buchanan,

2008). Feminist ideologies have sometimes insisted that the personal is political and sisterhood is global, highlighting the connection between women's individual experiences with the wider context. However, assumptions that womanhood itself forms the basis for uniting all women have been problematised (Adamson et al., 1988). Women mobilised as activists cannot be neatly situated within a universal, essentialised category of womanhood, rather it is critical to situate historical and current lived experience politically, economically and socially as this informs us not only of the similarities but also the differences. Zita's perception of her identity as an activist stems from connections between specific issues and a larger set of interconnected beliefs:

> 'Did I describe myself as a feminist when I was younger? No. And what I'd say about feminist movement in the UK is that it is predominantly white, they don't include black women. They don't include migrant women. When they talk about women structures even in the trade union movement, if you look at women's structures, women structures are predominantly white women. There is almost this expectation that if you are a black woman you're going to have to choose. You either be black or you be a woman. Even if you look at the union structures when they are sending delegations and stuff it's nearly all white women…it's never been an inclusive movement and that's why you've got Southall Black sisters and other Black women's organisations, black women organising their own movements and structures and networks because we can't rely on white women. The white women feminist movements tend to be quite middle-class movements anyway. They're not inclusive, they're not encouraging'.

Zrinka, Lisa and Liz's accounts reframe 'being a woman' as active rather than passive and engage politically on this basis. They contest the assumption of an 'essentialised bond' between women's experiences. For them, their sense of feminism is a goal-oriented movement, issue-specific and context sensitive. Zrinka notes:

> 'I am just a feminist. I don't have to define it. That's for other people it could be trouble defining it. I just do my thing. I just am'.

Lisa notes:

> 'I'm, you know, very much identify myself as a feminist and actually kind of its inequality in general that tends to affect me, so, me being a woman, um, I start to believe in woman's rights, but, not because I'm a woman I am drawn to these

issues. If that makes sense? So, it's because I think that's what's right. For example, my partner who is a man, is also a feminist as well'.

Lisa repeatedly self-identifies as a feminist, and sometimes refers to herself as an 'outspoken woman'; her identification with feminism is based on a progressive attitude towards the issues of equality. In her work she interacts *'increasingly so much with men who were so badly treated'*, thus her concept of equality relates to social justice for both men and women. Lisa adds:

> 'Um, but actually that don't engage as much with the kind of feminism, although I believe in a lot of what they believe, (feminism) is becoming kind of less relevant and I become more interested in, in class elements, but, also into intersectionality. Race, gender and class, that they are intersected'.

Liz notes:

> 'I certainly think that being a woman affected the way I came to those issues and I dealt with them. I.e. On an emotional sense I always had a deep suspicion of very mechanical politics and political parties that didn't care about human beings and human relationships. A lot of that comes from my experiences as a woman. The idea that, you know, you can treat people badly on a day because the cause is more important than people'.

> 'I also think that I am aware of, maybe this is a consciousness that comes through race as well as a woman, but you are aware of the privileges men get through being men in a patriarchal society, and so maybe that was without me knowing an influence of being aware of privileges that come to me because I am white in a racist society'.

Amal similarly describes how her gender, together with a deeper intersectional understanding of marginalisation, *'heavily influenced'* her political activity. Through that lens she is able to analyse the compounded barriers many Muslim women face. For her, feminism that considers these intersections can be a useful lens to challenge bigotry about Muslim women and inspire other Muslim women to speak up:

> 'Because I come from a background where women don't have voice, you know. You don't-- you don't speak, you don't say your opinions. And I just felt like we're in the UK, you know. There's free speech here, so I am going to make the most of it. Not even as that, I think it's because also I am a Muslim and I'm visibly Muslim. I wear headscarf and everything. And I thought, you know what? See all

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this kind of rubbish stuff that Muslim women are oppressed and all this. I'm going to prove them wrong, you know, and I'm going to make, uh, I'm going to speak up for myself…

…for me feminism is not just about women. I see it as being everybody. Everybody-- it covers everybody. It's about equality, fairness and justice and, you know, everybody should be treated equally regardless of where they come from, their gender, and their age, whatever, that doesn't matter at all. I see people as human beings before anything else. What they do or where they come from it doesn't matter at all. It's the character that's most important'.

Experiences as a woman and conceptualisations of womanhood and identity vary between the interviewees, reflecting their varying socio-historical factors. They rarely reference possible shared patterns that might have arisen from their experiences as mothers, spouses/partners or workers. However, they each embrace the feminist goals of equality and justice, which have influenced their sense of self and their lens upon the world. In Zita's case, her experiences of motherhood brought value and alignment with a more sustained commitment to anti-racism. In Amal's case, feminism provided role models: older feminist activists in Glasgow inspired and influenced her, shaping her current interpretation of feminism. Gender is devalued and socially ascribed a low status (Katz, Joner, Kwon 2002), the experience of such often impacting on perceptions of womanhood. However, the interviewees made no reference to sexist or gender-based mistreatment affecting their individual lives in a distinctive way. They perceived themselves as focusing on issue-centered activism that benefited other women, rather than womanhood or feminism being the sole determining factor of their activism.

4.3.2.2. On values and beliefs

Amal describes her religious values as being a significant influence on her role as an activist and a feminist and in the wider refugee rights movement:

'I practise Islam. I'm very open-minded though. Not that you read in the media [laugh]'. So, I think even from that my core values come from that, you know, to help people, to have faith, to always be there, you know, to support others, etc, all those things, you know. My moral obligation as a human being, my responsibility,

um, to always tell the truth and be honest, all of those things that come-- that I was brought up like that, you know. Obviously, that's my foundation. Those are my core values and that's what comes up, um, and always refer back to them, you know, and always think I always have faith in God, you know, that whatever it meant to be will be'.

Liz:

'On a personal level I would say that my influences are Black writers' college traditions, my values are socialist and communist (not in capitalist/socialist sense, not in political sense or Stalinist sense) but in a moral sense. I have the faith, my faith is the idea of a moral, humane, socialist and sharing, equal society'.

As for Lisa, she describes herself as having a *'strong humanism'* and is *'increasingly, kind of connected to faith groups'* with whom she works through Right to Remain. She is *'very much kind of sympathetic to the humankind',* holding a confidence in the goodness of the faith groups who are involved in her work with Right to Remain. Beliefs and values interact with daily reality as Lisa states,

'It's kind of hypocritical to think that one particular viewpoint is better if you are not considering the social economic basis for things…so, to determine what is good or right, it comes of humanism, of the good of the community. Um, but recognising that people have individual instincts, Um, so it's not straightforward. And, also, that, so, my kind of, anarchism is often challenged by people say that people kind of inherently selfish and individualistic. But my approach is within the individualistic capitalist society. We don't really know what true human nature is because it is been shaped by the forces around us.

Lisa has anarchist leanings, beliefs that she describes as *'quite important for thinking about how I want to see change'*, not through political parties but through communities.

As for Liz, understanding the impact that injustice was having on people deeply motivated her activism and led to taking on more projects:

'Recently, I have been working with a family of a prisoner who has been tortured, has been held in solitary confinement. He was a dual Belgium and Moroccan national, and I went to his trial and he was there behind the glass - we could touch and communicate behind the glass. I think the sense, you know, when you think of somebody who has been thrown into a hole, literally, or has had an attempt to completely destroy their psyche through torture, cruelty and degrading treatment. And actually, knowing that person or, their sisters or mother or father, you know, that's, you know it's just motivating, you get to get up in the morning and want to do something about it.'

The women's self-perception as committed activists is fundamentally impacted by a sense of self-transcendence and values that believe in the possibility of real change. Activists demonstrate a shared personal commitment to end oppression for the groups they supported, which holds them together as 'a movement', whilst giving coherence to their action-specific choices. Some element of spirituality was common, alongside a belief in humanity, and a deep desire to act for the common good.

4.3.2.3. On class

Class figured in the women's stories in terms of social location but did not have the same impact as other influences, such as race. Class was not always easily discernible for the participants. Amal notes:

> 'I don't think I belong to a particular class and don't find class such an important thing. Apparently because now we've gone to uni, apparently that will make us middle class, but I don't agree with the idea of class. No, I don't like those boxes. If I had to, I would just say I'm working class. I wouldn't classify myself as—it's not important to me at all. What difference does it make anyway?'

The issue of class is very important in Lisa's political work, '*because of the increasing gap between the upper class and working class*'. She comments:

> 'Um, so, I see that, umm, rather than technically see things as a gender issue I do tend to see them as being about a social class. About people's economic abilities'

As for Liz:

> 'Class is not like race; you move between classes. So I can't ever say, I mean, I was not from a middle class background I would say my parents were lower working class, having said that they (my parents) came with nothing, (as refugees). I would say, in sociological terms, I am a middle-class person. I have my own home. I have a roof over my head. I have a good job. So sociologically, I am a middle-class person. But we aren't all just 'sociology' - where my heart is, we are activists, my heart is always with people who are at the bottom of the ladder.'

Lisa would have historically described herself as middle class due to her political education and family heritage. However, her anarchistic beliefs have meant she has redefined herself as 'a worker', despite that *'to other people I am middle class'*. Lisa

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acknowledges that the middle-class label has been a barrier for her: '*it's like, you know, who are you to talk about this injustice and inequality while you're not living it*'.

4.3.2.3. Summary of the development of self-perception

Through each woman's narrative, the aspects of gender, values and class are played out. Each interviewee has a clear self-defined identity associated with their activist roles. Alongside the decision to focus the analysis on these aspects, it is recognised that race was a significant factor influencing their identities. Race, whilst clearly present as an influencing factor, was not a lens through which the women chose to view their self-perceptions. Instead, they used character traits to communicate their personae: *'very strong minded' (Zita); 'very passionate' (Amal); 'angry with injustice' (Zrinka).* Their self-concept was of a passionate self, which was intimately tethered to the roles they occupy. The pressures associated with campaigning, means that *'there is nothing more encouraging than knowing who you are'*. Developing a clear self-concept has, for many of them, included a process of laying down childhood aspirations and dreams: Liz aspired to be an ice skater and a creative writer; Amal wanted to be a teacher and Zita aspired to become a singer and creative artist. Becoming an activist, campaigning and speaking out for the rights of the marginalised, has involved sacrifice. Although, Zita notes that she still gets to use her creativity through campaigning: *'They call me affectionately the Griot of the Struggle!'*

Self-definition and a clear perception of self, contributes to sustained commitment to activism for each of these women. There is a correlation between self-perception, particularly a well-evolved activist identity, and a sustained commitment to activism: a well-established sense of dramatis personae underpins and enables exceptional dedication. In the next section, I explore the meaning of such dedication for ongoing contentious political engagement with refugee/migrant rights activism.

4.4. The meaning of commitment

Antonio Gramsci (1971) used the term 'passive revolution' to describe societal change that does not take the form of rupture or revolution. The women activists in this study, both in practice and theory, exemplify that change can be a slow, gradual metamorphosis, sometimes taking years or generations to realise. As discussed above, their self-perception is partly what fuels the dedication required to commit long-term to a particular line of action or social cause, but the value and meaning they ascribe to dedication and commitment is also significant. In the next section, through their own words, I will examine how they conceptualise commitment.

Liz defines what it means to be committed:

> 'I chose to stay in this role. I would say, to abstract it, commitment is dedication and devotion. To make it concrete I would say that to commit oneself to one organisation and to keeping it going means that you have to be willing to ...euh, it's not all about you. As simple as that! It's not about you! You have to be able to subsume yourself, in a way, to the greater good'.

Furthermore, to sustain such a commitment comes at a cost - a cost the women are prepared to pay because of their passion and determination to see change occur. It is like a religious conviction, as Liz notes:

> 'You know it's funny because you asked me the question on religion, I said there was no religious influences. As this conversation goes on and on I began to realise how I sound more and more religious (influenced). I honestly think that work is salvation, I think ...life is very hard, it is very difficult to function in such an unjust and miserable world! And I think your work is your salvation. Activism in work is very important, it allows you to transcend misery and injustice of the world, and it's almost like an unconscious attempt to live in a different world.'

Though not all activists in this study identified a religious belief system as the fuel for their convictions, the notion of spirituality is nonetheless mentioned explicitly and implicitly as the source of their moral duty to serve others. The conviction that we are all

interconnected as human beings engenders the capacity for a spiritual worldview, which conceptualises commitment in other than materialist ways (Lichterman, 1996).

The concept of vocation was also influential, vocation being *'something one cannot not do'*. Lisa articulates it better:

> 'I've never really seen it as being a choice, it has always been what I've wanted to do and needed to do. I've also always found it very difficult to hear about or see things happening and not feel like I'm doing something to improve them.'

Lichterman (1996) suggests that committing oneself to activism means making ongoing decisions about how much of life and what parts of life one will devote to political activism rather than any other aspects of life. Lisa states about activism: *'I think it's like my kind of core, um, core concept of self, really'*.

Commitment also requires a determination to overcome the pressures associated with activism. Liz states:

> 'I think it's important that your commitment doesn't become cold and abstract and that it is always earthed in human beings. I think it is really, really important. And the other thing I would say to the, just to end this question on a political level, if you look today what is happening in the world with Trump, what we see is enormously committed people to an ideologically distracted and human distracted cause. But at the end of the day, it's our task to make sure that at the end of this great wreckage, there are organisational forms there who are able to pick up the pieces when these people who created this wreckage. And I think that part of your commitment to an organisation, it's not commitment to the organisation for just today, it is for survival, it's there to pick up the pieces from the wreckage these people caused.'

Personal experience underpins commitment. For Amal, her own experience of marginality has become a source of strength and motivation to persevere in activism. She recognises that some activists join and burn out, while others choose to leave campaigning when they receive their right to remain in the country. However, for her, personal experience is that extra 'thing' that makes her choose to stay, taking on more cases:

'…for me I think because I've seen the injustice first-hand I've experienced going through the asylum system and then coming here (in Glasgow) and I've seen what others are being put through and I just feel like if I have the power to make a difference why would I not use that?

…a lot of people leave at some point. That's what a lot of people are doing, which is fine. Everybody has to makes their own choices. Everybody has to do what they find is the right thing to do. I feel like it's my responsibility.... So, it's what I'm destined to do. It's why I'm here in this world. It's what I believe: that everybody in this world has a purpose and I feel this is my purpose. I think everybody does have a moral obligation, but they choose what to do with them. So obviously I'm choosing to do something about it. …for me, I didn't wake up one day and say, right, I'm going to start a campaign, this is what I'm going to do and then I'll have a film about me, a musical about me—all those things, you know, this happened, they came. You don't plan them, they just come, you know, they just happen. And it's almost like I didn't choose it, it chose me, if that makes sense?'

Commitment can be understood as a responsibility that individuals chose to respond to or not. Somewhat conversely, it can also be understood as something someone is destined to do, a purpose-driven life path – but that still requires the devotion and determination not to quit in the face of difficulty. Amal's statement that circumstances 'choose you' has links with the feminist paradox of the heroisation narrative, often used when talking about transformative processes. Feminist heroes are self-portrayed as being in an ongoing war which fights to dismantle patriarchy; such a concept risks displacing the self-representation in the story. However, reading what Amal is saying from the context in which she is situated, this is not an exaggeration. The work of Amal in Glasgow Girls, which Amal co-founded, has been documented as it unfolded: her account is not falsely self-inflated.

Zrinka talked about the stigma for people in staying involved:

'…a few people that were campaigning with us lost their fire along the way, for example, some of them who were asylum seekers and as soon as they got their refugee status, they moved on with their lives which is fine of course if they want to forget that. You know what, not everybody wants to deal with their pasts as well. Nobody wants to-- because it's not a nice thing to be an asylum seeker, it's really not. Let's face it! There's a lot of stigma attached to it, a lot of pain attached to it and you don't want-- you don't want to think about having to get benefits, having to go sign on at the Home Office, having to be treated like you're nothing, you

know, and having that fear constantly to be deported. Nobody wants to live that forever, you know! As soon as you come out you want to forget. Some people deal with it, some people just don't want to go there at all, so that's why we see this pattern of asylum seekers once involved then disappear…'

In Lisa's analysis:

'People also who've gone the other way, who have been very, very committed activists [but] kind of, lost the positive vision that kind of keeps me going so, it becomes very much 'anti' : like, 'these people are bad these people are evil', and have lost any sense of what they are fighting for'.

In addition to the experiential perspective that fuels Zrinka's activism, age has been a positive factor in affirming and sustaining her commitment. Zrinka notes:

'Age has taught me how to handle things. When you're younger like I said before you just - you think the world is just a positive place where you can change things very quickly and things will be fine. Obviously, we know that's not true and that's why it taught me that not everybody will be on your side even if they pretend that they are. But also, there are always shifts that require our adjustments'.

It is Zrinka's years of experiences, during which she has seen flux and change in culture and society, that allows her to have a broad analysis of the work, viewing it through a very wide temporal and spatial lens. She adds:

'If you look at any movement for social justice, if you look at any religion, religions are thousands of years old and they always speak out about justice and equality and love. How come they did not succeed? Why do we still need all of that? Because that's human nature. So, it's the same in this area of work. The job is never done because we are dealing with humans and humans are complicated. So, it's not just policies. It's humans who make policies. So, there is constant battling with society between this competing interest and understanding of the world and everybody thinks they are doing the right thing. So, the fight is never over. It's just changing the shape. So, 20 years ago it was Somalia refugees and Bosnia refugees. Now there is Syrian. In 20 years' time there will be some other refugees. What we know for sure is that there will be war and there will be conflict…'

'*Being around for a while*' brings knowledge and understanding of the macro forces playing out in the wider context.

The weight of responsibility can be considerable. Lisa expressed how she feels partly responsible '*for the people that we are helping, but, also the organisation, {Right to*

Remain} whether that continues or not, it depends on us'. Right to Remain has very few staff to help develop or coordinate the campaigns, adding considerable pressure. Lisa notes:

> 'A lot of the crisis comes from government action. Um, and I think that's an interesting thing to negotiate. You can kind of feel powerless sometimes. Because, the context is getting worse and worse and worse. The laws are becoming more and more racist. So, you have to be clear about what you can change. Um, also, I am only responsible for doing the best I can do about that.'

For Lisa, it is not necessarily the organisation per se that has sustained her commitment: '*often in organisations, you will have to make a lot of compromises which kind of undermine your commitment'.* Instead, it has been the work with community groups who are supporting the asylum seekers and undocumented migrants: '*the idea of humanism is very affirming because it is, people acting on behalf of others.* From this perspective, Lisa conceptualises commitment as being a bond: the collective efforts in their anti-deportation work achieve better results that individual efforts and are intrinsically motivating because of the sense of shared action. People connect, in spite, or possibly even because of, the frustration and struggle involved. Lisa reflects:

> 'The people I meet when we are doing outreach. While the big picture seems horrible - but the resilience and willingness of people, such as community groups you meet, different people from different walks of life. And there is this little old granny who is doing these things. Um, to see some incredible, um, church members who are doing all these things. Um, and particularly people who are from kinds of backgrounds where they are meant to being pitched against migrants. When, they are kind of not working class, um, single moms saying we need to do more for migrants, so that kind of thing.'

Despite the struggles, setbacks and barriers, there is a sense of optimism, perseverance, focus and creativity among the women activists in this study. There is also an acknowledgement that policy change is time-bound: it takes time and patience to see change occur. This sense of on-going struggle, the perseverance and dedication which the cause requires over the long term is, by definition, commitment.

From the meanings ascribed to commitment, and the micro-histories represented in their narratives, distinct themes arise relating to commitment. I suggest the following distinctions can be made in relation to commitment, illustrated by the interviewees' own words:

A) Commitment is action-oriented (which requires getting involved and performing duties and responsibility)
B) Commitment is being intentional and informed (about what is happening in state bordering processes and politics)
C) Commitment is being interested and immersed (because activism is a continuous craft)
D) Commitment is overcoming pressures (such as burn-out)
E) Commitment is having a vision and being invested (leadership)
F) Commitment is devotion and a bond (which connects one to the refugee/migrant cause for a lifetime).

Committing to activism requires a shift beyond the reductive practice of theoretical production towards one that understands the activist role as a serious, long-term commitment to change. Within this, the enactment of self and the situated activity undertaken are bounded continuously across locations and time.

4.5. Becoming the dramatis personae

This chapter presents the way in which the interviewees understand the influence of their backgrounds, the motivating factors for their activism and symbolic 'turning points' intrinsic to their experience of organising. These questions were pursued in order to understand the source of the life-long commitment they have made to challenging border violence. Contouring women activists' dramatis personae within refugee and migrant rights activism must align with a theoretical understanding of what these activists do and why.

Due to the large size of data collected from these interviews, I found it useful for reflecting and interpreting on these stories to split them into two groups based on some

commonalities. Grouping according to commonalities was done with an intentional resistance of any potential essentialising of the women in my study; the descriptions neither provide a description of monolithic practice nor suggest 'a rainbow coalition', implying that there might be a discoverable 'universality inherent in the human condition' (Bourne, 1987, cited in Yuval-Davis, 1994:421). Instead, this study seeks to capture the 'complex moments of connection and shared interest within diversity, a mobile network of differentials of power' (Franks, 2002:45). Thus, the study contextualises the personal stories and compares them in terms of situatedness, positionality and standpoint. In feminism, the notion of situatedness indicates that interpretation considers the specificities of location as well as positionality. Positionality refers to the way in which the individual identity and affiliations we have are positioned by others (Franks, 2002) and can manifest in different ways. For example, 'ascribed positionality (as is generally the case with gender); selective positionality (as in the case of those who opt for a particular position) and enforced positionality (where others forcibly define the position whether it meets with subjective criteria or not)' (Franks, 2002:44). Acknowledging one's standpoint suggests there is multiplicity of standpoints and power relations at play, thus positional meaning is rooted in difference as opposed to essence (Butler, 1990).

Zita, Zrinka, Debora and Liz are of the same generation, which impacts their stories significantly. These are women in their 50's and 60's who have decades of experience of sustained activism for social justice prior to committing to refugee and asylum seekers rights. They appeared to set up their narratives into exemplars, each of their 'plots' reflective of their particular generation. Their personal stories provided contextual prefacing, perspectives and paradoxes that underlie historical and intergenerational struggles for the rights of migrants in the UK. This dates back to their early organising in the 1980's, highlighting multiple shifting terrains within state bordering politics and

migrants' struggle for citizenship. They seemed to understand the importance of attacking the issues at the root not just the symptoms, including countering forms of systemic racism encountered in the everyday experiences of migrants of colour, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Their feminist stories are constructed in terms of legacy and continuity: they are mindful of their identity as feminists that valorise a diversity of approaches towards the common goal of securing and protecting the rights of refugees or migrants in the UK. This has influenced the choices they have made and drives their empathy towards the various issues they tackle, including women in detention, identity, social justice and any form of discrimination and inequality. Seeing both between and within each story, such dramatis personae can be thought of as informed, involved, invested and immersed, with a healthy but controlled ego. Their analysis and interpretation of racialised borders factor in changes across time and through generational politics. They do not conceive of their role as attempting to 'fix' something or 'do their bit', rather they set a long-term vision to which they are wedded for its natural life cycle.

In contrast, based on their narratives of self and their interpretation of activism, a second cohort includes Amal and Lisa, as well as Pinar, Alex, Zodwa and Antonia[4]. These women activists began their activism less than a decade ago as part of countering action against state bordering practice. Their personal narratives of becoming are not particularly grounded in historical roots, but are more action-packed, radical and reflect the contemporary events affecting migrants and the impact that these events have had on them emotionally as well as on their personal worldviews. They too are bona fide

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[4] In this chapter, the quotes from Alex, Zodwa and Antonia's interviews have not been used. Instead, their accounts form the basis of chapter 6 (Alex, Zodwa) and chapter 7 (Antonia) and they are referenced at length in the subsequent chapters

organisers, well informed about the socio-political contexts that dictate the events in their life and work.

These individuals are sharp: alert to the issues of representation and thus carrying out their diverse operations within this framework. They are mindful of a logical identification where they adopt personae with mutable selves. Their narrative patterns emerge with a clear sense of which stories they are seeking to nurture and which stories they are seeking to disrupt. Nurturing involves retelling and reaching out to a wider audience. Disruption happens when new stories are told which counter the dominant narrative. This kind of disruption is illustrated in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7, which focus on activism that sprang out of the height of the refugee crisis in the summer of 2015. In those chapters I demonstrate how specific spatial interventions initiated by these activists not only sought to influence public opinion, but also strived to create a disruption big enough to birth a new narrative. Women across the two groups have learned through their experiences of organising and their ongoing struggles for the rights of refugees and migrants, that the role they play as activists, in interpreting, negotiating and applying rights is paramount. Their ongoing endeavours are coloured by their sense of self-definition and self-perception. Their stories are not collected to represent an idealised or fixed identity of a 'pure' migrant rights activist, however in order to understand the nature of resistant performance in the migrant rights movement (Chapter 5) and the arena where the action is happening (Chapter 6), it is of paramount importance to understand and make sense of the multi-dimensional personalities of ordinary people who organise and engage in sustained struggle. Thus, the narratives and personae described in this chapter give us a glimpse into the sort of 'back-stories' and motivations of the activists in the rest of the thesis. The women have constructed their personae on intersecting ideals from which their identities emerged. Such ideals expose the failings of the state as the antagonists,

highlighting that it is the absence of justice and equality which has caused border violence. The reinstatement of justice and equality remain core to the foundations of the movement. Long term commitment, such as that highlighted in the biographies of the interviewees, represents a core energy enabling activism to survive the test of time. This chapter forms a scaffold upon which to investigate how activists perform long term commitment through their dramatis personae in the particular contexts of activism through distinct acts, praxis, spaces, affect, scripts, strategies, vision, successes and contradictions. The following chapter (Chapter 5) will look at these aspects at greater length.

Chapter 5: Activists talking about their organising practice: mapping the politics of strategic un-bordering

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is about activist practice. It expands on the nature of women's commitment to migrant rights activism, examining the meanings of their experiences that can be heard in the stories they tell in relation to their praxis, their personal lives, their hopes and dreams. The chapter particularly reveals that activists find themselves confronted with internal tensions from within the movement, as well as material conditions that limit their potential and ability to make change. Thus, performing commitment to migrant rights activism requires overcoming considerable constraints. The women in this study have varying situatedness, organising from different standpoints and positionalities. However, one unifying factor is that they represent organisations that are currently supporters and signatories of the 2008 Charter for the Rights of Women Seeking Asylum, which provides an ideological framework for countering border practices affecting women. Their narratives demonstrate how, in the absence of a more structural movement or a clearer definition of organising, the different roles they symbolically represent are important to the re-conceptualisation of migrant rights practices, goals and priorities in the present time, as well as the developing and nurturing of their vision for the future. Engagement in this practical and political work requires negotiating with a blurred interpretation of the struggle and working towards more useful and effective activist strategies and arguments against rigid state bordering practices in the United Kingdom.

In order to understand the whole picture of activist praxis, it is appropriate to pursue lines of inquiry tied to the aims and research questions of the study. In particular, this chapter explores some of the opportunities, contractions and limitations of campaigning for refugees and asylum seekers (RQ3) and what feminist organising for refugees and asylum seekers (should) look like in the contemporary context (RQ4). The chapter utilises

the life history interview data examined in Chapter 4, asking the following questions to guide this inquiry into activist praxis:

- How do contemporary migrant rights activists define borders and how do they navigate and challenge them? (Section 5.4.1)

- What meaning do they ascribe to different social, cultural and political boundaries affecting asylum seekers and refugees and how do these meanings shape the strategies in which they engage? (Section 5.4.2)

- What feminist strategy for organising is employed to develop new campaigns and strategies or promote participation? (Section 5.4.3.3)

- How does the migrant rights movement confront internal borders based on the differences that emerge within the activists' initiatives? (Section 5.4.2.3 and 5.4.3.5)

A thread running through the chapter is an examination of the political character of the women's political actions. I examine this through considering the complexity of their organising acts, strategy and vision, which they utilise to undo the border-inflicted limitations, experiences and challenges. Their stories encompass social contexts as well as experiential worlds. The findings presented in this chapter provide an exploration of how state border performance simultaneously creates opportunities and challenges for activism and for feminist voices. These opportunities are useful both in practical work against regulated migration and in providing critical directions for future feminist praxis and research on countering borders and regulated migration.

5.2. Organisation of the chapter

Following a conceptual review (Section 5.3), in which I briefly discuss the meanings and sense making of bordering in different spheres, as a backdrop upon which to situate the narratives and practices of the women interviewed, I present the findings. The findings commence by suggesting a definition of organising in terms of migrant rights (Section 5.4.1); these definitions are drawn from the women interviewed. This allows for a better articulation of what counts as contemporary frames of counter-border performance (undoing the borders). I then present the activists understanding of the borders and bordering systems in Section 5.3.2. These are discussed in terms of the hostile environment in which activists operate; the way in which they understand borders to be racialised and the struggle between the perspectives of those who campaign from the positions of solidarity and experience, illustrating this tension with the debate over the 'time for a time limit' campaign.

This leads on to a presentation of the practical solutions and solidarities that have risen up in the movement in Section 5.4.3. Six solidarities are presented, with particular focus given over to the feminisation of resistance. While examining these praxes, it can be argued that the specific struggles were initiated at specific points, such as during heightened racist national hysteria or escalating attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers or refugee communities. These events effectively connected individual organisations to the broader refugee rights movement through practices of defiance, subversion and prefiguration in order to collectively confront the border performance. I conclude the chapter by exploring how success is measured and the visions for the future that activists hold.

In the context of the current hostile environment, it is important to recognise that contemporary borders and regimes of bordering are dislocated, dispersed and

increasingly in the everyday (see Chapter 2). This understanding explicates the rationale for activists' counter-performances, subversions and resistance, which are realised at every level and place of border enactment. As I argue in this chapter, effective strategic un-bordering can be found through dividing this heuristic distinction into multiple dimensionalities.

This chapter presents the women's narratives, which are sometimes told as individual courses of action, both affected by and affecting local context. The chapter ends with delineating complications and setbacks as well as opportunities and victories won in the past few decades and the vision for an alternative future. These findings present (arguably) some of the strongest activist practices, illuminating the effective strategies currently employed in migrant rights activism in the UK; it may be that these findings can be usefully applied within other radical movements within the UK.

5.3. Conceptual review

The meanings and sense-making of borders and border-related social worlds vary; narratives about the constructions of these meanings should be read through their historicity and relationality (Doevenspeck, 2011, Yuval-Davis, 2013). Activists' understanding and interpretation of the struggle is crucial as it dictates the repertoire of their strategies and the extent of the scope and range of possibilities for necessary spatial interventions. According to Mezzadra and Nelson (2013), borders can be understood as 'sites of conflict, as complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing' (p.3). As a site of struggle, the border can be 'a method precisely insofar as it is conceived of as a site of struggle (2013). Struggles of this kind emerge as a response to or consequence of bordering's double character: it is both a political project of governance and a political project of belonging (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2018).

The practices of state bordering can be understood as processual, taking place at multiple levels (See Section 3.2.1 of Chapter 3). This was illustrated by the findings from the EUBORDERSCAPES project, which, between 2012 and 2016 went beyond mapping the space of the border and borderland on the European continent, and pointed out how the process of bordering is embedded in the everyday border-crossing experience. The findings also suggest that the everyday construction of borders takes place through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism, including issues of family, gender, sexuality, cultural and personal understandings of borders.

Situating narratives and practices of the women activists in this study within the meta-narrative of state bordering provides a place to study how these practices are being experienced and countered at the macro and micro levels across contexts, time and situations.

5.4. Findings

The previous chapter examined the women activists' definitions and conceptions of commitment and self-perception. The interviewees reflected on their journeys in relation to their roles, self-positioning, situated acts and contexts. In this chapter, the women define organising and expand on this discussion by describing context-specific ways in which they perform such commitments.

5.4.1 Activists defining organising: 'organising is for life'

The definition posited, is drawn from the interviewees own interpretation of activism. It describes 'organising' as both action and process. In our information-rich world, and particularly where new forms of advocacy, often derisively referred to as 'armchair activism', have reduced the concepts of activist engagement, authenticity and transformation, producing a definition seeks to provide a temporary framework to support

and access the meaning women activists ascribed to their own practice. This enables the interrogation of the contemporary repertoire of performances inscribed as oppositional practices to state bordering. The definition then directs us towards a deepened understanding of spatial and ideological strategising, stemming from the politics of how the activists interpret border power configurations, their manifold performativity and vacillations. A feminist interpretation of the struggle is the central imperative that defines its unique character as it accounts for the effects of different positionings in relation to border power and the border matrix, thus informing the nature of possible bordering solidarities.

Researcher:

'I would like to go back to your earlier statement on the difference between organising and mobilising campaigns. What do you mean by organising?'

Zrinka:

'It's an interesting challenge because lots of people talk about organising whereas they are mobilising… and so everybody these days all tell you that they are organising. To some extent that is true. We are developing our own organising models based on the learning from the US and some of the experiences here. We are not driven to one particular model because its needs to be developed authentically for people who are going to use it. Our model is based on understanding that organising is for life. So, it's like being human. So, if you want to live in this country and if you are minority, you will always have problems. So, you always have to be prepared to do something about it. The main driving force of what we are trying to do is find people who are angry about injustice. So that anger can be channelled into something positive. We are kind of mixing it up in terms of community leaders and organisers. We feel that immigrants need to kind of reflect that in their leadership as well as organising. So, leaders need to be able to mobilise people but they also need to be committed to organising for a long time. They need to understand difference and all the mobilising and campaigns need to function to broader organised strategy. So if you know that by 2020 you want to ask government to treat every immigrant fairly, all the actions that you do along the way up on to that period of time, mobilising, campaigning, demonstrating, they all need to be functional in that broader goal. Organising is useful because we see organising as a part of mobilising other tools within the organising tool kit. This is because it is about building trust and building common ground. Telling the story... so 'I am nobody's case study and I choose when I want to tell my story'. My story is not a function of other people's goals. So that's slightly different to organising that we are trying to do. Which is about growing powers of immigrant communities

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through their leaders… and whereas in a broader organising, immigrants are used as ok *'you come and tell your story'*".

Zrinka deconstructs a theory of organising which she has developed based on a shared understanding of activist practice and enacted through values and actions that work specifically in the context of the refugee rights movement. Unpacking Zrinka's definition of organising provides some key features of activism:

1) The importance of articulating political action is not the 'end result'; instead, it is a 'continuous process' necessary for achieving political or other desired goals. As Zrinka puts it: *'organising is for life. It's like being human'.* It is essential to recognise that the issues connected to changing the governance of migration require long-term investment. Recognising bordering as processual suggests a continuous commitment across time, space and situations.

2) Organising is understood in terms of dual characteristics of power. The filtering that occurs in bordering processes distinguishes between both individuals and particular social groups. However, power can go both ways when it is reclaimed through countering the ongoing systemic violence of the border. Zrinka indicates that state bordering must be continuously and collaboratively challenged. '*If you want to live in this country and if you are minority, you will always have problems. So you always have to be prepared to do something about it'*. Given the ubiquitous nature of borders, resistance must be perceived beyond a binary opposition to the state and instead be perceived as a continuous, complex negotiation and conversation about power.

3) Leadership, strategising, building trust and coalitions are key to bringing about social change. Organising requires an investment into '*growing powers of immigrant communities through their leaders*'. Such a strategy is arguably crucial as it paves the way for a sustained course of action.

4) Consideration must be given to the effect of the historical relationship between the current organising practice and feminist concepts of countering social injustice and inequalities. It requires that '*people are angry about injustice'*; this will move things forward.

While the focus may be diversified, organising requires a definition, which distinguishes it from mobilisation, in order that it can have clarity about which issues are selected and worked on; how a border problem is defined; what needs will be met and strategies used and how success and victory are defined.

5.4.2 Activists ascribing meaning to borders and boundaries

5.4.2.1. 'It is a hostile environment'

> 'It is a very hostile environment. It is very difficult to have a strategy. It is very difficult to see clearly how what you are doing today can change something in 4 years' time because we need to work on an electoral cycle. When that one month before elections when politicians actually listen to what we have to say'. (Zrinka 2016)

Activists in my interviews recognised the complexity of the task at hand, particularly, working within an environment that has arguably become very hostile to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. This dates back to Theresa May's term as Home Secretary from 2012, when she stated her aim was 'to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants' (Telegraph, 2012). This led to the Home Office (HO) adopting typically rigid and hard-line policies, often facilitated by politicians seeking electoral votes, which expanded the scope of the UK border operations and increased border hostility and rigidity. The UKBA agenda has since shifted its emphasis from managing regular migration (policies focused on remedying potential abuse or mismanagement) to policing everyday spaces and creating hostility, with the goal of border operations being both practical enforcement and spectacle creation (Squire, 2011).

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The securitisation of migration has resulted in a succession of restrictive laws and policies. As is often at the heart of securitisation, 'safety-first' rhetoric underlies and justifies the state's advancement and implementation of a more restrictive immigration politics. In response, suspicion of the state has become almost ideological for some of the women activists. Once again, it is Theresa May's securitising and othering language, as she spoke about the need to 'clean up' (through hostility) illegal immigration, that has concretised the notions of spatial violence associated with border control.

Those who are affected the most by the new agenda are sometimes referred to as 'border lives'. They include the non-status migrants, or those with 'uncertain status'. The women activists assert that border lives have become status-less due to a variety of reasons which merit our attention: their refugee claim may have been rejected and they have exhausted available rights to appeal; they may not have proof of identification; their previous visas (work, student, visitor) may have expired or the sponsored partnership may have broken down (i.e. dependent spouse or relationship). In many cases, these circumstances sit alongside well-founded fears against deportation to their home countries.

The language of abjection and exclusion permeates the discourse of illegality; rarely are these border lives portrayed with any positivity. When those opposed to this type of migration speak of border lives, they typically employ pejorative projections associating them with criminality ('illegals'), poor moral character ('queue jumpers') or as dangerous threats ('terrorists') (Nyers, 2010:132). The task of activists becomes something more than representing the unrepresented and making a claim for the state to regularise status - something more ambitious, difficult and radical is required: to create new representations by allowing non-status migrants to assert themselves as political beings

with stories and voices of their own. Alongside this, the state policies and practices, whilst they are underpinned by such hostility, demand significant counter-weighting efforts.

The ever-changing nature of the hostile political climate affects activists in three ways: a) they have little control over what is happening, thus reducing the extent of their contribution; b) the activists work constantly to adapt to the HO and c) the ever shifting focus makes it hard to measure success in their campaigning. One of the women activists, Lisa Matthews, works for Right to Remain - a political pressure group that conducts high-profile strategic, media-intensive campaigns to prevent asylum seeker deportations and to raise the profile of asylum seekers throughout the UK, often through campaigning around individual cases. She notes:

> 'Well, our work changes quite a lot. So even over the history we've helped people to individually kind of go public and get the right to stay. We've done a big shift away from that because it increasingly doesn't work. So in the past, people used to have a public campaign, the Home Secretary would maybe intervene and say, yes you have the right to stay and use their discretion. Now, that doesn't exist'

Right to Remain has been one of the first ports of call for many migrants scheduled to be deported, failed asylum applicants or detained asylum seekers. Since they started the organisation in 2008, they have established good contacts with asylum seekers and refugee communities and have helped influence asylum cases and raise awareness. Border lives are in constant fear of detention, deportation and everyday surveillance, including policing of their residence. For them, the borderline is not just at the physical entry checkpoint but 'the border is everywhere' (Balibar, 2002). It emerges in 'places such as healthcare clinics, social housing…schools, foodbanks, welfare offices, police stations, within a ubiquitous elsewhere' (Nyers, 2010:132). Everyday activities such as working and driving are at risk of being transformed into criminal activity with dire consequences (De Genova, 2002:427), while minor transgressions can easily land them in immigration detention. Consequently, the increasingly hostile environment has reduced confidence

for migrants' rights campaigners, with women activists in this study experiencing significant reduction in the opportunities to influence state practices. Lisa notes:

> 'So, we've never, um, never used, for example, a successful campaign as a measure; also, because we have so little control. So, we can really help someone to strengthen their legal case, we could help someone keep fighting, but it is always been, kind of, contributive. It's going to be up to the Home Office and the courts. There are so many factors we can't control. That we decided I think for a long time never to try and use people being granted status as a measure of our success. But general increase if we can'.

Zrinka adds:

> 'Absolutely been no positive influence whatsoever. It's just going from worse to bad. There isn't a narrative about immigration that is controlled by us. It is controlled by right wing and nationalist and media and the key beneficiary of all of that is the UK state'.

While the state will always hold the right of exclusion and inclusion, women activists find that raising ethical concerns continues to be relevant and potentially influential. Equally, the politics of interpretation (of the border) is an important part of the activists' strategic un-bordering. The meanings ascribed to the border allow creative solutions to be continually sought to provide 'realistic' ways of meeting the challenges. For instance, Zrinka's work at Migrants Organise, one of a few migrant-led rights organisations in the UK, has increasingly focused on finding multiple ways to challenge the institutionalised positions of the government authority. Activities range from lobbying, public campaigns, audience outreach, engagement and policy research to a more direct-action approach such as marches and hosting conferences. Zrinka notes:

> 'I do (get frustrated) but it's how you set your targets and how you measure them…and how you measure results. So, it's being realistic - I think it's really important. There is no government structure in the world that is fair and good. So as long as you understand your framework and you understand what is possible within those frame works and what your place and role is - and be ambitious about the change. I am always ambitious. So, whatever the opportunity I try to figure out how I can see this so that it can help me deliver some kind of change. I don't have time to have ego, I don't have time for performance. My energy is needed somewhere else'

Effective strategies seek to undermine dominating power (which isolate immigrants of their will and power) - power which creates a space of forced invisibility, exclusion, subjugation and repression that non-status migrants must negotiate with in order to

survive (Nyers, 2003; De Genova, 2002). Activists are geared towards creating alternative new spaces which can be circumscribed as welcoming (not hostile) for immigrants to live in. Countering the violence of the border laws includes problematising and challenging the new oppressive laws that are brought into force and, in some radical cases, even breaking them. This has been the case where activists have organised protests to prevent deportation flights.

When describing their practice, activists understand there is the need to grasp both the current political climate and the position of the state, then situate themselves accordingly. This responsive self-positioning, I argue, allows for the varying forms of dissent expressed. It requires a combination of enacting differing strategies of resistance and the framing of clear arguments to antagonise and oppose the state's power and its ongoing cultivation of hostility towards migrants.

5.4.2.2. Borders are racialised

The activists interviewed understand borders as intrinsically racialised. Contemporary migration and racialisation appear to be co-constructed, with the logic of bordering and immigration control echoing 'the same logic of official and popular racism separating citizens who belong from those who do not' (Erel, Murji and Nahaboo, 2016:1344). To some extent this clear parallel energises and synthesises migrant rights activists as their challenging of bordering policies and systems can be couched in terms of a simultaneous resistance of racism. They are able to, for example, critically analyse the similarities in which the role of selective migration policies serves as racial markers, often making a non-citizen (who is typically racialised as non-white) 'as subjects of migration discourse' (Erel *et al,* 2016:1341).

The women activists in this study are part of an extended network of grassroots organisations whose work is rooted in migrant rights activism without overarching centralisation. Some of their work extends to anti-racism. Liz notes:

> 'Immigration has always been talked about as being part of the problem of racism. There had always been a real concept that immigration laws were part of the problem of racism…if you are an Afro Caribbean person, you will be stopped by the police …because the idea is you know you are a black person and therefore you are a street criminal …But with the Asian community, it used to be much more it was around your immigration status. So, you will be suspected to be an illegal immigrant…'

Racial inequalities remain socially pervasive, as reflected in disparities regarding wealth, income, criminal justice, employment, education, housing, healthcare and political power (Institute of Race Relations, 2018). This is reflected in the work the women activists do individually and collectively. Firstly, the activists identify institutional racism playing out in the larger organisations with which they interact. It has been argued that the UK and the EU migration policy reinforces classed and racialised occupational pathways for new migrants; institutional racism is identified by the activists within the 'linkages specifically among the institutions, ideologies, and practices that define these arenas' (Kibria, Browman, and O'Leary 2013:5). This is also reflected in the distinctions made between EU and non-EU workers, with non-EU workers disproportionally channelled into lower paid jobs. On the national level, this plays out in the stratifying power of citizenship and migration status, which remain unchanged in the face of new arrivals of migrants.

Another articulation of co-construction of race and migration can be found in how migrants are differentially racialised depending on legal status. Schuster (2010: 233) states that the 'common sense assertions of the "need for control" underlying the differential treatment of asylum seekers are expressions of a racism at the heart of European states because at the border, racism intersects in a complex and shifting way with class and gender, creating a hierarchy of the excluded'. Cohen (2002) and Walia (2013) have also

highlighted how immigration controls are inherently institutionally racist, building their argument on the 'historic connections between local government and immigration controls stretching back to the origins of modern controls at the start of the last century' (Cohen, 2002:518). Cohen (2002) finds that the dispersal scheme along with other control mechanisms such as detention, destitution or deportation are exclusionary schemes, which do not ameliorate the condition of asylum seekers.

Zita similarly reflects on the historic racism in the UK, identifying a recent resurgence of the levels of overt racism her mother experienced. In her mind, racism did not go away, it was just sublimated for a while, the weakening of mainstream anti-racist politics now allowing it to resurface. This is making current migrant rights activism more and more difficult:

> 'And then alongside austerity and cuts, racism just became rife. And where we are now people are really emboldened its back to the *no blacks, no Irish, no dog* signs. It's back to, you know, *have you got a tail? Do you live in the jungle?* Kind of experiences my mom had when she came to this country. We've kind of gone full circle…Now what I think is that racism never went away. People was emboldened to express their racism they weren't backed up by politicians and governments and systems that said it's acceptable to be racist, it's acceptable to scapegoat and scare monger and other people was to blame. And so, that's just emboldened...'
> ... (Zita, 2015)

These historically linked concerns (Anderson, 2013; Yuval Davis: 2007) relate to the 'construction of borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of (trans) nationalism' (Yuval-Davis 2013:10). Most recently, it has been highlighted that migrants who have been living in Britain for four decades or more are seeing a resurgence of previous forms of discrimination. This was reflected in the Movement Against Xenophobia (MAX) campaign - 'I am a Migrant', which was organised to counter mainstream narratives about migrant contributions to British and global society.

Zita notes:

> 'Three years ago, an immigration act was put in and it's been rolled out in stages, so it's still not fully implemented [2015] it effectively seeks to create an apartheid-like state in the U.K. The government has used migrants to scaremonger, scapegoat since 2010 to take away the trust focusing on themselves as the cause for austerity and their failures in addressing these issues so that the blame is targeted on migrants. They said migrants are coming in, they're the ones taking all the jobs, they're the ones taking all the housing and they're the ones causing all of these problems. So you've got that aspect, you've got the immigration act which seeks to treat people differently: so you can't access NHS services, you can't rent a property, you can't ... you can't get a driver's licence, you can't get married, you can't do anything…I think it's the most racist piece of legislation I've seen in my lifetime in the UK. So, there's that. But there's also all the stuff we've seen with the GO HOME vans and that kind of thing: the raids that you see of migrant homes, the treatment of asylum seekers... And if you look at the facts and figures, it's all myths and lies. There's far less migrants coming to U.K. than other European countries. Migrants contribute positively to U.K. society'. (Zita, 2015)

The Movement Against Xenophobia (MAX) campaign was set up to contest the continued misinformation, scaremongering and use of negative language in relation to migrants in Britain. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), under the umbrella of MAX, created the original *'I Am An Immigrant'* campaign in 2015 to combat further anti-immigrant sentiment developing in the run up to the General Election. The campaign, which saw posters on the tube and in other public places, contained images and stories that reinforced the positive contribution of migrants to British society. These images across Britain allowed immigrants a voice in the midst of misrepresentation to demonstrate that they were part of the fabric of British society and that their contribution was valuable. According to JCWI website, the campaign received overwhelming feedback and support, with £78,490 raised in just three weeks. The campaign was viewed over 80 million times in the UK and received vast media coverage across the globe. Zita believes that the current narrative surrounding today's migration situation is rooted in racism thus, expanding the anti-racist approach hopes to achieve a shift in rhetoric and public opinion, disarming and destroying the myths and fears surrounding migrants and informing popular discourse.

The question arises as to how activists can use race as a resource to construct, challenge or resist bordering discourses? So far, despite increasing theorising from committed activists, race has been a largely silent player in these dilemmas. Campaigns such as MAX's 'I Am A Migrant' however, have supported intergenerational solidarity in the face of racism, in a similar fashion to the anti-deportation campaigns connected with the Windrush scandal. It is possible that sometimes there is such an in-built assumption that race is central and foundational to the migrant and refugee rights movement that delineating it simply fails to occur. The potential impact for explicating the racialisation of borders for activism should not be underestimated.

5.4.2.3 'Time for a time limit'

There are also significant tensions within the movement with varying interpretations and distinctions of the core issues from one activist group to another, stemming from experiential or solidaristic perspectives. These sorts of tensions are well encapsulated in the 'time for a time limit' argument among anti-deportation activists, which advocates for time limits on detention. It does so as a concession to a government that will absolutely not concede to the ideologically desired endgame: a complete end to detention. This presents a challenge to the wider movement, as internal disagreement and in-fighting threatens to derail the struggle. Activist, Antonia Bright, has been involved in anti-detention of women in the past few years, alongside the Movement for Justice (MFJ) collective. Antonia's analysis of the development is worth quoting at length to highlight this tension:

> 'While we are also trying to push forward we are saying 'Shut down detention' and so there is an obstacle, of this question of 'How do you fight and actually win?', and so there is a tension within the whole kind of movement around detention or around migrant rights, where there are those who think 'you can only ask for what you think parliament would provide you'. That argument I would sum up as this *time for a time limit*, which sounds logical if you think that only parliament can change things and you are asking them to change so it has to be something they would want to give. Whereas our argument is 'Shut down detention' and the reason

is that, is because that is, in reality, the demand of everyone who has ever been into detention. Even if you say you would like, at the very least, a time limit, but we still want to shut it down. That's the point. Detention exists to make deportations against people's will possible. That's the only reason detention exists, is to assist in ensuring deportations of people against their will…If there was a time limit, like, they'd still do the deportation, it allows them to continue doing the deportations and it's just do them quicker. That's the only difference…But our fight has to be based on organising the power of the oppressed, not on adjusting that to bet what we think some element of the oppressor would agree to. It leaves people in a dead-end position, and that's why we say, in our MFJ pledge, it leaves the oppressed in a dead-end position of having to argue for a nicer way to oppress us. The exploited has to have a nicer way to be exploited, rather than to end the exploitation. And once you are in that position, it's a dead-end'.

'But again, it's when you don't believe that you have any power and you are relying on...other people'

Activists find themselves negotiating internal misunderstandings, tensions or different approaches to solving the problem, some of which come from different interpretations of the struggle, including the meaning they ascribe to borders which they are seeking to challenge or undo. For example, some activists seek primarily to resist state practices, as described above in the demand for the complete shutdown of detention centres. Others would seek to form a connection with the state to influence them, to facilitate a renegotiation of how they treat asylum seekers. The different ways in which activists view the state has significant spatial and activist consequences. Debora's (Asylum Aid) policy work, for instance, has been about working closely with the Home Office to provide them with evidential facts that prove some current policies need urgent review. This has been possible due to recognising themselves 'not as agents of opposition' necessarily, but as 'agents of information provision and facilitators of dialogue and cooperation' across the divide (Gill, 2010:1048). Either way, developing an analysis of the multiple influences, which intersect and affect migrants' lives allows activists to discern the direction and extent of their strategic action; but the tensions, as described by Antonia, are not easily overcome.

When Sir Stephen Shaw had completed a follow up to his 2016 'Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons', the report urged radical detention reform to drastically reduce the number of people detained and the length of time they were detained for. It highlighted the issues that have been frustrating activists for a long time: that the impact of detention for those who are vulnerable lasts a lifetime and that the detention mechanism has not achieved the purpose for which it was set up, whilst being costly and damaging. Similarly, a report from the Jesuit Refugee Society (JRS), called 'Detained and Dehumanised: the impact of immigration detention', studied the compound adverse effects of immigration detention, concluding that 71% of detained individuals blame their psychological problems and poor mental health on detention experience. Shaw summarises the JRS report, thus:

> 'The data shows that detention has the potential to harm many types of people, those with pre-existing special needs and otherwise healthy persons. It is important to stress that a person becomes vulnerable from the first day of their detention as the individual's personal condition is instantly affected due to their disadvantaged and weakened position. Detainees' level of vulnerability fluctuates in relation to the characteristics that they personally possess, the factors in their social network and the determinants in their wider environment' (Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons, 2016, Section 4.12: 83).

Borders are encountered very differently by differently situated individuals, producing different readings and meanings. Those with first-hand experience of the harshness of border control mechanisms will have a particular lens: organising from experiential inspiration is distinctly different from organising from a solidaristic perspective. To the former, the border per se is violent and damaging, so it is hard to sympathise with the perspectives of maybe more solidaristic campaigners who might celebrate small victories which reduce suffering.

Many activists insist that only ending detention will ultimately address the problems highlighted. However, it is highly unlikely that policy will change quickly, if it all, given the

state's ongoing policy of cultivating a hostile environment towards migrants. Therefore, it may be that the only pragmatic solution is to pursue a time limit on the amount of time that people can spend in a detention centre; at least this has potential to reduce damage. Whilst there is cross-agreement between activists that detention is violent and poses a real threat to an individual's health and wellbeing, different interpretations of the struggle and the viable solutions remain. It also remains the case that allies who have joined the struggle out of solidarity are unlikely to grasp the emotional urgency connected with shutting down these carceral facilities in the same way that those with experience of them might have.

5.4.3 Developing practical solidarities

This section highlights the practical solutions and solidarities that have arisen in the movement. After an overview of practical solidarities, using Right to Remain's activities as exemplar, it presents other solidarities under the following themes: anti-racist frameworks; the feminisation of resistance; the tension between policy and systemic change and finally the importance of building alliances.

5.4.3.1 Practical solidarities

> 'We've done a lot of work with individuals still, helping them, helping them to understand the system but also kind of keeping their spirit alive, to keep fighting. And, we've helped these amazing, kind of, completely unfunded groups to support their members that are often run by asylum seekers themselves, so we go out and give them training or support to them. So, there are some groups who just wouldn't exist if they weren't getting that support. Um, there are some people who have immigration status who wouldn't have without our work. Um, and in kind of less kind of measurable way there's lots of people who feel like, *actually there are decent people in the UK*, which they might not have felt otherwise'. (Lisa, 2015)

Practical solidarities for people at risk of detention and deportation are an important aspect of migrant rights activism. They range from emotional support to structural and administrative advice and guidance. Lisa's work within Right to Remain (RtR) entails

producing resources so that people can understand the asylum and immigration system and pursue their right to stay in the UK.

RtR also does a lot of work with community groups around the UK to help them support group members who are asylum seekers or undocumented migrants. Their aim is always to help individuals achieve the right to remain, but secondarily to lessen or prevent possible harm from navigating through the complex and punitive system. In addition to this they also campaign for change in the system. On their website, Right to Remain give examples of how one can offer practical solidarities to asylum seekers:

Reporting

They recommend accompanying asylum seekers to reporting centres, highlighting that this process can be very stressful. Reporting to the Home Office happens at various intervals: weekly, fortnightly and monthly. Due to the toll it has on people's mental health, or mothers with young children in need of childcare, extending a helping hand to those who regularly report is a practice that is encouraged throughout migrant activism. People can be unexpectedly detained or deported while reporting, and the knowledge of this breeds fear. Detention means moving away from your community, including your lawyer and, potentially, your faith group, from which asylum seekers often draw strength.

Information sharing

One of the most frustrating things for asylum seekers is lack of information about their legal case or the process through which they must go. Right to Remain has organised a toolkit, which is also available on their website; it provides resources and materials to prepare asylum seekers in case of detention. Right to Remain also organises training across the country, in which the immigration solicitors explain step by step some of the most important aspects of the asylum application and determination.

Solidarity and support

Right to Remain recommends befriending, and specifically offering 'signing support': this includes keeping in contact with people who go for reporting and keeping 'a record of everyone's contact details and emergency instructions of what to do if they do not come out' of the reporting centre. For activists, losing families or individuals they have campaigned for to deportation can be a very discouraging experience. Amal notes:

> I remember one day feeling really, really depressed. I was like really down and I went home and my mom was like '*maybe it's time to just give up'* because you could see how much it was affecting me. I'm very sensitive, so things like that really get to me and I felt as if it was me. I felt that like, you know, I felt the injustice over, it was so powerful that I felt like that's the way I was treated, it was so strange. Um, I think that's what compassion, isn't it? Um, and I remember thinking actually *no, no, I'm not going to give up*. Even though we lost those families there's so many other families that need our help and we'll try, that's the best we can do. I cannot sit down and do nothing. My consciousness would not let me do nothing. I have to do something. (Amal, 2015)

Table 1 lists examples of practical activities that each activist listed in their accounts, illustrating the wide range of ways in which solidarity and activism operates.

Name of Activist	Activity undertaken in their activist work
Zrinka	• Drafting legal submissions • Public speaking • Leadership academy for mentors
Lisa	• Organising public anti-deportation actions • Training and information sharing with asylum seekers in legal/case-related issues
Amal	• Mobilising court-support • Campaigning in media /public speaking
Zita	• Public engagements • Poetry/spoken word
Liz	• Hosting conferences • Policy Research and analysis • Activists scholarship
Antonia	• Organising direct action • Visits to detainees at Yarl's Wood Detention Centre • mentoring
Debora	• Lobbying/advocacy • Policy research • Public speaking

Table2: examples of practical solidarity activities.

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5.3.3.2 Anti-racist frameworks

Developing an anti-racist framework within which to situate migrant rights and activism can arguably lead to greater and more positive outcomes. Activists whose analytical overview pays attention to the race-migration nexus argue that status regulation must be a key campaigning point. Highlighting how regulations infer and reveal structural racism is effective, because the elimination of racist regulations and legislation is preconfigured in immigration politics (Walia, 2013).

Challenging racism must also consider racism beyond binary opposition to state policies and address it within and between migrant communities. Zita explains:

> 'And we also won't forget that actually there were migrants that come into the U.K. and are racist to black people here. There are some East European migrants who think they're superior to the black people in the U.K. and racially abuse them. I heard a little five-year-old boy who shout to my son and friend and her daughter, you niggers out on the street, here locally. That's a kind of experiences that ... yeah so. The, so, we're fighting for their rights but they're not the same - fighting for our rights - as black people, do you see what I mean?' (Zita, 2015)

It is appropriate to take an intersectional lens to avoid the disappearance of race within the migrant struggle. Initiatives such as MAX act as umbrella organisations, bringing groups together against the one common threat of racism. MAX offers a good example of a coalition of migrant rights groups, anti-racist groups, trade unions and individuals collectively working towards comprehensive (and intersectional) analysis of the meaning of the border, as well as the work required in countering its violent configurations. The diversity of interpretation and activities arising from such collaborations can innovate more initiatives for effecting change.

5.4.3.3. Feminisation of resistance

The women interviewed voiced that there is an urgent need to recognise the gendered construction of the migration processes. The feminisation of resistance refers to a shift in gender relations towards those considered 'female' or feminine (although it need not refer

to women alone, as men can also have experiences due their situatedness). The feminisation of resistance also recognises the masculinised conceptualisations of immigration, the politics of control and the regulation of asylum determination.

Debora's policy research work through Asylum Aid emphasises the significance of women's struggle in the asylum process, which allows us to grasp the complexity of the feminised political subjectivities being formed and the process of their manifestation. (Most of Asylum Aid's policy recommendations initially proposed to the Home Office were dubbed 'operationally impossible', though some did in fact succeed.) Through 'reclaiming' and 'centering' strategies, activists seek to create conditions within which women seeking asylum feel sufficiently safe to begin to recount their experiences, find their voices, be heard and respected.

This includes a focus on feminist categories to develop new campaigns and gender specific issues in the asylum determination process. The former involves challenging existing scripts of the Home Office (HO) politics of assessment and tackling the power imbalance that does not place women at the centre of this process. The latter involves adopting gendered themes in organising (themes specifically relating to women's experiences of detention) that seek to influence both the institutional practice and discourses or developing new gendered forms of collective resistance.

5.4.3.3.1. The Rights of Women Seeking Asylum: a Charter

In 2008, Asylum Aid joined with a dozen other small charities to script *The Rights of Women Seeking Asylum: a Charter* (Asylum Aid, 2013). The Charter outlines 'the simple steps needed to make the asylum system decent and safe for any woman who turns to it for help' (Consonant, 2018). It represents a unique style of campaigning, encourages, and inspires all its endorsers to develop its key principles of fair, dignified and safe treatment of any woman who seeks asylum in the UK.

Currently, the charter has 360 organisations behind it, providing a powerful coalition of signatories and endorsers who can monitor its implementation by the HO. The charter states that, in order for women's rights to be protected and their gender needs met, it means:

> '1) Women seeking asylum have the right to have their protection claims determined by an asylum system in the UK that is informed, in all aspects of its policy and operations, by a thorough understanding of the particular forms of persecution and human rights abuses that women experience because of their gender and of their particular needs as women;
>
> 2) Women seeking asylum have the right to an asylum determination process that recognises and takes into account their experiences of persecution and human rights abuses;
>
> 3) Women seeking asylum, have the right to accommodation, support and healthcare to their particular needs as women;
>
> 4) Women seeking asylum have the right to be treated with dignity in a way that is appropriate to their needs as women and that ensures their safety if in detention or during removal' (Asylum Aid, 2013:2).

This concise list of rights intimates underlying concerns about structural incidents of silencing, misrepresentation, negligence and exclusion that have been part of bordering devices. They also provide practicalities which a woman going through the same process would notice and benefit from, such as having a female interviewer and access to childcare. The Charter lists improvements which require a process of change. To achieve this Asylum Aid has to build a dialogue with the Home Office, communicating through research-based dialogue to build trust. Debora Singer (Asylum Aid) notes that each year since 2009, there has been progress. For example, the 'Every Single Woman' campaign was launched to demand that women seeking asylum are treated with dignity and respect. A year later, in 2010, the film 'Every Single Woman' was shown to Home Office staff on International Women's day.

The charter also inspired a whole host of local campaigns: Refugee Women launched a postcard campaign near Glasgow, which led to hundreds of messages calling for the fair treatment of asylum-seeking women being sent directly to the Home Secretary. In Yorkshire and Humber, Why Refugee Women was inspired to develop its own Why Refugee Charter calling on local organisations to improve their treatment of refugee women. In 2011, a report called 'Unsustainable' was published by Asylum Aid to persuade the HO to introduce new training on women's asylum issues for all asylum decision-makers. Nearly 1000 people joined the 'Missed Out' Campaign in 2012, to lobby their MPs and write to the Home Office. The Home Secretary, in response, promised more resources to help women seeking asylum. In 2013, The 'Dignity in Pregnancy' campaign led by Refugee Council and Maternity Action opened negotiations with the Home Office. Furthermore, the Medical Justice's 'Expecting Change' report backed calls made by Asylum Aid in its Women's Charter to end immigration detention of all pregnant women. Persistent pressure from the Charter endorsers resulted in improved policies for women seeking asylum who were new or expectant mothers. Additionally, the Refugee Women's Strategy Group published 'Making Asylum Work for Women', following up the charter's demands for a fair asylum system; it was written by women with direct experience of the asylum process. As a result, the HO did make some changes in their procedures, consulted on changes and are taking some of Asylum Aid's recommendations into account.

Connected to this are The Charter Campaign and The Protection Gap, which are also supported by numerous organisations working closely with Asylum Aid. Some of the rights advocated by the Protection Gap campaign include: childcare during screening and asylum interviews; female interviewers and interpreters during asylum interviews; interviewers and interpreters to be trained on sexual violence and trauma; counselling for

women who have experienced gender-based harm and information to be provided to women accessing asylum about the process and their rights. Having set up this campaign, Debora argues that it has given them a platform for raising issues and making changes, resulting in the HO being more willing to consult activists such as Asylum Aid. Following an extensive postcard campaign, the Home Office included all five of the rights in its Gender Asylum Action Plan in March 2015. The right to childcare has had the most progress. Activists like Debora continue to advocate that all the rights are implemented and that measures are put in place to ensure that asylum seekers obtain an accurate, credible assessment and the right initial asylum decision from the very beginning. The success of this collective action also meant that the activists were able to raise the issue in Europe. On 8 March 2016, on International Women's Day, members of the European Parliament voted in a resolution concerning women refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, which included all the demands from the Charter Campaign to close the Protection Gap. Beyond the asylum determination process, the strategy to develop new campaigning based on feminist 'categories' has wider benefits for the migrant movement. Seeking to end the detention of women is a step closer to the complete closure of detention centres altogether. Also, the strategy identifying and campaigning for the struggle of women in asylum was linked to similar concerns for women in the community, so that the benefits were transferable.

5.4.3.3.2. Campaigning against detention of women

Framing detention of women as a feminist issue has been a priority among women activists for migrant rights. However, the issue is complex, and often feels too small scale and hidden to make an impact. Zrinka reflects:

> 'It is too much of a strange issue. Not enough people are affected so I think last year they detained 80 pregnant women which is horrible. There are organisations campaigning and lobbying but there is no critical mass of people to push for that. There was a period in 2014 when the parliamentary inquiry report came out and it

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was last year, actually, 2015. The channel 4 news did the exposé of the abuse of women in Yarl's Wood. Now we have the evidence, now we have undercover material, a couple of G4S guides have been accused and on trial for sexual assault. We could see racist abuse - and the government is still giving contracts to people of these organisations and they are still abusing women. So that is disheartening actually'.

Debora has found that it can be easier to strategically engage the HO with concerns about women's rights, than to engage them on the wider concerns:

'There are things which they just won't discuss with us, like detention. So, we as a sector, not so much as Asylum Aid, have tried to raise detention issue, we've all got the same policy which is: *there shouldn't be detention*. And they (HO) just won't discuss it because that's not the government's policy. The government's policy is to have detention. But then things like the women issues, which is one of the interesting things about it, they (HO) are sometimes more open to those issues because we draw the parallels with the violence against women's agenda, which this government is very strong on, particularly the Home Secretary, and they worked with the Home Secretary so, that gives us something extra to be using as to put pressure on them'.

A feminist approach to immigration politics has opened a new dialogue and strategy to influence policy as well as provided a model for working on women's issues within the wider migrant and refugee movement. Recognising that the 1951 Refugee Convention was a product of its time has led to addressing gendered terms and conditions in its early reformulations. The idealised notion of a refugee – typically, a white, heterosexual male persecuted for his political activities - has been a central contentious theme in feminist scholarship on migration. More recently, there has been a review of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) guidelines in relation to gender, to ensure that the Refugee Convention can be interpreted in a gender-sensitive manner.

5.4.3.3.3. Representational politics beyond policy change

Behind much of the activism are fundamental ideological concerns. Many activists are ultimately seeking development of a wider political change, which would go beyond policy changes such as the adoption of the charter or better detention policies. There was a clear focus on a politics that politicises the personal. In the interviews and reflections from

activists, there was an emphasis on 'power within', shifting focus from what they see as the state power of bordering over migrant women and directing focus toward power from within - to women migrants themselves - in order to organise alongside them, rather than on behalf of them. This is because they recognise that the migrant women represent a group lacking in power, vulnerable to having their interests overlooked and their rights violated. This collective campaigning is demonstrated when the asylum seekers' struggles are linked to women's struggles in general, such as in accessing community childcare, family planning, family wellbeing and education. In this respect, demands are made not just in the name of migrants, but for women as a whole.

5.4.3.3.4. Women-only-space of self-care

Activists have also sought to create strategic spaces for women. Women for Refugee Women, Hope Projects (see case study in Chapter 7) and Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) have all emphasised this sort of work. In Chapter 7, Hope Space emphasises the need for creating a safe environment in which all forms of oppressive communication, narrative and discourse can be challenged and in which women can begin to develop theoretical understandings of borders and their lived experiences of them. However, these sorts of safe spaces do not escape bordering entirely. Borders can be viewed not merely as a structure 'out there' but as infusing our subjectivities and many of our relationships in ways that are impoverishing, harmful and painful. Brah and Phoenix (2004) emphasise in this context, self-care and its importance, including fun and pleasure; women-only spaces are depicted as key sites in which self-care can be both theorised, enacted and materialised. While the frameworks highlighted here are not exclusive (there are many more strategies of feminisation), they do have something in common: a theme of enabling marginal voices to communicate the diverse experiences of oppression which women with insecure status are encountering.

5.4.3.4. Policy and systemic change

> 'We're trying to push for a change in policy but it's difficult because obviously we live in Scotland and we don't have control of immigration. It's all done in Westminster. So, um, that's really hard. Um, we're still trying to do as much as we can. For me I want to raise as much awareness as possible. I want everybody to know. Because you never know who has power. You don't know who that person is going to be one day. So, for me, it's like I want people to know the truth and what they choose to do with that it's up to them, but I've done my part. That's the way I see it' (Amal, 2015)

Activists, although working individually and in different geographical settings, are concerned with how best they can contribute towards systemic change. Debora's work with Asylum Aid has two aspects to it: a) legal advice and representation and b) policy and campaigning. The two aspects are very different with different time frames and approaches:

> 'For instance, if you're a caseworker you keep going, you know, and make sure your client gets that - if they're going to court you go to court with them. Whereas the work in policy, one tends to have longer deadlines, one is able to create your own deadlines more. From that (operational/structural/managerial) point of view, linking the two aspects of the work seems to pose a challenge, in terms of prioritising and different time constraints' (Debora, 2016)

Research is necessary to identify how the border power is operating and shifting, and how best to frame an effective argument against bordering practice. As Debora puts it: 'it takes time…to change policy'. Much of the work is long-term, with many twists and turns along the way, and sometimes only resulting in small wins. 'You can't always have what you are aiming for' (Debora, 2016). She further notes:

> 'The political climate is really negative and, you know, having the current government is not going to bring in big new initiatives that are supportive of asylum seekers. So obviously they are doing the initiative for 20,000 people from Syria, but we'd like that to be more. There are things which they just won't discuss with us, like detention. So, we as a sector, not so much as Asylum Aid, have tried to raise the detention issue, we've all got the same policy which is: *there shouldn't be detention*. And they [the Home Office] just won't discuss it because that's not the government's policy. The government's policy is to have detention' (Debora, 2016)

Activists largely agree that detention should not exist. However, even lobbying for much softer, preventative work, or seeking to inform policies does not typically influence the Home Office (HO). The HO has a non-negotiable position on detention, refusing to even engage with activists on the topic. Activists respond to this variably, some with strategic, lobbying approaches, some with much more confrontational strategies.

Detention Action, another NGO organising to stop detention, recently launched a legal challenge, claiming that the Detained Fast Track (DFT) system was unlawful. Previous challenges had failed, leaving the HO to believe that it could expand its scale and scope. However, Detention Action took a different legal tack and after two years of litigation, and many separate legal challenges, DFT was found to be unlawful by the High Court Judge and suspended on 2 July 2015. The Supreme Court refused the government permission to appeal the decision, finding DFT 'systematically unfair' and making the decision definitive. This case stands as an example of the potential for radical and transformative strategies, as well as the need for stamina in campaigning.

Another small win was the introduction, through campaigning, of a limit of 72 hours for detaining pregnant women (and up to a week in 'exceptional circumstances'). Whilst a step in the right direction, an absolute ban on the incarceration of pregnant women, and a 28-day limit on all immigration detention, remains one of the goals (alongside the ultimate goal that all detention ceases).

The policy to reduce the waiting time in the asylum determination process was also targeted by activists. Currently, only those waiting 12 months for their claim to be determined can access employment, and even then, they are limited to work on the restrictive Shortage Occupation List. This leaves many asylum seekers waiting and forced to rely on paltry and diminishing government handouts, amounting to roughly £5 a day. An amendment to reduce the waiting time to six months passed with a large majority

in the House of Lords but was defeated in the Commons. A later version proposing a nine-month threshold was defeated in a second vote after withdrawal of support by the Labour frontbench. Debora notes that, from a policy point of view, it was extremely disappointing to see both the government and the main opposition party fail to pursue a simple and practical measure which would bring dignity for asylum seekers and economic benefits for the UK.

The number of Syrian refugees offered sanctuary in the UK has been another source of tension and dispute between activists and the government. Most of these arguments activists have advanced against regulated migration or control mechanisms have been met with an unfavourable response from the state. Reconciling such a decision intellectually, emotionally and professionally seems tough for activists: on the one hand they are appalled by the slowness or smallness of change, such as accepting only 20,000 Syrian refugees; on the other hand, they feel obliged to show appreciation to politicians who helped push through even these small decisions. Lisa notes:

> 'In campaigning work, we do all the time, um, we would, um, so, we have seen – strategically - it's better to become positive about campaigning and to celebrate change. And um, we should, kind of, thank MPS who've done things both and, emotionally I don't think that you should do, you know, like '*you're responsible for this bad stuff that is happening'.* Oh, great, well. So, for things like, you know, the Syrian resettlement of refugees. Kind of, professionally we have to be neutral and its good progress being made. Whereas privately I'm thinking this is appalling, this is actually worse than nothing. This is counterproductive. Um, but we have to be careful to be too critical because it actually doesn't help people make further change'. (Lisa, 2015)

In contrast, other activists take a much more militant position. Antonia Bright works for the Movement for Justice by all Means Necessary (MFJ), which is organised, like Detention Action, around calls to end detention across the UK. She refuses to acquiesce to the small-scale wins, categorically understanding the state as the oppressor; she

considers that only bold, real demands empower the oppressed and represent authentic activism:

> 'There is such a constantly a push and pull. But if you are only fighting within that circle then you are in a dead-end position. And what's really needed is a mass movement in action that is for SHUT DOWN Detention and that is not afraid to speak against racism and doesn't see that as RESTRICTING movement but sees it as what opens up the boldest platform. That people can speak their real truth, not soften it for the politician. It's a question of power. We stand on the power of the oppressed to win, we believe that the oppressed have power, if we can co-organise, we can win' (Antonia B)

These examples highlight that activists' agendas are always in tension with the government agenda. As Debora notes, the current negative political climate is the product of the failings of consecutive governments over the past few decades. Slow progress not only brings a sense of discouragement but also brings an awareness that achieving changes in policy or achieving systemic change is long term work.

Consistently small wins, and the ongoing push and pull of small victories and losses, makes activists insecure even about the victories, with some activists fearful that the HO may reintroduce DFT, despite such a public legal defeat. Zrinka recounts a disappointment with previous short-lived victories: successful campaigning to end child detention was quickly followed by a Government U-turn.

> 'In terms of campaigns, it's not really… we are just going through the time where the government made a U-turn on our jobs amendment… they also very quietly went back on detention of children. They have now withdrawn contracts from Barnado's to look after children…and at the same time they also put a ban on disabled refugee children from coming here. So I feel the detention of children was a successful campaign that I was part of. Ending detention of children – which, for a prolonged period of time, was awful. Kids were kept for months in the same room with their parents who are also very distressed. I worked very hard to successfully and actually change that. I managed to get the amendment to legislation through a sustained organised effort. Now what is really difficult to accept now is how quickly those wins become turned around. We worked on the detention of children for nearly a year. The campaign went on for nearly a year. So, two years of hard work and then accountability. So, from 2011 and now they kind of reversed it. The government went back on it'. (Zrinka, 2015)

The persistent challenges and setbacks of activism mean that definitive judicial wins, such as that achieved by Detention Action to ban DFT, can have a very necessary restorative function. Maintaining commitment and hope in the face of much discouragement, leans heavily on the concrete advances to provide stamina and sustain the sense that change is possible.

5.4.3.5. Building alliances

Building alliances has been identified as crucial in helping smaller organisations, such as Right to Remain, to join forces with other coalitions and associations against detention and deportation and build strength. Lisa notes:

> 'We work with other groups, other organisations who do. So, we are part of kind of a forum where, um, like I have been to a meeting this morning where a person in the organisation was going to meet with Home Office. So, we get to hear about it, Um, but we don't do that. We don't have the capacity, but we wouldn't particularly anyway. So, the organisation has two full time workers, but, then we have about 50 groups we work with, who are all kind of grassroots, non-funding groups across the UK. And we coordinate, um, support for those groups who are campaigning. And, so, and we have kind of thousands of supporters as well'.

There is no formalised database of the network, possibly because they 'work with a particular set of groups…that…change quite a lot' (Lisa, 2015). Funding restrictions can have a ripple effect across the movement; even if an organisation survives the funding struggles, it is impacted by the loss of a sister organisation if it does not survive. Funding difficulties naturally affect the smallest organisations, which, if they survive, end up experiencing huge pressure to be effective, even with the small amount of resources at their disposal. Finding a way to navigate these constraints can be a key part of the job, as Lisa explains:

> '… There is just two of us in the organisation. I mean, to manage the organisation. So, I feel responsible for the people that are helping, but, also the organisation, whether that continues or not, it depends on us. But I also feel like I'm not responsible for the context in which we are trying to work. So, a lot of the crisis comes from government action. Um, and I think that's an interesting thing to negotiate. You can kind of feel powerless sometimes. Because the context is

getting worse and worse and worse. The laws are becoming more and more racist. So, you have to be clear about what you can change. Um, also, I am only responsible for doing the best I can do about that. Our work depends on interaction of hundreds and thousands of other people'.

Alliances play an important role and lead to a diversity of activities and programmes to address women-centred issues in the asylum system and beyond. Though the acceptance of gender-sensitive approaches in Home Office practice has been made, women who have experienced gender-based persecution, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, rape, sexual and domestic violence, forced marriage, honour killings and other threats to life, still get detained and deported without due diligence. These experiences are often hard to evidence, which thwarts the process. In addition, the complexity of the asylum determination process, alongside the engrained belief that most claims are fraudulent, continues to lead to many claims being refused based on credibility. Such has been the context for these practical solidarities.

5.4.4 On measuring success and vision for the future

5.4.4.1. On measuring success

Activists tend to gauge success over the long term, rather than measuring it in short-term, concrete terms. Measuring success is problematic within a context of continual knock-backs and struggle, particularly in the much-more volatile anti-deportation and anti-detention campaigners' work. They avoid using metrics such as: how many campaigns they have run; how many families have been released out of detention centers; how many laws or policies they have seen change, instead thinking of success in terms of influence over time. Debora explains:

> 'I think it's, I mean the fact that I could only mention a couple of things that really have directly affected women and beyond that, sort of processes and things, shows that it's really slow process and I suppose it also shows that I've somehow coped with the fact that [the result] is not, you know happening like that immediately…So I suppose I measure processes as well as impacts and I measure well major thing, I mean, it depends what it's for. But, you know, we'll make note

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of things like something we've said will be included in somebody else's paper or something we've said being said by a minister or adopted or even just said by a minister even if it's not actually adopted as a policy. So, the fact that we're creating some influence and things are moving a bit, because if we only waited for the absolute impact, we'd have a lot of blank sheets of paper'.

Practical-orientated policy work is reliant heavily on whether and when the state is approachable to engage in dialogue with campaigners; policy is time bound and seeing real changes materialise can take a long time.

Lisa Matthews:

So, we've never, um, never used for example a successful campaign as a measure. Also, because we have so little control. So, we can really help someone to strengthen their legal case, we could help someone keep fighting, but, it is always been, kind of, contributive. It's going to be up to the Home Office and the courts. There are so many factors we can't control. That we decided I think for a long time never to try and use people being granted status as a measure of our success. But general increase if we can.

One small victory may benefit only a few individuals; however, if it is indicative of a shift in approach then it deserves to be highlighted and celebrated. Activists typically track and celebrate small wins, as waiting for the larger, concrete wins is unsustainable and demoralising. Another source of inspiration can be successful campaigns that start small, develop quickly and have unanticipated success and reach. Such has been the case with Amal's *Glasgow Girls,* which started out as the smallest of campaigns and became a movement. These small successes can have accumulative effects, as even one successful case can provide a precedent for lawyers arguing for similar cases elsewhere. This information can be quickly shared and benefit many people through these networks. In this way, small victories have the potential to snowball.

'The proudest moment my activism has been to 'Get Agnesa back'. It did still have a lot of issues, but it's better than nothing, plus also the number of families we've estimated - that it's been around 3,000 families that got saved, um, not just through us, through Glasgow Campaign, through Welcome Refugees, through all the other community campaigns, exactly, because what happened was there was an amnesty after like around - I think it was 2007. That's how Agneza, Rosa, Evelina,

a lot of families got leave to remain because of that, the amnesty. And we believe that the amnesty came as a result of that pressure from campaigns. Definitely. Absolutely…

…I see our campaign as a movement in itself. It has become so much bigger than a group of schoolgirls from Drumchapel High School. It has become about, you know, equalities, about justice, about humanity; it's about doing what's right' (Amal, 2015)

The ever-changing socio-political climate also thwarts success; activists have to keep responding and adapting to the changes, and this uses up valuable resources that could be focused on bringing about concrete changes. Lisa, however, is able to consider not just concrete, practical successes in her measurements, but also the more abstract sense of wanting to contribute to and influence the greater good of society. Psychologically, a sense of progress is key to maintaining motivation and momentum. However, the activists interviewed were consistently able to look beyond the need for immediate progress and demonstrate stamina for what is, very likely, a long struggle. Consequently, there is a mental preparedness for setbacks and failures, which gives them resilience during the times when they cannot see any progress, either in mentalities, culture or in the actual lives of those for whom they campaign.

5.4.4.2 On visions for the future

Commitment to activism requires an expansive vision that considers and includes future generations. It also requires thinking wider than the UK, considering the work of activists internationally and joining with them. At the time of our interview in summer 2015, the refugee crisis was extending to European shores. Amal was planning to visit Greece to evaluate the situation and find ways in which activists in Scotland might join forces with other European refugee rights counterparts to raise awareness of the depth and breadth of the issue. Amal states:

'I'm hoping that this movement will become bigger. I'm hoping that tangible changes will be made, mostly changes—with Calais and with Greece and

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everything. I'm hoping that Europe realises that it has an obligation to respond to the crisis. It has a moral obligation and a responsibility to do something about this and not just to ignore it… My main focus is the UK. But we need to link efforts. This is why I would be going. We're going there to capture all the evidence to bring it here (UK) to make the movement here bigger here because we need more people on our side. That's the vision'.

The refugee crisis raised the profile of the problem to a great degree, but, as an emergency response rather than a long-lasting strategy, the emphasis and higher profile was not sustained. This reflects the tension and difficulty of a movement that often needs to respond to the ever-changing political and social climate in order to stay relevant but needs to balance that against the long-term activism required to bring about real, lasting change.

Legacy and continuity also require ongoing consideration. As Zrinka observes, 'the voices of immigrants are non-existent within the movement'. Zrinka's long-term vision is that both refugees and economic migrants become the dominant voice of the movement. From her perspective, effective and authentic counter-bordering must grow a movement of leaders who will move and sustain the refugee/migrant rights activism.

> 'So there is no movement and there are no community leaders who should be leading that movement coming up. It's a country full of immigrants and many of them are educated but they tend to shy away from this particular area because it's been dominated by a kind of charitable groups… which is why it's not empowering for people. My challenge is to change that. My challenge to refugees is to be more active like me. Nothing special I just need 100 people like me. To me it's not just about voices. To me it's about people being in control of what needs doing because who knows better what immigrants need apart from immigrants'. (Zrinka, 2016)

The *Women on the Move Award*, presented by Migrants Organise, in partnership with UNHCR and the UN Refugee Agency, collaborates with this vision. The award ceremony aims to recognise and 'celebrate the inspirational leadership and refugee women who help others integrate and contribute to UK society' (Migrants Organise, 2018). This has a dual impact: it supports the women who do this important work, whilst contributing to changing the public narrative about what migrants and refugees bring to the UK.

According to their website, 'the awards and fellowship make an ongoing and lasting difference to the winners, whilst the women gain recognition for their work and raise their profile through the media coverage' www.womenonthemoveawards.org. The work done by these women has gained an international profile and received coverage in press publications, including Open Democracy, ITV and the Huffington Post. In 2014, Migrants Organise 'began to develop a fellowship network for the awards winners, shortlisted candidates and nominees to support each other, develop as leaders and continue to access new resources' (Migrants Organise, 2018). A fellowship provides access to high quality leadership development, networking opportunities and financial support to enable these women to develop their work. This includes pro-bono leadership training and mentoring from organisations such as The Forum, networking events, development opportunities, and individual/group support for winners, shortlisted candidates and nominees (Migrants Organise, 2018). In this way, the wider vision of raising up and releasing trained and equipped leaders from the migrant community is being enacted.

5.4.4.3. Mentoring future mentors

Investing specifically in future leaders and mentors is part of fulfilling this vision for a migrant-led movement. Mentoring mentors in their communities forms part of 'a vision is to establish an organised movement of migrants, refugees and allies who are powerful enough to ensure that politicians and the public build a welcoming society, which isn't hostile to refugees' (Zrinka, 2016).

Migrants Organise has also established a Community Leadership Academy. The academy, which was conceived as an initiative to address the absence of immigrant voices in the wider refugee rights movement, has been designed for all migrant and refugee community groups who are committed to social justice, with particular focus on people who are 'leading, building or members of refugee and migrant community

organisations'. Some of the training currently being offered by the Academy seeks to attract 'people who are passionate about their communities and have the drive and determination to change things for the better…have a firm footing in [their] community and will be well-connected to local people and groups' (Migrants Organise, 2018)

Training covers areas such as:

> *Building power to create change*: focus on understanding and building power through negotiation, influencing and action.
>
> *Speaking out on issues:* focus on developing ways to communicate what matters to you through practical training and action led learning. Speaking out is a way of claiming power and inspiring others to take action.
>
> *Building common ground:* focus on encouraging individuals and organisations to build strong alliances and networks and give you practical tools to help do so. This is aimed at building strong, diverse teams to strengthen communities.
>
> *Mentoring:* focus on developing leaders through peer-to-peer mentoring, growing teams and empowering them to take action
>
> (www.migrantsorganise.org)

These programmes indicate the hope for, and deliberate investing in, future change.

5.5. Conclusion

I began this chapter seeking to draw on stories from the women activists' life histories, with a focus on the meaning they ascribed to borders and the practical solidarities and activism within which they engage. This has expanded on the focus of Chapter 5, which examined their dedication to a particular life path and their long-term commitment to protect and defend the rights of migrants. The interpretations and meanings ascribed to borders and bordering by the activists was found to vary. Their interpretations are critical, as the meaning they give to the systems with which they engage is often the foundation for which activism decision-making and processes are enacted.

A unifying exposition and understanding of how borders are read would be profoundly useful for the movement, but most likely unachievable. Thus, complications arise when

activists have irreconcilably different interpretations of the struggle; these have the potential to derail the focus of activism and deplete energy from the focus of achieving change for refugees and asylum seekers.

In the context of an increasingly hostile environment, racialised and oppressive bordering practices are no longer only experienced through state processes and systems, nor just only in the specific locations of border-enactment but become ubiquitous, manifesting across culture and society. Activists' subversions and resistance need to mirror this, increasing influence and reach beyond the specific sites and systems of border enactment. Small scale, localised actions that support broader formations of activism are articulated through various forms of praxis such as practical solidarities, anti-racist frameworks, feminisation of resistance, campaigns for policy and systemic changes and alliance building.This chapter further reveals that activists find themselves confronted with other considerable constraints that limit their potential and ability to measure success.

However, it becomes evident that the women are able to celebrate small victories won while crafting the vision for an alternative future. This chapter serves as both an observation of the women's (arguably) strongest practices and an illumination of strategies currently employed which may be useful for other radical movements within the UK to consider.

Chapter 6 will examine a specific strategic articulation of activism in the arts, through an evaluation of Nine Lives Theatre as it toured across the UK between 2015 and 2016.

Chapter 6: Countervailing the borders through performance: The making, staging and touring of Nine Lives Theatre

6.1. Nine Lives Theatre as a political agent for refugee/migrant rights activism

6.1.1. Introduction

This chapter interrogates activists' articulation of engagement practices and political resistance through the arts. It is grounded in my evaluation of the Nine Lives Theatre performances, which I conducted from June 2015 to January 2016. Nine Lives Theatre toured across 25 locations, performing to more than 2000 members of the audience in the UK. The chapter posits Nine Lives Theatre as a political agent for counter-bordering in migrant rights activism in the UK.

A recognition of this connection between politics and performance often pervades the works of theatre scholars and activists, such as Alison Jeffers, Emma Cox and James Thompson. Indeed, 'performance has always been a way of articulating the conditions of contemporary society, and of pointing through the body of performance to ways of defining, understanding and changing those conditions' (Hunter, 2013:5)[5]. Hunter (2013) reminds us that performance indeed offers opportunities to engage in making a difference by signposting specific messages about issues in our societies. Furthermore, performance also can help 'generate alternatives through artistic productions that can become oppositional, relational, resistant, partial and situated or alongside' (Hunter, 2013:5).

Nine Lives Theatre generated defining stories, highlighting how asylum seekers are experiencing borders and bordering practices and generating reflections on alternative

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[5] More examples of spatial interventions through art can be found in the edited collection entitled, *Performance, Politics and Activism,* by Peter Linchtenfels and John Rouse.

strategies for practical solidarity. During the performances, the audience witnesses the situatedness, positioning and standpoint of an asylum seeker. Through the eyes of Ishmael, the central character, power-laden stories emerge, which illustrate that the state's asylum system effectively controls bodies on the move, punishes the dreams they carry on their journey and dictates their future. These stories of border lives were not only representing the lives and stories of those impacted by borders and bordering; these stories were fundamentally doing something - politically, ideologically, aesthetically and culturally.

6.1.2 Conceptual review and methodology

Politically motivated performances and theatrical practices provide alternative discourses for refugees to counter oppressive socio-political and economic conditions that render them refugees (Balfour, 2013). Though the notion that live performance can bring about real political change is contested (Kelleher, 2007:57), the theoretical and practical perspectives theatre performs, can give significant insight into the socio-political and economic conditions that render individuals as refugees, thus challenging dominant racist and othering discourses. Kaptani & Yuval-Davis (2008) illustrated this in their work employing theatre methodologies to explore issues of migration, refugee identity and belonging. They argue that theatre can be useful in generating narratives considering the identities of marginalised groups, suggesting that theatrical methodologies can illustrate the perceptions and experiences of social positionings and power relations in and outside community groupings.

The inclusion of an evaluation of the National Tour of Nine Lives Theatre within the thesis was to address two of the objectives of the thesis, namely: 1) to explore the role of performance in campaigning for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, and 2) to

investigate the ways in which performance becomes activism in the pursuit of refugee and migrant rights.

The epistemological foundation of politically motivated performance requires some consideration. Forsyth (2009) cautions that theatre documenting lives, should avoid homogenising concepts such as 'truth', 'originality' or 'authenticity'. It must 'embrace, politically and aesthetically the 'real' by truthfully interpreting life' (Forsyth 2009: 9). Similarly, in her book 'Theatre of the Real', Martin (2013) defines political performance as one which seeks a connection between the stage and social and political realities; it illustrates the connectedness between different stories and places, portraying real events whether personal, social, political or historical. These performances typically draw on highly innovative forms of playwriting and directing that may include witness accounts, film footage, photographs, documents, legal transcripts, interviews and archives (Martin, 2013).

Nine Lives is a reality-based theatre, attempting to accurately represent the experiences and stories of asylum seekers and refugees. I sought to avoid privileging one story over another, understanding that the performances were presenting constructions of lived experiences, rather than a positivist truth. I adopted a grounded theory approach, allowing the distinct questions of my inquiry to serve as a compass for my evaluation. These questions included: what messages did Nine Lives performances construct for UK audiences and to what end? How did Nine Lives performances communicate a belief or a 'truth'? How was this received and understood by audience members? The goal of Nine Lives Theatre was to translate the personal narratives into a 'possible discourse' that could potentially foster a sense of connection with the audience and inspire solidarity; I sought to evaluate how effectively this was achieved.

Ridout (2009) argues that theatre performances intending to make a political contribution must utilise new approaches to ethics. During theatre performances that address ethical and political issues, the audience is not simply spectating, but becomes the audience-as-witness to a person's pain - that the performance is based on the reality of another's experiences, removes the sense of detachment between the audience and the artist. His analysis is based in part on researching the responses and reactions of audience members during politically and ethically motivated theatre performances. Ridout (2009) claims that in witnessing and responding to the ethical issues raised, the audience then accepts a certain level of responsibility.

I was interested in whether and to what extent Nine Lives Theatre was able to bring people who were emotionally and politically distant from migration concerns into close proximity with them. In such a space of 'a situated inter-dependence' (Hunter, 2013), in which performers and audience members interact, I was able to examine the impact Nine Lives had on various audience members of different demographics and backgrounds. Nine Lives toured cities for eight months, giving 45 performances to 1320 audience members, of which 22 were regional and another 23 were in London. In addition, the performance was live-streamed on 29 January, 2015, though audience size was unmeasured.

I first met Alex Chisolm, the director of Nine Lives, on 15 November, 2015: we were both attending the Birmingham Sanctuary Summit[6], an unprecedented gathering of refugees,

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[6] In 2014, Birmingham Sanctuary summit participants spelled out their position in the "Birmingham Declaration," a set of principles and "asks" that have already been signed by 26 national and regional organisations. The declaration affirms the UK's long tradition of offering protection to those fleeing persecution, and its reputation for fairness and justice. It goes on to say that most British people are sympathetic towards those who come here seeking protection and asks for an end to destitution and indefinite detention. It is planned to continue gathering support for the declaration throughout the faith, community, public and private sectors, before sending it to all party leaders. https://sanctuarysummit2014.wordpress.com/

migrants, advocates and supporters from more than 100 civil society organisations across Britain. More than 400 attendees voted unanimously for the Birmingham Declaration that pledged to work to 'stop the tide of negativity facing those who come to our shore' (Summit Report, 2014). Shortly afterwards, the producers of Nine Lives Theatre raised a small amount of funding from the British Arts Council to take the play on a national tour, hoping that refugee narratives would be heard across the nation. I joined as an external evaluator/researcher, to witness how the play enacted activism, engaging audience with the politically motivated stories and experiences depicted in the narrative. I sought to evaluate Chisolm's strategy for **undoing** the specific rhetoric of the state towards the asylum seekers and refugees, pushing back against the increasingly normalised tide of negativity. It was the staging of particular discursive and practical frameworks within the specific context of crisis, which I argue, carried political salience and rigour. As various audiences were reached, specific choices were made in relation to achieving accurate representation of lived experiences of asylum seekers.

The methodology used in evaluating the tour is the combination of dramaturgical analysis and symbolic representation through the spectator's description of the performances of Nine Lives, as well as meaning-making within the wider social context of its production. Qualitative data was collected from the audience via feedback forms, post-theatre discussions, question and answer sessions (Q&A) and interviews. Quantitative data was collected on the number of participants across different activities, including workshops, post-show discussions, inter-disciplinary symposia, performances and talks. Additionally, I consider narrative accounts from my interviews with Alex Chisolm (the director and co-producer of Nine Lives), Zodwa Nyoni (the playwright) and Lladel Bryant (the actor).

My evaluation of Nine Lives Theatre primarily focused on audience feedback from people who attended, participated and discussed their experiences of the live performance; this

sometimes included reflections on the meaning of the performance in relation to their own stories of border experience[7].

The evaluation considered the successes, opportunities and challenges of the tour in relation to the thesis objectives. I was able to visit most venues to talk to participants or staff. During each visit, I observed and participated in activities, recorded field notes and helped in the collection of feedback forms from the audience. [8]

6.1.3. Organisation of the findings

The findings in this chapter are organised into three sections that reflect the overall argument that positions Nine Lives as counter-border performance. The making and staging of Nine Lives is examined in Section 6.2, starting with some background about the commissioning and process of writing the play. In my interview with the theatre director, Alex Chisolm, he describes the tour as a process of 'regaining the headlines'. The play was touring during the highly publicised refugee crisis of 2015-2016; the news was full of alarmist headlines raising concerns about the migrants 'flooding' into the UK, which was exacerbating the internal dislocation of borders and couched in rhetoric focusing on difference (Balibar, 2002). Alex was overt that the play's goal was to provoke consciousness in the audience and stir up a responsibility to become active in the migrant rights movement.

Section 6.2.1 gives a plot summary to contextualise the discussion and considers the role of representation. This is followed by the explication of five frames found in the script in Section 6.2.3; these five frames, discussed in turn, are otherness, everyday bordering and resistance, the violence of the system, legal limbo and belonging.

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[7] Data from the live-streamed performance was not collected, due to the platform not supporting data collection or audience feedback. Thus, the data collection was exclusively from the live audiences.
[8] Some of the participants preferred to take the feedback forms with them, and later emailed their responses directly to either the box office or to the director.

Section 6.3 examines the directorial politics and mise-en-scène. The findings emphasise evidence of a strong push to envision alternatives, paying attention to the intimate relationship between theatre and place. Mackey's (2016) work demonstrates that engaging people in their *locus* through theatre practice can trouble the meanings of place, destabilising suppositions of locality, community, belonging and connection and can identify, make explicit, interrogate and shift or alter relationships (2016: p. 107). I elaborate a similar argument in Section 6.3.2, demonstrating, through the data gathered from interactive engagement activities, how Nine Lives sought to create new political values. Audiences of Nine Lives were encouraged to imagine a new world, with questions such as: what does a world without detention centres look like? What does a UK society without rigid/racist immigration control mechanisms look like? Alex Chisolm's cultural envisioning also reflected the Birmingham Sanctuary Summit's Declaration, in particular the five pledges of the Declaration.[9]

Finally, the achievements and limitations of the tour are evaluated against the original objectives of the tour in Section 6.4. The efficacy of theatre practice as a form of activism within the refugee rights movement is examined more broadly, including the impact and legacy of Nine Lives Theatre. Overall, Nine Lives performances intended to 'engage its audiences in the moment of making difference that the possibility for effective action becomes imaginable' (Hunter, 2013); the contention of this chapter is that this was largely achieved through the strategic work of the performance and wider structures of the tour.

6.2. The making and staging of Nine Lives Theatre

Nine Lives Theatre was first commissioned in 2014 by Alex Chisolm, whilst she was the Director at West Yorkshire Playhouse. Zodwa Nyoni, her mentee at the Leeds' *Young*

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[9] Five pledges of Birmingham Declaration https://sanctuarysummit2014.wordpress.com/the-birmingham-declaration/

Writers Mentorship Development Programme residency at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, was commissioned to write it. It premiered in Leeds as part of West Yorkshire Playhouse's '*A Play, a Pie & a Pint'* theatre programme of short plays. On 2 September, 2014, Nine Lives was performed at the UK Parliament as part of *Sanctuary in Parliament*, an event organised by *City of Sanctuary* to highlight the issues in the UK's immigration and asylum system.

Nyoni explained during her interview that the storyline and script was inspired by a personal encounter with a deported asylum seeker she knew from the UK. Nyoni researched the process of claiming asylum to obtain more insight into the complexity of immigration politics; she noted the importance assigned to evidence in credibility assessments during the asylum-seeking process, and how the waiting process was experienced from the standpoint of an asylum seeker. Nyoni notes that her responsibility as a writer lies in the accurate representation of the experiences of her subjects.

> 'I knew I had a responsibility to tell the story as accurately as I could.... my job was to accurately tell the experiences of the people who are not being heard - but there is a reason why I interviewed asylum seekers and refugees. There is a reason why I volunteered with Meeting Point. There is a reason why I have volunteered with third sector. It was because I didn't want [to] have somebody tell my story in a completely inaccurate way. I know what it's like to be part of that wait. I had a responsibility to respect somebody enough to go ask them: what is your experience? And to respect them and not have to edit out the experience umm and lot of the information I end up [with] in the play is based on these interviews... it is also based on, you know, blogs that I read. I have a responsibility to accurately tell somebody's story not just the edit, not because it sounds nice. Sounding nice doesn't help the society...it doesn't tell anybody the truth about the world that we are living in'. (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015)

Nyoni explains how she avoided 'imposing filters' because 'if I am not depicting that world…that's not the person that I want to be [as a playwright]'. Thus, she sought to depict accurately the process of asylum-seeking and immigration control as it was being experienced by those interacting with it. The characterisation and plot were inspired by daily interactions and interviews with asylum seekers, with whom she spent time whilst

volunteering with the Leeds City of Sanctuary charity. She began with verbatim transcripts, moulding these into a script for the play; this included member checking the dialogue with her research participations. She explains:

> 'I was very much concerned about writing a script then taking it back into the group that I met at Meeting Point, and saying, is this right here? And when we read through the script, I read it [to the] asylum seekers, and I asked them whether or not things are correct and accurate. Then I started working with them on accents. Umm it was very, very important to me' (Zodwa Nyoni , 2015).

Finally, Nyoni sought to ensure that the characters expressed the intensity of emotion necessary to drive the plot; poetry was chosen to express certain feelings and ideas emotively and evocatively. It was clear from Nyoni's account that the process of developing the authorial voice and narration was not neutral but politicised. At different points during our interview Nyoni recounted moments where she perceived herself as being 'a watcher', 'speaking on behalf of' or 'giving voice to' others. Further analysis of how the politics of authorial intentionality played out and how textual choices were made politically transformative will be discussed next by positioning the script within a border power reading.

6.2.1 Positioning of author's textual choices within the power-border matrix

The script of Nine Lives Theatre consists of a fifty-minute monologue delivered by a solo character, Ishmael. The story charts Ishmael's journey from the moment when he is sent to his (temporary) new home in Leeds as part of the immigration dispersal scheme. Through Ishmael, we have a glimpse of the many other lives he meets during the wait to hear about his asylum claim, including people's differing attitudes and actions towards asylum seekers in the UK.

> 'Nine Lives tells the complex story of being moved through the asylum system - of being made powerless and anonymous, of being met with hostility and with love from the native population, of an already traumatised man being re-traumatised by a system designed to deal with you as a problem, not as a person. It also tells the

particular story of a gay asylum seeker from Zimbabwe. The story of LGBTQI asylum seekers is that of a minority within a minority. Until recently it was practice asking asylum seekers to 'prove' their sexuality, or to tell them they can go home and 'live quietly'. The enormously high burden of 'proof' means that the UK refuses 99% of all asylum claims based on sexuality on first application'. (Alex Chisolm: opening speech delivered during the Nine Lives-UeL symposium at Arcola Theatre on 25 January, 2016.)

Before deconstructing how border lives and experiences were depicted within the Nine Lives script, a brief plot summary may help readers who are not familiar with the play.

Plot summary:

Scene I

Nine Lives opens with a monologue by Ishmael, an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe, running for his life in pursuit of refugee protection. Upon arrival at Heathrow Airport, Ishmael is dispersed, as per Section 95 provision of the Asylum and Immigration Bill, to temporary accommodation in Leeds. He is sent to Burnstall Heights, Flat 46, where he is going to stay among strangers and wait for the outcome of his asylum claim. Ishmael's monologue begins with a claim - putting the record straight about the legitimacy of his asylum claim. Throughout the scene, a frustrated Ishmael gives a testimony-like narrative countering the dominant narrative as to why people claim protection. He speaks of the hardship of the uncertainty whilst awaiting decisions, of loneliness and invisibility. He talks of the combination of the scars of past trauma alongside his present life in limbo and the disruption caused by ever-changing immigration laws. Towards the end of the scene, Ishmael expresses his desire to be active and to belong. He begins to take walks, learns the names of the streets, makes casual acquaintances and enjoys connecting to the place. Everybody around him has got a clear identity, a clear location, and a clear purpose - but Ishmael has not. However, he does have a desire to assimilate, to learn everything about the host country, to remember places and make a new home. He wants to become identified with his new cultural (spatial) and social surroundings.

Scene 2

Life feels disappointing for Ishmael. The Home Office-provided living does not match his expectations nor his aspirations. Ishmael shares the flat with a middle-aged Iranian man who is also seeking asylum. Each live in their head, fearful and unable to connect with each other. Ishmael is struggling to adapt to the process of change. The emphasis placed on 'evidence' in the asylum process forces him to re-connect with his past via Facebook. In this scene, Ishmael's sexual identity is finally revealed. He laments the intrusiveness and explicitness of asylum interview questions and expresses confusion as regards to what counts towards his asylum claim. Ishmael experiences the process as dehumanising and crippling, but he desperately needs evidence in order to be believed. David, his former lover, and his only hope for evidence, has not been responding to his calls and messages.

Ishmael further highlights what it is like being gay in Harare as being something considered 'un-African', 'ungodly' - something neither his parents nor his society, he believes, would tolerate.

At Centre Points, Ishmael meets his fellow asylum seekers who meet at a church on Mondays for hot meals, drinks and socialising. Ishmael is excited to connect, but also desperately trying to survive by carefully rationing his miniscule support allowance of £36.62 a week. He also speaks to the issues of problematic legal representation and his constant need to gain access to his lawyers.

Scene 3

Ishmael continues to pay attention to his social environment. He receives clues about society and culture by listening to conversations of people around him. While taking his regular walks in the park, Ishmael meets a white 19-year old female, Becks, born and raised in Armley. Becks is the single mother of a four-year-old child named Bailey. Ishmael strikes up a friendship with Becks over their mutual love of the outdoors. Ishmael conceals his true identity from Becks and pretends to be Sam, a successful business student. He also pretends to be a fan of a musician named Tinie Tempah. Sam is indeed a confident, charming, straight lad with a bright future. Becks grows fond of Sam and the two become close. More parallels emerge in their connection story: they are both lonely, both have a desire to connect and to be heard and loved. Ishmael becomes increasingly guilty for betraying Beck's honesty by not revealing his own true identity. He is torn, mentally weighing the cons and pros of his continued deception. While he appreciates the positive emotions he gets when he is around Becks, he is scared this will lead to rejection as soon as Becks finds out his status. Ishmael cannot tolerate continuing to live the lie. One evening when he was invited to Beck's flat for dinner, a panicked Ishmael slips out her flat without saying goodbye, disappears never to return.

Scene 4

Back at his asylum accommodation flat, Ishmael's flat mate, Cyrus, an Iranian refugee and Christian father, is frustrated that his final appeal has been dismissed and that he has now exhausted all his rights to appeal. His anger is building. He has reached a breaking point, but Ishmael does not know how to help him. The exchange between the two in the flat is a sad narration of events that they both share and demonstrates how the system is built to *'break spirit, and make you want to give up before they tell you to go'*. Cyrus moans about being sent to a private landlord, Angie, who treats them harshly due to their insecure status in the country. Angie will not repair anything in the place, not even the kitchen sink or the carpet. The bedroom walls are damp and become mouldy, posing a health risk, which he fears will cause asthma to his soon-to-arrive daughter, Susann. Cyrus, who spent two years in limbo, cannot take it anymore. He gets blamed for everything and is easily picked on. Everyone looks at him as if he '*ruins this country'*. The next morning, Angie, followed by three men, forcibly intrude into Cyrus' residence, start packing his belonging and Cyrus is deported back to Tehran. Ishmael is shocked. He reflects on dreams aborted, and upon men of

integrity and honesty like Cyrus being rejected. He reflects on the price he must pay for '*begging for a taste of your liberty*'.

Scene 5

The phone rings. David (Ishmael's former lover) is finally getting in touch. However, he does so only to tell Ishmael that he no longer wants anything to do with him. David blames the trauma from the asylum process as the reason preventing him from giving evidence in favor of Ishmael. He refuses to go through evidence questioning and advises Ishmael to find someone he can hire to provide evidence. Ishmael refuses to rely on falsified evidence. He decides to be honest and rely on his true story. David hangs up the phone. This exchange leaves Ishmael devastated. Ishmael grabs the mobile phone and slams it repeatedly on the table. Later in this scene, Ishmael picks up red heels, slips them on and decides to explore the nightlife and his newly found freedom as a gay man. He leaves the pain behind and heads to a club. The music is loud. There are neon lights and rainbow flags. Everything is like nothing he has ever known or seen before. Ishmael is approached by a drag queen who invites him to join him on the dance floor. Ishmael lets go and breaks out in dancing. He is happy to be himself and to '*stop being afraid*'.

Scene 6

Another rejection letter comes from the Home Office. Ishmael hastily opens it and reads it with a disappointed face. His appeal application has been rejected once again. Ishmael misses Becks. He feels he has no choice but to come clean with Becks - the only person who truly gets him. Ishmael grabs the Home Office letter, a toy gift for Bailey and heads towards their usual meeting spot in the park. Ishmael finds Becks and Bailey and hands her the letter to read. Becks does not understand what it is about. Ishmael explains and confesses about having lied to her. He says he didn't know how to be her friend, even though Becks made him feel good, appreciated and noticed.

(Ishmael to Becks) You were my friend, but I didn't know how to be your friend. You reminded [me] of what it's like to feel good. You reminded me what it's like to be a person. And it's silly because you didn't do anything, you just sat next to me and said, "Hi". Not many people said Hi. Not many people made me feel good. They sort of look past you, look though you and the ones that see you only see what label you have. (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015: 28)

Becks doesn't say anything. She just stares motionless at Ishmael. She handed the letter back to him, and finally says, *"Hi Ishmael, It's nice to meet yah, I mean properly yah."* Ishmael grins with joy and recites his final, poignant monologue:

Some of us leave pieces of ourselves
In all the places that we've been.
Some of us are still counting how many
Battles we have to face.
Some of us, are just at the beginning,

Hoping to call somewhere home again (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015:29).

(Ishmael stands and places the letter in the suitcase. He puts on his jacket and rucksack, picks up the suitcase and leaves.)

----------------THE END------------------

Nine Lives Theatre was premised on the 'authenticity' factor (Jeffers, 2008): it sought to tell stories based on the real and genuine experiences of the people Nyoni had interviewed whilst writing. In doing so it sought to connect the audience with these experiences, evoking empathy and using the transformative power of imagination to facilitate the conceiving of an alternative world. This is based on representation – of speaking up and on behalf of those Nyoni sought to represent through the play. Thus, it is important to consider the discourses and meanings deployed in the script and narration, and how these were positioned within the border-matrix.

The use of introspective scenes in Nine Lives creates a strong voice, which encourages the audience to look beyond the border-inflicted binary of *'us and them'*, beyond the reduction of 'the other' (differently situated characters), and to think and feel with them. This allows both the informing of the audience but also encourages them to examine the experiences of Ishmael and the other characters. Representing the voice of the 'other' occurred through the characterisations; the text spoke on behalf of those with similar experiences, allowing an authentic voice, which had the potential to spark empathy and action. Within this, the audience was encouraged to bear witness to their own presence and potential power. The experience of the audience was filtered through five frames within the text, these are explicated in the next section.

6.2.2 Deconstructing the Poetics: the dialogical and discursive frames of Nine Lives Theatre

Nine Lives sought to communicate the narratives and testimonies of those living 'border lives', shaping audience's understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers; this was deployed as a strategy to validate their suffering while making a case for solidarity and alliance. Specific frames were condensed within the script, offering a simultaneous view of oppositional discourse against the power-laden state narrative of border securitisation and immigration control. Five frames can be identified as dominant in Nine Lives script and each describes a specific border experience: otherness, everyday bordering, the violence of the system, legal limbo and belonging. These are described in turn, examining how they were framed and deployed to speak to the public consciousness.

6.2.2.1. Frame 1: Understanding otherness

The monologue of Nine Lives Theatre begins by questioning how we understand otherness. It pits Ishmael's experiences against the rest of the world – creating a strong 'us' versus 'them' binary conception of his world. This notion was perceivable in almost every scene. Poetic interludes are situated between each scene, marking the boundaries of his belonging. In a chorus-like commentary, Ishmael opens with the following lines:

> Some of us were running
> Some of us were fleeing
> Some of us know wars that will never cease
> Some of us were persecuted
> Some of us were stripped and beaten
> Some of us have scars that will never heal
> Some of us are broken
> Some of us were thrown into prisons
> Some of us were sent back
> Some of us were dispersed
> Some of us were alone

> Some of us felt invisible
>
> Some of us felt time slow in our wait
>
> (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015:7).

In these lines, Ishmael identifies himself with a specific group who have gone through particular situated experiences, creating a distinct standpoint and worldview which differs from the rest of the world. The repetitive use of 'some of us' activates, right from the beginning, a marker of citizenship distributed through legal status: a fundamental characteristic of neoliberal immigration policies. The differential borders encountered by asylum seekers through the processes and mechanisms in place to filter, manage, and sort populations, builds an awareness that they are not equal with the rest of the community. Such distinctions of exclusion are performed wherever immigration politics is enacted (Balibar, 2002; De Genova, 2002): in entry ports, at Home Office Reporting Centres and in the everyday. From Ishmael's point of view, every bit of information is designed to mark the borders and his 'kind' occupy a particular space as 'innumerable others arising from a range of sets of power relations between groups' (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2017: 96). Otherness is linked to the immigration status that defines and structures the lives of asylum seekers, placing them into an isolated category and creating everyday borders. The policy and practice of citizenship serves an exclusionary function: it divides the population into subpopulations that can be managed and governed by states (Hindess, 2000).

Furthermore, Ishmael questions our attitudes towards those who are on the other side of the fence. By encouraging a dualistic thinking and underemphasising difference, Ishmael positions himself as a victim of neoliberal policies championing promises of freedom. In scene four he gives his reasons for claiming asylum as to 'have a taste of your liberty'. Scholarly debates about migration, migration enforcement regimes and border politics have drawn special attention to tensions and 'contradictions between liberal democratic

espousals of freedom and equality and the reality of exclusionary immigration policies' (Conlon and Gill, 2015:1; see also, Conlon and Gill, 2013; Bauder, 2003a). Citizenship in Western nations has been upheld as a political identity that embodies modern claims to liberty, equality, individualism, human agency and rights: the delineating of this identity becomes the very reason for others *not* achieving liberty. Ishmael finds that this conflict highlights the hypocrisy of this contradiction. He rejects complicity through subordination and shifts the blame to position the state as the 'other', mirroring the way in which he is seen as the 'other'.

6.2.2.2. Frame 2: Everyday as a site of resistance

In scene six, Ishmael tackles the state's positioning of him as an asylum seeker who is 'outside the law' – this exposes him to psychological suffering and leads him to doubt if he deserves 'human' existence. In his conversation with Becks, Ishmael confesses: 'waiting to be allowed to live is like flickering in and out of existence. Sometimes you are not even sure if you are real' (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015, Scene 6). The audience is presented with Ishmael's experience of the lack of viable political rights for him as an asylum seeker; without the rights of citizenship, he lives a precarious life - a state of 'non-existence-ness' resembling a 'bare life' (Darling, 2009). This positioning of asylum seekers as a group subjected to a bio-political logic of 'compassionate repression' can be found in every act of the state that relegates asylum seekers to a position reliant solely upon the ethical sensibilities of others.

Everyday state bordering processes are present not just in top-down macro social and state policies but are also present in everyday discourses and in the practices carried out by everyday encounters of different social agents, such as housing, welfare system, universities, media, state functionaries and so on (Wemyss et al., 2008; Wemyss and Cassidy, 2017; Yuval Davis et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the notion of public denunciation, in which ordinary citizens are encouraged to report suspicions of migrant illegality, has become a normalised instrument of governance whereby policing, surveillance and bordering are shared between states, institutions, private organisations, and ordinary people (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2018) Ishmael, like many asylum seekers, views the state's intentional encouraging of public intelligence or policing of 'illegals' as violating. For migrants, everyday takes place within a zone of distinction between inclusion and exclusion (Darling, 2009). Citizens reporting so-called illegal activity are effectively enacting sovereign abandonment; these acts need to be viewed within the larger state's politics of encampment. Ishmael's articulation of this experience as flickering in and out of existence allows the audience to question the values ascribed to those living border lives, whose fate rests in the arbitrary exclusion or inclusion even of anonymous citizens. This highlights Ishmael's experience of everyday bordering very powerfully.

Ishmael's powerlessness is set in relief, with the audience repositioned as the ones with the 'power'. As the audience begins to comprehend the ethical violations implicit within the immigration system, the capacity to imagine different possibilities arises. They are, for instance, encouraged to consider alternative ways of providing sanctuary, rather than leaving asylum seekers' survival depend on strangers' compassion and generosity.

Scene four showed how welfare policies operate as bordering practice. Ishmael's narrative recounts how Cyrus laments about his Azure Card failing during a supermarket shop for essentials. The Azure card payments are a cashless system only used by asylum seekers and are thus an identifiable signifier of an 'asylum seeker'. Every week a top up of £35.39[10] is paid into the card to meet weekly expenses including food, essentials,

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[10] While the value of cash on Azure Card in the script is £35.39, the level of support for a single person between 2011 until April 2015 was £36.62, which then increased from £36.62 per week to £36.95. From August 2015, the level of support was fixed at £36.95. And in February 2018 the amount was raised to £37.75 per person

transport and communication with legal representatives. Cyrus weeps in shame and embarrassment, not only because the card does not work, but because of the fear of stigma and judgement from those witnessing. He is conscious of the stigma and judgment from onlookers behind him in the queue: '*they think I am the one who ruined this country*', he says. Cyrus' long lament portrays the state's war on benefits, which has encouraged declining attitudes towards people on welfare. Through Cyrus' story, the anxiety, shame and frustration of being punished as 'bogus' are highlighted; these experiences commonly oppress those on state welfare in the UK.

Cyrus experience with the Azure Card emphasises how the welfare system has become a bordering mechanism, excluding the 'undeserving' within the welfare system. Whether a welfare claimant is 'deserving' or not, is usually associated with 'credibility'; a key element of the asylum-seeking process. The state rhetoric, emphasising that welfare is claimed by undeserving, uncredible individuals, prompting the need to increase policing and control mechanisms, is seen to have 'drove the developing rhetoric of hostility towards asylum seekers with its division between 'genuine' and 'non-genuine' (Guentner et al., 2016: 402). However, narratives stigmatising people receiving benefits are not addressed to asylum seekers alone. As Anderson (2013) notes, categories such as 'the workshy' or 'benefit scroungers' have been used repeatedly 'along with explicit claims that certain groups make disproportionate demands on the taxpayer through some fault of their own' (Guentner et al*.,* 2016: 402).

The dominant state discourses around immigration control have portrayed asylum seekers as 'benefit scroungers', who are taking advantage of the state, and against whom the state fights for control. Nine Lives intentionally shifts the narrative, allowing the audience to view the familiar rhetoric as a tool to channel public anxiety into the 'other' and away from state-directed concerns about the economy, housing, and employment to

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be projected. Nine Lives Theatre effectively counter-narrates these discourses by facilitating a real connection with Ishmael's experiences, which problematises mainstream thinking around migrants and welfare.

6.2.2.3. Frame 3: The violence of the (asylum) system

Obtaining legal status is the primary concern of asylum seekers. The recognition and permission from the sovereign state to remain in the country guarantees that the insecurities and threats of being deported end; this allows the individual to start processing the traumas that led to them seeking asylum. In her study entitled, 'Gendered Harm and Structural Violence in the British Asylum System', Canning (2018) argues that the everyday impacts of policy and practice arguably result in the infliction of further gendered harms on survivors of violence and persecution. Canning (2018) states that harm inflicted through this process can compound the impacts of previous experiences of violent continuums, causing the individual to become psychologically exhausted. In scene four, we see an illustration of this in relation to housing and inadequate welfare access. An inconsolable Cyrus is at breaking point: he has just exhausted all his rights of appeal and he is unhappy about his poor living conditions. Cyrus tells Ishmael:

> Look at them out there, living their lives. They do not know the dogs at the gate are not how they protect this country. They do it in here (points to his chest). They will break spirit and make you want to give up – and then they tell you to go. (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015: 23)

The processual nature of the asylum system is seen as punitive and 'torturous'; Cyrus wonders whether such harsh treatment of asylum seekers is a deliberate design to break their spirit. The violence bound up in asylum-seeker and migrant systems and structures is considerable. A report by Women for Refugee Women (2015), 'I am Human', found that 40% of women detained at the Yarl's Wood detention centre self-harmed. The figures from the Refugee Council further show that 61% of asylum seekers experience serious mental distress and that refugees are five times more likely to have mental health needs

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than the UK population. Additionally, a growing number of suicide attempts have been reported in deportation facilities : an average of two suicide attempts a day in 2018 happened in UK detention centres, 56% of these attempts were committed by individuals who already had a Rule 35 report made about them; (Rule 35 of the statutory Detention Centre Rules 2001 stipulates when a doctor must report health-related concerns to the Home Office) (see more www.refugeecouncil.org) The organisation Medical Justice also report that at least 13 people took their own lives through suicide whilst in detention between 2000 and 2015. These statistics intimate the inherent and structural violence perceivable in the systems (Canning, 2018), or at least imply that they are inappropriate for those already traumatised by the experiences leading to them seeking asylum.

The everyday threat of detention and deportation is explicated well by Nine Lives, highlighting how communities are being turned into policing agents, and how this escalates a sense of moral panic. Coincidently, the tour began at the time when a new Immigration Act (2015) was coming out which encouraged landlords, hospitals and schools to report any suspicion of illegality. In scene four, Ishmael describes the sombre deportation process of his flatmate Cyrus. To fellow asylum seekers, this becomes a shared experience, exacerbating the constant fear of being detained or deported. Ishmael reflects on the event:

> In the days following, the flat is quiet. We are both alone with our thoughts, knowing the inevitable is soon. One morning, Angie opens the door, followed by three men. They barge into his door and start packing his belongings. He tells them that this isn't right. They don't stop. I don't go out to look. (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015).

Nine Lives Theatre illustrates how the violence of the system controlling migrant bodies gets projected into everyday systems. Private landlords, like Angie, end up enacting the borders in private spaces. Ishmael says of Angie: she 'who treats us like we are nothing...as if we came out of cracks and nobody will come find us'. This alludes to 'borderwork', a term coined by Chris Rumford (2006) to denote those acts by 'ordinary

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people' to reinforce everyday borders, such as contractors and landlords. For Rumford, people who take part in such acts are 'borderworkers' and, borderwork provides borderworkers with new political and economic opportunities since 'borders work to strengthen some people while disempowering others' (Rumford, 2012: 897). Ishmael's story illustrates that in order for border work to extend systemically across culture and society, it requires that ordinary people – 'borderworkers' like Angie - construct and inflict borders.

The additional difficulty of this violence is reflected in Ishmael's struggle with rationing: he is given £36.62 a week to cover expenses. This impoverishment effectively acts as a controlling mechanism, extending to every aspect of his life while he awaits asylum determination. The absence of individual's personal autonomy and lack of access to basic human rights, inherent in the experience of not having enough material resources, contributes to the temporal limbo of waiting and can be experienced as a violence. By invoking individual and contextual circumstances in this frame, Nine Lives highlights the disparity between what is communicated to the public about the effectiveness of the mechanisms in place and how it is experienced by those subjected to them. This constructs a counter-narrative to the dominant headlines presented both by political discourses and media channels and moves the audience from the hysteria of the headlines towards concern for individual experience.

6.2.2.4. Frame 4: The legal limbo and representation inconsistencies

The play depicts the inherent culture of disbelief and distrust that permeates the asylum system. Ishmael's and Cyrus' narratives both explore this through their experiences of presenting evidence to the Home Office. Granting refugee status is bound up in the 'credibility' assessment (Griffiths, 2012: 9): the 1951 Refugee Convention states that there must be evidence of a 'well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion,

nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion' (UNHCR 2018). However, there is inherent suspicion that asylum seekers are prone to manipulate the system: UK authorities typically adopt a broad approach to the legal concept of credibility, emphasising 'truthfulness' within a culture of chronic suspicion that asylum seekers are liars (Coffey, 2009; Griffiths, 2012; Sales, 2002). The weight placed on 'credible evidence' means that one aspect of the story can undermine the entire application, often leading to increased likelihood of being detained or difficulty accessing legal representation. This is illustrated by the sudden removal of Ishmael's flatmate, Cyrus, who is deported back to Tehran (Iran), prompting Ishmael to prepare for inevitable deportation if he is not able to secure a witness statement from his ex-lover.

The narrative recounts Ishmael's reliance on Facebook as an important source of information: his only way to reconnect with those from his past who can potentially support his claim as witnesses. Shedding light on the importance of social networks (family ties, friends) in the determination process, the play's narrative brings into question the Home Office's decision-making. Griffiths (2012:10) describes how the credibility assessment and those determining asylum cases 'tend to assume that truthful asylum seekers have a good recall of events, provide 'plausible' accounts, present their stories in a consistent and unhesitating manner, and offer the 'right kind' of evidence and testimony'. Thus, the entire application may fail where there are variations, anomalies or forgotten details, as these occurrences are seen as evidence of lying. However, in reality 'many bureaucracies encourage at least a massaging of truth' (2012:10) in order to fit institutional expectations of 'truth'; this encourages the seeking of help from smugglers or fraudulent witnesses, in order to navigate the inherent administrative disbelief and dubiety with which asylum seekers continually interact.

6.2.2.5. Frame 5: Stories of humanity and belonging

In the final scene, Ishmael praises Becks for being his friend, emphasising how she has demonstrated to him the qualities of compassion, care, empathy and hospitality, which introduces a fifth frame of humanity and belonging. Within the context of a culture in which bordering is ubiquitous and Ishmael's experiences is of 'sharp markers of difference' (Scott & van Houtum, 2009), Nine Lives Theatre highlights the importance of befriending sanctuary seekers. In doing so, it poses questions about the application of the values of humanity and belonging, demonstrating the alternate politics of refugee solidarity and sanctuary exemplified in Becks and Ishmael's friendship.

While befriending the 'other' does not remove the fact that these two belong to different citizenship distinctions, clearly marked by legal status (and skin colour), friendship exists because the two chose to see beyond labels and see humanity. Two lonely individuals in search for a person to connect with find in each other what they were looking for. Befriending is a two-way practice. Becks tells us that it did not cost anything to say "Hi" to Ishmael, yet Ishmael struggles to feel worthy of the friendship and at times denies himself the opportunity to enjoy it. He tells Becks:

> You were my friend, but I didn't know how to be your friend. You reminded me how to feel good. You reminded me what it's like to be a person and it's silly because you didn't do anything. You just sat next to me and said, "Hi." Not so many people said, "Hi." They sort of look past you, look through you, and the ones that see you only see what label you have. (Zodwa Nyoni, 2015:28)

The marginalisation and categorisation of those in the asylum system can make them vulnerable to doubting whether they are worthy of the sanctuary they seek. This is exacerbated by the experience of being numerated rather than humanised: asylum seekers are identified by reference number throughout the asylum process. Whether reporting to the home office or seeking medical or welfare support, there is no mention of their name, only a serial number that enables them to be digitally recognised.

The interactions between Ishmael and Becks highlight the benefits of how supporters, friends and communities involved in the lives of those marginalised can contribute even by simply knowing them by name, responding with humanity and compassion. Through this aspect of the narrative recounting friendship, compassion and humanity, Nine Lives Theatre invites the audience to understand the political and ethical impact of simple support and friendship. Nine Lives performances intentionally wanted to present a narrative of support that was identifiable and achievable.

The narrative also weaves together issues of sexuality, empathy, care and family. In doing so, it highlights the absence of these things in the discourses of citizenship, welfare and political rights. Thus, it bridges the public and the private while discussing the complexity of the asylum experience. As audiences come face to face with the 'truth' about different routes into and through the asylum and immigration system - arrival, applying for asylum, human rights issues, dispersal accommodation and support, interview challenges, reporting requirements, detention, decision determinations and so on - they also find a narrative of humanity that transcends labels. The nine characters are a mix of status and status-less, British and migrants: the common ground being simply that they need each other. Through the genuine and practical reality of the exchange between Ishmael and Becks, the play attempts to remind audiences who we are outside of categorisation and labels. This is a vital bridge between the private and public realms: the power relation between these two realms is a political one, but this is interwoven and contested by a story of individual and collective experiences, shared views and lives.

In sum, the authorial intent in projecting the five frames – otherness, everyday bordering and resistance, the violence of the system, legal limbo and disbelief, and humanity and belonging - was to communicate discursive and practical information that inspires political

action in support of sanctuary. In the next section, the findings will highlight how the director's political ideology was communicated through textual and visual interpretations of bordering.

6.3. Envisioning alternatives: The touring of Nine Lives Theatre

This section is dedicated to assessing the impact and limitations of the tour. The tour sought to instigate sustainable political values, particularly the value of sanctuary. This was undertaken at a critical juncture when sanctuary as a value seemed to be obscured by hegemonic headlines projecting a picture of 'undeserving-ness'. This increased the salience of the tour's objectives, which included bringing audiences face to face with the experiences of 'border lives', providing a window into the lived experiences of how borders function in relation to individuals.

The section starts with an examination of the directorial aims and objectives, followed by a description of the extensive engagement programmes connected to the production, which were part of the wider strategy. The directorial mise-en-scène is explored, which enabled the play to engage politically through discursive and aesthetic strategies. Moving analysis from authorial intent to text, I will be paying attention to the distinctive textual choices made to create a politically motivated theatre (Ridout, 2009) depicting border experiences from the standpoint of the marginalised. This will be demonstrated through the analysis of the audience's reception of the performances as well as pre-show and post-show engagement activities. Through these means, I argue that the tour achieved its purpose by creating a space for inspiring solidarity and co-learning.

6.3.1 Directorial aims and objectives

The aims of the tour were set out with the clear objective to spotlight border experiences and stories beyond the headlines. The staging and touring of Nine Lives were conceived of by the director, Alex Chisolm, as an act of activism and solidarity with the refugee rights

movement. At the Birmingham Sanctuary Summit, Chisolm articulated and committed to the strategic aims and objectives of the national tour, which were to:

- Integrate the production into the life of the community in each location it visits, including refugees and those working with refugees.
- Inform a wider audience on issues around refugees and asylum seekers through the production, encounters with refugees and their stories, debates and available information.
- Build the audience for the production, including refugees, educational establishments and a core audience.
- Build future audiences regionally and nationally for similar activist theatre productions.
- Create a co-learning environment in each venue with activist communities, the refugee population and wider theatre audiences
- Create sustainable, creative relationships between partner venues
- Break even financially.

The directorial politics involved articulating forms of knowledge that could potentially contribute to an alternative vision within public discourse. The tailored engagement programme, including pre-show and post-show activities, was created with a vision to establish networks that could inspire sanctuary and counter border-inflicted othering of 'us' and 'them'.

6.3.2 Audience engagement programme and activism

The engagement programme's objectives were to:

- Integrate activities of education, activism and community participation workshops to enable cohesive and effective relationships with asylum seekers/refugees and wider audiences.
- Each venue is to develop their own bespoke audience engagement programme on issues of refugees and asylum seekers for their own communities.
- Create a space for dialogue, understanding and reflection informed by the learning and resources from local advocacy communities.
- Achieve minimum 60% capacity at each venue visited.
- Accessible Performances - accessible to at least 5% asylum seekers.
- Raise the profile of issues connected with refugees and asylum seekers locally, regionally and nationally.
- Raise the profile of high quality 'activist' drama productions from Leeds Studio and partners regionally and nationally.

To envision alternatives meant that, if successful, they would connect the audience to asylum seekers and their experiences – thus enabling the two worlds to come together in reflection and discussion. It also meant performances would create a space (platform) for charting the course of asylum seekers struggles, fears, anxieties, hopes and dreams. This was envisaged to awaken the consciousness of the audience as they encountered the experiences of hardship and struggle produced by the asylum system and the UK mechanisms of border control.

The tour commenced with a preview at West Yorkshire Playhouse, in Leeds on 19 June, 2015, with the first public performance on 21 June. This was followed by a series of performances touring Leeds, Sheffield, Hebden Bridge and Liverpool, ending on 27 July. The second series of performances resumed on 19 September, 2015 and toured Swansea, Wakefield Literature Festival, Oxford, Ilkley Literature Festival, Exeter, Bristol, Malvern, Leicester, Doncaster, Manchester (Sale), Stockton on Tees, and Brighton. The interval between the two series enabled the production to increase advertising and reach out to a wider audience across England and Wales. Nine Lives Tour ended with a month-long residence at Arcola Theatre in London, spanning 6 to 30 January, 2016.

6.3.3 The mise-en-scène

Theatrical activism relies upon executing a powerful and persuasive *mise-en-scène*[11]. This was a crucial part of Nine Lives, determining the quality of both the art (its importance as art form or medium) and the political discourse. This required that the personal stories of the nine lives of the play were authentically represented. Alex Chisolm, during my interview, expressed the importance given over to ensuring that the flow of thoughts and ascribed meanings in the performance accurately reflected the real experiences of asylum seekers. The director chose to emphasise action and minimise staging, in an

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[11] *Mise-en-scène* translated from French means 'setting the stage' or stage design.

effort to mediate the experiences of people on the move and the interrelated discourses about migration. This allowed the narrative to occupy the space and to have an inherent creative authority, which, it was hoped, might increase the emphasis on encouraging the audience to move from knowledge to action - from awareness of the issues to active members of the refugee rights movement. The minimal staging emphasised the politics, but also added value to overall aesthetics.

The discussion of *mise-en-scène* and the politics of its dramaturgy will focus on two visual images that dominated Nine Lives staging: (a) the suitcase and (b) the actor's embodiment of characters. The details are important: visual cues in theatrical performances contain the 'said' and 'unsaid' meanings (Hall, 1996). Language is the medium through which meanings can be shared, but language is more than spoken or written words (Hall, 1996). Chisolm's directorial strategy uses visual cues of a suitcase and the embodiment of the nine characterisations, using both silences and 'the said' throughout the performance. I will examine the symbolic language and dramatic function of the suitcase as a visual cue, alongside the meaning deploying through the use of a solo performer to articulate the experiences of nine characters.

6.3.3.1. The suitcase metaphor

The staging of the suitcase contains multiple meanings. The play opens with Ishmael entering the stage with only a suitcase and a single light bulb in his pocket. He screws the bulb into the holder above his head. The light snaps on. The bare setting and the suitcase speak of what is not there: the audience does not know where his journey starts or ends. The visuals allude to a lone, lonely journey, a body on the move. Ishmael's opening lines give us a hint of this: they give some descriptions of his journey, which has been coloured by disruption and continuity. There is a yearning to cross a 'border'- a geopolitical border but also a metaphorical one. The headlines of media outlets during the Nine Lives tour - dominated by images of the 'Calais Jungle' in France and the

desperate, sometimes deadly, attempts of those seeking sanctuary - made the visual image of the suitcase even more poignant. Sometimes the play's performance was paralleled by the media showing images of suitcases containing the leftovers of belongings of those who may or may not have made it safely to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

The directorial strategy was to maintain the visually condensed experience of a lone character as central throughout the staging of the play. In doing so, it sought to invite consideration from the audience that an individual, with a unique and specific narrative with isolating overtones, was behind the experiences of all those in the headlines on the move. As Ishmael's story demonstrates, such a journey does not have a foreseeable ending. The end of his monologue reemphasises this: before leaving the stage, he locks his suitcase, picks it up and moves towards the unknown, 'hoping to call somewhere home again'. The suitcase in the scene symbolises both human mobility and the resilience required to face adversity. Life as an asylum seeker is a collection of fragmented temporalities and disruptions, alongside a yearning for a sense of continuity and the pursuit of a better life. As the narrative develops, the audience see that all the fragments of Ishmael's past and present life stories and memories are buried inside the suitcase. Disjointed narratives gradually emerge each time Ishmael opens the suitcase and picks up an item.

In scene 2, he rushes to the suitcase, opens it, pulls out traditional African dancing shells, and then begins narrating his identity and the challenges of finding his place in the world, including his own family. Being African is an identity he cherishes, but there is more to his identity which he feels is at odds with his family and tradition. Such is the struggle of identifying as gay in most African countries where this is often viewed as un-African and un-Godly. Ishmael is concerned about what his family's reaction might have been, had

he come out as gay when in Zimbabwe. Instead, he felt forced to conceal his identity in order to avoid plunging his parents into shock and disappointment in him, whom they have viewed as a good son so far. The narrative recounts his experiences of living 'in the closet' due to the traditional, normative views of his family and country. Ishmael understands the issue as societal and structural, in need of change: even if his parents accepted him, he would not expect society to change for him, though in countries where a change in societal attitude prevails, it is possible to be free. Most people seeking asylum on the basis of sexual identity come from countries that have not yet recognised same sex relationships or marriage.

In scene 5, the scene touches on the notion of 'breaking free', 'being yourself', 'not being afraid anymore' and 'making one's own choices'. Ishmael opens his suitcase, pulls out a pair of pink-glitter stilettoes, takes off his old trainers and slips into his high heels: a demonstration of his previously concealed self.

Gender and sexuality often pose significant problems in terms of obtaining refugee recognition through the asylum determination process. The 'refugee', as imagined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, is a man fleeing persecution by an authoritarian regime and seeking protection in Western liberal states (Anderson, 2013). The absence of gendered guidelines has posed complications whenever reasons for fleeing or the person fleeing do not fit the implied description. The credibility assessment requires an asylum claim based on sexual orientation to prove their sexual orientation and that it put them at significant risk of harm. Some have consequently reported a dehumanising interrogation process, in which concealment of their sexuality utilised to avoid discrimination or rejection in the countries from which they had fled, was used as evidence that they could not prove their sexuality, nor associated loss of safety. Advocates from the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group state that in 2010 LGBTQ+ asylum seekers were turned

down at a rate of 98 - 99%. Refused asylum seekers were expected to return to violently homophobic countries where they are told to 'live discreetly'.

The metaphor of the suitcase also contains spatial and ideological meanings. Midway through Scene 2, Ishmael pulls out a flyer with information about a local church that organises hot meals and social activities for asylum seekers. Such information about sanctuary providers is very important for the survival of asylum seekers. He also pulls out a photograph of Cyrus' family, with whom he shares a flat through the dispersal scheme. A new story emerges about their shared journey in pursuit of refugee status. The audience discovers that inside the suitcase are also all Ishmael's previous refusal letters from immigration tribunals: Ishmael carries the disappointments with him, though they are buried deep.

The suitcase dramatises the hard exterior of Ishmael's spirit - his survival instincts and his strong, resilient spirit. It is strong enough to carry all the burdens of his past and present traumas, and yet it is from this 'suitcase' that the story is told and in which new connections are made and sustained. A broken vessel emerges from the stories, familiar and relatable. In this way, Ishmael represents asylum seekers' longing to connect and their ability to find parallels of humanity in their surroundings.

6.3.3.2. The actor's 'make believe' embodiment

The highly persuasive ability of Lladel Bryant's one-man performance is the second crucial aesthetic of the mise-en-scène. Lladel (the actor) embodied nine characters in total, switching roles from one character to another. Citizens, non-citizens, men and women were linguistically and culturally delineated through his performance. The actor embodied each story, demonstrating powerfully how it might feel to be seeking sanctuary in the UK (though the story of Ishmael has few parallels with his own). This embodiment and stage presence created the sort of 'make believe theatre' (Schechner, 2006) that the

productions objectives required. Lladel Bryant demonstrated how the body of an asylum seeker appears and reappears within the border matrix.

In my conversations with Lladel Bryant at the beginning of the tour, he acknowledged the responsibility he carried as an actor to represent a million voices that are not often accurately heard, including concerns about being judged harshly as a straight man in the role of a gay man. 'The story matters', he states, 'and it has to be told by anyone with such a privileged platform, including me'. Lladel continually sought feedback from asylum seekers whose experiences were reflected in the characters he portrayed to ensure authenticity. By participating in the post-show discussions, the actor was able to receive feedback directly from the audience, which fed into the creation of Ishmael's story, crafted with energy, tears and humour. The authenticity in his acting abilities carried power in itself: power to legitimise the complexity of the asylum experience, power to engage the audience in an exchange of emotion and deliberation, and power to smoothly voice the questions of rights, including the right to belong and be counted.

6.3.4. Reception/ meaning making and interpretation of the political

The director sought to render the hermeneutics of Nine Lives through political discourse and the *mise-en-scène:* this highlighted the role of border policing and politicising ideology and the power dynamics embedded in the text. The *mise-en-scène* reflected the expression of the directorial vision on stage, seeking to articulate the artistic imagination of the relationship between form and content. This not only constituted grounds on which the aesthetic and ideological principles the director wanted to convey to the audiences could be planted, it also allowed the actor to engross the audience in the asylum experiences through the simplicity of the staging.

For the sake of rigour through reflexivity, it is important to acknowledge my own narrative as a spectator (Alexander, 2011). The performances of Nine Lives were entirely within

my own cultural framework. The narratives were consistent with my own enacted circumstances and resonated strongly with me as a migrant woman in a foreign land, but also as a former theatre practitioner. As the national tour evaluator, I felt that possessing such an understanding of these experiences enhanced and activated my viewing as a spectator. I understood clearly the content of the script, connected with the characters' feelings and watched as if they were mine: there was a sense for me in which this was my 'own business'. Alongside this, I kept in mind that I was in a researcher role.

Alexander (2011) notes the importance of 'ritualised' symbolic communication, in which effect/affect takes place if there is a shared mutual belief in the 'descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication's symbolic contents' (2011:82) and an acceptance of the authenticity of another's intentions. How audiences received and interpreted the message was primarily about how much of the deployed meanings made sense to the viewers. The audiences (both those who watched Nine Lives performances and participated in the engagement programme) were shaped temporally and spatially, by the place they occupied and the ideology of the play.

Through a narrative of the tour's achievements and challenges, I will highlight what the audiences thought of the performances, and what this tells us about the agency of theatre in instigating consciousness about migrant issues and migrant rights activism. This will expound how Nine Lives Theatre fulfilled the classic mantra 'educate, agitate, organise' (Gramsci, 1949) through evoking 'consciousness'. This process of 'becoming' was materialised through engagement strategies in which a space was created for dialogue alongside the experience of witnessing authentic stories that rarely make the headlines.

6.4. Achievements and limitations of the Tour

A representative sampling of the audience responses to the play included the following: 'impressive'; 'everything theatre should be'; 'well directed'; 'very accessible' and 'a skilful

direction and production that captured reality, feelings and atmospheres right from the start of the play until the end'. Audience responses typically described Lladel's performance as: 'inspiring'; 'a mighty performance'; 'absolutely awesome'; 'engaging, moving, funny, and informative'; 'honestly acted' and 'a very moving representation of a current topical issue'. The company was committed to challenging the contemporary rhetoric around refugees and asylum seekers through their engagement of their audiences, a mission described as 'regaining the headlines'.

Table 3. Highlighting the achievements and challenges of the tour

Aims	Attained? Yes/No	Highlights of the tour
Integrate the production into the lives of the community	Yes	• 45 performances in 25 locations visited, • Geographically spread • 1320 "live audiences" • live-streamed performance on internet
Inform a wider audience about border experiences in the asylum system	Yes	• Clear political, ideological, discursive and practical frames were deployed • Q&A at host venue
Build diverse audiences Build future audiences Create a co-learning environment in each venue	Yes	• Tailored engagement programme at host venue • Pre-show and post show activities and discussions on pertinent organising issues • Double billed with another show to attract/influence the fence sitters • A symposium gathered activists, artists and scholars interested in migration and human mobility

Break even financially	Not known	• Factors not researched in sufficient depth for this thesis
Sustainable relationship between partner venues	Yes	• Relationships established across the host venues • Database created during tour number one • Nine Lives went on tour for a second time

Table 3 (above) shows in broad terms whether the aims and objectives of the tour were attained. The details of this are explored in the following sections, which also highlight notable outcomes from the overall production and the delivery of the engagement programme. I will also examine the role of active audiences in making the tour a space for counter-bordering. The following sections focus on: the process of integrating Nine Lives into various communities; the awareness-raising about the bordering issues in the asylum system; the process of inspiring a vision of bottom-up sanctuary; engaging with refugees and asylum seekers; reaching out to educational establishments and young people and bridging the academia, arts practitioners and grassroots activists in the refugee/migrant rights activism.

6.4.1 Connecting to a variety of audiences across various communities

The audience profile indicated that people from diverse backgrounds watched the performances, including refugees, asylum seekers, migrant communities, students, activist communities, artists and core audience members. The total audience numbers exceeded expectations: in addition to 1,320 people who watched the performances in person, an undetermined number of remote audiences watched the show live over the internet. The high audience turnout was exemplified in the venues where tickets were

completely sold out, although this was not always the case. Brighton, Leeds, Great Malvern, Doncaster, Hebden Bridge and Nottingham had the highest attendances, with exceeded target sales in other venues (with the exception of the morning matinée performances).

Several factors are likely to have contributed to the success, not least the extensive marketing campaign. Tickets for most performances were on a 'pay what you decide' basis, other venues kept the price low (£5.50 to £8.50). Asylum seekers were given free tickets, while refugee rights groups and educational establishments received very significant discounts. For instance, at Arcola Theatre in London, tickets were £12, but for University of East London (UEL) students they were £7.50.

The timing of the performances was orchestrated to coincide with other significant events to facilitate outreach: in Liverpool and Leeds, performances took place during *Refugee Week*. Other performances aligned with relevant events such as Sheffield's Gay Pride festival and Leicester's Platforma Annual Conference, which is usually attended by people working in or interested in exploring the migration experience through the arts.

Nine Lives performances were also scheduled as part of local festivals. This included performances at the Hebden Bridge Arts Festival, Ilkley Literature Festival, Wakefield Literature Festival and Sola Refugee Arts Festival in Liverpool. These local festivals had well-established networks, audiences and outreach strategies, which made connection to the local community possible.

Finally, local advocacy groups provided collaborative opportunities for the project. In Liverpool, Brighton, Ilkley, Leicester and Great Malvern local refugee rights activists coordinated and hosted most of the post-show activities and Q&A, which were well-attended. In Swansea, Oxford, Exeter, Manchester and Doncaster, local activists ran pre-

show workshops and other engagement activities. At each location a large number of asylum seekers and refugees were involved, engaging and dialoguing with people who did not have familiarity with bordering issues.

6.4.2 Awareness-raising: issues in the asylum system

The feedback collated indicates that the performances had an impact on audiences in the way in which it opened up opportunities for reflection and conversation. Approximately 70% of audience members who offered feedback[12] mentioned that Nine Lives impacted their understanding about issues of refugees and asylum seekers. The timing of the tour, involvement of local supporters, community disparities in terms of immigration dispersal programme and potential resonance with often unarticulated traumas of audience members will have contributed to the level of impact. The tour took place during the 'refugee crisis', when the issue of refugees captured the nation's attention with a surge of unsettling images, narratives and extensive discourses about asylum seekers in the media. Audiences who attended were more likely to have read some of the harrowing reports from the media, such as the story of Aylan Kurdi, the 3-year-old who drowned while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. They are likely to have heard about the horrors of the 'Calais Jungle' in France or the emergence of a new 'Refugee Welcome' movement. Feedback consistently indicated that an intellectual and emotional connection had been made between Ishmael's story of the asylum process and the current news headlines. These included responses from local supporters, who typically emphasised the importance of the production coming to their neighborhoods and the space it created to discuss what people think of the asylum or refugee situation. Two illustrative examples are presented.

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[12] We received 669 feedback forms from a total number of 1320 audience members, so feedback was gleaned from just over 50% of those who attended.

'As someone who works with and supports asylum seekers and refugees, I found you did an amazing job. Please do more performances if you can! Make a movie! I work with a charity which supports refugees and asylum seekers in Hull & it would be great if you could perform there!' (Juliette S)

'Tackles two significant issues, i.e. of asylum seeking and also homophobia, in an engaging and thought-provoking way. Strong delivery and attentional holding performance' (Michael D, theatre lover & politically orientated, Sheffield).

In most venues, local refugee organisations used banners to display information about asylum seekers. These displays enabled participants and audiences to obtain more information.

Engaging with asylum seekers and refugees was very important to Nine Lives productions. A substantial number of refugees and asylum seekers[13] attended the performances in all locations, and many volunteered to participate in the panel discussions, which gave the audience an opportunity to hear directly about the experiences of a person-seeking asylum. Feedback from refugees and asylum seekers indicated that the Nine Lives performance had accurately represented their personal experiences and reflected their life experiences. Feedback included that the performance was 'a powerful piece of work' that 'incredibly captured our lives in such detail' and 'gave a voice to many of us'.

Some local supporters who had similar past experiences but who had been granted refugee status came to support migrants recently arrived and call on the community to support the new arrivals. They expressed that Nine Lives reconnected them to their often-unarticulated traumas, prompting reflections on their current new lives. As one of the audience members said:

'It brings back memories. It also reminds me of what I had been through and that I am lucky to be still here, others have been forced to return to those horrible circumstances…Thank you very much it was an eye opener. It also made me reflect on my situation. I hope it will give me an opportunity and courage to accept

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[13] Feedback forms indicated that 20% of the audience were from migrant and asylum seeker communities (see Section 6.5.2).

> people's differences and diversity'. (Prisca M, interested audience member, Liverpool)

Ishmael's particular story of identity and how it interacted with the asylum process also found resonance amongst audience members:

> Nine Lives really gave a great perspective on what immigrants feel, going through the process, living secret lives. I felt I could relate, being a Trans man. (Lewis J. A-Sheffield)

Nine Lives also strategically engaged communities with little experience of immigration. Exeter and Great Malvern are far more traditional white, middle class communities; these locations are not engaged with the state's dispersal programme and consequently have not experienced a flow of migrants into the area. The Great Malvern audience typically asserted that they had few prior expectations or assumptions about the production, or the issues raised.

Overall, the feedback indicated that audience member's perceptions, attitudes and views on refugees and asylum seekers were tremendously impacted by the Nine Lives performance. During a Q&A session in Great Malvern, audience members demonstrated a willingness to start doing something about refugees and migrant rights, despite their unfamiliarity with proper advocacy and little knowledge about initiating a movement. This allowed local groups to present potential new recruits with information about their future involvement.

Feedback further indicated that, whether in locations familiar with the issues or not, 80% of the audience across the venues said their understanding improved with regards to the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers. Many also indicated they would like to see similar politicised theatre rooted in activism.

6.4.3 Bottom-up strengthening and inspiring a sanctuary vision

The performance of Nine Lives was strategically embedded into the engagement programme, which engaged and strengthened the existing platform of community activism. This was important in order to demonstrate that the production was not the product of 'outside agitators', but merely energising bottom-up activism. This represented an alternative, grassroots approach to organising. Nine Lives sought not only to inspire sanctuary values but to adopt strategies in partnership with local initiatives to sustain them.

The Nine Lives production hired a marketing agent and an outreach and engagement coordinator to ensure the best delivery of performances alongside effective audience engagement activities in order to inspire sanctuary values and vision. This was facilitated by a number of complementary factors: collaborating with host venues across the UK; engaging with an emerging interest in asylum issues across locations; a tailored programme for audience engagement; planning double-bill performances with another show to attract theatre-goers and getting refugees and asylum seekers involved and visible.

Collaboration with host venues, facilitated by Alex Chisolm's networking with theatres, was instrumental in supporting Nine Lives Tour to achieve its objectives. Collaboration helped with identifying, contacting and inviting target audiences, and, in some cases, helped the host venues or local community groups run their own engagement programme parallel to the Nine Lives performances. In Liverpool, Brighton, Sheffield, and Leicester the collaborative efforts facilitated venues to connect with asylum seekers in their areas, who in turn consented to take part in post-show panels where they shared their own testimonies. Special measures were taken to reassure vulnerable asylum seekers to encourage them to attend the show, in the form of free tickets and, in some cases,

supportive accompaniment from affiliated advocacy organisations. The participation of local asylum seekers in the panel meant that individual stories were told and heard, which also had the potential to increase a sense of agency. Their stories were met with genuine interest and empathy from audience members, some of whom were interested in understanding how they could take action to effect social change.

The engagement programme created a space for strengthening support and inspiring action, providing the opportunity to discuss the topics and think about alternative solutions. Some refugee rights groups independently operated their own tailored outreach programmes and workshops to raise awareness of asylum seekers and inspire a vision for sanctuary. Swansea City of Sanctuary organised a workshop entitled: '*Hearing the unheard: How you and your organisation can encourage the voices of people seeking sanctuary'.* The workshop was facilitated by Richenda Leonard from Displaced People in Action (DPIA) and gathered just over 60 attendees. The aim of the workshop was to inspire organisations and individuals to support the City of Sanctuary's vision of Swansea as a place that is welcoming and supportive of refugees, and to plan practical actions people can take to achieve this vision. Many of the organisations attending the workshop (including African Community Centre, National Museum Wales, Oasis Cardiff, DPIA, Cardiff City of Sanctuary, Oxfam, Hafan Books) have undertaken practical actions or are planning the changes they will make.

Nine Lives Theatre was sometimes double billed with another show. This allowed curious theatregoers to 'check it out' because the two shows came as one package with no extra cost. However, the time required to stage two shows on the one bill sometimes meant that there was no time left for the audience engagement programme or pre-show and post-show activities.

In some locations there was an absence of capacity to deliver the audience engagement programme even though commitment or interest in the project was present. Other times, engagement with the post-show discussion was low, possibly as audience members had not fully understood it or were disinterested. For instance, the second day of performance in Sheffield received a low attendance compared with the over-booked night before, with a large crowd attending from the Gay Pride Festival.

While Nine Lives Theatre was in residence in London, Platforma Arts and Refugee Networks (which supports and develops arts by, about and with refugees and migrants communities), organised various engagement activities as part of the Nine Lives tour:

- Platforma Jam: This refugee event took place on 16 January, 2016 and involved music performed by young refugees and migrants in London. Five friends from four continents treated the audience to songs and spoken word from Ethiopia, Palestine and elsewhere. The lyrics explored the issues of migration, identity and belonging, and featured Haymanot Testa, Leila Seguin, Duncan Mortimer, Ebsil Baz and Emily Zaraa.

- Music from Zimbabwe: Taking place on 23 January, 2016, a trio of Mbira players - 'Mbira Kuwirirana' based in the UK - presented a free cultural performance to a large audience as part of the Nine Lives Theatre tour. Fungai Gahadzikwa, Dough Langley and Takudzwa Mukiwa engaged the audience in an educational experience of African and specifically Zimbabwean culture.

- Bards without Borders: on 30 January, 2016, refugees and migrant poets inspired by Shakespeare presented a free performance. These events were well attended and highlighted the work of refugee artists that explored their experiences of migration and a new life in the host country.

Galvanising a movement, arguably, involves empowering those marginalised and bringing them to the forefront, so the visible involvement of refugees and asylum seekers was very important. The awareness-raising aspects of the performance and engagements were also appreciated by local refugee supporters and activists. This was particularly noticeably in Sheffield and Brighton where there is established activism around the issues connecting migration and the LGBTQ+ community. The Brighton performance of Nine Lives saw a significant participation of the members of Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard, who had volunteers running an information stand and chatting with the audience. This charity was established in 1975 in order to listen to, inform and support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Brighton & Hove and beyond. As part of the Nine Lives residence in London, similar contribution led to a gala fundraising night for UKLGIG, another charity promoting equality and dignity for LGBTQI people seeking asylum in UK.

The feedback from the engagement programme and from both target and core audience members indicates that Nine Lives Theatre successfully achieved its goal of integrating the production into the locations it visited. It also opened a dialogue about immigration issues with communities that have little contact with migrants, as well as those familiar with migrant rights issues. The performance reached a wide range of audiences and created a space where refugee and asylum seekers - together with their allies - could speak about the issues of seeking asylum differently from how mainstream media typically covers such topics. Alongside the support and involvement of local refugee supporters, it was important to Nine Lives Theatre that they engage with ordinary people to communicate that their involvement with counter-border organisation could be meaningful and effective. This is because every experience of unbelonging takes place in the everyday, in the community. Thus, by getting both refugees and asylum seekers

together with the rest of the community, there was a chance that connections could be established. In this way, Nine Lives Theatre sought to facilitate a temporary 'borderless' space; it was then up to the involved parties to sustain it for the future.

6.4.4 Bridging educational establishments with communities of activists and artists

The engagement programme ran before or after the show and brought various communities together in a dialogue about refugee rights activism. By involving communities of activists in each location, expertise and in-depth insights were shared alongside actionable and practical tools for activism. Additionally, by involving educational establishments, insights into research-led approaches and strategies that have previously worked in other contexts were shared. These communities often perform activism in silos through activist scholarships and publications or grassroots and community organising work. The connections which Nine Lives performances facilitated have potential to encourage a more joined-up approach across the disciplines. This was achieved through a number of factors.

Outreach to schools and universities, with an emphasis on the educational possibilities for learning about the structural and systemic forces implicit in the asylum system, was effective in engaging young people. This also has benefits for encouraging students and young people to be involved in sanctuary volunteering. Initially, as the tour commenced during the summer holidays, engaging young people was problematic. However, from November 2015, performances in academic institutions commenced and were effective. In Sale (Manchester), 73 local students from two establishments attended both the play and engagement programme, conducted by the playwright, Zodwa Nyoni. Their feedback included comments such as: 'very educational', 'informative' and 'thought provoking', while the performance was described as 'believable', 'very moving', 'eye opening' and

'emotional'. Perhaps the most encouraging feedback was a commitment made by some to begin to act on their understanding:

> 'The play really helped me to gain an understanding on the issues that I never knew about. It has led me to want to make a difference in my own circles'. (Daniel Robinson)

In Exeter, with collaborative efforts from the university's Department of Geography, the play was well attended by students, with some hosting the pre-show workshop through affiliation with City of Sanctuary. This involved an interactive activity in which the audience was asked to digitally trace their own mobility: a digital screen with drawing tools was installed in the hallway, and each participant was given an opportunity to sketch their mobility on the map. This led to personal reflections on the importance of freedom of mobility, connected to the concept of 'bodies on the move' in terms of migration. This led on to discussions about restrictions of mobility, the filtering of bodies and bordering policies in the UK. This allowed the politics of Nine Lives to be personalised and internalised by participants, reflecting on their daily mobility as an assumed feature of everyday life.

Nine Lives Theatre also engaged the audience through inspiring speakers with critical thinking about activist strategies. This created the potential for further collaborative projects utilising the bank of talents, skills, resources and expert knowledge from each of these communities. Some of these exchanges resulted in new or renewed commitments to activism from students, artists, academics and activists, who understood that this particular moment was 'ripe' for increasing momentum for change and inspiring a vision for sanctuary.

A notable engagement event was held on 25 January, 2016 at Arcola Theatre, London. The event sought to bridge the gap between arts practitioners, academics and migrant rights activists. Organised jointly by UEL in partnership with the Nine Lives production, a

one-day symposium entitled '*Rights Activism, Academia and Arts Practices: a Conversation'* brought together inspiring speakers and audience members from the arts community, rights activism and academic researchers interested in the issues of migration, belonging, social justice and identity. The discussions and contributions highlighted the benefits that collaborative work between arts practices, university scholarships and rights activism have for producing meaningful educational tools, raising awareness and inspiring change. They also discussed possible strategies for consolidating situated acts and organising opportunities into a more inter-connected framework for activism.

The activities of the day involved four sessions. Opening the sessions, Alex Chisholm's presentation entitled, *Why Stories Matter,* reflected upon her experiences of making, directing, and touring Nine Lives Theatre, eloquently reaffirming the power of 'bearing witness' to stories that 'deserve to be fairly heard'.' Feminist Activist P. J. Samuels performed some of her poetry, highlighting the powerlessness of being made invisible. Inviting the audience to reflect on the border experiences of invisibility, Samuels notes*: '*Sometimes it is more comforting to be hated than to be invisible'*. Offering policy perspective, Debora Singer (Asylum Aid) shared some of the highlights from her work with Asylum Aid, in which art is utilised in framing and performing some of the most sensitive of Asylum Aid's visions. Gargi Bhattacharyya's (UEL) presentation provided the historical context for the shifting nature of state border performance and how enacted policies have lasting impact on individuals subjected to immigration control.

In addition, Professor Nira Yuval-Davis (UEL) spoke about identity, performance and social action, with examples from her research in participatory theatre among refugees in London. Ruth Adele Tompsett (Middlesex University) spoke about the functions and impacts of some performing arts practices within and outside of academia. Dr Ananda

Breed (UEL) gave a post-conflict perspective and spoke about applying performance in such contexts. Emphasising the power in union and creating momentum, Charlotte Bence (Equity)'s presentation gave an historical perspective of campaigns and collective action that have had an influence on contemporary society.

Participants also discussed diverse perspectives about how the approaches could be utilised in migrant rights activism, increasing the effectiveness of efforts to promote social justice and social change. For instance, Tom Green (Platforma) highlighted how the arts can respond to a refugee and migration crisis, providing illustrative examples from the projects Platforma has been operating with refugees. Similarly, Christine Bacon's (Ice &Fire) presentation entitled '*Actors for Human Rights: Holding audiences to account through testimony',* described the ways in which actors for human rights use asylum monologues as a way to share stories and motivate people. Some actionable and practical tools of engagement models were shared from artists using film, visual installations, poetry, spoken words and performance in their political activism. Visual artist and activist, Bern O'Donogue, introduced her mobile project *Refugee Crossing and Dead Reckoning*, an art installation of boats connecting us with people who drown in the sea during their pursuance of safety in Europe. In the same vein, Catherine Donaldson (University of Brighton) discussed her feature length documentary about migration in Hastings, *Not 1066*.

The discussions held in Arcola Theatre proved to be both productive and encouraging. The event's success was largely due to the cooperation, contributions and enthusiasm of the attendees. The sessions ended with a powerful performance by a trade unionist and feminist activist, Zita Holbourne, whose campaigning strategies and tools incorporate arts and creative performance. Feedback also indicated that the activists, artists and researchers should collaborate in their efforts. The event also reaffirmed the significant

role of the arts in communicating political information and mobilising asylum and migration activism. Audience feedback included:

> A wonderful event, rich with insights, compassion and passion! All compliments to the organisers who brought such a wonderful collaboration of UEL and non-UEL participants. (anonymous symposium participant)

> As a student at UEL I think today has been an eye-opening day. The different people, ideas, experiences have really moved me and motivated me to participate in things I'd never thought I'd such a gut reaction to. Amazing! (anonymous UEL student/symposium participant)

> Positive and good practical approaches of engaging not only British citizens but global involvement to help make the challenges of refugees get address. (anonymous symposium participant)

The symposium created a platform for reflecting on the underlying debates and considerations in state bordering practice, challenging the mainstream narrative and reaching out to wider audiences. In so doing, useful contributions, tools and strategies were shared; email exchange was coordinated after the event, providing a channel for continued connection and conversation. The event was made possible thanks to the sponsorship by the UEL's School of Social Sciences through its research centres: CNR, CMRB and Centre for Research on Social change, the Moshal Scholarship Foundation, the UEL's Centre for Performing Arts and Global Studies.

6.4.5 Building relationships and future audiences at venues

The director and the production team built on their relationships with the host venues, working collaboratively at each location. This enabled the tour to reach diverse communities across the UK, rather than just traditional theatre goers, bridging diverse communities and activist organisations. These relationships are potentially sustainable through the databases of audience members, collated from those demonstrating an interest in future productions. Nine Lives Theatre effectively created a co-learning environment spanning refugee activist organisations, host communities and members of the public; the maintaining of such a space is paramount.

6.5. Has it made a difference?

6.5.1 Impact and legacy of Nine Lives Theatre National Tour

Real change at an individual level occurs gradually. Thus, Nine Lives performances facilitated the opportunity for renewed understanding about migrant rights, alongside reflective opportunities. Influence, both individually and collectively, will take time to materialise. In this section I examine the impact in relation to the tour's objectives, examining the audience feedback and the box office figures.

Feedback included some appreciation that the play described the realities of border, a story rarely heard, and that it moved these experiences from the margin to the centre.

> Really powerful and truthful, didn't make fun of the characters. Just honest and playful. Really very emotional and touching…Ps: It would be amazing if this were to be filmed/or for television-It deserves to reach as wide an audience as possible. As a daughter of immigrants, I felt very affected by narrative. (Tuktu B, London)

There was evidence of new understandings of the intersectional issues implicit within the asylum system:

> Fantastic performance of all the different characters. Thought the episode where the flatmate finally speaks with anger and his deportation was very powerful. Well done. When Becks said "Hi ya Ishmael"…I cried! I have never thought about the lonely journey of being both asylum seeker & gay before. (Interested audience member, Hebden Bridge)

Nine Lives Theatre also tackled the politics that produces the narratives in the play, as reflected in the audience responses below:

> A brilliant show. Hard to swallow in some places and really makes you think that maybe we really haven't come that far… Ps: absolutely amazing" (Kayleigh Walker, interested audience member, Sheffield)

> I thought the performance was outstanding. I was very impressed by the range of emotional ups and downs that Mr Bryant exposed to the audience. I didn't expect that such a range of immigrant experiences would be discussed and I liked the critique of class. The script is simply poetic and brilliantly written. (Professor Barbara M, Athens, Georgia, US, interested audience member, Liverpool)

Some audience members who were already well-informed on the issues indicated that Nine Lives left them with a deeper understanding:

> I thought it was a very powerful play that really goes beyond the headlines to show us the humanity of their lives and the violence of the system. I thought the script was so beautifully written and revealed just what it needed-what we needed to go on the journey with him. (Professor of Latin American literature – focusing on the African Diaspora, interested audience member, Liverpool)

6.5.2 Facts and figures

More than 1086 participants took part in the Nine Lives engagement programme, which was delivered either by the Nine Lives Theatre production team or in collaboration with various refugee rights groups, artists, academians and LGBTQI communities. A total of 669 feedback forms and 11 digitally recorded responses captured the audience's responses to the play. The data collected showed that:

- o Amongst those who responded, approximately 80% were not refugee, migrant, or asylum seekers.

- o 70% were already well-informed and well-disposed to refugees and asylum seekers, working as activists or knew someone who was an asylum seeker.

- o 10% reported that the Nine Lives performance prompted them to think about the asylum experience in a new way and informed them.

- o Approximately 75% felt that Nine Lives performances deepened their understanding of the issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers.

- o 76% thought Nine Lives Theatre effectively tackled issues of homophobia and the asylum experience with power and honesty, thereby raising awareness about these two issues.

- o 14% of respondents had been previously unaware of LGBTQI experiences in the asylum process, felt they had gained a better understanding of the

subject as a result of watching Nine Lives, and felt sympathy for Ishmael after the performance.

- o 95% said they would like to see similar work and provided their contact information to be added to the database.

- o 20% were members of the Nine Lives Theatre target audience (from refugee and migrant communities).

Quantitative data indicates that Nine Lives Theatre exceeded its audience targets as set out in their objectives. The performance reached out to refugees and asylum seekers, educational establishments and young people. Through the engagement programmes, Nine Lives empowered the voices of asylum seekers giving them a platform from which to share their testimonies and engaged a wide variety of audience members in reflection and discussion about the issues surrounding migrant and asylum experiences. Through high quality theatre, Nine Lives Theatre informed and engaged communities across the UK about migrant issues and promoted the mobilisation of art to address refugee rights and asylum-related issues.

6.6. Conclusions:Nine Lives Theatre as a counter-border performance

The narration of migrants' experiences of borders has been used throughout activism to highlight and challenge the ways in which 'state performance' of borders produces and reproduces precarious lives, particularly in the asylum system. I began this chapter seeking to examine the role of theatre/performance in campaigning for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, through an evaluation of the Nine Lives tour. The evidence collected from the evaluations of the Nine Lives national and regional tour, including its month-long residence in London, underscores the extent to which, intersectional experiences of borders can be staged through intentionally politicised drama to raise the

public consciousness and envision alternatives to the current systems and practices, which inspire sanctuary values and encourage activism.

The findings demonstrate the Nine Lives tour was shrewd enough to not try to instil opinions, but rather questioned the prevailing negative attitudes towards immigrants with a counter-narrative. This approach was reinforced through the engagement programme, which also offered real life experiences rather than just opinions. The tone of the script, which was deliberately unaggressive, was also strategic in the way it offered out oppositional discursive and ideological frames. The politics was subtle, seeking to stimulate the collective imagination and promote new frames of reference.

In response, some audience members pledged to consider the issues further and engage in activism. Strong collaboration with venues, as well as the refugee and asylum seeker communities, was essential for the effective delivery of the programme and engagement with it. Stories matter, and throughout the tour Nine Lives Theatre validated the power of stories, particularly in the context of raising awareness of border experiences through the asylum system. Through the subsidisation programme, Nine Lives Theatre also engaged communities with theatre who might otherwise not be able to attend.

A space was created, new relationships were built, and people were inspired. The high percentage of feedback indicated that audience members would attend a similar event, which has been captured on a database. This offers the potential for the temporary communities that arose during the tour, instigated by the theatrical event, to re-form again for future performances and continue the conversation. The power of the Nine Lives tour was enabled by the evocative nature of Zodwa Nyoni's poetic writing, Lladel Bryant's energetic and captivating performance, Alex's considered directional interpretation and the overarching production efforts: together these created a safe space for conversation, reflection and future action.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, Nine Lives received further funding to go on a second tour (between June 2016 and October 2016). Due to the limitations regarding my own research timeline, I was not able to evaluate those performances. However, I continued to participate in post-show discussions and was invited to be part of the panel speaking about my findings from the first national tour. At the time of writing, Nine Lives has toured locally, nationally and internationally, receiving considerable coverage in the mainstream media, including the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and various other online news outlets. In the light of the wider narrative of the tour's media impact, Nine Lives Theatre has established itself as a force within migrant rights activism.

Theatre-led activism allows complex issues such as migrant and asylum seeker rights, with all the implicit moral problems and structural injustices, to be represented eloquently through story. This offers a simple but provocative witness to the asylum system, within the context of 'imaginings' and even 'entertainment' that allows the audience to engage with the pain, trauma and violence of the system cathartically and empathetically.

Thus, accessibility was facilitated through the separation of the political and moral issues. The pain, trauma and violence of the system were narrated through the experience of an individual. This invited the audience to witness the current system – through the lens of the story - and imagine future possibilities. Nine Lives Theatre came in to disrupt, carrying with it a symbolically framed alternative, persisting in how we can re-imagine sanctuary. This made it profoundly meaningful and relevant to the current refugee rights movement.

In the following chapter (Chapter 7), I explore specific spatial interventions that employ other kinds of performance. Firstly, I present the Refugees Welcome demo, which offered a heightened aesthetic of an invisible and visible politics of resistance taking place on the street; I also explore my experiences of the Yarl's Wood demonstration and the powerful contrast between being 'inside' and 'outside' a detention centre; lastly, I discuss the Hope

Space project, which offers safe spaces and places for female asylum seekers. These performances highlight border lives and the emerging, complex struggles. Analysing such experiences requires a situated knowledge of the hermeneutics of these performances; this is necessary in order to understand the literal, moral, allegorical and anagogical meanings inscribed within them.

Chapter 7: In the space of dissent: people-to-people solidarities and the politics of in/visible resistance

7.1. Stories of defiance, resistance and resilience

Having previously presented the stories from activists describing their practice, this chapter presents a multi-voiced 'experiential' narrative of localised expressions of dissent. I use a rich and detailed description of my own personal experiences and encounters and argue that interventions such as migrant rights activism are closely tied to the increasingly visible nature of state border practices. The site-specific performative interventions analysed here bridge the theoretical connections between the politics of in/visibility with the transformative potential of the 'embodied' and 'live' counter-bordering actions in the space of migrant dissent.

Three separate fieldwork experiences will be examined and used to explore how citizens and non-citizens connected with the public sphere, as well as with spatial strategies for resistance, resilience and defiance. These three performances are: (1) the national staging of the *Refugees Welcome* demonstrations (2015 and 2016 respectively); (2) the direct action of the *Shut Down Yarl's Wood* campaign (held monthly in 2015 and 2016*);* and (3) interactive focus groups with *Women from the Hope Space* (held in August 2015). While the first two cases, *Refugees Welcome Demonstration* and *Shut Down Yarl's Wood*, represent a bold, direct and defiant approach, the latter takes a more subtle approach. Each of these cases created a space for a new kind of reading of political expression. The examination of the various places where bordering politics was performed led to multivalent findings. It has been important for this study – and potentially for wider studies of migrant rights activism – that findings are considered to have, or at least be susceptible to, various applications and meanings. Taken together, the stories deriving from these three cases demonstrate that space is a device through which a

multitude of micro and macro acts of 'radical' interventions are deployed and operationalised. Rather than each intervention being considered as a passive, stable, or a complete, pre-existent coherent whole, I considered them as taking place in 'animated space'.

Yarl's Wood and *Refugees Welcome* interventions took place in geographical places that were inhabited only briefly by protestors. They became animated spaces through operations and actions initiated by migrant rights activists. The space was integral to the intervention, insomuch as none of the politics enacted would be fully grasped if they had taken place in isolation from the locations that produced them (Lefevbre, 1991). In *The Production of Space,* Lefevbre explains that viewing current times in their historical context, with particular regard to space, enabled him to unravel the power structures of capitalism and examine how capitalism stripped away and 'appropriated' space from the working masses. He suggested a division of space into three categories: (1) perceived space, (2) conceived space, and (3) lived and endured space or spaces of representation. Space is not a container that simply needs to be filled but is itself an active designer of our social relations (Lefevbre, 1991).

The migrant rights activists' performances reviewed in the three case studies take place in space that is relational and contingent; they are produced in the interaction with society's spatial practices. Space and action have a two-way relationship: space can *'produce'* action, but also can *'be produced'* by action. The role, form and function of spaces considered in this chapter can be thought of as leading to three distinct actions: (1) conditioning actions (*Hope Space);* (2) structuring actions (*Refugees Welcome)*; and (3) direct action through influencing public opinion (*Yarl's Wood).*

These performances appropriate place and space wholly within the apparatus of theatrical events and produce value through doing so. Simply being in the space and time

of action not only opens a window to understanding and addressing the reproductive and performative aspect of space, but also makes it possible to witness 'action' as unfolding 'live' right there in the moment. Notions of spatiality are central to issues of mobilisation (Leitner et al., 2007). Multiple spatialities need to be considered as shaping and co-implicating the politics, including scale, place, networks, positionality and mobility (Leitner et al., 2007). The complex inter-relatedness of the various spatialities requires that one must pay attention to not only the variety of spatialities and the materiality of contentious politics, but also to the pertinence of particular contexts, how they shape one another and the consequent trajectory of counter-border organising. The three cases examined help illuminate how we read symbolic political performance in terms of presence, representation, visuality and visibility. This is situated within the condition of political subjectivity.

7.1.1. Refugees Welcome (RW)

The *Refugees Welcome* demonstrations started in 2015 as a movement of solidarity with refugees, and it has since repeated each year. This chapter examines the role which 'the public' - including citizens and non-citizens - played in its emergence and orientation. This case study demonstrates how the state's sentiment and public scepticism collides with the mobilisation of refugee solidarity, and how this prompts changes within underlying organisational strategies which influence public opinion. Perceiving this particular mobilisation through a performance construction allows analysis of the societal context in which the counter-bordering protests evolved. The resources and sense of 'people-to-people' solidarity it mobilised promoted a new identity of 'refugees welcome.' *Refugees Welcome* may be seen as an embodiment of the politics of welcome by the people, that is asserted in the face of the state's politics of abandonment and national exclusion. These counter-struggles at the borders of belonging involve deep seated emotive

dynamics. Analysis of this case followed aspects that are staple features: (1) that this RW movement qualifies as a networked, multi-spatial border counter-performance, i.e. a movement focused on British sanctuary values acting from the bottom-up in an attempt to influence the state opinion on welcoming refugees; (2) that it illustrates an ability to fruitfully integrate different organising axes; (3) that the mediatised sphere may be assuming a key role in the very orientation of some current people-to-people mass mobilising.

7.1.2. Surround the razor wire: Shut Down Yarl's Wood

The second case study takes place in the fieldwork site of the *Shut Down Yarl's Wood* campaign, located on the outskirts of Clapham in Bedfordshire. Yarl's Wood is a female immigration removal centre. It has been the focus of multiple parliamentary inquiries into reports of abuse of asylum seeker detainees. It has been a symbolic site of resistance to the practice of detention and incarceration of migrants in the UK. The stories from this space dispute the legitimacy of Yarl's Wood, calling for its total closure and ultimately the closure of all detention centres. This would also imply an end to the Detained Fast Track system.

7.1.3. Hope Space

Hope Space provides a functioning, everyday 'home space' for women - who would otherwise experience only destitution and a denial of cultural and citizenship recognition – thus leading to engendered performative acts of resistance, resilience and defiance. This chapter explores the women's agency in the face of disempowerment and highlights everyday practices of activism that reproduce a variety of situated meanings. *Hope Space* represents not simply a physical space where women can meet, but also an emotional space where women can connect, a social space for sociability, a political space for

mobilisation and a place of safety. The agency is exercised by choice: a self-determination to be engaged actors in and out of their space and to fight back. The intrinsic sense of 'home' which *Hope Space* provides – which for many women is where they build community and create political space for themselves – supports informal coalition building with existing community, which, in turn, allows for alternative stories of off-stage, quiet political acts of resistance through belonging. The engagements and organising of these women potentially represent under-examined features of contemporary rights movements, in that they effectively lodge their radical acts of political dissent through relational organising, performing radical interventions through the politics of invisibility.

7.2. Case One: Shut Down Yarl's Wood campaign

7.2.1. Surround the razor wire as a politics of defiance

On Saturday 4 April, 2015 at 10 am, we arrived at Yarl's Wood removal centre on the outskirts of Clapham, Bedfordshire. The Yarl's Wood protest seemed a well-orchestrated event: on its 5th staging it included participation from more than 12 different regions of the UK. During the journey, it was clear that those on the coach were regular protestors, as they recounted stories from previous protests. The person sitting next to me had spent all night painting banners, some of which were unfortunately misspelt due to a late night of labouring. Five coaches in total left King's Cross. Each was assigned a driver, a coach coordinator, and a colour code. Participants boarded coaches corresponding to their ticket colour codes. Similar logistics were available in other cities to facilitate participation. Upon arrival at Bedford, we found a safe parking site, which left us with at least another mile to walk. The detention centre is an eyesore in an otherwise picturesque country setting. In an unassuming business park, the well-placed Serco posters indicate the private ownership and management of the facilities. A great noise greeted us, with drums

beating out of sync and high-pitched yelling. As we walked towards the epicentre, the chanting became clearer. In front of us, a tall beige and brown coloured building finally came into view.

Figure1: protestors' arrivals from 12 cities arriving at Yarl's Wood by coach

We found a substantial number of protestors waiting for more arrivals. Some were slumped down by the fence with their bags under the trees. Others were in concentric circles. There was a sense of camaraderie, and the sunny weather seemed to be reflecting the mood as numbers slowly increased with the arrival of each bus.

Figure 2: Protestors waiting for more arrivals.

Before presenting the findings of my participation in the protest action, I will describe the campaign context that gave rise to the Yarl's Wood protests. The compelling methods and rationales for changing power relations will be examined. These are reflected in the campaign's demands and objectives, which emerged as a result of the controversial socio-political context that caused, and is still causing, public concern.

7.2.2. The campaign's context: how Yarl's Wood became a public concern

Yarl's Wood, an all-female detention centre, is one of 13 detention centres in which foreign nationals are held prior to being deported from the United Kingdom. At the time of the protest, it was operated by Serco, a private contractor working on behalf of the Home Office. Under the Immigration Act, a large number of non-citizens are detained in the UK and are held in the scattered removal centres. The government spends £100 per person, per night to house them (AVID, 2014). An undisclosed additional number of women (and men) are also held in police cells, immigration-reporting centres or in hospitals. As of May 2013, the government has made 1,000 bed spaces available in prisons, most of which are set aside for those who have finished their sentences and are awaiting deportation. Yarl's Wood, as well as the Gatwick Airport Removal Facility, act as so–called 'pre-departure accommodation'. Whilst the number of people detained is small compared to those living in the community without legal documentation, the act of detaining those who came here seeking asylum still demands scrutiny, raising considerable moral, ethical and legal dilemmas. These carceral spaces of asylum seekers are volatile and contested sites.

Although detention centres are custodial establishments, detainees are not held because they have been charged with a criminal offence or have been processed through normal

judicial procedures, but because of their 'immigration status'. Rule 3 of the Detention Centre Rules, set out by the government in 2001, indicated the purpose of detention centres (now Immigration Removal Centres (IRC)) such as Yarl's Wood as follows:

> 3. (1) The purpose of detention centres shall be to provide for the secure but humane accommodation of detained persons in a relaxed regime with as much freedom of movement and association as possible, consistent with maintaining a safe and secure environment, and to encourage and assist detained persons to make the most productive use of their time, whilst respecting in particular their dignity and the right to individual expression (2001, Detention Centre Rules).

Yarl's Wood has been at the centre of public attention since it opened in November 2001, after being plagued with controversy. Rather than fulfilling the government's assertions that these centres will promote dignity and respect, migrant rights activists and detainees have publicised the unethical practices inside detention centres, claiming that they are harmful, dangerous and destructive to physical and mental health of detainees.

Recurring criticisms include that:

- It is unfair to deprive a person of their liberty for administrative convenience.
- Detention is costly, ineffective and harmful, and that there are better alternatives to detention.
- Indefinite detention is harmful to the mental health and well-being of detainees.
- Safeguards to protect detainees and prevent inappropriate cases from being detained are insufficient and ineffective.
- Policies to guard against prolonged, unnecessary and unlawful detention are inadequately enforced.
- There is a lack of transparency about the use of detention and conditions in IRCs, including the treatment of detainees and the conduct of detention centre staff.
- Detainees are disadvantaged by their limited and inadequate access to legal advice, external communications and healthcare.

Channel Four Undercover (2015) and the Stephen Shaw Review (2015) both investigated Yarl's Wood. The Channel Four investigation, using covert footage from inside the detention centre and highlighted contemptuous treatment of detainees inside Yarl's Wood at the hands of the Serco guards. The reports also raised questions over standards of healthcare and highlighted numerous incidents of self-harm. The footage shows one

guard commenting: 'They are animals. They are beasties. They are all animals. Caged animals. Take a stick with you and beat them up. Right?' Rather than providing a safe and respectful environment, as per guidance from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, Yarl's Wood detainees were reduced to a less than human existence.

Similarly, in 2015, an independent review known as the 'Shaw Report' (see also UKGov2016) made public the findings of controversy inside the Yarl's Wood detention centre. Stephen Shaw, a former Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales, was commissioned by Theresa May, in her former Home Secretary role, to conduct the review. His findings were published in a lengthy report with 64 recommendations, many of which focused on helping the government make sense of its unwieldy, ineffective detention estate, which is failing to achieve the Home Office's stated aims. Articulating the welfare concerns further, Shaw advised the number of people detained to be reduced 'boldly and without delay' (Shaw Report, 2015).

Shaw's recommendations implicitly or explicitly addressed the key concerns and priorities of migrants right activism: time limits on immigration detention; ending detention of vulnerable people; improving judicial oversight and implementing alternatives to detention. Shaw observed that setting time limits was a means of achieving a more effective and less inhumane detention estate, suggesting, for example, that bail hearings could be automatic at the 28-day stage, or after three or four months. As for 'ending the detention of vulnerable people', Shaw also found that Rule 35 of the Detention Centre Rules - designed as a key safeguard for victims of torture or whose health would be at risk from continued detention - failed to protect vulnerable people in detention. Shaw called for an absolute exclusion of pregnant women from detention and advised that the clause 'which cannot be satisfactorily managed in detention' (Shaw, 2015: paragraph 10, p.12) should be removed from the section of the guidance covering those suffering from

serious mental illness. Shaw added new categories to the list of 'vulnerable' people who should not be detained, including victims of rape, other sexual or gender-based violence (including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)), those with a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), transsexual people and those with learning difficulties. He recommended that the Home Office adopt a dynamic, rather than category-based, approach to assessing vulnerability, pointing out that 'vulnerability is intrinsic to the very fact of detention, and an individual's degree of vulnerability is not constant but changes as circumstances change'. On 'improving judicial oversight of detention,' and 'implementing alternatives to detention,' Shaw notes:

> 'Immigration detention has increased, is increasing, and – whether by better screening, more effective reviews, or formal time limit - it ought to be reduced'. (Shaw, 2015, paragraph 11:8, p. 192)

In addition to arguing for an immediate reduction in the number of detainees, Shaw also recommended that the Home Office consider alternatives to detention, including community-based support.

It has been important for migrant rights activism that Stephen Shaw was able to confirm the outcries, by publicly criticising the government's practices and recommending progress towards a less callous and indiscriminate approach to immigration detention. It has also been important that the 64 recommendations represent practical measures which will hold the government to account in the long-term. James Brokenshire, Minister of Immigration at the time, accepted the broad thrust of the recommendations, committed to reducing the size of the detention estate, and endorsed the Detention Removal Centres for use immediately prior to deportation.

While the size of the detention estate has indeed been reduced, Dover and the Verne IRCs have closed, and the number of people in detention reduced by 18% between March 2017 and March 2018, in 2019 24,400 people were still being detained (Migration

Observation, 2018). Despite these reductions, the numbers held under immigration powers in prison facilities has not changed, and little is known about the likely duration of detainment in prison or their future. Many detainees in prison facilities are labelled 'foreign criminals' and there is no differentiation in the types of offences committed. Some of the detainees are being held for entering the country illegally or possessing false documents, others for merely overstaying or taking on precarious labour to survive after exhausting the appeals process.

It is also noteworthy that the Adults at Risk Approach has been introduced in detention centres and has been implemented as per Shaw's recommendation. However, the policy has been plagued by litigation and complaints that it has failed to address the issues identified by Shaw. One on-going criticism has been that immigration detention is being used as 'emergency accommodation' for administrative convenience, which represents a deprivation of liberty. Automatic bailing has been introduced for people who meet certain narrow criteria but is limited to those with no previous convictions. The government's further restrictions on bail accommodation have undermined the process further.

In 2017, Shaw conducted a shorter follow-up review to assess progress made in implementing his recommendations. His findings noted that while the Adults at Risk Approach had been introduced, the gap between policy and practice was still wide. Further recommendations were made to strengthen and mature the approach to vulnerability in detention (Shaw Report 2018).

Ultimately, the Shaw Report, whilst accurate and in line with activists' demands, has not led to meaningful change, as change is not effectively measured or monitored. Migrant rights campaigners have and will continue to bring the issue of detention to the centre of public debates. Yarl's Wood direct action represents a sustained commitment to justice,

ending indefinite detention and ending inhumane treatment of asylum seekers and refugee detainees.

7.2.3. Scripting representational goals of the Yarl's Wood protest

Movement for Justice (MFJ) has staged monthly demonstrations at Yarl's Wood detention centre over the past decade. I will refer to the materials and resources provided by the MFJ to describe the demands and objectives of the protests. MFJ's brochures and leaflets list four major demands. These communicate the campaign's goals for collective action and consciousness, (although the objectives are subject to change due to the shifting socio-political context). As of 2015, the demands were:

> 1: Shut down detention centres.
>
> 2: Defend and extend free movement.
>
> 3: Fight nationalist and racist backlash.
>
> 4: Open the Borders.

The immediate goal of the protest was to push for the closure of Yarl's Wood and all detention centres across the UK. Yarl's Wood scripting is flexible enough to allow strategies to emerge in response to observed or anticipated shifts in migrant rights issues and political developments. These shifts may relate to judicial orders or changes in legislation which potentially pose new threats and require creative strategising. They may also emerge from previous struggles, thus building on momentum to advance the shared goal to end detention.

Although the Yarl's Wood protests I attended were organised by MFJ, the network is diverse. Direct action at Campsfield and Yarl's Wood detention centres has been staged by other groups. #Set Her Free is a campaign by Women for Refugee Women which has pushed for significant changes by exposing unethical practices inside Yarl's Wood. Two

particularly poignant research publications, *Detained* (2014) and *I am Human: Refugee Women's Experiences of Detention in UK* (2015) highlight the poor conditions and treatment inside Yarl's Wood and the routine intrusions on women's privacy and dignity imposed by male staff. The reports also document the serious harm of detaining survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, forced marriage, female mutilation, forced prostitution and trafficking: the detainment is often re-traumatising for these already-traumatised women. The key recommendation of the #Set Her Free campaign has been an end to the detention of women seeking asylum. Their interim recommendations include: (1) an end to the detention of survivors of sexual and other gender-based gender violence; (2) an end to detention of pregnant women; (3) an end to indefinite detention; and, (4) while women are still being detained, improved conditions of their detention.

Every Yarl's Wood protest has advanced the struggle from both inside and outside the detention centre by showing that the immigrant rights movement is the dynamic heart of the fight for equality and a progressive society.

The biggest challenge migrant rights movements have always faced is racism, including the denial of racism. Antonia Bright, the MFJ coordinator, asserted that campaigning for the closure of detention centres was not the core concern for MFJ - racism was. These issues are so interconnected that it is imperative that they be considered and tackled together. To deal with them separately would result in leaving some aspects of the problem undealt with. Antonia notes:

> 'You know we aren't a group that started around the immigration, it's not that we began, unlike the NGO's and charities and all that who set up to do this or that, charities around whatever failures of the state to meet people's needs in immigration terms, we are a political movement, fighting racism, fighting [for] immigrants' rights is essential [and] central to any progressive direction of society so that is why it is central. It's not that you choose from, like a shopping list of causes.... you don't go that far to just be a single-issue person, all these things are completely tied up in your future. And fighting

racism is absolutely necessary but also fighting for healthcare, housing, fighting for all these things are absolutely necessary'. (Interview with activist Antonia B)

The MFJ movement argues that migrant struggles are combined struggles because they are 'part of a whole system of injustice, abuse, oppression and exploitation'. The central fight is to advance an equal and just society agenda. Yarl's Wood was made a campaign priority, because it represented the spectrum of issues (injustice, oppression, etc.) that are maintaining the whole system. MFJ fights by any means necessary to achieve a change of power to win real victories. The closure of Yarl's Wood and all detention centres would represent an end to the reproduction of racism the centres symbolise.

Racism is mostly reproduced in discourse and communication, with both racism and denial of racism being found in everyday conversations, parliamentary debates or press reports. The denial of racism includes:

'disclaimers, excuses, mitigation, euphemism, blaming the victim, reversal and other moves of defence, face-keeping and positive self-presentation in negative discourse about minorities, immigrants and (other) anti-racists' (van Dijk, 1992:87).

In the wake of the 2015 EU referendum, there was a push by the political right towards nationalistic and protectionist positions, new borders were erected, and detention expanded spreading the encroachment of borders into all aspects of migrants' lives (Antonia B). In response to these changing manifestations of racism, the MFJ almost doubled the size of their team, and are still seeking to grow in a bid to withstand the consequent nationalistic and racist backlash. They argue that withstanding this socio-political change is not achievable without an anti-racist movement that is not just UK-wide, but Europe-wide.

Thus, the perspectives and rhetoric of the struggles around Yarl's Wood have needed to respond and adapt to Brexit, to the election of Donald Trump, and be re-scripted accordingly. These events have emboldened neo-fascists across Europe, creating a new

and negative political situation that has 'plunged the western democracies into a profound crisis' (Antonia B).

The list of positions, goals and demands of the Yarl's Wood protestors, MFJ, and their allies in the time of Brexit are as follows:

1. Stop Brexit by all means necessary
2. Defend the Free Movement of People – no more immigration controls.
3. Build the mass immigration rights movements.
4. Stop the racist scapegoating of immigrants.
5. Engage in mass community action to stop immigration raids, deportations and charter flights.
6. Shut down all detention centres.
7. Open the borders of Britain and Europe.
8. Amnesty now for everyone who does not have secure immigration status.
9. Unite the struggles against racism, poverty and austerity
10. Create a sanctuary of schools, colleges and campuses to keep the Home Office out of education.
11. Organise collective action to defend international and immigrant students.
12. Shut down the anti-Muslim prevent strategy. No cooperation with Home Office surveillance.
13. Build the Mass, Integrated, Independent, Youth and Immigrant-Led Movement of and for the poor and oppressed.

Although Brexit did not directly lead to harsher immigration measures, there is a correlation between the two phenomena in that the Brexit movement routinely involved 'Leave' campaigners placing immigration at the centre of their communications, resulting in intense anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric. The advance of Brexit has coincided with harsher anti-immigration measures, as well as with the rise of extreme-right and fascist movements across Europe which have habitually hijacked the debates on immigration. Brexit has emboldened far right movements, which perceived it as a mandate from the majority to reduce immigration, a goal which the mainstream parties

have not been able to accomplish. Along with this, racist and xenophobic physical and verbal assaults massively intensified, often expressing anti-immigrant sentiments. This change in the political climate has also been accompanied by a rise in high-profile crimes, such as the assassination of Labour MP Jo Cox, a prominent campaigner for 'Stop Brexit,' and for the rights of refugees.

It is within these contexts that the 'Stop Brexit' campaigns operate – very much understanding Brexit as providing a platform for racism and anti-immigrant agendas. In December 2017, MFJ attended the Supreme Court Hearing of the legal challenge against Theresa May's intention to implement Brexit without a Parliamentary debate or vote. Protestors carried signs to the Supreme Court with slogans such as 'Stop Brexit Now', 'Brexit is Racist', and distributed leaflets which stated:

> 'Brexit must be stopped because its only purpose is to stop Immigration.
>
> The politicians of all the main parties and the giant corporations whose interests they serve are alarmed by the economic and political instability they have created, but they are powerless to prevent it. They are too profoundly tied to racist policies that are rooted in and serve their material interests: their imperialist profits, divide-and-rule tactics, demand for cheap labour, national power rivalries etc. Racism, xenophobia and immigrant-bashing are their most important political weapons. We have to disarm them politically by challenging those policies and that means stopping Brexit'. (Leaflet, MFJ)

It has been to the activist's advantage that the Supreme Court insisted the government seek Parliamentary approval for their Brexit plans. Everything that affects citizens, including migrants, requires the government to be held accountable. MFJ, along with other activists, likened this 'closed door' attempt to quietly force through these changes to the use of medieval powers of royal prerogative.

Many migrant rights activists, who are also 'Stop Brexit' campaigners, believe that rooting their campaign in the wider context of the fight against racism is key to helping others identify with it. Also linked to this is their defence of the free movement of people. To this

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end, the 'Open Borders' campaign is significant, in that it aims to derail all that Brexit represents. It aims to go further still, extending free movement to the rest of the world, beginning with those in pursuit of safety and sanctuary.

Brexit has created divisions in multiple layers of the political, economic and legal establishment and between and amongst Conservative and Labour parties. These divisions and delays are seen by activists as presenting opportunities to have greater impact, increasing the potential that Brexit can be stopped. Opposition to Brexit has grown most recently in the mainstream, illustrated well by a recent national march attracting hundreds of thousands of people. The march was organised by ordinary citizens. This event reflected the concerns and fears of the Black, Asian and immigrant communities, although different pressures, such as threats to business may well have also driven their concern.

One of the pledges of the integrated struggle for free movement has been taking action to stop bordering performance in educational spaces. Since the 2014 immigration bill came into force, education has increasingly become a space for state bordering. New 'monitoring' measures established university policing through the compulsory registration of many non-EU students with the police and limiting numbers of academic immigrant workers in higher education. This one-size-fits-all immigration policy has met with intense outrage and resistance. Connecting the struggles within education with the wider movement has been particularly productive. Wherever the rights of international students or immigrant students to stay have been threatened, anti-deportation sit-ins, occupations or demonstrations have been organised. Measures such as accompanying students to classes to make them feel supported have also been undertaken. Linking these struggles with the wider movement helps international students 'know their rights' while defending them from the anti-immigrant sentiment. It also potentially frees educational spaces for

political enactment during the unfolding of Brexit; this alliance is something from which the wider movement can potentially draw strength.

A closer examination of these contexts highlights the power laden use of border control processes and the increasingly harsh and exclusionary asylum systems continuing to hurt the lives of those deemed to be 'outsiders'. Within these wider contexts, the goal of the Yarl's Wood protests and the wider movement is to move from ideas about ending detention to enactment. Through honest dialogue about borders, their goals have been to provide enactable ideas and plans for ending detention centres, fighting racism and ending anti-immigrant policies and systems.

7.2.4. Engaging a mass of bodies in spectacular defiance

'Let me give a shout to every person who has been through detention and has come here again to demonstrate with people who are still inside......Everyone who has been in detention, can I get a shout?'

[Cheers, whooping and clapping, more than twenty hands raised up]

Antonia Bright's (MFJ) opening speech was an intense burst of energy. She explained the rationale behind rejecting traditional modes of voicing concerns and opting for open resistance.

Figure 3: The welcome remarks: protest's organisers addressing the crowd

The various groups were made to feel united in sustained involvement in the production of protest:

'We are nearly ready. It's half past one and I think we should start moving in the next ten minutes. So we are giving a little chance to Cambridge who are still on their way here. But when we start walking, we gonna go through two fields, before we get to detention centre. They (inside detainees) will hear us before they see us. So by the time we reach the second field, we need to get loud because we need them to hear us coming. We know that every time there is a lot of harassment from the Serco guards. Because they (guards) are terrified in reality of detainees. They are terrified of the movement. They are terrified of the unity across every nationality, every different religion, sexuality, and background, of the detainees inside feeling they can get together and they can rely on each other and learn how to fight. That is terrifying to this system. It [the system] relies on our fear and anxiety and it relies on our division. We can't accept that...' (Antonia Bright)

[Crowd cheering, whooping and clapping]

There were a few coaches yet to arrive. Meanwhile, individuals were distributing signs and placards as the speech continued. Antonia's speech encouraged campaigners to define and conceptualise their own understanding of resistance. In sociological studies, the term 'resistance' remains 'loosely defined, allowing some scholars to see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere' (Weitz, 1995: 669). Two aspects of the scholarly definitions for resistance were clearly observed in the Yarl's Wood campaign: (1) *a sense of action,* and (2) *a sense of opposition.* Here, resistance was not a theoretical or contested term, but a question of how people understood their struggle and praxis.

7.2.4.1. The Method: Bold resistance as a weapon of the oppressed

Explaining the purpose of the action, Antonia juxtaposed the defining words 'reject' with 'accept' in relation to racism, xenophobia and islamophobia:

'... it's because we, every person, who stands for real equality and for justice, has got to stand up because **we are facing the biggest attack on immigrant rights we have seen in generations in the form of Brexit.** Not only immigrant rights but a bigger attack. It has put into power a person who made deportation on attacking asylum seekers, on building detentions, on staging racist Go Home Vans. Theresa May has presided over mass

deportations of students, of all sorts of people. [She] never lost her job as Home Secretary despite every scandal in Yarl's Wood of sexual abuse in detention centres. Every scandal kept her job and she is now the Prime Minister off the back of her ability to attack immigrants thus to attack everybody through the division that racism and anti-immigrant bigotry achieves.

So, our movement, our working classes, the oppressed, the poor, the people who are struggling, we cannot accept racism. We have to reject racism. And we have to reject anti-immigrant bigotry and anti-muslim bigotry. If we don't, we can't build the movement that is needed to stand up for every single person's rights to freedom, safety and existence as who we are. We have to win this fight!'

[Loud cheers from the crowd. Enthusiastic clapping. Drum and highly pitched screams. Placards raised up]

Antonia encouraged the participants to remember that they have the capacity, collectively, to affect power and power relations. For protestors, bold resistance requires having clear modes of resistance aimed at shutting down detention centres. As a united movement, they are able to draw on their experience of both small and large wins to take action based on proven tactics to achieve their goals. Yarl's Wood protests can also be understood as challenging the politics of identity. It was claimed by protestors that migrants in the UK were often labelled or portrayed unfairly by politicians including Trump, Brexit Leavers, and the then Home Secretary. Bold, defiant resistance therefore involves discursive strategies, which reject stereotypes or attributed identity. From the perspective of the protestors, Yarl's Wood calls for goal-oriented action that strategically rejects *power-over.* It 'is not a quality of an actor, a state of being' but 'involves some active behaviour, whether verbal, cognitive or physical' (Hollander and Einwohner 2004:538).

7.2.4.2.The Performing Space: Taking the struggle to the very location of resistance

Exploring the performing space of the Yarl's Wood campaign has shown that these actors (as with the previous performances discussed) chose to stage their performance in a symbolically resonant location in order to give it added meaning and impact. In contrast

to the *Refugees Welcome* march that staged events at a space with symbolic resonance in the national consciousness (i.e. the procession from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square through No. 10 Downing Street) – the Yarl's Wood campaign purposely chose to protest outside the very location where asylum seekers and refugees were being detained. This created a hybrid space: one that seeks to connect with the people who are fighting for themselves inside, but also one that demonstrates an end to isolation and confinement. It was staged in a highly visible space, which draws attention by the very act of being there. The 'outsider' status, performed by Yarl's Wood as a place of removal and exclusion of non-citizens, was immediately challenged and performed as inclusive through the highly visible act of resistance in the same space.

My original interview with Antonia Bright led to the decision to make Yarl's Wood a focus of my inquiry; it highlighted that Yarl's Wood was a clear performing space:

> 'We have to connect back to the movement outside. We have to connect the outside movement to the movement inside, because in the end it's real people understanding the real situation and doing something about it. And we need to take that into a situation that we can win. It means consciousness, it means associations as part of something bigger, it means, you need to be able to know that others are fighting, that your fight isn't isolated, you know, which would allow someone the room to make a decision to keep going. It makes the people outside fight a lot harder, like think, speak a lot more about detention and understand it more…' (Antonia Bright)

The Yarl's Wood protest used the site to counter the borders of detention, considering and contesting both the symbolic reasons for detention alongside the geographical actuality.

In the next sections, a narrative and dramaturgical account of my participatory experience in the protests from 2015 to 2016 will be examined. The findings will be discussed, focusing on the representational goals of the Yarl's Wood protest. These goals are: (1) connecting struggles within and outside of detention centres through a unified collective

movement; (2) empowering detainees with survival skills to navigate their circumstances; (3) creating a space that energises supporters, thus sustaining the struggle long term; and (4) increasing awareness and visibility of issues around carcerality, detention and deportation.

These will be explored by drawing upon the theories of affect, embodiment and aesthetics. These three interconnected aspects of the theatricality of protest are crucial to understand the overtly emotional and passionately visual acts that characterised the Yarl's Wood protests. Embodiment is often described as a process of bridging the imaginary separation between body and mind (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In direct action, one embodies feelings to perform politics: 'to engage in direct action, you have to feel enough passion to put your values into practice' (Jordan, 1998:134). Therefore, the body becomes the site of lived experience and felt intensities (Labanyi, 2010; Mazzarella, 2009:293). Using the body as the instrument of protest may be the only option available to someone stripped of liberty and material goods. For other protestors, such use of the body may demonstrate their total commitment. Affect is experienced through the body as 'circuits, surges and sensations' (Stewart, 2007:230); such affective experiences 'shimmer with undetermined potential and the weight of received meaning' (Stewart, 2007:230). Through emotions, our bodies are forced to respond to the meaning we receive, thus affective experiences through embodiment are brought into the present as potentialities and opportunities to make responses. In particular, how protest performances are embodied allows us to explore the way meanings and identities are expressed through the body (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987) as well as the body as a lived subject and agent (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994).

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7.2.4.3. The scenography of Yarl's Wood protests

The narrative above offers glimpses of energetic acts that encouraged action, including the organisers' scripting of the protest. This action provided a sense of leadership and direction, enabling an originally dispersed crowd to rally around a shared understanding of protest. The protest began with a procession, following the contours of the detention centre's razor fence and crossing the multiple muddy fields surrounding the building.

Figure 4: procession around the razor wire

In between the fields surrounding the centre, additional performance spaces were created. Processions would stop while activities were held in each temporal acting space, then the procession would proceed to the next designated stop. This division of space not only allowed the relationship between performance space and acting space, but also allowed protestors to remain in the act by highlighting the boundaries of the metaphorical stage. To define the contours of the proscenium stage, MFJ had also brought bicycles, sound systems and ladders.

Figure 5: Bike and materials utilised to contour the boundaries of the stage.

Occupying the space meant being flanked by the wire fences and any additional tools used to make the stage. This not only created links between spaces utilised as the staged dramatic space, but also made it easier for protestors to find coherence. While there was a police presence, the police did not intrude into the design of the set, but rather kept a respectful distance and did not interfere with the ability of protestors to manage the space and coordinate the events. This was in contrast to the Refugees Welcome demonstration, during which, at some points, the police were part of the staging, creating boundaries between demonstrators and the counteraction by the English Defence League.

Being outdoors seemed to make people very comfortable. It was a bright, sunny day. This made it possible for the procession to proceed in the open air, and thus allowed the actors to choose to use the open space to interact with each other and their audiences.

Figure 6: procession in action

7.2.5. Turning Yarl's Wood space into an emotive affective field

Through careful staging of the event, the organisers sought to turn the space into an emotive and affective field. The presence of a mass of protestors was important to enable transformation of the space into a full field of communication. The deliberate connection and communication on emotional, sensory and symbolic levels added to the narrative of the performance.

Unlike the *Refugees Welcome* demonstration, in which participation was likely decided by a single, time-bound decision, participation in the Yarl's Wood event required commitment: participants needed to dedicate a substantial amount of time, travel, staging, energy and money. This was partly because the location is somewhat isolated geographically from the rest of the world. However, a large cyber audience was also able to participate in the event via connections through Twitter, livestream, Facebook and other cyber sphere channels.

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The protestors engaged in three culturally specific acts which signified that 'this is a performance' and enabled the transformative process of becoming to begin. First, the story was told within a context: it was a story which commanded the movement of bodies and reinforced the contested accounts of Yarl's Wood. Secondly, the protesters engaged in an intentional transformation of the visual space. Visibility was asserted with political intention, in order to challenge sovereign control of what is and should be visible. Thirdly, the interactions of the actors reflected roles, characters and characterisation. The performance provided opportunities to explore specific functions, conditions and interactions. As the actors moved through space, carrying signs, chanting, giving speeches, cheering, gesturing and processing together, performances remained spontaneous and unpredictable in the shared space.

7.2.5.1.*These Walls Must Come Down: the story being told in the space*

Yarl's Wood dramatised ideas regarding the state exercise of incarceration and criminalisation of asylum seekers, demonstrating how this bordering power is impacting the minority within British Society. The narrative denounced 'immigration bashing' - the mainstream narrative - whilst totally rejecting the existence of Yarl's Wood detention centre. Every speech, slogan, sign or chant reflected this story. When viewed in the context of the rise of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment (particularly in the wake of Brexit), Yarl's Wood is a toxic symbol. Thus, organisers sought to energise and empower protestors by constructing 'anti-state practice' discourse. They also created a carefully scripted vocabulary of motives that portrayed the urgency of the problem, as well as the necessity of taking action to end the state's detention practices. Protestors were called to reject any values that sustained these existing power relations, such as 'the very existence of Yarl's Wood as a symbol of exclusion'. This was incorporated in what was shown or implied both on stage and off stage.

During the speech, it was important that the grievances, and their alignment with the movement's objectives, were taken into account. The slogans, which the protestors chanted in an energetic chorus, together with the response from the participants, all carried these meanings. They included denouncing the use of rigid control mechanisms and the reiteration of universal human rights - particularly the rights of mobility. Slogans also opposed views and practices of politicians that fuel anti-immigrant sentiments.

Goffman (1959) explores the manner in which grievances are interpreted, generated and diffused. Throughout the protest, it was evident that grievances served as a source of driving energy and a tool to revise and reframe the experiences of Yarl's Wood - making it clear that the existence of the facility was not merely a tragic reality, but constituted an injustice perpetrated by specific people. The simplified interpretations of the chants ushered participants into 'cognitive deliberation' (Snow and Benford 1992).

Slogan/chorus	Protestor chants
Yarl's Wood	Shut it down. Shut it down.
Detention centres	Shut them down. Shut them down
Racist prisons	Shut them down. Shut them down
Money for jobs and education	Not for racist deportations
No human is illegal	No human is illegal
Brick by brick, wall by wall, detention centres have to go	Brick by brick, wall by wall, detention centres have to go
No Trump, no Brexit, no racist EU exit	No Trump, no Brexit, no racist EU exit
When the racists attack	We fight back!
When G4S attacks	We fight back!
When Amber Rudd attacks	We fight back!
When Theresa May attacks	We fight back!
When the government attacks	We fight back!
When Home Office attacks	We fight back!
We fight back	We fight back!
When our communities are under attack – What do we do?	We stand up and fight back!
When asylum seekers are under attack-what do we do?	We stand up and fight back!

When migrant workers are under attacks – what do we do?	We stand up and fight back!
When EU migrants are under attacks- what do we do?	We stand up and fight back!
When our friends and neighbours are under attack - what do we do?	We stand up and fight back!

Table 4. Illustration of chants and slogans for a warm-up and protest energiser

These rhetorical and discursive projections were inscribed through systems of colours and connotations on the spatial installations of protestors' placards and signs. Taken together, these organisational and verbal cues were utilised with the intention to define and evoke the appropriate emotion or mood. They provided a movement ritual that reinforced what MFJ had enlisted as campaign goals and objectives.

7.2.5.2. 'We won enormous things and there's more we can win'

Invoking previous wins (such as the victorious end of Detention Fast Track (DFT) in the asylum system) affirmed the view that the actions of the system were unjust. These victories also legitimised noncompliance for the movement, which, in turn, served as an intensely felt reminder of the world in which they were acting. It intensified the belief that there are more victories to win, and that unjust practice can be overturned. From beliefs about the antagonists to beliefs about the efficacy of potential collective action, this consideration gave them the optimism and confidence to persist. The victorious outcome was attributed to deploying a method that could match the opponent's method. Increased publicity of the more aggressive measures by the state to deport and detain immigrants has led occasionally to members of the public intervening. The 'direct method' arguably provides an activist response which matches the fierce and forceful tenacity of the bordering practice it seeks to resist. Antonia explains:

> 'Last week the MFJ led a mass protest to shut down a fascist rally in Croydon
> [*Loud cheers, claps and banners and placards rise up in celebratory mode*]
> And the way that we did it...the way that we did it... 'cause we didn't knock

out any deals with the police, we went to the place where the fascists were due to show up, which was East Croydon station, and we called on people to go there so that the fascists couldn't even gather in the first place. They were drowned out. They got lectured in anti-racism so that for about two hours they were receiving lessons from anti-racist movements. They couldn't link up or gather anyone, they could not link with any potential fascist recruits that day, because the community stopped them. We stopped them and we did it by having a method and committing to it and organising it and building it'.

7.2.5.3. 'We need to galvanise a movement'

There was a strong sense that the collective action taking place was part of a movement that needed developing and sustaining. This was in response to the sense that the fight was becoming harder rather than ending, and so the movement was needed now but would also be needed in the future. There was an appeal to expand the scale of the Yarl's Wood resistance. Rather than confining activism to local protestors, they were invited to commit to the refugee rights' movement and to more widespread activism, joining various collective activities and adopting creative strategies at each scale of counter-mobilising.

> 'We are gonna have to do more of that in the future. We are gonna have to do more of this in the future. Our fight is going to be at the detention centres, it's gonna be in streets, it's gonna be in our communities, it's gonna be on our campuses. And we need to be organised and we need to commit to this fight because the next two years, it's gonna be ridiculous stuff coming out of the parliament, it's gonna be ridiculous stuff coming from Theresa May, whatever it is, it's gonna be more attacks on immigration, and the Labour party has been failing to stand up for the freedom of movement of people, but we can't let them get away with that. We need to galvanise a movement that is saying: we defend the freedom of movement of all people. Not just the EU people but all people. WE HAVE A RIGHT TO MOVE (loud cheers, claps, drums, screams and placards raised up).
>
> So, my appeal is, by the time today is done, that there is a path every one of us here is on. And that when we return to all the different places we come down from, that is what we are talking about. JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE. Join us in this fight. Organise where you are. We are gonna come up with creative ways to fight'.

Contextualisation and temporalisation also helped in amplifying the belief in the importance of galvanising the movement. Antonia further highlighted the variety of targets

of resistance with which it would be possible to engage, saying that it was necessary for members of the community to coordinate anti-raid actions and anti-deportation acts on their own:

> 'I am impressed when the people took the bikes out and fooled those immigration Go Home vans the other day... and so to make sure that whatever community they gonna show up in, people are forewarned that immigration vans are coming. That they are seeing that there is a movement trying to stop them. Because when you know that there is a movement, you know that there is something you can join. You know that you are not on your own. You are not in this fight alone.
>
> That's what we need. So, build. Join the Movement For Justice. We have some fliers. And we have sign-ups sheets make sure you sign them. Do not fall out of touch. We have so much to do, and so much that we can do'.

Highlighting the smaller, individual acts of resistance indicates that every voice and every act count. Antonia articulates that the struggle does not necessarily need collective coordination to achieve significant changes, and some individuals will get involved in smaller actions. The perceived necessity of strategising motivates and sustains participation through physical or material aspects of resistance, ranging from personal efforts and subtle actions in pursuit of movement goals to more bold resistance.

Antonia insists that joining the Movement For Justice is a symbolic resistance in itself. While the activism of protests, street demonstrations, marches and picketing require high-level coordination and can only be achieved by large numbers of people joining forces as a movement, these dissent-associated activities utilise 'unity' as one of the identified 'weapons of mass movement' (Hughes et al., 1995; McAdam, 1982)

7.2.5.4. Establishing heroes, victims and villains

The protestors sought to establish the heroes, victims and villains of the production. Even though this was accomplished in a fraction of a second, it spontaneously incited cheers from the crowd, thus further fuelling the energy of activism. Antonia characterised the detainees inside the detention centre as the 'victims' of malevolent state actions: victims

of harm that must be undone quickly. By rejecting the values that sustain the asylum treatment, the protestors made an otherwise hidden truth (one of isolated experiences) a highly visible public concern. Once the victims were identified, the villains were depicted, not as invincible but rather 'they are terrified...of the movement, of the unity across nationality'. There was also a sympathetic shift from victim to hero, as Antonia mentioned the powerful potential of detainees inside 'feeling they can get together and they can rely on each other and learn from each other how to fight'. Detainees have potential and power within themselves to stand up to the oppressor, and that, as Antonia insinuates, is terrifying to the system.

The work of characterisation in cultural production as well as in deliberate democracy such as protest, is fashioned as central to the 'protestors' arsenals.' Jasper (2014) explains that this is partly because characters tell us what emotion we are supposed to feel: we pity victims, we fear and hate villains, we admire heroes, we feel contempt for minions. Rhetorically, Antonia's call for collective action from 'the working class, the oppressed, the poor, the people who are struggling', intends to arouse compassion and suggests they have a role to play, which is to start acting like a hero. The ethical majority also must be roused to action through claims of representation.

Antonia's speech framed the role of demonstrators as representatives of public good, of hope and of an integrated society. This positioned *Shut Down Yarl's Wood* as a protest concerned with visibly representing an oppositional identity in the public sphere. Rather than the fight being limited only to those who are currently experiencing oppression, a call for unity suggested that everyone is included in the struggle and resistance - even those who structurally have more power.

> 'And we are not afraid, wherever people come from in the world we can build [an] integrated society and be equals. We represent hope. We represent young people who rejected racism at the ballot box. Every time. We

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represent a future and that's what we have to fight for... [voice begins to crack. Pause] So I am calling on everyone!'

Antonia offered a consistent and comprehensive explanation of the context and action for the activism of MFJ. Antonia does not have a backstory of detention or personal experiences. Therefore, former detainees stepped into this role as supporting cast, often recounting the horrors they experienced, and demonstrating that, had it not been the depth of support they received from protestors while they were still inside, they would have died of depression. A former detainee stated: 'we must help those less fortunate among us who are still inside'.

Figure 7: Coordinator' sidekick addressing the crowd

7.2.5.5. Visual transformation of the Yarl's Wood space

The aesthetic appearance of Yarl's Wood also underwent a spatial transformation. Political visibility, like other political phenomena, amplifies value. (This does not mean that the invisibility cannot also be a political accomplishment: in the case study discussed later, it is clear that *Hope Space's* invisibility is intentional and is a political act.) The aesthetic in Yarl's Wood was central in attracting attention and focus from participants, and it reinforced the sense that space mattered. Demarcating a territory

was part of the design - operating as a counter performance to the state's demarcation that this was a place only for 'out of place' people. This first accomplishment offered a sharp contrast to the sovereign grammars of visibility and territorialism. The big placards and signs were used to transform the space. These carried the messages the protestors wanted to project, challenging the very idea of rigid state bordering.

Rather than *Yarl's Wood* remaining an isolated site, the visibility of signs meant the road users could bear witness, albeit in a time-bound manner. The repetition of visual symbols and vocal elements meant that there was a new articulation - a new rhythm that diffused the sense of sovereign control of what was visible and exposed it as irrelevant. Since the state modes of visibility extend to the mediatised sphere, the presence of the media officials and independent reporters fed into this expression, highlighting the salience of the protest reaching to audiences beyond the physical boundaries. Images from the protests are often transmitted live to millions of television viewers, and the demonstrations normally synchronise with the end of the weekend evening news and then become the next morning's leading items.

Figure 8: Images transmission to television viewers and synchronising news production schedules.

7.2.6. Embodied 'LIVE' resistance: between ritual and strategy

While the discursive aspect earlier described formed what Habermas (1989) called 'emerging publics', the protest was a place of encounters with affect: people who move through the world affected by and affecting others. Sharing space and co-presence contributes to the materiality of the protest experience. This leads us to consider the notion of the lived body as a site of resistance. What can we learn about the embodied, affected body and political dissent in Yarl's Wood? It is important to place the personal within the political, the subjective within the system. How can a conscious manipulation of bodies shed light on structural violence, historical oppression and inequality that inform and often limit our individual experiences?

Figure 9: energetic politics of noise.

Protest is an embodied practice that involves the self as an important site of meaning for activism. Embodiment is often evoked to turn our attention to the ritual of corporeal experience and to the fact that our experience, as embodied subjects in the world, presupposes 'the body as mediator of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Politics is often aligned with emotions - why we feel certain ways - and the need to understand internalised oppression in order to resist aligning with existing oppressive behaviours in society (King, 2005). The bodies of activists, as well as their emotional lives, are important sites of protest, especially in direct action which involves *physically* placing their bodies on the line and in the way of those they oppose.

Juris (2008) suggests that protests are characterised by high ritual density 'resulting from the bodily awareness of co-presence among ritual participants who are physically assembled and share a mutual focus of attention' (2008:61). Conducting the protest in the specific time, place and context of Yarl's Wood reflects the embodied dissent of the protestors, occupying the very space of the systemic border violence. There are two representational and transformative texts from Yarl's Wood which highlight lived

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embodiment: (1) the gendered nature of the texts, and (2) the fact that they are charged with the signifying systems crucial for understanding the Yarl's Wood protests. One can be framed through a recurring slogan, '*hands off our sisters'* reflecting Yarl's Wood as a feminist struggle. Another can be framed through the slogan, '*we fight back',* as an underlying principle expressing agency rather than victimhood.

7.2.7. 'Hands Off Our Sisters': a war of two walls

There were two signs which were particularly striking. The first one read, 'no woman is illegal,' and the second, 'hands off our sisters.' These signs engaged a particularly reflexive body performance, problematising gender rather than subverting it. They expressed dissent and disapproval of the structural political system and forces at play, countering them with affected bodies. The message was: women should not be detained, and if you do it, it becomes a feminist battle.

Figure 10: Placards at the demonstration.

In '*Protesting Like a Girl'*, Parkins (2000) suggests that the body is an anchorage in the world 'that opens us up to the world in situation there' (2000:60). The symbolic construction of the world in which the bodies of the protestor were anchored, the world within which their bodies moved and acted, served to create an alternative world and alternative futures: a new emerging feminist world, safer for women detainees and women

protestors alike. A further evocation of this was a woman carrying a sign with a famous quote from a feminist scholar activist, Audre Lorde, which reads:

> I am not free while any woman is unfree even when her shackles are different from my own.
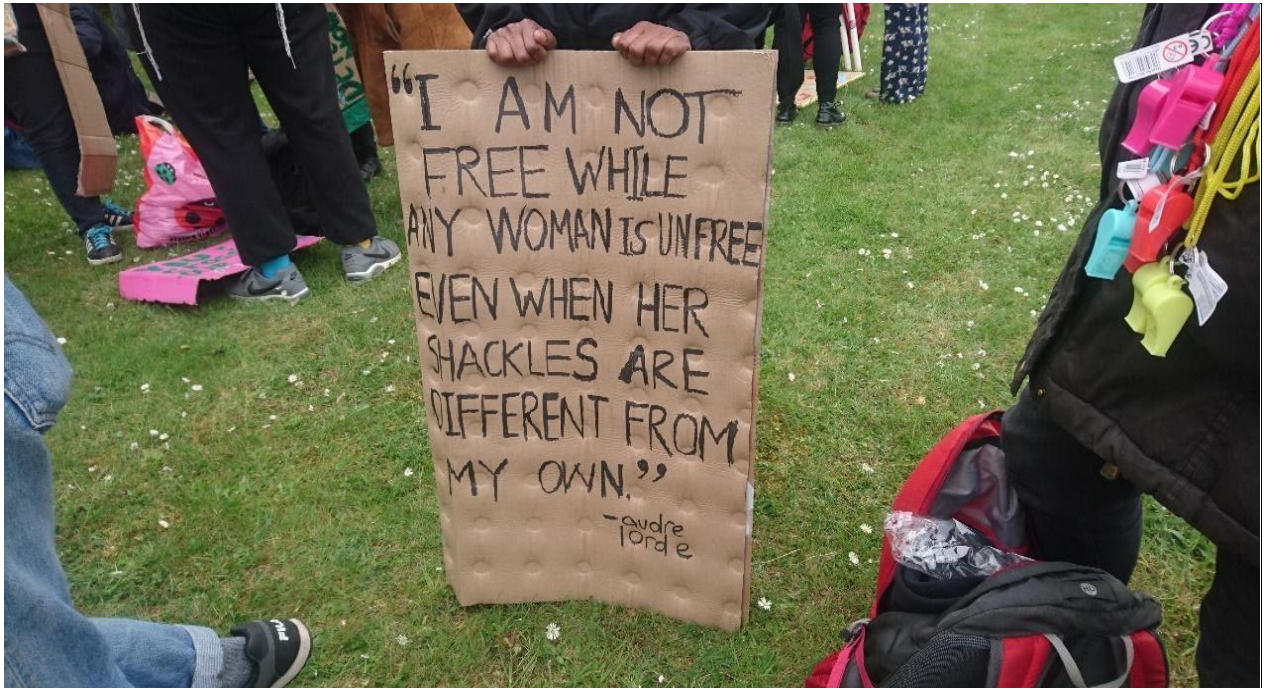
Figure 11: Audre Lorde -quote.

During the protest, Serco guards attempted to prevent the detainees: only a few days before the protest, the original wire gate was covered in a tall, green, barbed-wire fence to prevent the view from or to the inside. To try to be visible to the women inside, protestors used ladders or climbed on each other's shoulders, like acrobats leaning for support. The guards prevented a large number of detainees coming near the windows. On our side of the fence, a wall of noise intensified. I could see a detained woman looking down from the windows. I thus received a tiny glimpse of the inside world that was briefly joining in with the organised chaos outside the fence. There was a strong sense of camaraderie between the women and the protestors below.

Figure 12: desperate waving between two walls

The most dramatic moment occurred when one detainee's performance from behind the razor wire was synchronised with the protestor's performance, like a battlefield across the two sides of the fences. A mobile phone was connected to a loudspeaker on the performance stage outside, and organisers called a mobile phone inside the detention centre where the women were gathering. The exchanges were synchronised with the rhythm of the performance outside, and former detainees acted as pace mediators while connecting the real and broken pauses throughout the duration of the performance. In response, the Yarl's Wood inmates dangled strips of toilet paper from the window to express appreciation of the solidarity. Locked behind metal, glass and plastic windows, the detainees could only slip their hands through the narrow window spaces to join in the performance, sending tissue sweeping through the air. Such a simple act felt like a tangible show of strength, determination and unity. Protestors held their backs against the tall, barbed-wire gate and started to kick it: there was a deafening sound of hundreds of feet stamping against metal. Bang, bang, bang. A flare was launched. Those not on the wall alternated between banging and frantically waving back at the women looking down from Yarl's Wood. Their faces were etched with a seeming desperation to reach

the women - to show them that they were not forgotten, that they were human, and that

people on the outside recognised that.

Figure 13: Wall-kicking

A woman (who did not wish to give me her name) who wore a grey hooded tracksuit

described a situation when guards tried to forcefully deport her while she was still fighting

for her asylum:

> 'You have to see the way they lifted me like a sack of beans and pushed me straight into the G4S van. All because I said that: I am not going back. There is a way they interpret this resistance, they call it 'verbal aggression' you see? You are expected to get in the van like a sheep and do as you are told! My point is that these people are funded by the Home Office as contractors to brutalise women and they don't care if you could be their grandma or you are heavily pregnant'.

> After saying this, the woman gestured at the crowds of protestors:

> 'You guys you think I will ever forget your gesture coming here? When I was still inside, and you guys were here on the outside. You said and screamed: 'Together we could achieve victory'. And I am proof of that. Here I am, protesting with you today. I am out. As we said, we did. We achieved my release into the community together. You gave me strength'.

A cacophony of whistles, drums and cheers erupted in support. She defiantly ended her

speech by declaring 'No human is illegal!'

More former detainees of Yarl's Wood lined up one by one to speak. The last one looked much shyer than the previous speakers but was determined to hold a microphone and say something. She was at first overwhelmed into speechlessness and had to be coaxed on stage by the former speaker. Her voice trembled slightly as she said: 'Thank you for thinking about us. Thank you everyone here'. She defiantly ended by proclaiming: 'No human is illegal!' The energised, smiling and encouraging faces rhythmically broke into chants of, 'No human is illegal!' No borders! No nations! Stop deportation!' The organisers tried to speak but were muffled by the roar of cheers and clapping. There was much flying tissue. Many smiles. Flares in the air. More people approached the wall again and recommenced kicking. The cheers grew louder. The feet banged harder. The chants became faster and louder. More kicks, waves, noise, and the chants continued endlessly. The energy and atmosphere within the crowd was indescribably powerful.

7.3. Case Two: Refugees Welcome National Demonstration

7.3.1. Refugees Welcome as the politics of welcome: the campaign's demands and objectives

On the 12th of September 2015, I attended the first *Refugees Welcome* (RW) Demonstration in London. Tens of thousands of people[14] marched through the streets of Central London in support of refugees and to demand that the UK government take a greater share of the EU burden for accepting Syrian refugees. Organisers hoped for the rally to convey the message that Europe should not continue to allow thousands to die trying to reach EU shores and exercise their legal right to claim asylum. The RW Facebook page said, 'We have to ensure that refugees can reach Europe safely'. Initially, the protest performance was triggered by a Facebook call for a demonstration. Almashi Abdellaziz, one of the rally organisers from Solidarity with Syria, explained during an

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[14] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/12/london-rally-solidarity-with-refugees, accessed on 17 November 2018

interview that they had not expected such high numbers of positive respondents on Facebook, which had prompted a quick agenda setting and raised expected outcomes for the rally. It was difficult not to be despondent with so much political and moral indifference among the leading politicians. Rather than staying passive and accepting the dominant political narrative, the organisers hoped to convey the message that nothing was inevitable, and the power was in the hands of the people. The demonstration was scheduled for Saturday - two days prior to the emergency talks on Europe's refugee crisis, which Theresa May would be attending alongside her EU counterparts. The organisers said:

> We need to prioritise the fast processing of asylum claims from people from particularly dangerous regions, such as Syria. We can't allow any EU countries to close their borders or build fences. There needs to be Europe-wide consensus on providing help where it is desperately needed, relieving pressure on the Mediterranean countries.

The RW performance sought to generate critiques of national policies by proposing alternate policies and systems that lessen repression on a national scale. On Facebook, RW said: 'There needs to be either official safe transport provided, or if people could apply for asylum from outside the EU, they would be able to enter by official routes'.

Facebook posts and RW's website articulated the demands and objectives of the demonstrations, which sought to:

> 'bring together major civil society institutions and groups across the UK to mobilise their resources to support the government, local authorities and specialist providers in resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 and to go further by bringing more refugees to safety in Britain'.

In addition to this, a *Refugees Welcome* joint statement declared further objectives:

> 1. Pressuring the UK to take a fair and proportionate share of asylum seekers and refugees, both those already within the EU and those still outside.

2. Establishing safe and legal routes to the UK, as well as to the EU for all refugees through humanitarian visas, resettlement schemes and humane family reunion policies.

3. Ensuring appropriate funding of the existing specialist support for refugees and asylum seekers and for coordination of volunteer initiatives.

4. Abandon plans to introduce the new Immigration Act, which introduces a more restrictive stance towards asylum seekers (http://www.swruk.org/).

Similar performance events were synchronised across national and global space, thus bringing the transnational directly to the local sphere. Many cities in the UK, including Glasgow, Brighton, Birmingham and Manchester, participated in local demonstrations. A mass *Refugees Welcome* protest took place in Copenhagen, with an estimated 30,000 protestors gathering outside the Danish parliament. The Danish protestors chanted in English, 'say it loud and say it clear: Refugees are welcome here!' These protests seemed popular and captured the shift of views the refugee issue had generated.

7.3.2. Societal context: protesting against the State's absence of human Care

7.3.2.1. Refugee crisis and calls for sanctuary

The *Refugees Welcome* campaign emerged in August 2014 within the context of what the *New Statesman* described as 'the summer of blood'. This followed the intensification of wars across the world and the Syrian refugee crisis which erupted in 2011. The Syrian refugee crisis forcibly displaced over four million people, leaving them with no option other than to flee their home country. Approximately 6.5 million Syrians sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon or Jordan. In 2014, more than 3,000 refugees drowned in the Mediterranean as they fled in search of asylum. UNCHR reported that 59.5 million people were forcibly displaced in 2014. This was an unprecedented level of displacement, which lead the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon to say: 'Never before in the United Nations history have, we had

so many refugees, displaced people and asylum seekers'. Records from International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicated that in 2015, 3651 refugees died while trying to cross the sea, including 2,889 who died on the route to Italy from the North African border. Another 94 people died on the way to Europe from West Africa, and 684 others died on the way from Turkey to Greece. As the situation rapidly developed into a full-blown EU 'refugee crisis', the British state initially responded with a rehearsed and repetitive mantra about the 'proud history of offering sanctuary to those who are in need'. This was deployed by British politicians from all parties and mainstream media. For example, at the beginning of Refugees Week in June 2014, David Cameron said: 'the UK has a long tradition of providing refuge and safety to people at a time of crisis'. Similar views were also expressed across the party divide: Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrats) and Yvette Cooper (Labour) used rhetoric expressing that the offering of sanctuary was something very British, something to be proud of, a legacy to continue and indeed to sustain.

7.3.2.2. Flipping the script

Having initially shown sympathy and a political will to intervene, the political narrative shifted as the 2015 general elections approached and was replaced with the soundbites of 'illegal' migrants and 'evil traffickers'. The original promise by Labour to reclaim the immigration discourse from the right-wing shifted under the fear of electoral sanctions towards an anti-immigration propagation of fear. The initial narrative of sanctuary-giving was quickly obscured by moral and electoral panic in the face of the rapid escalation of the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. Rather than opening borders, Home Secretary, Theresa May sought to erect steel fences to secure the borders and released £12 million of funding for riot policing as part of a secure, fortified borders policy at Dover, and a FRONTEX land and sea border around Europe (in the central and eastern

Mediterranean). As external borders became militarised zones, internally, borders were also fortified through tougher asylum procedures and institutions designed to deter future asylum seekers. Freedom of Information requests revealed that the Home Office paid over £250,000 for sponsored articles, advertorials and digital advertising to the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* in 2014, while the controversial 'Go Home' van campaign reportedly cost the taxpayers £9,740.

7.3.2.3. Public representations of refugees

By June 2015 in Britain, the process of transforming refugees into matters of security had intensified. The media discourse was dominated by scaremongering. The media began portraying refugees as figureless images 'sneaking in', rather than telling individual stories. Terms such as an 'unstoppable flood' or 'swarms of people' (David Cameron) created panic and the sense that immigration was out of control. Extreme examples such as Katie Hopkin's inflammatory language in *The Sun* calling refugees 'cockroaches' became mainstream. The British Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, suggested refugees who arrived in Calais were 'marauding migrants threatening our standard of living', and warned that Europe could not protect itself or preserve its standard of living and social infrastructure if it has to absorb millions of 'migrants from Africa'.

These representations of migrants in the media coincided with the public being overwhelmed by cuts in the name of austerity. These cuts impacted the very same institutions - health services, education, employment and social housing - that were supposedly threatened by refugees. The official narrative was fuelled by the politicians and the media pandering to prejudice, some acting for short-term self-interest, others spreading hostility to win elections. This whipped up public distrust and shaped public opinion. The fear and uncertainty created by the propagated discourse was the foundation of the effort to form the national perspective and shape public opinion.

In the next section, I explain how, despite the official discourse of hostility, the public attitude was ambivalent, with the popularised narrative being challenged by individual scrutiny.

7.3.2.4. Heroism of ordinary citizens and solidarities from below

The Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) reported over 3,000 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. The refusal by European states to immediately support the rescue mission of migrant boats, echoed the depth of states' indifference to human life at the border. In contrast to the anti-refugee institutional response by 'liberal states', including the UK, countless numbers of ordinary people stepped into that caring role, demonstrating that the public are not passive audiences, but have agency. Local initiatives suddenly emerged, such as *Village of All Together,* on the Greek Island of Lesbos, and the civil society actors in Germany (*Refugees Welcome*). Similar initiatives emerged in Austria (Caritas) and Hungary (Migszol). Volunteers organised aid distribution and trips to borders and other 'hotspots' such as Calais and Lampedusa, carrying with them food and managing stocks of clothing, shoes, blankets and tents. Volunteers also undertook crowd management roles, providing critical information about registration and borders, referring the vulnerable to UNHCR or medical services, and caring for children. Solidarity groups acted across European borders, and the frontline volunteers sent an 'open letter' to European governments asking them to 'act immediately and decisively' to alleviate the situation. Britain, under Theresa May, rejected as 'inconceivable' the proposal to create legal, safe routes for migrants to get to Europe in the longer term. Britain eventually sent warships to the Mediterranean to help the Italian coastguard's search and rescue operations. However, this was only after an initial callous response to the conclusion of Italy's Mare Nostrum rescue programme, and the resultant surge in migrant deaths which caused public outrage. The much-publicised image of a Kurdish boy, Aylan Kurdi,

drowned on 2 September, 2015 and found lifeless on a Turkish beach, personalised and graphically demonstrated the levels of human suffering. This image challenged the national absence of human care. This incident prompted national conversations and public debates about the immigration crisis, notably using the hashtags #Humanity and #washedupashore, which represented English translations of the Greek hashtag #kiyiyavuraninsanlik.

The refugee crisis exposed a sharp political and cultural rift between EU member states, including debates about a proposed and 'controversial' mandatory quota which would require each EU country to take in 40,000 refugees. The European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, argued that there was a strong moral imperative to help people fleeing persecution and war, and appealed for unity to facilitate a deal which might keep pace with events on the ground. The European Council President, Donald Tusk, warned that divisions between Western member states and their newest Eastern partners were complicating efforts to solve the deepening refugee crisis. Although Germany decided to finally open its border to over 40,000 refugees, not all 28 members of European Union reacted in the same way. Rather, refugees were often caught up in a circus between the Austrian, Greek and Hungarian border; these measures most often contained rather than helped the refugees (www.asylumeurope.org). The UK agreed to take up to 20,000 Syrians refugees over five years (2016-2021), a small number compared to the commitment from its counterparts. Solidarity actions of British citizens, non-citizens, migrants and non-migrants criticised the state's inaction throughout this crisis as a 'neo-liberal system of abandoning' by a succession of governments over the past decades. *Refugees Welcome* thus emerged in mainstream public discourse during the heat of the crisis as a way to reflect the attitude of many people in the UK, embodying the power of welcome.

In the following section, I present my findings, exploring the extent to which staging *Refugees Welcome* protests affected public or state opinion about the refugee crisis during 2015. Given the societal context described, I analyse some of the carefully orchestrated features of the demonstration, such as its political staging, the 'march' performance, rhetorical/discursive deployment and the post-demonstration developments. In addition to other societal public-engaging interventions, such as the theatre performances described in the previous chapter, I will focus on protest as an expression of dissent, which, I argue, has distinct advantages that inform migrant rights activism praxis.

7.3.3. Performing at the borders of belonging

Staging the *Refugees Welcome* protest involved the act of 'going public,' which theoretically, is a democratic move to 'seek social support, hoping to set in motion a process that will make it hard for elected officials to continue to ignore them' (Ad hoc interview at RW 2016). The plethora of diverse demonstrations, talks, debates, conferences and other actions that come under the banner of *Refugees Welcome* suggest it is a forum through which the public demonstrated their concern and opinions about the refugee issues independent from the dominant narrative, thus, intentionally creating a welcoming culture of sanctuary. Protesting peacefully highlighted resistance to state policy and demonstrated the weight of the argument through the large numbers of people in agreement with the protest. Such protests also revealed the extent to which people care and their united position on the issue. Since the event was a spontaneous response rather than a pre-planned event, there was a heavy reliance upon developing and manipulating the symbols. It was an opportunity for the protestors to claim their views represent those of the majority, with large numbers joining in support and solidarity. The

protest performance generated powerful emotions through 'affective solidarity' (Juris, 2008) which, in turn, 'prepare[d] activists' bodies for action' (Thrift, 2004).

Dismantling borders of belonging and inclusion was one of the main goals of these demonstrations. The numbers attending the march and the intensity of the passion expressed were designed to call into question both the official immigration policy and the dominant political views - and to challenge whether these really reflect the opinions of the majority. A consistent protest script challenged what was perceived to be the state's absence from the refugee crisis and demanded responsive action. A strong demonstration of solidarity was designed to engage audiences online and offline with the 'welcome' narrative. This was scripted within the narrative of challenging how migrants of colour are represented through image and text, and how this reinforces inequalities. This set the protest within the wider sense of solidarity against injustice.

Refugees Welcome built its demands on the existing scripts of anti-racism and traditional migrant rights organising. It sought to harness the momentum of 'the sea drowning' stories, using individualised frames to rescript the argument. These scripts were an effective device to intensify the powerful notion of belonging and inclusion, which many migrant rights campaigners had set into motion long before the heat of the crisis. *Refugees Welcome*'s scripts helped activists appropriately address the issue at stake, ask questions, set demands, speak out and lead protests. They also set an effective conversational tone, offering an alternative public representation of Syrian refugees within a context of everyday humanitarianism.

7.3.4. Migrating performing spaces, bodies and audiences

Refugees Welcome's protest effectively pushed back against the dominant narrative and influenced power. Organisers used emotion strategically in order to generate the commitment necessary to maintain participation, which led to supporters taking action at

national, local, and European levels. Gould (2001) notes that activists spend a great deal of time working towards affective attachments, conveying or evoking emotional states with the goal to motivate and sustain action. RW's strategies were quite labour intensive, using twitter, Facebook, printed brochures as well as other online and offline platforms. The effort also involved coordination among diverse networks and groups, the division of space, and a variety of protest styles in order to produce a networking logic on a tactical plane. Migrant and anti-racist networks joined from locations across the UK, using diverse performances and alternative identities to generate emotional tones ranging from militant rage to 'carnivalesque' exuberance.

Figure 14: Pro-refugee activist networks at the 2016 RW demo

The procession began from Hyde Park with the final staging space at Trafalgar Square. Additional stops were created for decentralised actions, mixing a mobile blend of migrating performances and audiences. At Downing street, Parliament, and the BBC building, protestors chanted: 'Refugees are welcome here' and 'Theresa May -' shame on you!' Activists sought to stage a networked multi-spatial performance to generate powerful emotions and new narratives of welcome, while simultaneously working out new forms of sociality.

Protestors often utilise their visibility to produce complex ritual performances. The effect is that, externally, they are 'image events' which deliberately 'hi-jack' the global media space afforded by the reputation of the location. The route of the RW protest was deliberately chosen as a symbol of performative terrain where contemporary struggles compete for visibility. The route from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square has previously hosted many famous public dissents, such as *Free Mandela*, *Stop the War.* Such struggles have been mediated and embodied to produce image-engineered resistance. A 'high ritual intensity' results from the 'bodily awareness of co-presence among ritual participants who are physically assembled and share a mutual focus of attention'. A ritual intensity was coordinated by the political communities to coordinate a performance of political statements of welcome and inclusiveness (Collins 2001:.28).

The homogeneity and potential of the audience was managed across a large scale, with the RW Facebook page explaining: 'RW connects people across EU and Middle East with organisations and people activists. There were simultaneous online calls to practical actions, such as providing shelter or urging established networks and alliances to take emergency aid to Calais. This facilitated citizens and non-citizens to respond, acting from the bottom up. Communication and information technologies were critical to RW's mobilisation and their implementation of strategies to influence public opinion, allowing them to reach out to wide networks in a matter of days.

7.3.5. 'We' the People: embodying the power of welcome in the public sphere

RW protests provided spaces where identities were expressed through distinct bodily techniques and emotions. They also provided moments of recognition of others and the self in the 'live' experience, which blurred the relationship between individual and collective. The heterogeneity of the protestors was reflected by affiliations with different

ideological, faith and social backgrounds. Speakers and board members included a bishop, a Muslim imam and a rabbi.

Figure 15: The heterogeneity of the protestors was reflected by affiliations with different ideological, faith and social backgrounds

There were party representatives from Labour, Green, Conservative, Liberal Democrats and others at the RW event. (This diversity stands in contrast to the homogeneity seen in the subversive organising nature of dissenting groups such as Hope Space). The context of this protest performance resulted in differences in status or differing values being deactivated by the united claim of belonging to a space devoid of borders. The participation of refugees and asylum seekers was also key, for their presence challenged both the 'sovereign control' and 'traditions of the political that are centred upon the politics of visibility' (Nyers, 2013: 29).

However, not all performers were supporting the refugee cause. When we arrived near Trafalgar Square, a group of antagonists carrying the flag of the English Defence League

(EDL) attempted to control or limit the flow of the procession towards the main stage. Although this group was quite small, the presence of the EDL micro-performances was another embodied staging aspect. It provided an opportunity to witness the staging as an interactive process, for RW organisers and participants had to adjust to each other's actions and the presence of EDL. In addition, the metropolitan police formed a line separating the EDL from the demonstrators. Although there were not any erected architectural barriers at the site, the presence of EDL – albeit in small numbers - provoked fears that they would succeed in disrupting the protest's symbolic representation and visibility. There was some concern that the mere presence of EDL would be considered more interesting and newsworthy by the reporters.

7.4. Case Three: Hope Space

7.4.1. Hope Space as a politics of belonging and resilience

> Ever since I came here, I feel alive again. It's funny to say my life is better now as a destitute in this house of Hope Space because, you know, of course I am still a destitute while before I had NAAS support. The difference is that now I am aware that being in this place, in this women's group, I am able to look back and reflect on everything I went through. Seeing others like me and hearing their stories helps me come to terms with what I lost and endured during the past seven years in the asylum system (Mina, Focus group No2, August 2015).

Mina offers a clear, intersectional account, of hope through community, providing a good overall picture of the effective politics of the Hope Space. Born as a response to the increasing destitution of asylum seekers in the UK in recent years, this shelter is currently working to help those barred from public funds (including all mainstream benefits and provision for the homeless such as hostels and night-shelters) in Birmingham and the West Midlands through five main projects:

- The Hope Destitution Fund, making fortnightly cash grants to destitute asylum seekers.

- Hope Housing, providing emergency accommodation for homeless asylum seekers.

- The Hope Fund for Children, making one-time grants to mothers of small children who are barred from access to public funds.

- Ujamaa, providing specialist counselling and advice/casework support to asylum seekers and refugee women.

- The Hope Special Fund, making one–time grants for purposes not covered by other Hope Funds.

In 2013/14, the shelter accommodated 68 new residents - 35 women (five pregnant), 22 men and three couples with five children. The shelter serves as first-stage accommodation where the needs of women can be assessed before they move to other facilities; it works closely with referral-agencies. The cost of managing and operating Hope Space is covered by trusts and other organisations that support the cause of securing alternative remedies to asylum destitution. There is a small office for Hope support workers and volunteers, and this serves as the base for a range of activities for the residents from all the houses. The physical space, along with the ongoing activities such as weekly meetings, provided a useful arrangement from which I was able to conduct focus groups in the summer of 2015.

Through the practical provision of accommodation, subsistence, counselling and advocacy to destitute and homeless asylum seekers and migrants, *Hope Space* performs everyday acts of resistance, resilience, and defiance. Although *Hope Space*, like other such shelters for destitute asylum seekers, is localised in a specific place, it is a place that is animated by its inhabitants. It is this combination of the animation of locatedness that is significant. Women of Hope provides the background 'hope' that gives the women confidence to express their voices. Massey (2005) argues that previously conceived

distinctions between space and place do not exist. Concepts that equate 'place' with localised experience are incorrect, Massey (2005) this notion of space as an abstract and globalised mapping of experience. Thus, this shelter is a located space (a geophysical site) animated by destitute women seeking asylum.

7.4.2. Accessing the women only space: a question of methodology

I visited women of Hope Space at the beginning of my fieldwork between August 2015 and September 2015. The aim was to trace the struggle of status-less women to perform resistant acts through the creation of organising space, as well as to explore how they support and sustain their cause. At the initial conceptual stage, *Hope Space* was one of many initiatives in the UK highlighting the changing understanding of feminist organising, particularly with reference to migrant women with insecure status. This gave rise to particular questions and concerns as to whether there was accurate representation of the situated understandings and perspectives of in/visible migrant women within the wider discourse and counter-performance of borders. The women's activities can be described as a form of feminist organising, empowering women as individuals and as a 'community' to contest exclusionary systems of representation and participation. Alongside this, Hope Space demonstrates how subjects expand their resistance beyond the boundaries of their 'home place' into the public sphere.

A literature review on the contemporary politics of immigration and state bordering practices preceded the focus groups. This provided configurations through which state bordering performances manifest (see Chapter 2). This review was important to understand the barrage of hardships and hurts tied to the asylum system, and to critically engage with the literature before hearing personal stories about how individuals navigate the state bordering experiences. I also closely examined works on feminist and anti-racist

epistemology, which informed the ethical thinking and research method of my study. Findings were gathered from the following data:

- Agenda, minutes and flipchart sheets from weekly Hope Space meetings.

- Evaluation session with the women group meetings conducted by the project coordinator.

- *Hope Space Report* 13/14.

- Personal journal documenting thoughts, feelings, observations and questions.

- Summarised transcript from recorded focused groups session 1, 2, 3 (45 attendances in total).

- Semi-structured recorded interview with seven members of Women of Hope (Cameroonian, Zimbabwean, Ugandan, Syrian, Eritrean, Pakistani, Nigerian, Gambia-Senegalese).

- Notes from the training provided by 'Right to Remain' (conducted in 2015, date not provided).

- Notes from training on 'legal representation' delivered by a local charity.

- Notes from conversation over lunch with four members

I provided open questions for the focus group based around the themes of empowerment and disempowerment, referring to the experiences of the current immigration control mechanisms and how the women of Hope overcame them. The research material (included interviews, transcripts and observations) was analysed according to the theme of resisting state borders. While expanding on the issue of representation previously explored in other cases, the focus groups aimed to include active voices of people virtually invisible at the forefront of migrant rights, but who nevertheless function as context operators behind the scene. While migrant activists advocate on their behalf, they also acknowledge that the women have a voice which needs to be heard. In my

methodological chapter, I detail how access to interviews was a result of my prior encounter and engagement with some of the members, including the coordinator of the project. My position as a feminist researcher, and my identity as a Black woman were significant in the process of building trust with the groups - trust which was also strengthened by our many encounters in external activism events in which the women joined forces with the campaigns of community grassroots organisations.

The overarching finding is the existence, function and impact *Hope Space* has created and the consideration of practices engendered by these women in and out of their 'safe' space as political acts. The following sections provide contextual description as to what makes this space specifically well-suited to address the needs of these women, how *Hope Space* is run and sustained, whether it is an ongoing outcome of this space or particular to the women.

7.4.3. Space creation and space appropriation

Hope Space has not only been a physical place to call home – meeting functional and material support for shelter and security after being forced into destitution - but also a 'home place' where the women with no citizenship status forge a bond, share their cultural and political vision and concerns, and seek peer to peer support for their 'social' problems. Personal affinity and familiarity is experienced, and affective identification is shaped by a broader context, which is their shared immigration and asylum experiences. As Massey (2005) suggests, place is an aura of a location together with the location itself and one with which a person builds a relationship.

The weekly running of Women of Hope's meetings is managed by the women themselves under the leadership of an elder whom they affectionately call 'Mama Debra'. Although the group leader was indeed the oldest among the residents at the shelter, the nickname reflects a traditional African matriarchal structure in which an elder woman normally

occupies a performative role responsible for the exercise of the politics of care. Carefully observing the interactions of Mama Debra with the group highlighted an established hierarchy within which she has assumed a matriarchal/leadership/gatekeeper role. In *Hope Space*, a 'family-like,' relational and organisational model that includes performative roles (mother/daughter) are expressed to cultivate and mobilise the social bonds that sustain these women's activism and to fuel their survival.

The naming of the space and the naming of the project are themselves performative acts. The idea of forming a group came out of the necessity to find a place and space to mend 'hope' and thus the project was symbolically entitled *Hope Space.* The extremes of exclusion experienced by these women through dispersal, detention, appeal dismissals and deportation threats, has further plunged them into marginalisation and exclusion. hooks (1990) developed the concept of 'home space' as a site of resistance. While discussing the experiences of African American women, hooks' proposition was that, historically, these women struggled to make and sustain a home place. A 'home space' implied more than the provision of basic daily needs. More importantly, it provided a radical political dimension: 'despite the reality of domination, one's home place was the one site where one could freely confront the issues of humanization, where one could resist' (hooks, 1990:42). *Hope Space* operates as just such a 'home place': where partnership is made possible across gender and ethnic differences and where activism can be formed, developed and articulated. Such an emphasis on place facilitates the location of self in a place with more ease, confidence and sense of belonging. Feminist scholars have emphasised the role of creating and occupying a space, where the women can interact with each other. As Foucault (1979) proposes, places are not only sites of dominance, they are also sites of resistance.

7.4.3.1. 'This is how we do it'

In *Hope Space*, the purpose of weekly meetings is to empower women through sharing information, training on legal matters, and creating alliances.

At the first meeting, Mama Debra conveyed aspects of their conceptualised and situated understandings and perspectives on the world, how they organise, and why they organised. She further ensured that I understood how they 'do' things, including making me aware that I should expect the other women in attendance to conceal certain important information in general meetings. She suggested I consider additional one- to-one interviews on an individual basis:

> Mama Debra: Listen, if you really, really want any real information about our experiences, it won't happen like this in the group. Because it is not everyone who will want to say out loud intimate stories about what they went through. As people will want and you can plan accordingly. I saw on the flyer in the office that you will be coming every Tuesday, is that correct?

> Mukaka: Yes, I will be coming every Tuesday this whole month.

> Mama Debra: For the same thing?

> Mukaka: Yes, but we will be discussing a different theme in each meeting. Here, it is in the information sheet you have in your hands.

> Mama Debra: Ok. Ok. I think it's better. Sorry, it's practical to select a few people to spend time with to know about their own stories, then have a group meeting to discuss general experiences. You know, this is how we used to do. We did focus groups with Women for Refugee Women. I did with Sara Malka for her research as well. It's better to have one-to-one meetings in a quite isolated corner. You see, we have a large garden here, and a nice seating area. Because when you start [the collective meeting], I will say something, as I know women, one may speak over another. But also, maybe this is also the main reason, there are individuals among us who went through so much that some of them are not yet comfortable or are even embarrassed to share them or reveal them to the rest of the group. You know, there are many reasons it's better to do as I told you. Maybe I can help you with suggestions, I am happy to put myself forward. I will give you names of other people as well.

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Tamera: Make sure you come early as well. Because our usual meeting starts at 1pm, so if you come to meet those individuals early during drop-in at 10am before everyone else comes, it will be better for you!

Mukaka: Thank you. I will do it the way you just suggested. (Focus Group, Birmingham, August 2015)

This conversation indicated that the women were not passive victims of circumstances, but rather have agency. They set the rules about how and who can access their space. This initial conversation helped in gaining their trust and established the extent to which I was welcomed, helping me to navigate appropriately in and out of their space. Hugman, Pitaway and Bartolomi (2011) explore the ethics of research with refugees, encouraging the consideration of questions such as, 'where does knowledge about the story come from and how is it passed on?'; 'what spurs ethical thinking at an individual or organisational level?'; 'how can ethical sensitivity and strategic effectiveness be combined? Interestingly, these initial interactions were not so much about me giving agency as the researcher, but Mama Debra demanding agency. This was important for me to grasp in order to understand the dynamics of the group and respect their boundaries. The group was fully aware that I was making notes and reflections about our activities, and that the data would be used for my own academic purposes. Figure 16 shows the questions designed to outline the issues, the challenges the women face, how they overcame them, and the role of *Women of Hope* in this process**.**

Interview Schedule

1. Can you tell me why/when did you join *Women of Hope* / What has been the benefit of your involvement?
2. Has it been important it was a women-only group? Have you been in other groups before?
3. What do you think are the main outcomes and impact of *Women of Hope*?
Empowerment
 	
   4. What does the term 'empowerment' mean to you?
   5. What have been the most disempowering things since you've come to this country?
      • Citizenship/belonging
      • Deportation
      • Destitution

Acts of Resistance

6. What are the things that helped you to feel strong and supported, despite this?
    • You in relation to yourself
    • You in relation to the group
    • You in relation to the world
Organising for/with Asylum Seekers

7. What are the characteristics which make someone a good ally to people like you (no status)?
8. What are the organisations that you've been involved in that are aiming to support asylum seeker women?
9. How do you work together/in which capacity/describe your relationship?

Figure 16: Interview schedule at Hope Space

7.4.4. Views from the interactive focus groups: analysis

Over the course of three focus groups, the planned questions addressing disempowerment seemed to overtake the focus of the meetings. This was quite consistent with the initial line of inquiry, which aimed to explore what immigration politics produces and reproduces as well as who is affected and to what extent. The term 'disempowerment' used in the interview schedule points to the powerlessness that comes with the absence of formal status recognition. Feminists have conceptualised power in three main ways: (1) as a resource to be (re) distributed, (2) as domination, and (3) as empowerment (Allen, 2005, 1998, 1999; Caputi, 2013; Hartsock, 1983, 1996; Yeatmann, 1997; Young, 1992). Intersectional feminists argue that any aspect of difference – such as a different race or nationality – can serve to marginalise a person, often leading to them being assigned the status of the 'other' and thus formally categorising a person as unworthy, an outcast, or inferior in some way. This concept was expressed by participants in the focus group discussions. The focus groups provided the opportunity for participants to voice their experiences and describe events within the asylum system. Some experiences were of specific forms of disempowerment, such as 'oppression' (power

exercised over them) or 'domination' (understood in the Weberian sense of imposing one's will upon someone else).

As the discussions developed, the women were able to describe ways in which they had been able to overcome some (but not all) barriers. Many of the experiences described echoed Paulo Freire's (1968) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Freire describes how, through an active teaching method (i.e. *Hope space*), individuals can become aware of their own situation, of themselves as 'subject,' so that they may obtain the 'instruments that would allow them to make choices' and become 'politically conscious'. Scott (1985) develops this thought suggesting that the process of domination generates hegemonic public conduct and a backstage discourse informing what cannot be spoken in the face of power. Scott's argument is that 'everyday resistance of subalterns shows that they have not consented to dominance' (1985). While focusing on 'the weapons of the weak', Scott (1985) talks about what he refers to as 'infrapolitics': strategies of resistance that go unnoticed by superordinate groups. Scott describes the open, public interactions between dominators and oppressed as a 'public transcript' and the critique of power that goes on offstage as a 'hidden transcript'. Scott (1990: xii) asks: 'How do we study power relations when the power-less are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and when the powerful may have an interest in overdramatizing their reputation and mastery?'

Understanding Scott's analysis invites us to pay careful attention to what lies beneath the surface of evident, public behaviour of the asylum seekers while they are under the strict surveillance and policing of the Home Office. The women from *Hope Space* - like every asylum seeker - are prohibited by law from engaging in any political activity, especially actions critical of the Home Office or the UK government. The experience of (and response to) being under such domination and oppressive control therefore cannot be

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understood merely by the public actions of the women, in which they may *appear* acquiescent.

This raises an ethical question for the research regarding whether highlighting the intrinsic political nature of projects like *Women of Hope* might put them at risk. The simple answer is that art is *always* political, as is every human activity (Ranciere, 1987): any agency and active choice expressed through our lives is in itself political. For instance, a vegetarian does not have to go on marches and join organisations to be political about being a vegetarian. The simple act of restricting meat from their diet *is* a political act - and not restricted to any physical or political space. The activities of *Hope Women* may be considered to be both hidden and public transcripts: they include openly resistant acts, and acts that are more subtle and intrinsic. This is a politics of invisibility in operation: using disguise as the means by which they achieve their organising aims and objectives.

The discussions we held contained many overlapping themes. Table 2 identifies the factors which overlap on individual, social and political levels.

Level of empowerment	Disempowering factors	Action/ outcomes of Hope's organising
Individual	- Feeling invisible/ worthless - Aborted dreams/limbo/stuck in a moment - Fear	- Hopefulness - Being yourself - Moving on - Person-centred goals - Strength & potential
Social	- Waiting game - Lack of agency - Isolation - Hopeless	- Solidarity - Mutuality - Trust - Companionship - Human interaction - Feeling 'safe' in their space - Relationships

Political	• Borders of identity (no status, just an applicant, a number in the system • Uneasy relationship with legal representation • Lack of legal knowledge or alternative possibilities for survival • Lives controlled by someone else • Culture of disbelief that creates anxiety, doubt, uncertainty, disappointment	• Equality and empowerment • Reducing stigma • Alternative choices • Alive • Confidence which comes with more information/understanding of the law/political world in general • Are our views fed in? Building resilience • Belonging/through associations/networking with local activists

Table 5: focus group highlights.

7.4.4.1. Relational organising as an act of resistance

The participants identified various mechanisms to cope and recover from the conditions of being a destitute asylum seeker at Hope shelters. Hope Project has become a means to belong and integrate in the absence of any formal recognition of status. Belonging is a basic human need but is dependent upon and influenced by an individual's choices and actions and the choices and actions of others.

Yuval-Davis (2013) analyses the accounts of non-British citizens and their experiences of belonging to and identifying with the British nation. Belonging has an emotional connection to citizenship, which is a formal status of recognition in relation to a nation state. Citizenship policies are positioned as state mechanisms that actively shape the integration outcomes and experiences of belonging for all who reside within the nation-state. Accordingly, the women's lives are determined by their positioning in the citizenship binaries (citizens/non-citizens). The absence of formal status is likely to achieve a complete destruction and disruption of the lives of asylum seekers through de-legitimation. The rigidity of laws and policies imply that the subjects are powerless to respond politically, socially, or morally to the state's perfectly executed script.

However, this performance does not entirely achieve its intended goal. Rather, as Hope's case exemplifies, it often creates the opposite effect. Hope women cope by creating a

space and place of survival where their daily efforts and energies can be channelled to fight back against the unfair immigration system. Being a woman-only group and shelter, the focus of the *Hope Space* meetings is not necessarily upon feminist conscious-raising, but rather emphasises the need to counter-perform the system. It is about navigating and surviving the legal process and campaigning for change - trying to end the destructive policies that harm women and divide families and communities in general. Surviving the asylum and immigration system of the UK is not easy for these women. The group recognises that women - once they arrive at the shelter - should not go through this alone.

There were three distinct ways the group organised: (1) self-help, (2) mutuality, and (3) solidarity. I posit that it is in this space that the women assemble the performative elements of their resistance, resilience and defiance. They attempt to accomplish this through a counter-reading of the asylum politics, by seizing power to oppose through networking and coalition-building, and through underground subversive organising.

7.4.4.2. Hope Women and self-transformation: a space to mend broken hope

Mina's account provided at the beginning of this case study highlights the utility of Hope in the recovery process women go through after challenging circumstances in the asylum application process. Mina's life feels out of control to her. Her life is determined by someone else to the degree that she loses ownership and connection to herself. Despite the hardships she has faced, and the fact that materially she is no better off than she was before she fled from her native country, she is emotionally better off in *Hope Space* because she has had time and space to reflect. This has been achieved through being part of a feminist supportive space.

In focus group meetings, Tamera highlighted the numerous benefits of the community in which she now resides. 'I was completely broken before I came here in Birmingham, I was totally in pieces.' Before joining *Hope Project,* Tamera was turned down by a number

of homeless shelters, but finally STAR (Student Action for Refugees) referred her to the Birmingham shelter.

> 'It might not seem that much but just being here with these women has brought me back to hope that no matter what happens tomorrow, I will not give up the fight. I have found others like me here.' (Tamera)

After having been recently released from detention, both Tamera and Mina found women with similar experiences. More specifically, they found support to deal with the constant fear that they could be arrested and detained again at any time.

The description of Tamera being 'in pieces' echoes the narratives of other former detainees within this group. The fragmentation of the body is evoked through traumatic memories of having faced both emotional and physical threats to their safety, life and identity. Stories were recounted about experiences of the disempowering and threatening 'male gaze' of the security staff members who suddenly turned up in the detainee's room or while they were taking showers.

> 'They don't knock, before you realised someone enters your room and, bang! Right there, he is right in front of you while you are naked, moisturizing.'

Many similar stories of abuse were also shared, including male security guards performing full body searches on women, not only leaving them with a sense of powerlessness, but also with a sense of loss of their body as a whole. In this context, hope is much more connected with overcoming the male-centred oppression of the asylum process. Mina added: 'They certainly stole our dignity and I didn't like it.' As they narrated the stories back to me, I had the impression that these women had been subjects whose fragmented 'pieces' were able to return to their 'owners' as they joined the women of Hope. The renewal of body ownership, and, indirectly, a new consciousness of inner strength and resilience produce a counter-reading of the state border script.

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Before Asylum Aid published a report on a gender analysis of UK asylum law, policy and practice, the Home Office did not accept the reported differential experiences based on gender the women asylum seekers had experienced. After lobbying by Asylum Aid and others, the government used the publication of its *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan* in 2011 to promise fair treatment of all asylum-seeking women. This was followed by welcome public commitments to gender-sensitive asylum reform made by the Immigration Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Although changes were made to the asylum interviewing process, accounts by the *Hope Space* women highlight that the oppressive experiences have not been banished entirely. On the brighter side, their accounts confirm previously discussed notions of political ownership. Together, the women encourage each other to have hope, rebuild self-esteem, and to regain a sense of agency.

Even in just a few, brief extracts from the women's stories, we begin to trace the narrative of an oppressive system trying to remove all sense of agency – an extreme case of Foucault's panopticon. Yet despite this, there is still the power to resist, to regain ownership of one's body and self-esteem. This is done socially, with other women, which is the core of the real power of feminism here. This counter-reading that takes place in *Hope Space* offers the women an opportunity to finally get to know their antagonist (the Home Office) somewhat better, begin their self-transformation, and develop their political consciousness. All the participants described how the state had 'deliberately' created a system designed to break their soul before expelling them from the country. They used the word 'deliberately' to emphasise the intentional position of the state, and their own location as people aware of who oppresses them and for what purpose.

Out of many 'harsh' experiences that the women voiced, destitution was described as the most disempowering factor. It was the main reason that led each woman to *Hope Space*. Destitution left them with a sense of being broken and living with aborted dreams:

> R1: Being forced into destitution makes us invisible, worthless. Our dreams are aborted, and you can't think of the future because you are waiting for years and nothing changes. Home Office creates this environment on purpose so we can leave this country a broken soul. How can we go back like that when we came here fleeing persecution? (Focus Group, 2015)

This sense of worthlessness holds different meanings for each woman and affected each of them differently in terms of their social experience and political engagement. For one respondent, worthlessness meant a forced separation from her children, an inability to perform her role as a mother, and being unable to financially support her children. Just as with Mina, who gauged whether she was better or worse off - not in terms of material gain, but rather by her degree of perceived emotional support and community safety, R2's evaluation of her current circumstances was likewise based on the quality of her relationships, safety, and support - not her financial circumstances. For R2, she is worse off because she is forced away from her children and unable to fulfil her role as a mother.

> R2: The fact that I used to work not being relying on anything, that is the most important thing. And looking back that I am already five years into asylum claim, the credentials which I was holding would be useless in a minute. So, even if they say they are going to deport me, how am I going to help my country without anything? Say they deport me with nothing, even clothes, and my country needs to be rebuilt, how am I going to do that? How can one do that when one has spent five years doing nothing and then all of a sudden you are just taken back to your country of origin, feeling worthless? It really doesn't help, and it really does stress us. I have lost communication with my family, my kids I can't cater for them now. It's painful. You know? Our kids back home they wonder, my mum is in England, how come am I not getting this bla bla bla so that that's added the strain to the family. (Focus Group, 2015)

For another respondent, not having control of her live makes it difficult to see the future or maintain a sense of identity:

> **R3:** It's like you have no existence of your own while you are waiting. Everything including where to shop, what to think, what to say, where to worship, who to love, what to eat, where to travel, everything is decided by someone else. When we were still in NAAS accommodation, we have the list to sign everyday so you can't go to spend a night to your friend, no, because if you miss one signature you would be in trouble. (Focus Group, 2015)

There were also numerous examples highlighting the Home Office's dismissal of the women's claims as lacking credibility. Their stories have been officially ruled 'not credible'. The result is damaging not only to their chances of safety, but also to their sense of self and mental wellbeing. One respondent commented, 'all I wanted is being heard and believed'. What is accepted as truth or plausible in the Home Office is at the heart of the power asymmetry of the asylum process. The ability of a person to stay in the country depends on their story being believed, within a quota system that requires the majority of claims to be dismissed. According to the women, as they go through refusals, the experience is charged with anxiety, fear and the uncertainty of returning to the same predetermined court-performance over and over again until the women have exhausted all their appeal opportunities and lost their NAAS support. At that point, they were forced into homelessness and destitution.

This 'culture of disbelief' in the Home Office is yet another disempowering factor for asylum seekers:

> R4: just the thought that I have a court hearing coming up soon is making me sick. Luckily, I have some of the girls coming with me, to support me. It's not as easy as you think it is. You've got to prove yourself and if that fails you've got to start again until they say it is your last appeal. My last appeal was two years ago but I am still here fighting. I gave them all the evidence I have, nothing else left to give. I swear they (HO caseworker) have been taught not to trust us, it is very difficult to live like that, all these year (Focus Group, 2015)

R3's powerful comment, 'all I wanted is being heard and believed' speaks to the concerns and questions as to who has a voice - and who does not. The practices of the activists

documented in the previous chapter about *Nine Lives Theatre* give people a voice. The *Refugees Welcome* march also gives a voice, but whose voices? Not necessarily the voices of asylum seekers.   Can the subaltern speak? (Spivak, 1983). Can the voices of those outside of the power structures be heard? The systems and practices of the Home Office indicate that there are active attempts to remove the voice of the asylum seekers. *Nine Lives Theatre* and the *Refugees Welcome* marches provide some awareness of other voices - resonant voices. (These movements that claim to actually speak on behalf of or for the women, by inference, negate the ability and right of the women to speak for themselves.) *Hope Space* provides the support to give these women a voice (albeit to only a small audience), but this allows them to build their confidence and sense of self – through hope.

The women were able to describe the isolation caused by the borders of identity, such as not having status and lack of information. They lamented the impact of not knowing who to trust or feeling scared of approaching people and the very negative reactions people gave to them once they found out about their status. Martin (1987) suggests several ways in which the powerless express consciousness of their marginalised positions, including how 'subjects' are carried along by forces out of their control. Martin noticed that these may include acceptance, lament, and non-action, but can also be expressed through sabotage and direct resistance. It is evident from the discussions that being a member of a group helped the Hope women as individuals to express their frustration, anxiety, depression, panic, fear and anger, thus rediscovering their sense of being alive again. Mina, like many other women, found being part of the group gave her a sense of belonging, through the experience of being part of a community.

7.4.4.3. The importance of mutuality/altruism

Hope members support each other and nurture one another. When tough times come, they tend to lean on each other for emotional support and practical advice. Talha talked about how seemingly small things, such as holding someone going through the distress and fear when they have just received an appeal refusal, is very uplifting. Tamera added 'someone may be able to look after someone's kids while they go to court to appeal that refusal'. The women also discussed how 'talking therapies' between peers have eased their stress. Some women prefer to trust one confidant with their most personal trauma and grievances rather than sharing it with everybody in the group meeting. Mama Debra stated:

> 'Some of the women have been raped, others went to prison (not detention centres), some have been trafficked, in fact, one of the ladies is still traumatised since her roommate here suddenly died a few weeks ago. She was refused proper medication and stress killed her really. Many of us are still grieving.'

The importance of acknowledging each other was not limited to sad moments: the group also created spontaneous moments of joyous interaction. Occasionally, our focus group coincided with lunch, and it was great to see how this was used as a celebration of culture. Mariama, from Afghanistan, commented about Mama Debra's African recipe: 'we don't cook Jollof rice in Afghanistan, but this is my best meal since I came to UK'. Recognising each other also helps to maintain and celebrate their sense of community.

> 'Mama Debra is a great cook so once a month Hope Project provides money to buy our own groceries. And she always surprises us with these delicious dishes.'

This practice of mutuality is expressed in many other ways such as the women doing each other's hair, teaching each other basic computer skills, or explaining to each other the legal jargon they often come across during their own legal representation process.

7.4.4.4. Coalition building and transformative interactions

Representation is important to the women of Hope and, from what I sensed from our interactions, the Hope women care about how they are represented - whether it is in the media or in campaigns reinforcing their rights. There is evident awareness that they too can utilise their 'new' identity as a distinct group to their advantage. Such acknowledgement of functioning as a unit is also what legitimises their views to be fed into the framing of grassroots activism. 'We are stronger together', Mama Debra said while opening the focus group. She explained that alongside the personal benefits of organising - healing, bonding and transforming one's minds – there are the wider, more public benefits of influencing the transformation of other people's minds. One of the participants specifically linked their motivation for helping others directly to the experience of having not found help themselves. In this case, organising is a form of self-help.

Understanding and learning about their oppressor is crucial to how women learn to fight back. Tahla said: 'Knowledge is power, there are so many things we are learning about ourselves, about the law and about the Home Office'. Knowledge becomes a weapon for the women who described repeated experiences of struggling to communicate with their legal representation due to lack of information. They also believed that key life-saving information was not shared with them while they were still at the initial stages of the immigration process:

> 'You know if my lawyer didn't mess up my case, I wouldn't be here you know. I didn't know how to fight back and where to begin. Now Lisa Matthew (Right to Remain) just finished a training with us on legal matters, and it helps to know what is going on.'

A glance at some of the training and roles undertaken suggests that they are some of the most civically engaged asylum seekers and refugee women in and around Birmingham, whose names and photos are often to be spotted in various internal and external reports (examples in the first section above). Trainings are often offered by the supportive local

alliances such as grassroots advocacy groups, pro-bono legal firms, churches, religious groups and others.

In their meetings, the women decide which training they would like to receive. Together, they draft the next plan of action. The training arrangements are then made by th*e Hope Project* coordinator, a volunteer activist who acts on their behalf and who identifies training providers. It is also in these meetings when they decide their immediate concerns, discuss the possibility of forging strategic alliances and solidarity with the grassroots advocacy community, and plan how to utilise these networks to launch campaigns.

Through alliance building, the women can obtain access to practical information, material assistance, as well as emotional and physical support and care. A participant talked about having benefited from befriending services, so that on weekends she was able to have a social life 'like normal people'. As with mobilisation practices, such participation in mutual support allows them to have a voice – even if it is just with each other. When this becomes a part of their everyday life, it represents an important and potentially powerful form of agency.

7.4.4.5. Women getting radical: subversive underground organising

The findings further suggest that the befriending and networking with the local rights activists benefit the women of Hope in advancing their political agenda. After the Hope women's group has gone through a counter-reading process of the state performance, this becomes one of the drivers towards taking the desired collective action. This action may be in the form of protest, anonymised petitioning, court-watching, witnessing in activist conferences, or taking part in important research such as parliamentary inquiries. Performances such as court-watching and political protests are performances of power. They represent opportunities to resist and for them to have a voice, empowerment and

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agency. Alexander (2012) notes that power comes into being when social actors exercise their agency.

At this 'action taking phase' the women from *Hope Project* are eager to build on the generous attention from grassroots organisers as the bridging anchor to a captive audience. The practice of surveillance and monitoring in the Home Office has been imposed to manage immigration. It makes it difficult for asylum seekers to voice their grievances effectively.

According to Foucault (1998), people always have at least *some* power to resist, as power is essentially relational and requires a network. Throughout this section, the women have shown that they have the power to resist. However, they also have the power to turn the gaze back upon the state. One focus group participant suggested that while it is difficult to completely escape the Home Office monitoring and policing methods in the Hope shelters, they are still able to find ways to become radical and have political agency: 'of course we don't make it obvious to Home Office that we are campaigning for this or that. We just find a way'.

7.4.4.6. Court-watching as a double act of quiet power politics

The women talked about how they stand by each other's side, most particularly by accompanying group members to their asylum appeals. The hearing process is usually *very* intense. The format and systems of the tribunal can feel very intimidating to a vulnerable asylum seeker, especially if she has been dismissed or treated harshly in previous tribunals. The women described how they sit behind the appellant and send her 'positive vibes' so she does not feel alone. They talked about how they enjoy giving back to the judge a serious stare - a way of saying 'you are watching her, and we are watching you back!'

Court-watching highlights two performative elements at work in the system, that can be described as quiet politics (Gill, 2014). First of all, it highlights the sense in which state bordering practice through court hearing systems and juridical-legal scripts is performative (Chapter 2). It is a repetitive, ritual like-practice by the state in the name of migration management and securitisation. The second aspect of performativity derives from the women's creative sensory action. Even though the women feel they have no power to protect the appellant from the harm of the system, they mentioned feeling some strong responsibility to let the judge know that he must be accountable for his performance. This is specifically performed at the moment they can seize the power back to evaluate the judge by giving him/her 'that look'. One can see this as Giddens' (1982) 'double hermeneutics' in which the opportunity to reflect back on ourselves often means we change our behaviour. These women are taking their cues from their own experience as well as from their friend's experience (Butler, 2005), but are also resisting the judge. These women are both performing a role and performing resistance (Butler, 2005).

7.4.4.7. Overt protest, witnessing, anonymised cyber petitions and fundraising

The women were clear about the necessity of ensuring their political activities conform to normal 'citizen' behaviour; this minimises the risk factors from the Home Office to re-detain them in response to their activities. They described using network events to politicise their experiences, such as those organised by *Women for Refugee Women*, the *Refugee Council* and *Amnesty International*. This practice of networking with local supportive organisations is a much safer source of fuelling their political formation. Networking allows the women at Hope to legitimately and, at least to some extent, overtly participate in resistant acts as part of something larger than themselves, which would otherwise prove very risky to perform on their own. By doing this, they join the wider

movement as they become part of 'we against the state' through, for example, witnessing at 'activist' conferences:

> R4: We are currently rehearsing because we are going to perform at a conference organised by Women for Refugee Women. So we will be going to London. We have poetry, and a song, and we do other stuff as well. You should come to see us.
>
> Mukaka: What is the conference about?
>
> R5: It is basically about the campaign **#Set her free#** to end detention of women at Yarl's Wood and in all detention centres.

This particular event provided the women the opportunity to witness approximately 400 attendees at the *Women for Refugee Women* conference in London, about the oppression they have experienced through the asylum system. Within this wider context, they did not shy away from heavily criticising the government about how they have been treated. This is something they are not able to do when they go to the enforced Home Office reporting appointments. These are 'hidden transcripts', for they present a critique of power that goes on offstage, while in the eyes of the Home Office, the *Women of Hope* attempt to remain as inconspicuous as possible and refrain from bringing attention or notoriety. The act of witnessing also extends to advocating with lawyers and local MPs, the most recent example being the parliamentary inquiry on indefinite detention in which some of *Hope Space* members took part.

Anonymised cyber-petitioning also helped the *Women of Hope* to voice those concerns which otherwise they are not able to state openly to the Home Office. Sometimes they are able to draft a petition and the coordinator posts it online in her name, or another activist puts it forward on their behalf. These include petitions for defending their interests, resisting a deportation of a fellow member, raising money for a legal matter, a concern of an individual member, or a concern of the group as a whole. One of the most striking petitions was for information relating to a member who died suddenly in 2015. The petition

claimed that the reason for her death had not been truthfully reported by the Home Office since it would incriminate them as having been guilty of negligence. The petition gained attention of activists such as *Women for Refugee Women,* who have incorporated similar experiences into their set-her-free campaign. Exercising their agency through underground subversive organising helps them to appear conventional and inconspicuous in the eyes of the Home Office. These subversive structures restore some confidence that they do have an element of control in how they can be represented, and who can represent them.

7.5 'We Fight Back' as an underlying counter border-performance principle: a review of three cases

The findings demonstrate how *Hope Space* provides a *home place:* a place of belonging for destitute women seeking asylum. The women have overcome the insecurity of unforeseeable futures, as well as the sense of fragmentation of self by creating and appropriating a space for self-help, solidarity and mutual aid through relational organising practices. Themes of personal, social and cultural breakdown permeate the narratives of the women gathered during our interactive focus groups. In order to combat this, mutual support, resistance and hope were the themes which expressed the ways in which they navigate the borders of life. The embodiment of political activity within that space seeks to counter-perform the borders of status, and to reinvent themselves as active agents who can have some political agency - despite domination and oppression. A closer examination of this particular political formation qualifies it to be a home place where mutual support, resistance and hope are key ingredients. In each case, the 'home place' enables the women to have a voice. The function of the 'space' indicates that the consciousness begins with counter-reading the state performance of the asylum system during the weekly meetings. This is not only the time for transformation on the individual

level, but also a collective assembling of the performative elements of resistance and survival in the form of training (e.g. legal matters, skills), coalition building, information sharing and networking. In order to appear conventional and inconspicuous, and to make it difficult for the Home Office to identify their political engagements, the *Hope Women* fight back by being political and radical *quietly* - particularly through networking with other (grassroots) refugee rights groups. Similarly, protest events, such as *Yarl's Wood* and *Refugees Welcome*, demonstrated a unifying pattern of 'fighting back' as an underlying philosophy of the refugee protest performance.

The interventions reviewed in this chapter can be understood within the frame of 'contentious politics', which are 'interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone's interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims or third parties' (Tilly, 2008: 5). Such actions engage in disruptive techniques for political emphasis and in an attempt to influence government policy. A more open reading situates these interventions within the broader logics of governmentality and management. The logic that drove the UK to open and maintain carceral spaces such as Yarl's Wood and restrict the mobility of Syrian refugees to prevent them from crossing their borders, was informed by the sense that they were responding to a crisis that needed to be managed, and, as such, the migrants were 'figures of crisis'.

The slogan, 'we fight back' counters this logic and the power underlying it. Countering power has an objective basis but is also grounded in a subjective framing of injustice that emerges from either individual or collective political grievances. *Refugees Welcome* and *Surround Yarl's Wood* were both initiated and conducted by the people, for the people. In *Refugees Welcome*, fighting back means people stepping into the role otherwise abandoned by the state to care for fellow humans in need: care exercised outside of bureaucratic structure. The call to individuals on Facebook for a national demonstration

of course did not start with a hierarchically organised structure, but rather started with the initiative of willing actors of different roles, organised independent committees, campaigns and projects (*Refugees Welcome,* 2015). Following this responsive outcome, befriending networks were established, volunteering branches set up across the borders and, essentially, connection was established with the struggle beyond the UK borders.

In places of refugee incarceration behind the razor wire fences, the principle of '*We Fight Back'* means a unified politics of anger and defiance, and the idea that power can be re-seized by empowering the people inside to fight back, as well as energising those outside to articulate and sustain the fight. In her post-production remarks, Antonia B. reflects on what fighting back really means, including changing power relations and participating in movement dramas:

> '…You have to see how the people inside (detention) have the power. You gotta act on your power that means, you gotta have an assessment of it. You gotta to have consciousness. And there is nothing more automatic about being thrown into that situation that gives you consciousness, you can be conscious of everything bad, you can be very conscious of just the guards having all the keys and you have nothing and it could make you feel like nothing. But if you are conscious of a history of struggle in that place, and you are conscious of other people making decisions to act on something then you start comparing your emotional reaction with something more objective and then you can realise. Even people who have someone inside, you can visit in the visitors hall, you are visiting one person, it doesn't mean, you can see what it is like, it's like a prison, you can tell from the way you are brought in and the way you leave...but that isn't a full understanding of the power balance. You can leave feeling intimidated but if you feel intimidated, you can say to yourself like, the best advice to people inside is like, 'just keep your head down, don't worry,' you can become more dependent on solicitors who take your money and don't fight, you can become more dependent on hoping that the judges decide in your favour, you know what I mean, and it can be more out of your hands but when you are involved in the movement and you are organising with others and you are learning from many people's struggle you ultimately ought to see many things differently. You have to see how the people inside do have power in situations and are capable, there are lots of things they are capable of doing that support each other and make a difference in particular cases or just in generally…'

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The movement of dissenting bodies is as much about restoring power to those *outside* the detention centres as it is restoring power inside the detention centres. It is about applying not just radical tactics, but also about applying subtle strategies and tactics in order that the movement can push for the desired political outcomes. The case of *Hope Space* eloquently demonstrated that restoring refugee/asylum power is not (and should not be) limited by visibility. Rather than being limited by the invisibility caused by the borders of citizenship, the women use the invisibility to their own advantage - as a political weapon in the space of dissent in which they reinvent themselves as active agents for empowerment, resistance and organising. As Antonia articulates, there is value in empowering asylum seekers - particularly those finding themselves in the deepest pit.

In conclusion, the staging logics found in the spatial interventions in activism for migrant rights are not understood by generalisations, but by particularities. Fighting back in *Hope Space* has its own staging conditions, scripts, hidden transcripts, rules, and roles, though it is not a fixed or rigid in structure. The resistant acts produced and counter-conducts should be taken seriously, even if it is through rather small-scale acts of female solidarity and action.

7.6 Conclusion: In the space of dissent

This chapter includes an account of my navigation of forms of contestation in which individuals and groups organise and form alliances, with various degrees of ritual and performativity to challenge hegemonic norms of everyday bordering. It expands the theme of previous chapters, arguing that counter-bordering action entails the development of strategies and practices that advance alternative imaginaries (cf. Leitner *et al*., 2007). I have explored how activist interventions such as *Refugees Welcome*, *Yarl's Wood* and *Hope Space* have created political spaces of dissent leading to a new kind of reading of political expression. The evaluation of each specific use of space and the

narratives of activist practice offers a helpful model of how to approach the task of analysing the impact of activists by framing such activism as a performance by activist practitioners in relation to a spectator. Though it is presented as an anthology, this chapter offers a valuable snapshot of current practices of counter-mobilising against state bordering practices.

These recent spatial strategies emerged in response to state bordering practices and created a space for voicing grievances in the public sphere and forging solidarities outside the confines of the nation-state. Some of these interventions, such as Yarl's Wood and RW protests, build on affective solidarities concerned with 'going public': taking the matter 'out there' and into the court of public opinion. Other interventions, such as *Hope Space*, can be distinguished from these forms of contention in that they are more concerned with subtle, everyday acts of resistance, resonant of Scott's (1990) description of the weapon of the weak and hidden transcripts.

These three interventions use theatrical tropes and can be understood as performance. Theatricality accommodates the materialistic perception that there is a 'playing out' of power relations, a 'masking' of authority, and a 'scenario' of events (Geertz, 1980). By exploring dynamics and signification of each space, I was able to propose that it was through manipulation of theatrical strategies and vocabularies which produced potentially radical events for migrant rights activism. *Refugees Welcome* provided the language of welcome, re-situating those the state considers to be on the periphery and bringing them into the public sphere, utilising key national structures and landmarks for emphasis. Building its demands on the existing scripts of migrant rights activism, RW individualised frames of 'the sea-drowning' momentum to ensue political hysteria. The RW campaign harnessed this crisis for further impact, connecting the affected public to the struggle of influencing state opinion from bottom up. *Shut Down Yarl's Wood* sought to disrupt state

power by introducing often small-scale performance devices that take into account dynamics of space and signification. Yarl's Wood detention and removal centre represents the scene of the border spectacle as a scene of ostensible exclusion. As deportable subjects, women detainees are pervasively subjected to myriad conditions of social degradation. The scene of border enforcement at Yarl's Wood performatively activates and reiterates the rightlessness of deportable 'foreigners. This is often accompanied with discursive formations, but also the visual grammar that upholds them as figures of 'illegal immigration'. The analyses have shown that while RW scripting sought to dismantle the borders of belonging, the Yarl's Wood protest sought to dismantle the rationale of detention, explicitly revealing the violence by the spectacle, including holding neoliberal governance accountable by calling out state performance and its ethics, and even calling its existence into question. Finally, *Hope Space* produced a language of hope, a space for mending broken lives of those destitute woman otherwise understood by the system and disproportionately disqualified as 'illegal' or 'deportable subjects'.

The three cases illustrated in this chapter demonstrate that immigration and border practice are enmeshed in a dense tangle of discourse and representation which generates and supplies labels of 'illegality', 'undeserving-ness' and 'exclusion' (De Genova, 2005: 242). This can fuel anti-immigration controversy, reinforce citizenship inequalities whilst simultaneously forging new kinds of solidarities. Through the power of co-presence and embodiment, but also the importance of location and in/visibility, this chapter has explored how the spectacular spaces of *Refugees Welcome*, *Yarl's Wood* and *Hope Space* can change dispositions towards refugees, and can model and facilitate compassion, sanctuary and kindness.

Chapter 8: Countering the markers of state borders: feminist stories and acts that matter

8.1 Addressing the research questions

Early in the project I acknowledged that, given the timing of the study, there was so much more to learn about the rapidly changing landscapes of migrant solidarity activism. It was not just the rapidly shifting contemporary landscapes that needed comprehending, but these needed to be understood within the contexts of history – the activisms that have occurred through the generations, over the long-term. Despite the years spent on this project and the contributions it makes, I remain aware of how much more there is to understand and discover.

I began research in September 2014, conscious of the intensification of border security measures in the UK in recent decades, and therefore seeking to understand how contemporary state bordering and the UK's restrictive immigration policies were being experienced by migrant women, and were being actively contested. Significant strengthening and rigidifying in migration policies and associated control mechanisms were put in place to address, what was apparently conceived as, a major social problem: irregular migration. In comparison to the population of the UK, irregular migration is numerically tiny. However, as established neoliberal policy, being on a territory requires legitimate legal recognition and permission by the state, and so policies were strengthened in response to what the state experienced as the defiance of this. This was, and continues to be, the socio-political backdrop for the research project.

The academic literature reviewed in Chapter 2 provided the inquiries of this research – that of borders and bordering practices in relation to the experiences of migrants and counter-border activism – with meta-narratives and grand theories. The study is situated within a feminist theoretical and conceptual framework, informed by theoretical constructs

from the study of borders, particularly Critical Border Studies, Race Studies and Citizenship Studies. I also drew on some of the influential texts in the wider field of border research, including the social sciences, whose material provided a historical and contemporary account of how the experiences of migrants, including in relation to conditions at the border, affect migrants who are subject to immigration control. By linking the influential texts to wider feminist border research, it was possible to track, map and chart some of the prominent debates. Doing so helped demonstrate why borders matter, why we should pay attention to this topic, and how understanding the inner workings of border-power or border politics presents an opportunity to investigate how migrant resistance emerges, as well as how and why it is articulated and sustained as counter-performance.

I then outlined my approach to examining the performance and performativity of border power in immigration politics, drawing on the way in which performance studies frames human, social action and symbolic interaction. Together, these contributions informed the performance and narrative approach utilised to address, methodologically and analytically, the specific aims and objectives of this thesis. These were:

1) to explore how migrant struggle and resistance emerges and how such struggles are articulated
2) to present a feminist understanding of migrant resistance
3) to understand the role of performance in the pursuit of migrant rights.

The study acknowledged epistemological and representational diversity, the notion that there exist different ways of knowing, and that one experience or presentation of knowledge can never be generalised as a universality. This constructivist frame facilitated the melding of narrative and performance approaches to the study.

8.2. Research outcomes

Research data was gathered across a variety of sites and activities, using an expansive toolkit of methods and approaches. The various datasets collected were applied to the different aspects of the research questions.

The findings from the life histories interviews with women activists provided an understanding of organising for migrant rights and the journeys that these feminist women had undertaken in becoming committed to activism; thus, they related to the first and second objectives of the research. Through the activists' narratives, the political character of the women and the motivations behind their committed activism as a lifestyle were illuminated. Their stories, which encompass social contexts as well as experiential worlds, provide an alternative to theoretical representations of counter-border activism and social transformation. The findings show how activists set out their own agenda, including how their ideas and discourses occupy space. The findings also revealed that empathy alone is not what drives action and activism: long-term commitment, such as that highlighted in the biographies of the interviewees, represents a core energy enabling activism to survive the test of time. It has taken each of the participants decades to have constructed their personae on intersecting ideals from which their identities emerged. The ideals each activist embodies expose the failings of the state, highlighting that it is the absence of justice and equality which has caused border violence. The reinstatement of justice and equality remain core to the foundations of the movement.

The research sought activist participants who were adopting experimental and innovative spatial interventions. The findings furnished the notion articulated in this thesis that contemporary immigration politics is metaphorically staged and performed in such a way that can be specifically depicted to 'allow viewers to go deeper into the meaning behind representations' (Cartwright, 2009). The findings from Nine Lives Theatre provided a lens

through which to understand both the human spectator's and activist's worldviews. Nine Lives strategically brought performer and spectator together to reflect on their respective spatial situated positions while at the same time, seeking to inspire solidarity and sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees. These findings addressed the third objective of the research: to understand the role of performance in the pursuit of migrant rights.

The embodied activists' interventions examined in this research, whether the quiet politics of Hope Space or the highly visible people-to-people solidarity politics of the demonstrations and performances, each contributed to shifting power-knowledge relations through spatial occupation (Goodman, 2000). These interventions in the space of dissent brought to the forefront multi-vocal and multi-dynamic performances demonstrating that performance is, and always was, a means in which discourses of ideology and politics are bodily, verbally, visually or nonverbally communicated and promoted – this holds true for the multi-scalar performance of borders by the state, visible and invisible, and the responsive, reactive performance of resistance through multifarious border-undoing activism.

8.3. Contribution of the study

This thesis was first and foremost a political project. Researching migrant rights, as it is for any social justice project, is grounded in a conscious political stance, meaning the study is openly ideological. It seeks to shed light on 'politicised' border performance – both border performances by the state which affect the everyday life of those it seeks to limit and repel – as well as the border performance of committed refugee and migrant rights activists, who seek to push against the borders, both literally and ideologically, making space and creating a culture of welcome and sanctuary. This project sought to collect, present and illuminate the effective strategies for activism which can be

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sustainably and collectively embraced for the future. The research is interdisciplinary in its reach and has been written for a wide audience.

The study explores, describes and illuminates particular displays of border performance situated within contemporary immigration politics. It illustrates how theatre becomes activism by exploring the ways in which it attempts to reach out to inspire ideas as well as feelings, impacting the audience and urging social change (Goodman, 2000). In addition, the research presents an array of activists' counter-performances ranging from the spontaneous street theatricals of the Refugees Welcome demonstration through to the serious acts of defiance of the Shut Down Yarl's Wood demonstration. These acts of resistance were embellished by the use of subtle psychological tools intended to influence public opinion and meaning (Ricketts, 2006).

There is arguably an under-representation in the literature of historically informed feminist accounts that focus on the persistent voices and actions of migrant rights activism. This thesis thus contributes to the knowledge and discussion on the changing understanding of feminist organising and the implications for migrant rights activism in the present day.

The research findings also provide a grid through which we can comprehend the multi-various migrant solidarities and struggles across the UK. This research has argued that we should think of borders as performative, imbued with power and dislocated and instituted in multiple spatialities. I presented an array of female voices – the stories of those at the heart of activist organising - whose individual journeys bring to light the interplay between society, the self and social political contexts. Through context specific examples, their personal stories illustrate the contextual prefacing, perspectives and paradoxes that underlie historical and intergenerational struggles for the rights of migrants in the UK and highlight the multiple shifting terrains of border politics and

performance. I argue that such individual and collective stories are knowledge that can inform theory as well as policy.

The thesis demonstrates the role of performance in pursuit of refugee, asylum seeker and migrant rights activism, a central aim for the project. The political impact of the Nine Lives production across 25 locations across the UK demonstrated that performing counter-bordering activism has huge potential to bring change. The pain, trauma and violence of the system, as experienced by the individual, were offered in the context of political action and provocation, so that the audience was invited to witness the current system and imagine future possibilities. Through narrative and dramatisation it prompted empathy and the questioning of assumed attitudes, rather than trying to instil opinions, creating space for new attitudes towards immigrants and asylum seekers. Nine Lives sought to disrupt, offering a symbolically framed alternative for how we can re-imagine sanctuary giving.

Taken together, the empirical chapters provide a framework to read political performance. Each chapter is a different kind of reading of performance. Interventions explored in each chapter respond to a distinct border, thus how activists perform commitment through distinct acts, praxis, affect, scripts, strategies, vision, successes and contradictions provides examples of effective activism to fuel future resistance.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval

See next page for pdf of ethical approval letter from the University of East London's Research Ethics Committee.

14 August 2015

Dear Alice

Project Title:	**Feminist organizing for migrant rights**
Researcher(s):	**Alice Mukaka**
Principal Investigator:	**Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya**
Reference Number:	**UREC_1415_99**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered at the meeting on **Wednesday 20th May 2015**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
Multiple locations around the UK: theatres, public locations, and locations to be arranged with participants and supporting organisations.	Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya

Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
UREC application form	2.0	24 July 2015
Participant information sheet	2.0	24 July 2015

– activists		
Participant information sheet – migrant women and asylum seekers	2.0	24 July 2015
Consent form	2.0	24 July 2015
Audience feedback form	2.0	13 August 2015
Correspondence with Asylum Aid	1.0	24 July 2015
Correspondence with theatre company	1.0	24 July 2015
Correspondence with Right to Remain	1.0	24 July 2015
Correspondence with Women Connect First	1.0	24 July 2015
Correspondence with Women with Hope	1.0	24 July 2015

Approval is given on the understanding that the UEL Code of Good Practice in Research is adhered to.

Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Rosalind Eccles
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
UREC Servicing Officer
Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

14 August 2015

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University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
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Appendix 2: Interview schedules

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic Guide – Life History Interviews with Feminist Activists for Migrant Rights

PHD RESEARCH TOPIC: Feminist Organising for Migrant Rights

Name of Participant:

Title:

Date of Interview:

Time Started:

Time Stopped:

Pre-Brief:

- Thank the informant for participating
- Introduce the study (aims of the project)
- Ask activist to sign confidentiality agreement
- Reconfirm audiotape permission
- Set up recording equipment; rearrange furniture if necessary.
- Fully turn off Mobile phones; Unplug wall phones.

Method:

I will go through life chronologically. I will explain we can stop at any point. I will also make it clear that I will be asking personal questions and it is fine if interviewee doesn't want to answer but might ask why not. I will mention I may ask obvious questions, but the aim is to obtain a full picture as possible of life and work for future activism and research.

NOTE TO SELF: The questions below are indicative, to be re-read before the interview but not used during it

Activist's life in depth:
a chronological order

THE QUESTIONS BELOW ARE INDICATIVE, TO BE RE-READ BEFORE THE INTERVIEW BUT NOT USED DURING IT

Opening Question:

As you know, we are using a life method. I would like to begin by asking you: if you were listening to an interview of your own life, what would you want to be included? I will allow time to think about this

Second Question:

I've introduced you as xxxx. But is this the name you were born with? Did your name change? Tell me the story of your name (prompt for middle names)

I.   **BIOGRAPHY**

EARLY LIFE:

Full date of birth, family, childhood home, mother, father, siblings, extended family

UPBRINGING & EARLY LIFE:

School education (primary & secondary), early relationships, friends, any radical living change (I.e. migration etc.), and social class i.e. Family financial means (struggling or not…), leisure activities,

SOCIAL/POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT:

formative religious beliefs, Family morals, family political views, general view of your time at school

WORK/EARLY EMPLOYMENT:

Ask about subsequent memorable jobs/volunteering/unemployment, with emphasis on the ones the interviewee remembers as the most enjoyable/most unpleasant; the reasons for taking on those jobs. How did those jobs contribute to later opportunities and political views? How would you describe the balance of your paid working life with your unpaid working life? How have you survived materially?

II.   **PERCEPTION OF THE SELF**

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF PERCEPTION:

In this section we are trying to get an idea of how you developed into the person you are. As a young child, was there anything you ever wanted to be when you grew up? Do you think you have realised the kind of expectations you had for yourself?

At the moment, how would you describe yourself to yourself? How others would describe? In what ways you have changed? Stayed the same? What do you think led to these changes?

III. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Turning points and early influences: key decisive moments for involvement in advocacy/politics, developing political consciousness [Duration: APPROX 2 Hours]

Note to self: ask about relationships &friends, important to political awakening

Developing political consciousness

- Can you remember when you first got involved into activism?
- Was your involvement a gradual dawning or was it influenced by a particular event or person?
- Would you have described yourself as having been political before getting involved into activism?
- If yes, did your political awareness influence you into activism? Otherwise, who or what else inspired you?

Early influence, key friends and social context

- Can you describe how your social life and relationship with friends was like at that time?
- At that time, was any of your social activities or relationships significant to your political views?
- Were any of your friends interested in politics, activism, etc.?

Politics of the time

- What were the political trends in the world when you first became involved? E.g. activism in the 1970s or 80s.
- Were you involved in any other group prior to Black British activism or women's liberation movement (i.e. far left groups, civil rights, student groups, environmental, etc.)? If yes, can you recall the group(s), the types of campaigns and location of activism you are most involved in?

Legislative changes

- Can you identify the legislative changes? [show a list to jog memory]
- Have these laws affected you, your home, family or friends?
- How could you describe the effects of these changes?

IV ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE: AGE 30-40

Campaign involvement and demands: involvement in the campaigns/movement (role in leadership or as a participant) describe meetings, manifesto, conflicts, paid or unpaid, childcare arrangements (if applicable), activities [**Duration**: APPROX 2 Hours]

Groups

- What group/campaigns were you involved in? [show a list to jog memory]
- How did you organise? What activities did the group engage in? What were your daily/weekly/monthly activities?
- What were the aims/manifesto of the group?
- Can you describe a typical meeting?
- Where were the meetings held?
- Can you remember any of the active individuals in the group?
- Were partners with children ever present in the meetings?
- Who looked after the children during events etc.?
- Did you make your own banners/leaflets/posters?
- Where were materials stored?
- Any idea if these materials have survived?

Internal Conflicts

- Did the group ever encounter any kind of internal disagreements/conflicts?
- How did the disagreements/conflicts affect the group's activities or unity? (split, reshuffle, change in strategy)
- How did you or the group resolve them?

Impact of the groups/achievements

- What do you think were the achievements of the group(s)?
- Was any role you played in the group or movements paid for? e.g. in funded women's centre (more likely in the 80s)
- What other groups did you know about/were making an impact?
- [**Elicit key names and networks**]
- Did your involvement affect you physically, psychologically, emotionally or perhaps your consciousness as a woman?
- What do you think were your achievements as an individual and the group in general?

Demonstrations/events/campaigns

Tick where applicable

Example: Area of Contemporary activism

- Protests and Demonstrations
- Campaigns, conferences and demands
- Writings, publications
- Campaigning with ex-detainees (anti-detention)
- Anti-deportation campaigns
- Legal advice and representation
- Destitution / Right to work
- Access to Healthcare
- Campaigning with Mainstream Media
- Campaigning Online
- Campaigning with the Arts
- Lobbying, engaging with MP's
- Belonging and citizenship projects
- Black British Feminism

Memorable demonstrations, events, moments, conferences, actions, domestic arrangements in place in order to participate [Duration: APPROX 2 Hours]

Events

- Can you tell me about any memorable demonstrations/conferences/events/actions that your group (s) participated in?

Description of movement across the UK: *organizational analysis (aims, ideology, class, race/ethnicity, identities, mobilizing structures, perception from outside i.e. from the media [**Duration**: APPROX 2 Hours]*

Aims

- In your views, what would you have described as the aims of the movements?
- Which goals were personally most important to you as of then and how?
- How did those goals evolve and fit into the movement?

Ideologies

- How would you describe your ideological position? E.g. radical, revolutionary, socialist, liberal, non-aligned, libertarian, Black, anti-colonial or something else?
- How did you relate to these perspectives and how did they impact on the movement's ideas and activism?
- How did ideological divides relate to the politics of experience that was so important to the movement?
- What was and is now, your view of separatism as a political strategy?
- What about men and the movement?

Class

- What was the dominant social class in the groups you were involved in?
- Can you give an example of a particular occasion or relationship where this was evident?
- Were there any class tensions with your group (or the movement, if they want to comment)
- Did your class background impact on your choice of group/campaign, form of involvement, ideology?

Race/ethnicity

- Were you part of black/white/diverse groups?
- What is your memory of how the groups you were involved in dealt with cultural and ethnic difference? E.g. Wages for Housework, etc… examples of people organising around identities
- How did the movement shape/alter your identity as a woman, as Black/Asian/White/Muslim/Jewish/Catholic/Protestant?

Evolution of the movement: (how activism is formed, developed and sustained, coalition-building opportunities with other groups, networks [**Duration**: APPROX 2 Hours]

Formation

- Were they decisive moments or turning points for your involvement in the movement?
- What were key events? Discuss & Show a timeline and examples below

Legislative changes

[**Complete the examples below**: show them the list all changes in law & discuss as relevant]

- Immigration Act 1971
- The British Nationality Act 1981
- The Immigration Act 1988
- The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993

- The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002
- Immigration and Asylum Act (NIA) 2002
- Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 (which was fully implemented by 2008)
- The Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2007
- The Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009
- Immigration Act 2014

Key events

- Wider Socio-political context
- Thatcherism
- Women liberation politics
- Race uprisings
- Rights' protests
- Anti-racism protests
- Immigration raids i.e. Go Home Vans
- Police' Stop & search
- Migrants' sea drowning

Framing processes: *generation, elaboration, and diffusion of collective action frames, socio-cultural contextual factors that constrain and facilitate framing processes, implications and Outcomes [Duration: APPROX 2 Hours]*

Framing positive stories

- How did/do you tell a positive story on asylum and migration?
- Did/do you use your own experience in a story?
- How did/do your organization develop clear messages?
- How did/do you get the right tone?
- Is there something not to do when talking to the media?
- How to answer challenging questions?

Storying processes

- In what ways do you think Asylum seekers/migrant women tell stories?
- How well do you think activists utilize asylum seekers/migrant women stories for activism?
- Is there any way that your organization could have improved its storytelling?
- How do you think your organization did/do comparing to other advocacy organizations in its use of stories?
- What did/do you like and dislike about stories used by activists?
- How memorable are the stories framed by your organization?
- How effective are the personal stories of Asylum seekers/migrant women?
- What stories do you associate with your organization or campaign?
- Is there more than one story?
- Which story did/do you relate to the most?
- Has this story played a role in your involvement?
- How connected do you feel to the stories of Asylum seekers/migrant women?
- Do the stories help make you feel connected to the organization? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Do you think the stories of Asylum seekers/migrant women have influenced your own involvement with the organization? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What do you think the most successful channel is for telling stories for an activist cause?

Counter-messaging and tackling negative responses/stories

- What did/do you do when media publish inaccurate or misleading material about asylum seekers, immigrants, migrant or refugees?
- What is your relationship with the Press Complaints Commission?
- Have you heard about the Leveson Inquiry? [**explain a bit about it, ask if they know www.mediawise.org.uk]**
- What are public attitudes to asylum seekers/migrant women?
- What impact this has on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers?
- How do you influence such attitudes?

Campaigning online

- Give examples of successful online campaigns
- What are the strategies used to engage with the virtual audience?
- What are the challenges encountered?

Artistic and media activism

- What was your personal involvement/memories of artist outputs and their influence on the public cultural realm i.e. music, poetry, publishing, dance, film and radio?
- What do you think was the portrayal of feminists in the media?
- (If relevant) how were negative media stereotypes challenged by feminists?

Language and slogans

- What is the meaning of 'the personal is political' to you? How appealing were the slogans [for feminist activists only - can you remember when you first heard the term 'sexism', 'patriarchy'?]

Recruitment Processes: *individual campaigns, organization memberships [**Duration**: APPROX 2 Hours]*

Membership and recruitment

- How did you recruit members?
- What strategies/methods were used? E.g. door to door, meetings, schools…etc.

Leadership/role in the movement

- What was your role in the movement?
- How were you connected with the cause?
- How were the movement's activities coordinated? Who oversaw the leadership?

Internal Conflicts

- Were there disagreements/ conflicts
- How did you resolve them?
- How did the conflicts affect your activities or groups unity? [Split, reshuffle, change in strategy…]

Self-definition in activism: *feminist or not? Emotional development? Self-expression with other women?*

*Confidence? Friendships within the movement? [**Duration**: APPROX 2 Hours]*

Self-expression/confidence

- How did you feel about expressing yourself in meetings or groups with other women or in mixed setting? [Ask for examples and description]
- Did you experience a confidence boost?

Texts/Intellectual/creative influence

- Which texts e.g. novels, poetry, history, theory inspired you?
- Which texts influenced you the most? Did you read in your campaign group?
- Could you say something about how far you consider there was a feminist intelligentsia? And whether feminist intellectuals or idea-makers were valued inside and outside of the movement?

Friendships within the movement

- Can you describe your relationships/friendships with other participants within the movement?
- How close/caring were those relationships?
- Which ones have endured – and why do you think they have?

Work balance and motherhood*: family, dependents, partnerships, love, sexuality, marriage, motherhood, childcare, housework/domestic role, life, death [Duration: APPROX 2 Hours]*

Partnership

- How was (did you manage) important relationships (sexual or love) during your time in the movement?
- How would you describe your relationship with your parents whilst involved in campaigning/working in the movement?

Sexuality

- What do you think about the impact of the movement on women's sexualities?
- How did the movement shape your attitude towards your sexuality?
- Non monogamy
- 'Sexuality is to women what labour is to the working class' - Catherine MacKinnon
- If relevant, how did your group address question of sexuality, sex work, and pornography?

Children or other dependents

- Do you have children?
- When were they born?
- What was your experience of pregnancy?
- What gender? Did having boy (s) ever cause tensions with fellow feminists
- Was your decision NOT to have children related to your activism or feminist politics?
- Have you been a carer for siblings or elderly parents or other relatives?
- Do you have grandchildren? What's your relationship like with them?
- Are there significant differences between how your daughter's mothering and how you approached the role?

Motherhood

- Was motherhood what you expected?
- Were there aspects that you found particularly challenging or satisfying?
- How did you cope with the demands of children and running a home?
- How did the movement influence your mothering or ideas about how society should parent? Collective childcare?
- How did you see campaigns that tried to deal explicitly with the economics pf housework - for example WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP AND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK?
- What about the demand for twenty-four-hour nurseries?
- How did you support yourself financially during the movement?
- What was your accommodation? How did you pay for it? Did you live in a communal house? Was it women only or mixed?
- Health and dis/ability

- How conscious have you been about health and ill health during your life?
- Have you been involved in political on these issues? E.g. women health collectives and 'Our bodies Ourselves'.
- Abortion: Many feminists have written/spoken about their experiences of illegal abortions prior to the 1967 Act in the UK (see literature review) but it was still difficult to gain a legal abortion in the 1970s. Did you know of women's liberation networks helping women to access supportive doctors before or after 1967 or activist groups conducting abortions?
- How did you find out about sex? Was this typical or not for people in the area you lived?
- When were you able to access contraception?

Legacy: *Success stories, contributions and achievements (political, legislative, personal, social, Individual or collective), to what extent aims of the organizations or campaigns were achieved, events that contributed to the changes, philosophy, generational thinking, ageing [Duration: APPROX 2 Hours]*

- Success stories/achievement
- Can you give me examples of issues/events do you think were achieved thanks to the movement's collective action?
- To what extent to you think the aims and goals of the movement (and your group/campaign) were achieved?
- How much power did the movement achieve?
- What events/issues do you think contributed to changes in gender role or relationships over the last forty years that went beyond the efforts of the movement? (I may need to explain using e.g. perceptions of the role that late capitalism, migration flows and globalization have played in challenging patriarchal societies.)

Impact and Legacy

- Can you describe your relationship with, and journey between, grassroots organising/Women Liberation groups and formal politics and institutions?
- How do you see feminism's institutionalisation?
- How do you see gender mainstreaming?
- How much influence do you feel the movement has had? In what spheres?
- Aging: activists tend to reflect on their achievements when they reach a certain age, do you feel significantly different about any of your feminist views as an older woman?

Visions/ reflexion of involvement

- Overall how would you characterise your involvement in the women's campaigns/liberation movement?
- How would you assess impact on your life?
- What has been the most profound aspect?
- What would you say of the favour of the movement in other parts of the United Kingdom? (e.g. Wales, Scotland, Ireland, outside London)
- What makes or made your own organizing unique?
- Where you or your group linked to feminists abroad?
- How much contacts were they (e.g. American feminists? anti-imperial feminists)
- In what ways did they influence you?

Challenges and setbacks: internal, external limitations, migration laws

- From you experience how and why did the mass mobilization of migrant women in 1970s and 80s decline /fragment?
- What do you consider personally as feminist' greatest success/failure and impact?
- [Ask about internal (ask about funds, resource mobilization, personal relationships, leadership) but also external factors e.g. change in politics, law amendments etc.]
- Are you still active? In what capacity?

Belonging in the movement/organization

- How 'at home' in the organization/movement, what makes you feel you belonged, what is your sense of belonging, did you leave or consider leaving, why, did you see others leaving or being rejected? i.e. split, merge, conflicts,
- Contemporary feminism
- What do you know about women or feminist campaigning in the 1990's, 2000's, currently? (If interviewing a young activist, ask about what they know about the 1970's, 1980's campaigns?)
- What do you think of current women's networks and contemporary feminist ideas or ideologies? Do you think there are similar splits in today's movements?
- What are the tools or arguments that you would most like to pass on to younger generations? Are there different things you would say to men or women today?

Conclusion: evolving understanding of feminist organizing:

- In light of the lack of historical documentation of activism work in scholarship, do you think there is reluctance by UK feminists to write history of the period they lived through and were intimately involved in? Why do we see this gap, in your opinion?
- Have you been interviewed before as an activist?
- What do you think of preserving activists work?
- How do you see the organizing going?
- Any current young feminist/activist/academic you know?

After recording

- Consent form for interview to be checked if need further amendment
- Explain again what happens next: transcript, queries, cataloguing, planned events
- Do you have any material/item (such as photo, newspaper, and activists' souvenir) that you would like to show us?
- Request if I can take activist photograph (consent is a must)
- Request if anything else they would like to add
- Feedback: ask if the method used really captured the essence of their experiences. If not, ask how we could do it differently
- Thank you so much for those valuable personal and intimate memories
- We can return to this again later if you'd like.

Appendix 3: Participant information & consent form for activists

![University of East London logo]

ANNEXE 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR ACTIVISTS

University of East London

Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Alice Mukaka, University of East London, Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Telephone 07526809259   Skype: alice.mukaka   email: u1436186@uel.ac.uk

Participant information for the PhD research

Project title: Feminist Organising for Migrant Rights

The life history interviews I am undertaking will form the basis of my PhD research on activism for the rights of migrant women in the United Kingdom. The research focuses on legislative changes that have occurred during the past four decades of 'restrictive' immigration politics of control and how and to what extent these changes affect migrant women' lives, in particular, those who have no 'legal status'.

The purpose of this research is to make sense of these changes (that are) presupposing a counter-mobilising action and also to have an improved understanding of how activists make sense of their experiences in waging campaigns on behalf of migrant women.

I will be gathering narrative accounts from two distinct groups of women:

a) Semi structured interviews with asylum seekers to make sense of their experiences of immigration control mechanisms, such as experiences of destitution, dispersal, detention, deportation and their sense of belonging

b) Life stories/ histories interviews with different activists, working individually or in coalition, who are or were involved in advocating for migrant women and asylum seekers. My interest is in finding out how activists form, develop, articulate or sustain their campaigns on behalf of migrant women, including challenges, setbacks and success they encounter.

The research project is being conducted under the supervision of Prof Gargi Bhattacharyya and Prof Molly Andrews from the Department of Social Sciences at the University of East London. We are inviting you to participate in this research project.

In-depth interviews will be conducted on a voluntary basis and are not paid. As a participant, you will be interviewed by me and at a location of your choice. The questions I will ask will be quite general about different aspects of your life as an activist, such as your childhood, family, religion, key decisive moments or turning point of your involvement into activism, what have been your successes so far or challenges, limitations and setbacks. Interview durations will vary depending on your availability and I will be recording you on a small digital recorder for purposes of accuracy in data collection. The recording will then be transcribed by me. You may decline to be audiotaped and are still welcome to participate in the study. You have also the right to stop the interview or to withdraw from the project at any time, with no consequences or disadvantages. At the end of the interview you will be offered a copy of your transcript, and you will be invited to comment on or suggest amendments to be made as you see fit. The material will only be used if/when you are satisfied with the content of the transcript.

All information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be identified or linked to the data you provide at any time unless you give your consent to reveal your identity. I will store the transcript and recording in my computer, securely protected with a password, and no one else will use or have access to the material other than me.

Once my PhD programme has been completed, I will retain the material for my possible future academic use, or potentially for activism archive, unless you request that your interview should not be archived.

Should you have queries or concerns at any point regarding the conduct of the project in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleteau, Research Integrity and Ethics Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

ANNEXE 2: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Consent to Participate in the Research Project:

Project Title: Feminist Organising for Migrant Rights

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………….

Appendix 4: Participant information & consent form for migrant women and asylum seekers

ANNEXE 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR MIGRANT WOMEN AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

<u>University of East London</u>

Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Alice Mukaka, University of East London, Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Telephone: 07526809259   Skype: alice.mukaka   email: <u>u1436186@uel.ac.uk</u>

Participant information for the PhD research

Project title: Feminist Organising for Migrant Rights

The interviews I am undertaking will form the basis of my PhD research on activism for the rights of migrant women in the United Kingdom. The research focuses on changes that have occurred during the past four decades of 'restrictive' immigration politics of control and how and to what extent these changes affect migrant women' lives, in particular those with no legal immigration 'status' or who are on a temporary leave to remain.

The purpose of this research is to make sense of these changes (that are) presupposing a counter-mobilising action and also to have an improved understanding on how women, as subjects, make sense of their experiences. This research will collect 'unheard' stories in the forms of testimonies and evidence of asylum seekers' experiences of destitution, dispersal, detention and deportation. I am also interested in how migrant women sense their belonging and what makes them feel they belong or not. In addition to these semi –structured interviews, I will also be interviewing different women activists, working individually or in coalition, who are or were involved in advocating for migrant women and asylum seekers.

The research project is being conducted under the supervision of Prof Gargi Bhattacharyya and Prof Molly Andrews from the Department of Social Sciences at the University of East London. We are, therefore, inviting you to participate in this research project.

Interviews will be conducted on a voluntary basis and are not paid. As a participant, you will be interviewed by me at a location of your choice. The questions I will ask will be quite general about different aspects of your life as a migrant woman, and where applicable, in relation to your experiences of the current control mechanisms. Interviews will last approximately 1 hour and I will be recording you on a small digital recorder for purposes of accuracy in data collection. The recording will then be transcribed by me. You may decline to be audiotaped and still are welcome to participate in the study. You have the right to stop the interview or to withdraw from the project at any time, with no consequences or disadvantages. At the end of the interview, you will be offered a copy of your transcript and you will be invited to comment on or suggest amendments to be made as you see fit. The material will only be used if/when you are satisfied with the content of the transcript.

All information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be identified or linked to the data you provide at any time unless you give your consent to reveal your identity. I will store the transcript and recording in my computer, securely protected with a password, and no one else will use or have access to the material. Once my PhD programme has been completed, I will retain the material for my possible future academic use or potentially for activism archive, unless you request that your interview should not be archived.

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UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Docklands Campus, University Way, E16 2RD

Consent to Participate in the Research Project:

Project Title: Feminist Organising for Migrant Rights

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………….

Participant's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………….

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