Solidarity research with Xochicuicatl e.V.

– Exploring the dynamics between the organization its beneficiaries and the overall migrant group

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Abstract

This thesis project is an act of solidarity research with the Berlin based Latin American women’s organization Xochicuicatl. Along the idea that research should be based on the interests and needs of oppressed groups, the research design was developed in cooperation with the organization. The study centers on migration movements between Latin America and the Caribbean and Germany. Moreover, it investigates the dynamics of inner-outer interplay between the organization the beneficiaries and the overall migrant group. The main method is a qualitative content analysis of documents out of the organization’s archive. The organization’s response to transformations is thereby analyzed through action within invited (coping) and invented (resistance) spaces of citizenship. In this regard, the organization’s space is understood as a subaltern counterpublic which enables a connection between coping and resistance.

Keywords: Solidarity Research, Migrant Women’s organization, Social Movement, Latin American Women, Intersectionality, Subaltern Counterpublic, Invited and Invented Spaces of Citizenship, Global migration movements, Germany, Berlin
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1. Introduction

Academics are not placed somewhere in the universe. They are not neutral observers, standing outside of society. Academics are part of society, engage with society and shape society. They are either resisting against oppression or are complicit with it.

Following this line, the question arises how academics can resist against oppression; how can they shape the world to a better place?

Is it through shedding light on the situation of oppressed people? Through studying social movements and ways of resistance? Or is it simply through working as an academic and then doing the dishes in a soup kitchen during free time?

Usually it is part of the academics’ imagination how their work might have an impact. Researchers can thereby have quite naïve and obscure ideas how their work does a change. Especially given the fact that a lot of academic work is written in an exclusive language and barely reaches the broad society.

The Argentinian scholar Mato frames an alternative approach: He demands that research should be solely based on the interests of oppressed groups. Moreover, the results should be in the first place directed to them. He argues that “the goal should not be ‘studying the subaltern’ but ‘studying with subaltern groups’ and studying whatever they may propose” (Mato, 2000, p.497).

His approach made a lot of sense to me. Oppressed groups should know best what they need and how research can help them. Furthermore, they should be the ones most benefiting from liberative knowledge production.

Based on these ideas, I started developing my thesis project. I planned to do research for migrant groups in Germany. I decided to approach migrant organizations since I thought it would be easier to engage with a group when it is in some way organized. Subsequently, I contacted organizations and explained them my idea to do research based on whatever are their interests and needs. Some organizations declined my project, because of a lack of resources, others due to a language barrier. For example, an Iranian refugee organization explained that without speaking Farsi, I would not be a big help for the organization. In the end I managed to establish contact with the organization Xochicuicatl. In the following, I will shortly introduce the organization:
Xochicuicatl


„A place which offers shelter and development. Where you can search for and find help. Where you can simultaneously sing and flourish. A nest, where you can get prepared to start flying”

With these words one of the organization’s members describes Xochicuicatl.

The organization emerged out of a writing workshop. In 1991 a group of Latin American women started the workshop taller de escritura Xochicuicatl. “Xochicuicatl” comes from the language Nahuatl and means singing of the flowers. As a meeting place, they used a room by the women’s organization S.U.S.I. in an occupied house. The idea of the workshop was to combine writing and therapy. Topics included origin, breakings (Brüche), nostalgia (Sehnsucht), women and body or women and migration. At this time, the migrant population experienced growing racism and racist attacks. The women used the writing workshop to cope with fear and to find a safe space. Over time the idea of an own place, where Latin American women can find support and solidarity, emerged (Xochicuicatl e.V., 2017).

Finally, on the 15th of January 1992, a group of ten Latin American women founded the organization Xochicuicatl. They created it as a location where Latin American women can support each other and exchange knowledge about their lives as migrants in Berlin. Moreover, they imagined it as a place where they could find recognition for their working situation, even though their jobs as e.g. babysitters or cleaners were not thought highly of in the general society. The language of the location should be their first language Spanish. This decision was made not only to keep up the emotional relation to the language, but also to exchange information more easily. Through funding from the German state, they were able to become independent from S.U.S.I and to rent their own location (Xochicuicatl e.V. 2017).

Since the founding of the organization, it expanded significantly. Nowadays it includes different forms of counseling (e.g. social, psychological, or legal advice), regular courses (e.g. German or sport classes) and a variety of events (e.g. movie screenings or discussion rounds).
1.1 Research aim and research question

“Si quieres ayudar, necesitaríamos una persona para limpiar.” (If you want to help, we would need a person for cleaning), joked one of the organization’s members when we discussed about how I could support the organization. I met with two women of the organization to openly discuss how academic research might help their work. To the meeting I brought an overview of my research plan as well as a list of methods with which I was familiar with. In this way, I wanted to give them an idea into which direction the research could go. Additionally, I prepared some questions to foster the discussion. During the conversation I took notes on the ideas, which came up.

In the next week I looked closer into the collected ideas and wrote three possible research designs. I then called the organization to explain the ideas and to select a research design together. We decided to work on a combination of two designs:

The first design refers to the group of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) women in Berlin. In recent years, many political incidents happened in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among others there have been abrupt political changes in some countries (e.g. Brazil and Bolivia), a devastating economic situation in Venezuela and ongoing conflicts in Colombia and the Caribbean. These incidents result in many new migration movements within the continent, but also in a transatlantic form. In this way the group of LAC migrants in Berlin is changing a lot. The organization explained that they experience many current transformations in the group and that it is difficult to remain an overview. Based on these reflections, the research idea was to look deeper into current migration movements from Latin America and the Caribbean and how these change the group of LAC migrants in Berlin. Since Xochicuicatl is a women organization, a focus on female migrants was important.

The second design refers to the organization itself. The organization was very interested in me working with some of the organization’s own data and linking it to academic literature and theory. In this respect, the organization wanted to understand how it evolved and changed over time. As a way to put a focus on the data analysis, we thought about connecting it to the first research design, meaning to work on data of women who seek help in the organization and see how the group was transforming during the last years.

In the next step, I established several research aims. The first aim refers directly to the first design: I aim to obtain an overview on the group of female LAC migrants in Berlin and how it is transforming due to new migration movements. The second aim refers to the second design:
I want to analyze the organization’s beneficiaries and investigate how this group is changing currently. I think the organization is interested in knowledge on the group of LAC migrants, to align their work better to it. Therefore, I believe it is valuable to see the relation between the overall group and the women who actually visit the organization. It is clear that both groups are interconnected: When the overall group of LAC female migrants changes, there will be new women with new needs seeking help in the organization. So, the third aim is to understand the dynamic between the beneficiaries and the overall group. The fourth aim refers again to the second design. The organization stated that it would be interesting to understand better how it evolved and changed over time. Thus, I want to analyze the organization’s role within the dynamic. On one hand the organization is part of the group of LAC female migrants, on the other hand it responds to needs within the group. The aim is to understand the organization’s role in the dynamic and its response mechanisms to transformations and new needs in the group.

This graphic helps to clarify the points:

![Figure 1: The relation between the organization, the beneficiaries, and the overall migrant group](image)

The graphic shows the group of LAC migrant women in Berlin and the organization placed within it. Additionally, it shows the women who are part of the group and who seek help within the organization. All the groups are connected to each other. So, if the shape of the overall group changes e.g. through new migration movements, the women within it will have different needs and the organization must respond to these newly upcoming needs.
Based on the aims, I will work on these research questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of the LAC migrant women group in Berlin and how is it transforming due to new migration movements?
2. What are the main characteristics of the women who seek help in the organization and how is the group changing?
3. What are the dynamics of inner-outer interplay between the organization Xochicuicatl, the beneficiaries and the overall group of LAC migrant women in Berlin?

Additional to these aims, I will engage with questions related to the overall research project. I will discuss how researchers can support social justice and conduct research with and for oppressed groups. In this regard, I will also reflect on my thesis project and my positionality. Therefore, the fourth research question is:

4. How can I, as an academic, support a migrant organization in its struggle?

My initial plan to answer the questions included a mixed method out of archive analysis and participatory observation. Unfortunately, just when I was about to start my fieldwork, the Covid 19 Virus turned the world upside down. In March, I travelled to Berlin in order to conduct my data. Two days after my arrival, however, the organization closed its doors. As a result, I had to revise my research plans and adapt them to the given situation. I somehow regret that I was not able to do the participatory observation, since it was an important part of my project. Nevertheless, I had time to focus more on other issues and hence included an extensive analysis on data by the municipality.

But Covid 19 did not only limit my field work, it also impacts my object of analysis. Since the beginning of this year, Covid 19 influences migration movements. For some period, many borders were closed and most of the countries still have strict border controls. It further influences the life of citizens and often migrants are the ones hit hardest by crisis situations. The focus of my thesis will not be on the impact of Covid 19. Nevertheless, I try to include certain aspects around it. Regarding this, I face the difficulties of a continuously changing pandemic: Some of the analysis might not be accurate anymore a few months or even weeks after publication.
1.2 Structure of the thesis

In the chapter following the introduction, I will give some contextual background to my study. In this respect, I will describe the migration society of Germany and Berlin with a focus on the migration from Latin America and the Caribbean. The next chapter deals with previous research. I will present former research on migrant organizations as well as alternative research models which aim to work with and for organizations. In the next step, I explain my methods and methodological approach. This includes a description of my applied methods and reflection on my own positionality regarding the project. Following that, I will depict the theoretical framework. It is divided into theories which enable to understand the situation of LAC migrant women and theories which should help to better understand the organization’s work. Then I will proceed to analyze and interpret my data. Finally, I will present the main results of the analysis and additionally draw on a conclusion concerning my methodological approach.
2. Contextual knowledge

In the first part of the chapter, I will introduce and compare the migration society of Germany and Berlin. I decided to translate and apply the German term *Migrationsgesellschaft* (migration society). It describes a society shaped by migration. Other than the term *immigration country*, it stresses that immigration as well as emigration movements exist. Moreover, it questions the homogenous image of a native population.

In the second part of the chapter, I will depict migration movements between the Latin American and Caribbean region and Germany. Thereby, I will focus on current transformations and on the situation of migrant women.

2.1 Migration-societies: Native Germany and “Multikulti” Berlin?

A common phrase claims “Berlin is not Germany”. It means Berlin is too crazy, too divers, too multicultural or as people say it in a loved or hated way: too “multikulti”. Berlin is often portrayed in stark contrast to the rest of Germany, which is perceived as more traditional, more “native”. In this subchapter, I will take a closer look at the migration societies of Germany and Berlin.

Native Germany...

In the course of its history, Germany has been shaped by various immigration and emigration movements. These include labor migrations in the aftermath of the 30 year war, the transatlantic emigration to the Americas in the 19th century or the emigration of people who fled from national socialism (Oltmer & Hanewinkel, 2017).

After the war Germany was divided by the four victorious powers: Russia, the USA, Great Britain, and France. Russia created the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – commonly referred to as East Germany. The others connected their regions and established the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) – commonly referred to as West Germany.

In both parts the dominant ideology marked the migration policy. Specifically the ideal of socialist solidarity impacted the migration movements in the GDR (Gruner-Domić, 2002). Both countries established contracts with other states in order to receive labor migrants. In West Germany, these migrants were called “guest workers” and came mainly from Southern Europe...
and Turkey. In East Germany, the migrants were called contract workers (Vertragsarbeiter*innen) and came mainly from other communist countries (Oltmer & Hanewinkel, 2017). Overall, the number of migrant workers was much higher in West Germany. At the point of reunification 1990, 4.5 million foreigners lived in the western part, around 25 times more than in the eastern part of Germany (Kleff & Seidel, 2009).

Two years after, in 1992, the country experienced an immigration peak. Nevertheless, in the following years, the immigration declined continuously until 2008 and 2009 the emigration outweighed the immigration movements. Since then, the immigration increases again. Currently most of the migrants come from the European Union. The only exception to this pattern is 2015, when a high number of refugees entered the country (Oltmer & Hanewinkel, 2017).

Currently the biggest group of foreigners are Turkish, followed by South and East European nationalities. Due to the refugee movements there is additionally a big group of Syrians and Afghans (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020).

The migration policy concerning the labor market focuses on measures which favor highly qualified migrants and certain economic fields e.g. the care sector. Moreover, the European contract on free movement of persons plays an important role. Nevertheless, in recent years the German government created some laws to control these movements. In 2014 and 2016 it strongly restricted the access to social security and child benefits for EU migrants (Oltmer & Hanewinkel, 2017).

As I mentioned earlier, Germany has always been shaped by various migration movements. Nevertheless, the common image is dominated by the idea that a rather homogenous nation always existed, which then formed the state. This image clearly influenced the German citizenship policies. For a long time, these policies were based on the principle of *ius sanguinis* (right of blood) which means that only descendants of Germans can receive the citizenship. Moreover, immigration was long perceived as something exceptional and not common for the German nation. For decades politicians led controversial debates whether Germany can be called an immigration country. At the turn of the millennium, this imagination slightly changed. In 1998 the social democratic green government officially declared Germany a country of immigration. Subsequently, the government also changed the citizenship laws and included the principle of *ius soli* (right of soil) which meant that migrants could receive the citizenship based on a certain time of residency (Terkessidis, 2004).
However, the image of a homogeneous German nation to which foreigners must integrate still dominates the integration discourse. The continuous discussion concerning a leading culture (Leitkultur) shows this. Leading culture means that there is one dominant culture to which migrants must adapt. Still in 2017, the secretary of the interior de Maizière created a draft for a German leading culture. It included points concerning universal education, the role of Christianity and the value of patriotism. The first point he concluded with the words “Wir sind nicht Burka” (We are not Burka). He further claimed that migrants who reject this leading culture will never be integrated (“Wir Sind Nicht Burka: Innenminister Will Deutsche Leitkultur,” 2017).

In the aftermath of the refugee situation in 2015, the German right-wing movements strengthened. The right wing populist party AFD entered many political arenas (Oltmer & Hanewinkel, 2017). Additionally, right wing violence increased. In 2019, the chronic of refugee hostile incidents counted 1111 attacks against refugees and refugee shelters (Chronik flüchtlingsfeindlicher Vorfälle, 2020).

... and Multikulti Berlin?

Like the whole country, Berlin was shaped by various migration movements. At some points in the past it was even as international and divers as it is nowadays. For instance, the labor migration in the second half of the 19th century led to a big number of Polish and Russian foreigners (ca. 17 % of the population). After the second world war the capital was – like the rest of the country - divided into East and West. In this way different national migration policies influenced the two parts of the city. This different influence is still visible today for example is the number of foreigners living in former East Berlin significantly lower than in the western part (Kleff & Seidel, 2009).

Nowadays the city constantly grows. Moreover, it becomes more and more international. In 2010 around 13,5 % of the population were foreigners. Until 2019 this number increased to up to 20% (Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2020) A drawback of the population growth are gentrification processes. Especially in the districts Kreuzberg and Neukölln the rental prices are rising which leads to a displacement of former residents, many of them migrants (Türkmen, 2015).

Many big German cities have a higher proportion of foreign inhabitants than Berlin. Despite this fact, Berlin follows a unique self-representation as an international city. At its 775
anniversary in 2012, Berlin celebrated itself as the “city of diversity”. Nevertheless, the way how Berlin promotes its diverse image is often reductionist. Diversity is portrayed as very harmonic; often the economic benefits of qualified international workers are stressed. The urban researcher Holm concludes: “If we would believe the media coverage, only cool people would come to Berlin: Spanish dancers, Danish poets, American computer experts and Australian rock bands.” (Bayer et al., 2014, p.84 – own translation). Topics such as racism, poverty, exclusionary practices and the protest against these is often left aside (Bayer et al., 2014).

To go back to the beginning and draw a conclusion: Native Germany? - As I showed, there is no native Germany, nor has it ever existed. Multikulti Berlin? – There are cities which are indeed more divers. Nevertheless, Berlin is rapidly growing and becoming more international.

In addition to that, another aspect becomes clear: The reality of a place and the imagination of it is not necessarily connected. Germany is shaped by migration and is diverse. But still people cling to the image of a homogenous nation. Furthermore, these images influence policies and so the lives of all migrants and racialized people. It is also interesting to see how these images impact protest. I argue that in both cases protest is hindered. In native Germany migrants still struggle to have a place and be accepted in society. Thus, further claims become difficult. In international Berlin migrants have a place but still struggle to be heard since racism and exclusion do not exist in the harmonic multicultural world.

### 2.2 Migration movements between the Latin American and Caribbean region and Germany

Before starting this subchapter, I must introduce two regional concepts. The first one is Latin America: This region comprises all countries of the Americas which have a Romance language as one of their official languages. That means all countries which have been colonized by France, Spain, or Portugal. The second one is Latin America and the Caribbean: This region comprises all the Latin American countries plus countries in central America with English as one of their official languages e.g. the Bahamas or Jamaica. In other words, all American countries except Canada and the USA. Among others the United Nations uses this regional subdivision (The United Nations, 2020). In my thesis I will refer to the region of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).
In the first subchapter, I will describe migration movements between LAC and Germany. On one hand, I will give a historical perspective on the movements. On the other hand, I will draft current transformations concerning the migration flows. Following that, I will have a closer look on the situation in Berlin. In this respect, I will present statistics by the municipality on migrants from the LAC region. Finally, I will focus on the situation of LAC migrant women in Germany from a more qualitative perspective.

2.2.1 Historical view and current transformations

In general, little academic attention has been paid to migration movements between LAC and Europe. Thereby, most of the scholars focused on the migration between LAC and Spain (Bayona-i-Carasco et al., 2018). After the refugee situation in 2015, the topic of LAC migrants in Europe may have been marginalized even more.

Furthermore, there is no international consensus on how to define and measure migrants. Most nation states have their own method and even change definitions over time. For instance, there are discussions on how long one must reside in the country to count as a migrant. Moreover, the categorization of migrants into groups such as refugees, international students, labor migrants, marriage migrants etc. is not a natural fact but depends highly on political decisions (Schwenken, 2018).

To conclude, it is very difficult to make clear statements on the migration movements between the two regions. Therefore, in this subchapter, I will focus on main migration movements and their characteristics. When I draw on some exact numbers, I will always give an explanation on which basis they have been collected.

**Historical view**

The migration from Europe to LAC started with the act of colonization. After the independence and consolidation of the first South American states the migration continued. Especially Brazil and Argentina served as economic poles of the continent, which attracted many migrants. The migration from Europe to LAC was thereby on its peak from the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. In this period most of the migrants came from Southern Europe (Pino Paredes, 2018). Nevertheless, also Germans started migrating to LAC, mainly to Argentina, Brazil and Chile (Gruner-Domić, 2002).

Before and during national socialism in Germany, Jewish refugees fled and sought asylum in LAC. In the aftermath of the second world war a quite oppositional group followed: Nazis
escaped from legal persecution and went underground in several LAC countries (Pino Paredes 2018). In the years after the Second World War, the century-long migration direction from Europe to LAC reversed and the migration from LAC to Europe started increasing (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018). The migration from LAC to Europe is clearly connected to the former colonial relations and century long migration flows (Rizzo, 2007). Based on the long migration period, clear migration networks were established between the continents (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018). These networks then enabled a lot of migration from LAC to Germany.

As explained above, after the war, Germany was separated into a western and an eastern part. First, I will explain the migration towards West Germany:

In the 1960s the first groups of LAC migrants arrived in West Germany. They came mainly from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela. Many of these migration movements were connected to the former German emigration (Gruner-Domic 2002).

In the years after, the migration increased heavily. Many people fled the dictatorships which arose in several Latin American countries. Most of the refugees seeking asylum in Germany came from Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and Venezuela (Gruner-Domić 2002). This coincided with migration movements in respect to independence movements in the case of Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, and Surinam (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018).

In general, immigration and Visa restrictions limited the migration from LAC to West Germany. Even for refugees it was not easy to get political asylum. Some of the migrants which already had close family in West Germany, could apply for family reunification (Gruner-Domic 2002). Others made use of their relation to German ancestors to apply for citizenship (Pino-Paredes 2018). In the second half of the 1980s, the migration movements became increasingly female (Gruner-Domic 2002).

Like the country’s western part, the German Democratic Republic received refugees from LAC. In their policy, however, they favored refugees who shared their ideological standpoint (Gruner-Domic 2002). In addition to that, East Germany took labor migrants from other socialist countries. In 1978 the state made a contract with Cuba in order to receive young workers for their industry. Moreover, smaller groups of migrants came from Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Most of them came for work and study reasons (Pino Paredes 2018). In contrast to the migration to West Germany, the migration to the GDR was mostly male dominated. After reunification, Cuba immediately ended the contract with the GDR and tried to return all of its workers (Gruner-Domic 2002).
In the years following reunification, the overall immigration from LAC increased (Gruner-Domic 2002). Furthermore, the migration movements became more diverse in respect to socio-demographic aspects: Female and indigenous migration rose (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018). The proportion of refugees, however, declined clearly. Only the ongoing conflicts in Colombia resulted in small numbers of refugees seeking asylum in Germany (Pino Paredes 2018). Currently, most of the migrants are labor migrants, international students and migrants based on family reunification (Pino Paredes 2018). Compared to the total migrant population, the number of LAC migrants in Germany is relatively small. In 2019 only three percent of all the foreigners were American nationals (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020).

**Current transformations**

Important impacts that shape the current migration movements include a general demographic growth in the LAC region, the economic crisis 2008, the shift in US-American migration policy, the state of crisis in some LAC countries and the situation around Covid 19.

To begin with, the demographic growth in the LAC region leads to a generally higher number of migrants. Hence, also the migration towards Germany increases (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018).

Furthermore, the economic crisis 2008 clearly influenced the migration movements. In general, the crisis had a destructive effect on countries worldwide. In Europe it hit the Southern nations the hardest. In the aftermath of the crisis, the LAC immigration to Southern Europe clearly slowed down. Additionally, many migrants moved a second time on to Northern European countries, including Germany. Nevertheless, as soon as the Southern European nations started recuperating from the crisis, the immigration from LAC to Southern Europe started increasing again (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018).

Another important impact is the changing role of the USA concerning LAC migration. Despite some movements to Europe and other regions, the USA has for a long time been the main migration destination for LAC migrants. That applies especially for countries geographically close to North America. After 9/11 the USA introduced many new migration restrictions. As a result, the migration from LAC to the USA decreased clearly. Due to recent US-policy, this decrease continues. Consequently, Europe as a new destination becomes more important (Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018).
The state of crisis in some LAC countries is a further factor which influences the migration movements. Since some years, the numbers of LAC asylum seekers in Europe rises. In 2019 the number of Venezuelan asylum seekers in Europe doubled; now they constitute the third biggest group of refugees. In the same way the number of Colombian refugees grows. In 2019, three times more Colombians sought asylum than in 2018. As a result, they constitute the fifth biggest group of asylum seekers. Furthermore, there are significantly more applicants from El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Peru, and Cuba. The asylum recognition rate for many of these countries is relatively low (except for Salvadorans). However, some European countries issue residency based on humanitarian reasons (European Asylum Support Office, 2019). At present, the statistics in Germany do not mirror these tendencies. In 2020 refugees from LAC have not been among the 10 biggest nationalities (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2020). Nevertheless, some of the refugees might apply for asylum in another EU country and then further migrate to Germany.

Finally, the Covid 19 pandemic has a significant impact on global migration movements. In the middle of March, Germany closed its borders. From then on, the entry was only allowed to German nationals with a few very specific exceptions. Since the 15\textsuperscript{th} of June it reopened its borders for EU citizens. Nevertheless, the entry from non-EU countries is until now (15.07.2020) highly restricted (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020).

I think future predictions concerning the impact of Covid 19 on migration movements are hardly possible. Migration policies probably depend on the further development of the pandemic. Currently, migration control based on medical requirements increases (International organization for Migration, 2020). Medical checks might therefore become an essential part of future border controls. Moreover, the Covid caused economic crisis will have an influence on migration.

### 2.2.2 A look at Berlin’s migration data

In order to obtain a more accurate picture on the situation of LAC migrants in Berlin, I decided to work with the municipality’s data. The statistical information center (Statistisches Informationszentrum) Berlin Brandenburg has publicly accessible databases on the residents of the city. These include every person who is officially registered in Berlin. Collected information
comprise among others gender, country of origin, citizenship, district of residence and living conditions.

The data does not show multiple migrations i.e. when migrants first move to another country and then onto Germany. Additionally, it does not encompass information on illegalized residents since they are not registered officially.

Based on the databases, I created tables and graphics which show different characteristics about the group of LAC migrants in Berlin. The thesis’ main analysis concerning the organization’s documents focuses on the years from 2015 to 2019. Based on this, I decided to concentrate on Berlin’s statistics from 2012 to 2019. In this way, I could see how transformations in the overall group of LAC migrants changed the organization’s group of beneficiaries step by step.

*Transformations in the group of LAC migrants*

The following chart shows the number of residents with a LAC country of origin over the past 7 years:

![Chart showing the development of residents with a LAC country of origin in Berlin.](image)

The number of residents with a LAC country of origin increased since 2012. Until 2014, however, the numbers stayed relatively stable. Since 2014 the group grows evenly. The increase differs from country to country. According to the data, the number of residents from Argentina,
Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Mexico doubled since 2012. Other groups such as residents from Cuba, Jamaica, and Peru stayed almost equal over the years.

As mentioned in the former subchapter, the numbers of asylum seekers from Venezuela and Colombia in Europe are significantly increasing. Berlin’s data shows a similar increase regarding its residents from these countries:

![Figure 3: The residents with Colombia or Venezuela as a country of origin](image)

The number of residents from Colombia grows continuously from 2239 in 2012 to 4306 in 2019. In contrast to that, the number of residents from Venezuela remained relatively stable from 2012 to 2015 and then started increasing more. As I described earlier, the German institute for migrants and refugees (BAMF) did not report a growth in asylum seekers from these countries. Therefore, it is likely that the refugees either applied for asylum in another EU country and then moved on to Germany or migrated in another form e.g. as labor migrants or through family reunification.
The next chart shows the proportion of residents with a LAC country of origin in 2019:

![Figure 4: The Proportion of residents with a LAC country of origin in 2019](image)

The highest number of residents comes from Brazil (28%), followed by residents from Colombia (11%), Mexico (11%), and Chile (10%). There are two main explanations why these groups constitute the biggest in Germany. Firstly, many of these countries are the most populous countries in the LAC region. Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are the most populous countries and encompass the biggest group of residents in Berlin. Secondly, some of the countries have a historical migration connection with Germany. As explained earlier, many Germans emigrated to Brazil, Chile, and Argentina in the 19th century. Additionally, the GDR employed workers from socialist Cuba. The sociologist Gruner-Domic sees the big group of Cuban migrants in Germany as strongly connected to the GDR’s migration policy (Gruner-Domic 2002).

As explained in the previous subchapter, migrants can gain the German citizenship through different ways. According to the data, a little less than half (43%) of the residents from LAC countries have the German citizenship.
**Gender perspective**

The chart below shows the development of residents with a LAC country of origin by gender over the past seven years:

![The development of residents with a LAC country of origin by gender](image)

As explained in the last subchapter, academic literature describes the migration from LAC to Germany to be increasingly female dominated (see Bayona-i-Carasco et al. 2018; Gruner-Domic 2011; Pino Paredes 2018). Berlin’s statistical data, however, disapproves this argument. During the entire period from 2012 to 2019, there are just slightly more female than male residents. Thereby the proportion between male and female migrants stayed very stable. According to the data, most of the nationalities mirror this general gender distribution. Only in the case of the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Costa Rica the difference between male and female migrants is significantly bigger. In respect to the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, there are clearly more female than male residents. In respect to residents from Costa Rica it is the opposite: The number of male residents is much higher than the number of female residents. A further interesting case is the gender distribution of residents from Jamaica. In 2012 the distribution was female dominated (52% female - 48% male). Then the distribution changed over the years, so that in 2019 there were more male than female residents (47% female - 53% male).

Since the target group of the organization are migrant women, the following statistics will focus on characteristics and the situation of female residents from LAC countries.
Age and Family situation

The following chart describes the age distribution in respect to female residents from LAC countries in 2019:

Half of the women are between 20 and 40 years old. Children (residents under 20) constitute ca. one quarter of the overall group. Only a very small number is in the age usual for retirement (over 67). The overall Berlin population is much older. Thereby the proportion of children is very similar. It is more the age group between 20 and 40 which is significantly smaller and the group over 50 which is bigger in the average population.
The table below shows the marital status of the female residents from LAC countries in 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Married</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil partnership</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil partner died</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil partnership terminated</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The marital status of the female residents from LAC countries in 2019

Half of the group are not married. Another big part is married. The group of divorced women makes up around 8%.

Residential area

The following chart depicts the residential areas of the women from LAC countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitte</td>
<td>3.488</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg</td>
<td>2.942</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pankow</td>
<td>2.702</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf</td>
<td>3.130</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spandau</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steglitz-Zehlendorf</td>
<td>1.764</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempelhof-Schöneberg</td>
<td>1.919</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neukölln</td>
<td>1.472</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treptow-Köpenick</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marzahn-Hellersdorf</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichtenberg</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinickendorf</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>21.281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The residential area of the women from LAC countries

Most of the women live in Mitte (16%), Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf (15%), Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (14%), and Pankow (13%).
After this quantitative overview on LAC migrant women, I will now give a deeper and more detailed view into their migration process and their situation in Germany. Thereby I worked with some qualitative studies which focus on the women’s life situation.

As explained in the former subchapters, there have been various migration movements between LAC and Europe. These include refugee movements, labor migration, family reunification and student migration. The heterogenous group of female LAC migrants mirrors these diverse movements (Hernández, 2005). Most of the women enable their migration through networks. These networks are often almost exclusively female ones (Rizzo 2007). Moreover, many women travel alone; the possibly partner and children thereby stay in the country of origin (Hernández 2005). The migration process is often not a linear one from one country to another. Most of the times the women migrate to various countries before they arrive in Germany (Rizzo 2007). The image of Berlin as an alternative and multicultural city attracts thereby many migrant women (Hernandez 2005; Gruner-Domic 2011).

Latin America and the Caribbean is a very diverse region. The different societies are shaped by colonization, the import of slaves from Africa, and different migration movements from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The group of LAC migrant women in Germany reflects this diversity. LAC migrant women in Germany differ concerning country of origin, class, race, legal status etc. (Hernandez 2005). Nevertheless, in the dominant German discourse they are often portrayed as one single homogenous group (Gruner-Domic, 2011). In her study Gruner-Domic discusses this portrayal with LAC women: All the women described to experience the ascription of a pan-ethnic Latina identity. Furthermore, they explained that inter-ethnic cohabitation shaped their acceptance of the identity. These experiences encompass contacts with other Latin American women and the access to global Spanish media, which often portrays a common belonging. Nevertheless, despite this acceptance, the women did not want to be limited to the Latina identity (Gruner-Domic 2011).

LAC women encounter many obstacles in the German labor sector. They face an invalidation of their diploma and a disqualification of their professional experience (Hernandez 2005; Lidola 2013; Gutiérrez Rodriguez, 2015). Additionally, they are confronted with discrimination and stereotypes when searching for work. Especially Berlin’s promotion of multiculturalism enables and restricts the women to find work which is connected to ethnic stereotypes and exotic imaginations (Gruner-Domic 2011; Lidola 2013). For these reasons, many women work in the care and domestic sector regardless of their educational qualification (Hernandez 2005;
Lidola 2013). The ethnologist Lidola conducted a study with Brazilian women in Berlin. Many of the women faced an invalidation of their diplomas and their professional experience. Therefore, a job in the domestic and care sector was often the only possibility to earn money. The women explained that in addition to their gender, their nationality was an important hiring factor. The stereotype of the Latina as clean, a good cook and a good nanny enabled them to easily find a job in the domestic sector. Within their work, the Brazilian women report discriminative treatment such as paternalistic attitudes (Lidola, 2013). Moreover, sexual stereotypes depicting Latinas as temperamentally and fiery can lead to the problematic demand for additional sexual services. Hernandez describes how LAC women try to make clear and defend themselves through certain newspaper ads such as "Sudamericana busca trabajo para limpiar o cuidar niños. Lunes a viernes, y también fin de semana. Ningún sexo!" (South American woman looks for cleaning or nanny job. Monday to Friday, and weekend. No sex! – (Hernandez, 2005, p. 210 – own translation). These examples show the power of racism and dominant stereotypes. They can restrict and enable the job search and can mark the whole working life.

Hernandez concludes in her study that the situation of LAC women is significantly shaped by their position as mujeres/extranjeras/tercermundistas (women/foreigners/from the third world). In this way their situation is similar to other women in the same position i.e. migrant women from the “third world” (Hernandez 2005).
3. Previous research

In the following two subchapters, I will draw on previous research in respect to my thesis project. First, I will describe former research on migrant organizations i.e. research in which the organizations only function as an object of analysis. In the next step, I will introduce alternative research approaches which aim to study with and/or for organizations.

3.1 Research on migrant organizations

Migrant organizations are a global phenomenon. Nevertheless, in this subchapter I will focus on migrant organizations in Germany and German scholars engaged with the topic. Since the 1980s, most of the research on migrant organizations concentrates on the topic of integration. Thereby, two main contrary views exist: One part of scholars claim that migrant organizations promote the integration of migrants and emphasize their function as bridges between migrant groups and other parts of society. The other part of scholars argues that migrant organizations would be an obstacle to integration by fostering parallel societies (Pries, 2013). For this reason, the sociologist Heckmann even demanded the stop of funding for migrant organizations (Latorre & Zitzelsberger, 2013). Nevertheless, nowadays migrant organizations are increasingly seen as representatives of migrant groups and possible cooperation partners concerning integration projects (Pries 2013). In the next step, I will proceed with the researcher’s main results.

Main Results

In general, migrant organizations are very heterogenous. They vary concerning their work focus, their size, their status by law, their funding, and their internal structures. The sociologist Pries distinguishes between religious, political, job related, cultural, self-help, humanitarian, and leisure organizations. Thereby many organizations have multiple thematic goals and the focus often changes over time (Pries, 2013). Most of the migrant organizations are based on one country of origin. Nevertheless, the amount of multinational organizations is increasing (Schultze & Thränhardt, 2013). There are several reasons for the multinational organization: The facing of similar problems within Germany, similar political issues, a connecting identity (e.g. foreigner in Germany) or structural reasons (if the number of own nationals is too small). In some cases, migrants decide to organize in respect to regions of origin. Reasons for that could be connected to former colonization and the violent enforcement of one language on specific
regions (e.g. Spanish in most of the parts in South America). Because of that the different nationalities can communicate and exchange easily in exile (Schwenken 2000). Moreover, the organization’s work focus is often not limited to Germany. Many organizations are as well active in the country/region of origin e.g. through humanitarian work or remittances. That means the organizations operate in a transnational field. Furthermore, there are differences in the organization by migrant groups e.g. migrants with Turkish background organize themselves proportionally more often in the form of migrant organizations (Pries, 2013).

In order to achieve their goals, the organizations might need to cooperate or to extend/ change their membership. Some organizations dissolve after main achievements, others transform and continue their work in a new field. Especially the next migrant generation will have new problems and aims. Therefore, it will challenge and change the work of migrant organizations (Schultze und Tränhardt 2013). Since Xochicuicatl is a migrant women’s organization, I will now focus on the specific situation of migrant women’s organizations.

**Migrant women’s organizations**

In general, the creation of migrant women’s organizations increases (Reineke et al., 2010). On one hand, migrant women decide to organize themselves because of a failure of inclusion and a lack of openness towards migrants within general women organizations. On the other hand, female migrants often feel pushed into fixed gender roles and perceive a lack of attention concerning women’s issues within migrant organizations (Latorre & Zitzelsberger, 2011).

Despite own forms of organizing, migrant women’s organizations still cooperate with general women’s organizations and other migrant organizations. In comparison, however, a study by Latorre and Zitzelsberger showed that the migrant women’s organizations had much stronger contact to other migrant organizations than to general women’s organizations (Latorre & Zitzelsberger, 2011).

In the following, I will have a closer look on one study by Schwenken (2000). In her research, she analyzed documents of 224 migrant women’s organizations in Germany. Although the study is not necessarily up to date, it gives valuable insights into structures and dynamics of migrant women’s organizations in Germany.

The main programs of the organizations are political initiatives, the provision of meeting points, counseling, and courses/ further education. Thereby a clear distinction between political- and
self-help organizations is often not possible. Most of the self-help organizations are engaged in political work. Likewise, political organizations often have strong aspects of self-help.

Political initiatives encompass political representation of interests, political actions, and reflection about the situation of migrant women in the country. Topics are among others migration policy and law, human trafficking, or racism. A comparison between migrant women organizations and general women organizations shows slightly different thematic foci. For example, the thematic field of marriage/ sexuality is important to migrant and the general organizations. Migrant women organizations, however, discuss questions related to migration more often, e.g. marital residence permits.

Another focus of the organizations is counseling. The beneficiaries often do not seek help regarding a single problem, issues are often complex. Thereby social problems (e.g. an unsecure legal status) can impact the mental health. For this reason, the migrant organizations must combine offers and competencies, whereas in the state social system different institutions would be responsible. In some cases, the organizations play the role of an intermediary and forward the beneficiaries to other organizations. In the counseling the possibility to talk in the first language plays an important role for the beneficiaries. Many organizations provide courses and further education. These include German courses, cooking courses or writing workshops. To many organizations it is important to have own rooms in order to offer the women a safe space. In this respect, the organizations serve as a location marked by autonomy and solidarity.

Furthermore, Schwenken analyzed differences between the group of women who works in the organization and the beneficiaries. First, a difference in age exists. Young women are often the target group of projects and counseling, but rarely work within the organizations. Second, there is a difference concerning the residence status. Many women who work in organizations have a secure residence status, whereas many beneficiaries have problems with their residence status. Third, a high percentage of academic women are involved in the organizations. In order to explain this high number of academic women, Schwenken draws on a study by Encarnacion Gutierrez Rodriguez. Rodriguez interviewed intellectual migrants in movements and found out that many academic migrant women have difficulties to find jobs which fit their qualification. This is due to the non-recognition of their diplomas or a lack of social capital in the new country. A part of this group then uses the academic background instead for political work and activism.

Based on her study, Schwenken discusses if migrant women’s organizations can be framed as a social movement. She explains migrant women’s organizations include many aspects of social movements e.g. political demands or continuity of organization. Nevertheless, she decides not
to use the term movement, since the organizations do not consist of a unified movement with the same aims and strategies. Furthermore, she elucidates deficits concerning social movement theories to explain migrant women’s organizations. For example, theories regarding social movement membership often do not fit to include the group of beneficiaries within the analysis.

In the next step, I will position my study within this field of previous research. In this respect, I want to draw on two main critics concerning the former research.

**Reflection and own approach**

Many studies seem to have a very narrow definition of what is political. As mentioned above, Pries distinguishes between religious, political, job related, cultural, self-help, humanitarian, and leisure organizations (Pries 2013). I argue that the own category of “political” is problematic. It seems like an organization can be religious or political respectively religious and political. But the idea that having a religious organization can be political, is excluded. To make it clearer: Around 5 % of the German population are Muslims. They face discrimination based on their religion. Additionally, they often need to fight to establish religious sites to practice their religion. One Muslim organization in the German city of Erfurt had to fight for over two years to be able to build the city’s first mosque. First, no one wanted to sell property to the group, then huge right-wing protests appeared, and in the end, no local company was willed to build the mosque. The organization had to campaign and connect with other groups to achieve the construction (Debes, 2018). To frame the organization as only religious or as religious and political would be wrong. Because the bare attempt to be religious makes the organization political. In the case of oppressed groups, seemingly everyday actions like practicing the religion or cultural festivities often include necessary organization and political fights. For marginalized groups, the personal is almost always political. Therefore, I think the whole discussion on integration hindering factors of migrant organizations is problematic. I would claim the organizations are not about creating “parallel societies” but about creating space in order to practice their own culture and religion within the society. Space which did not exist before, often because of discrimination and oppression. Following this line of reasoning, I argue for a broader understanding of the political. The political aspect should not be seen as a program of some organizations but as essential to most of the migrant organizations.

In my thesis project I try to apply this broader understanding of the political. Xochicuicatl is placed within an oppressive society. As Hernandez explains, the situation of LAC women is
marked by their position as mujeres/extranjeras/tercermundistas (Women/Foreigner/from the third world). I aim to understand the organization’s actions in this context.

In this respect, Schwenken’s discussion if migrant women’s organizations can be framed as social movements becomes interesting. To see the organizations as movements offers the possibility to analyze and understand them in a politicized way. I agree with Schwenken that it is difficult to see all migrant women’s organizations as one unified movement. Nevertheless, I would claim that every organization can be seen as a movement, interconnected with others. Of course, some social movement theories are difficult to apply on migrant women’s organizations. But others can be a helpful lens to better understand migrant women’s organizations. In my thesis I will work among others with social movement theories.

My second main critique refers to the relation between the researchers and the organizations. I argue that most of the described scholars do not take the side of the migrant organizations. They are mostly concerned about the organization’s role in the integration process, which means the value of the organization for the dominant German society. In this way they position themselves in a rather suspicious way in relation to the organizations. A clear example is the scholar Heckman who claimed the integration hindering aspect of the organizations, demanded the stop of funding and thus even became a threat to the organizations’ existence. Furthermore, in most of the research the organizations play a passive role. They are only the objects of the research and are not included as agents in the research process.

I disapprove these research approaches. I try to do my research in alliance with Xochicuicatl. I do not mind the organization’s value for the dominant society. This would mean being complicit with oppressive structures. I am concerned about how to support the organization in the best way through my research.

In the next subchapter, I will draw on alternative ways to conduct research with organizations; ways which clearly take the side of the organizations and ways which see the organizations as agents and target a more equal relationship between the researcher and the researched.
3.2 Research with/ for organizations

In their book *The radical imagination*, Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) explain three main ways in which scholars can support social movements.

The first approach is called invocation. In this approach, researchers use mainly traditional disciplinary research techniques to obtain information about movements. They aim to publish material which is imagined to be helpful to movements or which will valorize and legitimize the movement. In this way, researchers mobilize their privilege to make people aware of the struggle in question and to shed positive light on the movement (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014).

One example of this invocational approach is a study by León-Rosales and Ålund (2017): *Renaissance from the margins – urban youth activism in Sweden.* The authors focus on Swedish urban justice movements. They describe how the movements resist against cultural stigmatization and social exclusion. Moreover, they analyze a lack of real opportunities for decision making and how the movements struggle to invent new spaces in order to make their voices heard. In the research the authors clearly take the side of the movements and shed positive light on their actions. Along this line, they also speak up against criminalizing mainstream discourses.

As described above, some of the German scholars declared the integration fostering aspects of migrant organizations. Hence, they also shed a positive light on the organizations in German society. At the same time, however, these scholars are complicit with a problematic integration paradigm. A paradigm that only legitimizes the existence of migrant organizations if they have an integration fostering impact. That means through their studies they reproduce the idea that the value of migrant organizations depends on their integration work. It is the same case as studies which show the positive economic impact of refugees. While trying to improve the acceptance of refugees in society, they reproduce the idea that refugees need to have a positive economic impact to be accepted.

The invocational approach can support movements in their struggle. Researchers can use their privilege to show movements in a positive light and legitimize their work. The example of the studies on migrant organizations and integration, however, shows that scholars must be aware with which logic and within which paradigm they aim to legitimize the movement.

The next strategy is named avocation. In this strategy scholars seek direction from the movements and sometimes disappear into the movement. Haiven and Khasnabish call the
strategy avocation “because it might be seen as a retreat from or a rejection of the unjust privilege and power of the academic researcher” (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2014, p.16).

An example of this avocational approach could be studies by Mato. In his work as a scholar, he tried to conduct research that would be useful to American indigenous groups. He studied global agents such as the World Bank or the Inter-American-Development bank and their networks. In this way he could give practical support to the indigenous groups which had to negotiate with these powerful institutions (Mato, 2000). In his case the avocational approach was leading to a way of studying up.

Finally, there is the strategy of convocation (convoke= to call together). In this approach the movement is seen as a knowledge producer itself. The role of the researcher is to awaken and sharpen the movements’ own capacities of research. This means the scholars try to create new spaces of dialogue, debate, and reflection for the movement.

Haiven and Khasnabish apply this convocational approach in their own project. They aimed to support social movements in the Canadian city Halifax. Therefore, they organized in-depth interviews and panel discussion to give the movement members possibilities for debate and reflection (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014).

All these approaches are important strategies how scholars can support social movements. Often researchers use a combination of the strategies for their research design (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). I argue, however, that scholars must be aware that the research is really based on the articulated interests of movements and not on own ideas what might be helpful. In fact, all the three approaches could be applied in an authoritarian way.

The pedagogue Freire describes trust in the people as essential to fight oppression and transform the system. He explains that many left-wing elites lacked this trust and therefore did not liberate the society, but instead changed the system into another authoritarian one (Freire, 1968/1998). I think in the same way academics must trust oppressed groups that they know best what they need and how research could support them in their struggle.

As mentioned earlier, my thesis project aims to support the organization Xochicuicatl. In my approach I decided to trust the organization that they know how to best benefit from research. For this reason, I tried to base my research on their articulated interests. In general, I am following mainly the avocational approach. Nevertheless, I disapprove the idea to reject my privilege and disappear into the movement. Instead, I want to recognize my privilege and positionality and be aware about it in respect to my project.
4. Methods and methodological approach

Initially, I planned to do a participatory observation and an analysis of the organization’s documents. Due to Covid 19, however, the organization closed for an uncertain period. Therefore, the participatory observation was not possible anymore.

Since the participatory observation was an important part of my project, I will shortly draw on my main plan concerning the observation. Following that, I explain the collection and the analysis of the organization’s documents. In the next step I describe my overall collaboration with the organization and the closing of the project. Then, I will reflect on my own positionality within the project. Finally, I will discuss my research design in respect to the invocational, avocation and convocational approach.

4.1 Participatory observation (Initial plan)

Social movements and organizations are by nature very complex. Participatory observation is an efficient way to obtain in depth knowledge into their internal dynamics (Uldam & McCurdy, 2013). I planned to attend the everyday life in the organization, participate at projects and events and take part at conferences. During the participatory observation, I wanted to conduct informal interviews (see DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011) with the organization’s members and the beneficiaries. Because of ethical reasons and to engage people with the research topic, I would have implemented the observation in an overt way.

The participatory observation had several aims. To begin with, I wanted to get more information and better understand the organization’s events and projects. Another aim was to observe the relation between the organization’s members and between the members and the beneficiaries. Moreover, the participatory observation should have brought some complementary information to the data analysis. In general, I thought of the observation as being an adequate method to obtain more data and understanding without disturbing the organization’s work and demanding to much of their time.
4.2 Analysis of the organization’s documents

I consulted the organization in order to collect adequate material for the analysis. I explained the exact direction and aim of the analysis and described what sort of material would be suitable. Following that, I needed to sign a data protection declaration (Datenschutzerklärung). Then the organization sent me its annual reports from 2015 – 2019. I analyzed the material according to the method qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2015).

The chart below shows the process of the analysis:

![Diagram of the analysis process]

Figure 7: The process of the analysis

(1) As explained above, the material consists of the organization’s annual reports. The reports encompass information about the beneficiaries, a description of the organization’s main strategies and goals, as well as an enumeration of every course, event, and project within the year. First, I analyzed every report separately to have a coherent picture of every year. In the
next step, I compared the different years to see tendencies concerning the beneficiaries and the organization’s focus over the years. (2) The material is, however, not an objective depiction of the organization’s work. It must be critically looked at in relation to its type, who produced it, for what purpose and so on (Bosi & Reiter, 2014). The author of every report was the organization’s coordinator. The reports were addressed to the Berlin municipality (Berliner Senat). In this way the material might be biased. Difficulties and problems of the organization’s work might not be described fully. Moreover, a critical view on the municipality might not be articulated.

(3) The goal of the analysis is to collect information on the beneficiaries and the organization’s approach (projects, events counseling etc.). Furthermore, I aimed to see changes concerning the group of beneficiaries and the organization’s work focus over the years. (4) As a theoretical basis for the analysis I used the concept “social movement triad” by Haiven and Khasnabish (2014). Haiven and Khasnabish explain that social movements can be understood through the triad of imagination, strategy, and tactics. Every movement consists of these three elements. I will explain the concept in a concreter way in subchapter 5.2.1. At this point I just want to draw on my specific questions in respect to the analysis.

The imagination

a) How does the group of beneficiaries look like concerning age, gender, family situation, legal situation, economic status etc.? – How did it change over the years?
b) What are the needs of the beneficiaries? – How did they change over the years?
c) How does the societal situation look like?

The strategy

d) What are the broad strategies of the organization? – How did they change over the years?

The tactics

e) What are the concrete tactics (projects, events etc.) of the organization? – How did they change over the years?

The connection between the different elements

f) What is the concrete relation between imagination, strategy, and tactics – How does the group of beneficiaries influence the work of the organization?
(5) I applied a deductive coding approach. I structured the material according to the broad categories “Characteristics and needs of the beneficiaries”, “societal situation”, “strategy present”, “strategy future”, and “tactics”. (6) Following that, I summarized the material within the categories. (7) As mentioned before, I first summarized and interpreted the results separated for every year. (8) Then I compared and connected the different years with each other.

4.3 Continuation and closing of the project

In the introduction, I already explained how I got in contact with Xochicuicatl and how we established a research design for my thesis. In the months after, I stayed via e-mail and phone calls in connection with the organization. I always tried to keep the organization updated on the current state of the research. Moreover, I wanted to make sure that the organization agrees with my plan and to give space for possible changes. I continuously documented the contact and reflected on our collaboration. After finishing some parts of the analysis, I sent the organization the first results. Following that, I received some first feedback and further ideas on which parts to focus more. Before finishing the thesis, I gave it to the organization to read and correct it. In this way I was able to ensure that no sensitive information is published.

Moreover, I wrote one summary with the main results. This paper also included a list of interesting literature for the organization. Initially, I planned to write the summary in Spanish. The organization, however, asked for a German version to further use it in the engagement with German organizations and institutions. Therefore, I wrote the summary in German. I then presented the summary in the organization. At the presentation I received some important feedback and critic. These I added in form of footnotes to the analysis chapter. Furthermore, I obtained feedback on the whole research design and the value of the project. I see this feedback as a validation of my research. Hale explains that activist research follows other standards of research validation. Instead of relying on opinions of the academic circle, it is important that the research leads to societal transformations and is useful for groups working on those transformations (Hale, 2001). So, the value and usefulness of my results for the organization determines the validation of the project.
4.4 Positionality

In my early thesis notes I found this phrase:

“I want to be a tool for the organization – I want to use my academic and methodical knowledge in order to do research for the organization + I don’t want to impose my ideas on the organization”

During the project, I realized problems with this initial idea: I am not a blank tool, neither can I just disappear into the movement. I have my own positionality and I am not a part of the organization. Moreover, I have my own values. There are reasons why I engage in the research and why I want to support the movement. In addition to that, I need to take in space and bring in my ideas to the research project.

Burawoy describes three steps on how to face an unequal world: First to analyze its structure and dynamics, second, to understand one’s place within it, and third, to confront it (Burawoy, 2015). I agree with him that one needs to understand the own position in society to successfully engage in resistance. For my project it means that I need to reflect on my own position in society and towards the organization. This reflection is necessary to successfully support the organization in its struggle.

Knowing my position is crucial to become aware of which power structures I am able to see and which not. According to Mohanty a person needs to stand at the bottom of oppression in order to see power structures (Mohanty, 2003). Furthermore, reflection on my own positionality is necessary so I become aware of my own privileges and the danger to reproduce specific oppressive structures.

My fourth research question is “How can I as an academic support a migrant organization in its struggle?” At this point, I want to expand the question further and ask, “How can I as an academic - standing at my specific position in society - support a migrant organization in its struggle?”

For this reason, I try to shortly draft my own positionality: I grew up in a small town in the South of Germany. I learned German as my first language. Neither me nor my parents are migrants in Germany. I have, however, lived as a migrant in other countries. I am white and never faced racism. I am a cis-woman and face the patriarchy. I grew up in a middle-class family and never had to worry about money. I am a Master student. So, if everything is considered the question expands to “How can I as an academic and non-migrant-white-middleclass-ciswoman etc. support a migrant organization in its struggle?”
In the case of this research I must reflect on my position towards the organization Xochicuicatl. If I set myself in relation to the overall organization, my position seems very clear. I am not part of the organization, so I am clearly an outsider. My position in relation to the different individual members is more complex. The organization’s members and the beneficiaries form a diverse group. With some of the members I share more aspects with others less. During the whole research I needed to be conscious about different power structures that come into play in the contact between me and the women.

The feminist academic Yuval-Davis worked on this issue of different power positions in feminist groups. In order to achieve just dialogue, she proposes the concept of transversalism. She got to know the idea of transversal dialogue from Italian feminists. These described transversalism as an alternative to universalism. Universalism means to be blind concerning differences in the group and to imagine a homogenous point of departure. This approach, however, ends up fostering domination and exclusion (Yuval-Davis, 1994).

In respect to dialogue, transversal politics propose the concept of rooting and shifting. Rooting means that every individual in a dialogue brings with them the knowledge of their own positioning and identity. At the same time, they try to shift, which means to put oneself in the situation of the other person with whom they are in dialogue. However, shifting should not mean decentering, that is to lose one’s own rooting and set of values. Neither should it be an act of homogenizing the other. Every group should be seen as diverse and containing different points of views (Yuval-Davis, 1999).

In addition to communities based on similar positions and identities, Yuval Davis adds another group called “epistemological communities”. These communities share similar value systems and can exist across differences in identity and positioning (Yuval Davis 1999). So, despite different positionings, there can be a common ground based on similar values.

I found the idea of rooting and shifting very valuable. It reminded me to continuously root myself and to realize from which position I see the world. At the same time, I tried to shift and to understand the situation of the women with whom I was in contact. I also connect with the idea of epistemological communities. It showed me that, despite different positionings, there can still be similar values that can lead to a common ground for struggle.

In addition to the ideas based on transversal dialogue, I established some other techniques to deal with the different power structures. During the whole research project, I paid a lot attention to transparency. I tried to make sure the organization was fully informed about the whole project.
and updated them continuously in respect to changes and new results. Moreover, I tried to give space for the organization’s ideas regarding changes and a further focus in the study. Finally, the language of communication between me and the women is Spanish. It was not necessarily my decision, it happened rather automatically. The main language in the organization is Spanish. So, the moment I entered it, it seemed common sense to adapt to this pattern. Although in some situations I would have loved to revert to German or English to articulate better, I think it was a fair act to stick to Spanish. So, even though the organization is in Germany, where I am usually in the powerful position speaking my first language, within the organization the roles were turned around.

4.5 Reflecting the research design

In the subchapter 3.2, I drew on different ways how scholars can support organizations. In the following I will discuss the different approaches in relation to my own research.

The first approach was called invocation. In this strategy researchers study an organization in order to shed positive light on it and legitimize it in society (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). Since my idea was not to study the organization but for them, I initially did not intend to apply this approach. In the end, however, my research design was as well invocational: I studied the organization and showed how they support their group and promote social justice. In this way I shed positive light on the organization. Moreover, I realized that the idea to study an organization and to study for an organization are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The organization was interested in an analysis of their own data to better understand how it is transforming. That means in the act of studying them, I also studied for them.

Nevertheless, I tried to be aware with which logic and within which paradigm I shed positive light on and legitimized the organization. I did not aim to show the organization’s value for the dominant system which would mean to be complicit with oppressive structures. Instead I decided to clearly take the side of the organization and show its value for the oppressed group itself.

The second approach was called avocational research. In this strategy scholars seek direction from the movements and sometimes disappear into the movement (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). The main idea of my thesis project follows this avocational approach. I wanted to do research for the organization. Therefore, I met with the organization to discuss the research aims. In this way I obtained directions from the organization for my research design. In Mato’s
case the approach led to ways of studying up (Mato 2000). In my project it led to research on the group of concern (LAC migrants) and on the organization. In relation to the study of LAC migrants, I used, besides Berlin’s statistic, a lot of already existing academic literature on the group. Through my thesis I made these academic works on the migrant group in a comprised and focused way available for the group. I see this also as an important and rightful act, since oppressed groups should be aware, know and benefit from the knowledge which is produced about them.

Nevertheless, I reject the avocational idea to disappear into the movement. As outlined in the former subchapter, I am not part of the group, I have my own positionality and I need to be aware of it and reflect it in the research process.

The third approach was called convocational research. In this approach the role of the researcher is to awaken and sharpen the movements’ own capacities of research. This means the scholars try to create new spaces of dialogue, debate, and reflection for the movement (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). My research design did not explicitly include this approach. The content of the thesis, however, comprises an analysis of their work of several years connected to the municipality’s statistics and academic literature. Therefore, I think the thesis can constitute a basis for further discussion and reflection in the organization.

In the implementation of the different approaches I tried to apply Freire’s ideal of trust in the people. Freire describes this trust as essential to fight oppression and transform the system (Freire 1968/ 1998). Instead of following barely my own imagination how to do research for the organization, I made sure that the research was based on the organization’s articulated interest. I trusted its members that they know best what knowledge they need and how research can support them in their struggle.
5. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is divided into two main parts. The first one encompasses theories which shall improve the understanding of the situation of LAC migrant women. In this respect, I mainly focus on the theory of intersectionality. The second part includes theories which aim to better understand the organization’s work.

5.1 Understanding the intersectional position of migrant women

Different oppressive structures (e.g. racism, capitalism, or patriarchy) do not operate separated from each other. Instead they are interconnected and reproduce each other. Therefore, they must be understood as interlocking systems of oppression. This is called the “matrix of oppression” (Collins, 1998). Feminist bell hooks describes this matrix of oppression as an imperialist-white supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy. It affects people in different ways (hooks, 1994).

Crenshaw, a US American feminist legal academic, analyzes how specifically black women are affected by this matrix of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). She builds her theory on the experiences of black women with the legal system. In this regard, she analyzed three cases of black female plaintiffs at court. In the first case a group of black women tried to sue General motors. They claimed they have been discriminated against as black women. The court, however, only recognized discrimination based on gender or race. In the company white women have not been discriminated against neither black men. For this reason, the court denied the indictment. Discrimination based on a combination of race and gender did not exist in the legal system. In the second case a black woman tried to sue a company based on gender discrimination, thereby representing the group of female employees. The court, however, declined the indictment. It claimed that the situation of black women would be so specific that they cannot represent the whole group of female employees. The third case resulted in a similar way. A black woman tried to indict a company based on racial discrimination, thereby representing the black group of employees. Similar to the second case, the court argued that the woman could not represent the group of black employees because her situation as a black woman would be too specific.

These cases expose the problematic way how society and law think about discrimination. As explained above the definition of discrimination in law was based on separated categories which means one could be discriminated against gender or race or nationality etc.
The experiences of black women, however, can be different than the ones by white women and black men. Black women can experience discrimination specifically as black women, as an intersection out of the category women and black. In the first case, the law did not protect the group of black women because it did not recognize their specific experiences as black women. This means black women are only protected if their experiences coincide with other groups e.g. a discrimination against the whole group of women.

Furthermore, sex and race discrimination tend to be defined in terms of the privileged ones. In every category (race, gender, nationality) the experiences of the privileged are central to definitions of discrimination. That means in the conceptualization of gender discrimination the experiences of white women are central. In the case of racial discrimination, the experiences of black men are central. These tendencies become clear in the second and third case. The black women were not allowed to represent the group of women neither the group of black people. Black women were only able to represent themselves.

Crenshaw shows that society’s failure to recognize intersectionality, can have real material consequences for people. In order to explain this issue in a clearer way, she uses the metaphor of people trapped in a basement:

“Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked-feet standing on shoulders-with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are not disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that "but for" the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who-due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below-are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch.” (Crenshaw, 1989, p.151f)

Crenshaw further critiques the centrality of whiteness within feminism. A lot of feminist theory is created within and dominated by a white context. The value of this theory for black women is therefore diminished. The white dominance in feminist academics not only overlooks black
women, black women are actively excluded when white women claim to speak as representatives for all women. Moreover, white feminists tend to overlook their race privilege and how they can contribute to the domination of other women as well.

In the same way black groups lack gender sensitivity. Race is often depicted as the primary oppositional force in black lives. The effects of patriarchy are thereby often overlooked. Additionally, the context of race oppression would make resistance against black men more difficult. Issues of sexism are sometimes expected to be suppressed in order to ensure the security of the larger black community. For these reasons, Crenshaw demands civil rights defenders to include gender and feminists to include race within their struggles.

Finally, Crenshaw critiques the order how racism and sexism is addressed. She explains that struggles are often organized along singular categories. Instead, struggles should begin by addressing the issues and problems of those who are most disadvantaged. In this way other people who are singularly disadvantaged would benefit as well. According to the logic “When they enter, we all enter” (Crenshaw 1989, p.167).

To conclude, oppressive structures (e.g. racism, capitalism, or patriarchy) do not operate separated from each other. Instead, they are interconnected and reproduce each other as a matrix of oppression. People are in different ways affected by this matrix of oppression. In this respect, categories of discrimination should not be seen as separated but intersecting with each other. Moreover, the legal system fails to protect these multiply disadvantaged people, and social movements fail to include intersecting issues within their struggles.

Crenshaw focuses on the situation of black women. They are disadvantaged through an intersection of racism and sexism. In addition to racism and sexism, other oppressive structures exist in society (e.g. capitalim, nationalism, and ableism). My thesis deals with the situation of LAC migrant women. Of course, the situation of every LAC migrant woman is unique. They can be advantaged and disadvantage in relation to many different factors. However, they are all multiply oppressed through being a woman and being a migrant from the global south. As explained in subchapter 2.2.3 Hernandez describes the situation of LAC women as predominantly marked by their position as “mujeres/extranjeras/tercermundistas” (Hernandez 2005). I agree with Hernandez and argue that the matrix of domination LAC women in Germany face is coined by patriarchal, xenohostile, and racist/colonial structures.

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2 I apply xenohostile as an alternative to xenophobic. The translation of xenophobic is “fear against foreigners/strangers”. I criticize the term to be reductionist and pathologizing. The term xenohostile describes hostile structures against foreigners/strangers and fits reality much better.
In the next step, I will explain the women’s intersectional position in the field of labor and partnership.

5.1.1 Intersectionality in the field of labor

The social scientists Lutz and Amelina distinguish between feminized and masculinized working places. A working place is called feminized if the majority of the workers are female. These working places are usually characterized by low income, low social status, and a lack of possibility for promotion (Lutz & Amelina, 2017). This precarious state of feminized working places is connected to the idea that wage earning is not the women’s primary role. This idea justifies the women’s position as subsidiary workers and the level of their wages as complementary wages only (Morokvasic, 1984). Like all women, migrant women mostly work in feminized working places (Lutz and Amelina 2017).

LAC women, however, are not only oppressed by patriarchal structures in the field of labor. They are additionally constrained through their position as migrants from the global south. As explained in subchapter 2.2.3, LAC women often face a devaluation of their former education. This devaluation is connected to colonial structures. Knowledge production and dissemination in the global south is seen as inferior compared to the standard of the global north (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Therefore, the migrant’s education becomes devalued and certificates not recognized. Moreover, migrants are vulnerable to exploitation due to an insecure legal status (Morokvasic 1984). Especially illegalized migrants are at risk of exploitative working conditions. In Germany they can even encounter deportation when speaking up against exploitation in front of the court (Tangermann & Grote, 2017). The vulnerable position of excluded people such as migrants is thereby necessary for the neoliberal capitalist system which is based on exploitation. In fact, migrants are valuable to the system because they are vulnerable to exploitation (Bauder, 2006).

As described in subchapter 2.2.3, stereotypes restrict and enable the women’s search for jobs. These stereotypes are connected to an intersection out of patriarchal and colonial structures. Women from the global south are portrayed as “religious (read ‘not progressive’), family-oriented (read ‘traditional’), legal minors (read ‘they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights’), illiterate (read ‘ignorant’), domestic (read ‘backward’)” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 352). Based on this imagination migrant women from the global south seem to logically fit into the domestic and care sector.
To conclude, migrant women are multiply disadvantaged in the field of labor. They face an intersection out of patriarchal, xenohostile, and colonial/racist structures. Because of this disadvantaged position they are vulnerable to exploitation.

As mentioned above, Crenshaw criticizes white feminists for overlooking their race privilege and how they can contribute to the domination over other women. That means that oppressed people can be oppressors at the same time (Crenshaw 1989). One example of this phenomenon is the transfer of domestic work onto migrant women. Economic transformations and changing gender roles in countries of the global north result in the increasing employment of “native” women. In order to continuously achieve their work-life balance, the women need further help regarding tasks like domestic work, child-care and elderly care. In this way a new labor demand in these fields emerges. This is often filled out by migrant women who are dependent on these jobs due to their disadvantaged position as migrants (Lutz and Amelina 2017). Along this line, the “emancipation” of native women is made possible by the cheap support and often oppression of migrant women. Traditional gender roles are thus not questioned or resolved, but passed on to migrant women (Lidola 2013).

5.1.2 Intersectionality in the field of partnership

Gender relations can be affected by migration. In the past, many scholars considered migration to be a generally liberating process. They imagined the migration from the global south to the global north as a movement from a traditional to a modern environment, meaning from a more oppressive to an emancipative one. The liberation of the migrant women then became achieved through westernization. Later, these generalizing, racist ideas have been criticized widely (Morokvasic 1984). Current research shows the effect of migration on gender relations in various ways. Some studies underline emancipative changes, others show stabilizing or more restrictive impacts. Often the migration process includes several ups and downs in relation to emancipation (Schwenken 2018). In the next step, I will have a closer look on the specific situation of marriage migrant women:

The situation of marriage migrants is very dependent on the specific context of the marriage. Nevertheless, they are all affected by patriarchal, xenohostile, and colonial/racist structures. The marriage migrant might not have the same rights as citizens of the country. Therefore, the woman could have reduced access to the social system. Moreover, as explained in the previous subchapter, many migrant women find themselves in precarious working conditions. These factors can lead to a great dependency on the partner (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002).
The dependency may even be greater due to a connection between the marriage and the legal residence status. Many countries connect the residence status of the marriage migrant to the remaining marriage for a specific period. Hence, it is very difficult for the migrant spouse to end the relationship and gives the (abusive) partner a lot of power over the dependent marriage migrant (Williams, 2010).

Dutton and Goodman state that an individual’s vulnerability and the possibility of violence are usually clear to both the perpetrator and the victim. This knowledge of vulnerability then creates an environment that does not necessarily lead to abuse, but which make abuse more likely (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Based on the situation of marriage migrants it means that the vulnerable situation of the migrant itself makes abuse and violence more likely.

The possibility of paid work is often described as a step towards independence from the partner and thus towards emancipation. Nevertheless, this can create a great dependency on work, which can mean a dependency on oppressive working conditions (Morokvasic 1984).

This example makes clear how the intersection between the categories “women” and “migrant”, can lead to a very specific vulnerable situation. Policies which fail to recognize this issue of intersectionality can also fail to protect these women. For example, the offer of a place in a women’s shelter does not help if the woman will be deported if she leaves the husband to accept the offer. At this place Crenshaw’s example of the basement can be applied. The women who experience domestic violence are all together in the basement. Native women, however, stand on the shoulders of migrant women. Through the establishment of a woman’s shelter the native women can go through the hatch to leave the basement. The migrant women are left below, until they can pull themselves into the group of the native women (e.g. through gaining the citizenship after some years of marriage) and then be able to crawl through the hatch.
5.2 Understanding the organization’s agency

In the following I will draw on theories, which shall improve the understanding of the organization’s agency. In the first subchapter, I will introduce the theory “social movement triad” by Haiven and Khasnabish. Then I proceed to describe the concept of “subaltern counterpublics” by Fraser. Finally, I will explain Miraftab’s notion of “invented and invited spaces of citizenship”.

5.2.1 The social movement triad

Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) explain that social movements can be understood through the triad of imagination, strategy, and tactics. Every movement consist of these three elements.

The imagination describes how someone imagines the world, meaning the way how social reality is interpreted and understood. The imagination is thereby not an individual possession, but a shared landscape. Nevertheless, this does not mean that everyone who is part of the imagination, imagines everything in the same way. Imaginations overlap, conflict, and communicate with each other. The imagination is thus not a static thing, it is constantly negotiated. Furthermore, the imagination must be understood as the basis and the result of actions. It emerges from and leads to collective doing. It is important to state that the imagination is not the same as ideology. Ideology is a robust and coherent suite of concepts. The imagination in contrast, is not that clear and coherent, but much more conflicted and messier.

The strategies of a movement describe their broader pathways to social transformation. They can encompass organizational structures, the building of networks and cooperation, and a favoring of specific types of tactics. The imagination thereby informs and leads the strategy. Haiven and Khasnabish explain “How we imagine social relations and the possibilities for change will shape what sorts of broad strategies we believe might be effective.” (p.52)

Tactics are the concrete actions movements do to achieve their strategic goals. They can include a demonstration, a film screening, a book discussion, or the occupation of a certain institution. Tactics are specific actions that altogether constitute a strategy.

Of course, the three elements imagination, strategy and tactics are interrelated. The imagination informs the strategy and further the strategy leads to tactics. Nevertheless, movements should not be seen as absolutely coherent. The connection between the three elements is in reality much messier and more contradictive.
5.2.2 Subaltern counterpublics

Before getting into the theory of subaltern counterpublics, I will shortly introduce Chakravorty Spivak’s ideas on subalternity:

Inspired by Gramscian analyses of hegemony, Chakravorty Spivak addresses the position of the subaltern focusing on their representation concerning voice and gender hierarchies. She explains that the subaltern have no or very limited access to hegemonic power. Moreover, they do not have a voice, they cannot speak and represent themselves in hegemonic discourses. Since hegemonic discourses are male dominated, the subaltern woman is even more silenced (Chakravorty Spivak, 1988/2006).

Keeping these ideas in mind, I will now explain the theory of subaltern counterpublics by the US-American academic Nancy Fraser (1990). In her essay, she takes a critical look at Habermas’ concept of the public sphere: Habermas imagined the public sphere to be an arena of discussion, a place where private persons discuss about common issues. These discussions can be a critical counterweight to the state. The public sphere is further accessible to everyone, inequalities of status are put in brackets to achieve a rational discussion among peers. He further explains that the ideal in a society is one all-encompassing public sphere. Multiple competing public spheres would lead to fragmentation and would impede the democratic system.

Based on Habermas’ concept, Fraser formulates three main critiques. To begin with, she claims that the public sphere has never been fully accessible to everyone. The public sphere has always been marked by exclusions. The exclusions occur on the grounds of gender, class, and race. In the past the exclusions have often been formal. For example, an association in which only men could be members. Nowadays usually a formal inclusion exists. Fraser argues, however, that the public sphere is still marked by informal exclusions. She explains that the public sphere is not a place of zero-degree culture. The discursive arena is always positioned in the larger societal context. Since people have different power positions in society, these power differences are also significant in the discursive arena. A very clear example for this, are feminist studies which show that men tend to interrupt women more than women interrupt men. Moreover, do men take more turns and longer turns in discussions. The different power structures also lead to a language which favors one perspective. This makes it harder for subaltern groups to express their thoughts. Additionally, often a specific way of talking is favored e.g. “sophisticated language” vs. “slang language”. In some cases, subaltern groups feel a need to discursively assimilate as a condition to take part. Fraser concludes that Habermas’ idea to put status inequalities into brackets does not work. On the contrary, the attempt to overlook differences,
would work to the advantage of the dominant groups. In this way, seemingly equal deliberation can be in fact a mask of domination.

Secondly, Fraser criticizes Habermas’ ideal of one single public sphere. She declares that parallel to the “one” public sphere always several subaltern counterpublics did exist. She defines subaltern counterpublics as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (p. 67). As a significant example of these subaltern counterpublics, she describes feminist groups in the late twentieth century. The feminists started a variety of journals, bookstores, academic programs, conferences, and local meeting places. Within these new spheres, women invented new words to picture social reality, e.g., sexism and sexual harassment (current examples are e.g., mansplaining, hepeating or cat calling). In general, these subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they are a place of withdrawal and regrouping. On the other hand, they serve as spaces where resistance against the wider public is being formed. This dialectic process makes emancipation possible. In respect to democracy, Fraser argues that the existence of multiple publics would result in a widening of discursive contestation, which has a positive impact on democracy and social equality.

Fraser’s third critique deals with the distinction between the public and the private. Habermas described the public sphere as a place where people discuss about public matters. Fraser, however, claims that there is no natural distinction between what is public and what is private. The difference between the two gets decided through discursive contestation. She explains that for a long period, domestic violence was seen as something private which should not be discussed in public. Feminists questioned this idea, arguing that domestic violence was not only happening in some rare cases, but was a result of male-dominated societies. Therefore, it must be discussed and approached in the public sphere. To term things as private works to delegitimize them for public debate and contestation. This usually functions for the advantage of dominant groups.

From my point of view, Fraser’s concept of subaltern counterpublics is very valuable. It describes kind of a safe space where subaltern groups can find and build solidarity. The space offers a chance to become aware of oppression, find words together to describe it, and challenge the hegemonic common sense. The formation of a counterpublic can additionally be a way out of subalternity, a way to gain a voice in society.
Moreover, theories can emerge which explain and try to solve power structures in society. The
discussions are therefore theorizing as a liberatory practice. Bell hooks argues

“personal testimony, personal experience, is such fertile grounds for the production of
liberatory feminist theory because it usually forms the base of our theory making. While
we work to resolve those issues that are most pressing in daily life (our need for literacy,
an end to violence against women and children, women’s health and reproductive
rights, and sexual freedom, to name a few), we engage in a critical process of theorizing
that enables and empowers”. (hooks, 1994, p.70)

Furthermore, I think subaltern counterpublics are very crucial places for movements. They
constitute places where movements discuss and where movements can emerge through
discussion and awareness.

5.2.3 Invented and invited spaces of citizenship
The social scientist Miraftab (2004) explains the work of grassroot movements with the concept
of invited and invented spaces of citizenship. Within invited spaces, movements work mainly
on coping mechanisms to survive the oppressive system. The focus is thereby more on dealing
with the system and less on the resistance against it. The invited spaces are therefore spaces
legitimized by donors and governmental institutions. Within invented spaces of citizenship,
movements challenge the system and resist against the dominant power relations. The two
spaces are not mutually exclusive. Movements can always move between them; in different
contexts they can use different tools and spaces of mobilization.

Feminists have been vocal critics of the distinction between formal and informal politics. They
claim that formal politics which are dominated by men are often declared as “real politics”,
whereas informal politics like grassroot movements are delegitimized.

Miraftab explains that a similar distinction is often applied between invited and invented spaces
of citizenship. The state and media would promote the picture of an “authentic” civil society.
This “authentic” civil society works within the invited spaces of citizenship and helps
marginalized groups to cope with the oppressive system. Opposed to the idea of the “authentic”
civil society, stands the image of the “outcast” civil society. The outcast civil society is
connected to invented spaces of citizenship. It works on resistance against the system and is
therefore delegitimized. Miraftab explains that the distinction between the “authentic” and
“outcast” civil society can lead to the criminalization of actions against the system. Miraftab
critics the limited recognition of participation to official channels (invited spaces). In this way the state has the power to define where and how citizenship can be practiced.

The theory of Miraftab makes clear how movements work twofold. First, they work within a system and try to cope with it. Second, they try to challenge and change the system. Whereas the coping with the system is accepted and even supported by the state, the work against the system often becomes delegitimized and criminalized.

In respect to research, Haiven and Khasnabish make a similar argument. They claim that movements cannot fully be understood within the existing landscape of political relations because it is inherent to movements to challenge that order and try to create a different system (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014).

**Subaltern counterpublics and the invention of new spaces of citizenship**

As the name claims it, invited spaces are spaces offered by governmental institutions. These places do not need to be invented; they have been created by the state to give space to cope with the system but not to question it. In contrast to that, invented spaces of citizenship need to be invented. But how does it work to invent new spaces of citizenship – spaces which are not meant to exist in the system? I argue that subaltern counterpublics are important places for the invention of new spaces of citizenship. Subaltern counterpublics constitute a place of discussion for subaltern people. Through exchange and discussion, subaltern groups can become aware of power structures, can find words to describe them, can create theories around them, and finally can find ways to resist against them. In this way invented spaces of citizenship can emerge. Moreover, the idea of subaltern counterpublics makes the connection between invited and invented spaces of citizenship visible. Fraser describes this as the dual character of subaltern counterpublics. On the one hand, they are a place of withdrawal and regrouping. On the other hand, they serve as spaces where resistance against the wider public is being formed. In many ways, the withdrawal into a safe space and the exchange of experiences as a form of coping make people aware of power structures and thus enable a will to resist. So, actions within invited spaces of citizenship can lead to the creation of invented spaces of citizenship.
6. Analysis and Interpretation

In the previous chapters, I showed the migration and refugee movements from LAC to Germany. In particular, I focused on the situation of LAC migrant women in Berlin during the last eight years. In the first part of the analysis, I will investigate the organization’s beneficiaries and compare it with my former results. In this way I aim to understand how transformations in the general group of LAC migrant women impact and change the group of beneficiaries. In general, the organization opened up in regard to new groups of beneficiaries. In the second part of the analysis, I will therefore concentrate on the organization’s actions of inclusion and exclusion. The third subchapter analyses the organization’s main working approach. Based on the theory of the social movement triad, I will describe Xochiucicatl’s strategies and tactics. In the next subchapter, I aim to understand the organization’s agency. I will apply the ideas of invited and invented spaces of citizenship and the concept of subaltern counterpublics to analyze how the organization can support the women’s coping processes with the system and at the same time enables a place to challenge the system. Taking the organization’s agency into account, I will finally investigate the organization’s response mechanism towards the transformations in the group of beneficiaries.

6.1 The development of the beneficiaries

Before starting the analysis, I shortly want to reflect on the term “beneficiary”. In the analysis, I use the term to describe the women who seek help in the organization. The term is problematic because the relation between the organization and the women is more complex. In some events e.g. discussion rounds the relation is in fact very equal. A discussion of the relation between the organization and the women will be part of the analysis. Nevertheless, for reasons of clarity, I will apply the term beneficiaries. Xochiucicatl calls the beneficiaries “Ratsuchende” (people who seek advice) or simply “Migrantinnen” (migrant women).
Now, I will investigate the organization’s beneficiaries and compare it with my former results:

**Overall contact numbers**

The following chart shows the organization’s contact with the beneficiaries.

![Chart showing contact with beneficiaries](image)

*Figure 8: The organization’s contact with beneficiaries*

The number concerning all uses of project services increases clearly from 2016 to 2017. After that, the growth becomes smaller and the numbers seem to stabilize. The contact personally in the organization shows a clear increase as well from 2016 to 2017. In the year after, the numbers stabilize and then drop from 2018 to 2019. In contrast to that, the contact not-personally in the project still increases.

The development of the beneficiaries mirrors only partly the overall development of LAC migrants in Berlin. Like the overall group of LAC migrants, the number of beneficiaries increases. Nevertheless, the number of overall migrants continues to grow steadily, whereas the organization’s number of beneficiaries seem to stabilize. This development might indicate that the capacities of the organization are exhausted, and it cannot include new beneficiaries. Another explanation can be that the new groups of migrants either do not know about the organization or are not in a situation of need.³

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³ When I presented the thesis in the organization, one of its members added important aspects: She explained that during the last years migrant groups organized themselves more and established new organizations. Moreover, other NGOs and social organizations included more Spanish speaking personal to support migrants from LAC and Spain.
**Country of origin**

Almost all the organization’s beneficiaries are migrant women. During the period, the group of beneficiaries transformed due to new migration and refugee movements: In general, the organization experienced an increase of women migrating from Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, and Portugal). Many of these cases are LAC women who first move to Southern Europe and then another time onto Germany. At large, almost half of the beneficiaries underwent a second migration. This often means many difficulties and stress for the women as well as for the children.

The organization’s reports mirror the general developments. As explained before, many LAC migrants move to Spain and Portugal because of former colonial relations. During the economic crisis 2008, many of these migrants moved another time onto central and Northern Europe, including Germany (Bayona-i-Carasco et al., 2018). In the same way, Rizzo describes in her study with LAC women that many did not experience the migration as a linear process between two countries, but as several migration acts (Rizzo 2007). As explained earlier, during the last years the access to social security for EU citizens became strongly restricted. These restrictions affected migrants from Southern Europe as well as LAC migrants with Southern European citizenship. The increased help-seeking of Southern European nationals in the organization might be connected to these restrictions. Moreover, the language aspect might play an important role. In the organization Southern European migrants can receive support in their first language.²⁴

Since 2016 the organization reports an increase of women in need from Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, and central America. Xochicuicatl connects this development to economic and political crises in these countries. The European Asylum support office described as well a significant increase in refugees from Venezuela, Colombia and central America (European Asylum Support Office, 2019). The German asylum office, however, does not cover these transformations (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2020). Nevertheless, Berlin’s statistics show a clear increase of Venezuelan and Colombian nationals. Therefore, it might be possible that many refugees do not apply for asylum, but obtain a residence permit through other ways e.g. marriage or a job contract. Another possibility is that the refugees first apply

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²⁴ When I presented the thesis in the organization, one of its members added an important aspect. She explained that in addition to the LAC migrants who move a second time from Southern Europe to Germany, migrant groups from Africa undertake the same step. Especially migrants from former Portuguese colonies e.g. Mozambique but also other African migrant groups move to Southern Europe and then later on to Germany. Because they often learned the Southern European languages, they then seek help in the organization.
for asylum in other countries and then move on to Germany. The organization’s observations of many second migrations support this idea. The increase of women in need from Brazil mirrors the development shown in Berlin’s statistics. Since 2012 the number of Brazilian women doubled (from 3058 to 6130).

Nevertheless, Berlin’s statistics also show a doubling concerning the numbers of residents from Mexico, Costa Rica, and Argentina. The organization’s reports, however, do not mention beneficiaries from these countries in particular. It might be that these nationals either do not know about the organization’s work or are not in a situation of need.

Moreover, Xochicuicatl reports help requests from women in their country of origin. The women often consider a migration and ask regarding visa, residence permits and the overall life in Berlin. This development shows the transnational working scope of the organization (see Pries 2013). In these cases, Xochicuicatl’s support is not limited to the migrant’s arrival, but already starts at the first deliberations which means the very beginning of the migration process.

In 2015 the organization decides to additionally support refugee women outside of the LAC region. In the following years Xochicuicatl opens its rooms for the women and involves them in its activities. Most of the refugee women come from Afghanistan. The organization stated that

„In Anbetracht der aktuellen politischen Situation, geprägt durch eine herausfordernde Zunahme von Flüchtlingen in Berlin, haben wir erkannt, dass auch wir unsere Arbeit an die Gegebenheiten anpassen müssen. Obwohl Flüchtlinge nicht zu unserer direkten Zielgruppe gehören, sind wir gewillt, unsere Erfahrungen in der Arbeit mit sich im Prozess der Integration befindenden Menschen weiterzugeben.“

(We realized, that in the current political situation, marked by a challenging increase of refugees in Berlin, we need to adapt our work to the situation. Although refugees are not our direct target group, we are eager to pass on our work experiences with people who are in the integration process.)

To conclude, the group of beneficiaries strongly mirrors the general migration developments in Berlin. In particular, the group transformed due to migration movements from Southern Europe (including many second migrations from LAC) and refugee movements from Venezuela, Colombia, and central America. This close connection between transformations in the overall group and the group of beneficiaries can be linked to several reasons. On one hand, it can be connected to the organization’s level of prominence in Berlin, on the other hand to the
organization’s integration into the city’s institutional and organizational structures. Additionally, the intertwining between the organization’s members and the overall group might be an important factor. As mentioned above, the organization also gives advice to women in their country of origin who consider migrating. In this way, the organization receives an idea of possible new migration and refugee movements very early on.

Moreover, even developments outside of the immediate target group have an impact. This becomes clear in the support for refugees from other parts of the world.

Future predictions on the development of migration from LAC to Berlin are difficult to make. The state of crisis in some LAC countries and ongoing restrictive US migration policies could further foster the migration flow. Berlin’s statistics support the idea of a continuous increase. Nevertheless, Covid 19 has and will have a big impact on migration. Due to the closed borders, the migration from LAC must have almost equaled zero during the last months. Moreover, Germany or the EU could implement new migration restrictions among others based on medical requirements. The probably upcoming economic crisis, however, might create new migration movements. Especially, new migrations from the Southern European nations which were hit hard by Covid 19, are possible.

**Economic situation**

The chart below shows the employment situation of the organization’s beneficiaries:

![The beneficiaries' employment situation](image)

*Figure 9: The beneficiaries' employment situation*

Since 2015, the number of unemployed women has been steadily decreasing and the number of employed women is increasing gradually. A significant part of the employed women, however,
works in small scale employment (geringfügige Beschäftigung) and mini jobs. Especially from 2015 to 2018 the number of women in precarious working situations rose. The organization states that the precarious working situation of the women is a big issue. Many of the women are poor despite their work and additional aid by the employment agency (jobcenter).

In subchapter 5.1.1, I looked at the precarious working position of migrant women with an intersectional perspective. The precarious work is thereby not a naturally given fact, but the result of various oppressive power structures. To begin with, the women face patriarchal structures in the labor market. Many women work within feminized working places. These are usually characterized by low income, low social status, and a lack of possibility for promotion (Lutz & Amelina, 2017). Additionally, the women are confronted with xenohostile and racial/colonial structures. Especially as migrants from the global south, they face a devaluation of their certificates and work experience (Hernandez 2005; Lidola 2013; Gutiérrez Rodriguez 2015). Moreover, many are in a disadvantaged position because of an insecure legal status. As shown by Berlin’s statistics, slightly more than half of the LAC migrants does not have the German citizenship. Furthermore, Xochicuicatl explained that one part of the beneficiaries does not have a legal residence status. This legal insecurity makes migrants much more vulnerable to exploitation (Morocvasic 1984; Tangeman and Grote 2017). Finally, specific stereotypes have an impact on the women’s position in the labor market. In particular Berlin’s promotion as a multicultural city restricts the women to positions which fit the stereotype of an exoticized, domestic LAC women (Hernandez 2005; Gruner-Domic 2011). All these reasons lead to precarious working conditions primarily in the field of domestic work and care (Hernandez 2005; Lidola 2013).

As the graphic shows, the women become more and more employed, which means they become more and more integrated into the labor market. Nevertheless, as the organization stated, “many women are poor despite their work”. This shows that the issue of many women is not necessarily exclusion from the labor market, but unequal inclusion. The women get integrated into an unequal labor market which builds upon exploitation (Bauder 2006). The aim should hence not be limited to integrate the women, but also to confront oppressive structures within the labor market.

Covid 19 also affects the women’s labor situation. In the course of the pandemic, many people lose their jobs. In response, many governments implement special social security. Migrants, however, are often not covered by these governmental safety nets (Pertek et al., 2020).
Furthermore, women employed in the care sector are at a higher health risk because health and safety guidelines are difficult to enforce (Baldassar et al., 2020).

*Family situation*

Throughout the period (2015-2019), a large proportion of the beneficiaries (over 60%) were mothers of children under the age of 14. Many of them became mothers at a young age. During paternal leave, many women experience isolation.

The big number of mothers is fitting to the age distribution of LAC migrant women. Berlin’s statistics show that half of the group are between 20 to 40 years old. The women either migrated with their children or gave birth in Germany. Nevertheless, the big number of mothers stands in contrast with studies which describe LAC women mostly traveling alone (see Hernandez 2005) and descriptions of maternity in distance (see Amelina and Lutz 2017). The isolation during paternal leave might be connected to the lack of a social network in the new country.

The reports show that the family counseling increased continuously. Many couples have conflicts over language and parenting styles. Furthermore, children experience discrimination in the school and in the kindergarten. These forms of discrimination can be linked to the, particularly since 2015, growing xenohostile tendencies in the German society (Oltmer and Hanewinkel 2017).

The organization reports every year 30-40 cases of domestic violence. As explained in subchapter 5.1.2 the intersectional position of migrant women makes them more vulnerable to domestic abuse. To begin with, many LAC migrant women face an insecure legal status. Berlin’s statistics show that a little more than half of the LAC residents do not have German citizenship. Moreover, the organization states that a part of the beneficiaries does not have a legal residence status. This legal insecurity leads to a greater dependency on the partner; especially in cases when the residence status is connected to the marriage situation (Williams 2010). As depicted in the former chapter, the economic situation of many LAC women is precarious. This financial insecurity further enhances the dependency on the partner. The women’s dependency on the partner makes abuse more likely and complicates to leave the abusive partner (Menjívar and Salcido 2002). Due to the lack of citizenship the women have reduced access to the social system. Moreover, aid which does not take the women’s intersectional experience into account, might not help the women (Crenshaw 1989). Based on these explanations, two main steps are necessary to support the women. Firstly, organizations
and political measures need to be aware of the women’s intersectional position in order to help successfully. Secondly, migration laws which enhance the women’s vulnerability to abuse must be confronted.

The Covid pandemic also has an impact on sexual and gender-based violence. The EU Agency for fundamental rights describes an overall increase in sexual and gender-based violence connected to the pandemic (European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, 2020). Moreover, digital poverty, which means the inability to pay for phone top ups and internet, exclude victims from reaching remote services, Covid 19 information, and social networks. Furthermore, the pandemic can trigger memories of abuse and gender-based violence. Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence compared the pandemic restrictions to those in times of abuse such as enforced isolation and limited freedom (Pertek et al., 2020).

6.2 Expanding the target group: Processes of inclusion and exclusion

Overall, the organization became more inclusive concerning the target group. In 1992 it was established as a LAC women organization. Schwenken describes several reasons for migrants to organize in a multinational way: The facing of similar problems within Germany, similar political issues, a connecting identity (e.g. as foreigners in Germany), a connecting language (often due to colonial enforcements) or structural reasons (if the group of own nationals is too small) (Schwenken 2000). Many of these points led as well to the foundation of Xochicuicatl. The organization’s members described similar problems as migrant women in Germany. Additionally, growing racism brought the women together and arouse the idea of a safe space. The organization should become this safe space and a place to support each other concerning coping and orientation in the new country (Xochicuicatl 2015). Through similar experiences a connecting identity can emerge. This identity might further be strengthened when the dominant society ignores diversity and lumps the women together into one homogenous Latina group. In this way, the women are despite their differences affected by the same stereotypical ascriptions and discrimination. These experiences can then foster a unified counter movement (Okamoto & Mora, 2014). For sure, also the Spanish language played an important role to connect and unify.

In the course of the years, the organization then opened up in relation to women from Spain and Portugal. In 2015 and 2016, Xochicuicatl described its focus to be on Spanish and Portuguese
speaking women from LAC and Europe. In 2015 only 3% of the beneficiaries had another country of origin. In 2017, the organization expanded its focus to include women from Italy and refugee women. In 2018, Xochicuicatl keeps this focus, but additionally declares to be open for women from all over the world. It explains: „Ursprünglich waren unsere Angebote für lateinamerikanische Frauen konzipiert, aber seit den Migrationsbewegungen der letzten Jahre ist die Einrichtung offen für Frauen aus aller Welt.“ (Originally our activities were conceptualized for Latin American women, but due to the recent migration movements, the organization is open to women from all over the world.)

The organization purposefully opened up in relation to country of origin. Moreover, through digital help requests the group of beneficiaries even expanded to women who are not physically present in Berlin. Nevertheless, in relation to other aspects the organization stayed exclusive. Until now the target group does not include non-migrant women nor (migrant) men. In fact, it only opened up along the intersectional position of migrant women.

As explained before, LAC women face a matrix of domination which is marked by patriarchal, xenohostile, and racist/colonial structures. Most of the other migrant women face these structures in the German society. Therefore, they are in a similar multiply disadvantaged position as LAC women. Thus, the organization stayed exclusive towards more privileged groups (men and non-migrant women) and opened up towards similar disadvantaged groups. Because of the similar positioning of other migrant women, the organization can use its experience and expertise to support them. The organization’s function as a meeting place can additionally enhance the women's connection and thus the building of solidarity and resistance against the same oppressive structures. Moreover, some exclusions might be necessary to keep the organization’s safe space.⁵

6.3 The organization’s strategies and tactics

As explained in subchapter 5.2.1, every movement consists of the three elements imagination, strategy, and tactics. The living conditions of the beneficiaries is part of the organization’s imagination. Based on the (imagined) living conditions, the organization implements specific

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⁵ When I presented the thesis in the organization, its members criticized the term “exclusion”. They explained that Xochicuicatl has a focus but is not closed in respect to any group. If a person seeks help in the organization and does not belong to the target group e.g. a migrant man, the organization still supports or at least forwards the person to another organization.
strategies and tactics in order to support the women. In the former subchapter, I described the beneficiaries’ living conditions. Now I want to show the organizations strategies and tactics.

At this point, I want to clarify that it is my understanding of the organization’s work. It is based on the analyzed material, but it is still my presentation and my interpretation of it. The organization’s members might understand their work in a different way. Nevertheless, I hope that my analysis will be useful for reflection and development.

Support to move autonomously in the German system
The first main strategy can be described as “support to move autonomously in the German system”. The organization gives information and support to enable the women to act autonomously in different sectors of the German society. These sectors include health, work, the housing market, the legal system, but also culture and history: To begin with, Xochicuicatl created different events to inform the women about the German health system e.g. on health insurances. In the sector of work, the organization provides regular counseling as well as work related courses, e.g. about entrepreneurship or informatics. In 2017, Xochicuicatl organized two events to inform the women about Berlin’s housing situation and their rights as new citizens of Berlin. Furthermore, the organization provides regular legal counseling as well as specific events to inform, e.g. about the asylum law and specific visas. In most of the years, the organization created events on the German history and culture, such as trips to engage with the history and workshops to get to know the German Christmas celebrations.

Additional to the counseling and information events, the organization accompanies women at institutions and public offices. Xochicuicatl states that the accompaniment clearly increases the success rate.

Another important way to enable the women’s autonomy is through language support. Xochicuicatl describes the German language as a key element to live self-determined in Germany. The reports show that the German courses extend more and more, so support based on different levels becomes possible.

Support in respect to the family/partnership
The next main strategy is support in terms of family and partnership. The organization provides regular family counseling. In 2017, it additionally implemented counseling especially for
mothers with children between 0 and 7 years of age. Moreover, the reports show further events related to issues such as family conflicts, maternity, and divorce.

Over the years the organization created courses and events as well for children. In the beginning these included courses such as dancing, music, or face painting. Over time the focus, however, changed: The courses started targeting primarily girls (in 2018: 90% were girls; in 2019: 100%). Moreover, the activities started to be more concentrated on the fields of education (e.g. private tutoring in English and Math) and on the fields of exchange (e.g. discussion rounds only for girls).

Social counseling and psychosocial counseling
The organization offers regularly social and psychosocial counseling.

Exchange and community
The organization aims to provide a space for the women to come together and to exchange experiences. Over the period, Xochicuicatl organizes regular meetings for cooking and drinking coffee. Some of the meetings target specific groups such as pregnant women or parents. Since 2017 it additionally has meeting points for refugee women. Furthermore, the organization established some leisure groups e.g. a choir and a gardening group.

Self-awareness and self-care
One important focus of the organization is the women’s mental and physical health. Xochicuicatl aims to support the women with issues of stress and isolation. The reports show over the years different sport courses, meditation, and health workshops. Some of them are directed towards specific groups such as elderly or pregnant women. Moreover, the organization established some self-help groups. Some of the courses had thereby a more creative approach e.g. theater or writing workshops.

Self-awareness and activism
Another strategy is self-awareness and activism. Xochicuicatl works on topics such as right-wing populism, gender-based hostility, feminism and ecology, and gender-based violence. The reports show the establishment of feminist discussion rounds, and events/ courses in relation to
gender-based violence. Some of the events specifically target girls. Moreover, over the period Xochicuicatl organized events on Latin American culture and politics. Since 2017 the organization takes part in demonstrations.

Lectures and conferences
Over the period Xochicuicatl gave lectures at other organizations/institutions and participated in conferences. The topics included migration and mental health or gender-based violence.

In general, the dynamic between the organization and its beneficiaries varies widely depending on certain strategies and tactics. In the strategies *Support to move autonomously in the German system, Support in respect to the family/partnership* and *Social counseling and psychosocial counseling* the dynamic is one between a supporter and a beneficiary. The supporter gives information and advice in certain fields and the beneficiary takes the information and tries to apply it. In other strategies the dynamic is more equal. These include *Exchange and community, Self-awareness, and Self-care* and partly *Self-awareness and activism*. In the frame of leisure activities, self-help groups and feminist discussion rounds, the beneficiaries become equal contributors. In this respect, the term “beneficiary” actually does not fit anymore. Finally, in relation to *lectures and conferences* and political events such as demonstrations, the relation is more between the organization and the wider public. Nevertheless, probably often in advocacy for the beneficiaries.

6.4 The organization’s agency
Like other organizations, Xochicuicatl operates within invited and invented spaces of citizenship. As explained in subchapter 5.2.3, invited spaces of citizenship are provided by the system. In these spaces, people work mainly on coping mechanisms in order to survive the oppressive system (Miraftab 2004). The organization’s support concerning the German system is a clear example of action in invited spaces. Xochicuicatl informs the women about different sectors of the German society. In this way the women can understand how the system works, they learn how to deal with it and how to survive it. The work in invited spaces is, I argue, connected to processes of integration. Through learning how to move and to cope with a system, people integrate into the system. Nevertheless, they integrate into an unequal system. They
integrate into a system which disadvantages them. The work within invited spaces of citizenship increases the coping, the survivability, however, it does not change the unequal system itself.

The establishment of self-help groups and discussion rounds are also actions within invited spaces of citizenship. In these groups the women can exchange experiences and find together ways on how to cope with the system. Nevertheless, the groups can as well be places where new spaces of citizenship are invented, and resistance is formed.

I understand the organization’s spaces thereby as subaltern counterpublics. As mentioned earlier, subaltern counterpublics function as places of withdrawal and regrouping, but also as places where resistance can be formed (Fraser 1990). Xochicuicatl organizes many spaces for exchange and discussion. Some of them target particular groups such as pregnant women, girls, or refugee women. These places function to regroup, exchange experiences and develop coping strategies. Nevertheless, through exchange the women can become aware of oppressive structures, share solidarity, do liberatory theory and invent new spaces of citizenship i.e. to engage in resistance. These acts of resistance are then shown in events targeting issues such as gender-based or racist violence and in the engagement in protests.

The described subaltern counterpublic is marked by liberating discussion. In her theory, Fraser also focuses on the discursive dimension of subaltern counterpublics. The organization’s work, however, shows an additional dimension: A subaltern counterpublic in relation to the body and identity. Bodies and societal structures are not separated from each other, they are entangled. Bodies move along societal norms. They are being positioned, controlled, and straightened out in order to reinscribe the normative social order (Ahmed, 2007). The LAC women’s bodies and identities are both oppressed and devalued in the society; oppressed in relation to their gender and their race. Xochicuicatl created several courses and events in the field of self-care and self-awareness. These include courses on meditation and mindfulness, astrology and self-knowledge or different forms of yoga. These courses constitute a safe space to cope and deal with stress. At the same time, the women can explore and become aware of the body and the identity and of the oppressive structures against it. Moreover, the practices and the reflections can enable the women to revalue and to start freeing their bodies and identities from oppressive structures. This step becomes clear in one of the women’s courses called “decolonizing the body”. The feminist Collins describes acts of self-definition and self-valuation as important acts of resistance (Collins, 1991). The courses can function as places of self-awareness, self-definition, and self-valuation and therefore as places of resistance.
6.5 The organization’s response to transformations

Xochicuicatl responded to transformations in the group of LAC women and new groups of beneficiaries in different ways and different spaces of citizenship:

In respect to invited spaces of citizenship, the organization responded to the transformations in two ways. First, it included new women into already existing support structures: The reports show that many of the organization’s strategies and tactics do not target a specific group (e.g. in relation to country of origin) but migrant women in general. New help-seeking women can therefore be easily included in the activities.

Second, the organization established courses and events targeting the new beneficiaries in particular. Xochicuicatl described a clear increase in help-seeking women from Southern Europe. In 2016 it started in cooperation with other organizations a project called “Angekommen – llegué – arrivato – chegued und dann?”. The project aims to advice and support migrant women from the European Union. The counseling is thereby available in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian.

In view of the refugee situation 2015, the organization decided to support refugee women and include them in its activities. Hence, the organization established a special working group to create and implement projects with and for female refugees. The reports show information events concerning the asylum law and specific meeting points for refugee women.

Moreover, the organization seems to respond to new needs due to societal change such as Berlin’s housing crisis and the gentrification processes. In 2015 it provided language support (Sprachvermittlung) in precarious housing situations. Additionally, in 2017 it arranged two events concerning the rights as new Berlin citizens and concerning the housing situation.

The organization responded to changes as well in invented spaces of citizenship. As explained earlier, the situation of the women is marked by patriarchal, xenohostile, and colonial/racist structures. In the aftermath of 2015, xenohostile and right-wing tendencies further strengthened in Germany (Oltmer and Hanewinkel 2017). Over the period the organization seems to concentrate more and more on political education and protest. In 2018, Xochicuicatl stated to specifically focus on right-wing populism in its events. In the same way, the focus on feminism strengthened. In 2019, the organization declared the development of feminist theory and practice a major annual theme. Additionally, the feminist focus started including activities with girls.
Nevertheless, the organization is not a fixed unit which only responds to transformations in the target group. The organization and the group of LAC migrant women are entangled. So, if the group transforms, the organization’s body transforms as well. Some of the new migrants might bring in new resources and expertise which can complement and extend the organization’s activities. Furthermore, the new women become part of the subaltern counterpublic and equal contributors in exchange and discussion rounds.
7. Conclusion

In the first part of the conclusion, I will summarize the main results of my analysis. In the second part I will reflect and discuss my methodological approach. In each part, I will successively repose my initial research questions, explain how I answered them, and then present the key findings.

7.1 Summary of analysis

My first research question was:

*What are the main characteristics of the LAC migrant women group in Berlin and how is it transforming due to new migration movements?*

I answered the question mainly through secondary research. I worked with academic literature on migration between LAC and Germany, and with studies in respect to the situation of LAC migrant women. In addition to that, I analyzed statistics from the municipality of Berlin.

The current migration movements between LAC and Germany are connected to former colonial relations and century long migration flows between the continents. Overall, the group of LAC migrants in Germany is very heterogeneous. This is due to the diversity of the LAC region and a result of the various different migration movements. The biggest group of LAC migrants comes from Brazil, followed by residents from Colombia, Mexico, and Chile. Many of the migrants experience multiple migrations. In respect to gender, the data shows slightly more female than male LAC migrants. The gender relation is thereby almost equal in respect to most of the nationalities. Half of the LAC migrant women is between 20 and 40 years old. Children make up ca. one quarter of the total group.

Important impacts which shape the current migration movements include a general demographic growth in the LAC region, the economic crisis 2008, the shift in US-American migration policy, the state of crisis in some LAC countries, and the situation around Covid 19. In general, the group of LAC migrants was growing due to new migration and refugee movements. This increase differed from country to country. The number of residents from Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Mexico doubled since 2012. Other groups stayed almost equal over the years. These tendencies, however, might be strongly impacted by the current pandemic. Due to the closed borders, the migration from LAC must have almost equaled zero during the last months. The uncertainty of the pandemic also makes future
predictions difficult. The state of crisis in some LAC countries and persistently restrictive US migration policies could further foster the migration flow. In addition to that, the probably due to the pandemic upcoming economic crisis might create new migration movements. Nevertheless, the borders towards most non-EU countries are still closed. Moreover, the EU and Germany could implement new migration restrictions among others based on medical requirements.

My second research question was:

What are the main characteristics of the women who seek help in the organization and how is the group changing?

I responded this research question mainly through the analysis of the organization’s reports. In this regard, I used the theory of intersectionality to better understand the women’s situation. Following that, I compared my results on the beneficiaries with the information on the overall group of LAC migrants.

The organization’s number of beneficiaries grew a lot between 2016 and 2017. Since then the numbers seem to stabilize. In contrast to that, the overall group of LAC migrants continues to grow steadily. This development might indicate that the capacities of the organization are exhausted, and it cannot include new beneficiaries. Another possible explanation is that the current groups of migrants either do not know about the organization or are not in a situation of need. At the presentation of my thesis, one of the organization’s members added another important aspect: She explained that during the last years migrant groups organized themselves more and set up new organizations. Moreover, other NGOs and social organizations included more Spanish speaking personal to support migrants from LAC and Spain.

In general, the group of beneficiaries mirrors very much the overall migration developments in Berlin. In particular, the group transformed due to migration movements from Southern Europe (including many second migrations from LAC) and refugee movements from Venezuela, Colombia, and central America. Moreover, Xochicuicatl reports help requests from women in their country of origin. This development shows the transnational working scope of the organization. In addition to that, Xochicuicatl started including refugee women.
In the course of time, the organization becomes more inclusive concerning the country of origin. Nevertheless, in respect to other categories such as (migrant) men and non-migrant women it stayed exclusive. In fact, it only opened up along the intersectional position of migrant women.

Since 2015, the number of unemployed beneficiaries decreases continuously, and the number of employed women increases gradually. A significant part of the employed women, however, works in small scale employment (geringfügige Beschäftigung) and mini jobs. The precarious work is thereby not a naturally given fact, but the result of patriarchal, xenohostile, and racist/colonial power structures. The organization explains that many women are poor despite their work. This shows that the issue of many women is not necessarily exclusion from the labor market, but unequal inclusion. The women become integrated into an unequal labor market which builds upon exploitation.

During the period of analysis, a big part of the beneficiaries (over 60%) were mothers of children under 14 years. Many of them became mothers at a young age. During paternal leave, the women often experience isolation. Furthermore, the reports show a continuous increase in family counseling. Many couples have conflicts over language and parenting styles. Moreover, children experience discrimination in the school and in the kindergarten.

The organization reports every year 30-40 cases of domestic violence. The intersectional position of migrant women makes them more vulnerable to domestic abuse. In addition to that, the pandemic leads to an increase in sexual and gender-based violence.

My third research question was:

What are the dynamics of inner-outer interplay between the organization Xochicuicatl, the beneficiaries and the overall group of LAC migrant women in Berlin?

I addressed this question through an analysis of the organization’s reports. I organized the analysis thereby along the theory of the social movement triad, that is, along the categories imagination, strategy, and tactics. In order to understand the organization’s agency, I further applied the concepts of invited and invented spaces of citizenship and the notion of subaltern counterpublics. Taking the organization’s agency into account, I finally investigated the organization’s response mechanism towards transformations in the group of beneficiaries.

The organization’s main strategies are Support to move autonomously in the German system, Support in respect to the family/partnership, Social counseling and psychosocial counseling,
Giving a space for exchange and community, Activities in the field of self-awareness and self-care, Activities in the field of self-awareness and activism, and finally Lectures and conferences.

In general, the dynamic between the organization and its beneficiaries varies widely depending on certain strategies and tactics. In some strategies e.g. Support to move autonomously in the German system the dynamic is one between a supporter and a beneficiary. The supporter gives information and advice in certain fields and the beneficiary takes the information and tries to apply it. In other strategies e.g. Exchange and community the dynamic is more equal, and the beneficiaries become contributors as well. Finally, in relation to Lectures and conferences and political events such as demonstrations the relation is foremost between the organization and the wider public. Nevertheless, probably often in advocacy for the beneficiaries.

Like other organizations, Xochicuicatl operates within invited and invented spaces of citizenship. The organization’s support concerning the German system is a clear example of action in invited spaces. Xochicuicatl informs the women about different sectors of the German society. In this way the women can understand how the system works, they learn how to deal with it and how to survive it.

The establishment of self-help groups and discussion rounds are also actions within invited spaces of citizenship. In these groups the women can exchange experiences and find together ways on how to cope with the system. Nevertheless, the groups can as well lead to the invention of new spaces of citizenship. I understand the organization’s spaces thereby as subaltern counterpublics. The spaces function to regroup, exchange experiences and develop coping strategies. Through the exchange, however, the women can become aware of oppressive structures, share solidarity, do liberatory theory and invent new spaces of citizenship i.e. to engage in resistance.

In addition to these discursive counterpublics, the organization shows another dimension: A subalter counterpublic in relation to the body and identity. Xochicuicatl provides several courses and events in the field of self-care and self-awareness. These courses constitute a safe space to cope and deal with stress. At the same time, the women can explore and become aware of the body and the identity and of the oppressive structures against it. Moreover, the practices and the reflections can enable the women to revalue and to start freeing their bodies and identities from oppressive structures.

The organization responded in several ways to transformations in the group of beneficiaries. The responses can thereby be divided into invited and invented spaces of citizenship. In the
space of invited citizenship, the organization included new beneficiaries either in already existing support structures or created new courses targeting the new beneficiaries. One example of this process is the establishment of a project focusing on new Southern European migrants: Xochicuicatl described a clear increase in help-seeking women from Southern Europe. In 2016 it started in cooperation with other organizations a project called “Angekommen – llegué – arrivato – chegúe und dann?”. The project aims to advice and support especially migrant women from the European Union. The counseling is thereby available in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian.

In addition to that, Xochicuicatl responded to changes in invented spaces of citizenship. Over time, the organization seems to concentrate more and more on political education and protest. In 2018, Xochicuicatl declared to specifically focus on right-wing populism in its events. In the same way, the focus on feminism strengthened. In 2019, the organization described the development of feminist theory and practice as a major annual theme. Additionally, the feminist focus started including activities with girls.

Since the organization and the group of LAC migrants are entangled, the organization’s body itself transforms through new migration movements. Some of the new migrants might bring in new resources and expertise which can complement and expand the organization’s activities. Furthermore, the new women become part of the subaltern counterpublic and equal contributors in exchange and discussion rounds.

My analysis shows Xochicuicatl’s work in a detailed way. Based on that, I want to return to my discussion concerning German academics and the topic of migrant organizations. I criticized how German scholars portray migrant organizations. In particular, I pointed out the narrow definition on what is political. Since for oppressed groups the personal is almost always political, I demanded that the work of the organizations must be understood in the context of an oppressive society. My applied theories helped me to see the organization in a politicized way. The framing of the organization’s space as a subaltern counterpublic was crucial to see the relation between invited spaces (coping) and invented spaces (resistance) of citizenship. It made clear how activities for exchange and discussion are not only about talking and sharing information, but are crucial to become aware of oppressive structures, to do liberatory theory and to engage in resistance. Along this line, I argue that migrant organizations are crucial for subaltern groups to gain a voice. Furthermore, courses on meditation and self-awareness are not only about coping with stress, but also make aware of oppressive structures against the body and identity and can lead to ways of self-valuation and self-definition, which are in an
oppressive society acts of resistance. Based on these arguments, I demand researchers to see migrant organization in a politicized way and their actions connected to the struggle in an oppressive society.

In addition to that, I criticized how scholars engage with migrant organizations. I argued that researchers should stop seeing migrant organizations in a suspicious way investigating their value for the dominant part of society. Instead, they should take their side and seek ways on how to support them in their struggle. In my thesis I depicted several ways on how to do solidarity research with organizations. In the next subchapter, I will critically conclude my own approach.

7.2 Methodological conclusions
The main methodological question of my project was: “How can I, as an academic, support a migrant organization in its struggle?

I argued that rather than following own imaginations how research might support oppressed groups, academics should engage with groups and base the research on their articulated interests. Oppressed groups should know best what they need and how research can help them. Moreover, they should be the ones most benefiting from liberative knowledge production.

I created my thesis project along these reflections: I engaged with the organization Xochicuicatl and discussed how research might support them. Following this, I developed the research aim and questions. During the research, I tried to keep the organization updated and tried to give space for possible changes. In the end of the project, I provided a summary of my thesis as well as a list of interesting literature, which I both presented in the organization.

While pursuing my research plan, I became aware of the importance to take my own positionality into account. As a researcher I am not a blank-space-academic-tool executing the organization’s research ideas. I have my own positionality which influences the research project. In this way, it is also my responsibility to reflect on my positionality and find ways to deal with the different power structures that exist between me and the organization. I tried to mitigate these structures mainly through the ideas of transversalism, transparency and openness to change.
The dedication of academic work towards oppressed groups leads to questioning and reorienting parts of academia. To begin with, the usefulness of the produced knowledge becomes more important. In this way, the research process becomes more practice and solution oriented. Moreover, the writing in an exclusive academic manner no longer makes sense, as people outside academia to whom the research is dedicated would not be able to read it. In general, academic success becomes defined by the dominant system: The academic elite is doing peer review, and quantifiable capitalist standards connect success with the possible commodification of the produced knowledge. If, instead of the dominant system, oppressed groups are responsible for defining research success, this order is turned upside down. Finally, the whole commodification of knowledge becomes questioned because those to whom the knowledge is directed might not be able to afford it.

Apart from these reflections, my thesis made another important point concerning knowledge production: I argue that knowledge production is not exclusive for the academic field. Organizations and movements are important spaces for liberative knowledge production. In this way, also new spaces of citizenship can emerge and ways how to resist against dominant structures become visible.
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