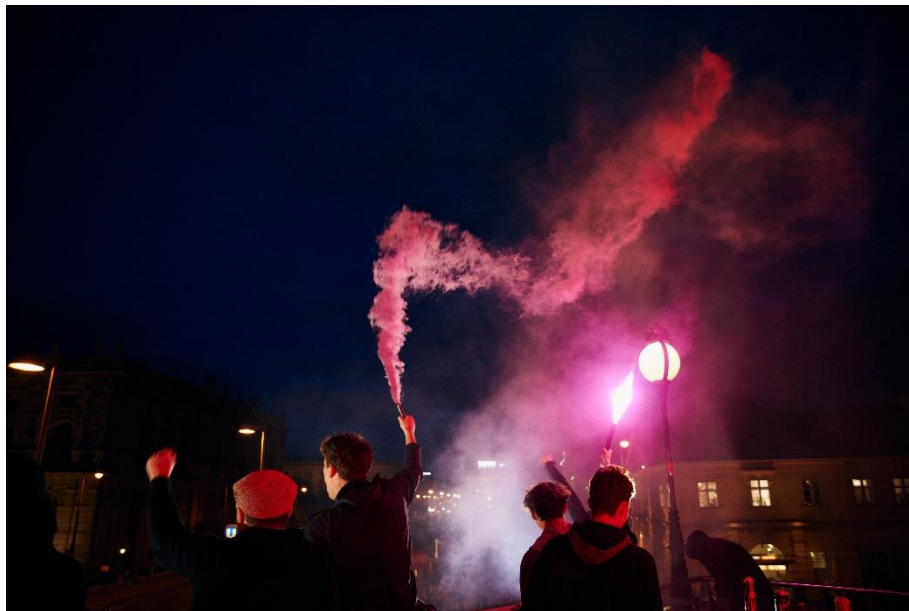


# **THE REVOLUTION OF DANCE**

## **REASONS FOR THE NON-ERUPTION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE COURSE OF RESISTANCE AGAINST A FASCIST GOVERNMENT IN A WESTERN DEMOCRACY**



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### I.)a) Introduction of topic

*“The Thursday-demonstrations are part of the narrative of the FPÖ-ÖVP coalition: anyone who thinks of it, automatically thinks of the resistance against it as well” (Interviewee 4)*

The matter of subject which will be studied in the course of this thesis are the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria. Apart from touching upon what they are and how they have developed, a special emphasis will be given to why violent conflict did not erupt in this case. Despite the notion that Austria seems to be what one of the interviewees called a “latent fascist country” (Interview 4) and “traditionally has a strong right-winged scene” (Interview 7), the success of right-winged ideologies as well as politicians who have adopted these belief systems in Austria in 2018/2019 was quite shocking to some. Despite the country’s dark historical past including the holocaust, a coalition between the right-winged extremist Freedom-Party (FPÖ) and the conservative party (ÖVP) has been officially voted for twice within this millennium. Whereas Austria might therefore have set an example for an increased tolerance of right-winged tendencies in Europe, it has been stated that Europe has been (politically) different (Interview 4) during the first FPÖ-ÖVP coalition in the 2000’s. Even though the shock-moment has been way more intense last time (Interview 10), the outcome of the last elections in the Western democracy of Austria in 2018 did, indeed, also lead to the outrage of some locals.

The response to these elections could perhaps be explained by significance theory. It has been shown that when people experienced loss of significance they were more willing to sacrifice for the political cause (Dugas et al., 2016 in Jasko et al. 2019:316). Due to interviewees having emphasized the importance of knowing that they are not alone (Interviews 1,2,4,5,7,8), I would argue that a notion of a loss of significance could have been true for some individuals. This might therefore implicate that they somewhat do not feel like their voices are being heard in the political context as well as perceiving the quantity of people who disagree with the right-winged ideologies of the government as few. Additionally, due to scientific research, those who experienced loss of significance not only tend to have more extreme political views (Webber et al., 2018 in Jasko et al. 2019:316) but, being especially crucial to this thesis, are more likely to engage in violent actions on behalf of their ideological beliefs (Jasko, LaFree, & Kruglanski, 2017 in Jasko et al. 2019:316).

Furthermore, the Thursday-demonstrations are organized by a group of private people rather than an organization or a political party (Interviews 8, 9,10) and it has previously been argued that grassroots activism provides a pathway to radicalism (Cross & Snow 2012:126). Taking all the aforementioned points in consideration, one might have expected radical or actually even violent forms of resistance in the very recent case of the Austrian ÖVP-FPÖ-coalition. Whereas historically speaking, left-winged extremist groups such as the RAF might come to mind, and due to the given circumstances and the general political climate in Austria a formation of a similar form of organization would probably not have been too surprising, nothing even close to that seems to have evolved. Somewhat following up on an important complication already raised by Marx, who has questioned why members of a group who “should” revolt when history provides the “objective conditions” for revolt often fail to do so (Tarrow 2012:9-10) and going along with Tilly & Tarrow’s recommendation to do research on

what they call “oceans of apathy”, namely, why people who have the right to resist sit on their hands (Tilly & Tarrow 2015:233), this thesis aims to explore the non-occurrence of more radical or even violent ways of resistance as a reaction to the fascist government in Austria in 2018-2019.

### **I.)b) Significance and objectives**

Therefore, this thesis appears to be a relevant addition to the academic debate within the study of contentious politics as it tries to contribute to filling the theoretical gap of understanding the aforementioned apathy and lack of violent means of resistance within a democratic system which, drawing on what is known as “political opportunity structure” (Benford & Snow 2000:628; Neidhardt & Rucht 2010:24; Tilly 1999:93), seems to provide the perfect conditions. This research can be situated within the theoretical framework of contentious politics which is a sub-category of social movement theory and significant for the study of violent conflict (Demmers 2017:85).

Another way in which this thesis could perhaps be relevant is to follow up on a statement made by Cross and Snow. They claimed that, whereas radicality is persistent within social movements, only little is known about the factors that lead to radicalization (see: Cross & Snow 2012:116). Adding to their explanation of processes and types of radicalism (see: Cross & Snow 2012:116), it might be worth to look at factors that prevent radicalism from happening. A suggestion for what could indeed play into the non-development of radical actions in some cases is tried to be made by this very small case study of Austria. However, the objective of this thesis is not only to build theory in a sense of elaborating contributing factors for a lack of violent resistance but also to give voice to those who do in fact antagonize against the government, a certain kind of politics and social norms with peaceful means by trying to understand and explain their views on why they choose this form of counteraction.

Furthermore, in the search of an explanation for the lack of violence, the eventual creation of a particular environment by the government should be considered by looking at framing in public discourse. In order to find answers to that specific matter, two sub-questions were posed in this regard and the subject will briefly be touched upon in the course of this thesis.

### **I) c) Research Puzzle**

Following up on the statements mentioned by Jasko et al. as above (Jasko et al. 2019:316), my research puzzle is as follows:

Despite activists who experienced a loss of significance and aroused from grass-root activism having the tendency to engage in radical and even violent actions, why does political violence not occur in the case of the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria in 2018-2019?

The Sub-questions leading up to the answers included the following:

- What are the goals of the Thursday-demonstrations intended by individual protestors (relating to Conflict Behaviour)? / What exactly do activists want to achieve with their actions?

- How do the ideologies/beliefs/values of the demonstrators shape the form of the demonstrations?
- What are the collective claims that are being made through the Thursday demonstrations (relating to Contentious politics)?
- How are the protests and the protestors framed in public discourse in Austria?
- What kind of environment has the Austrian government created in order to give counter-voices space to express their opinion(s)?

#### **l) d) Methodology**

In order to get the closest to answering the questions that have been risen as much in-depth as possible rather than on a quantitative scale, an ethnographic approach has been chosen. In fact, three different methods have been triangulated, namely literature research, participant observation and the conduct of semi-structured interviews. Literature research is obviously necessary in order to get to know what is being discussed within the academic debate as well as to get a feel for the context and fathom some basics. Interviewing and participant observation are not only both key methods of anthropological research but also make a great combination in order to get as close to the social reality as possible: the findings of both can be compared and therefore cross-checked, which is hoped to lead to an accumulation of data and a broader analysis as well as contributes to the validity of the research. Semi-structured interviews have open-ended questions and can involve supplementary questions relating to the answers and are conducted more as a conversation with a more egalitarian relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Skinner 2012:8). I have chosen these as they allow me to emphatically react to the interview partners and because I believe that an egalitarian conversation will show better results than a standardized interview with a strict guideline. The latter could possibly be perceived as authority of the interviewer by the interviewee and might subsequently run danger to cause a bias or perhaps even a distortion of data.

Ever since Clifford Geertz's "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1983), participant observation has been considered as even more crucial to ethnographic research. DeWalt & DeWalt described participant observation as both a data collection and an analytical tool by arguing that first, it enhances the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork and second, it enhances the quality of the interpretation of data, whether those data are collected through participant observation or by other methods (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:10). In addition, participant observation is also slightly related to Action Anthropology, which the inventor of the term (see: Tax 1975:514) defines as the syndrome where peoples of radically different cultures are in contact, with a relatively small community under pressure of a power-laden larger society which has technical and political advantages (Tax 1975:515). In view of this, I have on top of simple participation also engaged in a few organizational activities regarding the peaceful Thursday-demonstrations in Austria. Even though the protestors in Austria can probably not be considered as having a "radically different culture" in comparison to the (ex-)rulers of the country, the researcher would argue that the group of demonstrators can be seen as a small

community under pressure of a power-laden larger society, namely all the voters and sympathizers of the parties in power, as well as obviously the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition itself.

In the course of this research, 10 interview partners have been spoken to. The sample of respondents consisted of two people who are part of the organization-team of the Thursday-demonstrations in Vienna (Interviews 3,10) , two photographers of the Thursday-demonstrations in Vienna who are also considered as part of the team (Interviews 4,6), two individuals who are partially involved by for example creating and distributing banners (Interviews 1,7), one person who was asked to participate in the organization-team of the Thursday-demonstrations in Vienna but refused (Interview 9), one individual who organized the Thursday-demonstration in Amstetten (Interview 8) and two people who mainly simply participated in the Thursday-demonstrations in Vienna by walking along with the crowd and setting a sign that way (Interviews 2,5). The reason for the choice of informants was that I tried to shed light on the issue from different perspectives. A photographer is for example rather an observant in the situation (Interviews 4,6) whereas others, who for instance participate in performative political actions, seem to have a riskier role. Furthermore, I consider it as important to include viewpoints from within the organization-team as well as those of participants of the demonstration itself. Apart from that, I tried to include the perspective of organizers/participants of Thursday-demonstrations in other Austrian cities. However, due to the short time frame and a limitation of capacities, unfortunately only one interview could be conducted in this regard (Interview 8).

My first personal involvement was a performative political action on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019, which took place only two days after I had entered the country and was sort of a consequence of a long, informal conversation with a friend on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. From then on, I tried to vary the type of my own engagement, for example by acting as a marshal (18<sup>th</sup> April 2019), putting up banners previously to the demonstrations itself (weekly ever since the beginning of May 2019), selling merchandise (24<sup>th</sup> April 2019) or even having the full responsibility for the organization and implementation of political activist actions in the course of the demonstration (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019). It is rather challenging to state my exact time in the field. As I was based in Vienna and kept following the political situation as well as the topics that were risen at the demonstrations, I was in a certain sense in the field all the time. However, the time that I have spent at field-sites in a sense of participant observation at the demonstrations, attending meetings and events, conducting interviews, organizational stuff, planning political actions, writing fieldnotes, following recent political developments etc., mostly added up to a multitude of hours per day, despite some days that I took off for myself. In addition, I had informal conversations with Austrians who sympathize, some who antipathize and some who conveyed the impression not to care at all. I felt like my whole life circled almost solely around political activism and resistance during that time of my research. In accordance with that, it might be worth to mention that the author of this thesis speaks the local language, grew up in Austria and additionally considers herself as a political activist. Therefore, quite a lot of context has already automatically been given ever since this research has been conceptualized, which is hoped to contribute to a better understanding of the local

political sentiment, the answers given by the interviewees and subsequently the outcome of the analysis and the findings.

However, the research is unfortunately quite limited when it comes to the number of respondents which was a result of a rather narrow timeframe. Apart from that, it would have been ideal if all the Thursday-demonstrations could have been participated in ever since their beginning, which, unfortunately, was not feasible for the researcher as she was out of the country when they started. Another potential limitation could be that, as the investigator is Austrian herself, she is emotionally caught by its politics and on top of that has very strong opinions herself, which she tried to mitigate as much as she could in the course of the present research. Nonetheless, due to the methodology followed and her intimate knowledge of the context, she believes that her research is still valid and reliable.

### **l) e) Brief introduction of the Thursday-demonstrations**

In the 2000's as well as in 2018/2019, Austria had a government consisting of a coalition between the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the conservative people's party (ÖVP). The fact of a right-winged extremist party (FPÖ) partially ruling the country led – then and now – to a specific form of resistance deriving from the non-agreement as well as a critical mindset towards the government from a part of the Austrian society: the Thursday-demonstrations. Following up on Tilly & Tarrow's definition of a social movement campaign as a sustained challenge to power holders, in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders, by means of concerted public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and press releases (Tilly & Tarrow 2015:246), the Thursday-demonstrations can be labelled as such. Even though the current Thursday-demonstrations in Austria seem to be a revival of the 2000's, significant changes occurred: the demonstrations augmented politicizing the participants (Interview 10) by providing people with a stage whom usually do not have the privilege of being listened to (Interviews 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). They therefore gave them the right to speak (Lewis 2017:25) which relates to Foucault's hierarchization of knowledge (Foucault in Lewis 2017:26) and subsequently provide an educational aspect to the protestors (Interview 1). As one respondent has stated, she considers it as important to make use of one's own structural power position as to give voice to others (Interview 2). That, indeed, is significantly tried to be done in the course of the Thursday-demonstrations: there is a policy of having at least 75% women and 30 % People of Color (POC) or people with a migrant background on the stage (Interview 10). Apart from that every week has another topic (Interviews 1,2,9; observation) and another route which is chosen in relation to the topic (Interview 1; observation). Whereas E-Mails (Interview 8) and a website (Interview 10) have essentially been used to mobilize people in the 2000's, it's now primarily social media (Interviews 1, 9, 10), while in both cases individuals also orally mobilized their friends and acquaintances (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10). Furthermore, Tilly's description of participants and observers drawing on previous experiences and making selective references to shared memories (Tilly 1999:272) seems to occur among protestors who have participated in both

years referring to their memories (Interviews 1, 8, 10) as well as a positive narrative and collective memories of the current demonstrations (Interview 4). The organization-team of the latter seem to be successful not only in the Tilly-an sense of making new models of performances available to other potential actors (Tilly 1999:98) but also due to being praised by participants for their skills (Interview 1) and creativity (Interview 9).

During the ÖVP-FPÖ government in the 2000's Europe used to be entirely different (Interview 4). It seemed to be an exception and a shocking news back then, and even Austrians themselves thought that it was just an "accident" which can and will be restored very soon (Interview 10). In fact, there was a EU dogma in place that no right-winged extremist parties are to rule, which is why, back then, Austria was almost excluded from the EU (Interview 10). This, indeed, is one of the reasons that motivated the activists: their thought was that if even the EU sets actions, they definitely have to do something as well (Interview 10). However, nowadays, the political turn to right-winged ideologies conveys the impression to be present all-over Western Europe. Openly fascist parties such as the AfD ("Alternative für Deutschland" in Germany) or PVV ("Partij voor de Vrijheid" in the Netherlands) gain votes and seem to shift the general political climate to the right. One respondent even stated that Haider (a known Austrian right-winged extremist politician who used to be the leader of the Freedom-Party in the 2000's) basically showed "how it works" (Interview 7); in other words, he demonstrated how to manipulate people into believing in right-winged ideologies and therefore create success for his party. Haider was an outstanding political talent and knew how to use rhetorical and political techniques (Interview 7) in order to manipulate people into following him. The interviewee therefore somewhat implicated that the political success of right-winged parties in Western Europe might derive from Haider having acted as a role model (Interview 7). Western Europe's tendency to shift to the right therefore also influences the perception of the level of tragedy of the success of right-winged parties: it's simply not even a surprise anymore. Furthermore, the further the shift moves, the less actually extremist things are perceived as such. In connection with that and taking discourse analysis in consideration, one can currently observe tragical things in Austria. One of several examples is the speech of the vice mayor of Braunau: in a public statement he openly compared immigrants to rats. This can be strongly related to the writings of German philologist Victor Klemperer, who described the changing of wording in the Third Reich and how it severely affected people's minds (see: Demmers 2017:116). He stated that words can be like doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after some time the toxic reaction sets in after all (Klemperer 2000 [1947]: 30-1, translation JD in Demmers 2017:116). Therefore, following Klemperer's suggestion, what might have potential to happen in Austria subsequently to this language development is extremely worrisome. In order to create a counter-discourse, even something close to what could potentially be called a "label" has evolved in the course of the Thursday-demonstrations: the so-called "do!". "Do!", apart from its obvious English meaning, not only is the shortcut of the German word "Donnerstag" (which means Thursday) but also means "here" in Austrian German. "Wir sind do!" therefore means "we are here!" as well as "We are Thursday!" in a sense of "We are the Thursday-demonstrations". Furthermore,



specific claims have consciously been associated with the Thursday-demonstrations, an example being “fix zam” which means something along the lines of “we stand together for sure” in the local language. The latter, even though in its original meaning mostly referring to a specific status of a romantic relationship, has therefore become a political statement and acts as a counter-discourse to the dividing political frames of the government.

## **II. Reasons for the non-eruption of violent conflict in the course of the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria**

As already briefly mentioned further above, this thesis mainly focuses on the exploration of potential factors mitigating the eruption of violent conflict in the frame of resistance against a fascist government in a Western democracy.

Before diving deeper into the subject, it might be worth minding the necessity of taking the different perceptions on and of radicality. This relates to Cross & Snow’s statement that radicalism and radicals are often defined by their context (2012:116). Whereas Cross defines radicalism as the practice of high-risk or extreme movement activity (Cross & Snow 2012:117), one of the respondents stated that radicality does not necessarily need to involve destruction or criminalization but that a lot can be expressed on a symbolic level (Interview 10). Another one argued that radicalism is not about shouting the slogans the loudest but to actually try to think things through totally differently (Interview 4). Some even went as far as stating that “it is not about changing something right there on a Thursday” (Interview 4) but rather about showing presence and making use of the privilege of having the opportunity to protest (Interviews 2,4). The latter point seemingly relates to what Goldstone & Tilly describe as a regime that offers challengers openings to advance their claims and threats, which is one of two crucial inclusive parts of opportunity structures (see: Goldstone and Tilly 2001 in Tilly & Tarrow 2015:49). Minding the peaceful form of resistance and non-escalation, the case of the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria might even implicate that giving citizens the right to protest actually seems to contribute to the mitigation – or in this case even the complete non-eruption – of violent actions on a political scale from the protestor’s side. However, following up on the explanation of some respondents of the non-radicality of the Thursday-demonstrations deriving from a lack of willingness to take risks on the side of the protestors (Interviews 2,10), it might be worth questioning *why* protestors in Austria are not willing to take risks. The following chapters try to give a bit of an insight of what factors might contribute to that.

### **II) a) The notion of brokerage as the actual radicality**

*“When we started, her and me had 2 mutual Facebook-friends; now we have 160.”  
(informal conversation with Interview partner 10)*

Relating to the definition of conflict as any situation in which two or more “parties” (however defined or structured) perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals (Mitchell 1981:17 in Demmers 2017:5) and deriving from Galtung’s idea of conflict behavior as a consistency of actions undertaken by one party in any situation of conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making that opponent abandon or modify its goals (Galtung 1981:29 in Demmers 2012:6), most of the interviewees were posed questions about

the goals they hope to reach through their political activism. Even though the concrete formulation of the goals included “equality on an intersectional level” (Interview 2), “creating a form of resistance and collective memories” (Interview 4), “a solidary society” (Interview 5, Interview 7), “world peace” (Interview 5) and “a new economic model” (Interview 7), the respondents seemed to be well-aware of the unlikelihood of reaching these kinds of goals solely by demonstrating. Despite their idealistic goals, some emphasized their pessimistic attitude regarding the (future-)development of society in general (Interviews 2, 7).

Interestingly though, respondents strongly emphasized a point that Tilly conceptualized as brokerage, namely creating new connections between previously unconnected social sites (Tilly 1999:280; Interviews 8, 9, 10) and, very closely relating to that, the notion of “not being alone” (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8) . Brokerage seems to be perceived as the feasible goal (Interview 8) or the actual radicality (Interview 10) of the Thursday-demonstrations. Some interviewees mentioned the so-called “Omas gegen Rechts” (“grandmothers against fascism”) (New York Times Online; Interviews 4,6) who have been referred to as one of the most beautiful images of resistance (Interview 6) as they combine wisdom and tenderness with it (Interview 6). They apparently even physically put themselves in between the police and the so-called antifascist action at one point (Interview 4). The alliance between civic grandmothers and young Antifas (Interview 4) and even the very presence of the latter at the Thursday-demonstrations seem to be a confirmation for brokerage to some extent having successfully worked out.

## II) b) De-construction through heterotopias and ideological performances

*“You won’t extinguish a fire by adding more fire to it. It needs to be water.”  
(Interview partner 6)*

One of the main points that have been risen when having been asked about what differentiates the Thursday-demonstrations from other forms of protest has been that they fight for rather than against something (Interviews 5, 6, 9). One of the interviewees pointed out that, due to him, solely fighting something destroys resistance in the very moment when whatever has been fought against, is gone (Interview 6). Some respondents stated though that they do perceive the Thursday-demonstrations as not radical enough (Interviews 4, 10). Even though there appears to a sort of internal disagreement between the demonstrators regarding this topic, the general rules seem to be clear: “everybody is welcome, but do not constitute stress” (Interview 4), or, possibly in other words: if you want to be part of the Thursday-protest, do not engage in any form of violent conflict. This seems to derive from a variety of reasons, including the attempt to find a broader consensus (Interview 4, 7, 10), the weekly routine (Interview 5, 7, 9), the inclusive approach and the diversity of the actors (Interview 4, 6, 7, 9) amongst others. In relation to the idea of inclusivity, Tilly’s description of part of the work of political entrepreneurs being to construct or activate us-them boundaries between their networks and outsiders (Tilly 1999:281) might be relevant. The aberration of that – in this case the inclusive approach and the non-creation of us-them boundaries – therefore seems to contribute to the mitigation of violence in the frame of social movements. The only slight exception to the occurrence of violence in the context of the Thursday-

demonstrations I came across in this regard was some protestors getting into a physical fight with representatives of the right-winged group who refer to themselves as “die Identitären” (Interview 1). In fact, one of the respondents even portrayed the demonstrations as “a stroll through the city with flowers and love” (Interview 6).

So, how then, do the protestors want to de-mobilize a radical/violent system without radical/violent means? One possible answer to this rather challenging question could be by the creation of heterotopias. Heterotopias can be understood as real experiments in thinking and being differently, lived in the present (Beckett/Bagguley/Campbell 2017:174). They provide escape routes from the norm, enlarging the possibilities for self-determination (Beckett/Bagguley/Campbell 2017:174). This seems to be the very concept of what the respondents described as “creating a counter-reality” (Interview 9), “having the opportunity to go to a safe place which is public” (Interview 4) and “generating visibility” (Interview 6). Furthermore, the importance of claiming space and creating collective memories and a positive narrative, which is perceived as being crucial for the dynamics of the group, has been stressed (Interview 4). Space-claiming and merging different social realities does indeed have potential to challenge or even de-construct social and political norms, as Topinka explains: by juxtaposing different spaces that usually do not exist together or are even perceived to not be able to exist together in one site, the ground on which our knowledge is built is destabilized (Topinka 2010: 55f).

The heterotopia that has been created in the course of the Thursday-demonstration does, however, also include conditions regarding which the participants have a multitude of, at times controversial, opinions. An example for that is indeed something that makes the Thursday-demonstrations stand out a little bit, namely, the party aspect. Even though different speakers – apparently with one exception (Interview 9) – provide informative content at every single demonstration (Interviews 5,9), for the rest of the time, music is being played and people dance. Critical voices point out that it therefore lacks seriousness (Interview 2) and by creating a party character it loses the character of a protest (Interview 2; informal conversations with two participants). At this point I would like to quote one of the respondents: “protest is not a party but something serious” (Interview 2). Another interviewee contradicted that by asking whether resistance needs to go hand in hand with suffering and subsequently answering his own question by mentioning that, according to him, the self-enjoyment does not take away the seriousness of a protest (Interview 4). Adding to that counter-discourse, the notion of the party aspect serving as a great way of mobilizing not yet strongly politicized or non-political people has been mentioned (Interview 7). Furthermore, awareness has been risen that it is challenging to keep a weekly demonstration going (Interview 9), and some seem to perceive the additive party character as a contribution to a solution to that (Interviews 4, 7, 9). Someone elaborated on this issue by saying that one needs to provide the demonstrators with something nice, something emotionally catching, as he argued that the left-winged scene does not have an emotional narrative themselves (Interview 4). Rather, it defines itself as a contradiction to right-winged ideologies and people,

the latter indeed having an emotional narrative, which he believes to be reason for so many citizens falling for right-winged ideologies (Interview 4).

Another relevant concept in order to gain a better understanding of the non-violent character of the Thursday-demonstrations are ideological performances. An ideological performance is how a performer's beliefs, values, and allegiances are displayed for an audience via her behaviour, language, movement, use of props, and aesthetics (Todd Nicholas Fuist 2014:430). The protestors' beliefs along the lines of solidarity (Interview 5,7), humanity (Interview 6) and peace (Interview 5) do indeed seem to strongly determine the peaceful form of protesting. A peaceful form of protesting is veritably regarded as one of the key factors of good and successful resistance (Interviews 1,5,8) and by some perceived as the only way forward (Interviews 1,5). As one of the respondents has stated, they once a week want to show what a better world would look like (Interview 4). Furthermore, involving art is perceived as one of the key factors of a good form of resistance (Interview 5) and the very act of performing seems to be of importance, possibly deriving from many organizers and participants having a background in arts or academia and therefore, used to acting performatively (Interview 10). Even though this milieu is in fact not very seriously affected by the political decisions of right-winged politics (Interviews 1,10), they seem to be the most shocked (Interview 10). However, some of them act very passively and have a huge tendency to free ride (Interview 1), which is a substantial part of the collective action problem (Olsen 1965 in Demmers 2017:104). Whereas in the 2000's, thirty people stormed the ministry of social affairs and threw files out of the window, one respondent expressed his worry that the current Thursday-demonstrations consist a little too much of performance (Interview 10). However, he also argued how a very performative act – as for example it actually happened that some activists including myself lit up Bengal fires on the balcony of a theatre – can indeed also be radical. The way this example can be perceived as radical is by 1) pressurizing the rest of the theatre-scene to position itself politically and 2) boosting the confidence of the press people of the very theatre who showed solidarity by giving the political activists permission to perform on their balcony and perhaps even somewhat radicalising them (Interview 10).

Concluding this chapter, it can be said that the values and beliefs of the individual protestors appear to strongly shape the form of the social movement and the related actions. In other words, ideological performances seem to strongly determine not only the chosen form of resistance but also the rules. As it can be observed in this Austrian case-study, the beliefs of not only the organizers but also the participants contribute to the non-eruption of conflict by how they turn their beliefs and values into a heterotopia. The goal of both, the creation of heterotopias as well as the performative character of the demonstrations, in a discursive-analytical sense seems to be to want to contribute to de-construction. As Topinka states: if the order of things is socially produced, then it can be made differently" (Topinka 2010:171).

## **II) c) Non-fragility of the state**

An aspect that has been especially shocking when the right-winged extremist party became a coalition partner with a conservative, also right-winged, party, was that this happened in a

democracy. Thus, these parties and their representatives have actually been voted for by the majority of the population; in a Western democracy, which at the same time appears to have the 28<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world (World Atlas Online). Austria cannot be considered as fragile, which probably highly contributes to the non-occurrence of political violence. Attention should also be drawn to a statement made within the study field of contentious politics, namely, that the shape of institutions and regimes always affect movements (Tilly & Tarrow 2015:245). During some interviews, a comparison to more violent forms of demonstrating in other Western democracies occurred: the examples were France (Interview 1,10) and Germany (Interview 10). In contrast to Austria, both were described as widespread poverty being present (Interview 10) and the protest-situation in France was referred to as “war-like” (Interview 1). The notion that there seems to be a clear personal distance to anything that is associated with war (Interviews 1,5,10), and more violent forms of resistance seem to be perceived as such, might help to explain why any form of violent action in the course of the demonstrations was viewed as impermissible by many. When one participant of the Thursday-demonstrations lit up a Bengal fire within the crowd, another protestor instantly came up to him and demanded him to extinguish it; this seems to be quite a visible example for how deeply embedded the personal distance to anything even close to being illegal – let alone violent – appears to be in some minds. Furthermore, some citizens seem to take things for granted that by now are a given but once have been fought for (Interview 4). This might implicate that some people perhaps appear not to value their privileged situation and as an aftermath of not knowing what it means to fight for something that they presuppose, they simply don’t.

## **II) d) Cultural aspects: The lack of demo-culture and phlegmatic Austrians**

Another specificity that should be taken in consideration when analyzing the non-eruption of conflict is the local context. In Austria, an interesting dynamic has evolved as fascist ideologies are successful even though the locals are confronted with the aftermath of the holocaust in one way or another: fellow-students at school being Neo-Nazis (Interview 7), living close to what used to be a concentration camp or, at the least, learning about it at school. What is the reason then for Austrians, who have seen what fascism can lead to, of all people, not to resist against a fascist government in more radical ways? There are probably many answers that can be given but this chapter is all about touching upon the cultural context and the way it seems to partially determine the (non-)actions of Austrian protestors.

As some demonstrators have mentioned, there seems to be a lack of demo-culture in Austria (Interviews 4, 8, 9, 10). And not only that: in fact, demonstrations as well as political activists have a bad reputation within the country and are perceived as something negative by the majority of the society (Interviews 2, 4, 8). The societal connotation seems to be that demonstrations are annoying and disturbing (Interview 2) and that people should rather go to work than to the streets (Interview 8). Non-attendants of the demonstration are not happy to be forced to adjust their routes when driving and feel bothered in their peace and where to do their shopping (Interview 2). Or, in other words and cited directly from one of the

respondents: it basically disturbs the good capitalist life (Interview 2). Furthermore, the majority of the population does not seem to clearly position itself against war, hate and exclusion (Interview 6).

Potential partial explanations for both the lack of demo-culture as well as the negative connotation include the historical context (Interview 4, 10), the deeply culturally encrypted respect for authority (Interview 4), the division between the capital city and the countryside (Interviews 8,9) and a lack of temper and the peaceful spirit of Austrian people (Interviews 1,5,8) which might partially derive from the past experience of war (Interview 8) or because they do not want war to happen (Interviews 1,6). Historically speaking, attention has been drawn to whereas internationally, governments have been “chased away” by demonstrations, this has not yet been the case in Austria (Interview 10). One might also want to consider whether Austria’s neutral position between East and West during the Cold War in Post-war Europe has perhaps played a role. Furthermore, what has apparently been perceived as very politically shaping was that the revolution in 1848 has been broken up by emperor Franz-Josef and even afterwards a lot of effort has been put into trying to suppress any form of resistance (Interview 4). In addition, the holocaust has not been processed properly (Interviews 4, 8; observations). As Austrians have a cultural encryption for always needing to find someone who is guilty (Interview 8) – it being themselves or others (Interview 8) – what can be observed is that this guilt is tried to be transferred to Germany whereas Austria seems to prefer to frame itself as victim (observations). Whereas in Germany it took years to manipulate the population into wrongly believing that Jews are inferior, it only took days in Austria (Interview 4). In relation to the latter, one of the respondents stated that “when an Austrian can be an asshole, s\*he will be” (Interview 4) whereas, as already mentioned above, other interviewees pledged for the peacefulness of the Austrian citizens (Interviews 5,8).

Another word that arose in the interviews in relation to the Austrian people is “phlegmatic” (Interviews 5). This strongly seems to relate to the general well-being of the Austrian people and the fact that Austria is amongst the richest countries in the world. If everything is basically fine in your own personal little life, with food on your table, a roof above your head and some luxury here and there, why should you stand up and resist? The most common straight-up answer to the question of reasons for what Tilly & Tarrow refer to “oceans of apathy” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015:233) was that, basically “people are doing too well” (Interviews 1,2,9,10) and the level of suffering is not bad enough (Interview 1,6). One interviewee described it as, if people are doing well and have everything, the only thing they fear is that somebody takes something away from them and they are not ready to stand up in order for others to gain something (Interview 2). Others emphasized the similarity to the success of the Nazis (Interviews 1,8) and one person stated that the reason for the non-escalation of demonstrations in Austria is that one’s cousin hasn’t been shot yet (Interview 6). He further explained that people still work and earn money and due to changes occurring in such small steps, they are simply not bad enough for the citizens to take an action along the lines of something like: alright, let’s overthrow the system (Interview 6). Two respondents referred to the demonstrations in Austria as “western wealth protest form” (Interviews 2,4). What can be

observed in Austria is that wealth seems to be a contributing factor leading to political passivity; however, relating to ideological performances, the belief-systems of some individuals motivate themselves to partake or organize protest forms. Even though they do not perceive themselves as victims of fascist ideologies, they still want to show solidarity, which is, at least partially if not even mainly, why they are politically active (Interview 7,10).

## II)e) Police Force

*“In fact, history teaches that in democracies and semi-democracies, while ordinary people are the sources of most damage to property, the greatest source of violence against persons is the police.” (Tilly & Tarrow 2015:232)*

As Cross & Snow mentioned, radicalism is apart from internal movement dynamics also defined by external structural factors such as state and police responses (Cross & Snow 2011:121). Police force, indeed, seems to be another important factor in regard of what the Thursday-demonstrations are determined by. Even though the police are often commonly framed as “friend and helper” in the Austrian society, as stated above, police in fact is the greatest source of violence against persons in democracies and semi-democracies (Tilly & Tarrow 2015:232). Whereas the Freedom-party pledged for more police-presence in the country, the Austrian police have been accused of using disproportional reactions (Interview 9). Apart from a video of police officers abusing someone in Vienna having been spilled across Social Media recently (Facebook Online, Link below), the Austrian police force almost managed to build up an international reputation for not only structural but deeply rooted racism. The latter relates to a case where international artists didn’t want to travel to Austria as they were scared of the police after another non-white artist has been arrested (Interview 1) as well as the case of Marcus Omofuma, who was murdered by the Austrian police on a plane in the course of his deportation 20 years ago (speaker at the Thursday-demonstration regarding Omofuma’s memorial day). Sadly, the latter was not an exceptional case, as elaborated on in a newspaper article which describes multiple cases of very abusive behavior against Africans\*, some of whom even died during their confrontation with the police or in its aftermath (Inou 2010). Regarding police force against political activists, a few years ago, the Austrian police arrested a participant of a demonstration who literally put a burning waste-bin back up; this very action got him into jail for several months, the police claiming that he was guilty of being the leader of those who actually set the waste-bin on fire.

Even though it has been stated that demonstrations most of the time do not include abusive and violent behavior on the side of the police (Interview 2), several interviewees mentioned they had negative experiences with the police in multiple cases (Interviews 1,2,4,7). These included water cannons (Interviews 1,7), encirclement (Interviews 2,7), protestors who were on a sit-in being carried away (Interview 7) and physical violence such as being hit (Interview 4). In accordance with the Tilly & Tarrow’s quote above, one respondent stated that his conflicts were mostly with the police (Interview 4).

The ongoing negotiations with the police – in the case of the Thursday-demonstrations even weekly – seem to be a case of contentious conversation. In relation to that, Tilly argues that if we regard conversation as continuously negotiated communication and contention as mutual claim-making that bears significantly on the parties' interests [...] then the two social phenomena overlap extensively (Tilly 1999:269). One of the organizers of the demonstration briefly mentioned that there was some kind of unwritten agreement being put in place that the police won't arrest people for lighting up Bengal fires as long as nothing more than that will happen (informal conversation during participant observation). As this doesn't seem to be an official statement, I would argue, it appears to be a case of what Tilly describes as contentious conversation producing order by means of improvisation within constraints (Tilly 1999:272).

Whereas in the 2000's, the Thursday-demonstrations were not even previously announced (Interview 10), the organization team of the current Thursday-demonstrations appears to have a good relationship with the Austrian police (Interview 10). Whereas the former has been stated in one of the interviews and could also be confirmed by a case during participant observation, I argue, due to other occurrences during participant observation, that the notion of the police sympathizing with the demonstrators might be questionable. In any case, especially the officers in charge of operations have been emphasized to be very nice and the changes of the demo-route are accepted easily (Interview 10). The good relationship between the police and the organization team of the Thursday-demonstrations then results in the latter not wanting to disappoint their acquaintances (Interview 10). Thus, this could possibly implicate that positive connotations of the police as well as respectful behavior and an at least somewhat positive association contribute to non-radicalization of demonstrators and the mitigation of political violence from both sides.

Even though the Austrian police has been praised for mostly non-violent reactions to demonstrations (Interview 2), their counteractions are often perceived as disproportional at best (Interviews 4,9). A suggestion to policymakers as well as governors could therefore be 1) to monitor the police staff more extensively in order to prevent disproportional and violent actions against citizens 2) sensitize them properly in regard of their responsibility and indeed hold them accountable for their actions 3) in the case of obvious misbehavior judge them through a trial and dismiss them if necessary. The Austrian state especially seems to have quite a bit of room of improvement in this specific matter, especially considering the Omofuma-case mentioned above as well as the case of Cheibani Wague (Inou 2010 Online) where some of the responsible policemen were not even trialed as guilty and the one person who was got a severe reduction of his punishment (Inou 2010 Online). The reason for the latter was that the individual police staff member is not to be held responsible for the catastrophic situation in regard of the training of the Austrian police, as he had simply followed the instructions he had received during training (see: Inou 2010 Online).

Furthermore, in accordance with the online-documentation of the case of Edwin Ndupu (see: Inou 2010 Online), it has also been risen in informal conversations that police staff in Austria might even get promotions for acting violently against specific groups or individuals (POC or



left-winged demonstrators for example) or arresting someone randomly as then, they at least have someone to blame everything for. The latter possibly also relating to Austria's culturally determined guilt-complex (Interview 8), this thesis aims to encourage the Austrian state to, if accusations such as the aforementioned ones are wrong, prove that they are not true and, in any case and even more importantly, make sure that occurrences along the lines of the Omofuma-case as well as the several others that have been mentioned in the cited online article, do not happen again.

## **II)f) Media coverage**

As Cross & Snow elaborated on in their article, one of the goals of left-winged activism seems to be the attention of media (see: Cross & Snow 2011:121). However, in the case of the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria, the representation in the media, especially the local one, seems to be pretty low or even close to non-existent (Interviews 7,8). Whereas even the New York Times published an article regarding the "Grannies against fascism" (New York Times Online), the main thing that seems to be relevant to the Austrian media in regard of the demonstrations are the effects on the traffic routes through the cities (informal conversation; unpublished statement of the boss of an Austrian media platform). Even though hardly any big Austrian media seriously covered the Thursday-demonstrations (Interviews 7,8), one respondent actually found out about the current revival of them in one of Austria's newspapers/magazines (Interview 5). However, the mentioned newspaper/magazine is known to be somewhat left-wing, therefore implicating that only a certain kind of milieu is reached by it.

Another interesting factor regarding the representation in the media is locality in relation to city-countryside-dynamics. Whereas it has been stated that it is difficult to catch media attention in the capital city (Interviews 7,8), it has been emphasized that this has been easier on the countryside (Interview 8). Interestingly, the perception of some living in Vienna is that even though the Thursday-demonstrations seem to enjoy quite a bit of popularity, the majority of Austria's population doesn't even know about them yet (Interview 7). In sharp contrast to that, the notion of a respondent who lives on the countryside and organizes Thursday-demonstrations there, is, that you have an advantage in a small town in comparison to Vienna (Interview 8). The main reason for the latter is that the regional groups of organizers are very well connected to the modest regional newspapers (Interview 8). This might possibly partially derive from small size of the population which results in, very casually expressed, everyone knowing everyone. This is relevant as it has been stated that the regional newspapers write about the demonstrations because they know the protestors (Interview 8). Furthermore, the Thursday-demonstrations in Amstetten do not happen as frequently: whereas it is a weekly event in Vienna (Interviews 5,9,10; observation), it appears to be rather special in Amstetten, as so far, altogether only two Thursday-demonstrations have occurred (Interview 8). As one of the Viennese organizers stated, those in other locations but Vienna do their own thing and there are very few social intercourses between the organizers of the Thursday-demonstrations in the capital city and those of the other towns (Interview 10).

Even though it is perceived as a disadvantage in comparison to other demonstrations that there is a lack of media attention which might derive from shockers not being present at the Thursday-demonstrations (Interview 7), there is a big effort not to act in any way which could eventually lead to negative press coverage (Interviews 4,5,7). One of the reasons for the underrepresentation of the Thursday-demonstrations in Austrian media could actually be their peaceful form, as due to them not providing shockers, it does not have any news value (Interview 7). Whereas it is emphasized that the occurrence of shockers lacks at the Thursday-demonstrations, it is explained that the right-winged scene does indeed do that: providing shockers and therefore subsequently getting attention (Interview 7). One interviewee observed this kind of behavior of the Austrian freedom-party before any kind of election: one or two weeks previously they usually provide a right-winged extremist scandal, which gives them presence in the media for the whole period up until the end of the elections and they are present in people's minds and gain a lot of free advertisement (Interview 7). The question for the left-winged counterpart therefore is: do we want to be associated with shockers? (Interview 7) Even though the peaceful demonstrations are believed only to reach a certain milieu (Interviews 1,7) and a positive press would indeed be a goal (informal conversations), the answer to the question seems to be no. The reason is probable negativity of the echo of the media: they would instantly frame any counter-discourse to fascist ideologies as a chaotic, left-winged extremist group (Interview 5). This can have prejudiced and unfair consequences, as for example when the group of organizers of the Thursday-demonstrations in Amstetten permanently got kicked out of a specific bar with the claim of the owner that she doesn't want this "super-left-winged pack" on her premises (Interview 8). In Austria, securitizing not only left-winged extremism but almost any counter-discourse to the perspective of the majority of the population seems to be pretty easy; one could therefore possibly claim that there is some fear that plays into it. A fear of negative press, a fear of losing fellow protestors, a fear of being even more devalued and even less seen or heard and taken even less seriously. This would also relate to the emphasis of the importance of brokerage mentioned earlier, as it indicates that some of the activists might fear being too few. They go out on the streets to convince themselves of not being alone and that they are not the only ones who try to resist (Interview 8). Resulting from that, keeping everyone in who is already protesting is extremely important. And, taking into consideration the overall political climate as well as several interviews, occurrence of political violence on the protestor's side would definitely reduce the number of participants of the demonstrations. In addition, the tolerance on the broad part of the society's side would certainly be compromised; rather, those who already antipathized with the demonstrations would now have even more reason to do so. With a negative media echo, a positive movement is brought into disrepute and discredited in no time, which is why, anything that can lead to or possibly even encourage that, is not welcomed at the Thursday-demonstrations (Interview 5). Even though in a completely different context, Bayat mentions that protests that cause too much destruction and disruption lose their validity to a broad part of society and are therefore not supported as much (Bayat 2015: 42), which indeed seems to be the case here as well. Interestingly, one interviewee even stated that despite him

appreciating more radical ways of protesting in other cases, he strongly disagrees with it in relation to the Thursday-demonstrations (Interview 5).

### III) CONCLUSION

As the last sentence of the last chapter might implicate, the Thursday-demonstrations are a very special form of resistance which sets itself apart from other, perhaps more commonly known, forms of protest. The most spectacular thing about the Thursday-demonstrations probably is its persistence, which needs serious conviction from the participants. Even the well-known critic of capitalism and globalization Jean Ziegler has mentioned that in a newspaper article in which he articulated his solidarity with the Thursday-demonstrations in Austria (Der Standard Online). How though, is it manageable to mobilize such a large amount of people every single week? One interviewee has stated that growth is what keeps social movements alive but also mentioned some internal struggles within the organization-team in relation to reaching a consensual position regarding that (Interview 3). As the findings of this research appear to suggest, however, more than solely one factor seem to be necessary to keep such a broad – in this case weekly – social movement campaign going. These contributing factors appear to include a form of self-enjoyment to some extent (Interviews 4,7), some kind of seriousness (Interview 2), a somewhat intense level of suffering (Interview 1), in the Austrian context specifically the legality of the protest form (Interviews 2,4,6) and political conscience of the demonstrators as merely being affected doesn't seem to be enough to protest in Austria (Interview 10).

Despite the scientifically backed-up pre-assumptions taken in the beginning of the introduction of this thesis, no violent actions whatsoever seem to have occurred in the “2<sup>nd</sup> edition” of the Thursday-demonstrations, namely from 2018-2019. Why though, is this the case? As this thesis is hoped to have shown, there is a combination of several factors that lead to the non-violent form of demonstrating. One of the many points that matter in the Austrian context specifically, is that, apart from being legally bound to it as a consequence of calling the state-system a democracy, Austria does actually – at least most of the time – give the right to resist in the form of demonstrations to its citizens. What the collected data in the course of this research suggest is that the legal allowance of demonstrations to happen does in fact mitigate, rather than contribute to, political violence. Therefore, a recommendation that might arouse from this study for policy-makers of non-fragile democratic states is to legalize different forms of protests, especially demonstrations, not only in order to display their democratic values but also subsequently engender the non-occurrence of political violence from both – the protestors' and the police's – side. This also relates to the loss of significance being a contributing factor to radicalization (see: Webber et al., 2018 in Jasko et al. 2019:316), therefore implicating that, if the opposite is the case and people have the notion of their voices being heard, the likelihood of the occurrence of violent actions from their side drops. Even if it might not be the case, at least the perception of having the opportunity to display their values and ideologies publicly reduces the notion of non-significance and therefore helps prevent radicalization.

Another suggestion deriving from the presented findings of this limited research would be to raise the level of media-coverage regarding political activism from the left-winged side. If media chose to report increasingly on left-winged political actions, more violent and attention-seeking means would not have to be considered as necessary anymore in order to get the attention of the media. As it has been touched upon above, left-winged activists do indeed have the latter notion (Interview 7), which is in accordance with, as Cross & Snow mentioned, the attention of any media is the desired result of increasingly violent tactics (Cross & Snow 2011:121). In fact, due to Leistedt, even terrorism is the use of violence to trigger and amplify communication: the ultimate target of terrorist actions is not the people who are attacked but rather audiences that learn about the attack (Leistedt 2016:1590). The mass media are implicated in this process, because their own assessments of what is newsworthy give undue attention to violence compared to peaceful protest (Leistedt 2016:1590). In turn, media could, by giving this attention to peaceful protests as well, probably actually contribute to non-violent political actions and protest forms. A follow-up-question that might arise is if and why in turn, right-winged political activists, fraternities or even a group of right-winged people who basically simply throw a party, indeed seem to get the attention of the media. Without making a lot of effort, they appear to manage to draw significantly more media attention to themselves than their left-winged counter-voices. Reasons for these dynamics and their influence on the overall political climate, especially in the Austrian context regarding the latent fascist tendencies in the country, are a suggestion for further research in the field of contentious politics and discourse analysis.

Conflict can be defined as any situation in which two or more “parties” (however defined or structured) perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals (Mitchell 1981:17 in Demmers 2017:5). Even though this has been the case at the Thursday-demonstrations, namely the protestors and the government having incompatible goals (Interviews 1,2,5,6,7,8,9; observation), no violent forms of conflict have erupted in this context. The reason is that the conflict behavior, which Galtung defines as a consistency of actions undertaken by one party in any situation of conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making that opponent abandon or modify its goals (Galtung 1981:29 in Demmers 2012:6), from the protestor’s side is deliberately and consciously non-violent. This choice partially derives from ideological performances. The concept of showing how to do it right (Interviews 4,6) rather than criticizing and violently fighting (Interview 6) the present belief systems seems to work better for not only the individuals but also the group of protestors in the context of the Austrian Thursday-demonstrations. As quite a large number of non-radical people participate to whom it is crucial that no violence occurs, those who would indeed appreciate more violent forms of action are more or less forced to find a consensus (Interview 4,10), which, in this case, led to the set-up of unwritten rules (Interview 4; informal conversations; observation). Brokerage therefore clearly seems to be prioritized over radicality or even substantial change, as respondents have indicated that they estimate the chance of reaching their actual goals through the Thursday-demonstrations pretty low (Interviews 2,4,10) but do indeed formulate brokerage as another – and in fact feasible – goal

(Interviews 8,10). The notion of goals being reached by other factors than by protesting is also illustrated quite well by the recent political developments in Austria: it took the publication of a video and a large number of outraged citizens as well as, the way Sebastian Kurz himself tries to frame it, a shocked chancellor and a subsequent motion of no confidence, to (at least temporarily) reach some of the collective core-goals of the Thursday-demonstrators. Therefore, taking the recent political developments in Austria as well as the outcome of the last ÖVP-FPÖ coalition into account, it seems to be the case that rather than any form of protests, the very politicians themselves do the job of getting themselves dismissed (Interview 8).

As it has shortly been outlined above, the non-occurrence of political violence on the protestor's side in this very case-study at least partially derives from a lack of willingness to take risks (Interviews 2,10), the reason for the latter perhaps being the general prosperity of the Austrian people (Interviews 1,2,9,10) which leads to less readiness to confront oneself with conceivable hazard. Whereas, from a rational choice standpoint, protestors in more fragile states with less democratic values, less rights, more poverty and a worse or even non-existent health system might have a lot to gain and little to lose by revolting, the very opposite seems to be the case in Austria: even though many do see some room for improvement in multiple aspects, they are not ready to risk everything they have in order to perhaps have a little chance to have an actual impact on the improvement of the situation for themselves or others. Especially, they do not seem to be ready to stand up for the betterment of the living situation of "other" people (Interview 2), the definition of the "other" deriving from frames of "us vs. them" and often being based on nationalist ideas. Due to the highly privileged living situation of the majority of the population in comparison to other countries, the people seem to have developed some kind of apathy in regard of politics; some even stated that they do not want to engage in political activism or even discuss political decisions as it frustrates them (informal conversations) or they disconnect with people (Interview 6) and therefore themselves seem to be less fun to be around (Interview 6). Perhaps somewhat following up on the hundreds of years old concept of "bread and games" in the Roman Empire and slightly referring to Karl Marx's famous words of religion being the opium of the people, in the case of Austrian resistance, the opium of the people seems to be wealth.

Furthermore, ideological performances seem to strongly determine the form of resistance, which has powerfully contributed to the non-eruption of violent conflict in the frame of the Thursday-demonstrations. In addition, the non-creation of us-them boundaries within social movements appears to contribute to the mitigation of violence as pointed out further above. Apart from that, this thesis suggests that the non-fragility of the Austrian state as well as cultural and historical aspects and the reaction of the police and the media played a significant role in the non-occurrence of political violence in this case-study.

The combination of all the aforementioned factors might have determined the alternative non-violent choice that has been made in regard of the demonstrations, namely, without risking any privileges or having to lower one's own lifestyle still trying to make a difference in

a constructivist sense. Deriving from the constructivist idea that pretty much everything is socially constructed, social de-construction through the construction of non-normative heterotopias and a display of a gasp of the better world some would want to live in, seems to have been considered the best solution.

Even though it didn't seem to have had any direct effects on the actual dismissal of the government, I would argue, the large number of people standing on the so-called "Heldenplatz" ("place of heroes") one day after the publication of the Ibiza-video probably highly contributed to Strache's (former vice-prime minister of Austria) decision to step down. And that having been the case was actually – at least partially – the result from a spontaneous action of the organizational team of the Thursday-demonstrations, namely by spontaneously mobilizing hundreds of people on Social Media. The latter in combination with heterotopias, brokerage and ideological performances, indeed, seem to be the weapons of the present-day Western wealth-protestors, all of which lead to one goal: fighting the system by social de-construction.

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