WE ARE HERE WITH YOU

SUSTAINABLE PARTICIPATION AND DISENGAGEMENT
We Are Here With You
Sustained Participation and Disengagement

Master Thesis
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ABSTRACT: This thesis explores sustained participation and disengagement among the supporters of the Amsterdam based social movement *We Are Here*. Sustained participation and disengagement are often perceived as a one-time-decision. In this study, an argument is made against this perception and sustained participation and disengagement are perceived to be processes that unfold over time. It furthermore situates sustained participation and disengaging process in concrete social settings and in the broader societal context in which they emerge. It includes both the dynamics of participation and the disposition or ‘preparation’ prior to participation.
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During one of the first courses anthropology I followed someone made a remark along the line that anthropologist through the study of others learn about themselves. This sounded like common sense to me and I did not give it much thought. This changed the past year during my study of sustained participation among the supporters of the social movement We Are Here. During this fieldwork, some of the assumptions that I had beforehand were challenged, my perspective was broadened and I learned things about myself I did not realized before. I want to thank my informants who allowed me to walk along with them and accepted the constant questions I bombarded them with. You not only made it possible for me to answer the research question I formulated, you, in addition, let me grow as a person.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The supporters of the social movement *We Are Here* are a shifting, and therefore intriguing group of people. Why did they decide to become involved with *We Are Here* and why do some continue their involvement while others drop-out? These questions came to mind during my own experiences as a supporter of *We Are Here*, witnessing both stayers and leavers.

*We Are Here* is a collective of undocumented refugees that since the fall of 2012 has chosen to protest against Dutch immigration policies, which according to them are not conclusive and therefore inhumane. The problem that they address is that even though their asylum application is rejected, they cannot go back to their countries of origin. The collective claims that returning to these countries is not possible because some of these countries are unsafe due to war and conflict or because the embassies of their countries do not want to provide them with the appropriate travel documents. Because they stay here undocumented, they are forbidden to work and are not entitled to any public assistance in housing, education or regular care. This often leaves them in precarious situations. The collective perceives the unwillingness of the Dutch state to provide adequate shelter to be a violation of their human rights and refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to substantiate their claim. As a collective, the members of *We Are Here* demand recognition for their situation by squatting unused building in the city of Amsterdam. Although there are several goals the collective aims to achieve, they first and foremost advocate for adequate shelter and fair legal proceedings.

Since the inception of *We Are Here* almost seven years ago, the collective has received support by a circuit of Dutch supporters. These supporters have diverse professional backgrounds (e.g. students, lawyers, social workers, artist, journalist, writers, scholars) and ideological convictions (e.g. religious, political, humanistic). They contribute in a variety of ways, often making use of skills and networks from their professional career. They, for example, raise funds and help with the preparation of court cases and organization of solidarity events. They assist with transportation when a building is evicted and provide daily necessities like food and clothes. Some of the supporters give lessons in Dutch and English whilst others generate public awareness by writing articles or through the use of social media. But the supporters also help members of the collective individually with their paperwork or when they have to visit authorities. Even though the collective started in 2012 as one group in an improvised tent camp made out of used canvas in the garden of the protestant Diakonie,
through the years the collective has seen a separation into different groups that live in separate buildings. On the day of this writing there are five groups that operate under the name *We Are Here*. While some of the supporters are involved with several groups most of the supporters become involved with just one group.

Last summer I visited Ali\textsuperscript{1}, a friend of mine who is a member of the *Solidarity-group*, one of the five groups of undocumented refugees that operate under the name *We Are Here*. We met at the building they had been squatting for one month. When he let me in, he looked very distraught. As if he had not slept well for several nights. It did not take long for him to tell me the reason behind his distressed appearance. A few days earlier the group had received a letter that ordered them to leave the building within a week if they wanted to prevent eviction by the police. Although I understood that this meant that they had to find new accommodation, something that is obviously worrisome within a timeframe of a week, I wondered why he seemed more stressed than I had seen him ever before, even though I had seen him face far more hazardous situations than this one.

The upcoming eviction would be the forty-seventh eviction of the collective in general and the twenty-fourth of this group in particular. The current situation, therefore, was not something new for Ali, who is involved with the collective from its inception in the fall of 2012. I decided to ask him about it. Ali told me that he was indeed more stressed about this eviction than the ones before. He explained to me that this had nothing to do with the eviction per se, but rather with the mobilization of supporters. He told me that it seemed harder than ever to mobilize supporters, something that worried and puzzled him at the same time. Since the police had dropped the letter, he had been trying to reach some supporters but they did not seem to respond to his calls and messages. When Ali brought me to the train station later that evening, he brought up the topic once more and asked me "Do you understand what is going on with these supporters? There seems to be a willingness among them to help, but the last time when we needed them the most they were nowhere to be found!".

The question Ali asked me resonated with what I had noticed myself as well. Namely that fundraising events, demonstrations, and meetings seemed to mobilize many old and new supporters who articulated their willingness and shared the conviction that they already are (or definitely will

\textsuperscript{1} Ali is a fictitious name. I have chosen to use fictitious names throughout the thesis in order to decrease the possibility that supporters or members of the collective are recognized.
become) active supporters. However, during earlier evictions and squats I had been seeing the actual support decreasing. Apparently, the Dutch support circuits surrounding *We Are Here* were in decline. However, the problems that the undocumented refugees were facing, remained as big as ever. I wondered: what was happening?

This question about declining active solidarity with *We Are Here* is not only interesting for the collective, but it also taps into a wider debate about collective action. Through collective action, groups like the supporters of social movements like *We Are Here* are able to alter the path of a society. The supporters, in a way, are a social movement in its own right. By challenging current migration policies, *We Are Here* encourages change in the Dutch society, in policy and in public opinion. The supporters of *We Are Here*, in addition, fight against a perceived injustice from which they themselves do not directly suffer. As any social movement, they face the challenges of (ongoing) mobilization, of finding effective ways of action, and, one of the key issues, to keep their members on board. Exploring the question of prolonged participation versus disengagement, therefore, offers us the chance to gain a better understanding on under which conditions people are willing to be -and remain- part of collective action. This has led me to formulate the following research question:

"Why do some supporters persist in sustaining their involvement with *We Are Here*, while others drop out?"

This question can be split into the three sub-questions that are listed below:

1. Why did (ex-)supporters initially decide to become involved with *We Are Here*?
2. Which backgrounds, experiences and network/interaction-patterns of involvement contributed to continuity in participation?
3. Which backgrounds, experiences and network/interaction-patterns of involvement contributed to discontinuity in participation?

Scholarly work on social movement participation mainly focuses on recruitment, but often tends to neglect the issue of long-term participation versus discontinuation of involvement (with the exception of Downton & Wehr, 1998; Fillieule, 2010; Nepstad, 2004; Santos Nascimento, 2017). This silence has led Oliver Fillieule (2010) to argue that in the study of participation in social movements little is known about "maintenance of commitment and what amounts to the same thing, namely
defection" (Fillieule, 2010, p.1). Fillieule furthermore argues that the minimum of scholarly work that has been conducted in this regard takes the social movement as research unit, which narrows the conceptualization of disengagement down to a moment in time, rather than a process unfolding within a social movement among its participants. In an attempt to avoid the shortcomings Fillieule detected, this research will try to provide insights into the social relations that constitute and produce solidarity and commitment, especially in the shape of prolonged activism.

As explained, Fillieule (2010) criticizes the lack of interest among social movement scholars concerning the individual participants that the movement consists of. His critique on the social movement as research unit resonates with Salman and Assies’s (2017) call for a radicalized ‘actor-oriented approach’, that takes the individuals that constitute the social movement as a point of departure rather than the social movement itself. The adoption of a radicalized ‘actor-oriented approach’ will furthermore contribute to a more processual conceptualization of commitment and disengagement because it will allow for the inclusion of "[...] the long-term history of the societal context in which these protests take place" (Salman and Assies, 2017, p.66). I will, therefore, adopt a symbolic interactionist approach as proposed by Fillieule (2010). He defines symbolic interactionism "as a microsociological and processual approach which systematically links the individual and the study of situations to broader contextual factors and social order rules and norms" (Fillieule, 2010, p.3). This approach has as its main focus the individual, however, it perceives the individual and the society to be "interdependent but they also mutually construct each other" (Fillieule, 2010, p.3). A symbolic interactionist approach, therefore, allows for the study of sustained participation and disengagement because it traces these processes by situating the individual participants’ life history within the social movement and the wider society.

From a societal perspective, there are also things to gain from the research that I propose. The problem that We Are Here addresses will most likely not be solved in the near future. The solidarity expressed by supporters is not a matter of course. Investigating their willingness to support We Are Here is important because it provides insight into social relations, and an understanding under which condition political engagement becomes possible. And finally, to come back on the incentive of this research, We Are Here may additionally get a better understanding on how to mobilize volunteers more effectively and aspirant-supporters could gain a better understanding of what their
involvement with *We Are Here* may look like. The findings of this study, therefore, could offer both parties and understanding of this involvement with viable expectations.

In what follows I will first discuss the theoretical orientations that helped me interpret my data. Subsequently I will discuss the research process. This chapter includes information about the research setting, methods used and a reflection on my roles as, on the one hand, supporter and, on the other hand, researcher. I discuss where these roles aligned and how this is reflected in the research process and outcome. This is followed by three empirical chapters. Per chapter, I will answer one sub-question. The empirical chapters are followed by a conclusion in which I will wrap up the insights provided by the empirical chapters and thereby answer my main question.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When one thinks about social movements and its participants, the attention often seems to be drawn towards the reasons why someone joins a social movement. As interesting as this question may be, it is anthropologically embedded to view participation in any movement as something dynamic. This is possible through the lens of a ‘lifecycle of participation’, which constitutes of three phases: "mobilization/recruitment, participation, and demobilization/disengagement" (Santos Nascimento, 2017, 59). This lifecycle of participation subsequently gives rise to the need for an in-depth understanding of each of these phases if we aim at an understanding of participation in social movements in its totality. However, while the recruitment phase has been subjected to an in-depth inquiry, the participation and disengagement phases have been widely neglected by social movement scholars (with the exception of Downton & Wehr, 1998; Fillieule, 2010; Nepstad, 2004; Santos Nascimento, 2017).

According to Klandermans and Van der Veen (1989), scholar’s neglect of the disengagement process can partly be explained by an assumption among some social movement scholars that the process of disengagement is the reversed process of recruitment. This assumption, however, loses its validity if one takes into account that the sustained participation processes and its counterpart, the disengagement processes, only occur after joining the movement as a constant process of weighing the rewards against the costs (Klandermans, 1997; Fillieule, 2010). In addition, these scholars argue that personal features and conditions reflected in social interactions with and within the movement greatly influence the decision of either staying committed or leaving. This suggests that sustained participation and disengagement are not a reversed processes of recruitment.
2.1 The activist career

In order to maintain a processual approach to the study of sustained participation and disengagement, I adopt a ‘career’ approach as proposed by the political scientist and sociologist Oliver Fillieule (2010). Fillieule introduced his notion of the activist career as a way to overcome scholars’ tendency to conceptualize disengagement as a moment in time, rather than a process that unfolds itself through time. Fillieule’s notion of an activist career draws heavily on the interactionist concept of ‘career’ developed by Everett Hughes (1937) and Howard Becker (1966). In his work on entree to and mastery of occupations, Hughes (1937) conceptualizes a career as “the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order and of the typical sequences and concatenations of office (p. 413)”. Applied to the study of social movement participation, the notion of an activist career helps us understand the sequence of how someone becomes engaged and how this engagement changes over time. The notion of an activist career thus encompasses a factual dimension that constitutes a change in position that is accompanied by a subjective dimension that interprets and gives meaning to these fluctuations.

Following Fillieule (2010), I argue that the notion of career applied to the study of sustained participation helps us to situate (dis)engagement processes within the activist life history because it allows us to understand how activists’ attitudes and behaviors are determined by attitudes and behaviors from earlier phases in their lives and how they affect the sequence and development of actions and experiences of the participant during the period of involvement. This dialectic process between different phases in the activist’s life thus conditions the attitudes and behaviors that constitute (dis)engagement processes. This characteristic has led Fillieule (2010) to argue that:

The concept of career allows us to combine questions of predispositions to activism, the shift to action, differentiated and variable forms of engagement over time, the multiplicity of engagements through the life cycle (defections(s) and shift(s) from one collective to another, and from one type of activism to another) and the retraction or extension of commitments. (p.6)

The notion of an activist career lends itself thus for the resituating of antecedents of commitment because it allows for the analysis of attitudes and behaviors that change over time, in relation to experiences and actions that actually takes place within the social movement during participation. I
will therefore apply the notion of an activist career (through) in my analysis of the supporters’ life histories and by paying attention to relevant developments within *We Are Here*, but also those which are not in direct relation to their involvement with the collective but concern other spheres of their lives. Through use of this concept I will gain an understanding about why supporters value the same experiences differently. The difference being based on attitudes and behaviors stemming from personal earlier experiences.

2.2 Availability

In order to analyze the reasons why supporters initially became involved with *We Are Here* I have turned to the concept of availability as proposed by Downton and Wehr (1998). In their study on sustained participation among peace activists the authors argue that people participate in social movements because of their so-called ‘availability’ to do so. They distinguish two aspects, attitudinal availability and situational availability. Attitudinal availability is “the propensity to pursue [...] action because an individual’s beliefs are in harmony with the movement’s goals and means” (Downton & Wehr, 1998, p.536). These beliefs are formed in the early stages of an individual’s life and are held with deep conviction. Beliefs constitute ideas about what we think is true. They are the basis on which we construct our perspective on social reality. Beliefs therefore strongly determine our behavior. Especially beliefs exposed to in intimate settings like the family or religious settings strongly influence an individual’s perspective of social reality. Because socialization happens on the backdrop of one’s consciousness these beliefs are progressively internalized as truths that legitimize and encourage certain behaviors and invalidate and discourage others. Downton and Wehr (1998) link a consistency between an aspirant-participant beliefs and that of the social movement, to the likeliness that one becomes open to movement participation. However, this is only in combination with the second element of availability that they distinguish, situational availability, which emerges when “life circumstances provide the time, money, and energy for their commitment to activism” (Downton & Wehr 1998, p.536). This dimension addresses the practical concern that even if one is willing to become active, he or she should be in the capacity to do so. Together, attitudinal and situational availability explain that movement participation is constituted by an attitudinal availability that through socialization moved an individual towards social engagement and by a situational availability
that provided the individual the practical capacity to do so. Through analysis of what supporters tell me about their reasons to become involved with *We Are Here* I will analyze their attitudinal and situational availability to become involved with *We Are Here*.

2.3 Commitment

While the concept of availability can give us an understanding of the reasons why someone becomes open to movement participation, it does not say anything about the reasons to sustain the participation once an individual becomes active. The few studies that exist on sustained participation in social movements have often been concerned with the study of commitment (see for example Klandermans 1997; Nepstad 2004; Santos-Nascimento 2017). A common way to approach commitment is through the three-component model suggested by Allen and Meyer (1990), which I will discuss further on in this section. Although Allen and Meyer conceptualized their model in order to measure employees' commitment to the organization they worked for, they, and others, have suggested expanding their commitment-model to the study of sustained participation in social movements. The authors argued that while conceptualizations of commitment differed in form (e.g. psychological state, behavior) and content, they all seemed to make associations between strong commitment and likeness to stay in the organization. They furthermore argued that these different conceptualizations of attitudinal commitment often “reflect one of the three general themes: affective attachment, perceived costs and obligation” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.2). This observation has led the authors to suggest a model of commitment that is constituted by affective, continuance and normative components. They propose that:

The affective component of organizational commitment, [...] refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization. The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. Finally, the normative component refers to employees’ feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.1)
Allen and Meyer (1990) stress that these components do not all have to be present in all individuals or to the same degree. The scholars furthermore suggest that different antecedents precede these three components.

In her study on commitment retention among members of a catholic pacifist movement, Nepstad (2004) found that affective commitment comes into being through enjoyable relations with fellow participants or through symbolic and material rewards like prestige and honor. The question that may be asked is: does the participant feel comfortable in the social movement and in his or her role within the movement? Because if there is “[s]trong affective commitment [participants] remain because they want to” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.3). The importance of feeling comfortable and in the right position within a movement has also been pointed out by Downton and Wehr (1998). The authors argued in their study on the importance of belief systems among peace activist that this feeling of being comfortable within the organization will be strengthened if there is a resemblance between the beliefs and convictions of the participant and the beliefs and convictions of the movement. Furthermore, scholars argue that these elements of affective commitment, emotional attachment, and identification, are often explicitly sought by movements' leaders through the activities they organize (e.g. celebratory gatherings, demonstrations) (Downton and Wehr 1998; Fillieule 2010; Nepstad 2004).

The continuance component of commitment, the second component Allen and Meyer (1990) mention, comes into being when participants perceive their cost to leave the organization as too high. These ‘costs’ are seen as lost investments when they would decide to leave. Think about sacrificed time or career potential. The participants whose primary commitment is continuance sustain their participation “because they need to” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.3). Nepstad (2004) argues for example that the participants of the Plowshares movement she studied, who engage in high-risk activism, often develop continuance commitment after they had gone to jail because of their activism. According to her, this leads to a higher devotion to the movement because the realization that they have been to jail, away from their loved ones for no good reason would be a bitter pill to swallow.

The normative component of commitment, the third and last component, refers to employees' feelings of responsibility towards the organization. It develops through "long-term socialization processes that instill beliefs that are consistent with the movement, as well as the moral imperative
to fight injustices" (Nepstad, 2004, p.46). This antecedent of long-term socialization has led Klandermans (1989) to argue that normative commitment cannot be affected by social movements because the conditioning of instilled beliefs and values takes place long before the participant joins the movement. However, he stresses that movement leaders can frame their cause more in resemblance to the belief of its participants and in doing so strengthen their normative commitment. Which is in line of thinking with Downtown and Wehr. In the same vein, Nepstad (2004) showed how the leaders of the Plowshare movement, a Catholic left community "created plausibility structures where normative commitment is strengthened through rituals such as biblical meditations, prayer, and singing" (Nepstad, 2004, p.58). She, for example, recounts how the participants of the movement would participate in ritual singing that explicitly connected their Catholic beliefs against injustice in general and military action in particular. Although I agree with Klandermans (1989) and Nepstad that instilled ‘core’ believes are very hard to change, I do believe that attitudes and behaviors as a result of long-term (primary) socialization processes can be altered by experiences and interactions in different fields. Participants who sustain their participation through "strong normative commitment stay because they feel they ought to do so" (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.3). It is through these three components that I will explore sustained participation and disengagement processes.

I will analyze what supporters do and say in the light of the commitment model as proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) and will argue that supporters who want to stay with We Are Here because they are content with their position within We Are Here and feel comfortable about their role within the movement are motivated by affective commitment. This will be difficult to determine at times because people value enjoyable moments very differently and it depends so much on personality how much this weighs against other determining factors. Here the notion of an activist career offers a way out because through analysis of supporters’ participation in different life spheres and trough time we gain a better understanding why something at a certain point of participation is valued in a particular way. Supporters who feel they need to stay with We Are Here because they perceive it to be their best chance to meet their goals are most likely motivated by continuance commitment. This component will come emerge when it comes to what people lose and gain from their support, the sacrifices they make on the one hand and what they obtain on the other. Supporters who are strongly motivated by normative commitments stay because they ought to do so, may it be because of religion or other core beliefs and values. While the three-component model of commitment is suitable to account for reasons why supporters stay involved with We Are Here it has been developed to account for
motivation of employees within an organization who work in order to sustain their lives by earning money. *We Are Here* is a movement which is able to exist through solidarity without the motivations that money creates. Solidarity is a difficult concept to grasp in this model because it can be seen in all three components.

### 2.4 Interpersonal (dis)trust

In addition to the more general theoretical approaches to study sustained participation and disengagement process that I have introduced so far, I have also sought conceptual help in the theoretical framework focusing on interpersonal trust and distrust. This framework is developed by the philosopher Esther Pedersen (2015) in collaboration with the anthropologist Lotte Meinert to account for the workings of (dis)trust that are particular to a context like that of *We Are Here*, where trust is hard to build because contact is often volatile and new contacts, due to the political controversy concerning *We Are Here*, need to be suspected because of risks of infiltration. Pedersen distinguishes three features of interpersonal trust and distrust: firstly, (dis)trust is to a great extent conditioned by a person’s life history; secondly, (dis)trust evolves over time, and thirdly, trust relationships are always socially and culturally embedded. Following Pedersen, I will conceptualize “interpersonal trust as being formed by individual actions and emerging out of social situations and concerted actions that are beyond the control of the individuals (Pedersen 2015, p.105”).

Pedersen’s (ibid.) framework proposes three main concepts that pay attention to these three characteristics: prima facie (dis)trust; reflective (dis)trust and the locus of trust. The concept ‘prima facie (dis)trust’ refers to the “immediate position of either trust or distrust that an individual agent expresses in the actual meeting with others” (Pedersen 2015, p. 114). This (undeliberate) attitude of (dis)trust is conditioned by past experiences and depends to a large extent on predictability of the individuals’ context. This predictability is related to individuals’ past experiences in similar contexts that shaped expectations about the behavior of others. If these experiences are perceived positive, attitudes of ‘prima facie trust’ come into being, if negative, attitudes of ‘prima facie distrust’ come into being. Reflexive (dis)trust, refers to situations in which the predictability inherent to prima facie is absent and deliberate choices have to be made about acting (dis)trustfully. Reflectiveness about (dis)trust is evoked by the unfamiliarity of the context. Pedersen’s objective with this differentiation is:

> [...] to give an explanation of trust actions, attitudes, and beliefs as unfolding in a continuum that stretches from the conditioned reliance in the routines of everyday
life to the willed engagement of trust in others where the agent is acutely aware of the risk he takes by involving himself in a trust relationship. Depicting individual trust actions, attitudes, and beliefs as such a continuum draws attention to how the individual's trust/distrust in others depends upon social conditioning as well as individual choice. (Pedersen, 2015, p.108)

While Pedersen concepts 'prima facie (dis)trust' and 'reflective (dis)trust' are concerned with the individual experience of (dis)trust, the third main concept of her conceptual framework, the 'locus of trust', is concerned with the wider context wherein (dis)trustful interactions take place. The individuals' (dis)trustful interactions are related “to questions about conventions of social action, institutions and social structure, collective worldviews, and ways of behaving toward nature and social entities” (Pedersen & Liisberg, 2015, p.11). It is, in particular, this third concept that will help me analyze the workings of trust among supporters of We Are Here because it will allow me to situate the different forms of suspicion and other forms of distrust that I encountered which are specific to contexts like We Are Here.

So my theoretical and conceptual orientations share the following features. They are processual, situated in social settings (not isolated nor individualized) and in broader societal context, they include both the dynamics of participation and the disposition or “preparation” prior to participation.
In this chapter I discuss the methods which I used to gather the data which will help me to answer the research questions. Before embarking on the methodology, I will elaborate on the research setting, followed by a reflection on my role as a supporter of *We Are Here*. Then, I will reflect on my role as a researcher within the same context, after which I will bring these two roles together to show how both roles are reflected in the research process and outcome.

### 3.1 Research setting

As explained in the introduction, there are currently five groups of undocumented refugees operating under the name *We Are Here*. Some supporters are involved with several groups, but most supporters become involved with just one group. For the sake of clarity I chose to limit my research to the supporters that are affiliated with one group. I chose the *Solidarity-group* because it was within the context of this group that my research question emerged.

It has to be noted that while all five groups that operate under the name of *We Are Here* are part of the same collective addressing the same problem, there is a big difference between the groups. My findings are therefore not applicable to the other groups. What makes the *Solidarity-group* stand out in relation to the other groups, is that they have not known a lot of stability while the other groups have known times where they could stay for a relatively long period of time in the same building. These differences in stability create different social dynamics which have influence on the members of the respective group and its supporters. It should therefore be noted that the specific dynamics of each group influences the context wherein supporters operate and the findings concentrated around *Solidarity-group* are not “one size fits all” applicable to the experience of supporters from other groups that are part of *We Are Here*.

### 3.2 Entering the field as a supporter

During the winter of 2017-2018 I became an active supporter of *We Are Here*. My involvement with the collective was preceded by an academic interest to write a paper about the perspectives on citizenship among its supporters. What started as participant observation, to contextualize these narratives, ended up in prolonged support that, although differing in content, would continue long after I finished the research paper.
As a supporter of *We Are Here* I have been involved in the organization of demonstrations and assisted with squatting and finding post-eviction solutions. During these activities, I collaborated, in different associations, with members and supporters of the collective. As a supporter I had, besides the necessary interactions to collaborate on specific tasks, almost no contact with other supporters. This was a deliberate decision on my part. From the outset of my involvement as a supporter, there have been several encounters with other supporters during which I have been disturbed by the at times patronage attitudes and behaviors I observed. In addition, I became aware of tensions between some seasoned members and supporters of the collective, which made me more reserved when it came to interacting with other supporters. These tensions became apparent through the conflict-ridden interactions I observed between them, and through the stories members of the collective told me. Even though I understood that every side has two stories and I only listened to one side, that of the members of the collective, I did not want to interfere and was afraid that listening to both sides would do exactly that.

### 3.3 Entering the field as a researcher

When I decided to conduct research among some of the supporters who I avoided during my involvement as being only supporter, I was aware that my role as a researcher called for a different attitude and behavior than my role as supporter. I mistakenly thought that it would be enough to reflect on both roles during my fieldwork. What I had not fully realized prior to my research, is that I would not only write and theorize about my roles, but that action is often called for in the heat of the moment and that decisions on a course of action often have real consequences for real people. In my case I even call some of these people friends which adds an extra layer of complexity.

Building on my experiences as a supporter of *We Are Here*, I assumed that I roughly had an idea of what to expect when I would enter the field as a researcher. After my first week in the field, I found out that this assumption was false. One of the factors responsible for the discrepancy between my expectations and the realities I encountered during my time in the field was the rapid and continuous change when it came to members that make-up the *Solidarity-group*. This meant that there were a lot of ‘new’ members that I did not know and who did not know me either. In addition, this ever changing group of members created unexpected dynamics within the group which affected their relations with me and with the supporters among who I did my research. One of these dynamics was a power play between the old and the new members of the collective in which both parties tried to
recruit me and other supporters in order to form alliances. While new members of the collective critiqued the leadership of the group and questioned the legitimacy of the old leaders’ authority, the old leaders did everything in their power to protect and instill their authority through, among other things, their connection to the supporters.

Due to these unexpected dynamics, I realized that there were several implications stemming from my role as a researcher that I had not taken into account before entering the field. While I had thought about how I, as a researcher, would relate to the field (e.g. entrance, friendships, conflicts), I had spent less thought on how the field (e.g. members, supporters) would relate to me. During my involvement as being only a supporter I had amicable relationships with most members of the collective. Because of the changing dynamics this was no longer the case.

3.4 Conflicting roles: Supporter and researcher or researcher and supporter?
My position as a researcher was on the one hand privileged, because through my own involvement as a supporter of We Are Here I had access to contact with current and ex-supporters and was allowed to be present at and participate in all the activities connected to We Are Here. On the other hand my position turned out to be challenging. As I explained before, as a supporter I deliberately avoided interacting more than necessary with other supporters whose method of work did not align with mine. But now my research question called for interaction with some of the same supporters and my involvement with their projects as well. So, through my role as a researcher, my role as a supporter changed. I experienced it at times as a challenge to be authentic as a supporter, while working with others with whom I had consciously decided not to interfere or collaborate with in the past.

At the same time it became apparent to me that not all the assumptions I held about other supporters prior to entering the field as a researcher were true. As a supporter, my perspective had always been very narrow. I worked intensively together with members of the collective, with some I had developed friendships. Among the members of the collective there was a lot of distrust towards many other supporters. Even though I did not believe every suspicion and allegation that came to my attention, I was nonetheless affected by the stories that were shared with me over and over again.

As a researcher, I had to broaden my narrow perspective and this happened while working with other supporters. During these moments I was actively interacting with them, within and outside the context of We Are Here. Central to many of these interactions was listening to rumors and/or
complaints about members of the collective and other supporters. Even though I was aware of this before, the frequency with which this happened took me by surprise. At first, I would not know what to do with all of these stories, but after advice from my supervisor, I realized that rumors, true or not, are often in part the motivation for people’s actions. Through analysis of these narratives I got an understanding of how the supporters make sense of the context of We Are Here and why they make certain choices. It was during these interactions that I recognized how limited my perspective had been all along.

This new realization gave rise to new questions. Had I been convinced before entering the field that I had some understanding of the social interactions among supporters and between supporters and members of the collective, after entering the field I called this understanding into question. There were moments during the first weeks of my fieldwork that I felt as though I had no idea of what was happening around me. I wondered who was working with whom and under which conditions. I was no longer sure about what I believed before. Because of this uncertainty, I decided to make use of participant observations until I had a better understanding of what was happening around me. This first phase of participant observations helped enormously with bridging the unfamiliar realities of my informants. Because I would be working closely with them on their own projects in collaboration with their colleague supporters, I would submerge myself in their world for a while. Following these observations, I planned interviews with which I was able to contextualize informants’ narratives about their involvement.

3.5 Participant Observations

The first weeks of my fieldwork I spent a lot of time at the building where the Solidarity-group resided at that time. I did participant observations during solidarity events, meetings, demonstrations, moving days, evictions, court cases, open houses and squat actions, and all other activities supporters take part in. In total there have been forty events at which I participated, observed and wrote and recorded fieldnotes. The written notes I made were mostly on my cell phone because during one of the first meetings I attended and introduced my research, a few supporters had made the remark that the anthropologists that earlier studied the collective would sit in the back of the room observing everything and then write it down in their notebook. The supporters had experienced this as alienating. Therefore, I chose not to make use of a note block to write my observation down but instead used my cell phone, except for during the meetings I attended when I would write in a note
Because people use their cellphones often during gatherings, it was not out of place that at times I would make notes on mine. These written notes were complemented by voice recordings on which I would reflect on the event that I had participated in that day, step by step recapturing what had happened. This was beneficial because when I listened to these audio-notes during the writing process I heard the emotion in my voice which helped me remember the event more vividly.

After these first weeks in which I was (re-)introduced to the life of the supporters and welcomed in their homes, the supporters knew about my research and were willing to participate in it. After the first month, I changed my focus to interviews. In total, I conducted interviews with fifteen active supporters and five ex-supporters.

3.6 Interviews

My informants were current supporters and ex-supporters of We Are Here. Under the umbrella ‘support’ I have included a broad category of types of involvement from the provision of meals to the squatting of buildings. In total, I have interviewed twenty (ex-)supporters. The sexes were equally represented. The supporters differed in ages. Half of my informants were younger than fifty years old and half were older, with the youngest being 24 and the oldest being 82 years old. Three of my informants were students, seven of them were pensionaries and the rest had had a profession or an inheritance that allowed them to quit before reaching the age set for a pension. All but three of my informants were white. Two of the white supporters were migrants from European countries. The other white supporters were born in The Netherlands. All three colored informants identify as black with origins in South America or the Caribbean.

In total, I did twenty interviews with (ex-)supporters. These interviews had an average length of 1.5 hours. I divided the interview into two parts. Central in the first part of the interview was the informants’ involvement with the collective. I dealt with this part in chronological order, from their introduction with the collective to their current involvement. During the first part of the interview I asked questions about the reasons why they became involved, the conditions for, and expectations about their involvement. Through these questions I found out how they perceived their involvement,

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2 In addition to the twenty interviews I conducted for this research, I used a transcript of an interview I have done with Janet, a current supporter of We Are Here, a year prior to this research. The aim of that research was the exploration of perspectives on citizenship.
the challenges they encountered and the ways they overcame them and through this I learned what informants needed to sustain their participation. The second part of the interview was about the political and social context in which *We Are Here* operates. This part helped me to understand how informants make sense of the world around them in general and in relation to *We Are Here* in particular. In addition to the formal interviews I had numerous informal conversations with supporters.

So, my fieldwork entailed interviewing (ex-)supporters and doing participant observations during the following activities: solidarity events, meetings, demonstrations, moving days, evictions, court cases and squat actions. The benefits from participating in these activities is that it provided me insights about the supporters position within *We Are Here*. This in turn helped me to understand why the supporter would want to keep that position and therefore sustain their participation or why the supporter would want to change this position with the possibility of defection. In addition, the participant observation contributed to the interpretation of what had been said during the interviews and helped me to look for the differences between what is said and what is done. One of the limitations I encountered during my participation observations is that supporters expected more from me that they would expect from an outsider. They often tried to let me do activities on my own, like sending me to the copy shop to print flyers or do groceries with members of the collective, while my research asked to do these things together in order for me to understand their involvement better.

But this was not the only challenge I experienced stemming from the way supporters perceived me. During the interviews and participant observations I was not always sure if my informants shared something with me as “Lyana the supporter” or “Lyana the researcher”. Therefore, I was not sure if they wanted what they said to be confidential. I tried to overcome this ethical challenge by reminding my informants that I was doing a research. In addition, I often reminded them that my fieldwork would be finished at the 1st of April, to make sure that the supporters and members understood that my increased involvement would decrease again. Thereby I hoped to diminish possible expectations that I could not fulfill. The closer the 1th of April approached, the more I would mention it. While being reflective in a field diary could not resolve all the challenges I encountered during my time in the field, as explained above, it did help me to become aware of these ethical challenges thereby providing me the opportunity to intervene.
From all the people I interviewed, Bas’s involvement with *We Are Here* dates back the longest. He told me that he had been involved since the early days of the collective in the fall of 2012. Bas was present the day when the collective took form in the tent camp in the garden of the Diakonie. He recalled: “We and a few other people spread the sail around the seven images of mercy and that was the first tent. And then I put the name *We Are Here* on it” (Interview Bas, 20/03/2019). But when I ask him how he heard about *We Are Here* for the first time, he takes me even further back in time to 2006, to the one year commemoration of the *Schipholbrand*. The *Schipholbrand* refers to a large fire in the detention center for undocumented people at Schipholairport in October 2005. During this fire eleven detained people died. These people could not be released on time from their cells by the guards. An independent committee later concluded that the failure of a number of organizations led to the *Schipholbrand*. At the time of the *Schipholbrand* Bas was active within *Action Fund X-Y* which is a foundation that raises money in order to finance activists worldwide who are working towards a just and sustainable society. Within *X-Y* Bas did what he called strategic media; he would use different media outlets and forms to generate publicity for certain topics. Until the *Schipholbrand* Bas had worked as a journalist who often wrote about migration and related topics, but always with a focus on what happened abroad. Triggered by the criminal negligence of the state, Bas and his colleagues from *X-Y* developed a campaign to give a face to those affected by the *Schipholbrand*:

The first idea that came to mind was to reconstruct the stories of the deceased, to see where they came from and what they had fled from. But this was soon overshadowed when we met the survivors. They, of course, were more telling. (Interview Bas, 20/03/2019)

One of these survivors that made a big impression on Bas was Papa Sakó, who, one year later during the first commemoration of the *Schipholbrand* in 2006, spoke the following words: “We are here to make a life again, together as one” (Interview Bas, 20/03/2019). It was these words that inspired Bas years later, during the action in the garden of the Diakonie, to use as a statement that would mark the beginning of *We Are Here*.

Although Bas had been interested in migration and related topics all along his career as a journalist, he identifies the *Schipholbrand*, particularly meeting the survivors, as the turning point at
which he became involved with the situation of undocumented refugees in the Netherlands. As explained in the theoretical chapter, Downton and Wehr (1998) argue that people participate in social movements because of their availability to do so, which constitutes their attitudinal availability and situational availability. The former refers to harmony between the beliefs and convictions held by the individual and the social movement. While the latter refers to the patterns of everyday life that help or hinder social movement participation (e.g. money, time and health). Downton and Wehr (ibid.) argue that the combination of both attitudinal availability and situational availability makes social movement participation likely. Both elements of availability are present in Bas his path towards joining *We Are Here*. During his career as a journalist he learned a lot about migration and the complexity of reasons why people leave their countries. He therefore understands that migration often encompasses more than moving from one place to the other and is therefore better able to identify with the members of *We Are Here*. Additionally, the experience of meeting the survivors of the *Schipholbrand* made him realize how urgent the issue of undocumented people is. Through these experiences he became attitudinal available to become involved with the fight of undocumented refugees. Bas’s story shows that his involvement with *We Are Here* is not an isolated event, but rather the result of a process in which convictions and experiences developed an attitude that made him disposed to become involved with the fight of undocumented refugees. He was as it were “ethically prepared to assume the activist role” (Downton & Wehr, 1998, p. 536). In addition, his work as a freelance journalist allowed him to spend his time and energy on *We Are Here*. Bas’s situational availability reflects the second element of Downton and Wehr’s (ibid.) definition of availability. In combination the two aspects of availability enlarged the likeliness of Bas’ involvement with *We Are Here*.

In this chapter I will explore supporters’ life-histories to unpack the factors that made them available to become involved with *We Are Here*, as I phrased it in my first sub-question: “Why did (ex-)supporters initially decide to become involved with *We Are Here*? I will situate supporters’ involvement with *We Are Here* in the phase of life that supporters find themselves in at the moment they hear about *We Are Here* and unpack which experiences, beliefs and conviction have predisposed them to become involved with *We Are Here*. 
4.1 Involvement with We Are Here as a way out of current politics

Kim, an exchange student from Hong-Kong was introduced to We Are Here through her involvement with the Guerrilla Kitchen, an organization that uses fruit and vegetables that others throw away, to cook for those who want or need it. With them, she went several times to one of the buildings to cook for the members of the collective. After her first visit Kim started reading stories from the website of We Are Here where they explain the problem they address and the history of the movement. Kim was stunned to find out about the laws and systems that were behind the exclusion of the members of the collective from ‘normal’ life. Before meeting We Are Here Kim did not know what being undocumented meant. But when she found out more about it, she connected it to a migration issue she was familiar with in Hong Kong:

In the past […] I was a member of the organization of a film festival about social movements. We then had some similar issues, not about refugees but about new immigrants from mainland China coming to Hong Kong. We perceived it to be fundamentally an identity issue, in which the state separates us and them. And so when I realized the undocumented migrant issue in the Netherlands, I think, it is about how the state categorizes different people into undocumented and documented”. (Interview Kim, 02/03/2019)

Due to Kim’s experience organizing the film festival on social movements she came to believe that as long as we will be talking about states and policies we are actually reinforcing the policy. Her critique is based on her conviction that when we criticize policies we are not looking for alternatives. That’s where she believes social movements are a way out. In fact, in getting to know her she appeared to identify with anarchist ideas about society, meaning that since the state in her eyes mistreats its citizens, people can better start taking care of themselves away from the ‘evil state’. In We Are Here Kim therefore saw an alternative way of living together without reinforcing policies. Through Kim’s political convictions she became attitudinal available for becoming involved with We Are Here.

Kim’s motive to become involved with We Are Here as a way out of current politics reflects Bram’s motive to become involved with We Are Here, however in a different way. As a member of the Refugee Task Force of the Council for Churches, Bram was mainly concerned with status-holders and applicants who waited for their process in the residence of asylum centers. Through the Refugee Task Force of the Council for Churches he had followed We Are Here from the sideline, and he became more
and more curious. So when he by chance cycled past one of the squatted buildings he decided to visit them: “I thought, now I am going to see how it is there, and meet the people I heard so much about” (Interview Bram, 25/03/2019). Similar to other informants, Bram experienced his first visits as shocking. He noticed that the place was a mess and there was a lot of alcohol use and aggression. At Bram’s second visit a few days later, he found out that the toilets were clogged and had started flooding. Bram said to himself: “This cannot be true. This is too much” (Interview Bram, 25/03/2019). He then decided that he would write an email to his network to tell them that the Refugee Task Force could endlessly continue to talk about political solutions, but that immediate emergency assistance was needed. He recalled while laughing:

I made a picture of the flooding toilet, which did not look so nice, I assure you, and the same day I have emailed the picture to all these religious organizations and said: “Hello! This is what is going on, this is what happens! What are you doing about it?!” (Interview Bram, 25/03/2019)

Bram sees his involvement with We Are Here as part of a bigger political project. He explained to me that he had been reading a lot of books all his life and now, being halfway his fifties, the time had come to do something with all the knowledge he gained through reading. He told me that his view on the world is underlined by his analysis that due to the globalization of technology and money the nation state is no longer equipped to provide social security. He therefore expects the nation state to fall apart sooner or later. As a Christian he therefore wants to establish a kind of moral network from churches, mosques and leftist movements in Amsterdam, since the current nation state is not and won’t be able to take care of those who needed. For Bram his involvement with We Are Here entails more than just helping the collective by addressing his network. He has bigger goals with his involvement. His bigger goals are informed by his political analysis of his conception of the world. His involvement with We Are Here offers Bram a way to express this political identity. By reading books about the world around us Bram got convinced that we are approaching the end of the political area of the nation state. Influenced by his Christian values Bram wants us to think about solidarity and morality in the area after the nation state. In We Are Here Bram sees a first attempt of the kind of network he is talking about, independent from the state and based on solidarity. Bram’s Christian upbringing instilled in him the value that having solidarity towards those who have less is the right thing to do. That this norm has been deeply instilled in him becomes clear during the interview when
he became visible upset when he talked about the inequality of some having a lot while others have nothing. With a raised voice he said: “It is not right. It can't be like that” (Interview Bram, 25/03/2019). The conviction with which Bram stated “it is not right” shows that he has internalized this belief as a truth. Downton and Wehr (1998) point out that it is ideas like Bram’s, which are held as truths that have the potential to shape our perception of social reality and therefore affect our behavior. Bram feels addressed on this internalized value of solidarity by We Are Here. In addition, he felt like his time for reading is done and that at his age he should become active before he is too old. Bram’s conviction about the nation state and his deeply religiously inspired beliefs that taking care of each other as brothers and sisters is the right thing to do made him attitudinal available to become involved with We Are Here. In addition his life situation allowed him to be active with We Are Here.

4.2 Involvement with We Are Here as a way to fulfill moral obligations

For me, I personally come from a line of people that had been part of the resistance in the second world war. I therefore often think: What would they have done if they lived today? (Interview Marian, 10/01/2019).

Around the same time that Bas wrote ‘We Are Here’ on the fabricated tent in the garden of the Diakonie, Marian, another informant and longtime supporter, heard about We Are Here for the first time. During a demonstration organized by the International Socialists of which she was a member at that time, she was approached by some of the members of the collective who stayed at the tent camp in the Diakonie. They invited her to stop by and drink a cup of tea with them. She accepted the invitation and when the demonstration ended she visited the tent camp. Marian described her introduction to We Are Here as an intense confrontation that shocked her and left her in a state of disbelief. Especially the tent camp at the Notweg, the squatted courtyard in Amsterdam North where the collective moved to after they were evicted from the garden in the Diakonie made a big impression on her. She recalled:

The tent camp was terrible. It was I think late November, early December. Lots of rain, wind, and mud. The toilet had to be dug and it was also unsafe because it was a very open and exposed camp. One time extreme right-wing people came by early in the morning. I was not there, but they locked the camp with chains and stuff. Anyway, this was, of course, an untenable situation. (Interview Marian, 10/01/2019)
From her first visit onwards Marian decided to become actively involved with *We Are Here*. She connects her involvement with *We Are Here* to her heritage and experiences prior to her involvement with *We Are Here*. Marian shared with me that she is a descendant of people that were part of the resistance movement during the Second World War, something she had heard stories of while growing up. As Downtown and Wehr (1998) remind us, beliefs develop in certain time periods and life settings and in particular beliefs acquired during early childhood in the context of the family are among the most persistent beliefs we hold. As explained above, internalized beliefs are regarded as truths. These “truths” form the basis of our construct of reality and therefore shape our behavior. The stories Marian heard throughout her childhood made her feel proud to be related to such respectable people. Downtown and Wehr (1998) point out that particularly ethical beliefs have the power to shape our behavior. Although Marian does not compare her involvement with *We Are Here* to their resistance during the war, she does perceive their conviction to do what they believed was right in the midst of adversity as a direct inspiration for her involvement. In addition to the war heroes from her own bloodline, Marian was also inspired by the stories of war heroes with whom she worked years before she became involved with *We Are Here*. She told me she learned much from the stories they shared with her, but the biggest lesson she learned from them is that "their heroism started with (acts of) humanity before the war started" (Interview Marian, 10/01/2019). Marian's experiences before *We Are Here* instilled in her the moral value that one should do what is right. Which becomes clear from the question that she asks herself in the opening quote of this paragraph: “what would they have done if they lived today?”

Janet is another supporter who has been motivated to become involved with *We Are Here* due to a moral conviction to do the right thing. Janet got to know about the existence of *We Are Here* three years ago while volunteering at a refugee camp in Grande-Synthe, France. While distributing food at the camp, Janet had a conversation with another supporter from the Netherlands. Janet told her that they luckily did not have to distribute food at home, back in the Netherlands. The volunteer responded that this was not true and subsequently told her about *We Are Here*. When Janet came back in the Netherlands she visited one of the groups and from then on became actively involved with *We Are Here*. Just as her presence as a volunteer at a refugee camp in France declined, Janet’s involvement with *We Are Here*, is not an isolated event. Her active involvement with refugees began three years earlier when her second son volunteered at a refugee camp in Greece for the first time. When he came back with stories of the hardships he encountered at the refugee camp, her whole family, except for
her older son, became intensively involved. She quit her job as an investment banker to become a full-time volunteer and started a foundation with her second son. The past three years Janet divided her time between Greece, France and the Netherlands in order to help as many refugees as she possibly can.

Even though Janet told me she has not had the direct example of her parents to be socially engaged in the way she is, she acknowledges that because her parents were Holocaust survivors, she at a young age learned to have sympathy towards refugees and this became a value which inspired her throughout her life. Just as with Marian this value has been internalized throughout early childhood socialization. Janet’s’ attitudinal availability to become involved with *We Are Here* is strengthened by the moral value, that being sympathetic towards refugees is the right thing to do, which she internalized at a young age. Before Janet’s son visited the refugee camp in Greece she would always donate money but through the experiences shared by her son Janet decided she wanted to do more. This experience contributed to her becoming attitudinal available to get involved with *We Are Here*. In addition, Janet emphasized that her successful career as an investment banker had given her the opportunity to spend her time supporting refugees. Janet’s story clearly reflects her attitudinal and situational availability to become a supporter of *We Are Here*. Janet and Marian are both motivated by the moral value to do what is the right thing in their eyes. This is clearly distinguishable from other types of commitments like that of the politically motivated Bas or Kim who see *We Are Here* as a tool to achieve change while Janet and Marian first and foremost are active because they have been socialized into believing that it is the right thing to do. *We Are Here* is for both Janet and Marian a place where they feel addressed on their instilled value to do what is right.

### 4.3 Involvement with *We Are Here* as a divine inspiration

One of the people who received Bram’s email with the picture of the flooding toilet was Hans. At the time he was pastor of several parishes in the east of Amsterdam. After Bram’s emergency call Hans visited the group at the Zeeburgerpad and was, just like Bram, moved by the situation the members of *We Are Here* found themselves in. He explains to me that while he understands the political complexity to find a solution, he also understands the complexity of the reasons why many of the members left their countries. He reasons that if they choose to live under these conditions here, what they left behind must be much worse. He experiences this as a dilemma. He feels guided by the doctrine of the Catholic church that puts a big emphasis on the importance of dignity and solidarity.
Although Hans has no direct solutions for the problem and questions if there ever will be a fitting solution, he understands the situation as one "we have to accept while we try to keep our heads above the water and look for ways to how we make their [the members of the collective] situation more dignified" (Interview Hans, 14/02/2019). Hans explicitly connects his religious inspired convictions to his motivation to participate with We Are Here. As Downton and Wehr (1998) mention, these deeply held religious convictions prescribe his moral behavior to do the right thing. Hans is attitudinal predisposed to engage with We Are Here because of beliefs hold with profound conviction.

Another person that Bram's mail had reached was Mark. As the chairman of Caritas Amstelveen and Buitenveldert, he had received Bram’s emergency call for help. As Caritas Amstelveen, they were used to provide the necessary household goods to families (mainly asylum seekers) who needed it when they moved into their new home. At the time of Bram's emergency call, the Solidarity-group had moved into a building on the Zeeburgerpad. Mark visited the group together with his wife. They then donated a fridge and some other things from their household goods project to the group. When I asked him what this first experience was like, he laughed scornfully and described that first experience as “a meeting with the chaos that you and I are now used to” (Interview Mark, 15/03/2019). In addition to the household goods, Mark promised the group that Caritas would go shopping with the group every other week for two months. In the meantime, Caritas would look for a third party who could take over the groceries on a structural basis. During the interview, Mark joked that it is almost two years later and he is still searching for that third party.

When asking Mark what motivated him to get involved with We Are Here, he told me that I need to see his involvement with We Are Here in the broader context of his life. He is a physicist who had been able to participate in two studies that had been granted a Nobel prize. In that capacity he has always been in the so-called ‘upper’ layers of society. Early in his career, he realized that there are several layers in society and has actively done his best to get to know the ‘lower’ layers of society. He started with giving Dutch lessons to migrants with a status. Over the years these layers become ‘lower’ and ‘lower’. When I asked him why he thought it was important to know different layers of society, he told me about the importance of broadening one’s perspective. He connects this directly to his Christian faith when he adds: “In the end of the day are we not alone on this earth, and my Christian faiths tells me to be aware of that and help those who have it worse than you do” (Interview Mark, 15/03/2019). In addition, he told me that these experiences of getting to know different layers of society, and in particular those with the members of We Are Here, made him realize more and more
that the most urgent problems are not always the problems furthest away. He recalled that at the time he worked a lot with refugees (in this case status holders) he sometimes thought about setting up a school in Palestine or to support existing projects in relation to education. But the more he got to know the lower layers of Dutch society, he has realized that the emergency aid that *We Are Here* needs is no less than the emergency aid provided in Africa.

Just like Hans, Mark connects his involvement with *We Are Here* directly to values from his Christian faith. This clearly differs from earlier discussed political motives and while it resembles the moral motives from Janet and Marian it is not the same as it is guided by a clearly distinguishable religious conviction and perhaps less by unconsciously instilled beliefs by the example of role models.

**4.4 Involvement with *We Are Here* as a way to express guilt**

One of the remarks I often heard from my informants was that they held the Dutch state (partly) responsible for the reasons members of the collective had to flee in the first place. They were therefore upset to see that the Dutch state not only denied the members of the collective asylum but also took away their opportunity to a ‘normal’ life. This observation made them realize that they could not depend on the Dutch state to take responsibility and therefore felt they had to take responsibility themselves. For some, this realization was relatively new, for others this realization had been part of a long process that had taken shape throughout their lives.

One of these supporters was Erika. Erika had become involved with *We Are Here* through her involvement with *Women Against Deportation*, which is an alliance of female refugees and Dutch women that tries to improve the position of female refugees in the Netherlands. *Women Against Deportation* had been involved with *We Are Here* since the early days of the collective when they were residing in the tent camp at the Notweg (the tent camp Marian vividly described in paragraph 4.2). Brit who identifies as a feminist had always known that she wanted to join *Women Against Deportation*. When she returned to the Netherlands six years ago after living for almost three decades in Italy she joined *Women Against Deportation* almost directly and subsequently became involved with *We Are Here*. When I asked her why she had always wanted to join *Women Against Eviction* she told me that this had to with lessons she had learned when she lived in Tanzania over five decades ago.
At the beginning of her twenties, during the late 60s, Erika had lived for three years in Tanzania where she had a job as an assistant researcher on a study on Dutch development projects. Through this research, she learned that big Dutch companies that were almost bankrupt often went to Tanzania and other African countries to initiate development projects such as digging for water sources in order to receive funding. While the funding was being granted, most of the projects were never realized. It made Erika angry because the Dutch state was aware of this. Erika identifies this as the moment when she started to realize how unfair the system is under which we live and the role of the Dutch state therein. She feels the Dutch state should take responsibility for some of the problems that are caused by our way of earning money and connects them to some of the reasons members of the collective fled their country. Erika sees her involvement with Women Against Eviction and We Are Here as a way to fulfill her civil disobedience and she described her involvement with We Are Here as a "result of different lifelines coming together" (Interview Erika, 25/03/2019). She refers to her lifelong learning process concentrated around the ‘perverted’ way we accumulate our wealth, and her giving purpose to her elderly days.

Erika’s pathway to joining Women Against Eviction and We Are Here reflects availability as proposed by Downton and Wehr (1998). As explained before the authors argue that the likeliness an individual becomes involved with a social movement is higher when there is a resemblance between the participant’s own beliefs and convictions and those of the movement. In addition, they point out that the entire socialization of participants shape their construction of reality that form their attitude towards participation in the first place. Erika’s experiences in Tanzania have clearly influenced her perception of reality. These experiences made her critical of the Dutch state and contributed to her belief that the Dutch state is co-responsible for some of the problems in the world. To a certain extent she feels the need to make up for the faults of the Dutch state. Moreover, Erika’s life situation of being retired allows her the availability to be active with We Are Here.

All the supporters I spoke to seemed to be shocked by the situation the members of We Are Here found themselves in when they first got introduced to the collective. But what I showed is that being shocked alone is not enough to become involved with We Are Here. The motivation to become involved with We Are Here, to do something about the situation the members of the collective find themselves, often refers to norms and values acquired in earlier phases in life. During my analysis I have distinguished four types of motivations. Firstly, I distinguished a political motivation in which involvement with We Are Here is seen as a way out of current politics. Secondly, I distinguished a
moral motivation that is based on the conviction that one helps because that’s the ‘right’ thing to do, which can be split up in religiously inspired morals and inspiration by significant others. Finally, I discussed guilt commitment whereby We Are Here is a way to express anger against the left aside responsibility of the Dutch state and a way to make up for it. In the first and last type of motivation I distinguished, political motivation and guilt motivation, becoming involved with We Are Here is seen as a tool, while in the moral type of motivation, inspired by religion of significant others, the involvement with We Are Here itself is the goal and seen as a moral duty. While these experiences, beliefs and deeply held convictions (attitudinal availability) and life situations (situational availability) explain the likeliness that someone participates in a social movement, they do not offer an understanding of the maintenance of their commitment. In the next chapter I will therefore unpack the reasons why people stay committed to We Are Here.
In the previous chapter we have looked into reasons for supporters to become involved with *We Are Here*, in this chapter I will unpack the things that drive the ones that stayed, as I phrased it in my second sub-question: "Which backgrounds, experiences and network/interaction-patterns of involvement contribute to continuity in participation?" To answer this question I made use of observations complemented by interviews and digital analysis of WhatsApp group chats.

**5.1 Things that make supporters tend to continue: the ambivalent workings of “a messy network”**

By a messy network I mean that between the refugees and supporters are all kinds of alliances but also several oppositions. To a certain degree, there is contact through a mailing list to coordinate things. But that mailing list does not function anymore.

(Interview Bas, 20/03/2019)

Bas’s characterization of the *We Are Here*’s organizational structure as a *messy network* is comparable to things written down in my own field notes about the interaction patterns I observed and my own experiences as a supporter. With networks, Bas refers to the different groups consisting out of supporters and members of the collective that work together based on shared ideological convictions or tasks they aim to fulfill. The absence of communication and coordination between these networks seem to create different kinds of both opportunities and challenges for prolonged participation. Although I am aware of the challenges the *messy network* creates, for analytical purpose I will separate the challenges and opportunities. In this paragraph, I will discuss the *messy network* in light of the opportunities it creates for prolonged participation and in the next chapter, I will discuss the challenges.

From the outset, *We Are Here* attracts supporters with diverse professional backgrounds (e.g. students, lawyers, social workers, artists, journalists, writers, scholars) and ideological convictions (e.g. religious, political). Between these different supporters, there are similarities and differences in their perspective on the situation of *We Are Here* and their own involvement. These perspectives obviously bring certain behaviors, expectations and aims, and govern conditions supporters set for
their involvement. These differences in perspective for some turn out to be incompatible, on which I will elaborate in the next chapter.

The different perspectives supporters bring with them was visible from the outset of the collective, which led to the need for alignment. As Bas recalls that despite the ideological clash with others, he continued his participation:

[...] it started already in the garden of the Diakonie when the director of the Diakonie told me: you are not welcome any longer because you create unrest. Well, with them it goes no further than mercy, but with me, it was about political action. They didn’t want that. So when I was no longer welcome. I would sit on a stool on the sidewalk every day where we would talk. (Interview Bas, 20/03/2019)

Bas describes himself as an anarchistic activist. His involvement with We Are Here is based on his ideological conviction that the members of the collective have the right to a normal life. For him, normal life is not the same as equal rights. For Bas, it means having the autonomy to decide over your own destiny. For him self-organization among the members of the collective is therefore fundamental and he criticizes the charity approach of other supporters that made the members of the collective dependent on them. Bas’ perspective is in opposition to other supporters like Janet’s. She identifies as a humanitarian rather than an activist. A humanitarian in Janet’s view believes that every human being has the right to basic needs like shelter, food as well as mental and physical health. Whereas an activist according to her explicitly takes in a political standpoint and actively tries to change a system. Janet acknowledges it is a slippery slope but argues:

Well look, I am against the way the European government is tackling the refugee problem. And I want ... I’m humanitarian. I’m not an activist! That is a very big difference. But it’s ... it’s hard to be a humanitarian without any activism. So for me, my way of activism is to say: It’s not done in my name. I don’t agree with what the government is doing! It’s not in my name! (Interview Janet, 24/01/2018)

There is a big contrast between Bas and Janet’s perspectives on their own involvement with We Are Here. This contrast is not exceptional. Generally speaking, there is a division observable between supporters who see themselves as activists and supporters who see themselves as humanitarians. Although both are activists to some degree, this is how they themselves distinguish between different
types of motives for their involvement. The supporters who see themselves as humanitarians are often concerned with the provision of food and other daily necessities while the activists focus more on squat actions, court cases and demonstrations. Not every supporter falls into one of these categories unequivocally but in general, this division is observable. The *messy network*, somewhat distorted, saturated with miscommunications, apparently allows like-minded supporters to form alliances rather than being forced to work together with supporters with whom their perspective would clash. This reflects the argument made by Jeffrey Rubin (1998) in his analysis of the internal workings of the Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus (COCEI), a radical Marxist grassroot movement in Mexico. Rubin argues that the ambiguities and contradictions inherent to the COCEI produces room for people with different backgrounds to identify with the social movement which allowed them to appeal not only to students and workers but to peasants as well because these ambiguities and contradictions “contain spaces for the production of meaning by ordinary people, for alliance and accommodation, and for internal contestation over representation and mobilization” (Rubens, 1998, p.143).

By forming these alliances within *We Are Here*, supporters establish a context that is aligned with their perspectives and subsequent aims and conditions for their own involvement. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) comes affective commitment into being when someone feels he or she can identify with an organization and feels a sense of belonging. Because the *messy network* allows supporters of *We Are Here* to surround themselves with other supporters who have similar aims and expectations they are able to identify with each other and feel like they are part of a group of like-minded people. The *messy network*, therefore, contributes to prolonged participation because they facilitate the opportunity to identify with other supporters as part of one group. When the organizational structure would be less messy and more organized like an explicitly defined, substantively and ideologically coordinated network, this would hamper identification with *We Are Here* because these tightly defined networks work more "exclusively". A certain ambiguity, polyphony, appears to be more favorable for broad solidarity.

Another opportunity to prolong participation offered by the *messy network* is that in relation to these networks informants spoke about the importance of being surrounded by other supporters who understand the challenges one faces as a supporter of *We Are Here*. This seems to be most common when those involved share a similar perspective on their involvement as is the case within the formed alliances. Hans and Mark for example individually from each other described how much
they appreciated their collaboration with one another. Hans feels strengthened by his collaboration with Mark and emphasizes the importance of “having other supporters to share your journey with, to find support and inspiration with one another when you don’t have it yourself” (Interview Hans, 14/02/2019). Another example is given by Erika who experiences her support from the other Women Against Eviction-members as instrumental to her prolonged participation with We Are Here. The members of Women Against Eviction help each other to set boundaries to their support to make sure that their support does not take over their lives. Erika identifies this as an important factor that enables her to be involved in the long term. The same sentiment was found among most other supporters who were part of one or several alliances. The supporters within the alliances that make up the messy network offer support to each other. This support positively influences prolonged participation because it helps them relieve or evade stress they experience from their involvement with We Are Here. A plural group enables to find “like-minded people” in that broadly composed whole.

But the messy network not only allows for mind-liked people to interact, but it also creates the possibility for not like-minded people to evade each other when they do not feel comfortable with people that differ too much from themselves. Since they don’t necessarily have to work together, one can pick his or her alliances. This is mirrored in Sophie’s remark when she reflects on her relationship with some of the supporters that are part of the financial board. With her long dreadlocks and alternative clothing style she does not feel comfortable among them:

I don’t fight with anyone there. But when they have a party I don’t go to that party because I just don’t feel at home there. But I also admire them and respect them because they do beautiful things for a good cause. (Sophie 08/03/2019)

In addition to the opportunities for like-minded supporters to find support with each other and the opportunities for not like-minded supporters to evade each other, the messy network creates possibilities for individual supporters who do not want to work in a fixed composition. Marian who has been involved with We Are Here since the first tent camp, got disappointed in many of the collaborations she has been a part of throughout the years. The openness of the messy network allowed her to join several alliances. Now that she no longer believes in these collaborations the messy network allows her to temporarily join another supporter or group supporters for a meeting or specific tasks without the expectation to be committed for a longer period. A similar experience is
shared by Bram who emphasized that he does not see himself as a supporter of *We Are Here* but rather as an individual who knows some members of the collective with whom he works on different projects like the solidarity meals he organized together with leaders of the collective. As a self-defined soloist, Bram appreciates the freedom the *messy network* provides. He expresses several times his preference of not being part of an alliance of supporters with whom he has to discuss everything.

Apparently, the messiness that characterizes *We Are Here*’s organizational structure creates the opportunity to establish networks wherein supporters feel a sense of belonging and emotional attachment. These findings suggest that social movements could influence their participant’s prolonged participation by establishing an organizational structure in which participants can identify with- and can receive support from like-minded participants that make them feel as if they are in the right place within the movement. In the next passage I will discuss interaction patterns within one of these networks and analyze how they contribute to continuity of supporters their involvement with *We Are Here*.

**WE’RE JAMMIN’ AND I HOPE YOU LIKE JAMMIN’ TOO... – A SPHERE IMPRESSION**

It is the end of a long hectic day and I am planning to go home. I have just said goodbye to some of the members of the collective who are sitting in the back of the room playing dominos. I am amazed that they can see the dominoes because there is no light inside. In addition, the few windows that could let some of the streetlight inside, are covered with banners that were used in earlier demonstrations. I walk towards the living area where the rest of the group is gathered around the wooden salon table. All the eleven chairs around the table are occupied and in a circle around the chairs, people are sitting on mattresses that are laying on the ground. I am surprised to see that Johannes, Mirella and Anna did not leave yet. They said goodbye more than an hour ago after which I had been studying in the office room in the back of the building. Therefore, I thought I was the last supporter that was still around. The table is filled with tea mugs and beer cans. In the middle of the table is a round red speaker from which reggae music is played. Nobody seems to pay attention to the music, they are too caught up in their conversation.

When Harouna and Daouda notice me they stand up to offer me their chair. I tell them that it is not necessary because I only came to say goodbye before I leave. Before I can say anything more, Daouda starts pulling on the sleeve
of my jacket while he asks me whether I can stay a little longer. Daouda gets support from the others and before I know it Harouna and Kouassi stand up to help Daouda take off my jacket while the rest join them verbally trying to convince me to stay. I am laughing and decide that I can stay a little longer and position my arms behind my back making it easier for them to take off my jacket.

When I sit down Mirella pulls a bottle of red wine from underneath the table in front of her and asks if I want some. I decline and tell her I will make tea later. She continues to fill hers and Johann’s mug. Anna, who is sitting next to me, smiles at me and asks why I don’t drink wine. I tell her that I am tired already and that red wine makes me sleepy. She laughs briefly after which she confides in me that due to her age, she is 82, her stomach does not handle alcohol very well anymore. To which she quickly adds: “so now I only occasionally smoke a joint when I’m home”. While I’m laughing about Anna’s remark, Harouna stands up, scrapes his throat and starts freestyling on the beat of the song that is playing. He has a husky, high-pitched voice which reminds me of some of the reggae singers I used to listen to. I am impressed by his voice. Harouna raps that he is happy that we are spending a nice evening together and suddenly me and the other supporters who are present become part of his rap: “... and we're sitting here with the best of the best, our doctor, our teacher, our lawyer, and our Ethiopian empress!” We all are laughing which only seem to encourage Harouna to go on.

When I look around I see Johannes and Mirella grinch from ear to ear. It is clear that they are having a good time. I notice that Johannes has taken an empty plastic milk can in his right hand and while he is bouncing his upper body and head to the beat, he drums with a pen on the empty milk can. Mirella who sees me smiling at Johannes noticed it as well and starts looking around for something she can use to make music. She takes an empty beer can from the table and starts shaking it against the metal arm of the chair she is sitting on. Daouda joins Harouna and starts improvising a hook to Harouna’s song. His low and deep voice is a big contrast with Harouna’s high pitched voice but it really matches well. Anna and the other members of the collective start clapping and I decide to join them. When the song has come to an end Daouda takes Mirella’s phone from which the music is being played. He announces that it is now his turn, but that he, unlike Harouna, will use good music. He adds that
this good music comes from the Ivory Coast, the country where he was born. Everybody starts laughing and some members of the collective challenge Daouda by suggesting that the artists from their countries of origin are better. It is the start of a discussion about which country in Africa has the best music and moves.

Mirella, Johannes and Anna seemingly enjoy the discussion and interrupt the guys at times to ask questions about the differences and similarities between the music and dances of the African continent. Their interest only seems to ignite the enthusiasm of the boys who do like the attention. The discussion develops into a presentation wherein Harouna and Daouda, joined by other members of the collective, take turns to choose music which they then complement with commentary about the type of music, the region of origin and a demonstration of the dance that belongs to the music. When I stand up to get a cup of tea I am asked if I will go home. I reassure them that I will stay a bit longer and walk towards the kitchen to get some tea. In the kitchen, I get caught up in a conversation with Baba who is preparing food. When I come back with a cup of tea everyone is standing up and trying out the moves that were just shown to them. In the meantime, the music has become louder. I walk through the dancing supporters and members back to my chair. As soon as I put my tea mug on the table I am grabbed by my arm by Anna who direct me to dance as well. Even though I wanted to dismiss her, I decide to participate. If Anna, a woman three times my age is still dancing as if she is in her twenties than I should join as well. (Solidarity-group, 25/02/2019)

5.2 Things that make supporters tend to continue: enjoyable interactions and exchanges

In this paragraph I will describe the context in which the actual support takes place. I will draw mostly on observations to illustrate the day-to-day reality of being a supporter of We Are Here. I will describe how supporters relate to each other and to members of the collective.

Moments like the one described in the opening vignette of this paragraph are not rare within the group with whom I conducted most of my fieldwork. During the three months of my fieldwork, there have been numerous afternoons and evenings that ended up in singing, dancing and laughing together. These moments are not attended by all the supporters and it are often the same supporters who are present. These supporters are the ones whose main activities take place at the building and often visit the group also when they do not have a specific task to fulfill. They are therefore present.
when ordinary afternoons or evenings spontaneously develop into social gatherings. For these supporters, the enjoyable moments seem to be an important factor contributing to their prolonged participation. During several interviews, informants told me that they did not only enjoyed the good times they shared with the collective, but that they in addition were personally developing because they learned from their exchanges about history, religion and culture. One of these supporters was Marian. She experiences her involvement with *We Are Here* as part of an "awakening" process that started for her twenty years ago when she started to become interested in world history. She came to the realization that the world is far more interconnected than she had realized before. Marian describes meeting *We Are Here* as a final step in her awakening process. She sees the members of *We Are Here* as ambassadors of the regions they come from. She believes that most of the members of *We Are Here* have a much better idea of how much the world is interconnected. She experiences her interaction with members of the collective as learning experiences. Through conversations with the members of the collective about the history and the regions they originated from, Marian’s worldview is confirmed and broadened. She has always felt alone within her own networks surrounded by people who had different views of the world and perceives her involvement with *We Are Here* as instrumental in helping her find her own voice. Because her worldview is confirmed she became more confident in expressing her opinions and staying true to herself. This particular reason for prolonged participation is also recognized by Santos Nascimento (2017). In her study on the sustained participation and disengagement of participants of the *Landless Rural Workers Movement* in Brazil, she found that interactions that expand the worldviews of participants can be seen as a source of gratifying experiences and therefore a factor that contributes to prolonged participation in the movement. She argues that “this source of satisfaction is related to access to knowledge and/or the skills that the activists acquire thanks to their participation in the movement, and which would be missing without the movement’s support” (Santos Nascimento, 2017, p.170).

In addition to a source of informal knowledge and skills, moments like the one described in the vignette above contribute to the personal relationship that supporters and members develop. Through these collective moments, not only the active members of the group such as leaders interact with supporters but also members who do not participate in the organization of activities. It were the supporters who were often present at these moments that would tell me that they developed friendships with other supporters and members of the collective. Mirella is one of these supporters and shared on several occasions that although her involvement with *We Are Here* can be challenging
at times, she very much enjoys the interactions she has with the members of the collective. She recalls that this was the case from her first visit onwards: “so then I went there and then you stick around and you share a meal all together and it is just in all the misery and the drama it is also very sociable. I mean I also love reggae and that is always on when I visit they boys” (Interview Mirella, 19/02/2019). Mirella’s comment illustrates Rubin’s (1998) argument that in order for social movement participants to become or stay involved, the social movements should not only offer a problem analysis and a promising way to overcome this perceived problem, they should foster an appealing option for contentment and enjoyment as well. Other supporters with experiences similar to that of Mirella noted as well that these enjoyable moments make it easier to deal with the often harsh reality where the members of We Are Here find themselves in. They intentionally seek these pleasurable interactions. The social gatherings and interactions are part of their reason to stay involved. As discussed in the theoretical framework, Allen and Meyer (1990) argue that participants who are driven by “[s]trong affective commitment remain, because they want to” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.3). Through these moments of pleasurable interaction that are not directly related to We Are Here, but have a rather personal dimension, emotional attachment occurs which makes participants want to stay involved. In the same vein Klandermans (1997) argues that interactions between social movement participants must be a source of satisfaction, will there be a chance for affective commitment to come into being. He notes that rewarding social relations contribute to satisfaction because the more rewarding they are, the more they are able to diminish the perceived cost of movements’ participation.

Not surprisingly, it seems to be important that participants of social movements perceive their participation as satisfying in order for them to prolong their participation. When a social movement has a context in which rewarding relationships can be developed and are encouraged, it is likely that the perceived costs of participation diminish due to the satisfaction experienced by participants.

5.3 Things that make supporters tend to continue: participants' backgrounds and rewarding experiences

In this paragraph I will discuss how different backgrounds contribute to continuity of involvement. I will unpack the relevant experiences supporters brought with them when they joined the collective and contribute to sustained participation. These experiences are related to supporters personal and
professional lives. In addition I will explore how supporters’ experience success and how these successes contribute to sustained participation.

5.3.1 Better equipped to be involved with *We Are Here* through past experiences

Just like personal backgrounds, professional backgrounds and, more importantly, skills learned during these professions seem to contribute to supporters’ capacity for prolonged participation with *We Are Here*. I noticed that supporters often fulfilled a task that was similar to the occupations they had prior to their involvement with *We Are Here*. Bas, a journalist, became responsible for the communication with media; Robert, a writer, used among other things his linguistic skills to write stories about the collective and Sophie started printing and selling t-shirts as she did for other social causes. Being able to rely on skills learned in earlier phases of their lives helped them find a role in which they felt competent. This seems to contribute to prolonged participation. A good example of this is found in Hans’ involvement with *We Are Here*.

As a pastor, Hans had been responsible for the coordination of the collaboration between five different parishes that had to work together. In addition, he had the task to inspire the volunteers and to make sure the organization ran smoothly. When I met Hans during the court case at the beginning of my fieldwork he had been retired a few months before and he had just began to see if he was able to initiate some cooperation and coordination between the individuals who support *We Are Here*. In the weeks after our first meeting, I noticed that he had succeeded in doing just that. In cooperation with Mark, he had been able to find out which supporters had been providing food and had started a cooperation between them and the members of the collective. In addition to his work on better coordination and collaboration among supporters and members of the collective, Hans had since the beginning of his involvement been part of several other networks that came together on a weekly basis to discuss and find solutions for questions related to undocumented refugees within Amsterdam. Before his involvement with *We Are Here* Hans had expected that he as a pastor would have more personal contact with the members of the collective but he had experienced that, just like before his retirement, he again ended up in the more organizational structure of the organization. Although Hans seemed a bit disappointed when he shared this with me, he at the same time seemed comfortable in his current role within the collective. He told me that he "enjoys it to be part of a big group of people who constructively want to think about problems and develop solutions for them" (Interview Hans, 14/02/2019). Allen and Meyer argue that affective commitment arises through
“those experiences that fulfil employees’ psychological needs to feel comfortable within the organization and competent in the work-role” (Allen and Meyer, 1990, p.4). Hans feels at the right place within *We Are Here*. The role he has found for himself enables him to rely on skills gained before participation which he is good at. Furthermore, a feeling of competence in his role makes Hans enjoy what he does. The joy and competence he experiences contribute to his feeling of being comfortable within *We Are Here* and strengthen his affective commitment and therefore contribute to his prolonged participation.

It are, however, not only practical skills like organizational capacities that supporters bring with them from earlier experiences before movement participation. I also observed that there are certain social skills that help supporters navigate tension-ridden situations among members of the collective that often occur. There were, for example, several times that I saw Sophie deflecting an altercation or fight by dancing, singing or using another tactic to distract the attention of the ones involved. During our interview, she told me that she does these things deliberately and had learned to do this when she herself was a squatter and had to share a place with several other people who did not always agree with one another. In addition, she told me that her experience as a bartender had trained her to see a fight coming and react to it before it actually starts. These social skills Sophie developed long before joining *We Are Here* enabled Sophie to navigate through the often tension filled situations within the movement. These social skills gave her a confident feeling and enabled Sophie her skills her to find a fitting role in the collective. Sophie feels content that she can contribute to the collective in a positive manner. Similar to Hans, does Sophie’s feeling of being in the right place within *We Are Here* strengthens her affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990) and therefore contributes to her sustained participation.

Other informants shared how their personal experiences before joining *We Are Here* had created a better understanding of the situation the members of *We Are Here* find themselves in. This seemed to positively influence their commitment because it enabled them to understand the choices and behaviors of members of the collective better which in turn made them better able to deal with unmet expectations from the members of the collective. In this regard, Erika shared with me that it is easy for her to accept that people leave their countries and try to find a better life somewhere else. She herself had done so more than thirty years ago when she followed the love of her life to Italy.

I had the opportunity to arrange my migration in such a way, that I was declared unfit for work, and could leave with a basic income. I received enough money to get
through the month. All of those things that were legally possible in the 80s and 90s and, of course, these are enormous privileges. Because then you don’t have to be rich but you can survive, that freedom. [...] God damn it, people have always left when they thought: I will have it better elsewhere! You can’t blame people for that! (Erika interview, 25/03/2019)

A similar experience of being able to identify better with the members of the collective was shared by Mirella. Mirella confided in me that she had been through several hardships throughout her life. Among those hardships were her battles with depression. Even though she acknowledges that she does not know how it feels to have no legal status or a roof above your head, she does understand what it means to feel very unhappy. She explains: “So when I see those boys acting apathetic, or are not able to do anything, I completely understand that, I’ve been through it myself” (Interview Mirella, 19/02/2019). Mirella’s ability to identify with the mental hardships of members of the collective seems to enlarge her capacity to emphasize with the members of We Are Here. Erika’s and Mirella’s personal experiences contributed to a better understanding of the choices and behaviors of members of the collective. This understanding influenced the way they related to the members of the collective. They had fewer expectations from them to behave in a certain way and were, therefore, more flexible in their approach. This led to fewer disappointments and therefore contributes to prolonged participation. These two examples show that certain backgrounds of supporters influence supporters’ capacity for empathy, tolerance, and non-judgmental understanding. These in itself are not necessarily reasons to stay involved with We Are Here, but they rather enable the possibility to stay committed despite a direct appreciation for one’s involvement.

Apparently skills supporters acquired before becoming involved with We Are Here can contribute to sustained participation if one can find a role within the collective where he or she can perform these skills. If that is possible these skills contribute to a feeling of competence in one’s role, which can be seen as affective commitment and moreover contributes to an overall satisfactory experience of movement participation.

MIRELLA’S DAY IN COURT
It is Monday afternoon, 4:15 pm and we are finally allowed to enter the court room. I am together with Mirella, Johannes, Marian, Anna and about twenty members of the Solidarity-group in at the courthouse at the Parnassusweg in the
South of Amsterdam. Today is the summary proceeding against the public prosecutor to stop the announced eviction of the current building where the group is staying.

Due to struggles within the group, disagreements had arisen as to whether they wanted to go to court today or not. Because the leaders did not want this, they had not informed the rest of the group and did not ask a lawyer to represent them. This became apparent during the meeting we had yesterday. The members of the collective that did want to go had asked us to come along. Because we only found out yesterday that there would be a summary proceeding today, we did not have enough time to find a lawyer or ask the courthouse for a rescheduling of the summary proceedings. After some discussion about possible strategies, Mirella had suggested that she could try to represent the group.

When everyone is seated the judge introduces herself and the representatives of the state and the counterparty she turns her head at our side of the aisle and looks to Mirella. After a few short questions about the absence of a lawyer and Mirella's involvement in We Are Here the judge gives Mirella permission to represent the group. Mirella thanks the judge and asks if she can start because her argument contains a request to postpone the summary proceedings. The judge agrees and Mirella sits up and leans a little forward to access the microphone on the table in front of her. She starts reading:

“I would like to start my appeal with a short reminder to the fact that it is February 25, the commemoration of the February strike. Furthermore I have three requests. My first request is to postponement concerning this matter. According to the constitution it is stipulated that one must be represented by a sworn lawyer. We therefore ask the plaintiff for patience until this condition is met. My second request is to be able to read my story and my third request is that I want to remind those who are present here today of the three core values of Amsterdam, namely: Mercy, Determination and Heroism […].”

(Parnassusweg, 25/02/2019)
5.3.2 The acquisition of symbolic rewards through achieved successes

In this part, I aim to show how, next to supporters their personal and professional backgrounds, successful experiences contribute to prolonged participation through the acquisition of symbolic rewards.

Mirella’s speech at the summary proceeding described in the vignette above went on for some twenty more minutes. And although she did not manage to get the court case postponed as the collective had wanted, the final verdict of the judge was even better: the eviction itself was postponed with a month. While this may not look like a big success to an outsider, in the two years of my involvement with *We Are Here* this was the second best verdict that I had witnessed. Normally the court would decide for direct eviction or at the most a delay of one or two weeks. Only one time I experienced that the judge gave the members of the collective a month to leave the building they had occupied. This result, of course, had made Mirella proud of her accomplishment. From that moment on jokes would be made about it and the members of the collective playfully nicknamed her the new lawyer of the group. Mirella’s successful experience gave her the courage to persist and increased her confidence. The effect from this successful experience became even more apparent when three months later the group had to go to court again for a summary proceeding of the building they stayed at that time. Mirella argued that the group should not depend on a lawyer but that the supporters should do it themselves referring to her success in comparison to the results booked by the lawyers who had represented the collective the other summary proceedings. Mirella’s performance as ‘lawyer’ of the group had given her the courage to persist in similar situations. Mirella’s experience reflects Filleule’s (2010) remark that social movement participation can be a source of rewards. These rewards can be material and symbolic. I argue that successful experiences can also be seen as a reward for the effort that supporters have made through their involvement because they give supporters the feeling that their efforts had not gone unnoticed or been in vain, and in this regard a successful experience, even a minor one, can be seen as a kind of symbolic reward that motivate supporters to sustain their participation.

While the effects of Mirella her achievement had mainly been on her side, the over one hundred resident permits that have been granted since the beginning of *We Are Here* are experienced as successes among most of the supporters. During interviews but also in conversations I observed with outsiders who did not know the collective this fact was broadly shared. The granted resident permits legitimized supporters involvement with *We Are Here* because for them it proved that the members
of the collective were not asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal remedies, but refugees who
did not have fair legal procedures before. This legitimacy and useful purpose of their involvement
increased their resolution to keep the fight going which contributed to their sustained participation.
Furthermore, these permits reassured them, although it was not their primary goal, that their fight
was not for nothing and they achieved successes. Mostly, it were the supporters who had close
personal relations with members of the collective who experienced the moment when resident
permits were granted as successes because they had been personally involved in their trajectories
towards it. The following quote of Erika clearly illustrates this:

It is of course completely insane, that I once experienced that a woman that I had
been a buddy of, was granted a residence permit after a very long journey. I had been
on her side during her IMS research, that is short for, Institution for Medical Social
Research, that is conducted when someone may have had to deal with sexual
violence and so on. I have witnessed all of that. The IMS research consists of several
interviews and examinations with a psychologist and gynecologist. I was allowed to
sit by these interviews, which is often not allowed, but I was allowed to stay with
her. [...] Being allowed to be there, [the moment that asylum is granted] that just
feels like you're having a child yourself, so festive. (Erika interview, 25/03/2019)

As can be seen Erika compared the joy she experienced when her buddy finally got her residence
permit, as the joy experienced after giving birth to a child. Because of her direct involvement in the
lives of the people she works with, Erika experiences the moment when people do get a permit and
can start their ‘normal’ lives as a big success. This was clearly visible for the enthusiastic manner
when she talked about the occasion. These moments, which light her up contributed to her overall
feeling of satisfaction concerning her involvement and could therefore be seen as a rewarding
experience. As Fillieule (2010) reminds us it are in particular supporters of grassroots movements
like We Are Here for whom it is important that they experience rewards through their experience
because the goals they tried to achieve often take a long breath. Through rewarding successful
experiences supporters keep motivated to fight for their main goal and therefore contribute to their
sustained participation.

In this chapter I showed why supporters stay involved with We Are Here. What seems to be
important is that supporters feel good about their role within the collective. ‘Feeling good’ is of course
relative and what it meant was often determined by a supporters’ background and perspective on his or her own involvement what he or she would define as ‘good’. Through the *messy network* I described supporters could find alliances which contributed to this because these alliances increase the likelihood that they could find a fitting role in which a supporter felt he or she could really contribute, which was often connected to skills acquired in past experiences. In addition, the *messy network* allowed supporters to find other supporters who shared the same perspective on the way they related to each other and members of the collective which increased the likelihood of enjoyable relations and interactions. Furthermore, the successful experiences contributed to supporters’ feeling at the right place within the collective because it legitimized their involvement and lit them up and made them more resolute.
In the first two chapters I have discussed (ex-)supporters’ initial motivations to become involved with *We Are Here* and unpacked the things that contribute to the continuity of their involvement. In this chapter, I will unpack the factors that apparently contribute to ex-supporters’ reasons for ending their involvement with *We Are Here*, as I have phrased it in my fourth sub-question: “Which backgrounds, experiences and network/interaction-patterns of involvement contribute to discontinuity in participation?”

To answer this question, I made use of the data that I have gathered whilst interviewing ex-supporters of *We Are Here*. While preparing these interviews I expected that it would possibly be difficult for me to find ex-supporters that were willing to talk to me. This turned out to be the opposite. All the ex-supporters I spoke to told me they were happy they could finally share their doubts, disappointments, and frustrations with someone who is familiar with the context. These interviews are among the longest I have conducted and would take up several hours during which they developed more into conversations along the way.

Through analyses of these ex-supporters’ different trajectories, it becomes clear that the disengagement process is multifaceted and that it is often a combination of several factors that made the supporters decide to quit their involvement. That said, all the supporters do identify a crucial moment during their participation which has made them decide to end their involvement with *We Are Here*, like the last straw that breaks the camel’s back.

6.1 Marsha’s disengagement process: full of disappointment in the motives and behaviors of other supporters

Those left activists are sometimes harder to fight than right ones. (Interview Marsha, 05/03/2019)

In the summer of 2012 Marsha was introduced to *We Are Here* by a friend. After her first visit she started to visit the collective more often. After a while Marsha started organizing Dutch classes for the members of the collective and helped individuals with a variety of tasks like finding a doctor or reopening their asylum application. The reasons why Marsha after two years decided to keep her distance from *We Are Here* is twofold. Marsha was inspired by Black activist, Pan-Africanist thinkers
which had made her realize that her heritage was not only connected to Suriname and the Caribbean Islands but found its roots in the African continent. This identification process with the members of the collective, the majority of whom originate from African countries, led her to expect that there would be Somalian, Ethiopian or other women of color active within the collective. So, she was surprised and disappointed when she realized that she was one of the few black supporters. When Marsha started Dutch lessons, she noticed that all the books given to the members of the collective by supporters were Dutch children’s books like *Jip en Janneke* or books written by white authors presenting a white perspective and experience. After discussing it with the members of *We Are Here* Marsha started to bring books written by black authors. When she brought the books, she experienced a lot of hostility from the white supporters. The level of hostility she experienced varied from supporter to supporter. Some supporters would confront her and ask her why it was so important in her eyes who had written the books they brought, others would tell her that the members of the collective had too much on their minds to be concerned with issues like race and representation and would rather read something simple or play a boardgame.

Soon Marsha became frustrated by the, in her eyes, often paternalistic and colonial tendencies of the supporters. She was annoyed by how some of the supporters spoke to and about the members of the collective as if they were children instead of grown men. She, for example, criticized supporters who referred to the members of the collective as “boys” even though the average age at that time was early thirties. When Marsha would encounter these kinds of interactions, she would challenge the supporter on this behavior that she deemed as wrong. They would often feel attacked and respond defensively. Marsha experienced this as tiresome. She recalled a situation that went on through the mailing list about an incident in which a member of the collective from Sierra Leone was accused of having stolen fifty euros from a supporter which eventually turned out not to be not true. In this virtual public exchange, the supporter who had made the allegation had said something along the line: “That is how things go in Sierra Leone.” Marsha was offended by this racist remark and called the supporter out through the mailing list. The supporter that felt attacked responded defensively saying he did not mean what he had said. While the supporter was backed by other supporters who found Marsha's reaction exaggerated and who empathized with the supporter involved, Marsha did not feel any support. She shared many similar situations with me and during these confrontations there was only one other supporter who would at times back Marsha up. But this supporter ended his direct involvement with the collective before she did, so she was back on her own again.
A crucial moment in Marsha’s processes of disengagement was experiencing some of the members of the collective trying to deceive her. While they encouraged her to speak out on paternalistic tendencies by white supporters and approached her as a sister, playing into their shared blackness, she perceived them to simultaneously willingly play the dependent role towards the same white supporters if that would benefit them. After this realization, Marsha consciously took a few steps back.

After following *We Are Here* for a while from the sideline Marsha could not shake off the feeling of having abandoned the members of the collective, so she became involved again. Soon after her return, Marsha realized that nothing had changed and all the things that frustrated her before still happened, which made her decide to leave again. When I asked her what made her decide to leave the collective for good she recalls a very difficult time when one of the members of the collective died. Marsha had been outraged by the behavior of some of the supporters concerning his stay in the hospital, death and memorial service. Her outrage started when the supporters gave permission to stop the life-support he was on without asking or even informing his best friend, the closest thing to family that he had in The Netherlands. In addition, she resented the supporters for rejecting the hospitals’ offer to involve an Imam to assist the deceased member in a peaceful passage, even though he had been a practicing Muslim. When his best friend was organizing the memorial service with help from Marsha, other supporters proposed to do a demonstration in front of the mosque during the memorial service. Marsha was so outraged by this that she warned the other supporters that if someone would do that, that person would have a serious problem with her. In addition, there were some anarchistic orientated supporters who were discussing if they should adhere to Islamic rules to wear a scarf in the mosque because they perceived it as oppressive to women. After a long discussion Marsha told these supporters that if they were unable to show a little respect, they would not be welcome at the memorial service. Thinking back about this time, Marsha recalled: “Those left activist are sometimes harder to fight than then right ones” (Interview Marsha). This incident had made Marsha realize that for other supporters the members of the collective were a mere tool to fight their own convictions and to make them feel good about themselves. Thus, when the memorial service was being cared for, Marsha decided to quit her involvement with *We Are Here* again, this time for good.

Marsha’s involvement with *We Are Here* is characterized by many disappointments in her co-supporters. These disappointments were based on their cultural and religious sectarianism, prejudice, and patronage and made her eventually decide to leave *We Are Here*. 
6.2 Frank’s disengagement process: full of doubts and hesitations

I thought I’m going to be here and see what happens and maybe that I can contribute something meaningful and if that is not the case, then I will also distance myself. Because otherwise, it makes no sense to hang around there. (Interview Frank, 27/02/2019)

Many ex-supporters had a clear idea of how they wanted to contribute to the collective after their first visit. With Frank, this was not the case, for he adopted a more ‘wait-and-see’ approach. Since the outset of his involvement with We Are Here, Frank shared with me the dilemma of having a hard time trying to find out what role to play as a supporter. Frank felt that as a student he lacked the skills to be of any substantial help. Although Frank was moved by the situation members of the collective find themselves in and wanted to help them, he soon decided that if he was not able to find a fitting role he would not stay involved any longer.

During this period of orientation, Frank would regularly visit the group and started to attend meetings that were organized by leaders and supporters of the collective. Frank experienced these meetings as tiring and frustrating. He was annoyed that nobody seemed to listen to each other and that there were no decisions made. In addition, did he not like it that there were often more supporters present than refugees and that the refugees that were present often did not get the chance to speak out because the supporters did most of the talking. This frustrated Frank because the topics that were discussed during these meetings concerned the lives of the refugees. During these meetings, Frank, in addition, learned that:

Not only among the volunteers there were a lot of tensions about money, and the mode of organization, but there were in addition several We Are Here groups between whom there was a lot of tension too. So it became clear to me very soon that I did not want to have to deal with that. I understood that these tensions have roots many years ago and I don’t know what it is like at this moment, but I thought then, as a student, I will not interfere with that. (Interview Frank, 27/02/2019)

For Frank, it was a conscious decision not to interfere too much with other supporters and decided he would no longer attend all the meetings that were organized. He distanced himself from the political and organizational dimensions of the collective. While he was still finding a fitting role for
himself, he started to focus on the provision of things that the collective needed like food and other necessities like a heater and blankets. In addition, he chose to focus more on the social dimension of being involved with the collective, like drinking coffee with members of the collective or spending leisure time at the park. This contact was deliberately more individual and often took place outside the building because often when he would visit the group he would at some point feel awkward and uneasy because of the internal tensions within the group. By maintaining individual relations Frank tried to avoid being dragged into long standing rivalries that also existed among the members of the collective.

Although Frank did not work a lot with other supporters at the beginning of his involvement, he did meet them at social gatherings and was friendly with most of them. There were some with whom he did not connect at all because their mode of operation differed too much from his own. At some point, Frank became, against better judgment, involved in a squat action after some of the members of the collective insisted on it. This squat was organized by a supporter who had a mode of operation with which Frank did not agree because Frank felt he took the lead too much, thereby overshadowing the members of the collective. The squat failed because the supporter in question did not do the preparations right, and the building turned out to be occupied. By this action, the supporter had put the involved members and supporters in serious risk. When Frank tells about this experience during the interview, he gets noticeably frustrated again.

When I asked Frank what made him eventually decide to quit his involvement with the collective, he recalled a meeting in the Vondelbunker. The group with whom he was involved was falling apart and struggled to find a building they could squat. During the meeting in the park where members and supporters spoke about what to do next, Frank was annoyed that some of the old supporters tried to control things and according to him put themselves too much at the center of attention. He decided he did not want to be part of the collective if this was how things went and decided there and then to quit his involvement. Although he did stay in touch with some of the individuals with whom he already had contact more often, these connections eventually also diminished.

Just like Marsha, Frank quit his involvement with We Are Here due to disappointments in other supporters. Frank, who joined the collective with the intention to collaborate with other individuals in order to pursue a shared goal, was put off by his confrontation with the ugly reality of
self-promotion, resentment and rivalry. As a newcomer with good intentions, he did not want to be a part of the intra-social hostility that he found; which eventually led to his disengagement.

6.3 Miranda's disengagement process: full of allegations of insincere motivations

I believe in discipline. You can only build an organization like *We Are Here* with a lot of discipline. If there is no discipline you can try whatever you want, but it will not work. Because if everyone abides by the rules and does what he or she must do, then you can formulate goals and then you can also achieve your goals. But if there is no structure, you create a situation in which there is room to play each other out against each other. (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019)

Miranda became involved with the collective 18 months ago when the group had squatted the *Christus Koningkerk* in the east of Amsterdam. After her first visit to the *Christus Koningkerk* she realized that there was no organizational structure. In addition, she noticed that there was no communication between the supporters and the members of the collective and among both groups. She felt like this would be something she was able to contribute, given her eight years of experience working in an asylum center. During these eight years, she worked as a social worker and helped to set up a new asylum center. About the legitimacy of her contribution she says: “It is not that I only talk, but I also have experience with it. So, I thought I would bring the advantage of knowledge and experience to this group” (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019). Miranda perceived it to be a challenge to see if she was able to build an organizational structure. Miranda believed that once there would be a structure and better communication between those involved it would be easier to create stability so that the members of the collective could have rest for once and would not have to worry about what they would eat the next day or where they could rest their heads at night.

After Miranda’s first visit to the *Christus Koningkerk*, she was shocked by the mess she encountered:

So I came there the first time and I thought: ‘Wow, what a mess, that cannot be!’ I started thinking right away: ‘Imagine that you have someone, a benefactor who thinks: ‘I have empathy for those men, I want to do something’. And that person comes along unannounced and he sees the mess.’ So, the second time I came that week, I went to the Lidl to get cleaning stuff. I said: “Hello boys, we are going to clean...
the place together.” Within a half hour, it was finished, that altar was empty. Not to brag, but several other supporters came in and I was talking with one of them and asked: “You come here longer than I do, why did you just not put those men to work?” She argued that they are still adults who need to do it themselves. I said: “No! I also occasionally have to sit with my husband to make him aware of the mess he leaves behind. We were done cleaning in thirty minutes! (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019)

After several similar encounters, it became clear to Miranda that there was not much of an organization and that most of the supporters left it over to the members of the collective to take initiative. She did not understand how the supporters could be so passive. She was shocked by the numerous supporters she had seen who came around just to drink coffee and tea with the members of the collective. “They come in and have a nice cup of coffee. I haven't had time to drink coffee though! I thought this had to happen and that had to happen. We don’t have time to chit chat” (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019). She understood that most of the members of the collective were mostly concerned with short-term planning and perceived it to be the responsibility of the supporters to develop long-term planning. Together with some other new supporters, she started to organize meetings in which they formed commissions consisting out of two supporters and two members of the collective. These commissions were concerned with the management of food, evictions, and other recurring events. She was convinced of the urgency to develop these structures when she experienced the inefficient way the group and supporters dealt with evictions.

At the time that Miranda became involved with the collective there was an upcoming eviction of one of the buildings We Are Here was occupying. Miranda understood the passive attitude of members of the collective but was stunned by the passive attitude of the other supporters. In the days leading up to the eviction, nothing was organized or prepared. It seemed as if members and supporters were just waiting for that day to arrive. She was surprised about the lack of coordination concerning the upcoming eviction, considering evictions were not new for the collective at the time Miranda became involved. Only on the day of the eviction members became active and started to see if they could arrange supporters to help them with the transportation of their stuff. Because they did not succeed to arrange transportation last minute, they had to leave behind the things which they could not transport by foot or by bike. When Miranda would ask the other supporters why they did not prepare transportation and storage room to store the things they would definitely need again, like chairs and mattresses, the supporters would tell her that evictions were often unorganized because
members of the collective would be very distressed during these times and would have too much on
their minds to be concerned with the practical execution of the eviction. Miranda understood that,
but unlike the supporters who used it as a reason to do nothing, it confirmed Miranda’s believe that
in situations like this “supporters should take the responsibility to organize these things when
members of the collective seemed not to be able to do it” (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019).

Another obstacle Miranda aimed to overcome with the development of organizational
structure, was the lack of communication between supporters and members and among each of the
groups. She noticed that most of the time only the leaders of the groups were present at the meetings
and they did not communicate with the other members what was discussed during these meetings.
Miranda identified bad communication as a big factor contributing to distrust between the people
involved because the other members of the group got the feeling that supporters and leaders talked
about them without informing them. Through the establishment of the different committees, she tried
to involve more members of the collective than just the leaders. But when the committees started to
work, and there was coordination of tasks and information was shared, Miranda became aware that
some of the members of the collective, in particular, the ones who had a leading role, were not very
happy with Miranda’s reorganization of things. At first, they had been enthusiastic and asked her to
become a leader herself. Although she declined it, she did become heavily involved with the
coordination of things. When the organizational structure she introduced had direct consequences
for the positions of the leaders, their contact had gone sour. She remembered:

The leaders [of the collective] had of course also acquired a certain position for
themselves. They also had the benefits, of course, you know being the ones who have
most of the information and contact with the supporters. Of course, they realized
that with me around their positions were at stake. (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019)

To strengthen their own position, leaders of the collective started rumors about Miranda that
questioned her intentions. But there were not only suspicions and allegations of insincere
motivations against Miranda. She herself came to suspect leaders of the collective of being informants
for the police or municipality. It was because of these suspicions and allegations back and forth that
made Miranda decide to end her involvement with We Are Here.

Miranda describes her involvement as a road full of missed chances. Often when she proposed
a new idea this idea was criticized by old supporters who already tried it in some way or form; when
she did succeed to arrange things on her own, she was criticized by the same supporters that she took too much control. Miranda experienced these interactions as demotivating, and this made her stop sharing new ideas. Miranda expressed several times that she still was very disappointed that despite her knowledge and experience, she had not been able to do what she set out to do from the beginning: build an organization and foster communication. She still believes she could have done more for the collective:

It is more the feeling that I, I saw so many things that were possible. And then it doesn’t work, then it doesn’t work to get that movement into it. And then you get frustrated, a feeling of powerlessness. Because you see the potential that exists in the group. (Interview Miranda, 02/03/2019)

For Miranda, her reason to quit her involvement with We Are Here was twofold. The organizational immaturity and the passive attitude about it from other supporters became a source of frustration. When she intervened and tried to reorganize the support this led to suspicion, distrust and allegations of insincere motives which made her eventually decide to leave the collective.

6.4 Davina’s disengagement process: full of disappointments in the members of the collective

A few weeks before Miranda was introduced to the collective, Davina had found out that the collective had squatted the Christus Koningkerk. After her first visit to the group, she felt the urgency to do something to help. From then on, she would regularly visit the group in the church. Just like Miranda, Davina soon realized that there was no organizational structure but rather different groups between whom there was hardly any communication. Davina had expected with her experiences as a project manager that she could contribute to building a structure that would allow “for better communication and coordination between supporters and refugees so that things were able to be set up faster, with regard to food and the organization of demonstrations and shelter” (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019).

In addition, Davina hoped to give the members of the collective the feeling that there are people who support them and have not forgotten about them.

As part of a better organizational structure, Davina started to organize weekly meetings. These seemed to be successful because it temporarily spurred better communication between the different groups of supporters. However, after a few weeks, the enthusiasm to attend these meetings started to decrease and subsequently so did the positive effects of them. Davina blamed this on different
factors like shifting availability of supports and not seeing results directly. In addition, Davina identified a division between old and new supporters as a factor that hindered further collaboration. She remembered:

I became aware that there was a lot going on within the supporters group, and now I don’t know it exactly anymore, but there seemed to be a division between newcomers like myself, who wanted to take the lead and still had a lot of energy but had no experience and old supporters that had been helping for a long time and had already tried everything. So I had the feeling that the old group and the new group didn’t really want to work together. (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019)

It was not only during these meetings that Davina noticed that there was animosity within the supporters’ group but also through the rumors and allegations that were shared with her by other supporters.

Not only had her aim to implement an organizational structure failed, but Davina also became aware that building friendships was harder than she expected it to be. While Davina would have contact with most of the members of the collective when she would visit, she acknowledges that it was a handful of members that she would have contact with intensively. These were the leaders at that moment and some of the other active members that spoke English or French. If she wanted to arrange things, she would do that in collaboration with one of these members. After a while, Davina became aware that there were a lot of internal struggles within the group and she realized that she had only a partial perspective on the intergroup dynamics. As a newcomer, she experienced that people tried to influence her by telling her not to listen to or trust certain people. She did not like this because she felt that people tried to use her in their personal conflicts.

In addition to the rumors that Davina heard about insincere intentions, she also was confronted with examples of these herself. She recalls several experiences that disappointed her and changed the way that she looked at her involvement with the collective. One of these experiences happened early on in her involvement when she gave a used MacBook to one of the members of the collective. She gave it to him, however it was meant for the group. Two days later she found out that he had sold the MacBook and kept the money for himself. At first, Davina was disappointed in him but after she gave it more thought she understood “that is of course just what comes to mind when you are [financially] at the bottom” (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019). Another experience that happened
a little later in her involvement disappointed her even more. One of the members of the collective had asked her to help him with setting up a bicycle business. Given her experience in marketing, Davina thought this was something she could help him with. At first, they tried to develop a business plan together but the cooperation between them went too slow for Davina, she then decided to do it for him. After spending quite some time on it, immersing herself in the topic by reading about it and calling bike traders for information she handed the business plan to Ibrahim. Later on, Davina found out that Ibrahim never took the time to read the business plan but had used it to be eligible for a start capital that was offered to him by another supporter. With hindsight, Davina admits that it was naïve of her to think that all the members of the group had good intentions, and to a certain degree she felt that she understood the intentionality behind their actions but experiences like the one with Ibrahim had a demotivating effect on Davina and her involvement:

For me, it took away the charm of volunteering. I thought that I had built real friendships, but I didn't get so much in return at that level. I was not sure if my friendship was really wanted and if my help was really needed. I felt it like that, perhaps it is true. (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019)

Later on, Davina understood that there was not only distrust within the group but also against some of the supporters. This made her confused about whom to trust. She recalls a conversation with one of the members of the collective during a neighbor-day in which he advised her never to talk to Lisa, one of the old-time supporters of the collective. Davina was surprised by this remark because until then she had thought of Lisa as one of the most important supporters who had done a lot for the collective over the years. “I just didn’t get it anymore. I mean, something has probably happened between them in the past, probably there has been a fight or something.” Davina understood that it was often “long standing conflicts that made the dynamic within and between both groups really difficult” (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019). Although Davina tried not to become part of these long-standing rivalries, she found it very hard not to be influenced by them because the different parties involved in them were pulling on her from different sides. Due to these experiences, Davina was disillusioned that it was not as easy to help substantially like she had expected it to be. Especially the distrust among the group and between supporters and members of the collective disappointed her. She recalls:
It is so complex from both sides. Because at first I thought indeed we just all need to work together and it is going to be fantastic. Then I saw how the group dynamic is on the refugee side: Very complex. I still have not figured out what is going on there. I really know a fraction. But later on, it did dawn on me that within the supporters’ group there is also a lot going on. That just makes it so complicated. You must have such a long breath if you want to keep this up, I think. (Interview Davina, 05/02/2019)

So, when Davina got pregnant she felt relieved that she had a reason to take some steps back to reflect on her involvement. At the time of our interview, it has been almost a year since Davina quit her direct involvement. Unlike Marsha, Miranda and Frank it was for Davina not the disappointment in other supporters that characterizes her disengagement process, but the disappointment in members of the collective.

6.5 Discussing and comparing paths of disengagement

The different paths of participation and disengagement of Marsha, Frank, Miranda, and Davina demonstrate how a variety of factors can influence a supporter’s decision to leave the collective.

Marsha’s trajectory demonstrates the validity of acknowledging that activists are, as Fillieule (2010) formulates it, part of multiple sub-worlds. Years prior to her involvement with We Are Here Marsha had become active in the Black Rights movement in The Netherlands. During this period, she studied communication sciences in which she focused on racism in communication. Due to these experiences, Marsha internalized several norms regarding the engagement between black and white people. Navigating in a context where the majority of the members of the collective are black and the majority of the supporters are white, Marsha often had another perception of reality than that of her white co-supporters. Her norms developed in other spheres of life often clashed with norms and behaviors accepted within We Are Here. In addition, Marsha’s trajectory reflects the importance of an activist’s place within the movement. Marsha’s atypical profile within We Are Here often created tensions that did not exist among the white supporters (Fillieule, 2010). These tensions eventually contributed to Marsha’s decision to leave the collective. Marsha’s disengagement process teaches us that if supporters bring in norms obtained in other life spheres, that differ too much from the norms adhered to by the supporters of We Are Here, it could lead to clashes between those involved. It thus seems that whether an individual’s perceptions and behavioral traits helps them fit in with other
supporters and members of the collective, or positions them as different, has an effect on the longevity of their involvement.

Miranda and Davina, who joined the collective around the same time, both experienced a division between old and new supporters. When they tried to implement an organizational structure they encountered resistance from old supporters and members of the collective. For these (old) supporters and members, the lack of organization or the lack of structure created possibilities that are closed off when there is coordination and structure. These supporters and members did not appreciate it when new supporters came in and tried to change everything. This was confirmed when I talked to longtime supporters who often shared with me that they at times were frustrated to see new people come in trying to change everything and take control. These longstanding supporters would explicitly express their contempt for the new supporters by excluding them from their circles and rejecting and critiquing the ideas of the new supporters. For new supporters like Miranda and Davina, the resistance and critique they experienced discouraged them to propose new ideas. By resisting and critiquing the ideas of new supporters, the longstanding supporters and members of the collective closed the ranks of the collective and made it difficult for new supporters to integrate (Fillieule, 2010). The experiences shared by Miranda and Davina teach us that the relationship between old supporters and new supporters is characterized by rivalry and a certain competition. Through this rivalry and competition newcomers encountered resistance when they came up with new interventions and ideas which after a while demotivated them to go on. What we can learn from these experiences is that when new supporters who have fresh energy and new ideas encounter too much resistance from old supporters, they are more likely to end their participation. If newcomers would get the chance to apply their skills the chances of sustained participation would increase, which is confirmed by findings in chapter 5.

What is striking in Frank’s story is that since the beginning of his involvement he consciously decided that he would not hang around if he did not find a substantial role within the collective. Although he eventually stayed a few months, he never found a role in which he felt comfortable. Frank identifies not being able to find this role as a factor that contributed to his departure. Frank’s lack of dependency on his role within We Are Here made his defection easier (Fillieule, 2010). Although Frank is the only one who explicitly mentions it, it applies to all former supporters that I have spoken to that they did not feel a strong dependency on the role that they played within We Are Here. This underlines the importance of finding a role in which one feels (s)he can contribute to the collective.
All the stories shared by ex-supporters show furthermore that distrust has been a factor that influenced their reason for ending their involvement with *We Are Here*. May it be distrust in other supporters’ motivations or distrust in the intentions of the members of *We Are Here*. While the former was more common than the latter I will start with an example of distrust towards the members of the collective shared by Davina, because her story clearly illustrates the workings of (dis)trust which I will then use to discuss the more common form of distrust in other supporters.

Davina’s experiences with the members of the collective made her feel relieved when she got pregnant and had a reason to quit her involvement with *We Are Here* because, due to disappointments, she questioned if her involvement was wanted or needed in the first place. Davina started her involvement with a general attitude of trust towards members of the collective. She expected that she could trust them to work for a collective goal and that her involvement with the collective was appreciated and needed. In addition, she expected to develop friendships through her engagement with members of the collective. Davina’s general attitude of trust illustrates Esther Pedersen’s (2015) concept of ‘prima facie trust’. As explained in chapter 2 she defines this as “the immediate position of either trust or distrust that an individual agent expresses in the actual meeting with others” (Pedersen, 2015, p. 106). This position is based on the experiences an individual has regarding trusting other people. Pedersen argues that if a person has been conditioned in an environment where he or she has experienced that others act trustworthy, he or she will most likely develop a general attitude of ‘prima facie trust’.

When Davina found out that not every member of the collective thinks about the general wellbeing of the group, but that there were also individuals who try to maximize their individual gains, and it was not possible to develop friendships these new insights made her reexamine her involvement with *We Are Here*. As can be seen from the questions she asked herself not only about the legitimacy of her trust in the members of the collective but also about the legitimacy of her own involvement. This is in line with Pedersen’s definition of ‘reflective trust’ as entailing “unrest where all actions, attitudes, and beliefs are signs to be interpreted” (Pedersen, 2015, p.109). While Davina partly understood why some of the members of the collective behaved untrustworthy, her expectation of unselfish collective action and the possibility of developing friendships was shattered, and she had to develop new expectations. This new horizon of expectations developed a new attitude of ‘prima facie distrust’ for Davina and a subsequent new interpretation of her role within *We Are Here*. 
The ‘prima facie distrust’ that Davina developed towards the members of the collective was a big influence on the feeling of relief that Davina experienced when she quit her involvement with *We Are Here* due to pregnancy. This feeling of relief was in addition influenced by the development of ‘prima facie distrust’ towards supporters of the collective and the associated reinterpretation of her relationship with them and expectations towards them. Although Davina was the only one who explicitly identified the distrust she developed towards members of the collective as a reason for her to reexamine her role within *We Are Here*, all the other ex-supporters did identify that it was the breach of expectations towards other supporters, may it be in different ways, that made them reexamine their involvement with *We Are Here* as a factor in their disengagement process.

Miranda, Davina, and Frank all started their involvement with ‘prima facie trust’ towards the other supporters. For Frank it did not take long before his ‘prima facie trust’ started to shift to prima facie distrust. This was triggered by the rumors he heard about other supporters and the way in which other supporters seem to make themselves more important than the members of the collective during meetings he attended. For Miranda it was the expectation that she together with other supporters could offer a big contribution to the collective. But when she experienced that other supporters had different views on their involvement and adhered to different social conventions regarding their involvement, her shifted from ‘reflective trust’ to ‘prima facie distrust’. Thus, where she first trusted the supporters to have ‘good’ intentions, this was no longer so. What all these shifts from ‘prima facie trust’ through ‘reflective trust’ to ‘prima facie distrust’ have in common is that they are based on differences in worldview and conventions of social interaction. This reflects Pedersen’s (2015) remark that differences between individuals, or better yet not being able to recognize oneself in other individuals increases the possibility for ‘prima facie distrust’ to emerge. This ‘prima facie’ attitude of distrust towards other supporters due to a reality that is different from how they expect the behavior of other supporters to be was apparent in all ex-supporters, may it be in different ways. The shift from prima facie trust, through reflective trust, to an attitude of ‘prima facie trust’ was accompanied with a reinterpretation of their involvement and expectations towards other supporters. This resulted in suspicion of the intentions and motivations of other supporters, which in all four participant trajectories contributed to their reasons to leave *We Are Here*.

What these four trajectories of disengagement show us is that, while there are many reasons that contributed to ex-supporters decision to quit their involvement with *We Are Here*, the disappointment in the behavior of other supporters, more so than disappointments in success of their
interventions or in members of *We Are Here*, made ex-supporters decide to leave the collective. These trajectories therefore provide the insight that social movements more than anything should have attention when it comes to what kind of expectations people have when they support each specific social movement and invest in getting to know each other and speak out the different perspectives and subsequently expectations supporters bring with them. These factors will help build trust and respect among the supporters and members of *We Are Here* which in turn will increase the likeliness that participants sustain their participation.
I started this research with the following research question: “Why do some supporters persist their involvement with *We Are Here*, while others drop out?” As has become clear, the supporters of *We Are Here* are a heterogeneous group of people, who come from different backgrounds and bring with them different perspectives. These backgrounds and perspectives shape their expectations and the aims they have with their involvement and therefore determine how they experience their involvement.

In the first empirical chapter, I showed the importance of particular backgrounds that make aspirant supporters, as Downton and Wehr (1998) call it, available for involvement with *We Are Here*. Personal backgrounds shaped how supporters perceived the problem *We Are Here* addresses and therefore how they related to it. While all my informants told me that they had been shocked when they found out about the situation the members of *We Are Here* find themselves in, this shock alone was not enough for aspirant-supporters to actually become involved with the collective. I have argued that, in order for aspirant supporters to become involved with *We Are Here*, they had to be able to connect the problem that the collective addresses to norms and values acquired in earlier phases in life. This determined how they related themselves to it and therefore attributed to the possibility of becoming motivated to become involved. I distinguished different sources of motivation: political, guilt and moral. In the first type of motivation, becoming involved with *We Are Here* is seen as a tool to realize political goals, while in the moral and guilt type of motivation, involvement with *We Are Here* is the goal. While supporters’ experiences prior to involvement with *We Are Here* and the beliefs they held with deep conviction explained the likeliness that they participate in a social movement, they did not offer an understanding of the maintenance of their commitment after they became involved.

In the second empirical chapter I showed that in order for participants to maintain committed to *We Are Here*, they first and foremost have to experience their involvement as a satisfactory experience. What is perceived by supporters as satisfactory depends on their perspective. There were two factors that seemed to be of importance for supporters to perceive their involvement as satisfactory. First, a feeling of competence in their position within the collective. This was often connected to the skills they brought with them from experiences prior to their involvement. If supporters were able to find a role within the collective wherein they could rely on skills acquired
during experiences prior to their involvement, this often contributed to a feeling of competence and being in the right place in the collective. This finding was confirmed by ex-supporters who felt they had the collective something to offer but could not find a position within the collective where they could express this, and by ex-supporters who perceived their ‘lack’ of skill as one of the reasons why they could not find a role in which they could be useful to the collective. Second, a factor that seemed to contribute to an overall satisfactory experience of involvement with *We Are Here* and therefore sustained participation, were enjoyable relationships. This could be relationships with like-minded supporters but also a frequency in enjoyable interactions with members of the collective. The messiness that characterizes *We Are Here*’s organizational structure, created the opportunity to establish networks wherein supporters feel a sense of belonging and emotional attachment, may this be with other supporters or members of the collective. Therefore, it was the affective component of commitment as coined by Allen & Meyer (1990) that proved to be of importance for supporters to sustain their participation. It is the emotional attachment and identification which characterizes this component that proves to be motivating the supporters to maintain committed to the collective.

In the third and final empirical chapter, I showed that while there were many reasons why ex-supporters decided to quit their involvement with *We Are Here*, these reasons were often connected to disappointments in other supporters or in members of the collective. These disappointments had, again to do with the different perspectives and subsequently, the expectations supporters had from their involvement with *We Are Here* and therefore of other supporters and members of the collective. While the ex-supporters often started their involvement with *We Are Here* with courage and trust, this was soon over, due to unmet expectations. Inspired by Pedersen (2015) I argued that this process can be seen as a shift from ‘prima facie’ trust to ‘reflective trust’ to ‘prima facie’ distrust. The trajectories of the ex-supporters support the findings of the second empirical chapter because it shows that if an individual is not able to find a substantial role and does not experience enjoyable interactions, they do not perceive their overall involvement with *We Are Here* as satisfactory and are therefore more likely to leave the collective.

What these findings teach us is that disengagement from a social movement is not the reversed process of movement mobilization. It is what happens during participation what makes if participants are able to sustain her/his participation or not. If this is experienced as satisfactory it increases the likelihood that participants’ sustain their participation. My findings suggest that social movements
can influence this by providing participants with a function that matches their skills which contributes to a feeling of competence and directly influences a participants experience as satisfactory. Another way to influence participants sustained participation is to make sure there is room for plurality. When a social movement is too well defined and coordinated this hampers identification with the movement because tightly defined networks work more "exclusively" than the messy one of *We Are Here.*
With this thesis, I showed why some supporters of *We Are Here* continue their involvement while others drop out. I explored what motivates people to become involved with *We Are Here* in the first place and how they maintain or lose their commitment after becoming involved with the collective. The idea to study this topic came to mind during my own experiences as a supporter of *We Are Here*, witnessing both stayers and leavers. It is an important question because for social movements like *We Are Here* it is fundamental for their existence and for the achievement of goals that they have supporters who maintain motivated.

My findings suggest that while there are several reasons why supporters of *We Are Here* continue their involvement, it seemed first and foremost important that supporters perceived their involvement as satisfactory. Although what is perceived as satisfactory differed from supporter to supporter two general trends were observable. First, supporters who felt content with their role within *We Are Here* seemed to be able to continue their involvement. This feeling of content was often directly related to a feeling of competency that emerged when supporters could rely on the skills they had acquired through experiences prior to their involvement with *We Are Here*. Second, enjoyable relations with other supporters and members of the collective contributed to an overall satisfactory experience of supporters involvement. When supporters perceived their interactions with other supporters and members of the collective as enjoyable, this increased the possibility that supporters would continue their involvement.

What these findings suggest is that it is important that supporters are enabled to find a role within *We Are Here* that matches their capacities and skills. To increase this possibility the leaders of *We Are Here* could implement introduction interviews in which they try to find out what it is an aspirant supporter has to offer and how this could take form within the collective. At the moment the involvement of supporters often start from the question of what the collective needs. While this seems logical, it increases the possibility of a mismatch between what the collective needs and supporters have to offer. In addition, these interviews could contribute to a better understanding of the expectations aspirant-supporters have from other supporters and from members of the collective and...
this decreases the possibility of disappointments. This intervention enables supporters to find a fitting role and will help to build trust and a better understanding of the motives of other supporters among the supporters and members *We Are Here* which in turn will increase the likeliness that participants continue their participation.


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# APPENDIX I: OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTED DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>12/01/2019, 10/03/2019, 22/03/2019</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity events</td>
<td>12/01/2019, 24/01/2019, 16/02/2019, 08/03/2019, 29/03/2019</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time</td>
<td>14/01/2019, 04/02/2019, 20/02/2019, 14/02/2019, 15/02/2019, 25/02/2019, 04/03/2019, 11/03/2019</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>08/01/2019, 15/01/2019, 16/01/2019, 06/02/2019, 13/02/2019, 24/02/2019, 26/02/2019, 03/03/2019, 05/03/2019, 11/03/2019, 12/03/2019, 19/03/2019</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary proceedings</td>
<td>22/01/2019, 25/05/2019</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squats</td>
<td>09/02/2019, 10/03/2019</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Moving day</td>
<td>11/02/2019</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
<td>12/02/2019</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary debate</td>
<td>21/03/2019</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities (e.g. Making banners; Cooking; Looking for new buildings; Groceries; writing letters to authorities)</td>
<td>13/02/2019, 14/02/2019, 27/02/2019, 28/02/2019, 07/03/2019, 19/03/2019, 24/02/2019</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>