

## **David vs. Coal-iath**

*Coalition-building in the anti-coal protests in Lützerath, Germany*

*Michael Reck*

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Michael Konstantin Reck

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## **Abstract**

For social movements to create social change they need to mobilize resources, seize political opportunities, and foster favourable discourses. To do so, they engage in coalition building processes to streamline their action and resources with related groups. This process can also be observed in the village of 'Lützerath', Germany, which shall be swallowed by the coal mine 'Garzweiler 2'. To analyse the process of coalition building a micro-ethnography was conducted. Using a framework which I have derived from a literature review by Van Dyke and Amos (2017) and applied to the case of 'Lützerath', my study confirms that factors such as social ties, ideological congruence and political opportunities were favourable conditions and shows how they influenced the emergence and longevity of the coalition. These findings may inform other protests with a similarly diverse set of actors highlighting an example of how to bridge gaps between climate activists and local communities.

**Keywords: social movements, coalition building, emergence, longevity, anti-coal, protest**

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Aim and Research Questions .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1. Ontology and epistemology .....	3
3.2. (Micro)-Ethnography .....	3
3.3. Ethical considerations and positionality .....	4
<b>4. Background .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. Theoretical basis .....</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1. Overview of social movement theory .....	8
5.2. Social movement coalitions and introduction to framework .....	9
5.3. Theoretical framework .....	11
5.3.1. <i>Factors influencing coalition emergence and longevity</i> .....	12
5.3.2. <i>Factors influencing coalition longevity</i> .....	15
<b>6. Analysis and Results .....</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1. Social ties and history of interaction .....	15
6.2. Organizational characteristics .....	17
6.3. Ideology, culture, and identity .....	18
6.4. Institutional Environment: political opportunities, threats, and institutional structures .....	20
6.5. Resources .....	23
6.6. Commitment and trust, Quality of Interaction, Space and Shifting social environments .....	25

<b>7. Discussion.....</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1. Case focused discussion.....	26
7.2. Discussion of framework and broader theoretical implications.....	30
7.3. Limitations of this study .....	31
<b>8. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>9. References.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>10. Appendix .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Appendix 1: List of interviewees .....	39
Appendix 2: Guiding questions for interviews .....	39
Appendix 3: Map of Lützerath.....	40

## 1. Introduction

In the face of climate crisis, a radical transformation towards sustainability that balances ecological, social, cultural, and economic concerns is necessary (Temper et al., 2018). According to Folke (2006), transformations occur when the current system or some of its characteristics become untenable or highly undesirable. One agent of such transformations can be social movements (Temper et al., 2018). To create change movements need to mobilize resources, seize political opportunities, and create favourable discourses (Buechler, 2016). To do so, they often engage in coalition building processes to streamline their action and resources with related groups (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017).

This was no different in the case of Lützerath, a village which is bound to be swallowed by the coal mine 'Garzweiler 2'. To prevent this, strong protest has formed against it and mobilized groups and activists from many social backgrounds which have formed the coalition that is now observable (Lützerath Lebt, 2022a). This is a critical case to look at, since several studies have found that if the coal below Lützerath were to be excavated it would be impossible for Germany to fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Paris agreement and stay within the 1.5-degree goal (DIW Berlin, 2021; Rieve et al., 2022). Moreover, given the recency and the ongoing nature of this protest, there has been no study on the coalition conducted yet, providing a clear research gap to fill.

To understand how social movement coalitions create change one first need to understand how they emerge and sustain themselves over time. To analyse this coalition building process, I have based my framework for analysis on the literature review of Van Dyke and Amos (2017) which incorporates many elements of established social movement theory, such as resource mobilization theory (e.g. McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977) and political process theory (e.g. Kriesi, 1991; Tarrow, 1988; Tilly, 1978).

With this thesis I am aiming to fill a gap in the understanding of how civil society is influencing transformations to sustainability since "to date sustainability science literature has not paid sufficient attention to the role that social movement activity and resistance play in transformations" (Temper et al., 2018, p. 1). Hence, through this case study I am contributing to the field of sustainability science due to providing a better understanding on how coalitions emerge and sustain themselves and thus can act as agents of change.



## 2. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to understand the factors that supported the emergence and longevity of the social movement coalition in Lützerath. To do this, I have derived a framework for analysis from the literature review of Van Dyke and Amos (2017) and I want to explain how the factors of this framework unfolded in this case. Moreover, the findings and especially the discussion of this critical case should help inform future protests and activists looking into engaging in such coalitions. Hence, I intend to answer the following research question and sub questions:

How did the coalition in Lützerath emerge and sustain itself?

- 1) How did the factors of social ties, organizational structures, ideology and culture, institutional environment, and resources influence coalition formation?
- 2) How did those and additional factors influence the longevity of the coalition?
- 3) How can these findings inform other protests?

The thesis is structured as follows: the next section will highlight my ontological and epistemological considerations, the applied method of ethnography and my ethical considerations and positionality in this research. Afterwards, I will present a brief overview of the history of the protest in Lützerath, and the five main actors involved. Later, the theory section will give a summary of social movement theory in general and will provide a deeper look into the study of social movement coalitions and the framework for analysis I have applied. After that, I will provide my results and discussion. Lastly, the thesis wraps up with some concluding remarks.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Ontology and epistemology**

In this thesis, I applied a critical realist approach which also informed the methods I have chosen. Critical Realism (CR) holds that the real or objective world cannot be observed and exists independently from human perceptions (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Moreover, CR recognizes that the world how we understand it is constructed through our subjective interpretations, thus influencing the perception of the world through what is deemed to be observable (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). According to critical realist thinking, observable events can be caused by unobservable structures, such as relations between individuals and groups, and consequently one needs to understand these structures (Edwards et al., 2014).

CR proved to be a suitable ontology for my case study since unobservable structures, such as trust between coalition partners, can lead to observable outcomes, such as coalition persistence. Further, it informed my chosen method of ethnography which is well suited to observe these relations (Edwards et al., 2014). Moreover, given my chosen methodological approach, I appreciate that my epistemological position is a critical realist, hence subjective one, understanding that all knowledge I produce with this thesis is only an approximation of the real objective world (Yucel, 2018).

#### **3.2. (Micro)-Ethnography**

Ethnography is a method in which the researcher is deeply immersed in a social setting for a period, makes observations of the behaviour of people, engages in and listens to conversations, interviews informants, collects documents about the group, develops an understanding of the culture and writes up an account of that setting (Bryman, 2012). Within this micro ethnographic study, I was active in participant observation, conducting semi-structured interviews, and collecting documents in the field and online. The terms ethnography and participant observation are often used interchangeably, however, I understand the method of participant observation to be encapsulated in ethnography based on Bryman (2012).

I have been to Lützerath on two occasions, once for a weekend in January (07.01.22-09.01.22) and again for around two weeks in February (28.01-09.02.22). I draw my observations from both those visits, while the interviews were solely conducted during the second visit.

Based on Bryman (2012), I collected my experiences in a field notebook in a structured way, keeping theoretical considerations in mind where possible, while being a **participant observer**. However, there were situations, for instance, during dinner, when directly noting down my observations was not possible. In these situations, I memorized relevant points and noted them later.

Moreover, I conducted 5 **semi-structured interviews** with the media spokespersons of each group present on site in the village. The persons were chosen because of their role within the respective groups. I am fully aware that I cannot assume the groups to be fully homogenous, which some of the interviewees also mentioned to me. However, since these people were chosen to speak for their groups, I argue that they hold a certain legitimization to represent their organizations. This decision was also made since I could not have covered all opinions of every activist in the village. Moreover, I decided to only include interviewees of groups who were continuously present in the village, and did not just join for selective actions, such as 'Ende Gelände' or 'Fridays for Future'. In a semi structured or qualitative interviews participants are encouraged to diverge from initial questions to get a better insight into what they deem as relevant and important (Bryman, 2012). Hence, I prepared five guiding questions, which were supported by several follow up questions related to my interviewee's answers. The interviews were recorded after I received verbal consent of each of my interviewees and transcribed according to the rules of Dresing et al. (2015). I colour coded the transcripts and marked relevant sections in one colour for each of the factors based on my framework drawn from Van dyke and Amos (2017).

In this thesis, I will refer to information drawn from my field observations with **(OBS)**, and from interviews with **(INT+ Acronym of group + time if applicable)**. The broad guiding questions and a list of my interview partners can be found in the appendix.

Lastly, the information from my observations and interviews were supplemented with documents I either found on site, such as printed brochures of the protest, or online resources such as twitter posts.

### **3.3. Ethical considerations and positionality**

Researching social movements, as well as social movement coalitions, has its very own set of ethical considerations due to their e.g., exposed position in society and the possibility of repression against them (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012). Before starting this thesis project, I came across a blogpost by climate activists from the Rhineland area, where I was doing my research, stating that some of them are not willing to be researched anymore, since the research was often not useful for the movement,

dangerous at times and “trivial at best” (bewegungsforschung@nirgendwo.info, 2021). In an effort to remedy a lot of criticism the activists have pointed out, I opted to incorporate the principles of ethical social movement research after Milan (2014).

Milan (2014) asserts that social movement research needs to be 1) relevant and best empower the movement, 2) minimize risk 3), be aware of questions of power and 4) accountable towards the researched communities.

To make it movement **relevant research**, I aimed to look at the factors that supported coalition emergence and longevity in Lützerath and provide reflections on what other protests with a similar diverse set of actors could take away for their struggles. I assumed this approach, though not necessarily helpful to the current struggle, might be useful in the future. To confirm this, I engaged in an irritative process with Alex Wernke, a well-connected activist with 10+ years’ experience working in Lützerath. Before conducting my fieldwork in January 2022, I had two calls with Alex to discuss and alter the direction of my thesis approach.

To reduce the **risk** of the researched communities, I kept information anonymous where required and e.g., only used clear names when my interview partners explicitly allowed me to. Moreover, I paid close attention to not disclose any information in the thesis that could possibly be used against the activists e.g., in the case of an eviction, the number of inhabitants in the village.

I tried to be aware of **questions of power**, for instance, concerning the asymmetrical relationship between me as a researcher and the activists as interviewees and observed. This is where I want to discuss my positionality in this research and my position in this asymmetrical relationship.

**Positionality**, as defined by Rowe (2014) is “the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study” (p.628). This position influences what kind of knowledge is being constructed and how the research is conducted. Rowe (2014) differentiates between two main positions of the researcher, that of being internal or external in relation to the context of the study. I see myself as internal to a certain extent, having been active in climate activism for some years and thereby knowing to an extent how to navigate such spaces, as well as being German and thus not having any language barriers. However, I also consider myself as external compared to e.g., activists from the Rhineland region which have been fighting against RWE and coal mines since the 1980s and thus have a very strong connection to the place, which I lack. Moreover, Madison (2020), in her work on critical ethnography, uses an outline of three stances a researcher might have, one of which is an

activism stance, where the researcher's position is clear and explicit, advocating for marginalized groups and seeking to provide alternatives. I position myself as a research activist in this study, being in support of the struggle of the activists and thus trying to create an outcome meaningful to them as elaborated in the relevance section. This has several advantages since it creates a bond with the activists and serves as a basis for trust which I would maybe not have had when taking a neutral stance. However, this might influence how I reflect and evaluate my observations and the data collected. Moreover, I was trying to be receptive and reflect on my position more generally as a white, male, cis-gender research activist in the sense of who gets to speak and whose knowledge is valued since there has been a lot of criticism in the village that the protest is too white and academic.

Lastly, concerning the **accountability towards the researched community**, I tried to be reflexive of my position and transparent to why I am doing this research when approached and asked why I am in the camp. Moreover, I intend to translate my findings into something directly usable for activists, like a short non-academic summary, and share it with my interview partners after the submission of this thesis.

#### **4. Background**

The protests in Lützerath follow a long history of resistance against coal mining in the Rhineland region (OBS). They reach as far back as the 1980s, but in the past, they were mostly not framed as climate protests but rather as struggles against the destruction of villages and water shortage (OBS). This bred a very vast set of actors active in the area. The website "verheizte heimat" (burned home) lists 86 initiatives currently fighting against coal mining and RWE (Verheizte Heimat, n.d.).

In Lützerath, there are five groups which are strongly present. First, there is 'Alle Dörfer Bleiben' (ADB), an initiative aiming to save all villages threatened by coal mines in Germany and which started out in the Lusatia region in 2017 before it also got active in the Rhineland region in 2018 (INT – ADB). Second, there is 'Kirchen im Dorf lassen' (KIDL) which have been fighting to protect the churches and the villages threatened in the Rhineland area since 2018 (Die Kirche(n) im Dorf lassen, n.d.). Third, the 'Mahnwache Lützerath' (MAWA) was founded after RWE destroyed the connection road L277 in July 2020 (Mahnwache Lützerath, 2022b). Fourth, the group 'Lützerath lebt' established itself and a camp in the wake of the destruction of the L277 on a field and in houses behind the vigil (Lützerath Lebt, 2022a). Lastly, 'Greenpeace' joined the protest in Lützerath after the vigil and 'Lützerath Lebt' had already formalized themselves (INT – Lützerath Lebt).

Lützerath is a small village west of Cologne, which was first documented in 1168 (Lützerath Lebt, 2022c). An overview map of the village can be found in the appendix. In 2006 the resettlement of the villagers began and according to plans of RWE should have been finished in 2019. The continuous protest in Lützerath, began on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 when RWE started to destroy the connection road L277 and the trees along it, which was deemed to be a red line that should not have been crossed (Mahnwache Lützerath, 2022b). As a reaction the group 'Kirche im Dorf lassen' (KIDL) founded the 'Mahnwache Lützerath' (MAWA). This incident and the resistance to it were the start of the continuous protest on site in Lützerath with the MAWA being the first established structure (INT – KIDL). However, the formalization of the protest and the coalition took some time which led to several defeats along the way (INT – KIDL). From November 2020 to February 2021, during the cutting season, many trees in the village were cleared, and in January 2021 several houses in the village were torn down (Lützerath Lebt, 2022c). Following these losses, preparations were made, and no more trees were cut in the next clearing season until February 2022. Moreover, during that time the last remaining farmer in Lützeath, Eckhardt Heukamp, filed an appeal against an early transfer of possession of his grounds as requested by RWE. This court case will be further highlighted in section 6.4.

By the time this thesis was written, the court had decided against this appeal and Eckhardt has sold his farm to RWE in April 2022, stating that his home is no longer a "plaything for courts and politics" (Lützerath Lebt, 2022c). Since these and other events, such as the regional election in North Rhine Westphalia, happened after my fieldtrips to Lützerath, I will not consider them in my analysis and write from a perspective where they have not happened yet.

## 5. Theoretical basis

In the next few pages, I will give a brief overview of social movement theory in general to situate the study of social movement coalitions. Thereafter, the work on social movement coalitions will be highlighted, followed by a description of the framework applied in this thesis.

### 5.1. Overview of social movement theory

Early theorizing about social movements (SMs) began with the likes of Marx, Weber and Durkheim and their social theories (Buechler, 2016). These works laid the foundation for today's study of social movements. One commonly used definition of social movements by Mario Diani (1992) describes them as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities" (p.2).

According to Tilly, SMs engage in or more precisely are a type of what he calls "contentious politics" (Tilly & Wood, 2020). However, social movements are just one of many types of "contentious politics" which are defined as "politics that occur outside of traditional, diplomatic, elite or electoral means, and also include the use of violence or culturally recognizable non-routine displays of public discontent" (Castañeda, 2020, p. 169). The concept of contentious politics is part of the wider field of social movement theory which at large splits into structuralist and cultural approaches (Buechler, 2016).

On the structural side, political process theory or often also referred to as political opportunity theory is focused on the political environment a social movement is navigating in, influences and is influenced by (Buechler, 2016). The key elements of this paradigm are the "political opportunity structures" which can be defined as elements of the political environment, or a change thereof, providing incentives for collective action through influencing the perception of possible success or failure (McAdam et al., 1996). Resource mobilization theory, however, is less concerned with the environment a social movement is in but more with the organizations themselves (Buechler, 2016). Thus, it highlights how resources, such as money and labour but also knowledge and leadership, are mobilized to support effective collective action and how movements are organized to achieve that. Though resource mobilization and political process theory are useful in studying structural aspects such as opportunities, organization, and resources, they understate the significance of framing and culture in movement analysis (Buechler, 1993). This led to the rise of the last major contemporary strand of social movement theory, that of social constructionism and framing (Buechler, 2016).

This theory highlights that for a social movement to emerge and develop it is not sufficient that favourable structural aspects are given, people also need to “feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem” (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 5). Mediating these perceptions or this social construction of ideas and understandings is what Snow et al. (1986) coined as framing processes. Thus, not only structural elements influence a movement but also how these variables are framed and to which extent they align with the targets of mobilization (Snow & Benford, 1988).

In an effort to synthesize most if not all major theoretical strands of social movement theory McAdam, McCarty and Zald (1996) fused the two predominant structural approaches of the resource mobilization theory (e.g. McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977) and political process theory (e.g. Kriesi, 1991; Tarrow, 1988; Tilly, 1978) with the cultural approach of framing (e.g. Snow et al., 1986) into one paradigm. The synthesis approach sets out to answer two main questions through combining all strands of social movement theory, those of: 1) the origin and emergence of social movements and 2) their ongoing development and outcomes over time (McAdam et al., 1996).

The study of social movement coalitions, to a large extent, applies a similar approach to the synthesis, which I will expand on in the following section.

## **5.2. Social movement coalitions and introduction to framework**

The work on social movement coalitions by Van Dyke and Amos (2017), from which I have drawn my framework to analyse the case of Lützerath, is largely concerned with answering the same questions as the synthesis approach, combining several structural and cultural aspects of analysis. They expand the relevant conditions since some the factors “are unique to coalitions and stem from the involvement and interaction of distinct organizational entities, each with their own ideology, identity, structure, and operating process” (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017, p. 3)

Drawing on work by Van Dyke and McCammon (2010), I define the process of coalition formation as the cooperation between distinctive social movement organizations with the aim of achieving a variety of goals while possibly having many different interests in mind. Or put more succinctly, coalitions emerge when “[...] two or more social movement organizations work together on a common task” (Van Dyke & McCammon, 2010, p. xiv). Furthermore, I will use the word alliance and coalition interchangeable just Van Dyke and McCammon (2010) and Van Dyke and Amos (2017) do.

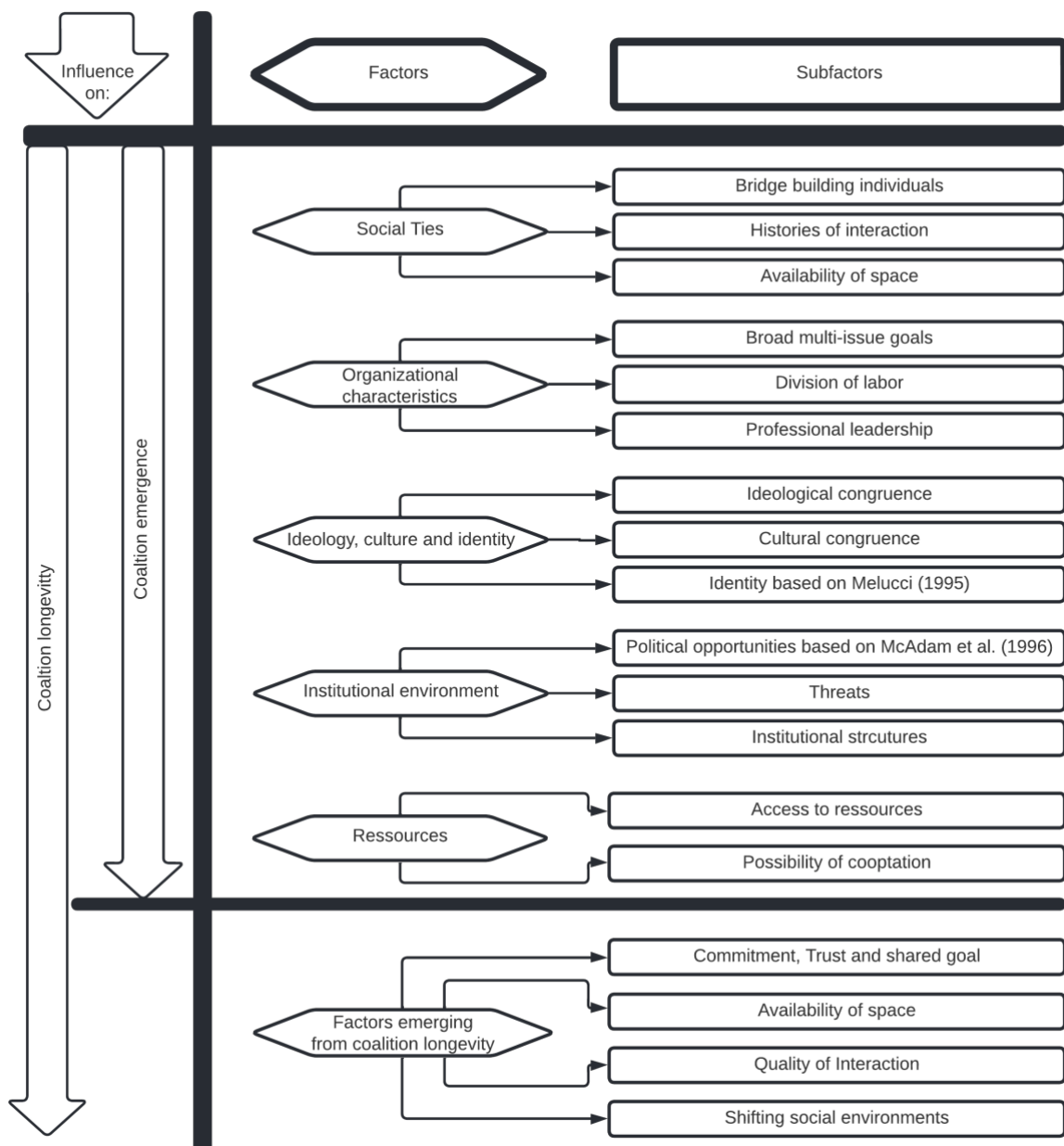


The literature review by Van Dyke and Amos (2017) builds upon previous efforts to gather contributions to the research field of social movement coalition building in which Van Dyke and McCammon (2010) identified three categories crucial for coalition formation: 1) social ties, 2) interest, identities, and ideology and 3) political context. Moreover, they highlight the interconnectedness of these three factors. In reaction to a critique from Staggenborg (2010) of lacking the examination of organizational structures and internal factors which foster coalitions, Van Dyke and Amos (2017) expanded the elements that may explain coalition building. They identified five factors essential to coalition building namely 1) social ties, 2) conducive organizational structures, 3) ideology, culture, and identity, 4) institutional environment and 5) resources (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). These will, combined with additional factors identified in their review, form the framework for my case study. By including the two additional elements of conducive organizational structures and resources, Van Dyke and Amos (2017) highlight elements related to the internal functioning's social movement coalitions as compared to the 2010 collection (Van Dyke & McCammon, 2010). This work by Van Dyke and Amos (2017) also informed other studies on coalition building, most recently the work by Teixeira & Motta (2022) as part of their analytical framework in their study about the Brazilian 'Marcha das Margaridas'.

In the following I will explain these five elements more in detail when describing the framework which I base on the work of Van Dyke and Amos (2017).

### 5.3. Theoretical framework

The framework is split into two sections as drawn from Van Dyke and Amos (2017). The first section concerns factors influencing both coalition **emergence** and **longevity** and includes the previously named five elements. And the second section looks at factors that only arise once a coalition has formed and are influencing the **longevity** such as commitment and trust. A visualization of the framework can be seen on figure 1.



**Figure 1** Visualization of framework based on factors drawn from Van Dyke and Amos (2017). Own creation.

### **5.3.1. Factors influencing coalition emergence and longevity**

#### ***Social Ties and a history of interaction***

**Social ties** between individuals and movement groups can influence which organizations end up participating in a coalition and which not (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Specifically, whether a coalition forms at all and which groups joins the alliance is strongly influenced by so called '**bridge builder**' individuals who have ties across several organizations (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). According to Van Dyke and Amos (2017) the "importance of bridge builders to coalition formation cannot be overstated" (p.4). Moreover, is it highly important whether there have been previous **histories of interaction** between different organizations that reflect ties (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Lastly, the availability of free physical or virtual **space**, which provides opportunities for interaction, facilitates coalition formation (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Polletta (1999) describes those free spaces as "settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization" (p.1.).

#### ***Organizational characteristics***

A range of organizational factors influence coalition formation. Organizations with **broad or multi-issue goals** for example are more likely to enter coalitions (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Also, organizational structures, such as **division of labour** (Borland, 2008) and **professional leadership** (Shaffer, 2000) are crucial.

#### ***Ideology, culture, and identity***

Research has shown that consistent ideologies (Staggenborg, 2015), cultural similarities (Jung et al., 2014) and a collective identity (Valocchi, 2009) help foster coalitions. Ideological alignment even emerged as a critical factor which can sometimes be enough to inspire an alliance (Van Dyke & McCammon, 2010).

Hence, **ideological congruence** is one of the most important factors to look at. Even organizations in the same social movement (e.g. environmental) who share similar goals may have ideological positions harmful for coalition formation (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Therefore, a broad ideology with possibilities for exchange can support in overcoming differences and bridge gaps between groups (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Again, bridge building individuals could be helpful here since "a lack of overlap in

membership among diverse groups exacerbates ideological differences, creating many disagreements and misunderstandings which might be avoided with better communication” (Staggenborg, 1986, p. 384). Van Dyke and Amos (2017) do not explicitly define what they mean by ideology. Therefore, for this framework and analysis, I will apply the understanding of political ideologies being a lens or a set of beliefs through which an individual, a group, a social movement or a social class deems society and the world to work, thereby structuring their political understanding and inspiring activism (Heywood, 2017).

Other than that, **cultural congruence** can be an influential factor (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Groups with initially little connection may incorporate certain cultural changes such as creating space at gatherings for different groups to facilitate coalition building.

Van Dyke and Amos (2017) do not provide examples for what they understand as **identity**. Hence, for the sake of a complete framework, I will apply the understanding of Melucci (1995) that “collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (p.44). Collective identity is a process negotiated over time including the following three elements (Melucci, 1995). Firstly, there needs to be a ‘cognitive definition’ concerning the means, the goals, and the environment or the field of social action. Hence, it should be clear in which field (e.g., environmental) it will happen, what will happen and what should be achieved. Secondly, an ‘active relationship’ between actors is necessary, meaning that they communicate, come together, and make decisions. Lastly, a certain level of ‘emotional investment’ by participants is required for them to feel like part of a community.

### ***Institutional environment: Political opportunities, threats, and institutional structures***

A series of external societal factors influences social movement coalitions (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). These are in line with the elements important to all movement emergences. Whereas **threats** and **opportunities** can facilitate alliance building, **institutional structures** can impact which groups work together (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). In line with political process or opportunity theory, research shows that it is more likely for coalitions to emerge when there are political openings or increased political opportunities (Lee, 2011), political or other threats (Van Dyke, 2003) or both (Staggenborg, 1986).

Since **political opportunities** are understood by Van Dyke and Amos (2017) to be consistent with political opportunity theory, I will apply the understanding defined in the synthesis approach, of

political opportunities or “political opportunity structures” consisting of four elements: 1) political openness as in access to formal political processes and actors, 2) the stability of political alignments within the elite, 3) the presence of elite allies and the 4) the state’s capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 27).

**Threats** can be anything, no matter if perceived or genuine, from antagonistic political actors at various levels up to actual threats of violence (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). They can sometimes inspire several organizations to bridge gaps, ideological or cultural, and work jointly against a common enemy (Staggenborg, 1986).

Lastly, **institutional structures** can determine with which organizations groups are able to cooperate or not, if they aim to shape policies via institutional politics (Van Dyke 2017). One example presented in Van Dyke and Amos (2017) by Jenkins-Smith et al. (1991) suggests that American lobbying coalitions need to constantly adapt to e.g., electoral changes in the American political system which may lead to coalition defections.

### ***Resources***

**Resources** are very important to understand how and why coalitions emerge (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Groups might want to gain access to resources through entering a coalition that their own organization lacks (Staggenborg, 1986). However, at the same time organizations need to be cautious when entering an alliance if there is a large disparity in resources since the well-equipped group might want to lead the coalition or at least will be perceived as if they were, and hence that could lead to conflict (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). When resources are scarce, pooling them might seem an attractive option but since alliances need plentiful resources, they are unlikely to occur when they are lacking in the first place (Zald & McCarthy, 1980). Therefore, in line with resource mobilization theory, coalitions are more likely to occur when resources are abundant (Staggenborg, 1986; Zald & McCarthy, 1980).

Since Van Dyke and Amos (2017) do not further specify what they understand by resources, I will apply the understanding derived from the resource mobilization theory (Buechler, 2016), that resources can be anything from financial resources, up to human resources, labour and knowledge.

### **5.3.2. Factors influencing coalition longevity**

Many of the factors that influence coalition emergence continue to influence them overtime (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Just as **threats** or **opportunities** may inspire collations, so can the decline of them affect the longevity and may foster dissolution of a coalition. **Cultural** and **ideological** compatibility or alignment continue to be important for a coalition after the emergence phase, especially when groups come from different backgrounds in terms of race, class, and gender. Similarly, the extent to which alliances build shared goals, **commitment**, and **trust** towards each other largely influences coalition longevity (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009). These factors are once again underpinned by the importance of possibilities for **interaction** and the **quality** thereof as well as the availability of **space**, virtual or physical, for building connection (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Lastly, a **changing social environment**, such as the passage of Roe v. Wade which made coalitions between pro-life and pro-choice feminists increasingly difficult (Kretschmer, 2014), may influence coalition longevity.

## **6. Analysis and Results**

The five factors of, social ties, organizational characteristics, ideology and culture, institutional environment, and resources have a strong influence on coalition emergence (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). They also continue to influence the longevity of an alliance and can be pivotal for its survival through their presence or absence over time. In the following, I will present my results and show how those factors unfolded in the case of Lützerath, answering my first and second sub research questions. The results section is structured as follows: First, I will go through how the five main factors identified for coalition emergence and longevity have played out in Lützerath (section 6.1 to 6.5) and second, I will highlight the factors which only become relevant once a coalition has formed such as commitment and trust (section 6.6).

### **6.1. Social ties and history of interaction**

According to Van Dyke & Amos (2017), it is a **previous history of interaction, social ties, bridge builder individuals** and the availability of **space** which are highly influential for coalition formation.

In the case of Lützerath, I argue it was not single individuals, but mainly a group, namely 'Alle Dörfer bleiben' (ADB), which acted as **bridge building individual**. According to Christopher, the media spokesperson of ADB, the group has been functioning as mediator between the different actors and

as an actor of the middle, saying that “in the middle sits "Alle Dörfer bleiben", which is also the only organization that integrates so many different actors within itself, with the city dwellers, the villagers, and the climate activists” (INT – ADB 14.31min).

This positioning in the centre of the spectrum of allies was made possible by a long **previous history of interaction**. By the time the protest in Lützerath started in 2020, ADB already had several years of experience of working together between villagers and climate activists, which helped to mediate the concerns of actors in Lützerath and “to find a common language, to know what is important for the different actors and what the red lines are” (INT – ADB 14.57min). This experience helped members of ADB to mediate conflicts when they arose in e.g., November 2021, in a large plenary between all actors (INT – ADB 16.51min). Moreover, there is a considerable overlap in membership and connection between members of the groups. Christopher, the media spokesperson of ADB, for example is a long-term climate activist with over 10 years of experience and he shares a flat with other long-term activists who are closely affiliated with ADB but also groups such as ‘Ende Gelände’ and ‘Lützerath lebt’ (OBS).

Another group which helped create social ties, shared experiences and acted as a bridge building entity for the coalition was the ‘Mahnwache’ (MAWA). Since the vigil was the first established structure in Lützerath it served as meeting point for different actors to organize and exchange but also everyone else who had not been engaged before (INT – KIDL 15.24min). And from this vigil, a process of differentiation between actors began which beforehand all gathered around the vigil as one, leading to the formalization of e.g., ‘Lützerath Lebt’ as a distinct entity (INT – KIDL 27.29min).

Another important aspect within the factor of social ties, are **free spaces** to interact since they facilitate the organization of coalitions (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). In the case of Lützerath the whole village acts as such a free space with several points where interaction concentrates (OBS). These spaces include e.g., the ‘KüFa’ (Kitchen for everyone), where a warm meal is served, a large circus tent, where plenaries would be held, smaller tents, which are used for workshops, the vigil, as regular meeting and arrival point, or the squatted houses like the ‘Villa’ and ‘Paulas Hof’ which can be used as spaces to retreat and recharge (OBS).

## 6.2. Organizational characteristics

A set of organizational characteristics, such as **broad or multi-issue goals**, the **division of labour** or **professional leadership** can affect coalition formation (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). The **broad multi-issue goal** that has made cooperation possible and that all related groups could agree on, is that Lützerath needs to remain (“Lützerath Bleibt”).

*So, I think the twist is that all the actors are here for multiple reasons. But the lowest common denominator is, I think, Lützerath remains. (INT – Lützerath Lebt 29.40min)*

This shows that the goal of “Lützerath remains” made it possible for the groups to work together but keep their own agendas and thus made it easier for them to engage in the coalition. Even though there might be several different agendas within the groups, like Greenpeace’s support for a 1.5-degree framing (INT – Greenpeace 14.04min) compared to Lützerath Lebt’s stance that 1.2 degree is already hell for a lot of people (INT – Lützerath Lebt), Lützerath remains is what the coalition has always come back to in e.g., their framing for the media output (INT – Lützerath Lebt 30.22min). However, though this broader goal has several advantages, it also showed that the groups were unable to reach a combined stance on coal in general as highlighted by this quote from Florian of ‘Lützerath Lebt’:

*(...) I think, that Lützerath remains is perhaps the lowest common denominator. We could not agree on a common framing on coal. (INT – Lützerath Lebt – 33.14min)*

A clear **division of labour** can also be found at Lützerath. The MAWA for example works as legal basis, even if the protest camp hosting e.g., ‘Lützerath Lebt’ should be evicted at some point (OBS). For as long as the MAWA gets approved to stay by the court, people are legally allowed to gather there (OBS). Meanwhile, ‘Lützerath lebt’ and ADB for example, do the biggest bulk of press work for the village even though all other actors are also active online (OBS). Moreover, for the case of eviction or further destruction of the village, the different groups would take up different roles to “complement each other” (INT – MAWA 28.55min). Some would go up the trees and others would provide mental support in case of police repressions (INT – MAWA 28.55min). Further, the labour is divided, also in the sense of which groups of people they mobilize. Social movement organizations like ADB or KIDL attract potentially older, middle-class people with events such as the “Dorfspaziergänge” (having a walk through the village with explanations by a ADB member) and “Gottesdienst an der Kante” (hosting a church service close to the mine) (OBS). Whereas ‘Lützerath Lebt’ and the camp attract younger climate activists (OBS).



Regarding **professional leadership** it was found that the coalition did not elect one combined leadership but rather engaged in non-hierarchical consent-based decision making (OBS). Negen, the founder of KIDL, notes that decision making was not always harmonious, and a certain division of labour was pivotal because if everyone had to be in every plenary all the time “there would be murder and manslaughter (laughs)” (INT – KIDL 28.30min). For everyday tasks, there is the so called ‘Lütze Rat’ (Lützerath Council), where representatives of the different groups inform each other on the progress in their respective fields (OBS). Moreover, every working group in the camp meets in plenaries either daily or at fixed dates to discuss their progress and take decisions in their line of work (OBS). Topics that are important for the village, such as preparations for an eviction or when there has been an awareness case are selectively discussed through general assemblies (OBS).

### **6.3. Ideology, culture, and identity**

**Consistent ideologies, cultural similarities** and a **collective identity** are pivotal in coalition formation (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Concerning **ideological congruence**, the groups in Lützerath were quite aligned (OBS). At first glance the several groups in Lützerath do not seem to have much in common. Take KIDL for example – the founder Negen described that most of their members live a very “middle-class” life (INT – KIDL-36.39min) which stands in stark contrast to e.g., full time activists which have not been in a paid jobs in over 5 years (OBS). However, taking a closer look, one can see that the ideologies of the different groups, as represented by what the different organizations understand as their ideals and principles of the functioning of society (Heywood, 2017), are in fact quite similar.

From my interviews and observations, I conclude that all groups apply a broadly anticapitalistic and environmental justice ideology. One of the common denominators among the groups is that they all fight for a “system change” (INT – MAWA 23.05min) however, all with a different understanding of what exactly that entails. Nonetheless, it has been noted that people or groups in Lützerath do not need to foster a lot of tolerance towards each other since they are “really not incredibly different” (INT – Lützerath Lebt 41.43min).

And even though this ideological congruence and, also cultural congruence, came not without conflict, and there has been a lot of critique from e.g., Lützerath Lebt towards Greenpeace for their interpretation anticapitalism and being not radical enough but “in the end the criticism was not to stop the cooperation, but to try to improve each other” (INT – Lützerath Lebt 42.10min).

Through this approach of trying to improve each other, the groups were also able to reach a certain level of **cultural congruence** (OBS). Cultural changes were made especially along the lines of class, gender, and race and in the field of antiracism (OBS). There has been a lot of discussion in the camp on how to make the village less white and academic and to be more welcoming towards e.g., BIPOC or differently abled people (OBS) and to achieve this, efforts were made like using appropriate language, building safe spaces, and creating an awareness team (OBS). However, even though the activists tried to be very reflexive, there have still been some disparities in e.g., reproductive work, such as cleaning toilets and cooking, which led to the introduction of a “cis het buttkick day” where all FLINTA persons (everyone but cis men) were allowed to rest, and men had to do the work (OBS).

These cultural requirements or changes were not to the liking of everyone, especially “the people from the villages, for their world view, probably really had to make a big step towards us [Lützerath Lebt] to be able to be here” (INT – Lützerath Lebt 40.29min). Negen, from KIDL, notes that even though the critique was quite harsh sometimes, those cultural changes were made and when the coalition really needed to stand together there has been no second thoughts and those gaps could be closed (INT – KIDL 36.56min).

Regarding **collective identity**, I argue that the coalition in Lützerath was able to create a common one, at least towards the media or outside threats (OBS). Firstly, a ‘cognitive definition’ of what needs to be achieved and how, was found through the broad goal of “Lützerath Bleibt” (Lützerath remains). This made it possible for all group to agree on a common goal while finding their own means of how they want to achieve it. Often the means were collaborative when organizing larger protests like the one on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2022 (OBS), but it also provided enough room for every group to take actions on their own along the lines with what they feel able and safe with since e.g., people of the MAWA might not “go up the trees, but instead we might do GESA support and support the activists (...)” (INT – MAWA 28.55min). Secondly, the ‘active relationship’ became visible when looking at e.g., the decision-making processes in the village wide general assembly where people from all the groups are invited to share their thoughts and concerns when it comes to certain decisions affecting the whole village (OBS). Lastly, the ‘emotional investment’ was created through having lived through a lot of shared experiences of defeat but also successes (INT – KIDL 34.57min), which not only plays an important role for the emergence of a coalition but also for its longevity. This factor will be further highlighted under the section 6.6 ‘Commitment and trust, Quality of Interaction, Space and Shifting social environments’.

#### **6.4. Institutional Environment: political opportunities, threats, and institutional structures**

For social movements to be able to achieve their goals they need to impact the political system and society they are operating in (Buechler, 2016). This is no other for coalitions, hence several external conditions such as **political opportunities, threats, and institutional structures** influence coalition formation and longevity (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017).

There are several **political opportunities** that presented themselves to the activists and that might have influenced coalition formation and longevity. First and foremost, there was a certain **political openness** thanks to the landmark ruling by the German constitutional court in March 2021 (Federal Constitutional Court of Germany, 2021). It mandated that the government needs to alter their climate protection law from 2019, describing the pathway to climate neutrality until 2050, to provide a clearer set of measures for the time after 2030. This ruling was of great importance for the coalition since it served as the basis of argumentation in the court case of Eckhardt Heukamp against the early transfer of possession of his land to RWE (OVG-NRW, 2022), which would if won, prevent evictions until a ruling in the main expropriation process is presented (OBS). According to the activists and their lawyers, this could take many years since expropriation processes are usually very lengthy and therefore would buy the coalition a lot of time (OBS). Moreover, according to activists, this court case made mobilization, at least from a legal perspective, easier since people are legally allowed to stay in the village since the camp and the houses owned by Eckhardt Heukamp cannot be evicted if the decision has not been taken yet (OBS).

Furthermore, several studies issued by ADB have found that the by RWE estimated amount of 780 million tons of coal which are planned to be harvested under Lützerath and in the 'Hambach' mine largely exceed the CO<sub>2</sub> budget that remains for the coal sector in Germany (around 200 million tons of coal) to stay in line with the 1.5-degree goal (DIW Berlin, 2021; Rieve et al., 2022). Hence, the destruction of Lützerath and the harvest of the total amount of 780 million are unnecessary (DIW Berlin, 2021; Rieve et al., 2022). This provides a strong political opportunity and leverage point for a coalition to access.

Secondly, the **stability of the political alignments** changed when in September 2021 a new government was elected. In their coalition contract the new government referred to the 5 villages, including Lützerath, which are endangered by the Garzweiler coal mine, stating that they "want to preserve the villages in the Rhinish mining area that are affected in the third resettlement phase. The

courts will decide over Lützerath" (SPD et al., 2021, p. 59). The fact that the government explicitly addressed the villages of the Rhine area and opts for a coal exit in 2030 instead of 2038 was seen by ADB as a huge success and opportunity for further protest (Alle Dörfer Bleiben, 2021). It was felt to prove that their protests work, and fights can be won and thus fighting for Lützerath needs to continue (Dresen & Alle Dörfer Bleiben, 2021). Moreover, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2022, a regional election in North-Rhine-Westphalia would be held. This also presented as an opportunity according to the activists since even if the court ruling would decide against Lützerath, a newly elected government could change the state development plans to save the village (OBS).

Also possibly influential for coalition formation and longevity were **elite allies** such as Katrin Henneberger, who became an elected member of the national parliament in 2021 for the green party (Henneberger, 2021). She has been active for years in climate movements in the Rhineland area years before moving into the national parliament (Henneberger, n.d.-a). She is now part of the parliamentary committee for 'climate protection and energy' and can therefore put topics such as 'structural change in the Rhineland area' onto the agenda (Henneberger, n.d.-b). Hence, having an advocate for their cause, such as Katrin Henneberger in such a committee, provides a strong political opportunity for the coalition. This became very visible when her committee passed a proposal where it was stated that "the German Bundestag is in favour of preserving the village of Lützerath at the Garzweiler open pit mine and of refraining from using the lignite under the village" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022, p. 30).

Lastly, the **state's capacity for repression** plays an important role for movements and therefore also coalitions to emerge and survive. This becomes clear when e.g., looking at the student democracy protests in China in 1989 which were brutally repressed and therefore dissolved (McAdam et al., 1996). However, in Lützerath people were quite confident that even when it would come to police repressions in the case of e.g., an eviction, the police would either not be able to clear them out quickly enough before more mobilization would happen or at least only at large costs (OBS). Hence, this did not provide a clear opportunity but also not a hinderance to coalition emergence or its longevity.

Concerning **threats**, the most continuously visible is the operator of the coal mine 'RWE' (OBS). Just the mere sight of the digger coming closer day and night until only being 90m away from the vigil (Mahnwache Lützerath, 2022a), poses a genuine threat to the shared goal of saving Lützerath. The digger can be seen on figure 2 and 3.



**Figure 2** View from Lützerath towards the mine. The earthen line on the bottom of the picture is the earthen wall separating the village from the "Tagebauvorfeld". On the right one can see security guards from RWE. On the far left behind the digger is the coal power plant Frimmersdorf or Neurath operated by RWE. The photo was taken by me on the 03.02.22.



**Figure 3** Full size view of the digger. The picture is showing the digger in its full-size while being out of operation for repairs. The treeline in the distance on the far left is where Lützerath is located (red circle). The photo was taken by me on the 03.02.22.

This threat is underpinned by the constant presence of RWE security forces, as seen on figure 2, patrolling the so called “Tagebauvorfeld” which is the area between Lützerath, and the digger only being separated by a tiny soil wall (OBS). This genuine threat of RWE and the fight against them is perceived as one of the biggest common denominators of the coalition (INT – MAWA 18.58min). This constant threat of RWE, of course, not only proves to be influential for the formation but also for the longevity of the coalition for as long as it is existent. Moreover, that there is the constant threat of state repression due to an eviction and the fear of getting evicted (OBS).

Further, this clear threat provides a “crystallisation point” as described by Christopher, which is needed to mobilize (INT – ADB 28.06min). According to him, those points, or places such as Lützerath, are where it becomes utterly clear what the problem and the enemy or threat is, and it helps create narratives that makes sense to people and gives them a space to gather and fight together against a common foe like RWE (INT – ADB 28.06min).

Lastly, changes in **Institutional structures** can determine for organizations which try to change policies via institutional politics, with which groups they are able to cooperate with (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Since I have already highlighted in the section above on political opportunities how the coalition in Lützerath is affected by e.g., electoral changes (Jenkins-Smith et al., 1991), I do not further elaborate on this point here.

## **6.5. Resources**

The availability of **resources** plays an important role for groups, because they need to compare cost and benefits before engaging in a collaboration (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). In Lützerath, all groups could gain different things from joining the coalition (OBS). What already became apparent in section 6.2 (division of labour), also holds true here. Since groups were able to successfully divide the work within the coalition, e.g., ADB and ‘Lützerath Lebt’ doing the bulk of the press work (OBS), they did not have to have every resource, be it financially or human resource, all by themselves but could profit from the others.

However, there are also things to look out for when a joining into a coalition with a much larger and more well-equipped organization (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). There might be the possibility of smaller groups getting co-opted or controlled by the stronger partner or at least it may appear so (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). There also has been such an incident in Lützerath. As per 'Lützerath Lebt', 'Greenpeace' had been pushing to hang up a large banner at the entrance of the village stating "1.5 degrees mean Lützerath remains" (INT – Lützerath Lebt). This banner can be seen on figure 4.



**Figure 4** View towards the village. The large yellow banner attached to Eckhardt Heukamps house reads "1.5 degrees mean Lützerath remains". The photo was taken by me on the 03.02.22.

When the decision was made, 'Lützerath Lebt' agreed to a compromise that 'Greenpeace' is allowed to put up the banner but only without a logo, so it does not appear that the whole village is in Greenpeace's hand (INT – Lützerath Lebt 47.45min). However, now they regret that they did not push more to change the message of the banner because it is very prominently placed and gets picked up in almost every article, interview or photo taken about Lützerath (INT – Lützerath Lebt 49.47min). Since they do not agree with the message of 1.5 degrees and rather opt for saying that 1.2 degrees is already unbearable for a people in the global South (INT – Lützerath Lebt 48.05min), they now have to put things right in interviews and other media work (INT – Lützerath Lebt 46.20min). Nonetheless, having an actor like 'Greenpeace' on board also brought a lot of legitimacy for groups like 'Lützerath Lebt' and their tactics of e.g., squatting houses, when they had a joint press release stating Greenpeace's support for the action (INT – Lützerath Lebt 45.04min).

## 6.6. Commitment and trust, Quality of Interaction, Space and Shifting social environments

As already explained before, many of the same factors that influence coalition emergence also continue to do so over time (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). There “are nonetheless a number of factors that emerge as organizations and individuals interact over time that shape a coalition's trajectory” (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017, p. 8). In this section, I will only highlight the factors that have not extensively been discussed already above.

One such factor is commitment and trust and shared goals. According to Van Dyke & Amos (2017) the extent to which coalition partners develop shared goals, trust, and commitment towards the coalition once it emerged, can highly influence its survival.

As shown in the previous section, Lützerath was able to create a **shared goal** of “Lützerath remains”, which helped span ideologies and different agendas and will most likely continue to do so.

**Trust**, I argue, was built through e.g., previous histories of interaction, living, working, and eating together every day but also through common experiences of success, like making it through the last cutting season without a single tree being cut, but also defeat, such as the destruction of the road L277 (OBS). According to Negen from KIDL, especially the shared experience of defeat was when “the foundation was laid for the trust that we have in each other” (INT – KIDL 34.57min).

And lastly a strong **commitment** to the coalition becomes clear when looking at e.g., acts of solidarity when activists which climbed onto harvesters to prevent trees from being cut were shielded off by “30 quite obviously middle-class, well-situated people applauding” making it “not quite so easy for the police officers” (INT – KIDL 34.57min). Even though there have been conflicts and criticism in the coalition, when it came down to saying “we need to defend Lützerath” (INT – KIDL 36.56min) and we need to cooperate now, there have never been any second thoughts of the groups (INT – KIDL 36.56min).

All the above is underlined by the quality of interactions as well as the **availability of space** for building connection (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Space for connection and collaboration was available and even constantly growing in Lützerath. When I first visited the village on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, activists had just squatted the last remaining empty house in the village (OBS). By the time I visited a second time at the end of January, this farmstead was already transformed into a space for rest and sleeping but also for workshops and events (OBS).



The general **quality of interaction** and collaboration between members of the different groups could be impeded through the constant change of people in the camp (OBS). Nonetheless, there was a solid basis of activists who are continuously stay in the village, and who have very close ties across the coalition (OBS). Moreover, this constant change resulting from a strategy of everybody is welcome was also seen as one of the strengths of Lützerath (INT – KIDL, since this allows people to join for shorter amounts of time and thus reduces the barriers of getting engaged).

And lastly, the coalition Lützerath has shown that they are prepared to adapt to **shifting social environments** if the need arises by hosting e.g., so called “Aktuelle Stunde” (current hour) meetings discussing the new developments in ongoing lawsuits against the village or changes in the demonstration laws by the state which could influence their protest (OBS and Lützerath Lebt, 2022b).

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1. Case focused discussion

Linking back to my research aim and my sub research question three of finding recommendations for other protests drawn from this critical case, I want to discuss the implications of the results, answering sub research question one and two of how the coalition in Lützerath emerged and sustained itself, and what could be taken away from them.

When it comes to coalition emergence and longevity one cannot overstate the importance of **social ties** (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). These have proven to be valuable also in the case of Lützerath with ADB acting as a **bridge builder entity** with connections that predated the protest in Lützerath to both the villagers and local communities and climate activist alike. Hence, my results confirm that it is very important to build relations early on so ties can form, and people can create a **history of interaction** together. This was also underlined by activists from e.g., Lützerath Lebt stating what they will take away positively from Lützerath is “that you try to get in touch with people locally, and also take these people on board and involve them a certain degree” (INT – Lützerath Lebt 33.29min). However, the example of the vigil also shows that ties can be created, which not necessarily needed to be established beforehand, and thus help a coalition to emerge.

What appeared to be very important for Lützerath and its social ties is activists who have connections to more than just one group and which were able to communicate and mediate between the actors

(INT – ADB). These connections and overlap in membership reflect strong previous histories of interaction and help blur the lines between the groups and facilitate coalition emergence and longevity. Or as Staggenborg (1986) finds “a lack of overlap in membership among diverse groups exacerbates ideological differences, creating many disagreements and misunderstandings which might be avoided with better communication” (p.384).

Lastly, creating those histories of interaction is also strongly supported by having **free spaces** or places which facilitate interaction (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). Lützerath provided such spaces, through e.g., its kitchen for all, their plenary and workshop tents, or the squatted houses as a calm place to retreat to (OBS). This was also highlighted by Christopher, from ADB, noting that the climate movement needs to have so called “crystallization” points where people can gather, mobilize, and interact (INT – ADB).

Hence, future coalitions and activists need to be aware of building social ties from day one or even before, to create histories of interaction especially with the local population. However, the example of the vigil shows that these do not necessarily need to exist beforehand but can also be built on site. Moreover, having a shared space to meet and a certain overlap in membership or at least connection between members can be very helpful too.

**Organizational factors** such as a broad **multi-issue goal** are also of great importance (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). The case of Lützerath showed that even though the groups were not able to find a common narrative or opinion on when and how to end coal (INT – Lützerath Lebt), which could have e.g., streamlined a strategy of influencing institutional politics, the goal of “Lützerath remains” still made it possible for them to gather under this umbrella goal while advancing their individual groups interests, like opting for a 1.2 degree instead of 1.5 degree framing in the case of ‘Lützerath Lebt’, hence supporting the formation and longevity of this coalition.

Moreover, the **division of labour** achieved in Lützerath helped streamline resources and avoid conflict especially since the coalition does not have one **professional leadership**, in opposition to what Shaffer (2000) finds to be helpful for coalitions, and a very diverse membership base. Through this division it was clear, that groups like the MAWA e.g., act as contact point and ‘Lützerath Lebt’ organises workshops and skill shares on certain topics (OBS). Thus, this supported the point raised with the broad goal of keeping their own agendas and prevented that everyone had to be available for all decision making in the village, given the base democratic leadership style chosen in Lützerath. And since different groups mobilized different people, this division supported the longevity of the coalition, because the broader they are along lines of class, gender, and race, the bigger the support might be.

Hence, future coalitions should opt for a goal that all can gather behind but also gives them enough room to keep their agendas. However, having a more specific goal might create bigger impact. Moreover, a somewhat clear division of labour is important especially for alliances without one combined clear leadership engaging in base democratic decision-making processes such as Lützerath.

When it comes to **ideology and culture**, my results show that the broadly anticapitalistic and environmental justice ideology that could be found with all the groups underlines again the positive effect already described for a broad goal or in this case ideology, that all the groups can define differently what this entails for them in particular while recognizing an ideological congruence and understanding that they are not all so incredibly different from each other (INT – Lützerath Lebt). This was all underpinned by changes in culture and how people work together. Creating a shared culture is a constant process important for both emergence and longevity (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). However, these cultural changes, especially along the lines of class, gender, and race and in the field of antiracism within the coalition were not without trouble. Nonetheless they are important since if they are not addressed that might strongly impede coalition building and longevity (Beamish & Luebbbers, 2009).

Hence, creating a working culture is a constant process and not even quite reflexive places such as Lützerath are free of racism and need to constantly address these issues to make the movement and coalition more inclusive. Future coalitions will need to strive for the same to create a welcoming place open for everyone. Moreover, coalition partners need to be at least to a certain extent ideologically aligned to work together.

Talking about the **institutional environment** the results from Lützerath show that there was a set of opportunities to seize. However, it is important to recognize them when they arise and mobilize at the right times and not give up in the face of defeat, for instance when RWE destroyed the connection road L227. Moreover, having a common enemy or a very clear observable threat, such as RWE, also strongly support the emergence of coalitions and continues to be important for their longevity. This also ties into the need for “crystallisation points” which are needed to mobilize by showcasing a clear and communicable threat (INT – ADB). It might be the case that when this clear threat dissolves it also becomes harder for the coalition in Lützerath to sustain itself. Since, “just as political opportunities or threats inspire collaboration, so does a decrease in opportunities and threats sometimes play a role in coalition dissolution” (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017, p. 8).

Hence, future coalitions need to be receptive for when opportunities arise and seize them. Moreover, they need to find crystallization points, if possible, where a threat is clear, imminent, and tangible and thus makes it able to mobilize and form coalitions against.

Social movement organizations engaging in coalitions have a lot of advantages from a **resource** point of view. As seen in Lützerath, they could not only divide the labour but also amass and share more from financial to human and social resources. However, smaller organizations, when cooperating with more established actors such as Greenpeace, need to be aware of not getting co-opted by their narratives or lured into compromises they might regret as seen with the banner example. Nonetheless, having an actor like 'Greenpeace' on board also brought a lot of legitimacy through Greenpeace's support the e.g., squatting of houses (INT – Lützerath Lebt).

Hence, groups thinking of joining coalitions with established actors for the sake of resources or legitimacy need to be aware of certain power structures and reflect thoroughly when accepting a seemingly easy compromise.

A **shared goal, trust and commitment** build the basis for an ongoing collaboration between actors. Whether these things develop over time or not can be highly influential on whether a coalition survives or not (Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). This was achieved in Lützerath through a lot of shared experiences ranging from defeat to successes and thus reflecting the earlier mentioned importance of a history of interaction again. Moreover, **shared space** and the **quality of interactions** are very important. When it comes such a space the earlier mentioned crystallization points come back to mind. And for improving the quality of interactions it might be useful that there is a more continuous set of people which organize and streamline the coalition over a longer time to counteract the very fluctuating nature of such a protest.

Hence, for future coalitions it is important to build commitment and trust early on through shared experiences in actions, may it be successes or defeats. Moreover, it is relevant that they have the space to connect but also meaningful connections through long time collaboration between people and not needing to adapt to a new set of people all the time, at least on a more planning level.

## **7.2. Discussion of framework and broader theoretical implications**

Through my thesis, I realized that there is a lack of clear frameworks to analyse coalitions effectively. There are not many established options, one being Beamish & Luebbers (2009) which is mainly concerned with explaining the success of a cross social movement alliance. Since my case however was mainly looking at organizations from the same social movement (environmental), I decided to derive a framework from the literature review of Van Dyke & Amos (2017) on social movement coalitions in general. This framework has proven very valuable as a lens to approach my case and data with. However, at times it lacked theoretical clarity and depth since Van Dyke & Amos (2017) did not further specify what they mean by concepts such as identity. Hence, I supported this framework through additions to the factors of 'Ideology, culture and identity', 'Institutional Environment: political opportunities, threats, and institutional structures' and 'Resources'. The additions consisted of applying the definitions of collective identity by Melucci (1995), ideology by Heywood (2017), political opportunities by (McAdam et al., 1996), and resources by (Buechler, 2016). This also made it possible to better tie in the framework with very established social movement theory such as resource mobilization theory (e.g. McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977) and political process theory (e.g. Kriesi, 1991; Tarrow, 1988; Tilly, 1978).

### ***Implications for social movement coalition theory***

Nonetheless, my study shows that a lot of the factors listed by Van Dyke & Amos (2017), as being influential for coalition emergence and longevity, with some exceptions, were also found in Lützerath and provided examples of how they unfolded. Thus, my research supports the validity of this set of factors and their relevance to social movement coalition research.

### ***Implications for sustainability science***

Moreover, in relation to sustainability science, there is a gap in the understanding of how the civil society influences transformations to sustainability (Temper et al., 2018). Through this study I contributed to a better understanding of how social movement coalitions, as one entity of civil society, influence sustainability transformations by describing a critical case and how this coalition managed to emerge and sustain itself, both being prerequisites for generating change.

### **7.3. Limitations of this study**

Due to the limited amount of time and the extent of this thesis, I was not able to analyse all the important factors of coalitions. Van Dyke & Amos (2017) invites one to look at the emergence, longevity, and the success of coalition. However, since the protest was still ongoing and due to constraints for the extent of this thesis, I have decided to not further investigate the field of success.

When it comes to my chosen research approach, one could argue that my interview partners were not representative or able to speak for the whole groups. Some even mentioned themselves that their answers cannot represent all the opinions in the camp, since their group of e.g., 'Lützerath Lebt' is so diverse. Castañeda (2020) also warns us to "not describe movements as clearly bounded, united, and coherent" (p.174). However, for this study I made the deliberate decision of interviewing the media representatives of each group since I figured that when chosen to speak for their respective organizations towards the media, they at least have some level of justification to speak for their groups. This decision was also made due to the impossible task of gathering opinions of all activists in the village.

Moreover, the duration of my fieldtrip was only an excerpt of the time the coalition has been active in total. This makes it harder to derive conclusions from those experiences during my stay, as things I thought to be relevant or true could have changed after I left. This could have been counteracted to an extent, through prolonging my time spent in the village. However, due to the limitations of this thesis this was not possible.

## 8. Conclusion

Understanding how coalitions emerge and sustain themselves is a prerequisite for understanding how they can contribute to sustainability transformations. In this thesis, I have shown how many of the factors relevant for coalition emergence and longevity described by Van Dyke and Amos (2017) unfolded in this critical case and what could be taken away from them.

The coalition emergence and longevity were influenced through e.g., extensive social ties, by bridge building entities like ADB with a long history of interaction. Further, organizational characteristics, like the broad goal of 'Lützerath remains' and a clear division of labour played a role. Moreover, the groups were quite ideologically aligned, were able to build a collective identity and incorporated cultural changes in e.g., the field of antiracism, to improve collaboration. The coalition was presented with several political opportunities such as the landmark ruling of the German constitutional court but also a clear threat through RWE. The exchange of resources also played a pivotal role especially through the division of labour. Lastly, factors such as commitment and trust were built through many shared experiences of successes and losses.

Furthermore, what can be taken away for future protests is that activists wishing to engage in coalition building need to be aware of creating social ties early on, finding a clear crystallization point where the threat is clear and there is space to connect, have a broad goal that can bridge ideological gaps and allows for different agendas, divide the labour, seize opportunities, and be receptive of not being co-opted by a larger player.

Future research could dive deeper into what makes coalitions successful. It could highlight the factors specific to social movement coalitions and investigate into comparing coalitions with singular social movement organizations. Furthermore, it could analyse the tensions that arise along the lines of class, gender, and race in coalitions, given that they have a very diverse membership base.

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## 10. Appendix

### Appendix 1: List of interviewees

Table 1 Interview partners

Number	Date	Name(s)	Organization	Duration
1	28.01.22	Frank	Greenpeace	00:47:08min
2	29.01.22	Sabine, Hajo and Markus	Mahnwache Lützerath (MAWA)	00:44:24min
3	30.01.22	Christopher	Alle Dörfer Bleiben (ADB)	00:29:42min
4	30.01.22	Negen	Kirchen im Dorf lassen (KIDL)	00:53:05min
5	02.02.22	Florian and Kante	Lützerath Lebt	01:16:33min

### Appendix 2: Guiding questions for interviews

- 1) What is, according to your organization, the injustice that RWE creates in Lützerath?
- 2) What would be just in comparison?
- 3) What is your contribution in Lützerath to achieve this justice?
- 4) What is, according to your organization, the common denominator which made cooperation possible between the heterogenous set of groups in Lützeath? How was this common denominator found? What was the process?
- 5) If Lützerath would remain, how would a more just society look like afterwards?

### Appendix 3: Map of Lützerath



**Figure 5** Overview map of Lützerath. The map shows the location of the village in relation to Cologne. The two large mines visible on the upper satellite picture are the 'Hambach' coal mine on lower edge on the picture and the 'Garzweiler 2' mine which is threatening Lützerath. The lower satellite picture shows Lützerath on the left-hand side with the 'Mahnwache Lützerath', the activist camp, the squatted house 'Paula' and Eckhardt Heukamps house highlighted with red circles. On the right-hand side the coal digger is visible. The lower satellite picture was retrieved from the GEOportal.NRW (Land NRW, 2022) and the upper from Google maps (Google, 2022). The map is my own creation.