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*School of Education and
Communication*

Age of Activism in the Face of Fascism

Mobilizing Grandmotherhood
through the Movement Identity
of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS

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Abstract

[ENGLISH] In critical times of reawakening right-wing ideologies in Germany, the social movement OMAS GEGEN RECHTS (transl. ‘Grannies against the far right’) sets a determined, yet by many unexpected, political statement against fascism. This thesis draws on collective identity theory and symbolic interactionism to conceptualize the activists’ communicative and strategic use of the grandmother self-designation. Based on semi-structured interviews, photo elicitation method, participant observation, and song lyrics, the work explores the expressive and symbolic meaning of their collective action, communicative objects and processes. The grounded analysis points to four themes of identity negotiations – (1) loudness, (2) visibility, (3) commemoration and (4) peacefulness versus ruthlessness – to reveal how OMAS GEGEN RECHTS re-appropriate grandmotherhood. With the lens of feminist gerontology, it becomes apparent that the activists’ self-designation ‘OMA’ extends far beyond anti-fascist commitment by challenging traditional images of female ageing.

[KEYWORDS] *OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, Social Movement, Older Women, Activism, Identity, Symbolic Interactionism, Feminist Gerontology, Anti-Fascism*

[GERMAN] In kritischen Zeiten wiedererstarkender rechter Ideologien in Deutschland setzt die soziale Bewegung OMAS GEGEN RECHTS ein entschlossenes, wenngleich für viele unerwartetes politisches Zeichen gegen den Faschismus. Mit Theorien der kollektiven Identität und des symbolischen Interaktionismus konzeptualisiert diese Arbeit den kommunikativen und strategischen Gebrauch der Selbstbezeichnung ‚Oma‘. Deren expressive und symbolische Bedeutung in Form von kollektiver Aktion sowie kommunikativer Objekte und Prozesse wird auf Grundlage von Interviews (mit visueller Unterstützung), teilnehmenden Beobachtungen und Liedtexten untersucht. Die fundierte Analyse verweist auf vier Themen der Identitätsverhandlungen – (1) Lautstärke, (2) Sichtbarkeit, (3) Gedenken und (4) Friedfertigkeit versus Wehrhaftigkeit. Die Themen zeigen auf, wie OMAS GEGEN RECHTS den Begriff der ‚Großmutterschaft‘ neu interpretieren und ihn sich aneignen. Aus der Perspektive der feministischen Gerontologie wird deutlich, dass die Selbstbezeichnung der Aktivistinnen ‚OMA‘ weit über antifaschistisches Engagement hinausgeht, indem sie traditionelle Bilder des weiblichen Alterns in Frage stellen.

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1. Introduction

If you, reading this book, are young: trust the women in your family! [...] When you are old: You are the link between the past and the future and you have something to tell! [...] We have learned from history and today we fight for our grandchildren, so that the far right does not triumph and does not destroy Europe. (Salzer, 2019, pp. 12-13)

The initiator Monika Salzer depicts why elderly women in Austria, Luxemburg and Germany mobilize: Under the movement's name OMAS GEGEN RECHTS (transl. 'Grannies against the Right'), thousands turned into activists and took the streets in non-violent protest. Since 2017 the German branch became a transnational and decentralized grass-roots movement with over 15.000 members (OGR Alliance, n.d.-b). The initiative commits to the protection of democracy in a common Europe and explicitly opposes fascism, anti-Semitism, racism, and misogyny for the better of their (grand)children's lives (Laverne, 2018). A detailed description of the movement is given in [appendix 1](#).

In the variety of topics and the local diversity of the groups, most activists are united by two characteristics in particular: the female gender and the higher age. Nevertheless, the movement is open to all genders and age groups ([appendix 1](#)). The activists denominate themselves as OMA¹ (translated as 'granny', plural 'OMAS'). On street protests and in their online presence, OMAS stand out with their protest signs, props, singing and sometimes stereotypical accessories. Many groups refer to the "striking symbolism" (Laverne, 2018) in their declaration. Thereby, the designation OMA becomes the figurehead of the movement – including the socially constructed role of a grandmother and the linguistic belittlement of grandmother into the German translation for 'granny'. Based on the findings of Chazan (2016), "grandmotherhood is [considered as] a period of political decline and that 'grandmothers' (or those who might appear to be grandmothers) are necessarily harmless, apolitical, and passive" (p. 28). At the same time, the activists challenge these socially entrenched stereotypes: "We are no longer the grandmothers of yesteryear buried more or

¹ The original spelling of the movement and its members in capital letters is maintained in this thesis.

less early in a traditional role” (Salzer, 2019, p. 68). This raises questions on why the movement relates to the grandmother role and how they express and use it strategically.

The research approach to OMAS GEGEN RECHTS is highly relevant, as authoritarian and right-wing structures are increasing worldwide and endanger democratic systems (Bethke et al., 2020). Also in Germany, despite its self-formulated claim of historical responsibility after World War II, recognized fascists and national socialists sit in the parliament again since 2017 (Decker et al., 2022). Germany has an over-aged society, in which the population of older adults outweighs the youth (Prange, 2021). Intergenerational communication and solidarity play a critical role also in other challenges, as the climate crisis, gender justice, or Covid-19. OMAS GEGEN RECHTS is a relatively new phenomenon in this context and the first major social movement in Germany that organizes around the grandmother role. The communicative processes of the movement’s identity serve as an important link between activism, civil society, and political entities, as this work will demonstrate.

This thesis denotes a first attempt to approach the OMA-self-designation of the (German) OMAS GEGEN RECHTS. It employs a mixed method approach of in-depth interviews enriched with visual material and participant observation. A conceptual and theoretical novelty lies on the focus on the expression of the OMA role in street and online protests (features of the member’s appearance, specific tactics, and symbolism) and their strategic use. Therefore, the thesis refers to the theory of collective identity and develops an analytical framework based on the dimensions participation, expression, and outcome. The concept offers a broad and interlinked understanding of mobilization processes, motives and (communicative) processes in becoming and maintaining a collective. Previous research supports the interpretations on the German movement in a methodological or comparative manner to other social movements reclaiming the ‘granny’-identity (chapter 2, selected authors Caissie, 2011; Chazan & Kittmer, 2016; Gatti, 2012; Johnson, 2020; Roy, 2006; Schwarz, 2022). These studies shed light on various identity aspects of comparable movements and societal conditions concerning ageism and sexism for other countries’ contexts. Complementarily, this thesis is the first attempt to strategically link OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’ grandmother role with the collective identity theory within the research field of ‘granny activism’.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The thesis addresses the tension between the reappropriated use of the granny identity, and in contrast, the constant challenging of age and gender norms in the context of social activism. **The thesis aims to explore the OMA identity and its strategic use by the movement's members to contribute to the understanding of elderly women in activism.** Because of diverse political contexts, the study focuses on OMAS GEGEN RECHTS in one country, Germany. The aim is concretized in the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What is the relationship between the individual activists of the social movement OMAS GEGEN RECHTS and their collective self-designation as 'OMA'?

RQ2: In which ways do the activists express their self-designation as 'OMAS' in street and online protests?

RQ2.1 (sub question): **For which strategic reasons do the activists express the 'OMA' self-designation in these particular ways?**

RQ1 analyzes the processes behind constructing and reinforcing the movement's collective identity in the interplay with personal roles, characteristics, and motives. It includes how the activists perceive and relate to the 'granny' identity, and simultaneously, how it influences them personally. The manifestation of the OMA identity becomes tangible and visualized with RQ2. This question focuses on the habits and experiences in consciously and unconsciously communicating the OMA role offline and online. Concretely, the question identifies and explores the features of the member's appearance, specific tactics, and (visual) symbolism. The sub question RQ2.1 builds on RQ2 by investigating the strategic choices of using and expressing the 'granny' role. It seeks to illuminate the connections between identity and the movement's strategy and success. Thereby, the tactical decision making is challenged in relation to age and gender along offline and online protest forms.

2. Previous Research

This cross-sectional thesis is situated between the study fields of communication activism, female activism, and aging activism research. It draws on a growing body of scholarship that conceptualizes a more inclusive and intersectional understanding of activism (Freixas et al., 2012). With the lens of phenomenological communication research, the products, processes, frames, and mediatizations of activists' interventions move into focus. In this context, this thesis resonates with the work on movement symbols and objects by Awad and Wagoner (2020), Regener et al. (2020) and De Vuyst (2022). First, this chapter turns to collectives and cases as the research object, then to thematic study areas.

Prior to today and to my knowledge, no scientific research has yet been published on OMAS GEGEN RECHTS². Although, there are brief references in few empirical studies. One finds these short citations and notes in the fields of political science and feminism (Fink, 2021; Mićunović, 2021), media and communication science (Dang-Anh et al., 2022; Galpin, 2022; Mićunović, 2021), and gerontology (De Vuyst, 2022). These few publications mostly refer to the movement in the Austrian setting, which differs compared to the political and cultural landscape of the German branch. This thesis' core conceptual contribution is, therefore, that it offers a systematic, grounded analysis of the characteristics of the German movement OMAS GEGEN RECHTS.

While numerous authors studied how gender, ethnicity, class, or sexuality interact to shape mobilizations, few explored how aging intersects with these power structures (Chazan, Baldwin, & Evans, 2018). Yet, in feminist research, elderly women were systematically underrepresented (Caissie, 2011). Since then, further studies enriched the research history on female activist in later life.

² In contrast, journalistic writing covers the movement intensively, even internationally (for instance New York Times (Eddy, 2019)).

However, since the thesis addresses specifically the movement's self-designation of 'OMA', the tie between high age and female gender is not sufficient. Thus, studies with similar research objects are relevant. The chapter narrows down the body of scholarship on various social movements worldwide, which similarly center the grandmother role. Sawchuck (2009) and Chazan (2016) loosely describe this field as '**granny activism**'. Thematic areas of other non-violent social movements are primarily the peace movement and, increasingly in recent years and in correlation to the youth's activism, the climate movement.

- *Raging Grannies* (n.d.) which evolved in the 1980s in Canada out of the peace movement (plus groups in the U.S., Israel, Japan and Greece) and are most present in academic (English) research (researchers collaborate via the academic collective 'Aging Activisms' (n.d.))
- *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (n.d.) in Argentina's human rights movement that demands justice for the (grand-)children stolen and illegally adopted during military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s
- *Knitting Nanas (Against Gas)* (n.d.) in Australia protesting against the coal seam gas industry by, for example, blocking the mines while spending the time with knitting
- *Granny Brigade*, a nativist movement, intervening against the restrictive border politics at the US-Mexico border
- *Polskie Babcie* against fascism in Poland (Wrobel, 2019)
- *Grandmothers for Peace International* (n.d.) in the U.S.
- *Bestemødre for fred* (n.d.) as part of the Norwegian Peace Council
- *Grandmothers Against Gun Violence* (n.d.) in the U.S.
- *Aktivistimummot* (n.d.) in Finnish climate activism
- *Omas For Future* (n.d.) supporting the young climate activists in Germany.

It applies to name these groups to shed light on different organizational forms, geographical distributions, and political goals within the practical field of 'granny activism'. In contrast, the research body on these movements is rather thin. Peer-reviewed papers only depict the first four movements, to the author's knowledge. Additionally, reflections and empirical findings partly resonate with research done on movements centered on grandparents as

members. An example is *Iaioflautas* (n.d.), a collective of retired men and women, organizing within the anti-austerity movement in Spain.

The research review reveals that three different academic approaches structure the field of 'granny activism': The research (1) on influencing the targeted social change (goals, strategy, success, and efficiency), (2) on influencing society's discourse, stereotypes, and narratives about women's ageing, (3) on influencing the activists' lives itself.

(1) This thesis resonates with analyses of social movement efficacy relating to a grandmother role (Charpentier et al., 2008; Chazan & Baldwin, 2019; Choi, 2019; Johnson, 2020; McHugh, 2012; Weis, 2015). Concerning political strategy, Gatti (2012) demonstrates how *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* uses their biological relation to grandchildren to demand "policies of reparation in cases where the identity of children was violated" (p. 353). Studies on movements (particularly in eco-activism) loosen the family ties and depict grandmotherhood as a symbolic argument to protect future generations worldwide and in remote future (Schwarz, 2022; Sheridan, 1988). Johnson (2020) describes grandmotherhood even as a symbol itself for the *Granny Brigade*. The work draws on research on solidarity efforts by the *Raging Grannies* and *Iaioflautas* (Chazan, 2016; Chazan & Baldwin, 2019; Pedersen, 2010; Schwarz, 2022). Through identity-forming intergenerational collaborations with young activists or activist coalitions in post-colonial contexts, these authors underline the perceived generational responsibility and experienced-based and protective functions in collaborating. Decision making is closely related to media and communication, although less work is engaged with theoretical frameworks from communication study. Among these, the thesis draws on distinguished perspectives on mediatization (Sawchuk, 2013) and narrative or storytelling approaches (Caissie, 2011; Grenier & Hanley, 2007; Kenyon et al., 2011) on the strategic (dis-)advantages of the grandmotherhood category. The perspective of art and craft (focus on the *Knitting Nanas*) (Clarke, 2016; Larri, 2020) and humor (Roy, 2004; Roy, 2006) provides further angles on communicative practices.

(2) The thesis' interpretations intervene in dominant stereotypes about grandmotherhood as a period attributed with as, inactivity and un-political attitudes (chapter 3.1.). Sawchuk (2009) frames 'granny activism' by counter-culture. Caissie (2011) depicts these as counter-

narratives, which “challenge the social construction of age and gender through their collective stories and provide a powerful ‘counterstory’ to dominant narratives of both” (p. 126). All publications on the listed social movements above include, partly brief, references to how activism can contest narrow patriarchal expectations for female ageing. Some refer to collective identity (chapter 3.2.) as theory (Blanche-T. & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2022; Caissie, 2011; Gatti, 2012; McHugh, 2012; Sawchuk, 2009). The enabler for these influences on images of women’s ageing are, among others, conceptualized as a distinctive persona of the ‘granny’ (Roy, 2006) or a ‘mask of ageing’ (Sawchuk, 2009). Critical perspectives note how, in the same time, the movements can reinforce stereotypes of old age (Blanche-T. & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2022), or gender binary and aspects of structural racism in the mostly privileged, White, cis-gender membership of most North American ‘granny movements’ (Chazan, Baldwin, & Whattam, 2018).

(3) A further body of research demonstrates the influences on individual members. This thesis draws upon approaches concerning activists’ empowerment via political expression (Pedersen, 2010; Sheridan, 1988); their self-images and attitudes towards ageing (Caissie, 2011); concerning health (Hutchinson & Wexler, 2007); and their education in fields of later life learning and pedagogy (for instance, for the *Knitting Nannas*, Larri (2021) coined the term ‘Nannagogy’).

3. Theoretical Frame and Concepts

Three theoretical pillars are the perspective on female ageing, the core concept of collective identity and the connective element between sociology and communication in symbolic interactionism. The closing subchapter consolidates these pillars in an analytical framework.

3.1. Age, Gender, and Feminist Gerontology

As the movement's initiators and most of the members of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS identify as women and as they are mostly above 50 or 60 years old, it is important to shed light on views on females in the so-called 'third and fourth age' (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). Additionally, social constructions of grandmotherhood are addressed.

Essential is that **gender and ageing** are socially constructed (Butler, 2006; Martin & Twigg, 2015). Besides biological features and processes we as societies make meaning of specific age levels, classify, and connect them to an understanding of what 'old' means. Besides positive associations and emotions, age-related prejudices and "pervasive negative attitudes about older persons [...are] widely accepted and normative for most cultures" (Gendron et al., 2016, p. 997). Older adults which identify as female prevalently experience further marginalization and discrimination (Freixas et al., 2012).

Grandmotherhood as social category evolves in specific discourses. In Western societies, grandmotherhood and 'grandmotherly' behavior and appearance is often romanticized and idealized on one side, as Haubold-Stolle (2009) sketches for German culture: "Who doesn't know her? The grandma with the white frizzy curls and the homemade cake. Tender, sweetly scented with lavender, her face wrinkled but with rosy, soft cheeks, an essence of love and care" (transl.) (p. 7). On the other side, grandmotherhood is often devalued and post-menopausal women are depicted in a 'narrative of decline' (Gullette, 1997) as being fragile, passive, dependent, unattractive, and unproductive (Grenier & Hanley, 2007). Caldas-Coulthard and Moon conclude: "While references to individual grandmothers often evaluate positively, there is also strong evidence of generic, figurative and other usages that trivialise and derogate" (2016, p. 1).

Overall, the perspective of **feminist gerontology** provides the basic understanding for the context of this thesis. Feminist gerontology research – practiced in nature, social sciences and humanities, and increasingly in the communication field – attempts to document women's experiences across the life course and to promote new interpretations of female aging (Freixas et al., 2012). It focuses on power relations and oppressions, thereby, the field

is placed between society's ageism and sexism in an intersectionality manner across disciplines (Hooyman et al., 2002). Feminist gerontology aims to "improve the negative images of older women by challenging negative stereotypes of them and emphasizing women's development over the entire life course" (Caissie, 2011, p. 128), which relates to my personal role as embedded research activist (chapter 4.3.).

3.2. Collective Identity and Social Movements

The core theory to explore the OMA identity and its strategic and communicative use is the collective identity concept. Collective identity is an abstract and multifaceted concept applied in different research areas; in social movement studies it became highly prominent since the 1980s (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Regarding social change initiatives Flesher Fominaya (2010) sketches collective identity with the following questions: "What is it that allows actors to identify themselves and each other as members of a social movement? How does a set of individuals become a collective entity we can identify and name as a social movement?" (p. 393). Collective identity depicts a 'one-ness' or a 'common we' (Snow, 2001) among a group. Consequently, in an **boundary dimension**, it is also based on an understanding of 'otherness' outside the group and on being recognized by the 'others' (Smithey, 2009). For example, social movements which are rooted in generational experiences might process their collective identity partly in contrast to other generations' values and features. However, these identities can be multi- dimensional and multi-layered within the same collective.

Alberto Melucci's writings are the entry point for social movement research. The novel and groundbreaking in his rethinking was that Melucci (1995) claimed: "The empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result rather than a starting point, a fact to be explained rather than evidence" (p. 43). Foundational is his analysis focus on dynamic processes how a social movement emerges, negotiates, and creates meaning and action as a collective actor (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Consequently, collective identity is not only based on properties of the group and its members, but primarily it is understood as a system of interactive and communicative processes fueled by networks and emotions (Melucci,

1995). Nevertheless, a movement's identity does not equal with a categorical homogeneity of all members. Collective identity is also not static or necessarily long-term consistent. Instead, collective identities constitute, develop, are challenged, and rebuilt over time. Specifically in case of conflicts, the identity is pressured to transform (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020).

All definition approaches need to be distinguished from the idea of **self-identity**. In contrast, collective identity "is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity" (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). Snow (2001) goes further and postulates a specific alignment or 'identity correspondence' between personal and collective identities.

Processes and properties which form, foster, and reconstruct collective identity reveal themselves in all temporal phases. These **four levels** drawn by Polletta and Jasper (2001) serve as more differentiated gradient within the concept. This thesis looks at the identity of the research object in these four levels, which build the foundation of the analytical framework. The levels are (1) identity and the movement's *emergence*, (2) identity and the member's *commitment* in the course, (3) identity and the *strategic* and tactical choices, and (4) identity and the movement's *outcome*.

Collective identity offers a shared agency and an impulse for **collective action** (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020). The action is connected to the movement strategy and acted out in various tactics. Both, collective identity, and collective action, are intertwined phenomena and condition and infer one another. As Smithey (2009) puts it into words: "Tactical choices reflect collective identities, collective action catalyzes the construction of collective identities, and meaning is constructed" (p. 659). The negotiation process between tactics and identity (besides a range of other internal and external factors) determines and enables a group's specific set of tactics, the so-called repertoire or 'repertoire of contention' (Tilly, 2016). Jasper (1997) even refers to a 'taste in tactics'. For decades prior, researchers attempted to explain collective action with rational self-interest or grievances, with cost-benefit and resource mobilization theory (Fletcher Fominaya, 2010). The 'new social

movements' scholars since the 1980s shifted their interest towards cultural and symbolic aspects of (Salman & Assies, 2010). This shift popularized the concept of collective identity – often related to aspects of habitus, norms, solidarity, ideology, and emotions (Hund & Benford, 2004; Kuumba, 2001).

As collective identities must be continuously constructed and maintained, social movement organizations must do '**identity-work**' by interpersonal or mediated communicating, mobilizing, negotiating and expression (Snow, 2001). However, identity-work is not necessarily consciously perceived as such. Instead, it always consists of accompanying processes in the movement's emergence, commitment, strategy, and success. In the following quotation, the relevance for communication sciences in this context becomes particularly apparent:

This 'identity-work' encompasses a range of activities that express who and what a group stands for [...]. Types of identity-work include rituals for the expression of solidarity and evocation of shared feelings, identity-talk, the use of songs and slogans that are politically and emotionally evocative, and gestures and symbols that serve as boundary markers of collective differentiation. (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020, p. 19)

Manifestations, speeches, names, social media publications, flags, strikes – all these are communication acts and likewise artifacts of collective identity and vice versa fundamental drivers and contenders of collective identity. For this reason, communication scholars and sociologists often study collective identity in relation to frames, discourses, or narratives with the empirical object of social movements' representations, tactics, and media coverage about these. This thesis aims for the comprehensive understanding of collective identity practice as a multidirectional mixture of communicative processes. Therefore, besides the in recent years often highlighted choice and decision-making level (Barandiaran et al., 2020; Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020), all four levels of identity in movements' – creation, recruitment, decision-making and outcome (Polletta & Jasper, 2001) – will be considered and integrated in the analytical framework.

3.3. Symbolic Interactionism

To link the sociological approach and communication, a phenomenological approach based on Waisbord's (2019) conceptualizations of communication as expression and as symbolic interaction is chosen. I thus advocate for a broad understanding of communication research beyond media-centrism.

Symbolic Interactionism focuses on small-scale interactions between members of a society. According to Blumer's (1969) premises, a person's behavior is guided by the meanings that objects have for this person. Meaning is established by interacting with other people and it constantly changes while interacting. The social objects are symbols. Reality is perceived as a set of social symbols which promote community and an expression of communities itself (Schutz, 1962). In the thesis context, movement symbols can be signs, names, narratives, styles of storytelling, clothing, rituals, tactics et cetera (Snow, 2001).

Smithey (2009) promotes the previously often neglected theory within social movement research. Considering the different levels of collective identity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001), the analysis of symbolism allows to bridge these levels. Awald and Wagoner (2020) sketch the "bridge between [...] the micro individual level of identifying with certain symbols and deciding to join certain causes; the meso level of group formation and solidarity through symbols; and the macro level of the representation of the society and its ideologies through symbols" (p. 100).

3.4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is utilized for structuring the interview questions and analyzing the data. It involves three sections: participation, expression, and outcome. The framework derives from the four levels of collective identity by Polletta and Jasper (2001), the perspective of symbolic interactionism, and the three previous research approaches in the field of 'granny activism'.

Analytical framework		RQ
Participation Becoming part and engaging within the OMA-identity	Identity & Emergence (1) Identity & Commitment (2)	RQ1 RQ2.1
Expression Communicating the OMA-identity strategically in collective actions	Identity & Strategy (3)	RQ2 RQ2.1
	Identity & Symbolism	
Outcome Achieving results as/of the OMA-identity	Identity & Outcome (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On goals • On society • On activists themselves 	RQ1 RQ2.1

Table 1: Analytical framework

4. Methods and Material

The qualitative research design beholds the empirical object, which is the OMA self-designation of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, and its epistemological objects, which are the movement's expressions of identity in the sense of practices behind the features of the member's appearance, specific tactics, and symbolism in street and online protests.

In line with the research aim, the thesis follows the epistemology of social constructivism, which implies that all knowledge and reality are actively created by social relationships and interactions (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the practices of and by the movement's representation, symbolic interactionism, and narratives move into the focus of attention, because they shape the (collective) identity, and because the (collective) identity is inscribed into these practices. This research strives for an articulated **grounded theory** research strategy, embedded in its original claims by Glaser and Strauss (1967), to develop concepts which emerge from the qualitative data in an iterating and comparative coding and interpreting process (Charmaz & Bryant, 2021, p. 375). While Mattoni (2014) mentions that grounded theory has been seldomly used by social movements researchers, she points

out that it is highly suitable for the exploration of perceptions, identities and in general for cultural dimensions of protest. As Charmaz (2006) ties grounded theory and constructivism together, a “constructivist [in grounded theory] would emphasize eliciting the participant’s definitions of terms, situations, and events and try to tap his or her assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules” (p. 32).

Besides grounded theory, the participant observation of street protests indicates (limited) aspects of **ethnographic** perspectives as one other out of five fundamental qualitative research approaches (Creswell, 2013). In ethnography the researcher becomes a “fieldworker [who] is present in two agencies, as data gatherer and as a person involved in activities” (Baszanger & Dodier, 2021, p. 12). Therefore, ethnography is suited here because it expands the methodology with (1) ‘firsthand’ data in the field, with (2) its observation scale pending towards the individual level of activists’ sense making, and with (3) the researcher’s practical experience inside of collective actions (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014). By the participant observation this thesis aims to give further indications of immersion into the movement for analysis depth and ethnographic sensibility.

The **combination of grounded theory and ethnographic sensitivity** also permits to resolve an apparent controversy and critique of (new) social movements research. With the desire to standardize from interviews and observations and to derive universal macro- or meso-level classifications about the movement as a whole, heterogeneities between members, their attitudes and (collective) identities were sometimes neglected (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014). Despite the rather socio-demographically homogeneous membership of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS (appendix 1), this work wants to leave room for the unique facets and eventual fragmentations of collective identity. Thus, the combined-method framework of the theory-generating, rather generalizing grounded theory approach and the more personal, ethnographic approach allows the derivation of individual practices and identity characteristics to the collective without over-unitizing the individuality of each OMA into a homogeneous entity.

4.1. Data ‘Making’ and Sampling

Rich and detailed information from members of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS has been produced by conducting seven in-depth interviews with the participatory photo elicitation method and by participant observation of four actions. Instead of referring to this chapter as data ‘collection’, I consider the process as data ‘making’ or ‘generation’ (Baker, 2021; della Porta, 2014) because, the OMA activists and I involve in very different modes, but, both, in (inter)active roles in disclosing the socially constructed OMA-identity.

4.1.1. Interviews with Photo Elicitation

Semi-structured interviews with several activists of the movement were chosen. I conducted five to six interviews of approximately 45 to 60 minutes in German language, later transcribed, and in extracts translated to English. The interviews were facilitated via online video calls because of covid-19 health restrictions and the geographical distance. One pilot interview was scheduled beforehand to test the interview guide and to verify some information about OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, which could only be found in the movement’s own and journalistic sources due to the lack of research.

One-to-one, in-depth interviews offered deeper insights into the subjective and individual perception of the OMA identity. Kvale (1994) reasons that “qualitative interviews may approach objectivity in an arithmetic sense of intersubjectivity” (p. 152). For that reason, individual and subjective values, convictions and formal as well as informal roles in the interview data could be abstracted to describe the collective identity of the movement (RQ1). Further, the interview method suits to reveal experiences, habits, and strategies in social activism with a “fundamental importance for the study of motives, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as the identities and emotions of movement activists” (della Porta, 2014, p. 226). Because of the scarcity of systematic information or reliable databases on social movements in general – and, particularly, in the case of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS – interviews with movement’s key informants remain a prominently used qualitative research method in social movements research (Blee & Taylor, 2002). The method with mostly open questions shed

light on a variety of identity-expressive features of the member's appearance, tactics, and visual symbolism online as well as offline (RQ2) and further explores the motivations and strategic considerations for using the OMA identity correspondingly (RQ2.1).

Because RQ2 and RQ2.1 aimed to explore these mostly visually visible or practically experienceable ways of expressing collective identity, the **photo elicitation interview** (PEI) approach was additionally used in the interviews. PEI was applied by “using photographs to invoke comments, memory, and discussion in the course of a semi-structured interview” (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2001, p. 87) to bring more nuanced inquiry into the research questions. In this study, I invited the respondents to send two to four pictures or screenshots, which depict the OMAS or their OMA-identity-typical features or tactics in street protests or online activism which were then discussed in the interview. Alternatively, I included press photos and screenshots captured online in the same manner. Thereby, this image data did not become a data source for visual analysis it-self. Rather it was used as a type of ‘prompt’ (McCracken, 1988) while producing spoken data along the interview questions.

The interview grid (appendix 3) is based on the analytical framework (chapter 3.4.). The grid got supplemented by Charmaz' and Belgrave's (2012) proposition for introductory/initial and closing/ending questions. Additionally, it was carefully adapted depending on the respective respondent and in the ongoing dynamics of the interview. By listening to the interviewees' foci and narrative threads (Blee & Taylor, 2002) and by responding with the order and selection of questions as well as responding with the timing and extend of the photo elicitation method, the study results were affected in a reinforcing manner. The adaptations were done intentionally as the thesis aims for the interpretation of just these personal perspectives and sense-making. Moreover, the adaptations were conducted tentatively to minimize possible critical effects on the results' validity.

The thesis focuses on female movement's members as interviewees which the minimum age of 50. To encompass the spectrum of different activities and experiences in the movement as broadly as possible and as distinctive for the tentative categories as needed (according to the theoretical sampling method in grounding theory (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012)), OMAS will be drawn from different parts of the country (at least west, east, north, south), different

levels of experience (at least 1.5 years active), and different positions within the movement's organization (ideally founding members, board members of German association, active members without formalized roles e.g.). The respondents were recruited by contacting the regional groups via Facebook, Instagram or via email, further using the snowball method (Creswell, 2014). A written consent to participate in the research (appendix 4) and for the audio recording will be secured. Ultimately, approximately eight hours of interview data with seven OMAS were generated:

Angelika	Wetterau (Central) Founder local group, OMA since 2018	May 25 th , 0:58
Hilde Vollmayr	Hamburg (North) Member local group, OMA since 2019/20	June 16 th , 1:11
Birgit Schuler	Villigen-Schwenningen (South) Member local group, OMA since 2018	June 16 th , 1:10
Konny	Dresden (East) Member local group, OMA since 2019	June 25 th , 0:56
Jutta	Frankfurt (Central) Board member of the association, OMA since 2018	June 29 th , 1:10
Maja	Hamburg (North) Member local group, OMA since 2019	June 24 th , 1:16
Katrin (Pseud.)	Anonymized (East) Founder regional group, OMA since 2019	July 1 st , 1:09

Table 2: Interview partners (partly anonymized)

Further, OMA-Hilde and OMA-Angelika provided me with 13 song lyrics. These **texts and partly melodies**, written and composed by various OMAS, will support the analysis.

4.1.2. Participant Observation

With field research by participating in minimum two chosen actions of the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS I aim to empirically view and experience ‘first-hand’ the events to better understand the protest through the perspective of the OMA activists. In line with the grounded theory strategy and in intentional contrast to the semi-structured interviews, the type of the more open field-driven participant observation was chosen (Lichterman, 2002).

Claimed as a revolution in social movements research with regard to the ethnographic approach, Balsiger (2014) supports the method’s use of observation to “show all the aspects that take place offstage, behind the scenes, before and after protest actions” (p. 145). Therefore, following Melucci (1996), I acted and integrated myself, as it is impossible to accurately understand a social situation if only observing it – while still self-reflectively balancing a certain degree of critical distance (Uldam & McCurdy, 2013). The immersive investigation of practices and symbolisms of the OMAS on site with a certain level of participation produced my secondary data – documented in the format of brief field notes and by taking brief recordings and photos. The street protests are closely interlinked with online media practices before, while and after the particular event. Therefore, the observation additionally includes online traces and some examples of social media uses as they contain relevant information for the research aim (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014).

Observed actions were chosen based on the variety of participant numbers and tactics, the geographical distribution across Germany, and the accessibility because of the member’s openness and trust towards me as an outsider researcher (Uldam & McCurdy, 2013).

Action 1	Spray-chalk action prior to a right-wing demonstration, preparing the walking route with posters and slogans <i>(3 OMAS, part of a group of local anti-fascist civil society organizations)</i>	Bad Nauheim, May 20 th , 2h
Action 2	Introduction of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS and discussion hosted by a senior citizen initiative <i>(2 OMAS, 6 interested elderly women)</i>	Frankfurt, June 23 rd , 3h

Action 3	<i>Cancelled on short notice:</i> Vigil for peace at the monument in commemoration of Korean ‘Comfort Women’ (sexual slavery by Imperial Japanese army in World War II) (<i>only 1 policeman on site, phone call with an OMA</i>)	Berlin, July 16 th , 1h
Action 4	Vigil for peace and disarmament at Alexanderplatz (<i>8 OMAS, 1 OPA/man, 1 grandchild, plus visit of public broadcasting team</i>)	Berlin, July 19 th , 1.5h

Table 3: Observed gatherings and protest actions

4.2. Data Analysis

In the iterative process of **grounded theory analysis**, the paradigms of deductive and inductive become blurred and evolve to a so-called ‘abductive’ (della Porta, 2014, p. 231) approach with constant loops of description, narration, and interpretation: “A continual movement between data, memos and theory so that data analysis is theoretically based, and theory is grounded in data” (Silverman, 2013, p. 109).

First, the interview data was transcribed with the support of the tool *f4x Spracherkennung* to prepare for the coding process. The analytical framework with its three sections inherently pre-organized the interview information to a minor extend. These vague structures of the interview material were then modified, reconstructed, and concretized into four broader themes in a constant comparative coding process (Decuir-Gunby et al., 2011) (codebook, appendix 2). The coding was backed with the *Nvivo* software, which proved very helpful, with its visualization features of word frequencies, coding comparisons and hierarchies.

In a next step, I contextualized the analysis with my participant observation undertaken at two actions and gatherings. Operating as **triangulation** of knowledge (Creswell, 2014) the field documentations reconciled, adjusted, and expanded the knowledge adding to the codebook structure and the findings. The triangulation in the scope of this thesis was particularly relevant due to the scarce research on OMAS GEGEN RECHTS and generally

meaningful in social movements research, as Ayoub et al. depicts it, “beyond [...] a validating strategy, we see it as an approach for sound explanation, enhanced theory-building capacity, and deeper understanding” (Ayoub et al., 2014, p. 68).

Subsequently, coming from the respondents’ answers and the observations as well as my personal experiences and respective research, I developed patterns, generalizations, and themes with regards to the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’ self-perceptions and representation, their symbolic action and strategy as well as implications for women’s aging in society.

4.3. Ethical Considerations and the Role of the Researcher

Ethical considerations are discussed because of the threats from far-right opponents and because the context of ageism and sexism in today’s German society remains sensitive.

In every contact, I communicated my role transparently. In the digital sphere, in particular the movement’s Facebook groups, I entered with consent. For public content, I considered that the expectation of privacy is rather limited (Uldam & McCurdy, 2013). For the interviewees’ consent (appendix 4) I offered three different steps to (partly) anonymize their identities. It would have been useful to directly offer further ways to double-check my identity, because while contacting potential participants, I underestimated the risks from the far-right and the activists’ caution. In the beginning of each interview, I chose to dedicate some minutes for rapport building (McCracken, 1988) to explain my self-positioning and to eventually detect possible hesitations towards the approach of this thesis. The rapport building also suited to decrease the impression of distance and strangeness in virtual meetings. Prior to the publication, all interviewees reviewed their citations and took the chance to correct minor unclarities.

For the sake of reflexivity in the ethnographic practice (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014), it was critical to continuously reflect on my own social constructions, frames, and norms of elderly women and social activism. Undeniably, I am rooted and socialized in German society with

sexist, ageist and racist structures and frames. Besides, I am influenced by my interest in feminism and the strong personal relationships to my grandmothers.

I can consider myself as a ‘research activist’, according to Jeppesen and Sartoretto, by aiming to achieve insights into social injustice and by contributing to civil societies’ efforts in Germany to resist against far-right tendencies. To elaborate, my role corresponds with the embedded research, “where a researcher shares activist objectives and values, although they were not a priori part of the researched community” (Jeppesen & Sartoretto, 2020, p. 13). My sympathy with OMAS GEGEN RECHTS and my outsider position will be reflected during the research. In terms of transparency of the researcher’s role I finally add that I stood loosely in contact with the regional group Wetterau for a short period in January 2022.

5. Analysis and Discussion

Seven older women and participants in the observed actions brought their heterogenic life stories and diverse political backgrounds into the research dialogue. Every woman to whom I could speak to during six weeks of data collection referred to herself and group members as ‘OMA’ (transl. ‘granny’).

With this thesis’ feminist approach, it was a priority for me to ensure that the OMAS have ‘their own say’. Therefore, a considerable number of translated quotations will guide the analysis (German originals, [appendix 5](#)). Based on grounded theory, the iterating coding process (codebook, [appendix 2](#)) generated various patterns and themes as part of the movement’s narrative, which structure the analysis.

5.1. Becoming Part and Making Sense of the OMA-Identity

The movement constructs, reinforces and realigns collective identity in the constant interplay of individual characters and motives, joint practices and rituals, societal stereotypes

regarding gender, age and grandmotherhood, as well as with external groups as boundary factors. This chapter analyzes the mutual influence and interaction between activists and the OMA self-designation according to [RQ 1](#).

5.1.1. How Reinterpretations of Grandmotherhood Create Belonging

When asked why the interviewees joined specifically OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, they respond with factual aspects. Among these reasons, they name having more time after raising children and reaching retirement (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Maja, OMA-Hilde), wishing to stay active after the moving, separation, or death of a partner (OMA-Jutta, OMA-Katrin), and greater access to resources and the power of a group (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Konny).

The interviewees OMA-Katrin, OMA-Birgit, and OMA-Konny report that previous activist groups ‘fitted’ no more or they ‘no longer felt comfortable’. Even though they had not previously been politically engaged, OMA-Jutta, OMA-Angelika, and OMA-Maja spoke similarly of moments of belonging when noticing the movement:

And there I saw the signs of the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS. They were still very new, and I saw them and said, that’s it. And many, many of us had this reaction when we went to the OMAS. We saw that sign and said, that’s it. That’s where I see myself. (OMA-Maja)¹

Maja’s statement raises the question: *What creates this feeling of belonging and we-ness, just by spotting a sign?* New social movement theory provides the opportunity to shift the focus from the OMAS’s rational reasoning to the identity-creating processes for participation ([Melucci, 1995](#)).

It became apparent: Oma does not equal OMA³. The **activists re-appropriate the term and the semiotic meaning of ‘Oma’** ([Galinsky et al., 2003](#)). This reappropriation centers the social category ‘grandmotherhood’ and reinterprets it (1) in its biological sense and (2) in its

³ The benefit of the capitalization used in this work becomes apparent. When referring to membership, engagement, or self-concept as a member of the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS collective, the word is capitalized.

societal connotations. The movement collective forms ‘OMA’ as members’ self-designation. By placing the ‘OMA’ designation into the movement’s name, they charge the movement with symbolic meaning (Kuumba, 2001) and turn every participating person into a protagonist. The usage of the plural ‘OMAS’ levels the performed category to a collective role, a community in opposition to the far-right. I argue that the reappropriation is key to shed light on questions of belongingness, participation, and movement typical expression. Therefore, the re-appropriated OMA-self-designation is defined as a constitutional “guiding theme” (Galinsky et al., 2003, p. 222) of the movement’s collective identity.

(1) First, the movement **reinterprets the biological sense** of ‘Oma’. In the German language, ‘Oma’ describes the social role of being a grandmother in colloquial speech⁴. The role comes into effect with the birth of the first grandchild (Haubold-Stolle, 2009). The movement’s name decouples the term ‘Oma’ from its strict familiar context into a broader relational meaning.

This interpretation is motivated by the respondents’ perspective that having grandchildren serves as a motivator (six out of seven women have grandchildren), but more in the sense of caring for succeeding generations rather than the existence of grandchildren as prerequisite (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Konny, OMA-Jutta). ‘Grandchildren / Future Generations’ is one of the most mentioned codes in all seven interviews. Caring for future generations also drives the differentiated agenda, for instance, including climate protection (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Konny, OMA-Katrin). Further, the movement invites younger women (also men and youth as supporters) to join the collective and adopt the OMA-self-designation.

Herein lies a potential for irritation and conflict. Interested persons sometimes react deterred by the movement’s name as they do not have (grand-)children. These reactions can be interpreted as part of the discourse of ‘compulsory motherhood’ (Wyssusek, 2018). Sometimes men feel excluded and attempt to discuss a renaming which the movement rejects

⁴ In the original Austrian language, ‘Oma’ is less biological determined (OMA-Maja), which underlines the special connotation in German language.

(OMA-Jutta). Others react with hesitation because of stigmas and stereotypes of grandmotherhood ([chapter 3.1.](#)). The respondents retell: “that makes me old” (transl. OMA-Jutta, action 2), or “embarrassingly granny-like” (transl. OMA-Birgit). Even one regional group dealt with irritations and therefore addresses members and interested persons with ‘Dear women’ in their newsletter (OMA-Konny). This paradox resembles findings by Blanche-T. and Fernández-Ardèvol ([2022](#)).

Thus, why is the movement using the grandmother-designation if the term ‘Oma’ is neither a biological prerequisite to participate, nor an uncontested term for elderly (female) adults?

(2) Because second, the movement **reinterprets societal connotations** related to ‘Oma’. The interviewees state: “Being OMA is an attitude, it’s a matter of mindset” (transl. OMA-Jutta). They frequently made this statement with great consistency and similar wording. OMA-Angelika elaborates:

Being OMA is an attitude. As an OMA, you are definitely anti-fascist, and you stand by that. And you say it out loud, and you intervene, and you let it be known what you think about things. [...] Of course we also coquet a bit with the term granny, that’s clear. In the past, one used to think of grandma as someone who baked cakes at home and made pudding and sewed things and knitted for the children and grandchildren. We want to show, no, the grannies of today, they also go out on the street if something doesn’t suit them. Of course, I can cook pudding and sew and crochet and knit and everything. But I also still have an opinion, and I want to express that opinion. And I am still a grandma. (OMA-Angelika) ^{II}

The quote reveals first aspects of what distinguishes OMAS GEGEN RECHTS and determines identity-forming processes of the collective.

5.1.2. Boundary Dimensions and Processes

To grasp a fuller picture of constructing processes of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’ collective identity, the following chapter structures the negotiation with otherness into three parts. Visualized in figure 1, they are: (1) The counter-identity to ‘GEGEN RECHTS’, namely the far-right; (2) the counter-identity to the OMA or grandmother attribute of being female,

namely men; and (3) the counter-identity to the OMA or grandmother attribute of being older, namely the youth.

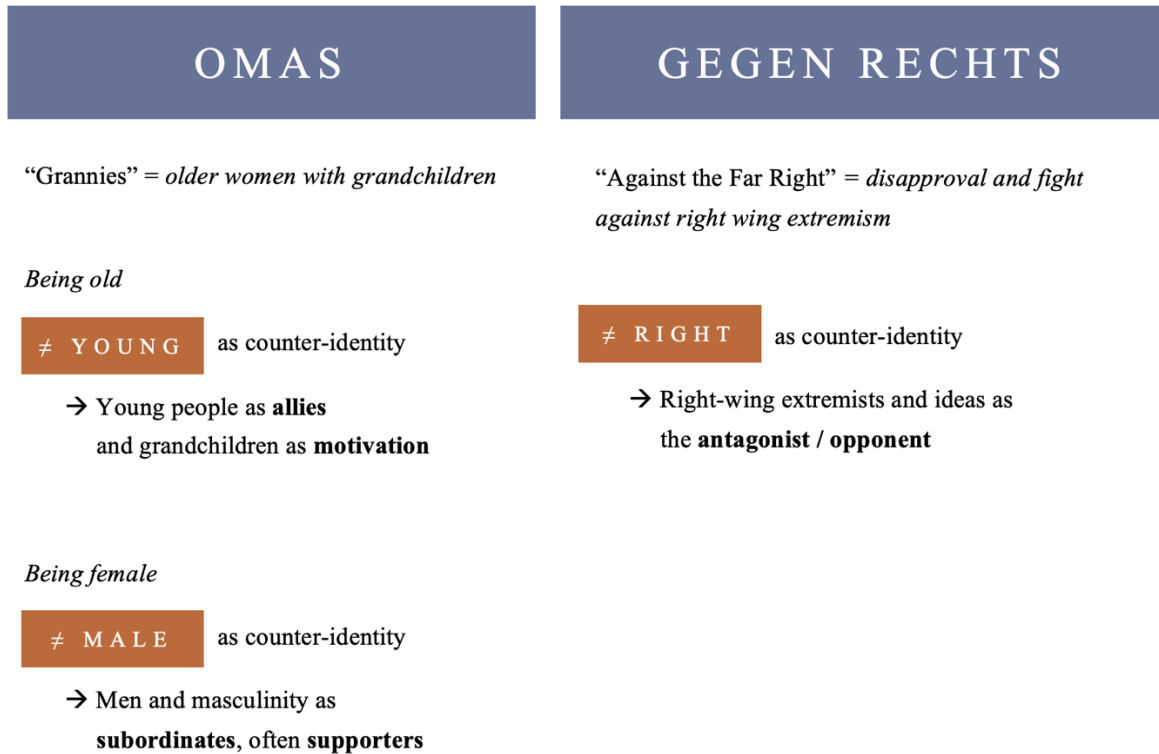


Figure 1: Overview of counter-identities and their functions (by author)

(1) The far-right as counter-identity: When speaking about ‘the far-right’, OMAS address different levels and groups: (a) overall radicalization tendencies in the broader population, (b) right-wing populist parties, represented in the German parliament, or (c) right-wing extremists and groups. This boundary actor needs to be contextualized within the rise of the far-right in Germany ([chapter 1](#)) and the OMAS’ often lifelong struggle for social change – a progress they fear losing:

And then these stupid right-wingers come along and want to cancel it all and want to go back to exactly where it all started, what we as young women already stood up against. And we just don’t want to let them take that away from us. It’s very simple. I don’t want to go ‘home to the Reich’. (OMA-Angelika) ^{III}

OMAS depict the far-right as destructive, brutalized in interaction and language, often racist and anti-Semitic, while promoting black-and-white thinking, simple solutions and traditional models of society and family. OMAS intentionally oppose this. For this reason, they consider themselves as constructive actors who articulate what they stand for and support realistic goals (OMA-Jutta, action 4). They demonstrate solidarity with the ones blamed and attacked by the far-right, such as religious minorities, migrants and refugees, or climate activists (all OMAS). Further, they confront brutalization with peaceful and tolerant dialogue, learning from their life experience to understand the world as complex and colored by shades of gray (OMA-Konny, OMA-Maja). Ultimately, the respondents use right-wing politics to justify part of their motivation for advocating a diverse and progressive role for women. In brief, the far-right is the movement's antagonist. They are the opponent not only because of the political agenda but also because of conflicting identity-forming characteristics and values:

Radicalism, regardless of whether it is xenophobia or anti-Semitism, or whether it is simply violence, including violence against women, because the right-wingers in particular have a very strict image of women ... That is also one of the reasons why we as women go against the far-right. (OMA-Maja) ^{IV}

OMAS experience hostility and threats from the far-right. As Hund and Benford (2004) state, conflicts with opponents can be reinforcing factors for collective identity. In this context, OMAS report subtle and open aggression face-to-face and in digital communication (six out of seven OMAS); sexist insults (OMA-Hilde); (death) threats (OMA-Birgit, OMA-Angelika); being documented and photographed and sometimes published with personal identities (OMA-Konny, OMA-Angelika); misinformation to stigmatize as violent and dangerous (OMA-Jutta, OMA-Maja) or defaming members as “demented, retarded and incontinent” (transl. OMA-Katrin); or even that right-wing men parodied the movement with signs labeled ‘OPAS GEGEN LINKS’ (transl. ‘Grandpas against the Left’) (OMA-Angelika). In the east of Germany, the aggression is much more intense, in big cities often much less. While movements in contentious politics as the *Raging Grannies* risk fines or arrest from the state (Pedersen, 2010), OMAS GEGEN RECHTS's risk-taking occurs in the context of an increasingly radical and militarized far-right extremism. Not all members withstand the pressure and sometimes reduce or quit their activism. Overall, all respondents

noticed that right-wingers react aggressively even just because of their presence. In this matter, the interviewees reflect on possible explanations (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Jutta, OMA-Konny, OMA-Angelika), why the populist and fascist scenes are this extremely hostile towards them (in comparison to other German civil society organizations and anti-fascist movements). OMA-Katrin sees a possible motive in the OMA-role:

So maybe they honor their own grandmother, but then they are insulted by OMAS. [...] I think they can't wrap their heads around it, it's somehow a special disgrace for them when these old hags demonstrate against them. It's my feeling, but it's only my interpretation. Because I notice that they are so allergic to us. (OMA-Katrin) ^V

Nevertheless, OMAS also interpret the attacks by the far-right as achievements for their political goals. Often, the interviewees interpret them as distress for the opponent. In this, the women find encouragement and confirmation. OMA-Jutta describes:

[It] shows that we have an impact. That is actually a compliment for us, when they begin to have fears, apprehensions towards us. (OMA-Jutta) ^{VI}

(2) The male as counter-identity: OMAS understand their collective as a female-lead movement and firmly reject any attempts from men to take over their discourses and political action. For instance, all respondents refuse to expand the name with a male or gender-neutral wording. In the sense of 'doing gender' (Butler, 2006), the respondents distinct themselves from socially constructed and performed attributes of masculinity, such as dominance, competitiveness, or hierarchical mindsets (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Birgit, action 4). Instead, they (re-)build their collective identity based on bottom-up, tolerant, and participatory ideals. The movement welcomes men as members, the 'OPAS'. Nevertheless, each regional group decides if and how to involve men (appendix 1). For joining, men accept the movement's identity, including its emancipatory agenda (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Katrin). This reverses German society's still patriarchic power structures. Men become the minority. Some men quickly exit the movement as they cannot bond to the movement's identity or cannot stand the secondary position (action 4, OMA-Birgit). Others accept the new balance of power, support the cause, join collective action, enjoy the same mutual appreciation and equal vote (OMA-Jutta, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Konny), and eventually experience new freedom beyond

gender stereotypes for both sides (OMA-Jutta). To summarize, the male counter-identity is subordinated. OPAS can act as supporters and, thus, become part of the collective identity.

(3) The youth as counter-identity: ‘The youth’ covers grandchildren as central motivator, young people in the public and young activists involved in the same struggle against the far-right and a future worth living. In alignment with other grandparent activism groups, the youth and grandchildren depict these movements’ ‘raison d’être’ (Blanche-T. & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2022). All respondents receive immense positive feedback from the youth, which makes them feel validated, motivated, and confirmed in their collective identity. OMAS and young activists (from left-wing groups like Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, et cetera) support each other with participation at actions, material resources, political analyses, and knowledge exchange (OMA-Maja, OMA-Katrin, OMA-Konny). Such intergenerational support and solidarity on eye-level is rather rare in German society, OMA-Katrin states. Chazan and Baldwin (2019), for instance, map ‘granny solidarity’ in the climate movement. Yet the groups remain distinctly separate in their membership, habitus, and identity. In brief, youth is considered as ally in the counter-identity. Additionally, the intergenerational collaboration between old and young reflects positively on youth’s attitudes towards gender and ageing. Some young people aspire to become older (activists) and anticipate joining:

Many young people said ‘When I’m old, I’ll be an OMA GEGEN RECHTS’. (laughs) That’s great, I thought. You still have a little time, but I think that’s a good goal. (OMA-Katrin) ^{vii}

5.1.3. Repercussions on Personal Lives and Constructions of the Self

Performing and engaging within the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS community and collective identity influences the activists. All respondents reported a significant impact on their lives – from ‘life changing’ (OMA-Katrin) to ‘nice contributions to life’ (OMA-Konny). In all interviews, OMAS emphasized that their activism is one facet of their lives, which covers different ‘proportions’ of time, energy, and personal identity. Besides, the interviewees hold different other social, professional, or familiar roles.

First, OMAS acquire the impression of being able to ‘contribute’, of doing something ‘important’ and ‘meaningful’. This leads to two positively perceived changes. On one side, respondents report a “**different standing**” (OMA-Angelika) vis-à-vis the outside world. This can be a higher status in the professional environment (OMA-Maja) or a more self-confident attitude towards family members and in the eyes of the public. All members described the youth’s positive response as an important and beneficial recognition. On the other side, the movement favors **inner growth**, as OMA-Birgit termed it.

One OMA, she’s always been with us, but pretty quietly. And now, it’s just stunning to see. How she suddenly stands there in the front and does stuff and addresses people. Not just behind her sign like ‘I dare to talk to people because I’m a OMA’, but like ‘I dare to talk to people and I show myself because I am here, because I am me’. Great. (OMA-Hilde) ^{VIII}

Second, participation at OMAS GEGEN RECHTS demands **cognitive activity** and includes personal **learning experiences**. The lens of social movement learning theory helps explore communities of practice and later-in-life learning processes (Larri & Whitehouse, 2019). OMAS emphasize further knowledge on the political landscape and how they increase their media competence and digital literacy (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Maja, action 4).

One of the most important effects is **social activation and the social community** gained. Having fun and finding support in the group matters considerably, as stated by all OMAS. It is also required to better cope with the serious content of their antifascist commitment or harassments from the far right (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Konny). In an environment of mutual respect and appreciation, movement members develop **interpersonal bonds**, which sometimes results in friendships (OMA-Birgit, OMA-Katrin, OMA-Maja).

Further, their activism reflects on personal **attitudes toward aging**. In contrast to other groups, researchers have experienced more hesitation in discussing age (Blanche-T. & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2022; Caissie, 2011). In contrast, OMAS GEGEN RECHTS are highly aware of these implications and willingly share them. The interviewees speak of a new freedom that came naturally with age, which echoes with concepts of liberation in later-life in gerontology (Kenyon et al., 2011). For some, the identity of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS reinforces a positive attitude towards a life beyond the climacteric and in distinction to

societal ideals of female youthfulness. However, other respondents quickly steered the conversation back to political objectives because this repercussion has less significance for them. Referring to OMA-Katrin, the influence on her personal initial aversion to the category for female ageing is most evident. Because of her movement participation, she experienced a reconciliation with the social category of grandmotherhood:

It's funny because I remember when my first grandchild was born, I didn't want to be called grandma. I thought that was terrible. [...] But this OMAS-GEGEN-RECHTS, that was so catchy for me. Now it's more an honorary title for me. So, I like it now and I don't have any problems [to be called 'granny'] anymore. (OMA-Katrin) ^{IX}

A negative development in their lives, which OMAS stressed, were the subtle or open-acted threats and attacks from the right-wing ([chapter 5.1.2.](#)).

5.2. Expressing, Negotiating and Strategizing the OMA-Identity

The following chapters turn to the question of 'how' collective identity becomes materialized and experienced in expression, strategy, and symbolism ([RQ2](#), [RQ2.1](#)). The structure is based on codes, which form clusters of themes (codebook, [appendix 2](#)), that are each part of the overall movement narrative.

All themes are described and motivated by tactical goals. The perspective of feminist gerontology then highlights levels of re-appropriation in the intersection of ageism and sexism, which the themes counteract. The themes do not stand isolated. They must be considered as entwined and often multilayered in communication means and rituals.

5.2.1. Theme: Being Loud to End Silence

– *Slogan, Paroles, Singing, Whistles, Music*

Terms related to tonal expression, such as 'voice', 'loud', 'to speak', accumulated in the interviews. Dualistically, OMAS phrased conflicting ideas around silence. In the interviews,

in media products and press reports, in social media and website content, OMAS repeatedly recite their slogan: “Being old does not mean being mute” (transl.) (Laverne, 2018). OMA-Hilde, same as three other interviewees, explains the slogan’s motivation:

The fascination is really that there are old women, a bunch of old women, [...] [who] dare to be loud and appear as a group like that. I found that immediately attractive. So, there is this beautiful saying: “We are old, but not mute”. (OMA-Hilde) ^x

By reciting and repeating the slogan – albeit in slightly different sentence structures – high penetration and coherence is evident. This suggests a significant resonance of this theme across all German regions. Moreover, the circulation and ritualization results from successful mediated identity-work within the movement (Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020).

Being loud and practicing vocalization occurs in a verbal and acoustic sense. For example, some groups use whistles, bicycle bells or horns. In demonstrations, the collective and number of OMAS intensify the noise. One action in which loudness played a major role occurred in Halle in 2019. Several OMAS, which were both present and absent this day, recounted this flash mob. Thus, the event is deeply anchored in the movement’s collective memory, which is why it is mentioned for the negotiation of collective identity. Over 50 OMAS, all trilling their whistles, disrupted a right-wing extremist’s rally on the marketplace (OGR Berlin, 2020). One of his followers alerts his group with repeated shouts: “The grannies are coming!” (transl.). One OMA records the scene and OMA-Maja narrates:

And at that moment we march up there and this “The grannies are coming; the grannies are coming!” There was so much panic in the voice, as if we were about to eat them up. One granny told us she had her son take the soundtrack out of the video and loaded it onto her cell phone as a ringtone. We laughed so much when we listened to it afterwards. That was great. (OMA-Maja) ^{xi}

The previous section demonstrates diverse communicative processes in which the collective uses sounds as a form of expression. The theme of loudness materializes as a tactic against the far-right. Sound evokes sound in interaction with the opponent, which is translated back into the movement in digitalized form. Creativity and (black) humor, parody and satire conspicuously mark these tactics. Previous research by Roy (2004) in Canada, or Whigham

(2015) in Argentina, highlight the role of sound and comic aspects within ‘granny activism’. Further, the sound-producing objects represent tools to combat the ‘age phenomenon’ of no longer holding such a strong or persistent voice, as OMA-Birgit explains. Thus, OMAS convert these probs into media to compensate for physical limitations. Referring to Marshall McLuhan’s (1964) ‘Extensions of Man’ these tactics serve as media prostheses of the senses.

Singing is an important form of expression for numerous groups. Several OMAS report how they use their voices in street protest for common anti-fascist and self-written texts:

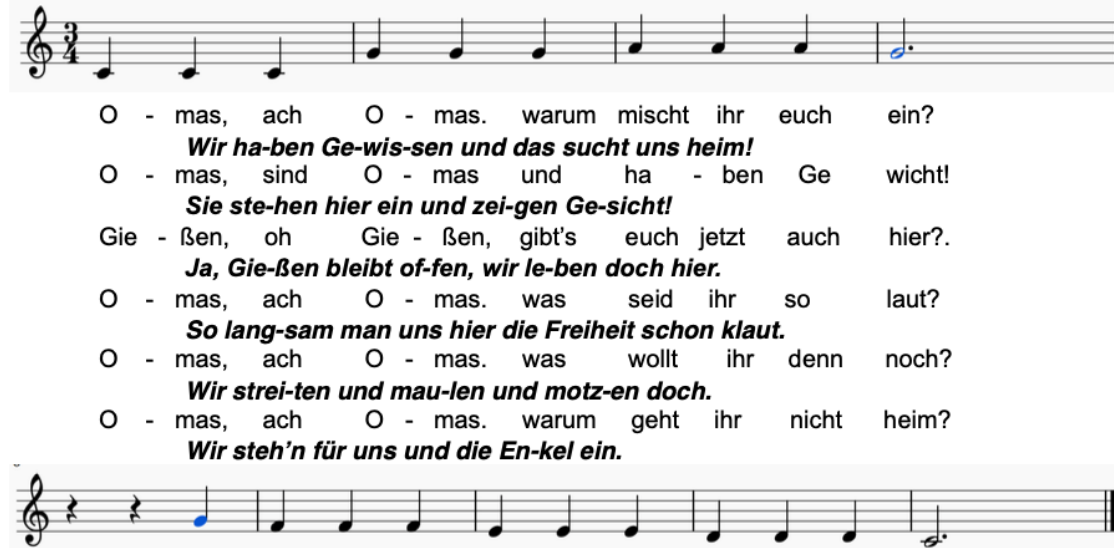
Our strength is singing. We sing a lot. We have special OMA-songs where we describe ourselves. But we have also rewritten songs. For example, a canon: “Resist, resist against the brown swamp in this country”. [...] And if you sing that at a demonstration, then the whole demonstration sings along with us. (OMA-Maja) ^{XII}

The singing groups described the vocal practice and their OMA-songs as a unique feature in Germany’s street protests (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Hilde). Therein, they communicate their political positions and address other demonstrators or groups. For example, in the mentioned canon, OMAS call on listening persons to join the struggle against right-wing forces⁵. Or they address the grandchild generation, mentioned as a motivator for engagement (figure 2). Interaction between groups is a recurring motif in the practice of singing and in the song messages. On closer inspection, this entire song text (figure 2) is dialogical in its structure and chanted by two OMA groups. This indicates a creative negotiation between a critical resonance from the outside and the internal motivations and resistance strategies. Collective singing in repertoires of contention links to various discourses among researchers and activists (Boyd & Mitchell, 2012). To name at least one parallel to previous research, the aspect refers to the analysis of over 200 *Raging Grannies* songs. Narushima (2004) pointed out relevant functions of singing for emotional processing and critical thinking.

⁵ The phrase ‘brown svamp’ is a color allegory referring to brown uniforms in the Nazi era.

→ 3 Frage- und Antwortspiel »Gretel, Pastetel ...

Gruppe singt die 1. Zeile, 2. Gruppe antwortet als Sprechgesang



O - mas, ach O - mas. warum mischt ihr euch ein?
Wir ha-ben Ge-wis-sen und das sucht uns heim!
O - mas, sind O - mas und ha - ben Ge wicht!
Sie ste-hen hier ein und zei-gen Ge-sicht!
Gie - ßen, oh Gie - ßen, gibt's euch jetzt auch hier?.
Ja, Gie-ßen bleibt of-fen, wir le-ben doch hier.
O - mas, ach O - mas. was seid ihr so laut?
So lang-sam man uns hier die Freiheit schon klaut.
O - mas, ach O - mas. was wollt ihr denn noch?
Wir strei-ten und mau-len und motz-en doch.
O - mas, ach O - mas. warum geht ihr nicht heim?
Wir steh'n für uns und die En-kel ein.

Figure 2: Song text and melody 'Sing for March 8th', the international women's day (sent by OMA-Angelika, for English translation see [appendix 5](#))

The theme further reflects in music. In street protests, OMAS install loudspeakers to play songs charged with the specific protest meaning (action 4). Similarly, for digital space, they combine images and video collages with music tracks. Some interviewees name these expressive practices, who have not adopted singing as a habit (OMA-Konny, OMA-Jutta, action 4). The movement has also strategized music as a form of culture and access to people. This includes tactics such as the organization of concerts (OMA-Angelika), performances by music groups (percussion group 'OMAS drumming against the far-right' [transl.], action 4), or exhibitions with music (OMA-Maja). In addition, OMA-Hilde mentioned exemplary that OMA groups currently "go on tour" with one of the most successful German hip-hop groups, accompanying their concerts with information booths. Thereby, the movement uses a popular music genre to facilitate the access to the youth, which resembles strategies of the Spanish *Iaioflautas* ([Schwarz, 2022](#)).

However, differences between the interviewees and regional groups become apparent. Other groups understand by being loud rather more subdued, as "granny-like" (transl. OMA-Jutta) described forms. These imply a determined and highly perceptible appearance, but without

resorting to intense volumes. In this context, all OMAS are highly aware of ‘multiplying effects’ for their messages (transl. OMA-Jutta), which they aim for, for instance, via their online outreach, via big events or press reports. Based on all examples, I argue: Being loud always symbolizes the movement’s demand to be heard. It emblemizes their political voice, which OMAS audibly raise towards the public and the right-wing opponent. Referring to the media scholar Couldry (2010) in ‘Why Voice Matters’, the movement understands voice as value and attempts to restore voice to political life.

Loudness stands in contrast to muteness:

In the past, people used to be mute. My mother was mute. She would never have stood up for her values or anything. [...] We either lived through the war⁶, in which people had to be silent, or we were children of parents traumatized by this war. (OMA-Angelika) ^{XIII}

Our grandparents were silent, well at least many, when there was still time to stand up against the agitation, to do something against Hitler. Nothing was done. I would never like to blame myself for that. And that’s why we go to the streets, also the other OMAS. (OMA-Jutta) ^{XIV}

In the interviews, OMAS often speak dualistically about countering silence with their loud voices. In this context, they refer to three aspects of their life stories. First, they aim to resist the ‘collective silence’ (Heimannsberg & Schmidt, 1993) they experienced in society and by their parents’ and grandparents’ generation. Silence becomes an accusation. In six out of seven cases (and action 2, 4), OMAS reported that there was minimal to no talk about war experiences, the holocaust, the ongoing threat of right-wing beliefs and extremism, or constructs of guilt in their families. Consequently, the interviewees associate voicelessness with surrendering to the rise of the national socialism in the 1930s. They expand the association and link silence to abstaining from politics in general. Second, they aim to resist society’s portrayal of the elderly females, which are stereotyped as quieter and more reserved (OMA-Jutta, OMA-Angelika, OMA-Maja). This perspective of feminist gerontology flags how OMAS challenge silencing strategies against women and older adults as well as

⁶ It is important to mention that a few older members experienced the last years of World War II and the post-war period as children. Unfortunately, it was not possible to cover this 80+ age group in this study.

internalized self-silencing beliefs in the category of grandmotherhood (Kenyon et al., 2011). Third, the movement breaks silence as a strategy to support and amplify the voice of the youth. The song text in figure 3 indicates how OMAS transforms their accusation of silence towards the parent generation into a moral standard for themselves and into intergenerational collective agency. Referring to previous research and to my knowledge, this aspect is rather novel in the research field of ‘granny activism’.

To summarize, the identity-determined and identity-forming expression of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS performs loudness. With noise, talk, singing and music, OMAS as a loud collective counteract three aspects of silence. As a result, the movement forms a strong political voice for its (female) older generation while breaking generational patterns and sexist stigmas.

4. Die grüne Lunge brennt – der Meeresspiegel steigt –
Tiere sterben aus. - Das wurde schon vergeigt!
Am Freitag auf die Straße – die Jugend macht es vor.
Wir sind dabei – wir helfen und singen hier im Chor:

II: OMAS, OMAS – uns braucht das ganze Land.

Wir kämpfen für die Kinder und leisten Widerstand! :II

Figure 3: Song text of the most popular ‘OMA-song’ with an added strophe about supporting the youth climate movement (by Andrea Türk, sent by OMA-Hilde, for English translation see [appendix 5](#))

5.2.2. Theme: Being Present to Defy Invisibility

– *Signs, Umbrellas, Carpet Beaters, Knitted and Sewn Banners, Social Media Debates, Press-Space*

OMAS GEGEN RECHTS stand out in street protest. They are visible and represent themselves in movement-specific ways. The respondents share how they gear up for actions with eye-catching signs, buttons, umbrellas, vests, t-shirts, backpacks and bags or banners (all OMAS). OMA-Hilde speaks of full “OMA-equipment” because of the variance of props. Most frequently, the interviewees address the signs with 28 codes, in a second place the umbrellas. Props are labeled with the large letters ‘OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’ printed or painted in black on white (figure 4). OMAS emphasize how important this minimalism in text and graphic is to them for recognizability. Even though sometimes controversial discussions about more ‘creative’ and colorful designs arise (OMA-Hilde).

We always try to keep it that way. There is a term for this in the world of business: Corporate Identity ... Because it has proven itself. And that’s why we have this feeling of togetherness. That’s why it doesn’t matter whether a simple stick holds the sign or by a carpet beater. The sign is the important thing. (OMA-Maja)^{xv}

The minimalist approach is also reflected in the brief inscription on the props. This “clear line” (OMA-Maja) contrasts with other movements that appear in protest with numerous messages, diversely visualized. OMA-Katrin reflects:

So that’s interesting, because no matter what action, which group goes to an event and just holds up a sign with their name? Very few do that. Those have a lot of topics on it and other things. Whereas for us it’s just important to show: ‘We’re here, too’. (OMA-Katrin)^{xvi}



Figure 4: OMAS protesting in front of Hamburg’s city hall with signs, buttons and umbrellas (press photo used in photo elicitation method by Röer ([MOPO, 2020](#)))

In these statements, two aspects appear as particularly relevant for the interpretation. First, collective identity as we-ness, which is communicated and generated between the members through the ritualization in use, the visibility of the props and the differentiation to other groups. And second, that the visual appearance is strategically reflected and forced in deliberate ways. With the latter, OMAS refer to economic concepts as “just as brands” (transl. OMA-Hilde), or “corporate identity” (OMA-Maja). Although OMAS GEGEN RECHTS is a relatively new movement, it sketches how women incorporate experience from former progressive movements and professional experiences. Further, the neutrality of color represents impartiality, as OMA-Maja notes. Black and white also symbolize clarity in the political stance of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS.

OMAS continue the theme of presence and visibility online. They express it in online debates and social media groups, but also visually with their self-representation through websites. For example, I discussed in some interviews how a digital collage (figure 5) includes the signs in a cartography style with an interactive map below. The interviewees emphasize the distinctive character of the signs and point out its symbolism. Although, they do not specify what the symbolic level comprises.

The great urge for visibility combined with the props' minimalism in form and content leads to interpretations of identity. For OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, the question is not only how they represent themselves and communicate their collective identity. But the key is already the fact that they do it at all. Showing a sign is a symbol in itself. After all, the very presence of OMAS intervening in public debates and performing in public space under the movement's name carries a message. In their declaration, the movement states: "The older woman as a public political force is not stored in our collective consciousness. Therefore, women must appear publicly, not as individuals and exceptions, not as stars, but as a group that stands out" (transl., most regional groups adopted this passage) (Laverne, 2018). Geer (1991) elaborates on how old women are relegated to chores and leisure limited to the house. OMA-Angelika lists activities attributed to grandmotherhood as supporting children and grandchildren, cooking, or caring for the household and garden. In contrast, OMAS step out of the domestic context and into the public and political sphere. Whether it is a matter of representation as social media users in an online debate, in kindergartens and schools for educational work (action 2), on busy city squares (action 3 and 4), via the distribution of sign icons on a digital map



Figure 5: Geographical distribution of regional groups with sign symbols on an interactive map (screenshot used in photo elicitation method, (OGR Support, n.d.))

(figure 5), on streets with spray chalk (action 1) or about the editorial space in press coverage – all these places “emerge as resonant sites of activism” (Nolas et al., 2017, p. 6). Theorists map a history of females strategizing public space (Kuumba, 2001). In alignment, the OMAS reclaim public space as a method to oppose right-wing and patriarchic power structures. Previous research on movements of ‘granny activism’ echoes with this interpretation. For instance, Caissie’s (2011) study on the *Raging Grannies* demonstrates how seizing “public space [is used] as method of resisting and redefining gender roles” (p. 134). For *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, the main site of Buenos Aires center was even eponymous (Bouvard, 2002).

I note critically, that OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’ representation of older women in public space is limited to a small segment of this socio-demographic group. The data shows that the movement’s members are predominantly white, middle to upper-class women (and a small percentage of mostly white and financially secure men), often with a high level of education and academic background. Thus, they are privileged in various ways within the age and gender group. OMA-Birgit mentions the aim of achieving more diversity regarding ethnicities and migration biographies. Otherwise, respondents barely reflected on this aspect.

Visibility stands in contrast to invisibility. During a conversation with an OPA, granddaughter, and several OMAS at action 4, the participants discussed high visibility as a strategy to cope with changing perceptions and diminishing resonance in old age. OMA-Birgit confirmed this personal motive in the interview:

That’s the image of women that we older women encounter everywhere. You don’t need to be part of OMAS-GEGEN-RECHTS, every grandmother gets to feel that. From a certain point on, men don’t look at you anymore in a way that says ‘is she interesting for me or not’, but only ‘oh, old granny’. (...) So you are simply overlooked by many. It is quite strange. You are suddenly a vacuum. (OMA-Birgit)^{XVII}

Theoretical literature addresses invisibility as a side phenomenon of aging processes (Greer, 1991). Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2016) argue that invisibility originates for females in the “transition from being reproductive selves (active sexually) to becoming ‘reflective’ selves (not so active or even non active sexually)” (p. 3). Further, in our capitalistic society the retired older adult is condemned as less productive and thus a less valuable member (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). Consequently, they receive less resonance and recognition.

Hence, OMAS' struggle for representation through means of communication and collective action happens on an overall societal level but also on a personal level. From the perspective of feminist gerontology, activism becomes a tool to overcome the experience and fear of diminishing social visibility.

Even if the theme primarily centers on the mere presence and visibility, the materiality of the props in their symbolic meaning is briefly mentioned. In doing so, I disagree with OMA-Maja's statement that the material of the OMA sign is less relevant. The members re-signify the objects by taking them out of the household context and instead using them in political collective actions. In contrast, their use can affirm ageist and sexist stereotype if recipients cannot or do not want to make the interpretative effort to decode the symbolism (OMA-Birgit). When OMAS protest with umbrellas, there are parallels to other social movements proclaiming space this way, such as the *Hongkong Umbrella Movement* (Lee & Chan, 2015). The umbrella is also cultivated as a fashionable accessory for women. Some OMAS attach their signs to carpet beaters (figure 6), which is a practical everyday tool in many German traditional households. One group brought sewn and croquet'd banners to actions (OMA-Birgit). Crafts like knitting and sewing are socially constructed as domestic activities; textiles are contorted as material of the social category of older woman. Scholars widely analyzed and theorized textiles and handcrafts as a feminist strategy under the term of 'craftivism' (Greer, 2014). Craftivism is, for instance, the core tactic of *Knitting Nanas* (Clarke, 2016)). Each example shares semiotic resources of domestic contexts. By applying the movement's name on these items, OMAS transform an object related to the traditional 'housewife' into a symbolic and meaningful protest sign. Similar processes of reinterpretation also emerge in the knitted OMA-hats (OMA-Birgit, action 4, widely used in Austria, similar to the 'pussy hat' (Larabee, 2017)), or in tactics such as reading children books aloud (OMA-Jutta), the singing practice (chapter 5.2.1.), or details such as hanging posters on clotheslines. This feminist practice can occur unconsciously. One woman even refuses the 'feminist-label' in principle. Others like OMA-Birgit, who has been involved in the women's movement since her youth, are highly aware of this symbolic-feminist reading and find in it a strong reason for her commitment:

Whether it's hats, umbrellas, fabrics, [...] we use female accessories, female resources, to draw attention to our demands. [...] OMAS have all these accessories, but they are used to transform the granny-like into cheeky and good demands. Thus, to show, we old women are not only old women in the sense of hair buns and knitting, but also of life experience. (OMA-Birgit)^{xviii}



Figure 6: OMA holding a carpet beater with the attached sign in her hand (press photo used in photo elicitation method, by (ZDF, 2020, November 11))

Finally, some further strategic and practicable reasons for this theme are mentioned. The interviewees named multiple functions of visibility and the props. Foremost, the aim is to set a visible, eye-catching opposition to right-wing tendencies in the face of the opponent and the public. On large demonstrations, the props are used to be recognized by supporters and to recognize other OMAS to gather. For some women, this moment of seeing the OMA-props the first time was the initial moment to notice the movement and initiate the decision-making process about joining it (OMA-Maja, OMA-Katrin). Visibility is thus an important means of mobilization. In addition, the movement sells props as “merchandising” (OMA-Maja) for financial profit. According to their affordances, the props fulfill specific functions. For example, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Maja, OMA-Birgit and OMA-Katrin describe how the umbrella protects from rain and sun; members can conceal it quickly in case of acute threat;

umbrellas can hide one's face in case of unwanted video recordings or hostility; and how, in the most extreme case, it might also serve as a tool for self-defense (without ever intending to use it violently).

5.2.3. Theme: Commemorating the Past to Share Generational Experience – *Memorial Days, Vigils, Public Education*

The coding process identified a specific set of actions in their contentious repertoire to remind of the dangers of right-wing ideology. For example, OMAS host vigils in memory of those who died because of covid-19 (OMA-Birgit, OMA-Katrin). Thus, they create a peaceful counterstatement to corona skeptics who downplay and deny science, and often have overlaps with right-wing extremist ideas (Jeitler, 2021). Action 3 was planned as a peace vigil in memory of the Korean 'comfort women'. At another peace vigil (action 4) OMAS educated and commemorated past and present wars with informational posters on the capital's largest square (figure 7). Other tactics in this pattern include events on memorial days and anniversaries related to the Nazi era (OMA-Konny, OMA-Angelika, OMA-Maja, OMA-Jutta) or related to women's rights issues (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Birgit). OMAS often use these days as an occasion for social media campaigns and educational digital content on channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or YouTube (OMA-Maja). Active assistance to the 'Stolpersteine'⁷ project (OMA-Maja, OMA-Konny, OMA-Katrin) also falls into this set of tactics.

These ritualized and partly institutionalized commemorative practices are complemented by less formal practices in small circles like regional groups or family settings. Some regional groups exchange their life stories and share their autobiographical motivations for their political activism in regular meeting formats (OMA-Katrin). OMA-Hilde shares how a

⁷ Transl. 'stumbling blocks' is a commemoration art project. Golden inscribed paving stones are placed in the streets in memory of people persecuted and killed during the Nazi era (Hesse, 2017).

YouTube video by OMAS GEGEN RECHTS initiated a controversy discussion with her daughter, which resulted in a deeper understanding of generational differences and former experiences.



Figure 7: Peace vigil at the clock monument on ‘Alexanderplatz’ in Berlin (action 4) – OMAS protesting, accompanied by a partner/OPA and a grandchild, filmed by local broadcaster (by author)

All these forms of expression relate to time and memory in different ways. Commemorative culture is an important pillar in the ‘taste of tactics’ (Jasper, 1997) rooted in the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS identity. The role of time is also symbolically underlined, to mention here only briefly the world time clock as venue of action 4. The theme refers to theoretical considerations concerning ‘Memory Activism’ (Gutman et al., 2022). As Jelin and Godoy-Anativia (2003) state, memory activists are often “human beings who ‘labor’ on and with memories of the past” (p. 5). Memories evidently play an enormous role for the OMAS. Inherent to the grandmother’s role is that she has decades of accumulated experience

(considering the average age, even more than men can accumulate in a lifetime). For this reason, evolutionary biologists and anthropologists even speak of the grandmother as an evolutionary advance for humankind (Mattern, 2019), because she enables intergenerational support, communication and exchange of experience decades after her own fertility.

We can combine it with our life experience and say that we have witnessed what is happening in the family. We therefore have a different standing. Young people can just say, ‘I think it’s terrible, I’m against it’. But we speak about it. We can say that our parents experienced the Nazi era, and we know what kind of trauma that brings to the family. [...] And that also has a bit of persuasive power. (OMA-Katrin)^{XIX}

The previous statement reveals that OMAS are aware of an advantage by transmitting experience between generations. For their activism, they mobilize experiences rooted in their family biography. This suggests that commemorative tactics and the experience-inherent OMA identity establish symbolic connections between generations (Nolas et al., 2017). By communicative processes OMAS connect progressive thinking and knowledge from their grandparents’ generation to their grandchildren’s generation – across at least five life spans. Moreover, the movement contributes to bridging generations within antifascist activism on the societal level. Schwarz (2022), studying the *Iaioflautas*, frames a similar phenomenon as the transmission of “historical legacy” (p. 104).

Finally, I interpret the strategic reasoning from a distinct feminist gerontology perspective. By centering experience and commemoration in their collective identity, I argue for a valorizing effect on older females. OMAS compare experience to “age-wisdom” (unnamed OMA, action 4). And besides life experience and generational experience, specific knowledge from the prior engagement in politics and social movement accumulates. This shows parallels to self-images of the *Raging Grannies* (Sawchuk, 2009). With this valorization, the activists contribute to defying the ‘narrative of decline’ (Gullette, 1997) and the development of being perceived as less worthy by society in high age. OMA-Birgit calls this ‘reversal’:

This is exactly what we are trying to turn around. We are worth a lot because we have lived a long life and have seen, heard and experienced a lot [...] and we want to pass that on. We are full of information. And they are so valuable. (OMA-Birgit)^{XX}

Age and experience convert into the position of role models. On the one hand, in a political sense, OMAS lead by example and motivate the general population to become active against the far-right. On the other hand, they want to be a role model for older adults and demonstrate how later life can be active and meaningful. Age becomes a valuable argument for mobilization. Three OMAS narrate:

We want to be a role model, to encourage the larger society to do the same. If we old women can raise our voices, then so can everyone else. (OMA-Jutta) ^{XXI}

I really believe [...] that [people] start giving it some thought. That's all we can do. But that they realize, yes, there are a few grannies, and they are already old and can't stand all the time like that and do it anyway. There must be something. (OMA-Konny) ^{XXII}

I think it also encourages others to say that you are never too old to get involved in something. [...] Look, we also have 80-year-olds with us. Even at that age you can still do something and don't have to sit at home and say, well, that was my life now. (OMA-Katrin) ^{XXIII}

Further, it is suggested that the commemoration tactics and the transmission of experience contains resisting moments against the physical aging process. In a philosophical respect, it can be argued that with their collective activism OMAS cope with physical decline and mortality. OMA-Hilde, OMA-Jutta, OMA-Konny imply the role of death indirectly. Because they acknowledge that they will probably not have to bear the potential catastrophic longer-term consequences on society and climate they hope to prevent, they aim to contribute post-mortem. OMA-Katrin mentions the end of life directly and highlights the significant role of activism and the collective in confidently shaping third and fourth age:

I was wondering how long I'd be able to keep doing this. [...] I already said [to Maja], 'you'll probably die on a demonstration one day'. Then she said, 'that would be my dream'. (Laughs) Yes, somehow, I think that's great, too. (Laughs) There's something about not being alone at home but being on the street for as long as you can. I think that's something great. That's a good way to grow old. (OMA-Katrin) ^{XXIV}

5.2.4. Theme: Balancing Peacefulness and Ruthlessness to Enforce and Protect

The movement's expression is characterized by the polarity between symbolic peacefulness and symbolic ruthfulness. First, the interviewees emphasize their peaceful and non-aggressive expression. OMA-Jutta, OMA-Angelika, OMA-Maja, and OMA-Konny explain how their groups choose tactics and wordings that clearly convey the counter-position against fascism, but without being libelous, threatening, defamatory, or hateful. For the interviewees, peacefulness is a quality inseparable from the grandmother role. They explain why this mattered when the movement adopted its name from Austria:

In general, this term ['Oma' / 'granny'] creates a very positive mood, something peaceful. And we are peaceful, but with very determined demands. We stand up against hate, agitation, and violence. (OMA-Jutta) ^{XXV}

Well, one assumes that grannies are peace-loving and that grannies, therefore, of course, do not want Nazis. (OMA-Konny) ^{XXVI}

Likewise, they relate to a common stigma. Referring to the theory ([chapter 3.1.](#)) and the intersection of sexism and ageism, Chazan (2016) specifies that “‘grandmothers’ (or those who might appear to be grandmothers) are [considered being] necessarily harmless, apolitical, and passive” ([p. 28](#)). Consequently, the movement's expressions of peacefulness evoke attributions of innocence and being tame or non-threatening. For instance, OMA-Maja mentioned she encountered belittlements in her workplace. Personally, I also noticed reaction like ‘sweet’ or ‘lovely’ from outsiders while preparing my research, which is why I shared this observation in all interviews ([appendix 3](#)). All seven OMAS resisted these ‘cuteness’ connotations, as they felt it trivializes their role. Instead, OMAS do not shy away from confrontation. They are not afraid of conflict. The activists take high risks when facing far-right extremists online and on the streets ([chapter 5.1.2.](#)). Further, internally, OMAS lead controversy and intense discussions without always reaching (and wanting to reach) compromise and thematic harmony (OMA-Konny, OMA-Katrin, OMA-Maja, action 4). In this context, the respondents often refer to current fiery debates about dis-/armament and the Russian war on Ukraine.

On the contrary, OMAS express ruthlessness. The alliance and some regional groups materialize this theme in hostile wordplays or in symbolism for physical strength. An example is the circulating hashtag or parole *#oldfemaledangerous* (transl., figure 9), published on social media and some websites. The triad of words reinterprets age and femininity and breaks with stereotypes of peacefulness mentioned by Chazan. Another example is a song text (figure 8) with the animalistic metaphor of OMAS as sharks with sharp teeth. With humor and figurative language, the warning towards the right-wing scene is stylized as a biting attack. In these creative forms, the movement playfully exhibits that it developed into a serious opponent of the far-right. However, I want to clarify two aspects. First, OMAS GEGEN RECHTS always retain their non-violent strategy. These examples depict only communicative methods. Second, the interviewees also address the physical aging process and bodily limitations (OMA-Birgit, OMA-Konny). Thus, in contrast to diminishing physical force, this theme of expression stresses political and cognitive force.

Ein OMA-Lied von Jutta aus Hannover

Ja, wir OMAS, wir ham Zähne,
und die nutzen wir mit Biss.
Uns missfällt die rechte Szene
Und der faule Kompromiss.

Figure 8: Song text on the melody of the ‘Three Penny Opera’ (1928) with the original text “The shark has teeth” (by Jutta, sent by OMA-Hilde, for English translation see [appendix 5](#))

Figure 9: Online blog entry for a book promotion – both with the title ‘Old, female, dangerous’ (Screenshot used in photo elicitation method, by ([Gertrud, 2021](#)))



OMAS GEGEN RECHTS uses this theme of their collective identity as strategies to (1) protect their own members, (2) to protect other demo participants and progressive groups, and (3) for peacemaking in the face of tension. First, OMAS take advantage of the stereotypes connected to peacefulness to avoid violence. The image of the peaceful and fragile grandmother shelters the members (OMA-Konny, OMA-Birgit) of harsh interventions by the police and forceful confrontations between actors:

And that is also something that protects us to a certain extent, I think. Who would knock down an elderly woman with a water cannon, who is actually peaceful ... or arrest her? (OMA-Angelika) ^{xxvii}

And what's really nice is that the Antifa [young left-wing activists] people say to us: 'Now you close your umbrellas and leave via the side streets, now it's getting serious' [...] So I think that's really totally sweet. They're really looking out for us. (OMA-Katrin) ^{xxviii}

Second, OMAS create a safe space for others. This can encourage indecisive persons to join protests. It can also create spaces of togetherness and intergenerational exchange, which offers dialogue and in turn reduces mutual prejudices between the youth and older adults (OMA-Katrin, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Maja). Because they stand out in their appearance, others call movement participants "gray block" (OMA-Angelika). In analogy to the black block, this designation reinterprets the physical appearance of graying hair with a fearless and defensive and, at the same time, peaceful connotation. Third, OMAS act purposefully to de-escalate. According to four of the seven OMAS, they build buffer zones in street protests to pacify. A link to previous research points out similar strategies by the *Raging Grannies* in contexts of women's untypical 'unruly' behavior (De Vuyst, 2022). OMAS in Germany intervene either out of their own interest, or because young activists or the police ask them to. Creative modes of expression, singing, and humor (chapter 5.2.1.) often play a role:

There's this image of the grandmother ... we consciously carry that in front of us when we notice that there's trouble somewhere [...] Then the OMAS squeeze in-between, start singing, everyone is calm and relaxed again, no one causes a fuss. [...] On one demonstration, an OMA created a new battle cry. The black block always shouted wildly: 'Alerta, Alerta, Antifaschista'. The police became quite nervous. One of the OMAS started shouting, and I laughed like crazy: 'Alerta, Alerta, the OMAS are tougher'. And all OMAS quickly joined in. And then the black block

shouted it, too, and the situation was relaxed again. Since then, that has been our battle cry.
(OMA-Maja)^{XXIX}

The theme is characterized by a strong internal penetration and coherence since every interviewee addresses protective functions of their collective identity. This suggests intense communicative processes in the transmission of tactical advice between the groups. However, the groups' historically developed relationships to the police and other activist groups differ and must be considered. One police officer I talked to (action 3) refers to the internal operational briefing. The briefing classifies OMAS GEGEN RECHTS as non-violent, yet it hints at encounters with provocation enacted by members. Consequently, the theme spans across expressive differences between the poles peacefulness and ruthlessness and unites the apparent opposites within the OMA identity.

5.2.5. Two Perspectives on Symbolic Reappropriation of Gender and Age Aspects

It is striking how differently the individuals perceive the use of symbolism in reappropriation processes of grandmotherhood. Not all groups use all these tactics. The movement's taste of tactics (Jasper, 1997) manifests in variants. Some members and groups use symbolic and humoristic tactics less, or less consciously through an understanding of symbolism or age and gender empowerment. For instance, some groups do not use singing as tactic (OMA-Konny, OMA-Jutta). Addressing the dimension of womanhood in their use of fabrics, an OMA made the statement "I don't have to break stereotypes, I never accepted them anyway ... I am a strong woman" (transl., unnamed OMA at Action 4). OMA-Jutta explained that – in contrast to the 'OMAS GEGEN RECHTS alliance Germany' (Laverne, 2018)– the association decided to completely discard the wording "eye-catching symbolism" from their declaration. Another example is OMA-Katrin, who points out the symbolism in the carpet beater, however, she is not using the props as she does not like the "housewife-like" stereotype, among other reasons. OMA-Konny distances herself most, saying she hardly sees being-female as a factor in her political engagement at OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, except for having grandchildren.

There is little evidence, that the different forms of expression – symbolism in the foreground or background, playful or more serious tactics, ‘granny-like’ constituted props or more neutral informational material – correlate with the two different perspectives on structure in the movement. This is less a matter of collective identity (which can combine both interpretations), rather than a question of the organizational movement’s character. The concept of collective identity provides a useful tool to detect such correlations between structures and motivations ([Melucci, 1995](#)). In the past, the two founders took separate paths (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Maja, OMA-Jutta at action 2). One shared the understanding of a decentralized, hierarchy-free and grassroots democratic movement and founded the Alliance. The other one had a decentralized but more structured and sorted vision and founded the association. The regional groups I spoke with chose independently whether and what intensity of relationships they wanted to establish with the alliance or the association. Almost all OMAS could report noticeable tensions as result of the differences, as is not unusual in social movements ([Freeman, 1978](#)). According to the theory, conflicts serve as catalysts for collective identity. When different expressive and strategic aspects of collective identity collide, as it is the case here, conflicts can foster the emergence of strengthened and multilayered identities ([Klandermans & Roggeband, 2020](#)). It seems possible, based on my though very limited data, that forms of expression and the imposed or minimized use of symbolic reappropriation of age and gender aspects divide along these structural poles.

Nevertheless, the emancipatory approach is validated by all members to whom I spoke. The self-image as an emancipated woman and functions of symbolic meaning to re-appropriate and empower grandmotherhood are shared by all respondents. Therefore, my interpretations are not to be understood in contradiction to the individual self-perception of the activists, but emphasizes the multilayered nature of collective identity ([Smithey, 2009](#)) and the shaping of forms of expression and repertoires also in identity processes of the subgroups. In no case was any of the tactics condemned by any participant in any way. Instead, mutual openness and tolerance for different forms of expression remained important to the interviewees. Referring to the analytical framework, I conclude, that the dimension expression of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS’s collective identity shows high correspondence but less coherence between different regional groups and members ([Snow, 2001](#)).

6. Conclusion

“Here I belong” (transl. OMA-Maja) – the self-designated ‘OMAS’ (transl. ‘grannies’) from OMAS GEGEN RECHTS sense great belonging throughout their political engagement. In critical political times, they form a collective actor, which became a new political and generational phenomenon in Germany. OMAS persistently represent themselves in nation-wide street and online protests and turned into a serious opponent for right-wing tendencies and groups in Germany. At a peace vigil, an OPA (transl. ‘grandpa’, male member) asked: “There must be something about it, something that attracts, that triggers. Why is that?”, (transl., action 4). The analysis traced the answer for this question back to the self-designation ‘OMA’ and the movement’s collective identity as an approach to explain the ‘we-ness’ (Snow, 2001) in participation, expression, and outcome of their struggle against the far-right. The thesis elaborates on how the movement (re-)constructs their identity while countering social categories as right-wing, biological determinism, or traditional roles of age and gender. This approach is highly relevant as in today’s political climate in Germany (and worldwide) right-wing ideologies, which embody hyper-patriarchal gender roles (Amadeu Antonio Foundation, n.d.), continue to gain strength.

The movement’s identity-work and -processes rotate around the reappropriation of the term granny, analyzed in RQ1. In brief, OMAS reinterpret its meaning by accepting or rejecting manifold associations with the social category of grandmotherhood. It could be shown that members attribute particularly the sympathy-bearing and confident social conceptions. Other more limiting, ageist and sexist connotations are firmly rejected. These interpretations could be drawn in high coherence to the respondents’ narrations. Counter-identities reinforce and challenge the collective’s constitutive processes in various ways. These boundary groups are the *far-right* as the antagonist, the *male* in the public or ‘OPA’-members as supporters in the reversely subordinated power balance, and the *youth*, including grandchildren and young activists, being allies and motivators. Particularly, the far-right movement impersonates the antagonist – not only in its political agenda, but also in its opposite to different identity-forming characteristics and values of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS. The participation in the collective affects the activists’ lives in several positive ways. However, it also includes risks

by hostilities of far-right politics and radicals. The relationship between the individual activists and their self-designation as OMA is two-sided, in constant circulation and characterized by high identity correspondence (Snow, 2001) (chapter 5.1.).

OMAS GEGEN RECHTS express their OMA-role. Moreover, the collective mobilizes grandmotherhood as a political strategy. RQ2 and RQ2.1 revealed four themes as part of the movement's narrative. Nevertheless, it could be shown that the collective identity is multilayered and contested in alignment to previous research on 'granny activism' (chapter 2). The interpretations derive from individual descriptions and single observations of forms of expression and are in no respect meant to mask personal, regional, or structural differences (chapter 5.2.5.) Each theme was developed by analyzing their mediatized props and the communicative dimensions of tactics: (1) OMAS use noise, singing, music and symbolic loudness to form a united voice against the political opponent. Thereby, they break patterns of silence in political history and in stereotypes of older women. (2) OMAS use signs, umbrellas, banners, press publications, or digital debates to be highly visible, reclaim public space, and thus counter the invisibility of their socio-demographic group and the individual fear of invisibility as an aging woman. (3) OMAS use commemoration in tactics and interpersonal communication to enforce intergenerational exchange and political education. Thereby, the movement symbolically bridges generations. (4) OMAS reconcile the contrast between the symbolism of being peaceful and being ruthless in their non-violent action. This way they emphasize their serious position, which includes strategies of peace-making and providing and to receiving protection on street protests. All themes' communication and mobilization processes are considered as identity-work. The movement becomes as loud and visible also because they are many who are symbolically connected in the collective understanding of their identity. Besides the social impact made for the movement's goals and strategies, the reinterpretations and symbolism hold a strong message against traditional grandmother preconceptions. Gender and age become political in the same way as the movement's resistance against right-wing beliefs and actors.

It can be concluded, with the perspective of feminist gerontology, that the activism of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS is an act of emancipation and empowerment itself. In a social climate with trends of sexism and agism, older women place themselves at the center of their

anti-right movement and freely define their role according to their own visions. They authorize and control their meaning-making of the collective and thus free themselves from the categories imposed from the outside. Specifically, their empowerment becomes a means to defend women's rights under threat in the face of fascism. In turn, the re-appropriated term inscribes into society. The movement's new interpretations influence political discourses and change images of the older woman. Thus, the collective identity with the members' self-designation 'OMA' is a political claim as well as a feminist claim.

The study generated novel theoretical insights and added to the understanding of elderly women in activism in Germany. The triangulation of methods provided methodological strength. Nevertheless, several limitations and aspects of criticism are noted in the following. First, in the scope of this work, personal differences, varied phases, and ages of grandmothing could only find very short reference – even though first dissimilarities between age groups, or OMAS socialized in the former socialist East Germany or the former West Germany became apparent. This might also be discussed as a limitation of the collective identity concept (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Secondly, members besides the main socio-demographic group, for instance OPAS, are not represented systematically in the data. Further, the external dimensions of counter-identities, resonance, and outcome are limited to subjective elaborations. I could only include brief moments of dialogue or interaction with externals (two interested women, one male partner, one grandchild, one policeman, one press reporter). Finally, a qualitative study is susceptible to the researcher's background – addressed in the ethnography reflexivity (chapter 4.3.).

Several aspects of this thesis invite for further research. To begin, the shortcomings of this study might be improved by comparable research. Founded on an expanded research period to further immerse into the movement, it could include a larger sample with, for instance female-male, East-West, cohorts (+70 years), or urban-rural sub-groups. Further, a quantitative research design seeking representativeness might complement such qualitative approaches. In addition, the analysis themes might be reflected in netnography or content analyses based on the significant use of social media and digital protest tactics by OMAS. To summarize, the movement offers high potential for social movement studies and the lens of communication science.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Background of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS

OMAS GEGEN RECHTS (the translation reads ‘Grannies against the (far) right’) is an approximately over 15,000 members strong group of – referring to the components of the name – OMAS (transl. ‘grannies’) as description or self-designation of members, who oppose right-wing extremist tendencies in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Luxembourg.

OMAS GEGEN RECHTS describes itself as civil society initiative ([OGR Support, n.d.](#)) or as non-party citizen initiative ([OGR Alliance, n.d.-b](#)) with loose organizational structures and basic democratic principles (OMA-Maja, Birgit, Angelika). Moreover, OMAS GEGEN RECHTS can be classified as social movement with different loose and more structured organizational levels. Thereby, it can be contextualized and embedded into the comprehensive body of social movement research. Defined as a new social movement, OMAS GEGEN RECHTS is characterized by “grassroots activism outside of formal political structures; informal, relatively unstructured, network forms of organization” with “an emphasis upon direct action and identity and lifestyle politics” ([Anderson, 2000, p. 94](#)). Their aim and agenda are summarized in their declaration, which is – sometimes in slightly adapted variants – shared by all groups within and outside Germany:

We are committed to a democratic, free society based on the rule of law. We are against fascist tendencies, xenophobia, the exclusion of disabled people, old people and foreigners, racism, misogyny, social dismantling, and we want to expose related grievances in politics and society with appropriate methods.(transl.) ([Laverne, 2018](#))

Historical aspects – originating in Austria, adapted in Germany

The movement emerged in Austria first. In November 2017, the 69-years old retired psychotherapist and theologian Monika Salzer created a Facebook group under the same name ([OGR Austria, n.d.](#)). She thereby responded to her anger about the far-right-wing participation in the Austrian government, thus she sent out invitations to Facebook contacts, and within weeks the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS movement rapidly gained hundreds of

supporters and significant media attention (Salzer, 2019). Three months later, the former teacher and local politician Anna Ohnweiler (aged 67) and the author and theater educationist Gerda Smorra (aged 74) brought the movement OMAS GEGEN RECHTS to Germany (OGR Alliance, n.d.-b) (AdminOma, 2021). Ohnweiler felt the urge when reading a tweet about the Austrian movement: “My granny would be ashamed, when you are already too old to be useful to society and have not learned knitting because of all the emancipation in the way” (transl.) (Kühn, 2019). Likewise, in rage, they initiated an online exchange in the form of a Facebook group (OGR [Group], 2018) in consultation with the Austrian initiators (OMA-Jutta).

Organizational aspects – decentralized and structured networks

With over five years of expansion in Germany, today’s (German) movement is characterized by decentralized structures, yet strong relations and coordination efforts between members. The Facebook group remains one central communication and coordination channel for the national level. On a regional level, over 100 groups have formed all over Germany (OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, n.d.) with various communication channels, mostly e-mail lists, Facebook groups and pages, WhatsApp groups, Twitter and Instagram accounts and video meeting software. Each regional group is founded and guided by one woman; opening new groups is open to everyone interested. Local groups have the opportunity to organize and connect among them via the *OMAS GEGEN RECHTS Deutschland Bündnis* (transl. ‘German alliance’) (OGR Alliance, n.d.-b), which was found in 2019 as a network platform. Additionally, in January 2020, the German association *OMAS GEGEN RECHTS Deutschland e.V.* was registered to ease coordination and legal administration, as an open offer to the members of the decentralized social movement (OGR Association, n.d.). According to the interviewees, the alliance and the association are often perceived as two different modes of coordination: the first in a more decentralized, for each group autarkic and non-hierarchic manner, and the latter as a more structured and centralized approach. Both differing notions sometimes can lead to tensions since the movement’s beginnings (OMA-Hilde, OMA-Maja, OMA-Katrin). Nevertheless, the members’ involvement spans widely: For instance, numerous OMAS engage in their local groups without being involved in any national-wide coordination.

Participants, including the male and the youth

The number of participants is estimated to over 15.000 senior citizens according to the website ([OGR Alliance, n.d.-b](#)). There exists no formalized membership. In most cases, the participation is predominantly perceived but not strictly limited to female seniors. Political involvement is not necessarily new for the vast majority of members – many stem from the peace movement, anti-nuclear or environmental movement, feminist movement, partly they had professions in party politics or civil society. Others take part in protests for the first time without any political background in the past. OMAS GEGEN RECHTS are very well connected in civil society networks (OMA-Angelika, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Jutta). The German movement is widely connected with other activists all over the world as depicted on the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS webpage ([OGR Alliance, n.d.-a](#)).

Moreover, the initiative opened up to older men (so-called OPAS, ‘grandpas’) and supporters of all generations and genders ([OGR Support, n.d.](#)). Nevertheless, each regional group independently decides whether to invite or exclude the opposite gender. The group’s members I spoke to depicted different approaches: OPAS are not allowed (OMA-Konny), OPAS are welcomed (OMA-Hilde) and 25 % of the digital community (OMA-Jutta regarding the Facebook groups), OPAS are welcomed but they are not represented in significant numbers (OMA-Katrin, action 4) or only joining the bigger actions, not the regular meetings and discussions (OMA-Birgit). They elaborate different visual approaches, how OPAS are represented in the street protest, for instance, joining with small signs “OPAS too” (transl.) complementing the movement name or adding a ‘OPA’ sticker; or joining with own ‘OPAS GEGEN RECHTS’ signs; the third approach is that men use the regular props with the term ‘OMA’ printed on it, which demands confidence from the men (OMA-Katrin).

Tactical aspects

Their involvement and collective action extend widely: OMAS initiate or participate in street protests against right-wing parties, anti-democratic efforts by right-radicals or against far-right and conspiracy-believing tendencies among Corona sceptics. They stand in solidarity with the peace movement and the climate movement. OMAS GEGEN RECHTS engages in online awareness campaigns and political education via web and social media (all OMA-

interviews). Online activism gained high relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically for them as higher risk age groups. Moreover, OMA groups use creative and artistic tactics as theater plays, they write and sing songs, host exhibitions, or arrange info desks to name but a few (OMA-Birgit, OMA-Hilde, OMA-Jutta, OMA-Maja, action 4).

Appendix 2: Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
1_ Far-right (counter)	Including general right-from-center beliefs, right-wing parties, and far-right extremism	6	20
2_ Male (counter)	Including OPAS as part of the identity	7	26
3_ Youth (counter)	Including young activists	7	18
_ 'Granny' stereotypes	Stereotypes and socially constructed images of grandmotherhood, of womanhood in general and later life	6	20
_ OMA description	Characteristics of OMA individuals and movement, contrasts within, reinterpretations or breaking expectations of 'granny'-characteristics	7	33
Irritation, criticism of OMA-designation		4	9
Rejecting belittlements		2	5
Strategic, tactical, calculating		3	6
Participation	Becoming part and engaging within the OMA-identity	6	11
Age group	Including physical limitations, inclusive, barrier-free	5	12
Agenda, extended topics		4	6
Differences, diversity	Including political parties, East-West, professions, prosperity	6	17
Discussion culture, internal debate		4	15
Grandchildren / future generations		7	23
Internal communication, further training		2	2
Parents, upbringing		5	17
Prior occupation, interest		6	16

Roles, multifaceted		7	14
Search for community, belonging		3	10
Search for meaningful, political purpose		3	8
Spare time, changing life circumstances		5	8
Stress, recovery	Including, pressure, time commitment, frustration, low participation	5	16
Expression	Communicating the OMA-identity strategically in collective actions	5	8
N1_ Loudness, voice, and silence		5	23
Singing, paroles		3	7
N2_ Visuality and representation		4	11
N3_ Experience, memory, and commemoration		6	9
Networking other movements		6	15
Props and tactics		6	16
_Other tactics		6	25
Carpet Beater		3	4
Color		3	4
Digital media		7	25
Press, media		5	9
Print		3	4
Signs		6	28
Textiles, sewing, knitting		2	4
Umbrella		5	12
Humor		5	11

Outcome	Achieving results as/of the OMA-identity	4	7
on activists		6	10
Activity (mandatory)		2	2
Learning experience		2	2
Resonance (from far-right)	Reactions, aggressions, threats, fear, and courage	7	28
Social bonds	Within the OMA groups, respectfulness and appreciation of others, female relationships, and friendships	5	13
Status, working life		1	3
Understanding, dialogue in family		3	4
on politics, goals		5	10
Encourage others, provoke reflection		4	8
Peaceful, de-escalating, tolerant		6	13
Protection, buffer zone		6	16
on society		5	8
Impact on ageing, image of elderly women		4	15
Recognition, popularity, sympathy		7	20
Other codes, less relevant for research aim			
Budget, finances, resources		3	8
Grassroots democratic processes		5	13
Police		7	16
Structure, alliance vs. association		5	21
World view		6	12

Table 4: Codebook, exported via the Nvivo Software

Appendix 3: Interview Grid

The grid supported the general structure for the interviews. It is based on the analytical framework ([chapter 3.4.](#)). However, each interview has been individualized to a high degree. The questions (in German language) were slightly adapted, sorted, and selected in the course of the interviews ([chapter 4.1.1.](#) for reflections).

		Analytical concept	Questions
Introductory questions		Basics & rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How long have you been part of the movement?What is your role in OMAS REGEN RECHTS?Assuming I had never heard of the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, how would you describe the movement to me?
Mid-interview-questions	PARTICIPATION – Engaging as an OMA		
	Personal & internal	Creation (1) / Interest / in beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Please tell me about your first contact with the movement. Can you take me a bit with you back to this day / that time?And what motivates you to this day that you are still active X years later?What do you like most and least about the movement?Whether you have children and grandchildren - does that play a role in your work in the movement? If so, how?
	Biographical	Commitment (2) / Incentives / keeping up in the course	
	EXPRESSION – Expressing as an OMA strategically in collective actions		
	external	Strategy (3) & Tactic (offline & online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Why do you call yourselves / the movement “OMAS” at all? (Follow up to go into being a woman and being older)What do you think how society sees you? (Connect to OMA figure and expectations)This contrast / similarity / image mentioned ... I would like to better understand what this means for the movements from a strategic point of view. (Which role does it have being a female and being an older adult?)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After all, the German movement is also open to men. Does it make a difference in your actions and strategies whether OMAS or OPAS appear? If so, how?
	Symbolism		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your mission statement, the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS write, “With eye-catching symbolism, older women, so-called OMAS, are raising their voices on the dangerous problems and issues of today.” What do you mean by “eye-catching symbolism”? PEI: I had sent you the request in advance with the question: ‘How can you recognize the OMAS GEGEN RECHTS? What are the typical characteristics of an OMA, on the streets and on the internet?’ Thank you for bringing some photos/screenshots: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could you tell me a bit about the photos? Could you describe to me a few experiences/stories/practises of how these symbols/objects/tactics were created? Why is it important for the movement to appear as seen here?
	OUTCOME – Influencing as an OMA		
External & internal & personal	Outcome (4) On ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Goals b) Society c) Activist 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the effect of OMAS GEGEN RECHTS? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your experience, how do these OMA characteristics and these props and tactics (that make OMAS GEGEN RECHTS just particularly distinguishable from other movements) help in your actions and goals? Are there any successes or failures you think the movement would not have reached if you had not acted as the OMA figure? b) Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the movement change something about society’s image of older women? If so, how? I have noticed that when I have told friends or fellow students about my research interest and the master’s thesis, that in most cases I have received spontaneous reactions like “oooooh”, “cute”, “oi, that’s great” combined with a friendly smile or even a loud laugh. When I describe this, what do you think about it?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked critically: do you reinforce stereotypes with your OMA appearance? <p>c) Activist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your life changed as a result of the movement?
Closing questions			<p>Thank you for your time, effort, and reflection ... we are now coming to the end of the interview. Is there anything else that hasn't come up yet but is very important to you? Or any clarifications or questions about what you want to ask me (gives respondent another chance to respond to my research aims + active interview character of 'making' data in interaction)? Of course, you always have the chance to contact me.</p> <p>Four more short questions about some basics (socio-biographical data):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which (regional) group / national level etc. are you organized? • Your age? • Current profession and previous profession? • How much time do you spend with and in the movement per week?

Table 5: Interview Grid

Appendix 4: Consent of Participants

In the consent form below, the interviewees agreed to their voluntary involvement in the study, as well as the procedure of recording, transcribing, and translating the interview data. They choose one option of A) revealing their identification in full name, B) revealing only their first name, or C) remaining entirely anonymous using a pseudonym with exception of their regional group membership.

Prior to the publication, all respondents had the opportunity to review and slightly correct the selected citations.

JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Communication

Einverständniserklärung zum Interview

Forschungsprojekt	Masterarbeit
Arbeitstitel	Female later life activism: Die kollektive Identität der sozialen Bewegung „OMAS GEGEN RECHTS“ in Deutschland
Durchführende Institution	Jönköping University, Schweden
Forscherin	Nicola Schäfer, schaefer-nicola@gmx.de
Betreuerin	PhD Paola Sartoretto

Teilnahme

Freiwillig und unentgeltlich erkläre ich mich dazu bereit, im Rahmen der genannten Masterarbeit ein Interview zu geben, und bin damit einverstanden, dass es aufgezeichnet, verschriftlicht, und ausgewertet wird.

Ich wurde über das Ziel und den Verlauf des Forschungsprojekts ausreichend informiert. Ich kann jederzeit die Forschende kontaktieren für Informationen oder Klarstellung.

Verarbeitung und Speicherung der Interviewdaten

Ich willige ein, dass mein Interview in Ton **aufgezeichnet** wird und verstehe, dass alle Informationen vertraulich behandelt werden, die ich für diese Forschungsarbeit bereitstelle. Ich verstehe, dass eine Transkription meines Interviews nach Beendigung dieser Masterarbeit behalten wird. Dies dient dazu, die Richtigkeit der Masterarbeit nachweisen zu können. Ich verstehe, dass die signierten **Einverständniserklärungen und Audioaufzeichnungen** in externen Cloud-Systemen (Dropbox) **aufbewahrt** werden, auf die nur die Forschende Zugriff hat.

Ich verstehe, dass **Ausschnitte** meines Interviews in der Masterarbeit und potenziell in einer veröffentlichten Forschungsarbeit **zitiert** werden. Ich verstehe, dass die Forschende Interviewausschnitte vom Deutschen ins Englische **übersetzen** wird. Ich weiß, dass ich dazu befugt bin, die von mir bereitgestellten Informationen anzufragen, während sie wie oben beschrieben gelagert werden.

Anonymität

Ich verstehe, dass ich mich frei und ohne jegliche Vor- oder Nachteile **entweder** für die Option **1, 2 oder 3** entscheiden kann [bitte eine Option ankreuzen].

1 (Offenlegung): ☒ Ich willige ein, dass mein Vor- und Nachname, sowie meine Rolle bei OMAS GEGEN RECHTS genannt werden dürfen.

2 (Teilweise Offenlegung): ☒ Ich willige ein, dass ich ausschließlich mit meinem Vor- und Nachnamen sowie mit der Rolle bei OMAS GEGEN RECHTS genannt werde. Der Nachname wird nicht erwähnt, um einen Rückschluss auf meine Person zu erschweren.

3 (Anonymisierung): ☐ Ich möchte anonym bleiben. Dies wird erreicht, indem mein Name durch ein Pseudonym ersetzt wird und alle identifizierenden Details in meinem Interview entfernt werden. Angaben, die in der Forschungsarbeit über meine Gruppenzugehörigkeit preisgegeben werden, betreffen nur die Art der Gruppe (Regionalgruppe, nationale Organisation, internationales Netzwerk). Ich verstehe, dass Rückschlüsse auf meine Person so zwar schwieriger, aber nicht auszuschließen sind.

Einwilligung

Meine Teilnahme am Interview und meine Zustimmung zur Verwendung der Daten sind freiwillig. Ich habe jederzeit die Möglichkeit, die Zustimmung zu widerrufen.

Vor- und Nachname: _____

Ort, Datum, Unterschrift: _____

Appendix 5: Translations and German Original Citations

Figure 4: Song text and melody ‘Sing for March 8th’ (sent by OMA-Angelika)



Grannies, oh grannies, why do you bother?

We have conscience and it haunts us!

Grannies, are grannies and have weight!

They stand here and show face!

Gießen, oh Gießen, are you now here too?

Yes, Gießen remains open, we live here after all.

Grannies, oh grannies, why are you so loud?

So slowly they are stealing our freedom.

Grannies, oh grannies, what else do you want?

We argue and grumble and complain though.

Grannies, oh grannies, why don't you go home?

We stand up for ourselves and our grandchildren.

Figure 5: Song text of the most popular ‘OMA-song’ with an added strophe about supporting the youth climate movement (by A. Türk, sent by OMA-Hilde)

4. Die grüne Lunge brennt – der Meeresspiegel steigt –
Tiere sterben aus. - Das wurde schon vergeigt!
Am Freitag auf die Straße – die Jugend macht es vor.
Wir sind dabei – wir helfen und singen hier im Chor:

II: OMAS, OMAS – uns braucht das ganze Land.

Wir kämpfen für die Kinder und leisten Widerstand! :II

The green lung burns – the sea level rises –

Animals are dying out – This has already been screwed up!

On Friday onto the street – the youth leads the way.

We are there – we help and sing in chorus:

OMAS, OMAS – the whole country needs us.

We fight for the children and resist!

Figure 11: Song text on the melody of the ‘Three Penny Opera’ (1928) with the original text by Berthold Brecht “The shark has teeth” (by Jutta, sent by OMA-Hilde)

<p>Ein OMA-Lied von Jutta aus Hannover</p> <p>Ja, wir OMAS, wir ham Zähne, und die nutzen wir mit Biss. Uns missfällt die rechte Szene Und der faule Kompromiss.</p>	<p>Yes, we OMAS, we have teeth, and we use them with bite. We dislike the right-wing scene And the rotten compromise.</p>
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Original Citations from the interviews:

- I Und da sah ich die Schilder von den OMAS GEGEN RECHTS. Die waren da noch ganz neu und ich habe die gesehen, und gesagt, das ist es. Und diese Reaktion haben sehr, sehr viele gehabt, die von uns zu den OMAS gegangen sind. Wir haben dieses Schild gesehen und haben gesagt, das ist es. Da finde ich mich wieder. (OMA-Maja)
- II OMA sein ist Haltung. Als OMA bist du definitiv Antifaschist, und du stehst dazu. Und du sagst es laut und du mischt dich ein und du tust kund, was du zu Dingen denkst. [...] Wir kokettieren natürlich auch so ein bisschen mit dem Begriff Oma, ist doch klar. Unter Oma hast du früher dir jemanden vorgestellt, die zuhause Kuchen gebacken hat und Pudding gekocht und was genäht und für die Kinder gestrickt hat und für die Enkel. Wir wollen zeigen, nein, die Omas von heute, die gehen auch auf die Straße, wenn ihnen etwas nicht passt. Natürlich kann ich Pudding kochen und nähen und häkeln und stricken und alles. Aber ich habe auch trotzdem eine Meinung, und ich möchte diese Meinung kundtun. Und ich bin trotzdem eine Oma. (OMA-Angelika)
- III Und dann kommen so blöde Rechte daher und wollen das alles einkassieren und wollen genau da hin, wo alles angefangen hat, wo wir als junge Frauen oder so schon mal gegen angetreten sind. Und das wollen wir uns einfach nicht nehmen lassen. Ganz einfach. Also ich will nicht ‚heim ins Reich‘. (OMA-Angelika)
- IV Radikalismus egal, ob es jetzt Fremdenfeindlichkeit ist oder ob es Antisemitismus ist oder ob es auch einfach nur Gewalt ist, auch Gewalt gegen Frauen, weil gerade die Rechten ein sehr strenges

Frauenbild haben ... Das ist auch so ein Punkt, warum wir als Frauen gegen Rechte gehen. (OMA-Maja)

- V Also ihre eigene Oma halten sie vielleicht in Ehren, und dann werden sie da von OMAS beschimpft. [...] Ich glaube, die kriegen das nicht auf die Reihe, das ist für die irgendwie eine besondere Schmach, wenn dann da diese alten Weiber auch noch gegen sie demonstrieren. Es ist mein Gefühl, ist aber nur meine Interpretation. Weil mir so auffällt, dass die so allergisch gegen uns sind. (OMA-Katrin)
- VI [Es] zeigt, dass wir wirken. Das ist eigentlich ein Kompliment für uns, wenn die langsam Ängste, Befürchtungen uns gegenüber haben. (OMA-Jutta)
- VII Also es haben ganz viele junge Leute gesagt, wenn ich mal alt bin, werde ich OMA GEGEN RECHTS. (lacht) Das ist doch toll, habe ich mir gedacht. Du hast ja noch ein bisschen Zeit, aber das finde ich ist ein gutes Ziel. (OMA-Katrin)
- VIII Ich muss gerade an eine OMA denken, die ist schon immer dabei gewesen, aber recht leise. Und jetzt, es ist einfach der Hammer zuzugucken. Also wie sie plötzlich da vorne steht und Sachen macht und Leute anspricht. Aber jetzt nicht nur mehr so hinter ihrem Schild, so ich traue mich Leute anzusprechen, weil ich eine OMA bin, sondern ich traue mich Leute anzusprechen und ich zeige mich, weil ich unterwegs bin, weil ich ich bin. Toll. (OMA-Hilde)
- IX Das ist lustig, weil ich weiß noch als mein erstes Enkelkind kam, da wollte ich nicht Oma genannt werden. Ich fand das schrecklich. [...] Aber dieses OMAS GEGEN RECHTS, das war mir so eingängig. Für mich ist das eher ein Ehrentitel, also mir gefällt das inzwischen gut und ich habe auch keine Probleme mehr damit. (OMA-Katrin)
- X Der Reiz ist wirklich, dass da alte Frauen sind, ein Haufen alter Frauen, [...] [die] sich trauen, laut zu sein und so als Gruppe so aufzutreten. Also das empfand ich als sofort anziehend. Also so diesen schönen Spruch, den es gibt: „Sie sind alt, aber nicht stumm“. (OMA-Hilde)
- XI Und in dem Moment marschieren wir da auf und dieses „die Omas kommen, die Omas kommen“ ... Da war so viel Panik in der Stimme, als würden wir die gleich auffressen. Da hat eine Oma noch erzählt, sie hat sich das von ihrem Sohn als Tonspur aus dem Video rausnehmen lassen und sich das als Klingelton aufs Handy geladen. Wir haben so gelacht, als wir uns das hinterher angehört haben. Das war großartig, (OMA-Maja)
- XII Unsere Stärke ist das Singen. Wir singen sehr viel. Wir haben spezielle Oma-Lieder, wo wir uns selbst beschreiben. Wir haben aber auch Lieder umgetextet. Zum Beispiel einen Kanon: „Wehrt

euch, leistet Widerstand gegen braunen Sumpf in diesem Land”. [...] Wenn man das anstimmt bei einer Demo, dann singt nachher die ganze Demo mit. (OMA-Maja)

XIII Früher waren die Leute ja stumm. Also meine Mutter war stumm. Sie hätte nie irgendwie für ihre Werte oder so eingestanden. [...] Wir haben entweder den Krieg noch miterlebt, in dem die Leute stumm sein mussten, oder wir waren Kinder von traumatisierten Eltern durch diesen Krieg. (OMA-Angelika)

XIV Unsere Großeltern haben geschwiegen, also zumindest viele, als noch Zeit war, gegen die Hetze aufzustehen, gegen Hitler etwas zu machen. Da wurde nichts getan. Diesen Vorwurf möchte ich mir nie machen. Und deshalb gehen wir auf die Straße, auch die anderen OMAS. (OMA-Jutta)

XV Wir versuchen das immer so zu halten. Da gibt es in der Wirtschaft einen Begriff für: Corporate Identity ... Weil es sich bewährt hat. Und darum eben auch dieses Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl. Deswegen ist es auch völlig egal, ob das Schild jetzt von einem einfachen Stock oder mit dem Teppichklopfer gehalten wird. Das Schild ist das Wichtigste. (OMA-Maja)

XVI Also das ist schon spannend, weil egal welche Aktion, welche Gruppe geht auf eine Veranstaltung und hält nur ein Schild mit ihrem Namen hoch? Das machen ganz wenige. Also, die haben da viele Themen drauf oder sonst irgendetwas. Während uns einfach wichtig ist, zu zeigen: ‚Wir sind auch hier’. (OMA-Katrin)

XVII Das ist das Frauenbild, was uns älteren Frauen erst mal entgegen schwappt, überall. Da brauchst du nicht bei den OMAS GEGEN RECHTS zu sein, das kriegt jede Oma zu spüren. Dass ab einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt Männer, dich nicht mehr so angucken, nach dem Motto ‚ist die interessant für mich oder nicht’, sondern nur noch ‚ach, alte Oma’. (...) Also du wirst von vielen schlicht übersehen. Es ist ganz merkwürdig, du bist plötzlich ein Vakuum. (OMA-Birgit)

XVIII Ob das Hüte sind, ob das Schirme sind, ob das Stoffe sind. Da würde ich sagen, benutzen wir weibliche Accessoires, weibliche Mittel, um auf unsere Forderungen aufmerksam zu machen. [...] All diese Accessoires gibt es eben bei den Omas, und sie werden aber nur benutzt, um das omahafte, dann on freche und gute Forderungen umzusetzen. Und zu zeigen, wir alte Frauen sind nicht nur alte Frauen im Sinne von Dutt und Strickzeug, sondern eben auch von Lebenserfahrung. (OMA-Birgit)

XIX Aber wir können es halt mit unserer Lebenserfahrung verbinden und sagen, wir haben in der Familie miterlebt, was da passiert. Wir haben da ein anderes Standing. Die jungen Leute, die können einfach nur sagen, ich finde das schrecklich, ich bin dagegen. Aber wir sprechen darüber,

unsere Eltern haben die Nazizeit miterlebt, und wir wissen, was das für ein Trauma in der Familie bringt. [...] Da glaube ich, bringen wir einfach eine andere Basis mit. Und das hat auch ein Stück Überzeugungskraft. (OMA-Katrin)

- XX Und genau das versuchen wir, umzudrehen. Wir sind sehr viel wert, weil wir ein langes Leben gelebt haben und viel gesehen, gehört und erfahren haben. [...] und das möchten wir weitergeben. Wir sind voll mit Informationen. Und die sind so wertvoll. (OMA-Birgit)
- XXI Wir wollen ein Vorbild sein, der Mehrheitsgesellschaft Mut machen, es uns gleich zu tun. Wenn wir alten Frauen unsere Stimme erheben können, dann kann das jeder andere auch. (OMA-Jutta)
- XXII Ich glaube schon, dass wir mit unserem Stehen und bloß wenn die Leute sagen ‚ach was machen die denn da?‘, dass die darüber nachdenken. Mehr werden wir nicht bewirken können. Aber das sie merken, ja Mensch, da gibt’s ein paar Omas um die sind ja schon alt und können nimmer so stehen und machen das trotzdem. Da muss es doch etwas geben. (OMA-Konny)
- XXIII Ich glaube, das macht auch anderen Mut zu sagen, man ist eigentlich nie zu alt, um sich gegen etwas zu engagieren. [...] Guck mal, wir haben ja auch 80-Jährige dabei, selbst in dem Alter kann man noch was tun und muss nicht zuhause sitzen und sagen, das war jetzt mein Leben. (OMA-Katrin)
- XXIV Ich habe mir immer gedacht, ich bin gespannt, wie lange ich das noch machen kann. Wenn ich Maja sehe, die da auf jeder Demo ist, ich habe schon gesagt, du stirbst wahrscheinlich irgendwann auf einer Demo. Da hat sie gesagt, das wäre mein Traum. (Lacht) Ja, irgendwie finde ich das auch toll. (Lacht) Es hat ja auch was, nicht allein zuhause vor sich hinzudämmern, sondern so lange, wie man überhaupt kann, auf der Straße zu sein. Das finde ich auch irgendwo was Tolles. Das ist eine gute Art, alt zu werden. (OMA-Katrin)
- XXV Im Großen und Ganzen wird mit diesem Begriff [„Oma“] eine sehr positive Stimmung erzeugt, etwas Friedliches. Und wir sind ja auch friedlich, aber mit sehr bestimmten Forderungen. Wir stehen auf gegen Hass, Hetze und Gewalt. (OMA-Jutta)
- XXVI Naja, man geht ja davon aus, dass die Omas erstmal friedliebend sind und dass die Omas natürlich deshalb keine Nazis wollen. (OMA-Konny)
- XXVII Und das ist auch etwas, was uns ein Stück weit schützt, denke ich mal. Wer wird bei einer Demo eine ältere Frau, die eigentlich friedlich ist, mit dem Wasserwerfer umpusten, oder sonst irgendwas ... oder sie verhaften? (OMA-Angelika)

- XXVIII Und was dann total nett ist, dass die Antifa-Leute zu uns sagen: ‚Jetzt macht ihr eure Schirme zu und verdrückt euch über die Nebenstraßen, jetzt wird’s ernst [...]‘. Also das finde ich wirklich total süß. Die passen echt auf uns auf. (OMA-Katrin)
- XXIX Also da ist eben dieses Image der Oma ... das tragen wir in dem Teil dann auch bewusst vor uns her, wenn wir merken, irgendwo gibt es Unruhe. Ganz klares Beispiel schwarzer Block und Polizei. Die können sich gegenseitig nicht riechen. Die werden sofort aggressiv, wenn die aufeinandertreffen. Dann schieben sich die Omas dazwischen, fangen an zu singen, alles ist ruhig und entspannt, keiner macht Stress. [...] Auf der Demo, da hatte eine OMA einen neuen Schlachtruf kreiert. Da hat der schwarze Block immer ganz wild gerufen: ‚Alerta, Alerta, Antifaschista‘. Die Polizei wurde auch schon ganz nervös und fing eine Oma an zu rufen – ich hab mich kringelich gelacht: Alerta, Alerta, die OMAS sind härter. Und das haben ganz schnell alle OMAS mit gerufen. Und dann hat der schwarze Block das auch gerufen und die Situation war wieder entspannt. Und seitdem ist das unser Schlachtruf. (OMA-Maja)