The Citizen, the Civilian and the Migrant: Understanding Civil Protest through Hannah Arendt's On Revolution

Thomas Bragdon

In the past three decades, cities of European Union countries witnessed emerging protest movements organized by noncitizens – inter alia, the Oranienplatz-Flüchtlinge in Berlin, Sans-Papiers in Paris and We Are Here in Amsterdam. These movements performed nonviolent action against the laws of the host country while they petitioned to becoming member of that country. One campaign was that of Sans-Papiers, who occupied churches and various other sites in Paris in 1996, culminating into a demonstration with the estimated number of 100,000 protestors on 22 February 1997. This campaign drew attention among scholars in human rights law, citizenship studies and political theory – such as Étienne Balibar (1996), Anne McNevin (2006) and Monika Krause (2008). Campaigns by noncitizen movements in other European Union countries followed. One example is We Are Here, a movement which squatted buildings and organized marches, petitions and cultural gatherings, notably the protest march "No Refuge on the Street nor in the Cell" in Amsterdam in 2012. These movements are dormant at times while they continue to exist as long as members reside without permits in the host countries. The members do not have the citizenship status of the country of residence, nor the refugee status, nor any other (permanent) residence permit that grants civil, political and social rights. In the literature, they are called unauthorized or irregular migrants although these terms do not cover the actual situation in which they live. They do not migrate any longer and in many cases, they already inhabit the host country for many years. Moreover, they are politically active and expose themselves in the public realm.

Precisely the lack of residence permits makes questions salient about whether or not to call the campaigns of the above-mentioned noncitizens movements by the name of civil protest. A term such as civil disobedience is — Candice Delmas points out — not only to describe but also to evaluate a protest: to highlight the protestor's public appearance, communicative intentions and nonviolent disposition — and so "begin the work of justification" (2018: 22). Moreover, civil disobedience — as well as civil protest more broadly — relates to a political history marked by iconic figures as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, a history which attests to the efficacy of the methods pertaining to civil disobedience — as scholars in civil resistance studies Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (2016) argue.¹ I opt for the adjective "efficacious" instead of "effective" to describe these methods. Efficacious, here a technical term, refers to performative effects,

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/01/18/how-the-world-is-proving-mlk-right-about-nonviolence/ [accessed 24 July 2023]

pertaining to contingent rather than causal relations, which can be either illocutionary (immediate, appearing *with* the act) or perlocutionary (indirect, appearing *after* the act).

Consider, for instance, the in the discourses of civil disobedience reiterated dispute of how wide the term "nonviolent action" is to be understood and whether or not this term covers the acts of self-inflicted violence, verbal coercion, property destruction and restrained self-defense.² In 2012, a protest group of Iranian asylum seekers went on a hunger strike in Würzburg, a city in the federated state Bavaria, Germany. The protestors inflicted violence upon themselves in protest against the living conditions in the asylum centers, as well as an asylum law popularized by the name of the Residenzpflicht.³ This is a law that restricts the asylum seeker's freedom of movement to the administrative district to which they are assigned during the asylum procedure. The Iranian asylum seekers had been assigned to a town called Grefrath. By protesting against that legal restriction, they claimed the civil right to the freedom of movement. The self-inflicted violence attracted media attention, which increased their chances of being heard. By that same act, they also took the risk of a backlash: negative media coverage and to be discredited by the state authorities. Since they petitioned to becoming state member of Germany, they had a stake in upholding the appearance of a model citizen who lives up to the law and custom of the host country. For such protestors, it is crucial that they present themselves to be civil protestors, whose hunger strike appears justifiable as a nonviolent act of civil disobedience.

The methods of civil disobedience in particular and civil protest more broadly have become the subject of a continuous discourse in academic and activist circles, through which a contested yet common vocabulary is being eked out. Civil disobedience and civil protest are comparable terms that involve nonviolent action taken by individuals or collectives for the sake of political change. One distinct difference is that civil disobedience is a specific form of nonviolent action whereas civil protest refers to a wider variety of nonviolent actions and strategies (Medina, 2023). Civil disobedience I understand here to refer to the action of disobeying a law in protest against a law for the sake of political change. Civil disobedience is commonly held to imply norms of civility that make it appear respectable, such as that it is done overtly, that it is communicative, nonviolent and that the protestors accept the juridical consequences (Rawls, 2005 [1971]: 364).4 Civil protest includes civil disobedience but also refers more broadly to all forms of protest that do not transgress any laws, such as permitted protest marches, petitions, open letters and public speeches. Nonviolent actions that involve legal transgressions without upholding (all) the norms of civility associated with civil disobedience have been brought under the heading of uncivil disobedience in the literature (Delmas, 2018;

² The Rawlsian account of civil disobedience equates violence with coercion. More recent accounts such as the accounts of radical democracy and political realism contend that violence should be separated from force and coercion.

³ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/asylvfg_1992/__56.html [accessed 17 July 2018]

⁴ John Rawls popularized this definition (and framed it within his theory of justice). He adopted it from Hugo A. Bedau's article 'On Civil Disobedience', first published in 1961, which is an interpretation of Martin Luther King's 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail'.

Scheuerman, 2021). I subsume acts of uncivil disobedience under the broader term of civil protest to highlight that these acts are still performed in the capacity of civilians. Civil protest is, then, a wider term than civil disobedience, covering a spectrum of varying forms of contestation between nonviolent action and violent rebellion, practiced by political subjects in the capacity of civilians.

Civil resistance is a term comparable to the term "civil protest", which likewise involves a broad range of nonviolent actions taken by individuals or groups for the sake of political change. But civil resistance has two distinct differences. Civil resistance often refers to a coordinated, sustained effort, consisting of multiple nonviolent actions and diverse techniques, deployed by a well-organized group. Moreover, civil resistance often involves opposition against oppressive regimes, aimed at weakening or even overturning their power, while garnering support for the resistance movement (Sharp, 1973; Martin, 1989). While the methods of civil resistance are the same as the methods of civil protest, civil resistance connotes contexts that are different from the contexts that I discuss in this article, namely protests occurring in European Union countries – commonly held to be non-oppressive regimes. Whereas I take theories of civil resistance and revolution into consideration, I opt for the term of civil protest to describe the cases at hand. Also, when highlighting the coordinated, sustained effort taken by a protest movement such as Sans-Papiers, I will speak of a campaign (rather than resistance).

The question of efficacy – why and how civil protest is an efficacious tool for noncitizens vis-à-vis the state of the host country - relates to the problem of what Hannah Arendt calls the "perplexities of the rights of man" (1953 [1973]: 267-302). The perplexities diminish chances for noncitizens to claim rights felicitously: to claim them and have them granted. Whereas the human rights belong to all humans at all times and in all places, these rights are only protected as civil rights in state territories, within the reach of the sovereign state. Another perplexity, nested like a Matryoshka doll in the first, concerns the friction between the nation and the state, which are conflicting principles for Arendt. The state, Arendt argues, serves the purpose of a guarantee for the principle of equality before the law, indifferent to nationality, protecting all inhabitants on its territory. The nation, by contrast, conditions according to Arendt state citizenship on national membership of a homogenous population, rooted in the soil of the homeland, othering any person without the proper nationality as second-rate citizens or immigrants. The paradox is, then, that the civil rights belong to all inhabitants on the territory of the sovereign state while national sovereignty only protects these rights in terms of national rights (ibid., 269).

Arendt's diagnosis of the "rights of man" was as crucial in her time as it is today, notwithstanding the reoccurring criticism that it became obsolete after the second half of the twentieth century. Jean L. Cohen criticizes Arendt for disregarding "the proliferation in her lifetime of a wide range of treaties, conventions, declarations of rights, covenants, international law, supranational courts, and projects of regional federation all oriented

toward tempering state sovereignty and, yes, giving weight to the idea of human rights" (1996: 177). Cohen thinks that sovereign nation-states could be embedded in international bodies, federate institutions and supranational courts. "Arendt did not see", writes Cohen, "that law on the international level could play a role parallel to law on the level of the state in protecting rights and in tempering sovereignty" (ibid., 177). After the publication of Cohen's article in 1996, it may be asked if not the opposite has happened. Rather than being tempered, nation-states have succeeded in circumventing the oversight processes and global rights instruments of international and supranational institutions. Legal scholar Ayelet Shachar (2020) observes that the national borders of Arendt's time have not vanished and have remained the basis for sovereign control. National borders, she argues, have rather transformed from fixed demarcations into in- and outward shifting borders that control both the external movement of migrants and internal residency of inhabitants through new border control technologies and legal instruments.

The issue whether – and how – "migrants" can overcome the "perplexities of the rights of man" is discussed in terms of the right to have rights in the literature (cf. Benhabib, 2004; Birmingham, 2006). Apart from a moral account of the right to have rights (cf. Michelman, 1996), this expression is broadly discussed in two senses: on the one hand, in the sense of petitioning for state protection and legalized residency; on the other hand, in the sense of self-initiating political space and asserting public visibility. While Nanda Oudejans (2014: 8) points out that it would be reductive to understand the expression only in either one of both senses, she yet limits her account to cases of (rejected) asylum seekers who only legally petition for asylum.

By contrast, Ayten Gündoğdu (2015) interprets the right to have rights in the political context of Sans-Papiers, prioritizing the political issue of public self-inclusion over the legal issue of asylum and state protection. She argues that the right to have rights is to be considered an inaugural speech-act in the declarative mode, similar to the expressive power at work in the eighteenth-century, revolutionary declarations (ibid. 171; cf. Butler and Spivak, 2007: 48; Zivi, 2012). Gündoğdu understands the declaration to be a public utterance with a contingent, risky, yet transformative effect: to inaugurate a public space in which to appear before others, to exercise the capabilities to speech and action. According to Gündoğdu, Sans-Papiers manifested this inaugural, expressive power in public statements such as "Papers for all", reminiscent of the speech-act in founding declarations. She writes: "Perhaps the most important element that Sans-Papiers has appropriated from this revolutionary history [i.e. French revolutionary and colonial history] is the form of the declaration itself" (2015: 196). For Gündoğdu, the Sans-Papiers' expressive power was manifest as they appeared in public space. The act of occupying public sites transformed their otherwise inconspicuous conduct, daily passing through these same sites without notice, into an assertive, public stance that defied the pending threat of deportation. They performatively contested, Gündoğdu points out, the immobility and invisibility to which lack of residence permits condemned them.

I do not call into question Gündoğdu's view of the right to have rights as an inaugural speech-act in the declarative mode. Neither do I doubt her point about the transformative effect manifest in the campaign of the Sans-Papiers. But I do argue that her argument is not yet sufficient to show how the campaign of Sans-Papiers (and by analogy, the campaigns of like movements) is efficacious – even when direct action and declarative speech momentarily transfigured policed space into inclusive, public space. For the effect that they intended was not only the contention of who acts and speaks in public. Ultimately, they acted for having residency legalized, the right to work granted and the obligation to income tax imposed. Whereas occupying public space for speech and action is an achievement in itself, it is not one which makes the efficacy of civil protest manifest. State authorities may refuse to adopt a receptive attitude towards protest, refuse to meet the claims protestors have at stake. My contention is therefore that efficacy of civil protest should be seen in close relationship with the willingness of state authorities to listen. In terms of speech-act theory, I contend that the right to have rights – as clarified by Gündoğdu – is only felicitous if it calls forth the desired, perlocutionary effect next to the illocutionary effect. Ultimately, the protestors desire an affirmative uptake by the addressee: to have the related authorities grant them residence permits. This often only happens through a struggle over a course of months and in many cases, years, sometimes even decades.

I aim to articulate how noncitizen movements such as Sans-Papiers deploy methods of civil protest as far as these induce the intended, perlocutionary effect. I therewith equally aim to understand how protests sometimes remain infelicitous: how authorities continue in refusing to listen. The question how political action induces which performative effects, is admittedly a context-dependent issue. But one can theorize the political condition – that is, the condition internal to political practice – that makes the right to have rights possible. In the following, I contend that two aspects are important in considering the efficacy of protest in the context of Sans-Papiers and like movements. In the next section, I propose to rearticulate the expression "immigrant protest" – such as it is called in the literature – in terms of civil protest. I will argue that the term "civilian", better than "immigrant", helps to understand how the political subject addresses the state authorities of the host country. In the last section, I consider the issue of how the efficacy of civil protest is to be understood in close relationship with the related authorities. I will then argue that Arendt's notion of political authority is at least as relevant as her expression of the right to have rights. Lastly, I will contend with the help of an argument formulated by Gene Sharp (1980) that the efficacy of inaugural speech is be studied within an understanding of civil protest that is more specific than Arendt's ambiguous understanding of revolution in On Revolution. On the premise of political authority in relation to civil protest, I will offer an antagonistic account of civil protest in the context of democratic protestors without residence permits.

This article is not the place to go into the detail of antagonism theory but let me here note why I opt for this approach. The distinction between the political and politics – made

by, inter alia, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau – helps to clarify an ambiguity that remains implicit in Arendt's work. Compare, for instance, her essay 'Civil Disobedience' with On Revolution on her use of the notion of the revolutionary. In 'Civil Disobedience', Arendt claims that both the civil disobedient and the revolutionary equally entertain the wish for political change of not only particular laws but also the legal system (1972 [1969]: 77). One might infer from this, that the civil disobedient and the revolutionary should then differ, if not in their aims, then in the means to attain it. But this inference is difficult to ascertain when reading On Revolution, where Arendt restricts the means and end of revolution to the activity of constitution-making. That is, whereas Arendt – I will argue here – has a deep understanding of the political, her restrictive understanding of politics prevents her from mapping out the civil disobedient's technique in comparison with the revolutionary's technique. In the following, I will highlight the distinction between the political and politics with the help of the distinction between antagonism and agonism. When I write about the political in, in my view, Arendt's sense, I will call this the antagonist account or simply antagonism. By contrast, whenever I write about techniques of civil protest, I will call it agonism and describe it as agonistic as opposed to militaristic - to highlight the civil practice in which they pursue political change, either of particular laws or of the legal system as a whole.5

The migrant, civilian and citizen: on the political subject that partakes in civil protest

For the sake of including the noncitizen as the political subject in democratic practice, I understand the adjective "civil" to refer to the third term "civilian" distinct from the citizen and the migrant. I consider the civilian to refer to the figure of the democratic participant with or without residence permit, subject to the civil law of the host country. Not the endowment with state-controlled citizenship is decisive for the prior capabilities to speak and act in democratic politics. It rather matters for the political subject that the subject is effected by civil law – e.g. the *Residenzpflicht* that restricts the right to free movement – so that the subject may "effect" it in turn: contest, amend and change it. The political subject is – as Judith Butler points out – "less a discrete substance than an active and transitive set of interrelations" because, they argue, "to be effected by another" and "to effect another" are equally part of what the political subject is (2009: 147). Moreover, I here consider the civilian without residence permit in the context of the "perplexities of the rights of man". The civilian without residence permit is distinct from the citizen as far as the civilian without residence permit is subject to perplexities – e.g. the legal equation

Admittedly, Mouffe has introduced the distinction between antagonism and agonism in a slightly different way in antagonism theory. For her, antagonism and agonism are incompatible terms, referring to qualitatively different forms of struggle on the level of politics. Whereas antagonistic struggle is, according to Mouffe, fought between enemies, agonistic struggle is fought between adversaries. By contrast, I will use the term "antagonism" to highlight a specific view on the level of the political whereas I will use the term "agonism" to highlight a specific type of struggle (which is, indeed, fought among adversaries) on the level of politics. I then hold that from the antagonistic view of the political, one can study the difference between agonistic and militaristic struggle. For a clarifying account of the terms "antagonism" and "agonism" in antagonism theory, see Nikolai Roskamm (2015).

of civil with national rights – that restrict the exercise of state-protected rights. But the civilian without residence permit is distinct from the migrant because the civilian exercises the capability to partake in civil protest aiming at contesting legal dichotomies between the citizen and the migrant.

The political subject is differently framed in citizenship studies and civil resistance studies. In citizenship studies, movements such as Sans-Papiers have been studied through the lens of structural analysis under the headings of immigrant protests, refugee activism and migrant politics. In the special issue 'Immigrant Protest' in *Citizenship Studies*, the editors write that this subject matters as far as the "securitization of citizenship" must be studied in relation to the concomitant "securitization of migration" (Tyler and Marcinia, 2013: 144).

Noncitizen movements have not yet (sufficiently) been studied in civil resistance studies as far as civil resistance is considered to be practiced in the capacity of citizens. Those who offer civil resistance would then challenge their own governments, not governments abroad. The restriction of civil resistance to citizenship may be imputed to Erica Chenoweth. She equates the adjective "civil" with "civic", derivative from the noun "citizenship", which is distinct from the noun "civility", she claims (2021: 68). To be sure, the paradigm of civil resistance studies (Sharp, 1973) bears on in-depth studies of the campaigns led by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was a leader of peoples who were not considered to be full citizens, just like present-day civilians without residence permits. Yet, the peoples Gandhi led were neither dubbed as migrants or foreigners. They were characterized as "natives" in the colonial context of British India (Sharma, 2020).

Other elucidations of the political subject occur in the debate on the normative conditions of justification for civil disobedience. Scholars in that field such as Luis Cabrera and Robin Celikates respond to strict accounts of civil disobedience in the wake of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Scheuerman, 2021). They propose more expansive versions, stretching the Rawlsian account of civil disobedience to include a greater variety of forms of protest. ⁶[6] Also, these expanded versions prescribe notions of the citizen that deviate from the standard notion of the citizen as a bearer of state-protected rights. They undertake these revisions from contradicting viewpoints. Cabrera adheres to a Rawlsian account to which he adds minor revisions. Celikates formulates an extensive revision under the heading of radical democratic disobedience. Below, I sketch Rawls's, Cabrera's and Celikates's accounts in order to situate the notion of the political subject in the context of civil disobedience (and civil protest, by implication).

Rawls defines civil disobedience as a conscientious, public and nonviolent breach of law undertaken to persuade the majority to correct a law or policy in a nearly just society. He lays out justificatory conditions for civil disobedience: that the activists should give

⁶ Exemplary strict accounts are Rawls's and Dworkin's liberalist accounts as well as Habermas's deliberative democratic account (Scheuerman, 2018; Kaufman, 2021; Smith, 2021).

authorities fair notice of their planned breach of law, that they should act in public and that they should appeal to the common understanding of justice shared among the civil populace. Rawls adds three justificatory conditions to mitigate disruptive effects. Civil disobedience should address a violation of the principle of equal basic liberties, it should be undertaken as a last resort and it should be coordinated with other groups with similar grievances (Rawls, 2005 [1973]: 363-391). Importantly, Rawls argues that the act deserves the name of civil disobedience only if the activist shows "fidelity to the law": endorses legal authority and accepts the obligation to obey the state. The protestor's fidelity to the law should be manifest in a non-evasive bearing: in overt acts of civil disobedience and in acceptance of the legal consequences. Moreover, the fidelity to the law constraints not only the moral disposition but also the legal status of the political subject. Rawls equates the political subject with the national citizen and does not account for the inhabitant without residence permit in matters of civil law.

Cabrera upholds Rawls's strict account but he argues for leniency in specific cases of nonviolent action that fall outside of the strict notion of civil disobedience. He reiterates civil disobedience as "morally principled, deliberate, and publicly enacted violation of law by individuals, who do not then seek to evade arrest" and who are "in broad fidelity to their domestic rule of law and good citizenship" (2021: 313). He then sets out to circumscribe specific cases of nonviolent action that meet the above-given requirements yet fall outside of the scope of the strict account. These cases would concern global or trans-state issues rather than domestic issues of civil law. He enumerates, inter alia, Sans-Papiers (ibid., 321-327). He claims how in this case, the activists use methods of nonviolent action without directly appealing to the civil law of the host country. Rather, they would challenge the government by appeals to global rights instruments, such as the human rights law of the United Nations and the European Convention on Human Rights. Also, he stresses that in the case of Sans-Papiers, the movement consists of "unauthorized migrants". It seems to him important to coin separate categories of civil disobedience for the sake of bolstering the activists' moral position in countering accusations and justifying protests vis-à-vis state authorities. He proposes to bring their protests under the categories of trans-state and global civil disobedience, which should enable activists, supportive citizens, journalists, jurists and politicians to plead the media, governments and courts for a lenient treatment of the activists.

Rawls borrows the notion of fidelity to the law from Marshall Cohen (1969). Rawls writes that those who use civil disobedience to protest laws "are prepared to oppose the statute even if it should be upheld" (1973: 365). Also, he writes that "[t]he law is broken, but fidelity to law is expressed by the public and nonviolent nature of the act, by the willingness to accept the legal consequences of one's conduct" (ibid., 366).

⁸ In the opening pages of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls restricts the subject-matter of justice to the basic institutions of a "society conceived for the time being as a closed system isolated from other societies" (1973: 8). This delineation reduces the political subject to the citizen. The "closed society" is only peopled by those who are citizens by birth. Rawls studies civil matters of justice with regard to national citizens, as if civilians more broadly did not participate in these matters. He makes the same restriction in *Political Liberalism*: "I assume that the basic structure is that of a closed society: that is, we are to regard it as self-contained and as having no relations with other societies. Its members enter it only by birth and leave it only by death" (Rawls, 2005 [1993]: 12).

The trouble with the categories of trans-state and global civil disobedience is that these presuppose a political subject whose actual existence is difficult to expose in the international arena. One might argue for the existence of regional citizenship in the European Union at best. It is difficult, if not unlikely, to illustrate the existence of the "global citizen" or "global civil disobedient". Cabrera acknowledges this is so, posits therefore the global citizen as an ideal attached to a set of normative criteria. One such criterion is that the activists, he writes, "reach across international boundaries, or internal boundaries of differential citizenship" (ibid., 320). Certain cases might be indicative of the global citizen if in these cases, the activists act "like" global citizens (ibid., 320; emphasis is his). Since, Cabrera argues, Sans-Papiers makes claims to legal inclusion in the French state, reach across internal boundaries of differential citizenship, they could be considered to act like global citizens. But the viability of this ideal is doubtful on the premise of the "perplexities of the rights of man": that noncitizens can only make viable claims to human rights once they have received proper residence permits. Before they can act like global citizens, they must be recognized as national citizens; otherwise, they appeal to abstract human rights at best (Rosenmüller, 2018). They must first claim the right to have rights before to have any cosmopolitan standing. Moreover, the ideal of the global citizen attached to a fixed set of normative criteria may just as well serve contrary purposes. The state can co-opt the ideal and frame activists as having transgressed the criteria attached to this ideal.

Celikates defines an act of radical democratic disobedience "as an intentionally unlawful and principled collective act of protest (...) with which citizens (...) pursue the political aim of changing norms, practices, institutions, and self-understandings (...) in ways that should be seen as civil (as opposed to military)" (2021: 134-143). The aim of civil disobedience aligns with the political because, he argues, it is part of the practice of contestation that challenges and changes established norms, practices and institutions (ibid., 128). The established norms, practices and institutions lack, he writes, "any secure foundations to stand on (such as legal or moral principles that would be immune from contestation)", including the norms that shape the political practice of contestation itself (ibid., 129). Contestation is only then a truly political practice according to Celikates if it is itself exposed to self-reflective contestation. The political implies, he writes, "a recognition of the democratic need for self-reflexivity and some sort of self-limitation" (ibid., 130). This self-reflectivity inherent to the practice of civil disobedience should, Celikates argues, especially be directed at contesting the norms of civility which restrain civil disobedience. He writes that these norms should be contested so as to "resist hegemonic attempts to co-opt, normalize, and depoliticize this practice, or to delegitimize it by framing it as a riot, a disturbance of public order, or even terrorism" (ibid., 132-133). It is, Celikates claims, not up to ethicists to apply external norms to specific protests and then decide if these are justifiable as acts of civil disobedience. Philosophers should leave the "context-dependent issues of justification open to discursive validation in the public arena – a validation that will, of course, itself be subject to contestation" (ibid., 138).

Celikates's account of radical democratic disobedience brings into focus that noncitizen movements such as Sans-Papiers fight their struggle within democracies of European Union countries rather than only through appeals to human rights. The equation of the political with practices of contestation prioritizes change over stability in democratic politics.9 Arendt makes a similar point when she reframes the "perplexities of the rights of man". The initiation (the right) to come together for claiming rights in concert (to have rights) aims at changing established dichotomies between the citizen and the migrant that define civil rights as national rights.¹⁰ Arendt questions therefore above all the requirement of fidelity to the law associated with civil disobedience. In her criticism of that norm of civility, she quotes from Marshall Cohen's article 'Civil Disobedience in a Constitutional Democracy', to which Rawls as well refers in his conceptualization of the fidelity to the law. She quotes: "The civil disobedient accepts, while the revolutionary rejects, the frame of established authority and the general legitimacy of the system of laws" (1972 [1969]: 77). Arendt finds that this distinction between the civil disobedient and the revolutionary is difficult to sustain because the civil disobedient shares with the revolutionary the wish for political change of not only particular laws but also the legal system. If civil disobedience is at the heart of constitutional democracy, so is the pursuit of systemic transformation. And if systemic transformation is the purpose of the political in democratic politics, noncitizen movements such as Sans-Papiers, We Are Here and the Oranienplatz-Flüchtlinge locate themselves at the heart of democracy in European Union countries.

The trouble with Celikates's account of radical democratic disobedience is that he does not take into account the "perplexities of the rights of man". This is apparent in the alternative notion of the citizen that he proposes, which effaces the "perplexities". Admittedly, his alternative notion of the citizen coheres with his idea of the political. Just as he equates the political with practices of contestation, he equates the citizen with the participant in any such practice, including civil disobedience. Celikates writes that his notion "goes beyond those recognized as citizens by a particular state" (2021: 136). Similarly, Chantal Mouffe writes: "A radical, democratic citizen must be an active citizen, somebody who acts as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking" (1992: 4). The advantage of equating citizenship with political agency is that then, for instance, the protestors in the GUstreik may be considered to be citizens as long as they participate in civil disobedience or in like practices.

But the disadvantage of equating citizenship with political agency is that one then must infer that they *already are* citizens (as long as they keep on performing politically). Starting from the radical democratic citizen in understanding civil disobedience, the

⁹ Celikates's definition of the political assumes that the political and politics are distinct, similar to the distinction made by Chantal Mouffe. Politics stands, she writes, for the "ethico-political principles that constitute its principles [i.e. the principles of a liberal-democratic society] of legitimacy". In contrast, she writes that the political stands for the "multiplicity of ways in which those principles are articulated and institutionalized in specific hegemonic formations" (2018: 44-45).

¹⁰ See the article by Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves (1992) on the affinity between radical democracy and Arendt's notion of the political.

opposed view of the citizen as a bearer of rights disappears from sight. This makes it difficult for the account of radical democratic disobedience to reckon with civil disobedients who enjoy less civil rights than citizens (as bearers of state-protected rights). Celikates's notion of the citizen hence fails to acknowledge the main point of the struggle fought in the GUstreik, which is precisely to become citizens, to have overcome the unequal treatment between civilians with and civilians without residence permits in the asylum regime. One might retort in favor of radical democracy that it is important to reassert the view of the state citizen as the subject position in a legal framework of rights. This framework would, one might then argue, supervene on the radical democratic citizen's assertion in a political field of shifting positions. But I doubt whether it is plausible to reassert the view of state citizenship upon the assertion of radical democratic practice. At least, I doubt this as long as one does not further specify how civil disobedients without residence permits can efficaciously assert themselves in a way that they increase their chances in attaining state citizenship (the desired, perlocutionary effect). This is important because their collective effort to become citizens is more complicated than practices of contestation, disruption and change. It involves activities, mentalities and techniques to sustain themselves over an indefinite period of time - and, crucially, in a durable relation with the state authorities of the host country where they wish to build a home.

To summarize, I propose to describe the political subject in democratic practice as the civilian distinct from the citizen and the migrant, that is the democratic participant with or without citizenship who is subject to the civil law of the host country. The advantage of describing the political subject in this manner is that I then avoid the conceptual shortcomings of Cabrera's and Celikates's accounts of civil disobedience. The civilian without residence permit can be understood to partake *in* the democracy of the host country, rather than making appeals from outside to cosmopolitan rights in a capacity – the global citizen – that at bests exists as an ideal to be co-opted by the state. Also, rather than overlooking the struggle of the noncitizen by framing them as some sort of citizen, the civilian can be understood to be confronted by state authorities that enforce legal or administrative restrictions on civil rights as national rights. At this precise point, the question of efficacy (regarding the desired, perlocutionary effect) becomes important. It becomes important to consider how techniques of civil protest are efficacious tools of action for noncitizens *in close relationship with* the state of the host country.

Hannah Arendt's On Revolution: on political authority and techniques of struggle

In the previous section, I have discussed how civil disobedience in particular and civil protest more broadly can be stretched to include protest movements organized by civilians without residence permits. I have proposed to consider the civilian to be the political subject in civil protest: the democratic participant with or without residence permit, subject to the civil law. By implication, the civilian without residence permit can

be understood to partake in civil protest, that is in protest against the civil law *within* the boundaries of the custom and law of the host country. A series of protests such as the afore-mentioned GUstreik can then be understood to consist of acts of civil disobedience: the hunger strikes as a legitimate form of nonviolent action with communicative intentions, maintaining a durable relationship with the public and the authorities of Würzburg. In the present section, I consider again how efficacious, civil protest maintains a durable relationship with state authorities – with a shift of emphasis from the protest movements to these authorities.

In studying the role of state authorities in the relationship with civil protest movements, I will here argue that the mode in which authorities show a receptive attitude towards civil protest campaigns, is dependent on the premise that political contestation and political authority are intrinsically linked. I will delineate this premise on an antagonistic account of political authority, which consists of three steps. First, I will argue with the help of Arendt's notion of political authority that state authorities are politically bound to listen to civil protest movements. Second, I will argue that since political authority is risky for state authorities, they are equally compelled to deploy administrative, legal and police measures against civil protest campaigns. Lastly, I will argue with the help of Sharp's notion of techniques of struggle, that civil protest movements counter these state measures through techniques of struggle, accompanied with inaugural speech-acts in the declarative mode, in the pursuit of perlocutionary effects.

Characteristically, the members of movements such as the Sans-Papiers enter into an agonistic bind with state authorities. The civilian without residence permit detaches from this bind in two ways: either by full submission to the law and custom – to the depoliticized, asylum procedure, for instance – or by participation in protest that is no longer deemed civil. When they maintain this bind, they accomplish this in two ways also. On the one hand, they address the authorities with the petition to becoming member of the host country, binding themselves to the law and custom. On the other hand, they enter into conflict with the same law and custom. Petitions for residence permits not always provoke conflict. Consider asylum requests or requests for work permits. But claims to residence permits effect struggle whenever they have been issued through civil protest. The protest movements at stake here issue claims to residence permits because requests for asylum have been rejected. The demand to legalization of residency is part of the declarative speech-act, which is equally an expression of protest against the rejection of the request for asylum. The declarative speech-act inaugurates, then, an agonistic bind as it expresses obedience to the law and custom, as well as protest against state decisions made in the name of the same law and custom. Yet, the question remains how state authorities are receptive to the declaration of protest, how they tie themselves in the struggle, rather than ordering a crackdown on the protests and proceeding with "business as usual".

I propose an antagonistic account of political authority on which to understand civil protest as an efficacious practice on the long term. I will articulate this account with the help of the antagonistic notion of the political in Arendt's On Revolution. Arendt's notions of freedom, power and authority provide the tools for understanding the agonistic bind in which state authorities listen to protestors without residence permits. Yet, I contend that Arendt's account of revolutionary declarations must be reassessed within a wider variety of techniques of struggle in politics. Sharp (1980) endorses Arendt's notion of the political in On Revolution. "The technique of nonviolent action is", he writes, "based upon the very theory of power which Dr. Arendt presented" (ibid., 158). But he criticizes Arendt's descriptions of revolutionary movements for the lack of regard for techniques of struggle with which they conducted campaigns. His objection to Arendt will help to finetune the antagonistic account of political authority in the context of agonistic struggle, i.e. civil protest, on account of which I intend to understand how state authorities are bound to noncitizen movements such as Sans-Papiers. I will discuss Sharp's objection alongside two more objections against Arendt's notion of the political: first, the objection that according to Arendt political authority is based on unreflective forces such as habit and belief; second, that Arendt has a purified notion of the political; third, that she offers too restrictive descriptions of techniques of struggle that exemplify the notions of freedom, power and authority. Whereas the first two objections may be refuted, the last objection is a substantial one that invites to a revision of her notion of the political in the context of civil protest.

In *On Revolution*, Arendt describes the origins of the American and French Revolution. Both revolutions, she argues, germinate in two experiences in the course of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, she describes the experience of the "downfall of political authority" in Europe, notably the ancient régime in France and the British empire. She describes how Europe's peoples lived as though "they were still ruled by habit and custom" while they "no longer trusted the laws under which they lived, and no longer believed in the authority of those who ruled them" (2006 [1963]: 107). On the other hand, the revolutions germinated in the experience of public freedom: the freedom to organize and take part in collective action, to share in public business, to excel in debates, discussions and decision-making – not for instrumental reasons but, Arendt writes, "for freedom for its own sake" (ibid., 107-108).

Both experiences – the loss of political authority and the enjoyment of public freedom – are intertwined for Arendt. The loss of political authority was according to her due to the "breakdown of the old Roman trinity of religion, tradition, and authority" on which the prerevolutionary, eighteenth-century regimes in Europe rested (ibid., 108). The experience of public freedom was for her not only the initial motive for revolution, it also harbored the promise of a novel source of political authority for the revolutionary republics to come. The God-given, eternal right to rule lost its appeal but, in return, public freedom became the novel "image of eternal bliss" (ibid., 122). It was the task of revolution to maintain the novel source of political authority – in Arendt's words, "to

assure the survival of the spirit out of which the act of foundation sprang" (ibid., 117). Precisely this spirit of revolution is public freedom according to Arendt, i.e. the initiation of assemblies through speech and action. The initiation to assemble in word and deed – i.e. the inaugural speech-act in the declarative mode – amounted, she writes, to "the birth of a new, secular realm" in the eighteenth century, a realm that was both new and secular as it replenished the authority of ancient, religious traditions (ibid., 16).

Arendt reads a history of political authority in the old Roman trinity of religion, tradition, and authority – from ancient Roman republicanism to eighteenth-century monarchism and finally to the revolutionary notion of public freedom.¹¹ She underpins that history with her notion of authority, for which she refers to Latin auctoritas, allegedly derived from augere, to augment. Authority, she claims, is a process rather than an outcome: not an "absolute", a foundation on which the ruler secured cooperation and obedience from the people. It is rather, she argues, an act of foundation, which on itself does not yet bind the members of the community. It would only bind them as far as they participated in an indefinite succession of acts of which each tied back to the founding act. Since the subsistence of the political community depended on the act of its foundation, it only subsisted to the extent that this act was reenacted again and again. Its subsistence was not secured on a permanent basis, it was at best augmented through the indefinite succession of reenactments (2006 [1963]: 193-194). Moreover, Arendt sees the three elements of the old Roman trinity reflected in her notion of authority: to augment (augere), to succeed or hand down (tradere) and to bind (religare). "[A]uthority in this context", Arendt writes, "is nothing more or less than a kind of necessary 'augmentation' by virtue of which all innovations and changes remain tied back to the foundation which, at the same time, they augment and increase" (ibid., 194). In On Revolution, the paradigm of this type of authority is the written constitution, which is a source of authority to the extent that the act of constitution is reenacted through successive amendments of the written outcome. In the essay 'Civil Disobedience', Arendt sees - as Gündoğdu points out - the act of civil disobedience as an exemplary reenactment of foundation. Gündoğdu writes:

In many ways, acts of civil disobedience also confront us with the perplexities of founding. After all, as Arendt reminds us, quoting Carl Cohen, "the law cannot justify the breaking of the law". Similar to revolutionaries, civil disobedients are not legally authorized to do what they set out to do. In the face of these perplexities, it is appealing to turn to an absolute and justify civil disobedience as a moral obligation arising from a "higher law". But Arendt rejects this foundationalist move in her account of the acts of civil disobedience in the late 1960s. She instead reinterprets these acts as augmentations of the principle of consent that became manifest in the American founding. To make this point, she declares in a Montesquieuan vein that civil disobedience is an action that departs from the letter of the law but does that in accordance with its "spirit" (2015: 182; emphasis is hers).

¹¹ Arendt describes this history in more detail in her essay 'What is Authority?' (2006 [1961]).

Now, various objections have been raised against Arendt's notion of political authority. One objection is that Arendt entertains a religious notion of authority. Mark Haugaard (2018) claims that adherence to political authority is "unreflective" for Arendt. Authority in Arendt's sense would amount to obedience by force of habit and unquestioned belief (2018: 110). Since Arendt rejects the liberalist doctrine of freedom which stipulates that acceptance of authority presupposes individual volition, Haugaard argues her notion of authority must be unreflective. Haugaard's argument resorts to the dichotomy between either reflective volition or unreflective habituation. Haugaard's refutation of Arendt's view of authority does not hold if this view is understood to be based on an alternative notion of freedom distinct from both habituation and volition. Habituation and volition have in common that they precede the (either habituated or deliberate) act. By contrast, freedom is for Arendt not prior to the act of foundation; rather, it is the illocutionary effect. Deliberation and reflection occur with the succession of acts that replenishes authority. Each act of augmentation binds back to, and so reflects on, the act of foundation. Moreover, each act of augmentation is critical in its recourse to the act of foundation. The reenactments by which political authority subsists - or augments - are the contestations, innovations and amendments of the written laws by which authorities rule. Charles Barbour (2012) summarizes the critical, reflective aspect of Arendt's notion of the political in terms of the "boundlessness of action" that recreates and corrodes the "boundaries of the law". The boundlessness of action, Barbour points out, makes possible and threatens administrative rule. Engrained legal customs, precepts and statutes can operate on society over a longer period of time only if they remain susceptible to an indefinite succession of innovations and amendments that continually threatens to undermine them.

Arendt does not reduce her notion of political authority to unreflective forces such as habit and belief but neither to a purified realm for freedom, power and authority – the second objection against her notion of the political.¹² Arendt distinguishes the political from economic, administrative and legal objectives, prioritizing public freedom over other purposes inherent to the political. One might here object that the subject-matter of the political were limited to the political itself, that is to matters related to constitutions, declarations and public spheres. With financial and economic matters were to be dealt outside the political, in administrative, bureaucratic and technocratic procedures. Similarly, Sheldon Wolin (1990) argues that the political exists for Arendt by the grace of specific mentalities such as the joy to participate in deliberation and the rhetorical pursuit of persuasion, as well as the desire to distinction in the eyes of peers who have matching desires and capacities. This realm were fenced off from mentalities peculiar to the social realm such as the want of abject poverty, the desire to happiness and the readiness to use violence to abolish biological need. Also, Andrew Schaap (2011) argues that Arendt has a "pure" notion of political activity, which is inherently nonviolent and hence incompatible with the uses of violence of any kind (cf. Rancière, 2006; 2013). Each of these critiques imputes the same presupposition to Arendt's thought: that the rift between the social (i.e.

¹² Bonnie Honig (2017) discusses this objection in detail.

the realm of necessity, force and habit) and the political (i.e. the realm of freedom, power and authority) is nonnegotiable.

Admittedly, one can find various passages in *On Revolution* where Arendt appeals to a bifurcation between natural necessity and political freedom. Still, as Bonnie Honig writes, one may ask if it is right "to attribute it to Arendt herself" (2017: 82). Arendt often recurs, Honig points out, to "the ancient Greece that is her beloved model", notably such as it is described in Aristotle's *Politics* (ibid., 81). But Arendt's celebration of the ancient Greek polis would not dictate her own distinction between the social and the political. Arendt resorts, inter alia, to the ancient Greek model in the passages where she describes the social question, "the terrifying predicament of mass poverty" in eighteenth-century France. Arendt describes in this passage how large parts of the French population sided with the revolutionaries – "the rebellion of the poor" that came to play "a truly revolutionary role" (2006 [1963]: 13). Here, she makes the remark that disorganized mass assemblies had the appearance of an irresistible force that "did not merely intrude into but burst upon the political domain" (ibid., 61).

Arendt resorts to an altogether different model in the passages where she elaborates on her own notion of the political in the context of ancient literature. One may impute to Aristotle the claim that the political – or political rule – is based on the natural capacities to rule and to obey. 13 For instance, in a democratic form of government, rule (the political) is manifest in the institutional mechanism of sortition (politics) for Aristotle. This institution rotates the positions of ruler and ruled among the citizens who can alternate between them by virtue of the capacities to rule and to be ruled (Van Reybrouck, 2016). Aristotle defines democratic freedom with recourse to rule even if it exists in the alternation between the capabilities to rule and obey. By contrast, Arendt resorts to Herodotus's expression of isonomia – as distinguished from democratic rule (democratia) and monarchic rule (monarchia) – in her elaboration on public freedom (2006 [1963]: 20-21). She translates isonomia into no-rule. Arendt pitches the practices of no-rule against forms of rule, no matter whether rule is economic, governmental or bureaucratic. Étienne Balibar (2007) points out that the novel source from which institutions (that is, forms of rule) must derive political authority is the transformation of their own existence (through practices of no-rule). He hence calls her notion of the political, antagonistic. Antagonism stands, then, for political transformation (the political), manifest in practices of no-rule that spring up within institutions of rule, the realms of financial, administrative and governmental rule (politics).

Yet, it may then be asked – which is the third and last objection – how the contestation of forms of rule through practices of no-rule looks like in the realms of markets, bureaucracies and governments. Arendt does not explicate the distinction between politics and the political. Also, she restricts her understanding of the diverse techniques of struggle, manifest in politics, that range from agonistic to militaristic. The cases that

¹³ See: Aristotle. Pol. 1277 a 32-1277 b 20. I have used Ernest Barker's translation (1950 [1948]).

Arendt selects to illustrate political technique, only contain descriptions of acts of assembling in speech and action, not of acts that contest regimes of rule *within* these regimes. Sharp raises therefore the objection that in the cases Arendt describes, she highlights the "organization" but not the "struggle" of political assemblies (1980: 157). On the one hand, he argues with Arendt that the organization of political assemblies presupposes power, that is the inaugural act of coming together for a common purpose. The means of strength gathered in an organization – e.g. financial, logistical and juridical resources as well as means of sanctions – would be of secondary importance. For the means on which rulers relied were only accessible through the cooperation, support and sympathy of others – from officials, peers and assistants, as well as from parts of the broader populace (1973: 11).

On the other hand, Sharp critiques Arendt for overlooking the extent to which organizations of no-rule amidst regimes of rule are manifest in struggle. In struggle, Sharp argues, the protestor's power is relative to the opponent's power. The inaugural act of organization then means, Sharp writes, "to influence - and at times to regulate - their opponent's power" (ibid., 69). On Sharp's account of power, the earlier mentioned Sans-Papiers regulated the French state's power as they won over large parts of the Paris populace in the large demonstration in 1997. One may retort – such as Hanako Koyama (2012) – that Arendt acknowledges the political significance of supportive, broader audiences in the public realm even if she privileges the role of smaller, political assemblies. But Sharp makes the point that organizations of no-rule do more than publish manifestos, hold speeches and make agreements. Civil resistance movements acquire support, assistance and sympathy from others in diversified resistance against adversaries that seek to prevent them from doing so. Civil resistance movements deploy techniques of struggle as diverse as the boundary conditions that their adversary sets to them. Erica Chenoweth (2021) describes how techniques of struggle take on more or less controversial forms, depending on the opponent's measures to which these techniques respond – creating parallel institutions, for instance, but also conducting hunger strikes and squatting buildings.

Arendt enumerates diverse revolutionary assemblies in modern history: the Puritan communities, townships and provincial congresses in the colonial history of North America; the sections and popular societies of the Parisian Commune in France during the French Revolution; the soviets during the first Russian Revolution in 1905 and the February Revolution in 1917; the *Arbeiter*- and *Soldatenräte* in Germany between 1918 and 1919; and the council system during the Hungarian Revolution in Budapest in 1956. But Arendt's descriptions of the ways in which they had struggled are limited to a few paradigm cases. She above all lays stress on the American Constitution and the "early covenants" (2006 [1963]: 259) such as the Mayflower Compact (ibid., 158) in the colonial history of United States America. The "men of the American Revolution" and the writers of the United States Constitution would have acted in the spirit of the early covenants in colonial America. "To them", she writes, "power came into being when and where people

would get together and bind themselves through promises, covenants, and mutual pledges" (ibid., 173). In *On Revolution*, then, Arendt restricts her descriptions of freedom, power and authority to "the power of covenant and constitution-making" (ibid. 159). It then seems as if the practices of revolutionary assemblies only consisted of inaugural speech-acts manifest in contracts, constitutions, covenants, pledges and promises. But these propositions do not illustrate the diverse techniques that were deployed to fight the struggles *in* various regimes of rule, regimes which set the boundaries to, and deployed measures against, these struggles.

One example of a technique of struggle, i.e. a speech-act directed against the boundary condition that shapes the struggle, is a silent hunger strike in prison. The prison impedes the verbalization of propositions. But the prisoners can yet perform a speech-act in a material mode other than a pledge, declaration or contract. A speech-act – as Judith Butler writes – may take the shape of "a practical refusal of a body that cannot appear in public" (2015: 170) which is yet speech addressed to others since "vocalization is also a bodily act, as is sign language" (ibid., 156). Another example is the aforementioned GUstreik, the hunger strikes organized by Iranian asylum seekers in Würzburg, Bavaria, in 2012. The protestors coordinated various techniques next to the hunger strikes: stitched up their mouths and wrote open letters addressed to politicians involved in Bavarian politics. In the letters, they indicated that their acts should be seen as a "silent cry". Hannes Kaufmann (2019) argues that the "silent cry" symbolizes protest against depoliticizing measures – the asylum procedure, for instance.¹⁴ One more example is We Are Here's method of squatting buildings in Amsterdam, with which We Are Here resisted the living conditions of the shelters that the Dutch state offered to rejected asylum seekers.

By privileging constitution-making over techniques of struggle, the need for fighting a struggle on the long term is overlooked. For instance, struggles for residence permits fought by Sans-Papiers and like movements endure. They must indefinitely reiterate acts of protest to overcome the counter measures of state authorities. If the diversified struggle with an opponent, the continuing campaign against state authorities, is not taken into account, then it becomes incomprehensible why constitution-making must be a reiteration of foundational acts. In 'What is Authority?', Arendt writes that in the American revolution, the foundational act preceded the Declaration of Independence. The framing of the United States Constitution fell back according to her on "charters and agreements" of a political community already existing on soil that was yet to become United States America (2006 [1961]: 140). But without accounting for the techniques of struggle aimed at endurance through conflict, one might as well assume that a political community springs up with the help of already one inaugural speech-act in the declarative mode. It is, then, not only about how Sans-Papiers - as Gündoğdu shows - successfully combined speech with action: momentarily occupying public space and appropriating the declaration from French revolutionary and colonial history. At least as important as the

¹⁴ https://e-cibs.org/issue-1-2019/#engelenhovenwhen [accessed 24 July 2023]

illocutionary effect (e.g. exercising the rights to speech and action) is the extent to which civil protest campaigns are conducted with techniques of struggle in the pursuit of the perlocutionary effect (e.g. the legalization of residency after enduring struggle).

Concluding remarks

Members of civil protest movements such as Sans-Papiers organize protest in the capacity of civilians without residence permit. They are confronted with the "perplexities of the rights of man", which they seek to overcome by self-initiating collective protest, exercising the rights to speech and action (the illocutionary effect) and claiming residence permits (the desired, perlocutionary effect). This leads them into an agonistic bind with state authorities on the long term. On the one hand, they organize public speeches, squatted buildings, protest marches, hunger strikes and public letters with which they contest the laws, regulations and policies of the host country. On the other hand, subjecting themselves to the law, they reiterate the petition for becoming member of the host country. In sustaining the agonistic bond, the protestors practice civil protest in the capacity of civilians without residence permits: subject to the civil law, they contest this law. Antagonism – i.e. the cause of political transformation – indicates that contestation and authority are intimately interlinked. In the capacity of civilians, the protestors partake just as state citizens in the indefinite succession of state-founding reenactments. The state authorities are therefore bound to lend an ear to the protestors at the risk of having the legal and administrative framework – e.g. the asylum regime – disrupted, amended and changed. Hence, while the state is bound to listen, it is equally compelled to immunize itself against disruption, using counter measures in attempts to disassemble civil protest movements and quell their campaigns. By implication, if protestors without residence permits fight an efficacious struggle on the long term, they fight it on both levels: to organize themselves in protest against the law so that state authorities are bound to listen to them and deploy techniques of struggle in overcoming the state measures that may quell them.

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