

# DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS DOING TRANSITIONS

## Politicisation and the Transformation of Articulating Not Taking Part

PRESENTATION FROM JESSICA LÜTGENS  
FEBRUARY 2020 DOING TRANSITIONS

# Youth, (left-wing) politicisation & participation

## Youth Research

How and how much  
do young people  
participate?

## Movement Research

How do macropolitical  
events influence  
activism in social  
movements?

## Research on Extremism

How can left activism  
of young people be  
prevented?



# Youth, (left-wing) politicisation & participation

## **Most existing research...**

- is based on a formal understanding of participation
- and a macropolitical and institutional idea of ‚politics‘
- reproduces normative assumptions and ascriptions

→ Instead: Politicisation as a dynamic process between subjective, social, discursive and institutional conditions

# Today's talk

**Experimental question today:** How does the concept of ‚articulation‘ (following Spies 2009 & Hall 2007 and more) relate to my findings on politicisation as a process of transformation?

- Background of my Study
- Structural Aspect: Politicisation as Articulation of Not Taking Part
  - The concepts behind Not Taking Part & Articulation
  - Biographical Case Sascha
- Conclusions

## Background of my study

**Research question:** How do young people get politically active?

**Sample:** 14 narrative interviews, 16-29 years old, heterogenous social backgrounds and position themselves as active in the left

**Method and result of analysis:** Biographical Case Reconstruction (Rosenthal 2008) with **Typology** and Theoretical Case Reconstruction (Miethe 2014) with **Structural Aspects**

# Background of my study

**Theoretical Framework** – Politicisation as a process in between...

Political socialisation	➡	Learning and instances of socialisation
Transition	➡	Changes of status and the life course
Biography	➡	Subjectivity and sociality
„Bildung“	➡	Appropriation and transformation

→ **Idea today:** Politicisation as a process in between....

subject-positioning	➡	(resistant) articulation
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# Structural Aspects of Politicisation in Adolescence

„**Structural aspects** do not try to describe biographical acting as such (that is what a typology does), but rather present single factors, which are relevant regarding the research question“  
(Miethe 2014: 174f.\*)



Structural Aspect of Politicisation in Adolescence:

Politicisation is performed (dt.: sich vollziehen) by the **Articulation of Not Taking Part** (dt.: Artikulation eines Nicht-Mitmachens)

# Politicisation as an ‚Articulation of Not Taking Part‘

- Young people being confronted with such events in institutions

One group suffering from discrimination, exclusion, etc. and transforming ‚Articulations of Not Being Able to Take Part‘ into ‚Articulations of Not Wanting To Take Part‘

other group witnessing discrimination, exclusion etc. and protest and intervene in that by articulating ‚Not Wanting To Take Part‘

- Intervene, protest, getting agency and become critical about ideologies by that
- Politicisation as ‚professionalisation‘ of those articulations



# Concept of ‚Not Taking Part‘ and ‚Articulation‘

## Not Taking Part (dt.: Nicht-Mitmachen)

- „I never wanted to ‚take part‘, I always experienced myself as someone, who did not wanted to take part“ (Löwenthal 1980: 47\*)
- „The only veritable power against the principle of Auschwitz would be autonomy, [...]: the strenght of reflection, for self-determination, for Not Taking Part“ (Adorno 1966/1971: 93\*)

**Articulation** = an expression of oneself by doings, sayings and performances

# Concept of ‚Articulation‘

## Articulation following Spies

- Spies (2009) connecting discourse- and biography-research referring to Hall (1997 and more)
- Articulation = taking a subject position under the pressure of being called into one (interpellation) within a discursive order (cf. Spies 2009: 14)
- Seeking for agency in discourse as theoretical and practical possibility

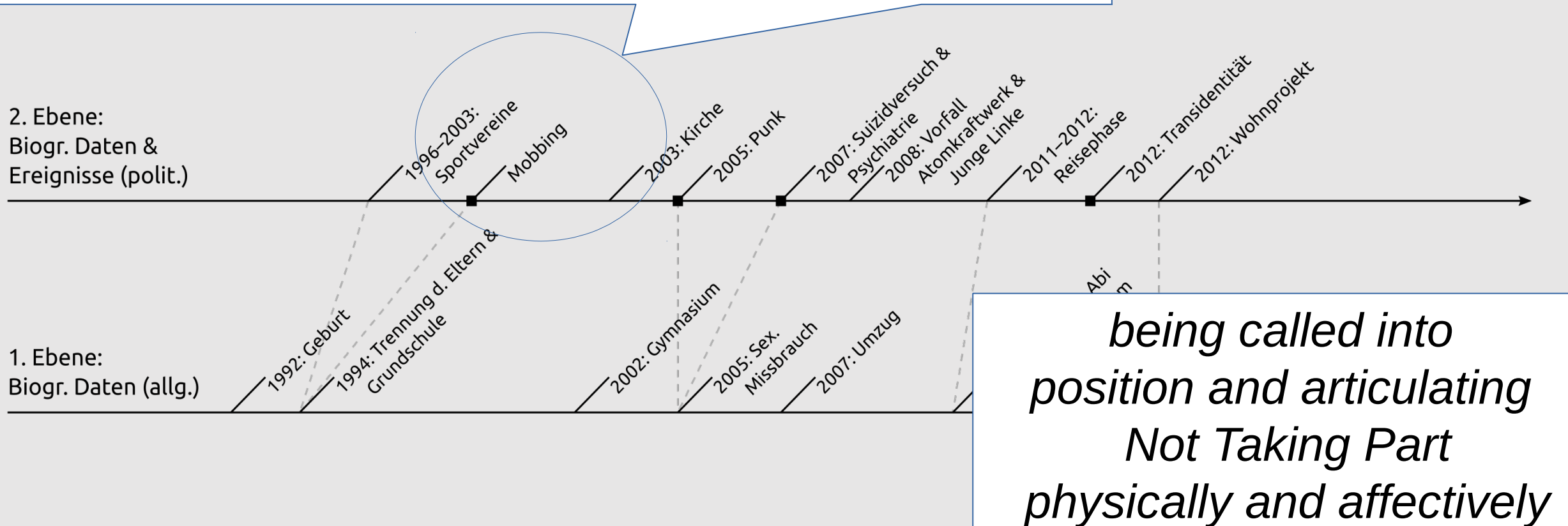
# Concept of ‚Articulation‘

## Articulation following Spies

- „If one understands the interrelation between discourse and subject as articulation, analysing biographical narrations allows to reconstruct forms of agency [...].“ (ibid.: 16\*)
  - By that: Possibility to reconstruct subversive acting, alternative subject positions and (micro-)political resistance from narrations
- **And now:** following the articulation of Not Taking Part within an empirical example

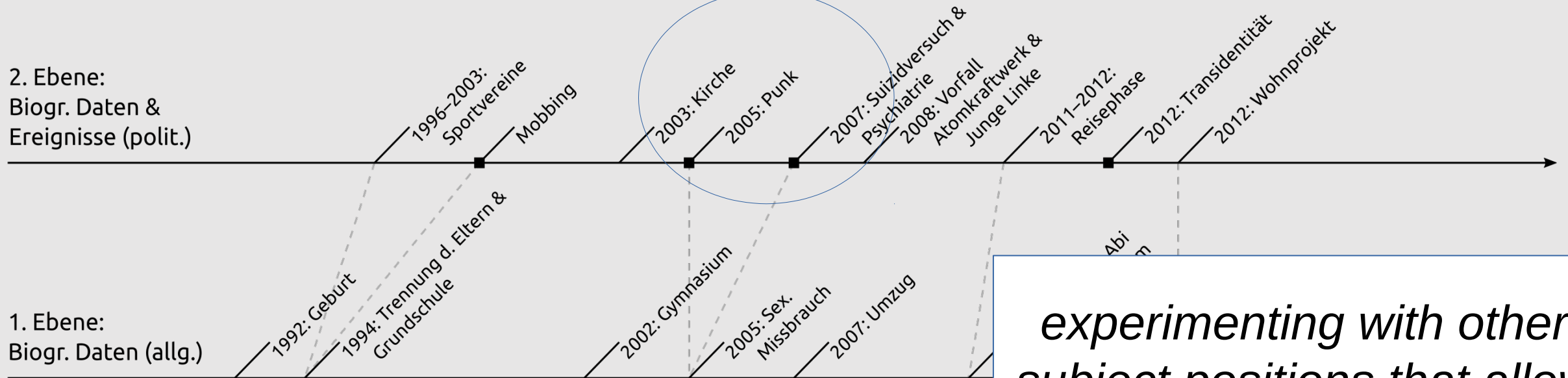
„because suddenly I belonged to the uncool ones,  
[...] no one wanted to spend time with me, I walked  
around all alone and hoped, that no one would see  
me, no one will hear me and that they will just  
ignore me.“

## Politicisation as Not (Being Able) Taking Part



„I had colourful trousers, Doc Marten boots, listened to Punk Music all day long in my little village and swore, well somehow unreflected, against God, the state and the nation.“

## Politicisation as Not (Wanting) Taking Part



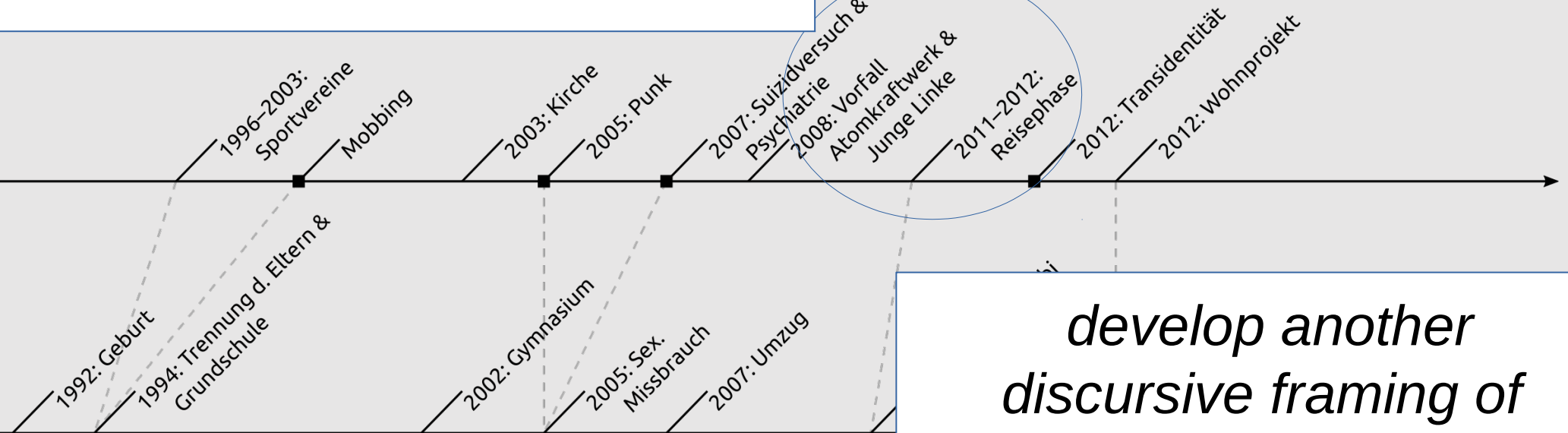
*experimenting with other  
subject positions that allow  
Not (Wanting) To Take Part*

„‘Gender‘ was becoming very important in my friendship-circle [...], that I started [...] to think about the deconstruction of gender [...] and everything changed quite quickly [...].“

## Politicisation as Appropriation of Transformative Bildungsexperiences

2. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten &  
Ereignisse (polit.)

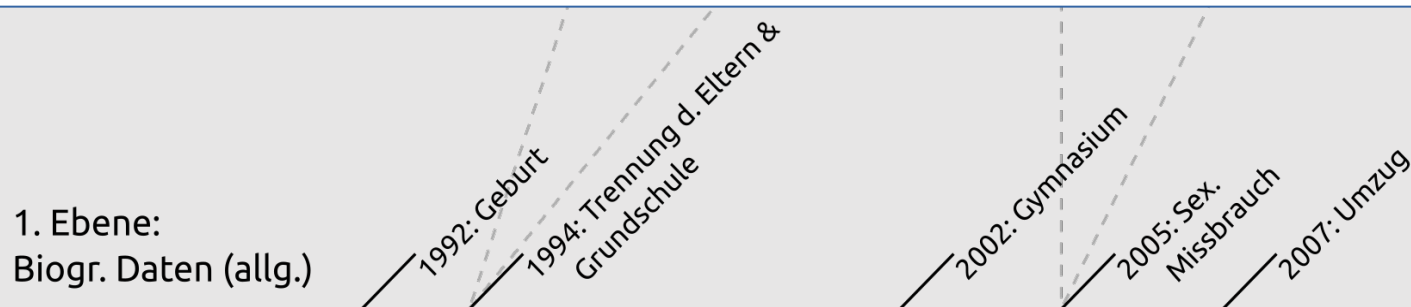
1. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten (allg.)



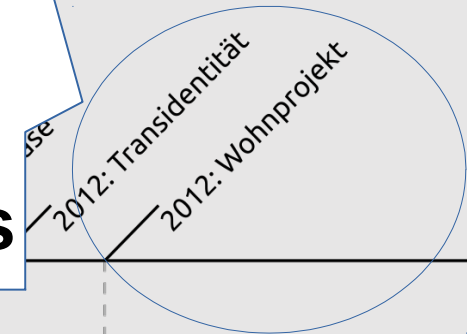
*develop another  
discursive framing of  
biography and choosing  
a(nother) subject position*

„those people have the same ideas on living-together, communication [...] trying to deconstruct society [...] and to live these ideas as an example. [...] Because everytime someone is facing [...] utopic ideas, he says ‚That will not work‘, that’s the killer argument [...] but when you just start [...] and making it possible to live this ideas, than this argument does not work anymore. Cause you can say ‚Look, there it is!’“

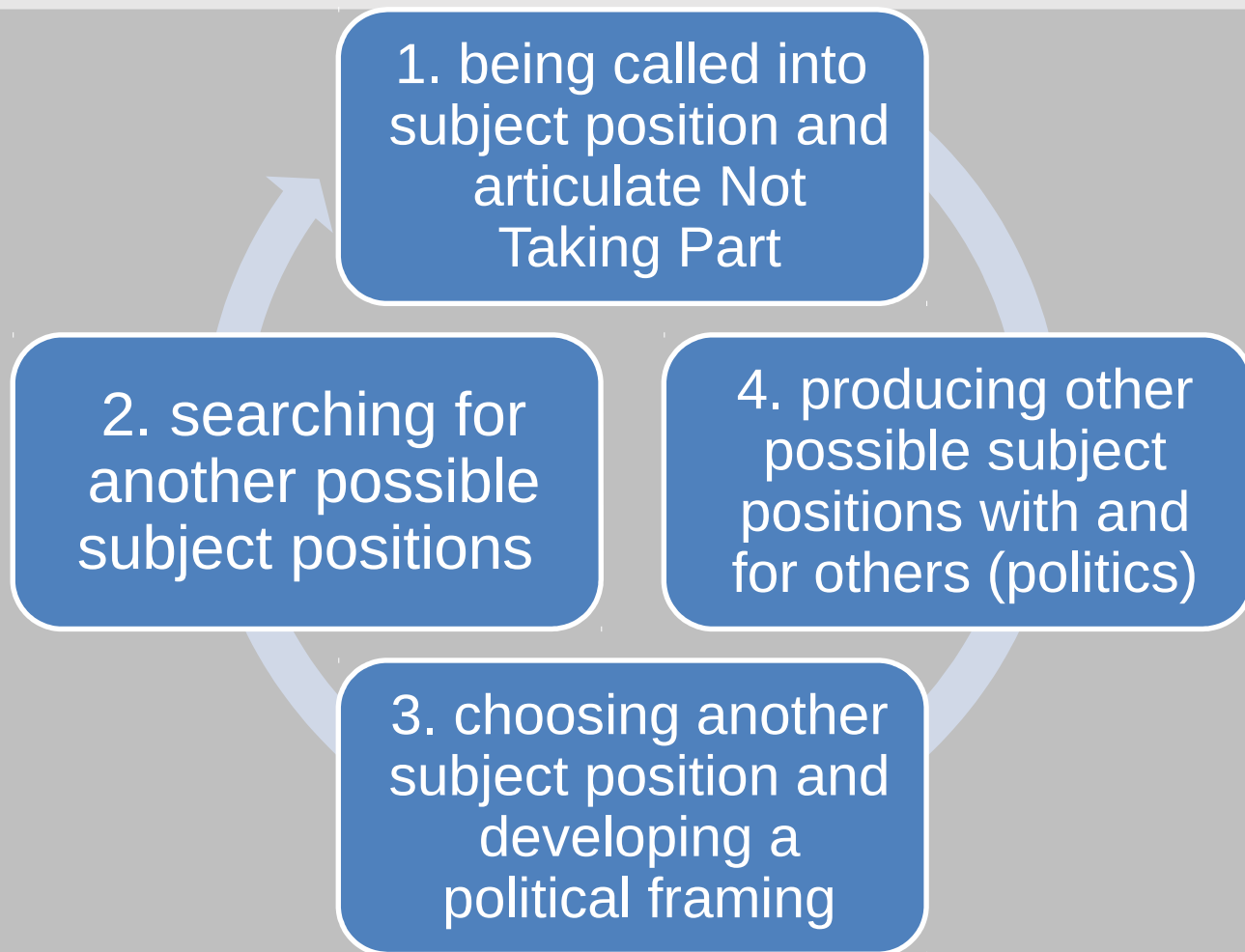
## Politicisation as Making of Solidary Relationships



*producing other possible subject positions/ articulations with and for others*



## Conclusion: Politicisation as a biographical transformation of articulation



→ **Politicisation** is a continuous, diachronical, interdependent and multidimensional transformation process



## Conclusion: Politicisation as a biographical transformation of articulation

### **Politicisation =**

- a process from a micropolitical Not Taking Part into Politics
- a process of positioning oneself to be called into a position by using a ‚political‘ discursive framework
- a transition that needs others and results in a changed subject position

**(Doing) Politics** = transforming common subject positions (Not Taking Part) and producing new subject positions that invite to take part

## List of references

- Adorno, T. W. (1966/1971): Erziehung nach Auschwitz: Vorträge und Gespräche mit Hellmut Becker 1959 bis 1966. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, S. 88-104.
- Hall, Stuart (1996): Representation. Cultural representations and signyfing practices. London: Sage.
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## Politicisation and the Transformation of Articulating Not Taking Part

PRESENTATION FROM JESSICA LÜTGENS  
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Today I will present to you some thoughts about my PhD-Project, a study with the title ‚I once was heart-left‘ – A biographical study about politicisation in adolescence‘. I chose the topic Politicisation and the Transformation of Articulating the Not-Taking-Part which I will unfold to you after some insights of the scientific field I am moving in.

## Youth, (left-wing) politicisation & participation

### Youth Research

How and how much do young people participate?

### Movement Research

How do macropolitical events influence activism in social movements?

### Research on Extremism

How can left activism of young people be prevented?



When science talks about Youth, (left) Politicisation and Participation...

- The youth research mostly has a static perspective. It asks how and how much young people do participate in our society, how much they are politically interested etc. They most likely do not ask, what young people do, especially when it is about informal or non-formal participation.
- The Movement Research mostly asks how historical and macropolitical events, such as regime changes, wars or small incidents with big impact, lead to social movements or people participating in them. They rarely ask why people take those events as something that matters so much to them that they become active.
- Extremism research: this discipline mostly asks, how radicalisation of groups develops and what can be done against it or which attitudes are compatible with democracy. It does thereby not very often look on individual biographies and even less it asks, how radicalisation can be a reaction to violent social circumstances.

## Youth, (left-wing) politicisation & participation

### Most existing research...

- is based on a formal understanding of participation
- and a macropolitical and institutional idea of 'politics'
- reproduces normative assumptions and ascriptions

→ Instead: Politicisation as a dynamic process between subjective, social, discursive and institutional conditions

All those perspectives on the thematic field Youth, (left) Politicisation and Participation seemed little differentiated to me. They do use a formal and institutional idea of participation and politics and they reproduce normative assumptions and ascriptions such as the extremism ideology. I instead wanted to look, what life courses lay behind politicisation, which barriers young people find on their way to politics, but also which promises, chances and hopes are there to be found. I wanted to develop a theory of politicisation which describes a process of becoming politically active as something in between subjective, social, discursive and institutional conditions but stays close to the individual and its biography.

## Today's talk

**Experimental question today:** How does the concept of ‚articulation‘ (following Spies 2009 & Hall 2007 and more) relate to my findings on politicisation as a process of transformation?

- Background of my Study
- Structural Aspect: Politicisation as Articulation of Not Taking Part
  - The concepts behind Not Taking Part & Articulation
  - Biographical Case Sascha
- Conclusions

But today I will not present my PhD-Study again, I will try out to apply a new question on my results: How does the concept of ‚articulation‘ relate to my findings on politicisation as a process of transformation? As I did not actually had a perspective on discourse in my PhD this whole input has the character of an experiment.

Therefore I will present to you

- Background of my Study
- Structural Aspect: Politicisation as Articulation of Not Taking Part
  - The concept of Not Taking Part & Articulation
  - Biographical case Sascha
- Conclusions about politicisation, biographical articulation and transformation

## Background of my study

**Research question:** How do young people get politically active?

**Sample:** 14 narrative interviews, 16-29 years old, heterogenous social backgrounds and position themselves as active in the left

**Method and result of analysis:** Biographical Case Reconstruction (Rosenthal 2008) with **Typology** and Theoretical Case Reconstruction (Miethe 2014) with **Structural Aspects**

Before I go there some words about my PhD. My study had the research question: How do young adults become politically active in the left from a biographical perspective?

Sample: 14 narrative interviews, 16-29 years old, heterogenous social backgrounds and position themselves as active in the 'left'

Method of analysis: Biographical Case Reconstruction (Rosenthal 2008) and Theoretical Case Reconstruction (Miethe 2014) – from that came a typology and some structural aspects of politicisation in adolescence. Today I will focus on one of those structural aspects to answer my inputs question.

## Background of my study

**Theoretical Framework** – Politicisation as a process in between...

Political socialisation	→	Learning and instances of socialisation
Transition	→	Changes of status and the life course
Biography	→	Subjectivity and sociality
„Bildung“	→	Appropriation and transformation

→ **Idea today:** Politicisation as a process in between....  
subject-positioning → (resistant) articulation

In my study I used a theoretical framework of

- Political socialisation: Learning and Instances of political socialisation
  - Transitions: Changes of status and the life course
  - Biography Subjectivity and sociality
  - And „Bildung“ which sees politicisation as a process between appropriation and transformation.
  - → they all helped me to develop politicisation as a transformation-process
- but: when I read about Spies understanding of Articulation I had the idea that politicisation could have been described as a process between subject-positioning and (resistant) articulation, too. And thats what I want to try out today. Back to my structural aspects.



## Structural Aspects of Politicisation in Adolescence

„**Structural aspects** do not try to describe biographical acting as such (that is what a typology does), but rather present single factors, which are relevant regarding the research question“

(Miethe 2014: 174f.\*)



Structural Aspect of Politicisation in Adolescence:

Politicisation is performed (dt.: sich vollziehen) by the **Articulation of Not Taking Part** (dt.: Artikulation eines Nicht-Mitmachens)

So when I did a case comparison in my study I developed Structural aspects. Those, as Miethe says: „do not try to describe biographical acting as such (that is what a typology does), but rather present single factors, which are relevant regarding the research question“ (Miethe 2014: 174f.)\*

They described how politicisation happens through different performances (Vollzüge). The first structural aspect I developed was that Politicisation happens by the articulation of not taking part.

## Politicisation as an ‚Articulation of Not Taking Part‘

- Young people being confronted with such events in institutions

One group suffering from discrimination, exclusion, etc. and transforming ‚Articulations of Not Being Able to Take Part‘ into ‚Articulations of Not Wanting To Take Part‘

other group witnessing discrimination, exclusion etc. and protest and intervene in that by articulating ‚Not Wanting To Take Part‘

- Intervene, protest, getting agency and become critical about ideologies by that
- Politicisation as ‚professionalisation‘ of those articulations

More precisely this structural aspect describes in my study how

- Young people are being confronted with exclusion, discrimination or violence in their childhood or youth – especially in institutions such as family and most likely school
- In those events they see how people are being called into a social position – such as being bullied by peers to become an outsider because of poverty
- The one Type I developed is suffering of those events him or herself and transforms experiences of Not-Being-Able-To-Take-Part into Articulations of Not-Wanting-To-Take-Part (I’ll show you an example of that later)
- The other Type I developed articulates Not-Wanting-To-Take-Part within groups and institutions that exclude, discriminate or hurt others
- Both of those Types become critically about institutions and ideologies by that events and professionalise their Not-Taking-Part through politicisation

## Concept of ‚Not Taking Part‘ and ‚Articulation‘

### Not Taking Part (dt.: Nicht-Mitmachen)

- „I never wanted to ‚take part‘, I always experienced myself as someone, who did not wanted to take part“ (Löwenthal 1980: 47\*)
- „The only veritable power against the principle of Auschwitz would be autonomy, [...]: the strenght of reflection, for self-determination, for Not Taking Part“ (Adorno 1966/1971: 93\*)

**Articulation** = an expression of oneself by doings, sayings and performances

The concepts Not Taking Part and Articulation I had from different backgrounds.

- The Not-Take-Part is an empirical concept from my material, but its name is from Critical Theory. It is an attitude (dt.: Haltung) against exklusion, discrimination and the outlashing of societal in-out-group-logics...
  - Löwenthal describes it in his autobiography. He sais: „I never wanted to ‚take part‘, I always experienced myself as someone, who objected“ (Löwenthal 1980: 47\*)
  - Adorno describes it as a necessity. He wroted: „The only veritable power against the principle of Auschwitz would be autonomy, [...]: the strenght of reflection, for self-determination, for Not-Taking-Part“ (Adorno 1966/1971: 93\*)
- Articulation I simply understood for myself as as an expression of oneself (e.g. by acting, talking, affective reactions, asthetics, etc.) – and not in a way Spies developed it. But ist pretty relateable to my study as I want to show you now.

## Concept of ‚Articulation‘

### Articulation following Spies

- Spies (2009) connecting discourse- and biography-research referring to Hall (1997 and more)
- Articulation = taking a subject position under the pressure of being called into one (interpellation) within a discursive order (cf. Spies 2009: 14)
- Seeking for agency in discourse as theoretical and practical possibility

Spies (2009) asked herself how it could be possible to connect discours- and biography-research.

She describes Articulation as a connecting concept. It means that a subjects is taking a subject position under the pressure of being called into one within a discursive order (cf. Spies 2009: 14).

By pointing out, that there is a problem in the theory, that subjects do seem to be determined to follow the call, to take a subject position, she refers to Hall (1997 and some others) to develop an idea of a subject that has the possibility of agency in that – f.e. to neglect a subject position.

## Concept of ‚Articulation‘

### Articulation following Spies

- „If one understands the interrelation between discourse and subject as articulation, analysing biographical narrations allows to reconstruct forms of agency [...]“ (ibid.: 16\*)
  - By that: Possibility to reconstruct subversive acting, alternative subject positions and (micro-)political resistance from narrations
- **And now:** following the articulation of Not Taking Part within an empirical example

In the end of her article she writes: „If one understands the interrelation between discourse and subject as articulation, analysing biographical narrations allows to reconstruct forms of agency [...]“ (Spies 2009: 16\*)

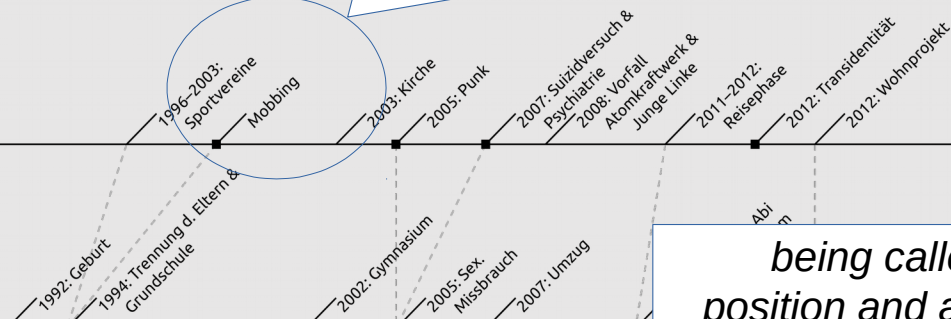
So from her understanding of articulation it could be by that possible bring together biography- and discours-research to reconstruct subversive acting, alternative subject positions and (micro-)political resistance within biographical narrations. And thats what I want to try out on my material, on the path of the Articulation of the Not Taking Part within an exemplary case of Sascha.

„because suddenly I belonged to the uncool ones, [...] no one wanted to spend time with me, I walked around all alone and hoped, that no one would see me, no one will hear me and that they will just ignore me.“

### Politicisation as Not (Being Able) Taking Part

2. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten &  
Ereignisse (polit.)

1. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten (allg.)



*being called into  
position and articulating  
Not Taking Part  
physically and affectively*

With about 10 years old Sascha is isolated in his social environment and has to adult or peer group to talk about his worries. In school, he tells, he gets bullied

„because suddenly I belonged to the uncool ones, [...] no one wanted to spend time with me, I walked around all alone and hoped, that no one would see me, no one will hear me and that they will just ignore me.“

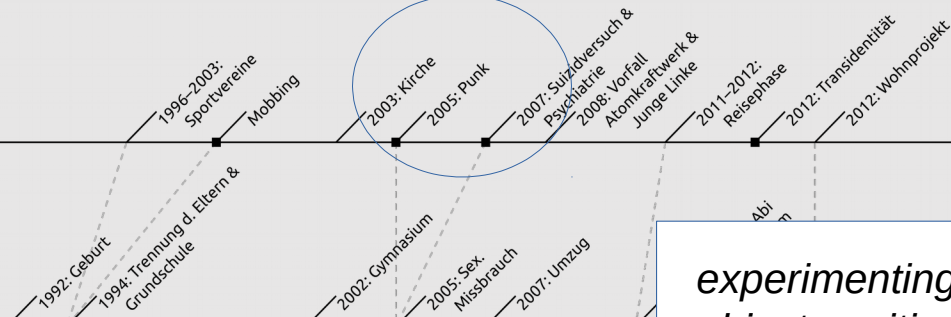
Sascha experiences extreme powerlessness. His biography starts with the inability to take-part in a ‚normal life‘ and fitting in as a boy in a male dominated environment as well as the failure in articulating himself about his experiences. This is even getting worse when he gets sexually abused with 13 years. -> This sequence and happenings lead to the development of the ‚Articulation of not-being-able-to-take-part‘. You could also define it – following Spies concept of articulation - as someone being called into position – of an outsider - and articulating physically and affectively that he would rather not to take part in that.

„I had colourful trousers, Doc Marten boots, listened to Punk Music all day long in my little village and swore, well somehow unreflected, against God, the state and the nation.“

## Politicisation as Not (Wanting) Taking Part

2. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten &  
Ereignisse (polit.)

1. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten (allg.)



*experimenting with other  
subject positions that allow  
Not (Wanting) To Take Part*

With about 13 years Sascha starts to listen to Punk music and wear Punk-clothes he buys from the internet. He tells:

„somehow I had colorful trousers, Doc Marten boots, listened to Punk Music all day long in my little village and swore, well kind of unreflected, against God, the state and the nation.“

This sequence shows, how Sascha turned through the youth culture Punk from the kid who was not able to take part to the kid who does not want to. And furthermore it not there for him as a vulnerable boy and represent exclusion. -> This sequence shows, how politicisation happens by the articulation of not taking part in institutions and ideologies that represent exclusion. It could also have been read – following Spies concept of articulation - how Sascha diffusely begins searching and trying out other subject positions than the one he has been called into, that allow him to have agency to fight against what happens to him.



„‘Gender‘ was becoming very important in my friendship-circle [...], that I started [...] to think about the deconstruction of gender [...] and everything changed quite quickly [...].“

## Politicisation as Appropriation of Transformative Bildungsexperiences

2. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten &  
Ereignisse (polit.)

1. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten (allg.)



*develop another discursive framing of biography and choosing a(nother) subject position*

Saschas life changes completely after he becomes politically active with 15 years. Some time after he becomes a part of the nationwide active youth organisation ‚Young Left‘ Sascha meets the queer wing of this youth organisation. There he gets into touch with theories about gender/sex and sexism. He tells: „‘Gender‘ was becoming very important in my friendship-circle [...], that I started [...] to think about the deconstruction of gender [...] and everything changed quite quickly [...].“

Sascha learns within these times to frame the events he experienced as something that had to do with gender: The young men bullying him, the man abusing him, his father attacking his mother, all those events that shaped his biography are coming together in the silver lining „gender“. Deconstructing gender and support LGBTIQ\* thereby becomes the goal of Saschas political activism and later Sascha will break gender-rules by becoming a woman, why I now will refer to her as ‚she‘.

-> What I read in my PhD as a transformative

Bildungsexperience could also have been read – following Spies concept of articulation – as the process of focusing on a new – in this case (political) - discursive framing and within that choosing a(nother) subject position than the one before, like becoming a woman.



„those people have the same ideas on living-together, communication [...] trying to deconstruct society [...] and to live these ideas as an example. [...] Because everytime someone is facing [...] utopic ideas, he says ‚That will not work‘, that’s the killer argument [...] but when you just start [...] and making it possible to live this ideas, than this argument does not work anymore. Cause you can say ‚Look, there it is!‘“

## Politicisation as Making of Solidary Relationships

1. Ebene:  
Biogr. Daten (allg.)

1992: Geburt  
1994: Trennung d. Eltern & Grundschule  
2002: Gymnasium  
2005: Sex. Missbrauch  
2007: Umzug

*producing other possible subject positions/ articulations with and for others*

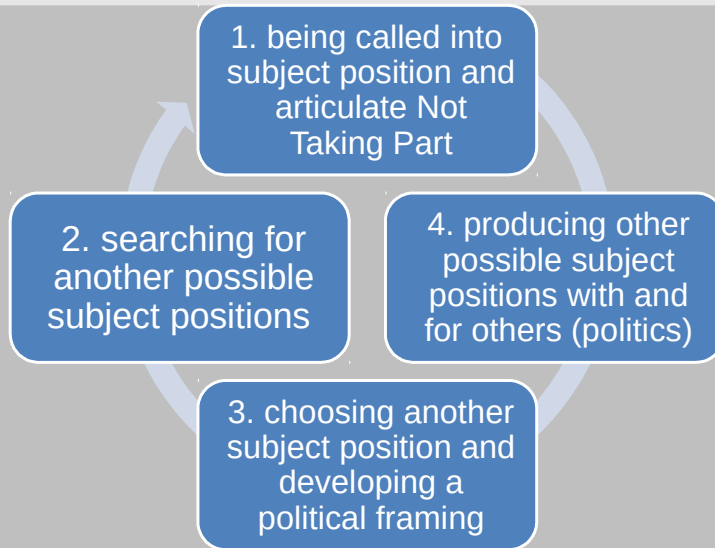
Around the age of 20 Sascha is highly active in the left scene and lives in a queer and antifacist house. About that she tells:

„those people have the same ideas on living-together, communication [...] to try to deconstruct society [...] and to live these ideas as an example. [...] Because everytime someone is facing [...] utopic ideas, he says ‚That will not work‘ and thats the killer argument [...] but when you just do it and start [...] make it possible to live this ideas, than this argumentation is not working anymore. Cause you can say ‚Look, there it is!‘“

This sequence shows how Sascha is now together with her group procuding new ideas on lifeforms and , being in relationship to each other. The groups practices of ideas in private and in politics transport possibilities of Not Taking Part in the common way of living and possibilities to Take Part in something else. -> This sequence could also have been read – following Spies concept of articulation – as the production and articulation of other possible subject positions with and for others. Thats in a way Politics from this perspective I chose toay – to produce new and transform old subject positions which help people to live in and survive society.

→ Now I will wrap everything up to some summary

## Conclusion: Politicisation as a biographical transformation of articulation



→ **Politicisation** is a continuous, diachronical, interdependent and multidimensional transformation process

Asking ‚How does the concept of ‚articulation‘ relate to my findings on politicisation as a process of transformation?’ You could read Politicisation as a biographical transformation of articulation. It is performed by:

- making experiences of being called into a position and affectively articulating Not Taking Part
- diffusely searching for other subject positions by trying out different discursive framings for experiences
- becoming focussed on a subject position by a political discursive framing
- articulating possible other social positions with and for others There is something else to emphasise.
- Firstly politicisation is a continuous, diachronical, multi-dimensional and interdependent biographical transformation process of articulation. It goes on and on, there are new experiences to be made, new calls to take positions come along, new articulations shape themselves, etc. It's an ongoing „Biographical articulation in transition“ to refer to the headline of our Panel.
- And it's not just a process of positioning oneself in articulation – it's also a process of transforming old subject positions and producing new possible ones

## Conclusion: Politicisation as a biographical transformation of articulation

### **Politicisation =**

- a process from a micropolitical Not Taking Part into Politics
- a process of positioning oneself to be called into a position by using a ‚political‘ discursive framework
- a transition that needs others and results in a changed subject position

**(Doing) Politics** = transforming common subject positions (Not Taking Part) and producing new subject positions that invite to take part

**To wrap it all up:** Politicisation as a biographical transformation process articulation is...

- a process from a micropolitical Not Taking Part into Politics
- a process of positioning oneself to be called into a position by using a ‚political‘ discursive framework
- a transition that needs others and results in a changed subject position
- And Politicisation is an articulation that does Politics by transforming old subject positions and producing new sets of subject positions – for oneself and for others - which help people to live in and survive the society.

## List of references

- Adorno, T. W. (1966/1971): Erziehung nach Auschwitz: Vorträge und Gespräche mit Hellmut Becker 1959 bis 1966. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, S. 88-104.
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