

Participatory Action Research with the Corona Lager Reports from the Break Isolation Group (BIG) of International Women* Space (IWS)

An Abstract of the thesis by Ngoc Thi Bui

International Women* Space (IWS) is a “feminist anti-racist political group of migrant and refugee women” as well as women without this experience, and the Break Isolation Group (BIG) is a self-organized refugee women only group of IWS. In April 2020, BIG started collecting audio reports about the Covid-19 situation from women from different reception and accommodation centers, also referred to as Lagers, around Berlin and Brandenburg. The Corona Lager Reports provide first-hand accounts of what people were experiencing in the Lagers during the pandemic and shed light on issues that would otherwise be completely outside of public awareness due to the isolation and inaccessibility of the Lagers. In this participatory action research project, I assessed whether the rights to health and humane accommodation were upheld during the pandemic using the Corona Lager Reports as a primary source of data and the official recommendations from the Robert Koch Institut as a guiding framework. In the second part, I aimed to create a focus group with the women of BIG to discuss how the Lager Reports can be advanced. The overarching mission was to contextualize the content and significance of the Lager Reports within human rights. Towards this end, the project sought to frame the challenges and barriers the women face in the Lagers as a matter of human rights and to make the potential of the Lager Reports as a human rights tool more apparent and robust. Finally this project illuminated how participatory action research with a human rights lens can be one possible structure by which human rights and grassroots advocacy can be bridged.