

2 Theoretical Framework

What motivates people to dedicate time and effort to the collective action against Belo Monte – especially as the context conditions are adverse to the mobilization and maintenance of a social movement and chances for success are slim? What meanings do activists attribute to the conflict over hydropower projects at the Xingu River and to their collective action against them? These are the core questions in the analysis of the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam, and they can best be addressed with two theoretical approaches that focus on the movement participants: the collective identity approach and the framing approach. Collective identity refers to a feeling of belonging to other people, groups, organizations, or – in more abstract terms – institution(s). It is conceptualized in this study as an individual attribute based on a social psychological perspective. While the study analyzes whom the social movement participants identify with, it also considers how collective identity is integrated with an activist's personal and social identities. Framing, in turn, refers to the efforts that groups of people undertake for the purpose of developing common understandings of the world and the events surrounding them. Until the 1970s, framing processes and identity work were clearly subordinated to structures and processes in social movement research. However, they have come to prominence in recent years and seem particularly adequate for this research, as I will demonstrate in the following.

Given the exploratory character of this study and the research design based on grounded theory methodology, I argue that theoretical concepts cannot be “applied” directly to the empirical material. However, a purely inductive approach is not feasible either, because the researcher has to define her research interest, objective, and procedures. In this study, the collective identity approach and the framing approach are the theoretical perspectives that guide the analysis. Concepts stemming from the literature, such as collective action, social movement, collective identity, and collective action frame, are used to denote the phenomena I am interested in. They are operationalized so as to guide the sampling, the development of interview guides, and the data collection. However, they are disregarded in the initial phase of the data analysis (coding) in order to allow for an emergence of original concepts that reflect the interview-

wees' perceptions.²⁰ To this effect, the analysis focuses on the relevance systems of the research participants in order to understand how they make sense of the events, actions, and conditions around them.²¹ In a later phase of the research, concepts stemming from the literature are systematically compared to the empirically grounded concepts derived from the analysis. The purpose of this comparison is to refine existing concepts and to evaluate the applicability of Western concepts in non-Western case studies. In Chapter 3, I discuss how a research design based on grounded theory methodology can be reconciled with the previous specification of a theoretical framework. Moreover, I reflect upon my previous knowledge and preliminary assumptions, which I set forth in the sensitizing concepts.

The present chapter focuses on the conceptualization of central theoretical concepts with a view to developing a conceptual framework that determines the research perspective and guides the analysis. Section 2.1 introduces the reader to the study of collective action, its research strands and conceptual backgrounds. Section 2.2 defines the concept of social movement and discusses its network character. The conceptualization of a social movement as a network entails a focus on collective identity. Therefore, the collective identity approach and the impact of collective identity on movement cohesion are discussed in Section 2.3. Section 2.4 elaborates on the framing approach and explains the characteristics and functions of the collective action frame. In Section 2.5, I discuss the differences between collective identity and framing because the concepts are closely related. The concept of cohesion is discussed and defined in Section 2.6. In the final section (2.7), I define the central theoretical concepts that guide the data collection and analysis.

20 It is impossible to completely neglect theoretical concepts in the course of the data analysis. However, in order to avoid the inconsiderate influence of my previous knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs on the interpretation of primary data, I reflect upon these concepts and disclose my previous ideas in the sensitizing concepts in Chapter 3 (also see Kelle 2011: 251; Kruse 2015: 479–484).

21 According to Alfred Schütz, all human actions are based on relevance structures. Relevance structures determine how people interpret situations and how they relate new experiences to existing knowledge (Schütz and Luckmann 2003: 253). All relevance structures taken together make up a person's relevance system. It is unique in that it comprises a person's attitudes, motives, past experiences, and extant knowledge (Schütz and Luckmann 2003: 305–312).

2.1 The Study of Collective Action

Social scientists are interested in diverse forms of collective action, including crowds, riots, interest groups, movements, gangs, revolutions, etc. The systematic study of these phenomena is based on analytical approaches stemming from social psychology, sociology, and political science. In the first half of the 20th century collective behavior was commonly associated with deprivation and social crisis (Klandermans et al. 1988: 2). However, with the emergence of so-called new social movements during the late 1960s and early 1970s scholars started to focus on the processes of mobilization and social movement activity (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 8).²² Since the late 1980s, the collective identity approach and the framing approach have come to prominence in social movement theory and research (Benford and Snow 2000: 612; Snow and McAdam 2000: 41). These approaches are based on early works of symbolic interactionism, sociology, and social psychology; however, they break with the earlier perception of collective action as irrational and destructive behavior (Gamson 1992: 54; Polletta and Jasper 2001: 283; Snow and Oliver 1995: 573; Stryker et al. 2000a: 3–4). Instead, the collective identity approach and the framing approach adopt the focus on human interaction that is prevalent in these research traditions. Symbolic interactionism is based on the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism, and stresses that social meanings and social order are created and maintained through human interaction and negotiation (Sandstrom et al. 2010: 2).²³ People observe their environment; they interpret it and respond to it based on past experiences. In doing so, they give meaning to the people and objects around them. Erving Goffman, a scholar from the Second Chicago School, argued that people use frameworks to make sense of the events they see in daily life. Frameworks provide them with “schemata of interpretation” that give meaning to something that would otherwise be meaningless (Goffman 1974: 21; also see Münch 2004: 283–284). Frameworks have varying degrees of organization ranging from precise systems of rules to loose bundles of understandings (Goffman 1974: 21). In order to interpret a situation, people tend to use

22 New social movement theory is based on European traditions of political philosophy and social theory. It developed as a reaction to the failure of extant theories to explain the new forms of political participation that emerged in the 1960s. Major theorists of new social movement theory include Manuel Castells, Alain Touraine, Alberto Melucci, and Jürgen Habermas (Buechler 1995).

23 George H. Mead, a leading scholar of the Chicago School, is credited for having introduced the pragmatist philosophy to sociology (Sandstrom et al. 2010: 4–5). However, the term symbolic interactionism was introduced by his student Herbert G. Blumer (Sandstrom et al. 2010: 7).

several frameworks at the same time (Goffman 1974: 25). Hence, frameworks form a constitutive element of the belief system of a social group (Goffman 1974: 27). As a consequence, symbolic interactionists believe that research in the social sciences has to focus on human agency, interaction, and meaning in order to understand social life (Sandstrom et al. 2010: 2–3). This perspective had a significant impact on the study of social movements, in that scholars like Erving Goffman, Robert Benford, Francesca Polletta, and David Snow, among others, have integrated the key concepts into social movement theory and continue working on them (see below).

Among the different strands in social movement research, this study focuses on collective identities and collective action frames as the theoretical perspectives for analysis. These concepts seem most adequate to explain the persistence of the collective action and the maintenance of movement cohesion in the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam.

2.2 Social Movement Theory

Social movements are commonly perceived as a particular form of collective action. Defined in general terms, collective action is characterized by the joint action of at least two individuals who are pursuing a common goal (Snow et al. 2008: 6). As this is true for many forms of everyday behavior, scholars have introduced the differentiation between institutionalized and non-institutionalized behavior as a basic criterion for classification. While interest groups and political parties have access to or even form part of political institutions, social movements are considered challengers to established structures that pursue their objectives through noninstitutional means (Snow et al. 2008: 6–7; Staggenborg 2008: 5). Beyond this attribute, however, scholars have not been able to develop a common definition of the phenomenon they investigate (Gohn 2000: 11; Snow et al. 2008: 6; Staggenborg 2008: 5). While reviews of the relevant literature identify a number of common dimensions in the various conceptualizations of social movement (see, for example, Diani 1992; Opp 2009), they also find that definitions remain heterogeneous and “surprisingly unclear” (Opp 2009: 37). The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements identifies five conceptual axes that are present in most definitions (Snow et al. 2008: 6): (1) collective or joint action, (2) change-oriented goals or claims, (3) some extra- or noninstitutional collective action, (4) some degree of organization, and (5) some degree of temporal continuity. Based on these attributes, Snow and colleagues propose to define social movements as “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the pur-

pose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part” (Snow et al. 2008: 11). Despite the conceptual rigor, these authors emphasize that social movements cannot always be clearly separated from crowds or interest groups. This is because social movements may support crowd behavior and/or cooperate with interest groups in order to promote their claims (Snow et al. 2008: 8). Diani proposes an alternative conceptualization of social movement that focuses on (1) conflictual collective action, (2) dense informal networks, and (3) collective identity as the central dimensions of social movements (Diani 2003: 301–306; also see Della Porta and Diani 2006: 20–21). He defines social movement as “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (Diani 1992: 13).²⁴

The two definitions presented above both emphasize that the existence of a social movement depends upon (1) a political or cultural conflict, and (2) a social or political opponent (Diani and Bison 2004: 283; Diani 1992: 13; Snow et al. 2008: 11). Moreover, Diani points out three aspects that seem particularly relevant for the study of the social movement against Belo Monte but are less prevalent in other conceptualizations. These are (1) the differentiation between social movement and social movement organization (SMO), (2) the network character of a social movement, and (3) the existence of a shared collective identity as the basis for interaction in a social movement.

The analysis of social movements with formal network approaches gained importance in the 1990s. However, the idea that people are embedded in larger structures (social networks) that influence individual and collective actions dates back to the 1950s.²⁵ Individuals, groups, and organizations maintain relations of various types with other people and organizations (Diani 2002: 189). These exchanges are by no means incidental – by contrast, they reveal dynamics of interaction between the different actors of a social movement that are of particular interest in social movement research.

But what exactly is a network? Everyday conceptualizations and a large number of scholarly works use the term to refer to a mode of organization that

24 Diani’s work is also perceived in Brazil. A translation of his 2004 article with Ivano Bison (Diani and Bison 2004) was published in the Brazilian *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, No. 3 in 2010.

25 Among the early proponents who are frequently quoted by social network researchers is sociologist George Simmel (Skvoretz and Faust 1999: 254; Diani 2009: 64–65; Scott 2000: 9; Wellman 1988: 23).

implies informal relationships or even the opposite of hierarchical structures (Christopoulos 2008: 475; Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 561).²⁶ By contrast, formal Social Network Analysis works with a conceptualization that is based on mathematical graph theory and defines a social network as a “set of actors and the ties among them” (Wasserman and Faust 1994: 9). While appearing very basic, this definition rids the concept of any premature assumptions – for example, the absence of hierarchy between actors – and allows scholars to study the network structure and its impact on individuals and groups (Wasserman and Faust 1994: 9). The degrees of organization, formality, and hierarchy within a network can differ across actors, and they can be assessed at different levels of analysis – for example, at the level of the entire network, the subgroup, or the individual actor (cf. Snow et al. 2008: 10).

The network perspective ties in well with the differentiation between social movement and SMOs. While the social movement as a whole takes the form of a network, individuals, groups, and organizations represent the set of actors. The differentiation between social movements and social movement organizations was first proposed by McCarthy and Zald (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and has been followed by a number of scholars (Opp 2009: 36; Snow and Oliver 1995: 571). In this perspective, a social movement is conceptualized as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of their social structure and/or reward distribution of a society” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1217–1218). The social movement does not consist in people, but it is evoked by their shared opinions and beliefs. Individual activists enter into this comparatively abstract definition through their affiliation with a social movement organization – that is “a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a counter-movement and attempts to implement those goals” (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1218).²⁷ This definition of an SMO includes many of the aforementioned

26 This conceptualization also seems to be prevalent among the experts interviewed during the preliminary study in São Paulo, Brasília, and Rio de Janeiro in 2011.

27 The term organization is disputed and some authors prefer to offer examples of organizations instead of a definition of the term (Reinhold et al. 1997: 476). Basic agreement exists on the general characteristics of an organization. In a broad sense, an organization is “a type of collectivity established for the pursuit of specific aims or goals, characterized by a formal structure of rules, authority relations, a division of labour and limited membership or admission” (Jary and Jary 1991: 444). The existence of common goals is a particularly controversial aspect, as individuals and groups within an organization may hold diverse and competing goals. It is an empirical question how common goals are defined and who is involved in these processes. A general distinction is made between formal organizations that seek to establish common goals through rewards and punishment, and informal organizations that negotiate goals and

dimensions that are commonly referred to in definitions of a social movement (Opp 2009: 36; Snow et al. 2008). Diani emphatically promotes the differentiation between social movements and SMOs in his works (Diani 1992, 2003), claiming that social movements are less formal in terms of membership and less coordinated in terms of interaction and internal regulation than SMOs (Diani 2003: 302). From his point of view, the differentiation allows for a closer analysis of the relationship between social movements, parties, and interest groups, as it breaks with the treatment of social movements as a specific type of organization (Diani 2003: 304). The network perspective and the differentiation between social movements and SMOs shift the analytical focus from the attributes of individual organizations to the relationships between organizations, thus leading to a conceptualization that is inherently relational. According to Diani, SMOs are “all those groups who identify themselves, and are identified by others, as part of the same movement, and exchange on that basis” (Diani 2003: 305).

Diani's conceptualization, which emphasizes social movement organizations, the network character, and the existence of a shared collective identity, seems particularly adequate for the analysis of the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam. Secondary literature on Altamira shows that the city has an active civil society with some individuals taking decisive roles in its activities (Umbuzeiro and Umbuzeiro 2012). It is plausible to assume that participants in the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam know each other from earlier incidents of collective action and are thus connected through relationships of collaboration, friendship, opposition, etc. The conceptualization of the social movement as a network enables an in-depth analysis of local activists' personal backgrounds, their experiences with collective action, and their relationships. Moreover, this conceptualization contributes to solving a conceptual discrepancy in the analysis of the social movement against Belo Monte. While the collective identity approach is commonly associated with the study of new social movements, which promote postmaterialist values, the collective action against Belo Monte is characterized by materialist and postmaterialist values.²⁸ Consequently, one might question the usefulness of the collective identity approach

procedures within organizations (Jary and Jary 1991: 444–445). As I will discuss in Chapter 5, the organizations involved in the Belo Monte conflict include formal organizations like the Catholic Church, which relies heavily on hierarchy and lines of authority to define common goals and procedures, and informal organizations like the various grassroots organizations involved in the social movement against Belo Monte, some of which deliberately dispense with leadership.

28 In Chapter 6, I discuss how materialist and postmaterialist values are reconciled in the social movement against Belo Monte.

and the framing approach in this particular case study. On the contrary, I propose that the collective identity and framing perspectives are particularly adequate to address the heterogeneity and complexity that characterize this particular movement. As discussed in the introduction, the strong heterogeneity of movement participants, difficult socioeconomic conditions, and other obstacles to mobilization – for example, power asymmetries and repression, among others – hamper the mobilization and target-oriented interaction of movement participants. If we think of the social movement as a network of actors, we can imagine that people and organizations are connected to each other through various relationships. These relationships influence the interaction between local activists and their collective action against Belo Monte. According to Diani, the network perspective is inherently concerned with identity dynamics (Diani 2003: 305). It is therefore particularly adequate for assessing the impact of collective identities on the persistence of the collective action and the maintenance of movement cohesion in the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam.²⁹

Beyond the differentiation between social movement and SMO, the study focuses on the individual social movement participant, defined as a person who is not necessarily affiliated with a group or organization but who participates in the collective action on a regular basis.³⁰ The study focuses explicitly on the “plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations” (Diani 1992: 13) in the social movement against Belo Monte in order to study the dynamics of identity work on the personal and collective level. Moreover, the focus on individuals takes into account that, empirically speaking, SMOs seem to play a subordinate role in the collective action against the Belo Monte Dam.³¹ The differentiation between the social movement, the social movement organization, and the individual social movement participant adds conceptual clarity and allows for a detailed analysis of the activists' motives and objectives.

29 However, it should be noted that Diani's conceptualization of identity is based on the work of Melucci who adopts a structural cultural perspective of identity. By contrast, this study builds on a social psychological perspective of collective identity, as I will explain further below. The different conceptualizations do not compromise the adequacy of a network perspective; however, they require a thorough discussion and conceptualization of identity.

30 Consequently, data is gathered and analyzed at the level of the individual (cf. Chapter 3).

31 I gained this insight during my field research trip to Altamira and Belém and discuss its implications in Chapter 6.

2.3 The Collective Identity Approach

Since the early 1990s, identity is considered a constitutive element of social movements (Daphi 2011: 13; Della Porta and Diani 2006: 21; Melucci 1988; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Snow and McAdam 2000). While the concept is frequently used in different disciplines and addressed from different angles, it remains an abstract and “slippery” concept that is left unclear and vague in many studies (Daphi and Rucht 2011: 2; Flesher Fominaya 2010a: 393; Stryker et al. 2000A: 5).

Sociologists and social psychologists generally differentiate between distinct types of identity, including personal identity and social or collective identity/-ies (Rucht 1995: 10). However, they disagree on the type and number of levels where identity formation takes places. For example, Simon identifies identity formations at the personal and collective level. He proposes to dispense with the term social identity as it implies that its counterpart, personal identity, was antisocial (Simon 2011: 40). Rucht, on the other hand, presents four types of identity: (1) physical identity, (2) role identity, (3) organizational identity, and (4) collective identity. He emphasizes that the latter three types are socially constructed and inherently unstable (Rucht 2011a: 26–27). Another conceptualization that is frequently used in social movement research and that I adopt for this study dates back to Snow. He differentiates between the personal, social, and collective identities of an individual (Snow 2001: 2213). According to Snow, personal identity is built up of self-designations and self-attributions, whereas social identity is attributed by others. The latter designates actors to a specific social space based on their social role (for example, their profession) or their belonging to a social group or category (for example, their ethnicity) (Snow 2001: 2212–2213). The concept of collective identity is particularly relevant for the study of social movements, as collective identities have been found to contribute to movement cohesion (Flesher Fominaya 2010b: 377). Snow defines collective identity as being “constituted by a shared and interactive sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘collective agency’” (Snow 2001: 2213). The sense of belonging to a collectivity (we) is based on shared attributes and experiences, and constructed in contrast to other actors (them). Scholars agree that the differentiation between in-group and out-group has a strong influence on the development of a collective identity. Moreover, the external environment plays an important role in the definition of movement boundaries. Social and political actors outside the movement may accept, deny, or oppose the in-group/out-group differentiation, thus recognizing the social movement as a relevant actor (Melucci 1996: 73). Inside the social movement, the shared sense of we-ness fosters collective agency (Rucht 1995: 10, 2002: 330; Snow 2001: 2213).

Besides the disagreement about the types and number of identity/-ies, social movement scholars base their identity concept on different perspectives – namely, the structural cultural perspective and the social psychological perspective. The structural cultural perspective treats collective identity as a collective attribute that becomes salient in rituals, styles, and narratives (Daphi 2011: 18–19; Hunt and Benford 2008: 434–435). For example, Alberto Melucci – who has made important contributions to social movement theory from a structural cultural perspective – defines collective identity as “an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place” (Melucci 1988: 342). In contrast, scholars sharing the social psychological perspective refer to collective identity as an individual attribute and seeks to explain a person's identification with a collective (Daphi 2011: 18–19; Hunt and Benford 2008: 435–436). From their point of view, the structural cultural perspective tends to neglect individual actors' involvement in movement activities (Stryker 2000: 23). Hence, there is substantial disagreement on whether collective identity is a personal or a collective attribute (Daphi 2011: 18; also see Flesher Fominaya 2010a; Hunt and Benford 2008; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Snow and McAdam 2000).

This study adopts a social psychological perspective and builds on the conceptualization of personal, social, and collective identities proposed by Snow (2001). Accordingly, collective identity is treated as an individual attribute and analyzed at the level of the social movement participant. This approach seems to be most adequate for analyzing the actors' identities and the relationship between personal, social, and collective identities, as is the objective of this study. Snow's conceptualization of identity is appropriate for this research for two reasons. First, the differentiation between social identity, which is ascribed by others, and collective identity, which is based on a sense of belonging, is empirically relevant in the case of Brazil. The conceptual distinction between self-classification and ascription is missing in other conceptualizations – for example, in the work of Simon (2011). The practical value of this differentiation becomes apparent, for example, in the fundamental changes in Brazilian racial policy in recent years. In the early years of this century, the Brazilian government adopted measures of affirmative action in the public sector and in higher education. As a consequence, many Brazilian universities implemented quotas for the admission of disadvantaged students based on race and/or socioeconomic conditions. Most universities rely (at least partially) on self-classification for the evaluation of eligibility. However, as self-classification and ascription by others may produce different results, the procedures are contested (Htun 2004; Schwartzman 2008). As

this example shows, the conceptual distinction between ascribed identity (that is, social identity) and a sense of we-ness developed by a group of actors (that is, collective identity) is empirically relevant in Brazil. Second, the conceptualization of identities on the basis of self-classification and ascription adds more analytical value than, for example, the distinction between role identity, organizational identity, and collective identity proposed by Rucht (2011a). These three types of identity refer to a persons' sense of belonging to a collective, be it a social group, an organization, a movement, or – in more abstract terms – an institution. Hence, they can be considered three different types of collective identity. But what is their analytical value? On the one hand, I agree with Rucht that a differentiation is useful when analyzing the processes of identity work in collectives, because it is plausible to assume that social movements have to engage in more identity work than formal organizations given the lack of clear boundaries and authorized representatives (Rucht 2011a: 27). On the other hand, I propose that it is even more important to ask: who identifies an actor with a collective? Does the actor identify him-/herself with a collective, or do others designate the actor to a specific social space? In this sense, self-classification and ascription should be understood as factors that influence the development of identities in a person. In contrast to Rucht, Snow offers a conceptual distinction between collective identity (based on self-classification) and social identity (based on ascription) that results in analytical clarity and parsimony. Hence, this study adopts the conceptualization of personal, social, and collective identity proposed by Snow (2001).

The social psychological perspective on identity and social movements has been further elaborated in recent years by Stryker, Owens, White, and others.³² Polletta and Jasper conceptualize collective identity as “an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). This definition locates collective identity at the level of the individual and alludes to the relationship between personal, social, and collective identity. According to the social psychological perspective, people have multiple identities that are organized hierarchically and become salient in different situations. That is to say, identity is a cognitive schema pertaining to the expectations for behavior that we have of a person with a particular role and corresponding

32 See, for example, the volume edited by Stryker and colleagues (2000b) and the article by Polletta and Jasper (2001).

identity. Identity salience refers to the readiness of a person to act out a particular identity at a particular point in time when the person takes on the corresponding role (Stryker 2000: 33–34). While the relationship between the different identities of an individual remains unclear, scholars generally agree that the three different types of identities interact and overlap (Flesher Fominaya 2010a: 397; Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285; Snow 2001: 2213). Moreover, they propose that collective identity amounts to more than the aggregate of the personal identities of a group of people (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 298).

Much research has also been done on the emergence and construction of collective identity through a process of identity work (Rucht 2002: 331; Snow 2001: 2213). Identity work is defined as “the range of activities people engage in, both individually and collectively, to signify and express who they are and what they stand for in relation or contrast to some set of others” (Snow 2001: 2216). Rucht emphasizes that social movements depend on extensive identity work in order to avoid fragmentation (Rucht 2002: 331). Especially those social movements whose collective identities are not characterized by primordial characteristics such as race or gender have to engage in discerning identity constructions (Rucht 1995: 19–20). As collective identity is constantly in the making it cannot constitute a precondition for social movements but rather represents “an (interstage) product of repeated interaction” (Rucht 1995: 14, author’s translation). Nonetheless, empirical research suggests that collective identities also rely on the characteristics emphasized by primordialism and social structuralism. Moreover, they are influenced by similarity in personal characteristics, by common fate, and shared experiences of collective action (Klandermans 1997: 41; Snow 2001: 2215–2216). Interestingly, collective identity can arise from “the discovery of preexisting bonds, interests, and boundaries” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 298). This implies a redefinition and renegotiation of existing relationships between actors and demonstrates the fluidity of collective identity.

As mentioned above, collective identity is constructed in social interactions with different kinds of audiences including bystanders, opponents, media, and authorities (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 298). It can even be constructed and ascribed to a collective by outsiders without the involvement of the individuals concerned (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Collective identity becomes salient in cultural materials like symbols, rituals, styles, and narratives (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). These symbolic resources also mark the boundary between insiders and outsiders (Snow 2001: 2216). The delineation of boundaries, which is an integral part of collective identity, makes identity work a complex process. Social movements have to find a balance between internal cohesion and external differentiation, on the one hand, and openness and low entry barriers that allow

for the recruitment of new movement participants, on the other hand (Rucht 2002: 331). Rucht suggests that diffuse external barriers and the admittance of heterogeneous groups to the movement implicate a risk of deadlock, loss of discriminating power and efficacy, and eventual fragmentation (Rucht 2002: 331–332). Moreover, he argues that the question of balancing internal cohesion against external openness is especially relevant for transnational social movements that have to reconcile cultures, styles, and practices when engaging in identity work (Rucht 2002: 332). Regarding the collective action against the Belo Monte Dam, I propose that the conciliation of cultures, styles, and practices is not only relevant in transnational social movement but also in smaller geographical unities (like regions or even communities) that are characterized by ethnic diversity and strong heterogeneity in social, economic, and cultural terms. According to Turner and Killian (1987), members within one social movement can have different identities based on their participation in local chapters or working groups. Being based on common activities, these identities are likely to be more concrete than the abstract collective identity of the entire social movement (Turner and Killian 1987: 136). Due to the coexistence of collective identities in a movement, Turner and Killian speak of social movements as “diffuse collectives” that allow for the inclusion of different identities that are consistent with the rather abstract collective identity of the broader movement (cf. Rucht 1995: 14).

Another factor that influences the development of a strong collective identity is the degree of opposition that a social movement encounters. Drawing on Touraine (1973), Rucht emphasizes that the existence of a conflict with another social group and the perception of common interests that meet external opposition are constitutive of a collective identity. They contribute to the contouring and structuring of the social movement as a distinctive and coherent social entity (Rucht 1995: 13, 2002: 331). This is also an important aspect for the analysis of the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam, as the movement is confronted with strong opposition from governments and companies.

2.4 The Framing Approach

Until the 1980s the beliefs and perceptions of social movement participants were dismissed as determinants for social movement emergence as they were considered ubiquitous. However, research has shown that social movements take on the important functions of carrying and transmitting existing beliefs and producing meanings through shaping and structuring the sociopolitical reality (Snow and Benford 1988: 198). Hence, framing processes have become a central

explanatory factor in social movement theory alongside resource mobilization theory and political opportunity structures (Benford and Snow 2000: 612).

The framing approach is based on the works of interactionist Erving Goffman (Goffman 1974; see above) and was introduced to social movement theory mainly by Snow and Benford (Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Snow et al. 1986; also see Haunss 2004: 36; Rucht 2002: 336). They refer to a frame as “an interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Hence, a frame corresponds to an extract or a certain perspective of reality that emphasizes some aspects while hiding others. It explains a movement's *raison d'être* and legitimizes the collective action (Snow 2008: 383). Regarding the Belo Monte conflict, one could think of a variety of possible interpretations of the historic and recent developments. For example, the collective action against Belo Monte can be framed as an indigenous struggle, a social and environmental conflict, or a general question of social and political order (see, for example, GfbV n.d.; Schulz 2013; Storm 2013; Survival International n.d.). The perception and subsequent presentation of the conflict as an indigenous, social, environmental, or ideological issue corresponds to the mindset and relevance system of the respective author. While frames are prevalent in everyday life, social movements employ them strategically in order to align their participants' perceptions of reality (Klandermans 1997: 121–122). Framing – as a process – refers to “the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (McAdam et al. 1996: 6, emphasis omitted). This definition emphasizes that framing is a dynamic, interactive, and controversial process that may challenge existing interpretations of reality. If successful, it results in a shared understanding of a situation that has been identified as problematic. However, the framing activity is not limited to the interpretation of reality; it also aims to promote collective action. The term collective action frame refers to “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford and Snow 2000: 614). These frames are typically addressed at constituents, antagonists, bystanders, and observers. They contribute to creating public attention, to disseminating information, and to mobilizing and legitimizing collective action (Benford and Snow 2000: 613; Hellmann 1998: 22). The framing approach adds a new dimension to the conceptualization of social movements in the present study. I argue that social movements are not only based on a shared collective identity, as proposed by Diani, but also on the continuous “production

and maintenance of meaning” (Benford and Snow 2000: 613). Therefore, the study adopts the collective identity approach and the framing approach as the theoretical perspectives for analysis.

If frames are produced by ordinary people and are therefore prevalent in everyday life, what are the distinguishing features of collective action frames? How do they come to be shared by a group of people and promote collective action? According to McAdam and colleagues, framing is a deliberate process; its core tasks have been elaborated by Snow and Benford. The first task in the framing process is the identification of a problem in social life that needs alteration. The second task is for the social movement to propose a solution to the problem that has been identified. The third task is the development of a rationale for collective action and the formulation of an appeal to participate in the social movement (Benford and Snow 2000: 615–618; Snow and Benford 1988: 199). The process of identifying a social problem is called diagnostic framing and involves the development of a shared understanding of a problematic situation. Research has shown that many diagnostic frames are injustice frames, a concept introduced by Gamson and colleagues (1982). Injustice frames comprise the belief that the authorities' behavior violates the “shared moral principles” of a group of people (Gamson et al. 1982: 123). Apart from injustice frames, Benford and Snow emphasize that in general terms the identification of the sources and victims of a problematic situation is central to diagnostic framing. By assigning roles and responsibilities, social movements can identify the addressees of their claims (Benford and Snow 2000: 616). However, an injustice frame – or a diagnostic frame, in general – does not automatically lead to collective action. It has to be matched with other frames that propose and justify collective action as the only adequate solution to the problem (Gamson et al. 1982: 122–124; Sandstrom et al. 2010: 220). Hence, the second core framing task is concerned with the solution of the problematic situation and is therefore called prognostic framing. The prognostic frame that results from this process proposes solutions to the problem and outlines possible activities and strategies that contribute to achieving the proposed solution. However, the range of possible and reasonable solutions is constrained by several factors including the nature of the problem itself and the positions and strategies of the other actors involved in the debate. Social movements can be challenged by the counterframes of their opponents and by disagreement among SMOs within the social movement. Even if SMOs present concordant diagnostic frames that identify the same problem, they may propose different solutions and develop different prognostic frames (Benford and Snow 2000: 617). The third core framing task aims to motivate movement participants to take action, and is therefore called motivational framing. It em-

phasizes the agency of actors and provides them with a rationale and a vocabulary of motive for collective action (Benford and Snow 2000: 617).

Contemporary scholars have also evaluated the characteristics of collective action frames in terms of direction, flexibility and inclusivity, scope and influence, and resonance. Collective action frames address a wide variety of contentious issues. One hypothesis relating to problem identification developed by Gerhards and Rucht (1992) is particularly interesting for the analysis of the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam. These authors claim that “[t]he larger the range of the problems covered by a frame, the larger the range of societal groups who can be addressed with the frame and the greater the mobilization capacity of the frame” (Gerhards and Rucht 1992: 580). If this hypothesis is true, the converse argument would be that a frame with a strong mobilization capacity that is supported by a large range of societal groups is likely to address a large range of problems. More specifically, the successful mobilization of the heterogeneous social movement against Belo Monte should depend – at least in part – on a broad and inclusive collective action frame that addresses a variety of issues. Hence, the collective identity approach and the framing approach are adequate theoretical perspectives for analyzing the persistence of the collective action and the maintenance of movement cohesion in the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam.

Another important feature of collective action frames is their cultural resonance – that is, their effectiveness in connecting their contents to the experiences and beliefs of a target audience. As discussed above, frames are developed by groups of people in interactive and often controversial negotiation processes that eventually arrive at shared understandings of a problem. In order for a collective action frame to resonate with a target audience, these shared understandings must be credible and the frame must be salient. Credibility is evaluated in terms of frame consistency, empirical credibility, and the credibility of frame articulators (Benford and Snow 2000: 619–622). Salience, on the other hand, depends on the centrality of the beliefs, values, and ideas for the lives of the target audience as well as the frame's coherence with the people's everyday experiences (experiential commensurability) and cultural narratives (narrative fidelity) (Benford and Snow 2000: 619–622).³³

The question that remains is: How do frames contribute to the mobilization of social movement participants? And how do different social movements come to connect their frames? Social movement organizations are interested in mobilizing society, recruiting new members, forging ties with other organiza-

33 See also Herkenrath (2011: 49) and Snow and Benford (1988).

tions, and acquiring resources. Benford and Snow have investigated the frame alignment process that social movement organizations employ when reaching out to potential adherents. They differentiate four basic alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Benford and Snow 2000: 624–625).

1. Frame bridging is suspected to be one of the most prevalent framing strategies. It occurs when “two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” are linked (Benford and Snow 2000: 624). Frame bridging can take place on the individual level when social movement organizations reach out to unmobilized segments of society in an attempt to connect people's sentiments to the collective action frame. It can also occur across social movements (Benford and Snow 2000: 624).
2. Frame amplification seems to be particularly relevant to movements holding values that challenge those of the dominant culture. Social movements employing this process of frame alignment seek to mobilize new activists by appealing to their preexisting beliefs and values and by reassuring them about their sentiments. The amplification of beliefs and values typically “involves [their] idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration” (Benford and Snow 2000: 624).
3. “Frame extension entails depicting an SMO's interests and frame(s) as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents” (Benford and Snow 2000: 625). While frame extension can lead to internal disputes about the ideological purity of a movement and may thus challenge movement cohesion (Benford and Snow 2000: 625), I propose that frame extension can also promote the mobilization of hitherto unmobilized segments of society and contribute to the development of (new) collective identities.
4. Frame transformation aims to overturn existing understandings and meanings prevalent in society by proposing a counterframe – that is, alternative understandings of a particular issue or problem (Benford and Snow 2000: 625).

The framing concept has been applied extensively to the study of social movements since the mid-1990s (Benford and Snow 2000: 612), and much research has been done on the core tasks of framing. According to Snow (2008), scholarly research on frames and framing processes typically focuses on “(1) enlargement and clarification of the conceptual architecture of collective action frames and

framing processes [...]; (2) empirical research investigating the application and analytic utility of various framing concepts [...]; (3) exploration of the link between framing processes and other factors relevant to the dynamics of social movements [...]; (4) methodological issues and techniques relevant to conducting framing research [...]; and (5) critical assessment of the framing perspective” (Snow 2008: 386).³⁴ While this research falls into the second category, it also addresses the relationship between framing and collective identity (third category) as well as methodological questions of social movement research with a focus on non-Western case studies (fourth category). It reconstructs framing processes from original data, and then compares the empirical findings with Benford and Snow’s theoretical concepts, with a view to advancing the theoretical debate.

2.5 The Difference between Collective Identity and Framing

The discussion of collective identity and framing shows that the concepts are closely related. Both are conceptualized as dynamic processes that demand actors to negotiate and construct meaning in order to create movement cohesion (Hellmann 1998: 19; also see Daphi 2011: 15). Therefore, research focusing on identity frequently considers framing processes in order to explain the mobilization and integration of activists in social movements (Daphi 2011: 15; also see Haunss 2004). What, then, is the difference between collective identity and framing? I propose that identities and frames are similar in that they are based on shared beliefs about the world. At the same time, they differ because they focus on distinct effects and implications of these beliefs. Collective identity is central to the self-assurance of a group and centers on the differentiation between in-group and out-group. Framing, on the other hand, serves to manifest this differentiation by creating group cohesion and a consistent behavior towards the outside world (Hellmann 1998: 16–17). Based on Gamson’s insight that social movement participation contributes to the enlargement of personal identity (Gamson 1992: 56), Snow and McAdam discuss various forms of identity work and the role of framing in these processes (Snow and McAdam 2000). Drawing on Hunt and colleagues (Hunt et al. 1994), they emphasize that framing processes contribute substantially to the construction of identities (Snow and McAdam 2000: 53). As stated above, frames provide shared understandings of

34 Snow references a large number of theoretical and empirical studies falling into these focal categories (Snow 2008: 386). As this list is to serve illustrative purposes only, the references are not reproduced here.

events and the actors involved, thus “situating or placing relevant sets of actors in time and space and [...] attributing characteristics to them that suggest specifiable relationships and lines of action” (Hunt et al. 1994: 185). Likewise, Rucht emphasizes that the framing of the opposition, the contentious issues, and the role of the social movement are important for the development of a collective identity (Rucht 1995: 16). Framing processes are therefore consistent with processes of identity construction in that they organize the world in a way that actors can make sense of occurrences and actions, and define their identities accordingly (Snow and McAdam 2000: 54).

2.6 Cohesion in Social Movements

Social movement scholars assume that a sense of cohesion is fundamental for the development of collective action; however, they rarely define movement cohesion in their works (Flesher Fominaya 2010b; Hunt and Benford 2004; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Teune 2008).³⁵ Drawing from Pearlman (2011), I conceptualize movement cohesion as “the cooperation among individuals that enables unified action” (Pearlman 2011: 9). Cohesion does not imply that individuals have identical motives, objectives, ideas and beliefs (Pearlman 2011: 11); rather, it emerges “when the forces assisting cooperative behavior exceed the forces encouraging competitive or antagonistic behavior” (Pearlman 2011: 9). Pearlman attributes the development and maintenance of movement cohesion to internal command and control, which enable the unified action of autonomous individuals. In her analysis of the Palestine national movement she focuses on (1) leadership, (2) institutions, and (3) the population's sense of collective purpose as the three most important factors facilitating cooperation (Pearlman 2011: 9).

This study takes up the three factors identified by Pearlman; however, instead of measuring to what degree they are present in the social movement against Belo Monte, I reconstruct the local activists' understanding of each of the factors. To this end, I assess the movement participants' sense of collective purpose by analyzing their understanding of the conflict (framing) and the motives behind their participation in the collective action (identities). Moreover, I examine the role and possible leadership of social movement organizations and individual actors in uniting the activities of various civil society organizations. According to Gardner, “leadership is the process of persuasion or example by

35 Hunt and Benford (2004) and Polletta and Jasper (2001) use the term solidarity instead of cohesion. I agree with Flesher Fominaya (2010b) and Mizruchi (1992) that the terms are used interchangeably in social movement research. In this study I use the term cohesion exclusively.

which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner 1993: 1). I use this as a working definition but focus on the interviewees' concept of leadership, which I reconstruct in Chapter 5 and evaluate in Chapter 6. Institutions – the third factor introduced by Pearlman – are generally understood as to provide rules for social interaction between individuals and groups (Pearlman 2011: 10). In this study, they play a subordinate role, due to the focus on individuals and the meaning they attribute to the Belo Monte project and the collective action. However, institutions enter into the analysis through the discussion of the strained relationship between civil society and the authorities on the local, state, and federal levels.

While collective identity has been identified as the basis for collective action and an important factor in the development and maintenance of movement cohesion (Flesher Fominaya 2010b: 377; Teune 2008: 533), the relationship between collective identity and cohesion remains vague. I argue that cohesion – defined as the cooperation between individuals and/or groups – is possible even between heterogeneous movement organizations, provided that they identify with a collective purpose and accept common institutions and leadership. I further propose that collective identity goes beyond collective action that is done in view of a collective purpose. This is because collective identity entails a sense of we-ness that is based on shared beliefs, interests, and experiences other than the collective purpose. While collective identity contributes to the development and maintenance of social movement cohesion, cooperation between actors does not automatically imply that they share a collective identity.

2.7 Definition of Central Theoretical Concepts

As the above discussion of the collective identity approach and the framing approach has demonstrated, there is a vast literature on social movements with a number of independent research strands. However, these concepts cannot be “applied” directly to the empirical data. In line with the grounded theory methodology, the collective identity approach and the framing approach are the theoretical perspectives that guide this research. For this purpose, the relevant theoretical concepts have to be defined and operationalized for data collection and analysis. In this section, I develop definitions of the central theoretical concepts based on the social movement literature discussed above. In Chapter 3, I operationalize these concepts for the purpose of data collection, and I explain how they inform the analysis.

(1) Collective action

In general terms, the protest activities against the Belo Monte Dam can be referred to as collective action. In line with Snow and colleagues (Snow et al. 2008: 6), the term collective action is deliberately used in a broad sense to refer to any kind of joint activity performed by at least two individuals who pursue a common objective in the realm of contentious politics.

(2) Social movement

More precisely, the collective action against the Belo Monte Dam is assumed to be a social movement. The conceptualization of social movement used in this study is based on the five axes developed by Snow and colleagues (2008) and the dimensions proposed by Diani (Diani 2003: 301–306; also see Della Porta and Diani 2006: 20–21; Diani 1992: 7). Based on Snow, I conceptualize social movements as “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part” (Snow et al. 2008: 11). In order to specify the definition and to integrate the network perspective, I treat collectivities as “network[s] of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations” (Diani 1992: 13). I further assume that collective identities play an important role in enabling collectives to work towards a common objective in an organized and lasting fashion. As Deaux and Reid propose, “[c]ollectivism implies an emphasis on group cohesion, common fate, distinction from out-groups, and shared norms and standards” (Deaux and Reid 2000: 186). Assuming that these dimensions are closely connected to collective identities and collective action frames, I adopt the collective identity approach and the framing approach as the theoretical perspectives for my analysis.

While this conceptualization of social movements seems adequate for the study of the collective action against the Belo Monte Dam, it should be stressed that before conducting the actual analysis it remains unclear whether the phenomenon constitutes a social movement according to the above conceptualization. Throughout this study, I treat the collective action against Belo as a social movement based on a preliminary assumption that is discussed in detail in the first sensitizing concept (cf. Chapter 3).

(3) Collective Identity

The disagreement about collective identity being either an individual or a collective attribute has important implications for the research question and research

design of a study (Daphi 2011: 19). If collective identity is conceptualized as a collective attribute, the level of analysis should likewise be the collective – for example, a social movement organization. Studies taking this perspective typically focus on rituals, symbols, and movement discourses (see, for example, Haunss 2004, 2011). On the other hand, if collective identity is conceptualized as an individual attribute, data collection and analysis take place at the level of the individual by means of qualitative interviews, surveys, observation, or experiments (see, for example, Simon 2011). As discussed earlier, this study takes a social psychological perspective and assumes that collective identity is an individual attribute that is embedded in the individual's identity hierarchy (Simon 2011: 40; Stryker 2000: 33–34). In line with this perspective, personal and social identities are included in the research in order to analyze how they interact with collective identity. Media reports and information material provided by SMOs tend to differentiate between different groups of people that are affected by the hydropower project. The groups most frequently referred to are riverine people, indigenous people, fishers, subsistence farmers, and townspeople. They can be expected to have different social identities based on distinct ethnic backgrounds and lifestyles. In order to gain further insight into their identities and the interaction between the different types of identities, I define collective identity broadly as the shared sense of belonging to a collectivity (we) in contrast to other actors (them). It is based on shared attributes and experiences, and leads to collective agency (cf. Rucht 1995, 2002; Snow 2001). This broad definition enables interviewees to explicate their relevance system. They can situate themselves in the context of various collectivities; and they can elaborate on their beliefs, experiences, objectives, and motives behind the collective action against Belo Monte. This kind of data is expected to provide further insight into framing processes and identity work, on the one hand, and the relationship between an actor's personal, social, and collective identities, on the other hand.

(4) Framing and Collective Action Frames

Based on McAdam and colleagues, framing is conceptualized in this study as “the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (McAdam et al. 1996: 6, emphasis omitted). Collective action frames are defined as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford and Snow 2000: 614). The objective of this study is to identify the collective action frame that has been developed and promoted by the social movement against the Belo Monte Dam – that is, the story of Belo Monte. Moreover, the

study seeks to trace how the local population adopts the frame and how different actors contribute to the framing process.

The central theoretical concepts defined in this section guide the sampling, the development of the interview guides, and the data collection. They also form the basis for the coding scheme, which was developed in a combined top-down and bottom-up procedure. In Chapter 3, I discuss the method and procedures of this research as well as my analytical positioning on the application of the grounded theory methodology.

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