The Hugo Valentin Centre

Master thesis

Functionary Prisoners: Behavioural Patterns and Social Processes

A new approach at the example of Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp

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Abstract

Functionary prisoners in Nazi concentration camps occupied an intermediate position between the superior SS and inferior regular inmates. Their ambivalent role led to certain behaviour and group formation processes. Using sociological theories, this thesis seeks to investigate an unexplored point of view in relation to the position of functionary prisoners in the camp society. By doing so, this thesis offers a comprehensive approach towards behaviour patterns and social processes of functionary prisoners. Based on an elaborated definition, this study argues for an extension of previous lines of research on this group. In order to achieve, it examines the room for manoeuvre of functionaries in relation to other social actors in the camp. A second major interest constitute their social differentiation processes. Finally, behavioural patterns and social processes in relation to ethnicity form a basis for a broader perspective.
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1. Introduction

Functionary prisoners were inmates of Nazi concentration camps executing control, regulation and administration tasks. They further formed a social group within the camps. Functionaries were the nexus between the SS and the other prisoners, and always had to balance between interests of the two groups. This position in the hierarchy implied some room for manoeuvre – which they used in different ways. Certainly, some functionaries behaved cruel towards other inmates – others protected them. Some strived for acknowledgement by the SS. Others prioritised solidarity with the fellow prisoners and tried to improve their living conditions.

Academic research so far draws a picture, which is not satisfactory for a rich understanding of the functionary prisoner's ambivalent role. Previous studies frequently display functionaries as henchmen of the SS. A negative image of this group evolves, placing functionary prisoners on the perpetrator side and ignoring their status as inmates within the prisoner society. This unfavourable portrait is opposed by several historical works focussing the camp resistance. These studies equate the resistance against the SS with a supportive role of functionary prisoners towards regular inmates. Both approaches represent a judgemental moral discourse, leading to a dichotomous view of brutality and solidarity, perpetrator and victim. They ignore that there is arguably no possibility to ever investigate the full range of crimes and acts of solidarity which took place in the camps. Moreover, it seems hardly possible to fully imagine and understand the situation of people imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. A moral perspective on the respective group is hence not adequate.

This thesis strives to expand the narrow perspectives of preceding approaches and aims at a better understanding of the functionary prisoners' behaviour. It provides a unique reflection on different characteristics and influences regarding the functionaries' behaviour. The interest thereby lies on the functionary prisoners' room for manoeuvre, their position within the social space of the prisoner society and the impact of ethnicity in social interactions between regular and functionary prisoners.

To pursue the stated research aim, this study investigates the concentration camp Mittelbau-Dora as a social space. The source material mainly derives from survivor's memory accounts. These are supplemented by testimonies provided during a post-war trial
held in 1947 at the site of the former Dachau Concentration Camp. This source corpus is the basis for an empirical analysis of the functionaries' role in the camp society, as well as their behavioural patterns.

1.1. Disposition

The structure of this thesis is motivated by the above mentioned focus of previous research. Due to this, my attention concerns an elaboration on the stated criticism of previous studies. Subsequently, I will substantiate this thesis' aim and formulate my research questions. After this, I will present my methodological approach and my source corpus, to familiarise the reader with the problems surrounding my analytical approach for the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp.

The second section of this work is devoted to a comprehensive discussion of a working definition of functionary prisoners and will further provide an embracing portrayal of my sociological theoretical framework. My clear-cut focus on Mittelbau-Dora also calls for an explanation of the camp's specific features, thus displayed in the third chapter.

A following semi-empirical investigation, based both on sources and research, of the organised camp resistance serves as a background for my empirical section. It links the characteristics of the camp to the role of functionary prisoners. Moreover, my depiction of the resistance movement intends to make the reader acquainted with the functionaries' behavioural patterns, identified by previous research.

The main section of this work addresses the behaviour of functionary prisoners according to the above mentioned focal points: the functionaries' room for manoeuvre, social differentiation processes, as well as the relation between the functionaries' behaviour and ethnicity. The conducted investigation is of course finally completed by short summarising remarks on findings and perspectives for future research.

1.2. Current State of Research

Research on functionary prisoners is still at its outset. Functionaries hardly constitute a point of interest in German academic research. Non-German considerations on this group
are usually very limited to a short discussion, embedded in some broader study.¹ Neither sociological considerations on the prisoner societies, nor historical approaches provide yet a satisfactory explanation of the functionaries' role or behaviour.

Certainly Wolfgang Sofsky,² Falk Pingel³ and Karin Orth⁴ are the most influential authors tackling social aspects of the camps. Placed between sociology and history, their work is based on an assessment of the internal hierarchy in the camps, thus reflecting the importance of authority and social stratification. They offer insights into aspects of group formation, social differentiation and the division of power in the camp.

The most prominent study on the sociological dimensions of concentration camps was published by the German sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky in 1993. In “Die Ordnung des Terrors: Das Konzentrationslager” he offers a broad analysis of social processes in concentration camps. Sofsky supposes an 'absolute power', carried by the camp's SS administration. This 'absolute power' was in his understanding absolute in a literal meaning – it defined the usage of time and space in the camp, ruled social processes and regulated resource allocation.⁵ Sofsky furthermore elaborates in great detail the establishment of a 'system of classifications', which, according to Sofsky, determined the social stratification in the camp. Its importance makes a short elaboration necessary:

Inmates of Nazi concentration camps were forced to carry a triangle of a specific colour, which was supposed to express the reason for their imprisonment. So-called 'criminal' inmates were labelled with a green triangle, 'political' inmates wore a red triangle. Pink was devoted to prisoners detained for homosexuality and black indicated 'asocial behaviour'.⁶ Most non-German prisoners were labelled as political inmates, although Sofsky argues for a high degree of arbitrariness.⁷

³Pingel, Social Life.
⁵Sofsky, Ordnung, 29. For a short summary of all features inherent in his concept, see: Ibid., 29-38.
⁶Ibid., 137.
⁷Ibid., 140.
The stigmatic appearance of the badge was complemented by a letter, indicating the country of origin of an inmate. Sofsky pledges for a determining influence of badge-colour and ethnic descent for the position of an inmate in the social space of the camp. German political and 'criminal' prisoners were at the peak of this stratification, they therefore usually held the privileged functionary positions. This hierarchical social structure names Sofsky the social field.

In Sofsky's understanding, the system was successful: “Although enforced by the SS, the category system was largely adopted by the prisoners. Although resistance was directed against the status of individual classes, not against the system as a whole.”

Although many scholars follow Sofsky's views of an 'absolute power' and his statements on the social stratification, his methodology and style are often criticised. I will elaborate further on several critical remarks as they serve as a basis for my approach.

My first criticism concerns Sofsky's definition of functionary prisoners. He claims for a broader perspective, but in fact considers only the most powerful ranks, namely capos and block eldests. I will further elaborate on this shortcoming during the discussion on my own working definition in chap. 2.1.

The second point of interest refers to his argumentation on the social field. Even though he mentions changes in the social field, his argumentation suggests that deviation was impossible; the inmates had to surrender and accept this system. The “ambiguity of the social”, which arises when reading survivors' accounts, “is homogenised by Sofsky from the perspective of absolute power.” Herein lies the great weakness of his study. Unlike

8 Ibid., 137-152.
9 Ibid., 144.
12 Sofsky, Ordnung, 146. See also chapter 2.1.
13 Sofsky, Ordnung, 151.
14 Suderland, Forschung, 395. She does provide a more complex criticism on his work, but a longer description would be leading too far away from the thesis subject at this point. Ibid. 394-396.
Sofsky, I view prisoners as social actors, who actively shaped their surrounding, and were not merely passive victims of the structure.

The third critique is related to the previous point. It concerns the social status he ascribes to functionary prisoners. Sofsky portrays are suggestive of a difference between functionary prisoners and the prisoner society in general. He thereby denies any characteristic of a victim status as inmates of concentration camps: “For the lackey there was no way back into the society of the prisoners.”15 Again, I view prisoners as social actors and the same status applies for functionaries.

Karin Orth states in regard to historical studies on the concentration camps: “For decades, the history of the Nazi concentration camps has been not written by historians in Germany, [...], but by the former prisoners.”16 The first, mainly public, discourse she refers to already began shortly after the war. Published survivors accounts17 and a general interest in the post-war trials18 initiated a first approximation to this research field. Her statement applies for concentration camps in general, as well as for functionary prisoners.

In 1947, the Buchenwald survivor and former member of the camp resistance Eugen Kogon published “Der SS-Staat”, a book on the situation within the camps. He combined his own experiences with an investigation of the concentration camp system. Although Kogon's study reveals deep insights in the structure of the camp society, his aim is problematic, as he strives to justify the behaviour of an entire group: the members of the resistance.

He focusses the internal rivalry within the resistance group and the struggle between political and 'criminal' prisoners. Moreover, he portrays different inmates' groups according to their badges. Hence he suggests that the label actually represents the background of a person's imprisonment. Especially his discussions of black-badged 'asocials' contains stereotypical perceptions and misjudgements.19

Kogo's work, among others20, contributed to the equalisation of functionary prisoners with anti-fascist resistance in the GDR's public discourse. Furthermore it established a

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15Sofsky, Ordnung, 162. The problem is also addressed in: Suderland, Forschung, 395.
16Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 112.
17Ibid., 112.
20In general was the historiography in East and West Germany in the first decades after the Second World War mostly shaped by reports of former inmates. Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 112.
stereotypical dichotomy of heroic “red badges” fighting against the destructive aims of the SS and cruel “green badges”, prisoners labelled as 'criminals'. This positive stigmatization of “red triangles” manifested itself in the official commemoration in the GDR.\textsuperscript{21}

Since 1990 the historical approaches towards functionary prisoners diversified. In 1994, a critical assessment of the camp resistance by Lutz Niethammer challenged this representation. Identifying the outcomes of the member’s actions, Niethammer presented a picture full of internal rivalry, cadre protection and victim exchange.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1998 a collection of essays was published by the memorial site of the former concentration camp Neuengamme. The volume titled “Abgeleitete Macht – Funktionshäftlinge zwischen Widerstand und Kollaboration”\textsuperscript{23} exclusively deals with functionary prisoners. This volume is in my opinion representative for the focus of research on functionary prisoners of the past two decades. All included articles pursue a solely historical approach surrounding the camp resistance and solidarity.

This approach very problematic, because it reinforces the preceding too narrow perspective on functionary prisoners as members of the resistance. The articles therewith strengthen a dichotomous perception of functionary prisoners. Even more, they enforce the top-down perspective manifested by Wolfgang Sofsky.

However, one of the essays deals specifically with functionary prisoners in Mittelbau-Dora. In his article named “Bunte Lagerprominenz? Die Funktionshäftlinge im Rüstungs-KZ Mittelbau-Dora.”\textsuperscript{24}, Olaf Mußmann evaluates different sources concerning the camp. He presents an interestingly large number of inmates in functionary positions who were neither labelled as political or criminal prisoners, nor where they German at all. In regard to these findings he states: “Diese Befunde sind verwirrend – und vorsichtig ausgedrückt – ungewöhnlich.”\textsuperscript{25} His essay was published in 1998, but was apparently widely ignored.

\textsuperscript{21}Manfred Overesch. \textit{Buchenwald und die DDR oder die Suche nach Selbstlegitimation.} Sammlung Vandenhoeck. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995).


\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 83.
There has as yet been no verification of his results, nor has it been set in relation to the situation in other camps.

Since then other scholars chose to approach the topic of functionary prisoners by means of investigating individual careers of important functionaries, mainly on the basis of court documents. These studies only focus on particular inmates within particular camps and thereby ignore implications of their results on the entire system.

Besides that, some historians pursued detailed investigations of functionaries in a specific camp. This approach nevertheless rarely offers new perspectives on behavioural patterns of functionary prisoners, as for instance a study by the German historian Marc Schemmler proves. He mainly describes functionaries as being torn “between cooperation and resistance.” Although I consider his work a definite contribution to the history of Neuengamme, I believe he missed the chance to abandon a descriptive level. My assessment of the literature concerning functionary prisoners so far portrayed the necessity to further investigate their ambivalent role as social actors and to consciously depart from a resistance-centred perspective. The situation is better for the history of the Mittelbau-Dora camp, at least since the turn of the century.

West-German scholars largely neglected the history of the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration camp until 1990. The camp was on the contrary intensively researched in the GDR during the 1960s. The reason was a range of studies belonging to the “Studentische Forschungsgemeinschaft” initiated by the Humboldt University in East-Berlin. These studies were unfortunately not published and are hardly accessible. However, the initiative of the “Studentische Forschungsgemeinschaft” initiated a vast collection of sources, but after the work of this group was finished, the interest in the functionary collective and the camp resistance in Dora decreased.

The discussion was resuscitated in the 1990s. Public debates on the role of civil engineers resulted in a new academic interest. The French historian and former inmate André Sellier published a work, particularly based on French survivors' accounts in 1998. His point of view is extremely interesting, not only “because it reflects the perspectives of
(Western European) survivors, but especially because Sellier, after years of research and with the help of a tight network in the survivors' organizations, could rely on a not surpassing density of memoirs.²⁹

The second large-scale study, named “Produktion des Todes”³⁰, is written by Jens-Christian Wagner. Since its first publication in 2001, it serves as a basis for all further work on the camp. Although Wagner's interest lies in the structural development of the entire Mittelbau camp complex, he also offers various information on the prisoner society. During his position as head of the Mittelbau-Dora Memorial he also published a vast number of detailed investigations on different issues, such as the camp resistance³¹ and transfer processes of inmates between different camps.³² As I will show later, his analysis of the functionary prisoners requires some criticism, mainly concerning the lack of a clear definition of the group.

There are finally two other studies, worth mentioning at this point: Manfred Bornemann's study on the camp resistance³³ and Frank Wiedemann's short work on “Everyday life in Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp.”³⁴ A closer look at both studies and their address to functionaries reveals the same problematic as for other solely historical works mentioned above. They portray the phenomenon through the perspective of resistance and an ongoing struggle between 'political' and 'criminal' prisoners.

Except for Olaf Mußmann's short essay, the functionary prisoners still form a desideratum in this historiography for Mittelbau-Dora. In the following chapter I therefore want to further portray my approach for a closure of this research gap.

1.3. Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is a deeper understanding of the functionary prisoners' behaviour. As mentioned above, I address quite a desideratum in academic research by means of this

²⁹Wagner, Produktion, 21.
³⁰Wagner, Produktion.
³⁴Wiedemann, Alltag.
goal. Moreover, it determines an unprecedented approach to this group. I believe that the unique character of this study calls for a broad guiding research question as an overall approach: What were the reasons for the functionaries' behaviour and what determined their actions.

My display of previous studies leads to specific sub-topics to specify my approach. This is true for both dimensions of this thesis: On the hand, there is a lack of sociological and historical studies, which explain the behaviour of functionary prisoners. On the other hand, although two comprehensive studies for Mittelbau-Dora exist, the influence of Olaf Mußmann's findings has not been adequately addressed so far.

Up to this point, scholars identified cadre protection as a behavioural pattern and motif for resistance movements. However, there is a lack of a conscious exploration of the functionaries' room for manoeuvre. Their behaviour can only be understood once their possibilities for actions are investigated.

The functionaries' position between the SS and regular prisoners makes two equally important considerations necessary: At first it is crucial to discuss the group of functionary prisoners itself. A clear definition framing this group allows an in-depth investigation.

The second needed focus is devoted to the social interactions between the functionaries and the SS. I want to lay particular attention to this relationship, because only the SS was able to provide the functionary prisoners with a room for manoeuvre.

Once this is accomplished, it is possible to turn towards the functionaries' behavioural patterns and underlying motifs. My critique on Sofsky already highlighted the relationship between functionary prisoners and the inmates' society in general. Based on this criticism, a closer investigation of the functionaries' position in the social space is necessary.

The third main focus derives from Mußmann's findings: Most scholars contrast German functionaries with a non-German unprivileged mass. Non-German functionary prisoners broaden this arguably too narrow perspective.

A recourse to Mußmann's assessment would furthermore only extend the dichotomy of a struggle between 'red' and 'green'. Inmates of other nationalities allow a deeper understanding of group formation processes and the position of functionary prisoners in the social space of the camp. Ethnicity is not two-sided, therefore opening a window of opportunity for a broader analysis.
These notions in mind, I am now to state a set of sub-questions: In which room for manoeuvre did functionary prisoners act? What influence did social differentiation processes have on the social stratification of the prisoner society? Which role did ethnic perceptions play as an underlying motivation of behaviour?

1.4. Research Outline

The guiding research questions tackle the demarcation of history and sociology. A historical approach derives from the available source material for my analysis. Sociological considerations constitute a necessary theoretical framework for my perspective.

A methodological groundwork for historical source criticism in relation to functionary prisoners is still missing. Karin Orth points out:

“Until today there is no historical-analytical monograph which examines empirically the system of functionary prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps. Despite the abundance of published and unpublished reports, source-critical investigations on how the question of how to analyse and interpret this material, are still missing.”

I therefore decided to follow previous approaches on an empirical investigation on prisoner societies. This access requires a presentation of stories provided by former inmates, which in turn compose the basis for a discussion. The German sociologist Maja Suderland conducted such an approach for the prisoner society in general. In her study “Ein Extremfall des Sozialen” she asks for a transferability of basic features of societies in the social space of concentration camps. Rooting in the field of sociology, she crosses the limitations of this field and conducts a profound analysis of prisoner societies.

For this thesis Suderland's sociological ground-breaking work serves as the perspective. In her so far unique approach, she addresses underlying guiding principles for behaviour and relates them to social class formation. Her focus thereby lies on regular inmates. Maja Suderland's emphasis on prisoners as social actors hence allows an extension of her approach towards functionary prisoners.

35Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 112.
Borrowing sociological theories for a clearly historical analysis is useful, because there is simply no theory in historical research which would explain these social dimensions. Behaviour and its social characteristics in relation to functionary prisoners are especially based on a division of power and group-formation processes. It is therefore more than plausible to further elaborate this perspective by recurring to sociological studies. This approach vice versa already hints at my modus operandi: I do not aim at theory or hypothesis testing. My focus lies in a profound analysis of the functionaries' behaviour and the social mechanisms connected to it – always linked to the social space of Mittelbau-Dora.

The specific characteristics of the camp further shape the composition of this thesis. This work addresses different groups of social actors within the camp. Functionaries were in permanent contact with regular prisoners and SS-men. The role of these two groups of social actors will therefore be addressed before turning to the empirical section.

Another important characteristic was the camp resistance. Previous studies on the camp's history already investigated this group. The findings of these inquiries need to be re-approached in the context of this thesis. Thereby a semi-empirical manner is necessary. I will therefore at first address the composition of the camp resistance in Dora and further on refer to the possible behavioural patterns of the group's members. Once the necessary and comprehensive groundwork is set, I will address the different points of interest of my study in the empirical section.

1.5. Source Corpus

Sources for such an empirical analysis are apparently available in a sufficient number. They to a large extent consist of court documents from the Dora Trial held in Dachau in 1947 and from published and unpublished survivors accounts in general. The memorial of the former concentration camp complex houses an archive, where more than 550 unpublished accounts, as well as copies of 13 rolls microfilm reproductions in relation to the Dora Trial can be found. During this trial, 19 persons – three of them functionaries in Dora\textsuperscript{37} – were accused and the trial resulted in 15 penalties, including all three former

\textsuperscript{37}There was a fourth former functionary accused and sentenced during the Dora Trial. Walter Ulbricht was a former clerk in the sub-camp Rottleberode.
inmates of the main camp Dora. In addition, there are more than 15 published accounts available.

Nevertheless, on second sight there is only a small number of rich source material concerning the camp Dora. There are different reasons for the limitation of the source material. The first is the perspective of this thesis. This thesis aims at a portrayal of the behaviour of inmates. Sources deriving from former SS officers and guards are therefore ignored. Jens-Christian Wagner explains significantly the reason for such an exclusion of sources:

“This applies particularly to the sources of SS provenance which largely gloss over the conditions in the camps, if they are ever mentioned at all. The working and living conditions in the camps can only be described as the former inmates speak for themselves.”  

I agree to Wagner's statement on the usage of accounts of former SS-men. It would also blur the perspective of this thesis. Especially during the post-war trials, this group was accused and their accounts therefore had a justifying motivation.

Second, notably my sub-questions furthermore portray the connection between the social reality in one camp and the aimed purpose of this thesis. I will therefore focus on the main camp Dora and widely ignore the sub-camps. I furthermore doubt that enough sources exist for a comprehensive investigation of functionary prisoners in the sub-camps.

Third and finally, language is a limiting feature of many accounts. At least the trial documents and most of the published accounts are available in English or German. Despite that, more than a fifth of the unpublished accounts are written in another European language, which I am not sufficiently capable of reading—mainly French, Russian, Polish and Czech.

There were further a number of succession processes concerning the crimes in Dora. However, difficult access to sources, as well as the limited usefulness of witness statements from the Dora Trial, allow to exclude these sources.

Besides these limitations, there are further unavoidable difficulties concerning the source corpus. It is again Jens-Christian Wagner who appropriately captures the problem:

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“Because of the large temporal distance, these reports provide more information on mental processing patterns and the postwar biographies of their authors as well as collective and individual memory as well as discourse shifts than concrete camp experience.”

Although I share his major criticism concerning (unpublished) accounts to some extent, I still argue for an extensive use in this thesis. In short, we simply lack of an another adequate source corpus related to functionary prisoners.

Wagner's argument implies difficulties linked to the use of survivors' accounts in general, but the mentioned problems can be solved by focussing on the often little and short stories, which are provided by the survivors. These stories include the survivors' perceptions on their own position and the system of functionary. Carefully taken into account, they can in fact provide a fruitful source corpus for the analysis of functionaries behaviour.

It is furthermore only a small number of survivors who provided testimony at all. As a conservative estimation I would argue for more than 600 persons out of around 40.000 survivors. More than 20.000 persons died in the camp and were not able to provide any form of testimony at all.

Even within this already smaller group of survivors, distinctions are necessary. Karin Orth rightly supposes that survivors who were active in the political resistance often aimed at a justification of their actions in the camp. From my own assessment of the source material, I can without any doubt support her argument. Certainly I will refer to this issue when dealing with the respective sources during my empirical section.

Further difficulties arise from a significant blurring concerning a localisation of described events in time and space. Most survivor's accounts lack of a specific notion when specific events took place. Even more, particularly for survivors who were imprisoned in different camps, a localisation of events is difficult. During my own assessment of the sources I tried to focus on this problem and to identify the specific events concerning Dora.

Even the emergence of unpublished accounts needs to remain unclear in several cases. There is often no indication when and under which circumstances they were written. More recent accounts, approximately since the mid 1990s, do, however, not carry this difficulty.

39Ibid., 26.
40Ibid., 616.
41Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 15.
They usually have an indication for the time they emerged. Furthermore were the witness accounts from the Dora trial meticulously marked with a date and location.

While more than 70 witnesses provided testimony during the Dora Trial, the information content of this sources is mostly rare. The reason is a simple focus of the persecution on crimes of a small group of perpetrators. This narrow perspective also included investigations on crimes committed by four former functionaries of the Mittelbau-Complex, who were accused in this trial. The German inmates Richard Walenta, Josef Kilian and Willi Zwiener were former powerful functionaries in Dora and all sentenced for beating and murdering inmates. However, all of them held socially exposed positions in the camp and provide less information about social mechanisms and motifs for behaviour.

I finally want to address my actual methodology when collecting the sources. Due to a very friendly response by Regine Heubaum, head of the memorial's documentation centre, I was able to compound a strategy for addressing the huge amount of overall source material. A first choice of the empirical material was conducted by her and routed in the above mentioned limitations. To ease my work, she excluded all unpublished survivors' accounts, which do not deal with the main camp Dora or are written in a language beyond my possibilities. It was possible to exclude approximately one third of the more than 500 sources. Further limitations were made by me, simply by going through each of the sources and critical assessing their respective information content. Because of the very different character of these sources, around 50 remained as useful to support my pursued research aim.

When facing the court testimonies, no such strategy was possible, because no comprehensive study on this trial exists. Here again a step by step analysis of each account was necessary, resulting in various outcomes. The small number of published accounts on the other hand made an extensive lecture comfortable.

42Although a volume dealing with the different trials held in Dachau was published by the German historians Ludwig Eiber and Robert Sigel, it does not mention the investigations in Dora. Eiber, Dachauer Prozesse.
2. Theoretical Framework

Two considerations are constitutive for the theoretical framework of this thesis. The first is a definition of functionary prisoners. I need to operationalise this for my approach. The second part of the theoretical framework introduces the sociological approach of Maja Suderland and considers to which extent it is a usable and fruitful tool for my further investigation.

2.1. Definition of Functionary Prisoners

Heinrich Himmler explained features of the functionaries' position during a speech in front of Wehrmacht generals in June 1944. A broader portrayal of his statement serves as a basis for my further discussion:

“So you see, those nearly 40,000 German political and professional criminals – please do not laugh – are my corps of NCOs (= Non-commissioned officers) for the whole community. Here … we have appointed so-called Capos. So, one of them is the responsible overseer, I would like to say Prisoners’ Elder for 30, 40, more than 100 other prisoners. At the moment, when he becomes a capo, he does not sleep with the others any longer. He is responsible that the beds are all well done … so he needs to push his men. In that moment, when we are no longer satisfied with him, he will not be capo any longer, he sleeps again with all the others of his men. He knows that he will be beaten to death by the others in that first night. Since we do not get by only with the Germans, it will, of course, be done that way that a French will be the capo of the Polish, a Polish of the Russians … so that here one nation will be played off against another."

Himmler's quote displays the ideas and desired consequences from the angle of the SS. He referred mainly to one position, the Elder, but recalled main principles of the system of functionary prisoners: a military-like hierarchy, its use as an instrument for terror, the possibility to appoint and set off their status at any time, a hauled out social position including diverse privileges and finally the utilisation of tensions among different groups.

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within the prisoner society. All of these characteristics determined the position and living conditions of nearly all functionary prisoners.

In her comprehensive study on the Nazi concentration camps, Karin Orth portrays the functionaries' guard-, controlling and administrative duties. She opens her considerations with the statement that “the in the so-called function bodies appointed inmates form the lowest level of a multi-layered surveillance system.” Later in her text she provides a very accurate description of the system and its structure. She thereby also identifies specific privileges of functionary prisoners. Instead of fully reporting her complex chain of thoughts on the structure of the system in too great detail, I will rather refer to those aspects most relevant in relation to my research aim in the following description of the system.

The camp eldest held the highest position of all inmates. He was directly subordinated to the 'Schutzhaftlagerführer', the German who was responsible for the inmates' camp. Every powerful functionary had to answer to one SS-man in charge of his overall position and to the camp eldest. The system of functionary prisoners thus correlated with the military hierarchy of the SS: At least at the top level, positions correspondent as for instance those of the camp eldest and the 'Schutzhaftlagerführer' or 'Lagerkommandant'.

Below this level the system diversified, according to working details, housing and other administrative entities in the camp. There were two main branches – the work section, were the functionaries were mainly called capos and the housing section, were the functionaries were mainly called eldest. An SS-man was in charge of one barrack – block in Nazi language 'block leader'. He delegated many duties to the block eldest. This functionary was in turn accountable to the 'block leader' and the camp eldest. Block eldest were superior to quarter elder, table elder and clerks to keep control over the blocks.

Their position relied on their relation to their superior functionary. Capos – functionaries who headed a working group, a so-called command or detail – were subordinated to the 'work leader' of their detail and the camp eldest. When positions of capos and block eldest were allocated, the camp eldest held the right of proposal. Foremen and clerks supported the capos in running a working command. In short, even the

46Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 109.
blocks and working details were organized by this comprehensive hierarchical system existed and less powerful functionaries were subordinated to their superiors and to the responsible SS-man.\textsuperscript{48}

So what distinguished any functionary prisoner from other prisoners in daily concentration camp life? Functionaries did most often not suffer from harassment and violence. They were exempted from hard labour and better accommodated. Moreover did the SS admit them “more extensive authority over other concentration camp inmates.”\textsuperscript{49} Karin Orth refers to these privileges when portraying the exceptional status of functionaries. She thus introduces identifiable features by means of which one can draw a clear line between regular inmates and functionary prisoners. However it creates a dichotomy between functional and other prisoners, and does not acknowledge the internal differences within the system of functionary prisoners. To address this shortcoming we simply have to apply the features she elaborated to different groups of functionary prisoners. The main question here is to which extent it integrates those prisoners, who do not command any entity but work in certain administratively or economically relevant functions within the camp. In his major study on the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Jens-Christian Wagner uses the term “camp economy” to specify all details necessary to run the camp. He mentions the privileged status of prisoners working in the kitchen and other sections inside the camp. Around ten percent of all inmates belonged to this group. Wagner distinguishes between prisoners working in the camp economy and functionaries, however, without offering a clear demarcation between them. In his chapter on functionary prisoners he only refers to high-level functionaries. We can hence conclude that he does not include low rank functionaries working in the camp economy as functionaries.

A closer look at such prisoners, working in camp economy functions will clarify if they qualify as functionary prisoners according to Karin Orth's definition. The camp kitchen commando for instance consisted of several prisoners responsible for the food preparation. They were working under the command of a capo who responded to an SS-man. Their housing conditions were the same as other prisoners. The work in the kitchen was

\textsuperscript{49}Orth, System, 59.
relatively less hard than in other commandos, and shielded from weather influences. The entire detail was widely exempted from violence and chicane by the camp administration.

However the prisoners did not have any power of command. Their privileges consisted of a free access to food. Kitchen functionaries’ “extensive authority over other concentration camp inmates” thus only becomes visible at a second glance: it lies in their disposal of food and ability to share according to their own will. Although they had no direct power, they were able to influence the living conditions of fellow inmates by resource distribution. Furthermore, access to nourishments provided them with the possibility to barter. The same applies for prisoners working in the tailoring detail: Less chicane, access to articles in demand and opportunities for barter formed their privileges.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to equate the camp economy with a privileged functionary position. Many of its commands were feared and not privileged. Corpse carriers and other inmates working in the 'special command' in the crematorium were not privileged. They faced hard labour – the crematorium in Dora was set up on a hill inside the inmates' camp – and of course a horrible task. Many inmates also feared the extreme conditions of the 'building command'. This command dealt with the build up of the barracks in the inmates' camp. Even more frightening was the situation of a small group of female Polish prisoners in the camp's brothel. Inmates in these details cannot be defined as functionaries according to Karin Orth's definition. Neither were they exempted from chicane and hard labour, nor did they enjoy a privileged position. I want to exclude these groups also from my definition. In fact, I only define inmates as functionaries who had the privileges mentioned by Orth.

These prisoner functionaries held an exposed position in relation to 'regular inmates', but there was an internal hierarchy in power distribution. Wolfgang Sofsky refers to

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50The Frenchman Jean Mialet survived his imprisonment because of contacts to the kitchen details in several camps. After the war he published a detailed description of the situation there. I will lay attention on his report during the empirical section of this thesis. Jean Mialet. Haß und Vergebung: Bericht eines Deportierten. 1. Aufl. (Bad Münstereifel: Westkreuz-Verl. Berlin/Bonn, 2006).

51Ibid.

52In the context of Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp, 'Sonderkommando' departs from the meaning of this term concerning Auschwitz Concentration Camp, where prisoners were forced to take care of the gas chambers. In Dora, however, there was no gas chamber and the term simply refers to the prisoners working in the crematorium. Wir weinten tränenlos: Augenzeugenberichte des jüdischen "Sonderkommandos" in Auschwitz. With the assistance of Gid’ón Graif and Matthias Schmidt. Überarb. Ausg. Fischer 13914 Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verl., 1999). See for Dora: Wagner, Produktion, 342.

53Ibid. 342

“disciplinary power” or “decision-making power” as a distinctive feature of higher-level functionaries.55 This characteristic proves usable not only for distinguishing between functionary and other prisoners, but also for elaborating differences within the hierarchy of functionary prisoners, to be precise to differentiate between high-rank and low-rank functionary prisoners. Prisoners with disciplinary powers as authorities in the barracks and the working details would thus constitute the group of higher positions. Block eldest, capos and their subordinates belonged to this group. They had a supervisory and controlling task over lower-level functionaries and ordinary prisoners. Inmates working in the clerk's office, the labour allocation office and the dispensary did also belong to the higher level. With their position they obtained a decision-making power over fellow prisoners.

A lack of this disciplinary power but possession of certain decision-making power constitutes the criteria to identify the lower ranks. Their power was usually limited to indirect authority over 'regular prisoners'. Going back to the provided example, prisoners working in the kitchen had no disciplinary authority over regular prisoners. However the privilege which came with their work place provided them with the possibility to make decisions – for instance smuggling food out of the kitchen and sharing it – which helped them maintain their own health and influenced other prisoner's lifes. Decisive was here not their position itself but their work place.

As we could see there is yet no universally accepted definition on the group of functionary prisoners. However in scholarly and public discussions of the topic, the focus seems to be on Capos and Blockälteste, thus the highest functionaries in the hierarchy. It is also easy to distinguish those who were directly bestowed with disciplinary power by the SS. However such a definition fails to acknowledge the complexity of power relations within the prisoner's hierarchy initiated by the SS. Power was not only consciously bestowed by the SS-men in form of certain competences but also provided by other means as for instance work place, access to food, or to clothing.

I argue that it is necessary to pay more attention to prisoners of lower ranks in order to fully grasp the phenomenon. Their role in between the most powerful functionaries and the mass of the inmates is particularly interesting. My overall approach in this thesis, which focusses on the role of functionaries as actors between the SS and regular prisoners

55Sofsky, Ordnung, 154-156.
needs to take the internal distinction between higher and lower ranks into account. I will therefore address the specific aims of this thesis – especially social differentiation and the role of ethnicity – in relation to both levels of functionaries.

2.2. Sociological Considerations on the Prisoner Society

Maja Suderland offers a sociological approach to prisoner societies in concentration camps. She asks for basic features of societies and their transferability to the social life within the camps. The unprivileged mass of inmates are the main interest of her investigation. She focusses on individual orientation for social group formation of these prisoners. In her well-conducted study she provides a new access to that formation processes.

By doing so, Suderland conducts two different compilations of analytical discussions, which together provide an approach for the investigation of behaviour patterns. That's why her investigation primarily serves as a perspective for my study. At the same time, she offers a set of tools for accessing sources, which I will apply for my research problem surrounding the functionary prisoners in Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp.

The aim of this thesis calls for a distinct study of the functionaries' room for manoeuvre and the underlying motivation of their behaviour. Maja Suderland addresses both aspects separately in her theoretical considerations. Her first discussion used in this thesis concerns the social life of inmates. An application of this argumentation serves as an approach to explore the functionaries' room for manoeuvre. Suderland's second deliberation refers to the concept of habitus, a set of differentiation principles guiding behaviour. This focus provides access to an examination of the functionary prisoners' behaviour patterns. Her different orientations therefore motivate the build of my empirical analysis.

2.2.1. Three Levels of Sociality and the Functionaries' Room for Manoeuvre

She introduces three levels of sociality, which frame social interaction. These levels are a military organisation of the concentration camps, the “shadow zone” and a small-scale organised latent social life.
She states that social life was determined by the military structure of the camps. It was a complex system with the SS at its top, functionary prisoners in between and unprivileged prisoners at the bottom. Functionaries had a hybrid status,

“since, on the one hand, they were inmates themselves, and on the other hand, they were endowed with significant power of disposition over the other prisoners. With that, they did neither formally nor socially to the SS, just as little as they belonged to the other inmates by their privileged position.”

Maja Suderland argues for this level that the military-like hierarchical organisation of the camps shaped the behaviour of the camp-SS, functionary prisoners and regular inmates. SS-men and functionaries acted according to their position in the camp. Regular inmates, on the other hand, where completely subjected to the organisation and the superior actors. Their subordinated position reflected in military drill, uniforms and daily routines. According to Suderland, individual strategies, such as solidarity, comradeship and cultural identity contrasted the destructive tendencies of the military organisation.

The second level of sociality consisted of disregard of camp rules by SS-men and functionary prisoners, black market activities on the basis of individual resources and also cultural activities. These different features of the “shadow zone” need to be understood as social acts based on a larger degree of organisation. SS-men, functionaries and regular prisoners behaved as social actors. As their actions on this level directed are against the military structure, they provided further possibilities for regular inmates to survive the extreme conditions in the camps.

Furthermore, the motivation behind the behaviour patterns was in Suderland's understanding based on pre-camp experiences. Different actors carried their views from the outside world in the camp. In the case of inmates, these views refer to their pre-camp lives. SS personnel, on the other hand, further had an outside life and carried their experiences inside the social sphere of the camps. Their pre-camp experiences were permanently shaped, which reflected in their behaviour patterns. The fact that even SS-men were social actors, who could behave because of their non-camp lives as supporters

56Suderland, Extremfall, 224-225.
57Ibid., 191-192.
58Ibid., 194-198.
59Ibid., 202.
of inmates, deserves in my opinion particular attention at this point. It challenges the common perception on a top-down relationship of SS-men and prisoners.

“Fragmented organised, latent social life” calls Suderland the third level of sociality. It did not exceed individual actions or the formation of small groups. Social life on this level was unseen by the SS and only affected functionary prisoners and regular inmates.60

The previous display of Maja Suderland's considerations already echoed a dissimilar role of functionaries and regular inmates. Because of their different status I want to further elaborate on the specific aspects of functionary prisoners in relation to the three levels of sociality. On the first level, regular prisoners were subjected to the military structure of the camps. Functionary prisoners, on the other hand, were participants and subordinates at the same time. They behaved as superior actors in the military organisation. Their two-folded role furthermore allowed them to escape the first level and to escape the military organisation. By doing so, they acted in the “shadow zone”. Their behaviour patterns in the second level therefore resembles the behaviour of SS-men as social actors. The functionary prisoners' hybrid status further affected the third level. As they could behave similar to SS personnel in the shadow zone, I assume an impetus on their social group formation. However, they were still inmates, what arguably resulted in the establishment of a small-scale social network with regular inmates.

Functionary prisoners held duties in the military organisation, but the second and the third level of sociality provided them with opportunities to interact with the SS. Their status thereby led to a very specific room for manoeuvre as actors between the camp administration and regular prisoners. Maja Suderland's considerations – transferred to the role of functionary prisoners – will therefore serve as an approach to explore this room for manoeuvre during the empirical section. My investigation will then be supplemented by a closer look on the military organisation itself. This second focus derives from the definition provided in the previous chapter and an assessment of the source material. However, Suderland's investigation on sociality further allows a more narrow approach to the military-like hierarchy in the camps.

The room for manoeuvre of functionary prisoners provides a basis for a further investigation of their behaviour. For a better understanding of the functionaries' actions, it is yet important to turn towards their motifs, too.

60Ibid., 210-215.
2.2.2. Differentiation Principles and their Importance for Behaviour: The Habitus

Maja Suderland offers a theoretical approach to the underlying motivation of behaviour. In her second set of discussions she refers to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the “habitus”. The habitus is a set of guiding principles for behaviour. It consists of social differentiation, physical features and an orientation towards ethnicity. A broader reflection on this concept allows an investigation of behaviour motifs during my empirical section.

The habitus first of all refers to the connection between the individual and the group. It defines the own in-group and out-group perceptions. Individuals observe their own position within social space by ascribing different attributes to their own group than to other groups. Group-belonging in this respect can be based on perceptions of commonality or on similar material resources. Thereby they relate them to various categories and define their own position within their surrounding society. Following the sociological perspective of Pierre Bourdieu, Suderland divides these attributions in three segments: social differentiation, physical features and perceptions of ethnicity. All three differentiation principles form the fundamental ideas of society. They define the own social identity by contrasting it to other members of the same society.61

Social status relies on the availability of resources. This status is the basis for social classes which in turn constitute a main feature of societies. Both concepts refer to the economical situation of individuals or groups.62 With economical changes the social status develops – it has a material basis. In her explanation of this phenomenon Maja Suderland refers to the concept of social space. This space is divided vertically in classes. Each of them occupy a specific level within the space. Differences between these classes lead to processes of social differentiation. The differentiation principle therewith turns into behaviour. Members of societies are “social actors who create, either knowingly or unknowingly, the social structure.”63 Social differences are not solely relying on the material basis, but also on its perception and behaviour linked to it.

In regard to the differences between she furthermore explains,

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61Ibid., 89-101.
62Ibid., 103.
63Ibid., 101.
“that these differences are not neutral, but tainted with significance, so these differing ways of life underlie a hierarchical classification, which, however, does not come from outside, but from the individual itself as a member of a society which is produced by its acting.”

Although social classes in concentration camps were similarly based on material privileges, they did not always form. In other words, similar material benefits to not naturally lead to group formation. Suderland only refers to a potency for class formation. Breaking the functionaries protruding position down to a definition of a homogeneous class would be too simplistic. I already depicted internal differences in the previous chapter. In her analysis Maja Suderland fails to acknowledge the importance of internal difference in the system of functionary prisoners for an in-depth analysis of the prisoners society. Nonetheless is her approach usable, because she establishes a division between collective and individual perceptions by recurring to the relation between individuals and social classes.

Higher social classes display their privileged position – either their material benefits or in form of behaviour. They establish the difference to lower classes. I therefore argue that these patterns applied to functionary prisoners, too. Their privileges were often visible and it further led to intra-group formation and behaviour. Because of the different levels of functionaries, I will ask for the influence of collective social differentiation for higher ranks and lower ranks. On the individual level the heterogeneity of different ranks of functionaries relied on the perception of different authorities and privileges. The value of these privileges differed individually, according to someone's goals. The individual appraisal was inter alia motivated by personal bounds, political or religious viewpoints. It could further depart from the material basis.

In my opinion, collective and individual perceptions of the social class and respective behaviour patterns differed. A functionary could enforce his distance towards most inmates, but at the same time macerate the structure towards other inmates. The influence of ethnicity can especially explain this behaviour.

Physical features constitute the second differentiation principle. Maja Suderland relates the importance of physical features to social space. This link refers to the destructive aims of the SS administration. De-individualisation was a main feature of the camps. Inmates were called by numbers and not by their names. The SS assigned them badge colours and

64 Ibid., 104-105.
65 Ibid., 107.
a letter, indicating their country of origin. Despite an eased identification, these measures even more served the purpose of de-individualisation and dehumanisation. Prisoners knew about the structure of this categorisation and always could relate to that and to their own position in the social space.

Most importantly, the stigmatisation system made functionaries visible and enforced the difference to the mass of inmates. Higher ranked functionaries usually wore an armband naming their position. Badges, letters and armbands provided an orientation when inmates first entered a camp. Measures of stigmatisation provided the most necessary and fundamental information about their surrounding persons.

The same is true for physical features: Nutritional status, represented in the build of inmates, provided information about hierarchical power distribution in the camp. It indicated health, diseases or exhaustion. Privileges shaped the physical status of inmates and thereby displayed their position, too. The functionaries' privileges were represented in their better physical build. Their physique portrayed most for every inmate the superiorly social position of the functionary. It also echoed the own powerlessness of regular inmates. There were even more possibilities to display a social position – a simple hair cut, which in every case stood out of shaven heads of the mass, but also clothing.

Physical features as motif for behaviour further rely on the importance of gender. Gender-based differentiation is created by linking physical characteristics to gender-related attributes. It is of biological origin, as well as it is constructed. Different to other constructions within societies, such as social classes and ethnicity, it is antagonistic. Male and female are often perceived as a determination of strong and weak. Femininity is subordinated to masculinity, gender construction is hierarchical. In addition, there is mostly some form of moral codex to which masculinity is exposed.

Gender construction in this understanding was two-sided: On the one hand, there was its representing function, discussed previously. On the other hand, it was an individual resource in the struggle against aimed de-individualisation by the SS. Gender as a differentiation principle is linked to perceptions of strength and health. Perception of the own masculinity raised self-confidence.

66 With a general recourse on Mittelbau-Dora, see: Wiedemann, Alltag, 74-78. In recourse to gender, see: Caplan, Gender, 86.
67 Sofsky, Ordnung, 138-139.
68 Suderland, Extremfall, 116.
69 Ibid., 111-114.
Sexual identity did also create awareness of the self. Cognition of the own desire could remind an inmate of his previous life. Dehumanisation tendencies were directed against any form of sexual desire or activity. The British historian Jane Caplan lays a significant attention to this feature of gender construction. In her essay titled “Gender and Concentration Camps” she argues for a broader perspective on this set of topics. Her portrayal thus serves as an extension of Maja Suderland's remarks on this issue. Caplan arranges her argumentation to a large extent around a comprehensive criticism on Sofsky's work. In reference to his concept of absolute power she states, that “the overall experience and meaning of ‘dehumanization’ must be recognized as gendered: differently inflected for men and women whose incorporation in ‘the human’ is organized through sexual difference.”70 She furthermore states as criticism on his work: “In this gap between the intended and the actual resided all those traits of identity, character and recognition that gender, among other factors, determined.”71 Gender construction and perceptions of it were not demolished by an absolute power in the camp. Especially masculinity was linked to behaviour patterns, most visible in sexual exploitation. It is again Jane Caplan who addresses this dependency relation:

“The concentration camps were places not only where inmates' sexual identity was punished, but also where male prisoners could be the beneficiaries as well as victims of sexual exploitation and the objects of sexualised violence.”72 Sexual exploitation was a consequence of the complex social structure within the camps. It was often based on – but not always – a dissimilar allocation of resources. The availability to these resources reflected the power of specific positions within the camps' hierarchy.

Ethnicity is the third fundamental feature of societies explained by Maja Suderland. Different to classes or gender, there is no material or biological foundation. It solely relies on ideas of commonality. These ideas, “which were not stated explicitly but were implicitly presumed and [are the] principle of distinction for description and self-description at the same time, were also social practice”73 Inmates in concentration camps acted according to their perceptions on ethnic descent. Ethnicity is not debatable, but personal bonds, pre-camp experiences and simply the necessity for group formations to pursue specific goals macerate its importance for actual behaviour. Other differentiation

70Caplan, Gender, 86.
71Ibid., 86.
72Ibid., 92-93.
73Ibid., 119.
principles can work conversely and hinder a realisation. By contrast, a different social class could create distance. Views on ethnic commonality did not always lead to joint actions.

In addition, ethnicity often lacks of a clear delimitation. The most prominent example in the camps were Jewish and Sinti and Roma prisoners. They were often perceived as a quasi-religious group – by the camp administration as well as by fellow prisoners – and their ethnic descent only played a minor role.74 I want extend her approach and state that ethnicity was linked to nationality. Inmates referred to each other as Frenchman, German, Russian. Ethnic descent was thereby sometimes submerged to national origin. Most prominent were prisoners from different countries of the Soviet Union, as a whole often referred to as Russians.

I moreover argue for another extension of her understanding: The colour of respective triangles were often perceived as a symbol for pre-cramp behaviour. Maja Suderland does not include this pattern in her concept, but she refers to it during her empirical section. In reference to prisoners labelled as homosexuals, she points out, “that the respective labelling was the cause for fragmenting as well as alienation processes, but it was also the basis for processes of communitarisation.”75 She explains the importance with a concept of 'social knowledge'. The badge-colour was perceived as a continuation of pre-camp life. Inmates in the camps related their own views on the world to this stigmatisation. Sets of social mechanisms triggered by perceptions of badge-colour and ethnicity are closely related. Both share the same features of labelling in the sphere of the camps. They were indicated once a person entered the camp and shape the inmate's social identity.

Given the complexity of her theoretical considerations and the thoroughness of her empirical section on the prisoner society, her simplified and too sparse analysis of the implications on functionary prisoners is surprising. Suderland's main interest in the respective chapter on functionaries is a short discussion of guilt and very structuralist approach. She identified the necessary instruments beforehand, but does not use them for an in-depth analysis of social stratification and behaviour patterns. Her study nonetheless provides the basis for an enlarged approach towards this prisoner group. During my

74Because of the small percentage of Jewish and Sinti and Roma inmates in Mittelbau-Dora and because they were mostly excluded from positions of functionary prisoners, a further discussion on anti-Semitism and Antiziganism would lead too far away from the thesis' subject. It is nonetheless provided by Maja Suderland: Suderland, Extremfall, 120-140. See for the camp's history: Wagner, Produktion, 366-389.
75Suderland, Extremfall, 316. The argument also resembles Sofsky's approach to group-formation processes. Sofsky, Ordnung, 144.
empirical chapter, I will first discuss the military the three levels of sociality and the functionaries' room for manoeuvre. It will serve as a background for further investigations on the influence of social differentiation, physical features and ethnic identity as well as its perceptions.

I am well aware of the fact that I do not display other aspects of her study, and that I leave out her derivation. My methodological approach makes a limited use of her theoretical depictions necessary. Again, theory testing is not the aim of this thesis. I will merely pursue new perspectives offered in Maja Suderland's work. Previous paragraphs already echoed the necessity to depart from her theoretical framework at some issues, but it is after all a very convenient tool for further investigations.

3. The Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp

Mittelbau-Dora was the last main camp founded during the Second World War. The camp was established in August 1943 and mainly served as a production site for the armament industry. Its late establishment caused specific features, making a short elaboration necessary. Due to that, this chapter serves to introduce the historical background of the camp and the main features of the prisoner society in Mittelbau-Dora. Once this is done, I will provide basic information on the guard's behaviour. These considerations are needed to complete the display of the microcosm in which the functionaries acted.

3.1. Historical Background and the Composition of the Prisoner Society

In August 1943 the camp Dora was established as a sub-camp of Buchenwald Concentration Camp. It was located close to the German town Nordhausen in Thuringia. The main task of the camp was the construction of an underground production site for the so-called “V-Weapons”. The Germans relocated the armament production due to the Allied air superiority. Allied bombers had destroyed the main construction facility of the “V2-rocket” only ten days before the camp was founded.

76 The “V-Weapons” were the flying bomb “V1” and the rocket “A4”, also called “V2”. The ‘V’ refers to the German word ‘Vergeltung’, meaning ‘revenge’. For a more detailed information on both weapons see: Joachim Neander. "Hat in Europa kein annäherndes Beispiel": Mittelbau-Dora - ein KZ für Hitlers Krieg. (Berlin: Metropol, 2000). Wagner, Produktion, 182-195.  
77 Wiedemann, Alltag, 37-39.
The first 107 prisoners from Buchenwald arrived at the site of the sub-camp Dora on 28 August 1943. At this time already an underground storage site for gas and lubricants for the German Wehrmacht existed, built prior to the war. The new inmates were forced to expand the existing tunnel system and their number increased drastically within a few months. Up to 11,000 prisoners worked in 12 hour shifts in the underground area and even lived there. At this time no barracks or camp existed – most inmates were not allowed to leave the tunnels for several months. Wolfgang Sofsky shortly describes how the four sleeping tunnels were build: “In the tunnels, which had a cross section of 11.5 metres, wooden floors had to be installed in a height of three metres in order to get a horizontal area of 120 by 10 metres for four storeyed bunk beds. Each tunnel housed some 1000 people.”

Because of the extreme living conditions, the camp became also known as the “Hell of Dora.”

At first, the inmates had to build the production site for the “V2”. They finished this task in early 1944. Only afterwards the camp administration decided to build an outside camp close to the tunnels. Prisoners erected the actual camp until May 1944. In fact, the housing was given the least priority so the prisoners barracks were only established after the factory and the guards' barracks had been built. After the prisoners moved to the barracks, they were forced to establish a “V1” production site in their former sleeping tunnels. For further projects, the underground area was afterwards still extended. Production and construction ran at the same time.

In the tunnels, prisoners had to work on a very limited space together with German civilian workers and engineers – often referred to as 'master' by the inmates. These civilians worked in the production, but they also had controlling duties over some inmates. Together with several capos they formed a complex supervisory apparatus.

In several places in the region, the Germans established facilities like in Dora. These facilities also formed sub-camps of Buchenwald in the beginning. The administration of

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78Ibid., 38.
79Wagner, Produktion, 134-139.
80Neander, Mittelbau-Dora, 61-77.
81The inmates worked 12 hours a day. When a half of them went to work, the other half occupied the sleeping area. Sofsky, Ordnung, 81.
83Wagner, Produktion, 168-170.
84Most survivors used the German word 'Meister' to refer to their German foremen. In German the word refers to a higher artisanal rank.
this camp complex became increasingly self-reliant during the summer of 1944. On 1 October 1944, this process led to the transformation of the sub-camp Dora to an independent main camp called Mittelbau-Dora. The name Mittelbau refers to an entire camp complex, which, at its maximum, had an extension of 39 sub-camps that belonged to it.

However, two types of sub-camps existed in the Mittelbau-Complex: construction and production camps. The inmates of construction camps had to build and further extend manufacturing sites. In production camps, the establishment was already finished and the inmates worked in the production. A similar difference applied for working details in Dora.

Within all camp sections and sub-camps, the inmates lacked of a sufficient supply of food and clothing. Especially in the first stage of the camp's existence in the tunnels. In the construction details the situation was only slightly better than in the tunnels. The prisoners' physical condition deteriorated so quickly in these details that often they were not capable of working after a few days in the camp. Work in a production command, on the other hand, was less destructive, because these inmates received an extra portion of food. Hence the production workers were to some extent privileged, even though they still lacked sufficient provisioning.

The division of sub-camps in production and construction camps led to a camp hierarchy, resulting in some kind of a 'typical' inmate's career: Usable – in the eyes of the Nazis of course – prisoners were first selected for production work. If their condition worsened, they were later on sent to a construction site. Prisoners not perceived as applicable were directly assigned to this hard labour. Once they were in a construction detail or camp, their physical condition deteriorated rapidly. For the most part they had no chance to return to an easier commando.

The sub-camps differed widely in size. They housed between 15 and up to around 8,000 prisoners compelled to forced labour. Around 15,000 inmates were detained in the main camp by the end of 1944. The number vastly increased in early 1945, when

85Wagner, Ellrich, 42.
86Ibid., 40.
87Wagner, Produktion, 333-342.
88Ibid., 433-464.
89Ibid., 433-464.
90Ibid., 230.
91Wagner, Ellrich, 56.
“evacuation transports” from Auschwitz and Groß-Rosen arrived. Most of the newly arrived prisoners were sent to sub-camps of Dora-Mittelbau.

Concerning the prisoner society especially in Dora it is to say that Mittelbau-Dora was no camp of first admittance. Every inmate who was deported there, has been in another camp before. During the first months of the camp's existence, most prisoners came from Buchenwald. 92

It is not possible to list or even track all changes within the prisoner society in Dora. Sources indicating the ethnic composition exist at least for 1 November 1944 and 1 April 1945.93 They reveal that the number of Russian prisoners decreased from 29.3% to 26.6% in the final months. The percentage of Polish prisoners increased from 28.1% to 34.2%. Both groups formed the majority of the camps' inmates. They were followed by around 15% to 17% of French inmates. So-called “Reichsdeutsche”, Germans born within the initial borders of the 'Reich', made up around 8%. Finally, there were around 4% Czech prisoners. All other groups formed a rest of less than 15%.94

However, as Jens-Christian Wagner points out, this statistical overview was not representative for the living conditions of each group in Dora:

“At the beginning of January 1945, French and Belgians made up about 14 and five percent, respectively, among the living prisoners of the entire complex. Among the dead of that month, however, they made up nearly 30 and 19 percent. Exactly vice versa was the relation among the Russian inmates. Their percentage among the dead was “only” around nine percent although they were nearly one third of the complete camp inmates. Among the Polish prisoners, as well, the proportion of the living was much higher than that of the dead.”95

Wagner argues later on, that the different mortality rate relied on the social and occupational background of the inmates: “Of the western inmates, many came from an academic and intellectual environment and had hardly any suitable professional qualification for being assigned to a production unit.”96 His argument hints at an interesting point: The selection for production in the camp was apparently more important than the racial hierarchy within the prisoner society. The importance of the social

92Wiedemann, Alltag, 36-40.
93Wagner, Produktion, 366-368, 617.
94Ibid., 617.
95Ibid., 370.
96Ibid., 371.
stratification according to the difference between production and construction detail will also be addressed during my analysis of social differentiation processes.\textsuperscript{97}

Nevertheless, on 11 April 1945 the main camp was liberated by the American Army. They took out most of the technology and parts belonging to the “V2”. The camp site was used as a DP-camp. Until the end of the 1940s most barracks were discharged and a first memorial site was established by the Soviet administration.\textsuperscript{98}

### 3.2. Notions on the Camp-SS

Maja Suderland's considerations on the three levels of sociality display, that the SS-men serving in the camps were social actors – they were more than only perpetrators. Especially her concept of the “shadow zone” challenges common misconceptions on this group. It is in my opinion therefore important to shortly address this group shortly.

Jens-Christian Wagner points out, that not all of the guards were members of the SS. Albert Speer, Minister of Armaments and War Production, suggested in 1943 that soldiers of the German Army (Wehrmacht) and Air Force (Luftwaffe) should be used as additional guards for the concentration camps. The reason was a simple lack of personnel, because most young men fought at the front. Despite these soldiers, the 'auxiliary guards' formed another group of non-SS-men serving in the camps.\textsuperscript{99}

New SS-men arrived in the camp in early 1945 with the transports from Auschwitz and Groß Rosen. Richard Baer, former camp commander of Auschwitz, replaced Otto Foerschner as camp commander in Dora. This turnover led to several other staff replacements within the ranks of the SS officers. Although we are relatively well informed about the staff turnover, the influence for the everyday life in the camp remains unclear due to a lack of documents. There are two main reasons for this lack: Firstly, no man of the new administration was accused in the Dora-Trial – so there is no information included in the trial documentation. If they were accused in other trials, their actions in Dora were usually not investigated. Secondly, most survivors do not distinguish between the regimes in their accounts. When they mention a change in early 1945, they focus on the shocking

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., 372.
\textsuperscript{98}After the Second World War Germany was divided in four different zones. Thuringia fell under Soviet occupation.
physical situation of the arriving inmates. Information about the new SS-men are usually missing.

Despite the staff turnover, the camp-SS in Dora still forms a desideratum in academic research. The situation is slightly different for Buchenwald. Between 1937 and 1942 the camp commanders Karl Otto Koch and Hermann Pister announced so-called “Commandant Headquarters’ orders”. They were an “instrument to regulate the camp life of the concentration camp-SS”.  

Felix Roth investigates the significance of these orders for everyday life in the camp. Roth states that they “in total contained plenty of information regarding administrative processes, the organisational structure of the camp-SS, the training, the duty and leisure behaviour of the camp personal as well as individual scope of action.”

Particularly Roth's notions on the behaviour and the room for manoeuvre of this men are important for an understanding of this men as social actors. Because of that, an elaboration on his study is necessary to investigate the relationship between the SS and functionary prisoners. His study is guided by the question,

“in what way the guards put the regulatory requirements of the camp and the orders of the commandants into practice and where they could evade those, or rather which scopes of action were established in everyday life. In terms of Karin Orth, the members of the camp-SS should not be understood as “supernumeraries of the superordinated structure or idea” but rather as independently acting subjects.”

Their role as social actors was opposed by an excessive over-regulation in the camps. SS-men were subjected to certain strict camp rules, determining their everyday life and duties. Roth argues, that this regulations were often challenged by SS-men:

“The commandant headquarters’ orders convey a picture of an undisciplined troop. Unpunctuality, eating, drinking and smoking, private conversations, conversations with inmates and the like were strictly forbidden during service, according to statutory requirements. However, Koch had to mention that continuously in his (commandant headquarters’) orders.”

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100 As this study is not published and therefore hardly accessible, a broader use of quotes is necessary to display Roth's line of argumentation. Felix Roth. Die Kommandanturbefehle des Konzentrationslagers Buchenwald 1937-1942. Ein Instrument zur Regelung des Lageralltags der Konzentrationslager-SS. (Erfurt: unpublished, 2015).
101Ibid., 11.
103Roth, Kommandanturbefehle, 24.
Roth further explains that violation of official camp rules did not create a harmless environment. In the everyday life of the camps situations emerged, where a controlling authority was missing. Work leaders were often alone with the inmates of the details. They were able to evade authority. Arbitrariness rather was the result.\textsuperscript{104}

Roth's assessment supports a further investigation of the relationship between the SS personnel and inmates. There was contact between both groups, which was not only guided by the guarding and supervising duties of the SS-men. Further is this notion important for functionary prisoners. If personal contact in form of "conversations with inmates" occurred, they most probably affected functionary prisoners, as they form an intermediate group.

\section*{4. Previous Perspectives: Camp Resistance and Triangles}

Previous research investigated functionary prisoners mainly through the prism of their solidarity and involvement in resistance, their badge colour or an individual case study. Although my approach is not guided by these aspects, my empirical study offers significant insights into the context of functionaries, badge colour and resistance. As a first part of my empirical findings I thus describe features of the political resistance in the camp. I contrast them with former lines of research to display the limited results of previous studies. In addition, this chapter serves as an introduction into specific behavioural patterns. Their outline is necessary for the following broader investigation of the functionary prisoners' behaviour. I will open this chapter by a brief overview of the understanding of the camp resistance in previous studies. Subsequently, I will, based on empiric material, investigate the structure of the resistance. Further I will portray behavioural patterns and their connection to motives. Finally I will address the shift of power between 'red' and 'green' prisoners in Dora.

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., 25.
4.1. Framing the Resistance Movement

Previous studies have shown that different resistance groups existed in the Mittelbau-Complex.\textsuperscript{105} However what does resistance in a camp context, and particularly in the context of Mittelbau-Dora, actually mean? Following a previous definition by the Auschwitz survivor Hermann Langbein Jens-Christian Wagner defines “all efforts for an organised counteraction against the extermination tendencies of the SS” as resistance.\textsuperscript{106} Reflecting on this definition he notes that the most effective way to resist was possible through “collaboration in the prisoner administration and the usage of their infrastructure.”\textsuperscript{107} Similar to other studies introduced above, he links resistance to functionary prisoners. I claim that this link deserves questioning and further investigation.

The term 'organised' usually signifies intentional anti-fascist action. Most members of the camp resistance were Germans labelled as political prisoners. Therefore the actions of the organised groups had a clear leftist handwriting. An equalisation of political prisoner and leftist ideology is however problematic. Such a too narrow focus excludes other motivations for behaviour. Later on I will show that the groups' actions followed specific aims. Those actions could depart from ideological intentions and were often shaped by the own struggle for survival.

Second, Wagner’s definition excludes certain groups. There are sources indicating that different resistance organisations existed in the camp, but did most probably not cooperate. The German survivor Ludwig Leineweber mentions a Russian resistance group in his testimony given during the Dora Trial. He was a member of the camp resistance and capo of the labour allocation office. According to his testimony, this organised group of Russian inmates carried out sabotage on a larger scale. Yet, they were not in possession of functionary positions and their opportunities were therefore limited.\textsuperscript{108} Unfortunately there is not much other information about this group – even their composition is unclear.\textsuperscript{109} If there was a coordination between a Russian group, which carried out acts of sabotage, and

\textsuperscript{105}See in general: Wagner, \textit{Produktion}. Wagner, \textit{Überlebenskampf}.
\textsuperscript{106}Wagner, \textit{Produktion}, 411.
\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., 411.
\textsuperscript{108}MA (Memory Account) Marcel Petit, 8 May 1966, DMD P1, Vol. 254, 3.
\textsuperscript{109}There are nonetheless other accounts which refer to the disclosure of a Russian group at the end of 1944 or the beginning of 1945. Most of the accused inmates were hanged. It is not possible to reconstruct their total number. Wagner, \textit{Produktion} 414-415.
the organised camp resistance focussed on here, is not clear.\textsuperscript{110} I was not able to find information on other groups active in the main camp of Dora.

Third, not all resistance was organized and carried out in groups. I understand individual sabotage acts equally as resistance – even if small-scaled. In Dora it was mostly aimed at the destruction of the produced weapons. The sources indicate such incidents, as they mention cases when such sabotage was revealed and the accused inmates were hanged.\textsuperscript{111}

Finally, resistance in this understanding was a collective action and needed organisation. These features pave the ground for a close link between resistance and functionary prisoners. One had to dispose of certain resources to be able to carry out acts of resistance. Indeed many members held functionary positions which provided them with some influence on the camp administration. They could thus affect everyday life. However, I will display now that the resistance in Dora consisted of only a small number of prisoners. The size of the group limited as a very limiting factor on their influence.

4.2. Composition of the Resistance

The composition of the main resistance movement in the camp was complex and needs to remain vague, due to a lack of sources. A reconstruction of the entire group of by means of the accessible source material is unfortunately not possible. Moreover, Ludwig Leineweber even stated in his testimony that no member of the resistance knew about the entire group.\textsuperscript{112} Survivors' witness accounts therefore allow now exact reconstruction.

However, Political resistance in Dora was established through Buchenwald. Its leading members were chosen by the functionary prisoner collective there. At first, the German political inmate Albert Kuntz became the leader of the resistance group in Dora. Kuntz had been a member of the “International Camp Committee”\textsuperscript{113} in Buchenwald. The resistance in Buchenwald had sent him to Dora due to an initiating interrogation by the Gestapo. Kuntz worked closely together with the camp commander Otto Foerschner, who was of course no member of the resistance, but apparently favoured political inmates.\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{110}Statement Ludwig Leineweber, 29 September 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 1273.
\bibitem{111}Ibid., 1273.
\bibitem{112}Ibid., 1273.
\bibitem{113}The 'Internationales Lagerkomitee' ('International Camp Committee') is a synonym for the widespread political resistance movement in Buchenwald. Wagner, \textit{Überlebenskampf}, 4.
\bibitem{114}Ibid., 5.
\end{thebibliography}
However, Kuntz's involvement in the resistance was discovered later on. Albert Kuntz was imprisoned in the bunker at the end of 1944 and shot on higher order on 22 or 23 January 1945.\textsuperscript{115} He was not the only leading figure in the camp resistance.

Leading members of the resistance movement were, furthermore, able to obtain the positions of camp eldest in Dora. The Germans Ludwig Szymcak, Georg Thomas, Christian Beham and Jupp Gamisch were leading members of the resistance and at some time camp eldest. Unfortunately, there is a lack of sources concerning their behaviour. Therefore their influence on the live in the camp and the camp resistance needs to remain vague.\textsuperscript{116}

There are yet other accounts to explore the organisations' composition: In 1960, Bruno Sickert and Erich Neumann, survivors and former active members in the organisation, mentioned 13 members in their joint report for the “Studentische Forschungsgruppe” in East Germany and named at least nine of them.\textsuperscript{117} The Czech survivor Jan Kaczmarek listed 12 members of the resistance, working with him in the labour allocation office.\textsuperscript{118} All members mentioned in both accounts were functionary prisoners in high positions. Other organised prisoners worked in the dispensary, as for instance the Czechoslovakian prisoner doctor Jan Cespiva and the Dutch doctor Hermann Louws Groeneveld. Cespiva was arrested for political resistance and sent by the Buchenwald resistance group to Dora in February 1944, to build up resistance there.\textsuperscript{119} Groeneveld, who arrived in August 1943 at Dora, belonged to the first 107 prisoners.\textsuperscript{120} Both survived the camp and provided testimony after liberation.

Jan Cespiva led a group in the inmates' dispensary.\textsuperscript{121} This group was able to build a small radio, which provided them with news about the ongoing war. Cespiva was in charge to maintain contact with the main camp since early 1944.\textsuperscript{122} During an interview he further mentioned that the resistance group planned a revolt, but in November 1944 the group was uncovered and many members were imprisoned in the bunker.\textsuperscript{123} At this time,
the organisation lost its influence. As a consequence of the bust the SS replaced most 'red' prisoners by 'green' ones.\textsuperscript{124}

The Gestapo interrogated the members in the bunker, including the former camp eldest. After long interrogations Szymcak, Thomas, Beham and Gamisch were shot on the evening of 5 April 1945 – shortly before liberation.\textsuperscript{125}

This history of Mittelbau Dora’s camp resistance provides a basement for further investigation. One point needs to be made particularly clear: The resistance movement only consisted of a few of inmates. Its members were still able to occupy the most important positions in the camp administration.\textsuperscript{126} Their limited influence did apparently not stem from less influential positions, but from their small number. I want to argue, that their little size forms a structure feature of the Dora camp and provides a fruitful groundwork for an investigation on the lower ranks of functionary prisoners. Nevertheless, in a second step of my argumentation I will now turn to the behaviour patterns for the resistance movement to lay a further basement for my later empirical analysis.

4.3. Behavioural Patterns linked to Resistance

At an earlier stage of this chapter I already introduced the account of the Czech survivor Jan Kaczmarek. In addition to his naming of members of the resistance movement, he reflected on his own duties within the organisation. Kaczmarek wrote his account some time between 1974 and 1978. In his report he lists his duties as a member of the resistance. His reflections portray the main goals of the resistance movement and thereby the behaviour patterns of the members:

“1. Organisation of rations for active members [...]  
2. Choice of people who appeared best qualified for responsible camp positions [...]  
3. protection of active prisoners [...]  
4. liquidation of inmates who murdered and denunciators of various kinds as far as it was reported to me [...]  
5. protection of newly arrived prisoners who arrived with recommendation, protection of underage persons [...]  
6. help for the sick of the resistance [...]”

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7. preparation of the resistance inmates for countermeasures to new intended SS crimes and chicane [...]
8. forgery of documents which were given to inmates [...]
9. organisation of sabotage and posting of respective inmates to the actions [...]
10. getting prisoners out of the tunnel [...]
11. I came to an agreement with the capos and formen on the kinds of protection for the prisoners, Capos and formen were subject to work assignment.”

It is not clear, whether the statements on his own role in the resistance are realistic or simply exaggerated. As a higher functionary in the labour allocation office, he was in charge for the assignment of prisoners for different working details. Also functionaries were allocated by this office. In chap. 2.1., I described how the assignment of different positions usually functioned: The official authority laid with the SS. There was one SS-man, Wilhelm Simon, in charge of the labour allocation office. It is unfortunately not possible to reconstruct Kaczmarek's influence on this process. This is not to say, of course, that this office did not have any influence on the allocation.

However, two aspects are very prominent in Kaczmarek's report: cadre protection and, as a result of it, victim exchange. Based on the introduced study by Lutz Niethammer, I want to argue that cadre protection forms a behaviour pattern and victim exchange is a mechanism linked to it. Yet, this argument makes a short elaboration necessary: Protection of the own group was most important, as the members of the resistance were always in danger. Furthermore, the resistance group itself was organised hierarchically – some members were regarded worth more than others. The same logic applied to their view on the entire prisoner society. Every time a member of the resistance organised that one inmate was taken out of a hard labour detail, this inmate was replaced by another prisoner. This other inmate was regarded less worth.


128 The person in charge of this office was for the most time the SS-Oberscharführer Walter Simon. For a closer portrayal on his role, see chap. 5.1.
Especially for the allocation of higher positions, members of the resistance were chosen by inmates in the administration offices. Thus chances for the survival of the own group increased – on the expense of others. As the resistance group was small, they could not protect every inmate in the camp. It was therefore necessary to select specific groups and prisoners.\footnote{Wachsmann, KL, 503. Niethammer, Antifaschismus, 45-46.}

Kaczmarek's account is representative for the post-war justification of former inmates of the resistance. The main motifs presented in these testimonies which were linked to resistance were cadre protection and victim exchange.\footnote{Orth, Lagergesellschaft, 14.} Karin Orth explains this connection as follows: „The descriptions of the former political prisoners need to be interpreted as discourses of survival, as reports which make the experiences into an absolute, which, moreover, try to legitimate the own actions as well as the own survival retrospectively.“\footnote{Ibid.}, 14-15.

Orth identifies a connection between the participation in the political resistance and the making of a memory account. Former members of the resistance often pursue a specific outcome when writing down their memories. They aim at a justification of their actions in the camp.

In the same essay Karin Orth compares the specific characteristics of memory accounts from former members of the resistance to the accounts of other groups. Concerning 'criminal' inmates, she writes the following: „Among the Greens there were hardly any who were used to reflect their own development and to put that into written words.“\footnote{Ibid., 15.} Testimonies of prisoners who were no members of the resistance obviously lacked knowledge about the organised groups in Dora. The Russian survivor Walerij Galilejevo states: „I did not know anything about the resistance. I was one among the army of the striped.“\footnote{“Über den Widerstand wußte ich nichts. Ich war einer im Heer der Gestreiften.” MA Walerij Galilejevo, DMD P1, Vol. 49.} This quote is representative, thus there are hardly any sources which display the perception of resistance activities. One reason is probably that the group(s) were small and lacked a recognisable influence.

To sum up, sources for a link between resistance and behaviour are problematic. On the one hand did former members aim at a justification, which makes an assessment of their reports very difficult. On the other hand is there a clear lack of accounts dealing with the
resistance, which were not written by former members. An in-depth portray to explain the functionaries behaviour by referring to the political resistance therefore can only remain vague, thus not reflecting their ambivalent role.

4.4. The Struggle between 'Red' and 'Green' Prisoners

During my introduction I related the focus on resistance movements to the perception of an opposing group, the 'green' inmates. I therefore want to shortly portray this line of thought and investigate the relation of both groups.

Most actions of the resistance collective were seemingly undertaken to protect the own group against a domination of 'criminal' prisoners.\footnote{Wagner, Produktion, 398-410. In general: Wagner, Überlebenskampf.} This struggle shaped the actions of the resistance in Dora. In the camp's history, there is one event of symbolic value for the transition of power: In spring 1944, the German camp eldest Ludwig Szymcak and Georg Thomas refused to carry out the hanging of prisoners. They were afterwards replaced by inmates with a green badge. The refusal of Szymcak and Thomas is frequently mentioned in the survivors' witness accounts.\footnote{MA Karl Feuerer-Carolus, DMD P1, Vol. 152. MA Jiri Benes, DMD P1, Vol. 62, 10.} Furthermore, it was a point of interest in the Dora Trial in Dachau.\footnote{Statement Alfred Bernhard, 17 July 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 4, 33-42.} The rejection itself is well documented, but the following developments are not. It is clear though that a couple of days later the German prisoners Josef Kilian and Willi Zwiener became the hangman and the new camp eldest.\footnote{Wagner, Produktion, 406-407.} The French survivor Jean Michel recalls a statement of the camp commander only a few days later: “As the political prisoners don't want to do the hangings, we would take the green ones because they are asking for it“.\footnote{Statement Jean Michel, 1 October 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 8, 88.} Szymczak and Thomas were sent to the bunker. Interestingly, they were later allocated for new influential positions in the camp: Szymcak became the capo of the labour statistics office and Thomas became the capo of the clothing supply.\footnote{Statement Ludwig Leineweber, 29 September 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 1180. Statement Alfred Bernhard, 17 July 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 4, 42.} The refusal took place in March 1944. Afterwards the political prisoners still occupied the key functionary positions at the inmate's dispensary, the camp police, the orderly office and the kitchen.\footnote{Wagner, Produktion, 406.} A few months later the situation changed again. Political prisoners intrigued and regained their dominance. At the end of 1944, the distribution of power fluctuated a last
time. The German Roman Drung, again a carrier of a green triangle, became the camp eldest.\textsuperscript{141}

However, these changes only affected the highest positions in the camp and there was most probably never an absolute predominance of one group. To this points for example the fact that the prisoner doctor Jan Cespiva remained in his position until the end of 1944. His status was not affected by the changes. Nevertheless, when the resistance group was uncovered he was sent to the bunker. In a statement provided on 4 May 1945 he describes, that the Gestapo interrogated him in the bunker until April 1945. His connection with the resistance was revealed and he received a death sentence. According to his statement, it was not carried out because his medical skills were needed.\textsuperscript{142}

A preserved list of the block eldest in Dora supports my assumption that it was always a mix of “green” and “red” triangles who held the top functionary positions. The list, which sadly lacks a date, reveals the composition of this group at a certain stage of the camp's existence. It lists 14 'green' and 14 'red' inmates in block eldest positions. They were supplemented by four prisoners categorised as 'asocial' and one homosexual. Out of these prisoners, four were non-German political inmates.\textsuperscript{143}

The camp resistance in Dora only had less influence on the everyday life of the camp. Even more, the room for manoeuvre was limited due to a lack of members. Actions primarily aimed at cadre protection. This behaviour pattern initiated a mechanism, which simply exchanges the protected member of the own group with an out-group victim. Cadre protection mainly affected the higher ranks of functionaries and was apparently mostly directed against 'green' inmates. Despite these findings is the outcome for an investigation on the functionaries' behaviour not satisfactory. I will therefore progress to a broader analysis.

5. Empirical Section

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, my empirical findings show that it was mostly pre-camp experiences and perceptions that shaped the behaviour of functionary prisoners. Using Maja Suderland's considerations as a theoretical framework I will identify and analyse specific aspects and dimensions of the functionaries' behaviour in the camp. This

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 407.
\textsuperscript{142} Interrogation Jan Cespiva, 4 May 1945, NAW, M-1079, Roll 4, 820.
\textsuperscript{143} “Verzeichnis der Blockältesten im Lager”, NAW, M-1079, Roll 1, 549.
will paint a picture of functionary prisoners which differs from the images created by means of approaches which focus on the camp resistance. My research thus points to a major shortcoming, or misunderstanding, regarding the behaviour of functionary prisoners which becomes evident through a thorough examination of the source material.

The first part of the chapter is devoted to an assessment of the functionary prisoner’s room for manoeuvre in relation to their position in the camp hierarchy. Subsequently, I will outline different motifs on their behaviour in relation to their social status. In the third and final part of the empirical section I will investigate the influence of ethnicity and nationality on the functionary prisoners' behaviour.

5.1. The Functionaries' Room for Manoeuvre

As I mentioned before, the system of functionary prisoners was hierarchical and embedded in the overall camp administration's structure. The German historian Bernhard Strebel summarises its role within the entire administration as follows:

“The system of functionary prisoners formed the lowest level of the surveillance hierarchy of the concentration camp. It did not only correspond to the organisational structure of the SS surveillance personnel, but it was also, like them, based on the principle “divide et impera”. Albeit under constant supervision by the SS, surveillance, control and execution tasks as well as administrative duties were delegated immediately.”144

The quote implies that functionary prisoners actually had room for manoeuvre – even though it was limited by control of the SS. Room for manoeuvre determines decisions and hence impacts and limits behaviour. And as behaviour is an element of social interaction, room for manoeuvre is a significant category for the social structure of a space. As described earlier, Maja Suderland outlines the three levels of sociality of the camp. As I described in chap. 2.2, she identifies the military structure of the camp as a major determinant of the prisoners’ behaviour. Following her approach I consider the military structure as decisive for the functionaries' choices and actions. After all it determined the room for manoeuvre each and every prisoner enjoyed. However, as the functionary prisoners participated in actions beyond the rules of the SS in one way or another, their

144Strebel, Ravensbrück, 36.
behaviour was also impacted by the “shadow zone”, as Suderland calls the second level of sociality. Although not directly determined by the rulers of the camp it creates a certain room for manoeuvre for every prisoner which very much depends on the prisoner’s access to resources, networks and status. The third level of sociality Suderland identifies is the level of latent social life. In the light of Suderlands categories I will investigate these rooms for manoeuvre, and how they were used, in relation to a prisoner’s position. Examining primary sources I will mainly focus on two aspects, or social spaces of camp life which have a special significance for functionary prisoners. One is the functionary prisoner’s interface with the SS. As I described before, high-rank functionaries responded to a particular SS-men according to a military structure. This, but also less formal contact with SS-men might have impacted the functionaries’ room for manoeuvre. Contrary to what one might assume, given the general image of SS-men, their behaviour was not static and reflects manifold cases of a disregard of the camp rules. Disregard, or at least using the camp rules, belongs to Suderland's “shadow zone”. The other social space I will take a closer look on is the administration. Many functionaries worked there, and the work included responsibility, and thus also the possibility to make choices and influence decisions by the SS. I argue, that this group was even able to shape the composition of the group of functionaries.

I investigate those two social spaces to discover relations or causalities between the features of those social spaces, and a potential room for manoeuvre of the functionary prisoners which belonged to this space. Moreover I assess to which extent the respective causalities fit into one of Suderland’s level of sociality.

5.1.1. Functionaries and SS-men – an influential Relationship?

The camp commander was the highest institution in the camp concerning the allocation of functionary prisoners. He was followed by the 'protective custody camp leader' and the 'work allocation leader'. Every prisoner who became a functionary in a higher position relied on the favour of these persons. The SS-man Wilhelm Simon held the position of the labour allocation leader between October 1943 and March 1945.145 His main task was the distribution of prisoners to different work details. Simon's responsibilities even outreached

145Wagner, Produktion, 620.
the main camp Dora and he was able to send prisoners to sub-camps for specific tasks. During the Dora Trial in Dachau, he was one of the accused. His role within the camp administration was intensively interrogated. His actions were furthermore portrayed in several memory accounts, which were written after the Trial. I will therefore refer to him frequently in my investigation. Within the prisoner society, the camp eldest was the most powerful person in the camp. He was solely responsible to the SS and accountable for everything that was going on in Dora. As I portrayed above, changes occurred concerning this position. 'Red' and 'green' prisoners took over several times. Two of the camp eldests survived imprisonment and testified as a witness during the Dora trial. Roman Drung, the last camp eldest in Dora and carrier of a green triangle, describes his duties as following, when asked about his duties (Q=Question, A=Answer):

“A To inform the prisoners of the regulations and orders of the SS, to see to it that everybody arrived at roll call on time, that there was peace and quiet on the roll call field, so that the block eldests wouldn't try any Black Market activities with the food, for the general peace and quiet of the camp.”

Q The position of camp eldest at Dora was a very important one, was it not?
A If it was important, I don't know.
Q You had a great deal of responsibility for all these thousands of prisoners, did you not?
A I did not have to carry the responsibility for the prisoners because the responsibility was carried by the SS.
Q Now, did you have any jurisdiction over the capoes in the camp?
A Sorry to say, no.”

Drung rejects any responsibility. Throughout his whole witness account, he presents himself as a harmless victim of the system, who only carried out orders. This particular statement is shaped by this strategy as well.

Willi Zwiener held the position of a camp eldest from 18 March 1944 to 15 June 1944. He was allocated for this position after the refusal of Ludwig Szymcak and Georg Thomas to carry out an execution. In the Dora trial he was accused and sentenced for

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147The letters A and Q are directly taken from the sources. Q refers to a question by an attorney, A introduces the answer of the witness/defendent. Statement Roman Drung, 13 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 6, 737-738.
148Wagner, Produktion, 621.
beating and killing inmates. In court, Zwiener described is competences like Drung. His main aim was certainly to defend himself during the interrogation. Even though Drung stood not at the bar during that trial, he most probably feared to become accused as well, too. Their statements have to be read in the light of their purpose: to exculpate the former block elders. As they do not offer sufficient information on the functionaries’ their room for manoeuvre, it is necessary to turn towards witness and memory accounts of other survivors.

The Dora trial produced not only these two testimonies on the position of the camp eldest in Dora, but many more. They frequently refer to the behaviour of Willi Zwiener. The testimony of the Belgian survivor Albert DeFroy is quite representative for these descriptions of the camp eldest: „Zwiener was not a man; he was a beast. He was a prisoner just like us and he seriously mistreated his own comrades who were prisoners just like himself.“ Willi Zwiener's behaviour is in general portrayed very negative by survivors. It derives from the sources that he harassed and beat other inmates on a regular basis. However, his power was not unlimited. Several witnesses describe how Zwiener was charged for murder in the camp. The story departed at the post office. Through this office prisoners could receive packages sent to them from outside the camp. The packages were checked, and often plundered by the SS before the prisoners received them. Still the packages constituted a great resource. When camp eldest, Zwiener was repeatedly blamed of theft at the post office. The prisoners complained about this and he was, among others, officially accused for theft from these packages. According to several testimonies, the person who accused him was the camp interpreter Major Doering. Apparently, Zwiener and his fellows took revenge for this accusation and killed Doering. The German survivor Oskar Junk describes this incident during his statement in front of the court in Dachau:

„Zwiener together with various block eldests and block leaders and capos were dismissed from the Post Office for theft and they were sent to a punishment detail and were transferred to Ellrich or some other camp and on the way there the transport they beat up this interpreter so badly that when they arrived at the next command or camp the commander of the camp there refused to take him in and then they came"
back and came to block two in Dora and the camp interpreter went to the dispensary right away and he died there. I saw the corpse myself. It was terribly beaten up. Zwiener said that he had told on him, that he had told on them."  

For the act of beating Doering to death, Zwiener did not use his power as a functionary, but his networks, as he had supporters. Moreover he committed a crime according to the camp rules. The deed is thus located on the second level of sociality – in the “shadow zone”.

There is a lack of sources displaying the further story of Zwiener’s fellows. However, Willi Zwiener was charged for murder of Doering. He was sent to the bunker, only to obtain a

“new position of trust and confidence with the Gestapo in Ellrich and [he] had the privileges of coming and going from camp whenever he so wished and we referred to him as „the spy“. It was a fact to us that he was working hand in hand with the Gestapo because at no time in the history of camp Dora did a situation like this occur where a man who was charged with murder suddenly was released and given more privileges than he had had before and more privileges than any man had ever had as a prisoner in Mittelbau.”

Here it becomes apparent that Zwiener gained from this incident. He received even more privileges than he had before, and his room for manoeuvre increased at least concerning the aspect that he could leave the camp temporarily.

The statements about Zwiener, but also about the former camp eldest Szymcak and Thomas reflect certain characteristics of the position of the camp eldest in Dora: First, the number of camp eldests was not constant. When Szymcak and Thomas refused to perform the hanging, the two positions as camp eldest number one and two were reallocated. Zwiener remained camp eldest for some time. A “second camp eldest only remained there for less than two weeks and then he was relieved. Zwiener in the following period was alone as Camp Eldest One.” Second, they were not entirely free to act as they wished. If they came in conflict with the rules or the orders of the SS they were entitled to punishment. The punishments we know about so far were interestingly very mild. Both Szymczak and Thomas, who had publicly refused an order and Zwiener who killed a

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153The missing punctuation in this quote derives from the source material. To stay with the original tone, I decided not to keep it as it is. Statement Oskar Junk, 27 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, 1096.
154Statement Willy Steimel, 26 May 1947, NAW, M-1079, 942.
prisoner received punishment that did not change their living conditions in the camp. Although they lost their position as camp eldests, they were all given another influential task. They were not completely deprived of their privileged status. Szymcak became capo of the labour allocation office. Thomas was allocated as the capo of the clothing supply office.\textsuperscript{156} Zwiener got a position in the subcamp Ellrich.

Unfortunately, there are no administrative sources that could explain this soft punishment. I assume that the trust the SS had in these persons played a major role. The relationship between higher functionaries and SS officers seems to be important. In the mentioned cases not the military structure or camp rule bestowed the punished with new privileges, but decisions of particular SS-men. Hence not only the structure in relation to the functionary position provided room for manoeuvre, but also the functionaries’ relationships to the decision makers. A quote by the survivor Ludwig Leineweber, capo of the labour statistics office and a member of the resistance, supports this: „Szymbak was on excellent terms with Simon, the labour allocation leader, and both understood each other very well.\textsuperscript{157}

I want to turn to another level of functionary prisoners to verify this thought. In his witness account the German former inmate Theo Fischer describes the following incident: He was working under a capo named Rudi in the kitchen detail in the tunnel. Both he and the capo were told by the camp administration to enter the inmates' camp before sunset, when an SS-guard ordered them to unload a crockery wagon in the tunnel. According to Fischer, the capo told the guard about their order. Then the SS-men beat “Rudi”. The capo hit back and the guard fell to the ground. As soon as Fischer and his capo reached the gate afterwards,

“the incident had been reported by phone to the camp leadership. Capo Rudi was replaced immediately and on the next day, he had to stand on a pedestal, visible to everyone, with a sign on his chest, on which everybody could read what he had done. But that was all. Work assignment leader Simon, for whom Rudi fulfilled important works as the only one in Buchenwald, had not forgotten that. Maybe, he admired Rudi’s courage. Rudi stayed capo for the special use of the work assignment leader. After some days, a new position was created for him. He became capo of the room elders.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{156} Statement Ludwig Leineweber, 29 September 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 1180.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 1178.
\textsuperscript{158} “[…] war das Vorkommnis schon der Lagerleitung telefonisch durchgegeben. Kapo Rudi wurde sofort abgelöst und am nächsten Tage musste er für alle sichtbar auf einem Podest stehen mit einem Schild vor der
Fischers story shows that personal connections, even from previous imprisonment in other camps, shaped the room for manoeuvre of functionary prisoners. For most inmates a fight with an SS-man would have led to a death penalty. Moreover, the story indicates that these relationships could influence the structure of the functionaries' hierarchy: It was possible to create a new position in favour for one individual person.

Further, the role of the SS as social actors becomes visible in the story told by André Mouton, a French survivor of Mittelbau Dora. Mouton was close to an accusation for sabotage. The capo in charge of his detail convinced the SS-man to suspend punishment. In front of the SS-man, he twice slapped Mouton very hard in the face. Later on, the capo approached Mouton and explained to him – “that he did not have another choice but treating me like that. This was the only possibility to save me from the prison sentence for sabotage.” The capo hence knew about his ability to influence the SS-men's decision – even in such a seemingly lost case. He was aware of his room for manoeuvre, and used it to protect the prisoner, although this was connected to an act of violence. In this case, the trust of the SS-men that the capo has the situation under control and principally acts according to the SS-men's wishes is crucial for the fact that the capo succeeds. With his success, the SS-men confirmed his room for manoeuvre again. Whereas the first examples provided here concerned eldest, this example portrayed the behaviour of a capo. Obviously, both groups shared common duties and privileges, although their task differed at first sight. The supervision of a block respectively a working detail provided both groups with specific authorities. Apparently they also had a very similar room for manoeuvre which included for example the physical punishment of other prisoners. I will thus treat both groups as one the same level within the camp hierarchy, as well as their respective subordinates.

The authority of the high-ranks functionaries allowed this group to kill other inmates for null and void reasons. Numerous accounts generally mention the murder of prisoners by capos and block eldests. Yet, there are only a few accounts displaying specific incidents of violence. Camp authorities apparently accepted violent behaviour and sometimes even supported or demanded it: “Capos drove the inmates to work. They chased them to

exhaustion. They did not only shout insults, but they also beat other people to death.\textsuperscript{160}

The former prisoner Walerij Galilelejevo recalls the official licence of capos to beat their subordinate inmates in their working detail on a very general level. Nonetheless, murderer also happened more or less secretly. The French survivor Yves Beon mentions one incident, were a block eldest had sleeping problems at night. He then found one inmate cleaning his from diarrhoea filthy clothes at night in the washing room. The block eldest beat him to death. He justified this behaviour with his duty to keep the block in order and that his barrack is no “pigsty”.\textsuperscript{161}

Even when the SS was aware of such murderous behaviour, it was sometimes accepted and the functionaries were rewarded for their brutality:

\begin{quote}
“Except fot the many brute deeds, I particularly remember, how a capo struck four prisoners dead with a rubber hose out of unknown reasons. An SS-man joined him, he looked at the situation and offered the capo two cigarettes.”\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

It is interesting that Zwiener was charged for killing Doering, while it was apparently normal in everyday camp life that functionaries with disciplinary authority killed other prisoners. We can only assume that the reason for his punishment lay in the position of the victim. Doering was the camp interpreter, thus also a functionary. This points to a difference between violence towards other functionaries and regular inmates. Doering’s position was not as high as Zwiener’s, according to my definition: As an interpreter, he lacked the disciplinary power. His position, however, was very important. And he was in touch with the SS frequently. It is thus possible that he was on good terms with some SS-men as well.

\textsuperscript{160}"Kapos trieben die Häftlinge zur Arbeit an. Sie jagten sie bis zur Erschöpfung. Sie schrien nicht nur Beleidigungen, sondern schlugen die Menschen auch zu Tode.” MA Walertj Galilejevo, DMD P1, Vol. 49.

\textsuperscript{161}Beon, \textit{Dora}, 203-204.

5.1.2 The Administration as a Resource of Power

Many survivors name the high-rank group of functionaries “camp celebrities”\(^{163}\). The signified group consisted mainly of camp eldest, block eldest and capos. Some survivor's also perceive prisoner doctors and functionaries who work at the administrative offices as members of this group.\(^ {164}\) The term administrative offices serves as a collective term for the labour statistics, the labour allocation and the clerk's office. These offices were most general in charge for a correct counting and distribution of inmates.\(^ {165}\) Inmates working in these offices were officially subordinated to their respective capos, but their power was far reaching. They were able to break up the official structure. I classify them as belonging to the higher ranks, because of their disciplinary power.\(^ {166}\) The former prisoner doctor H. L. Groeneveld recalls one instance, when a functionary working for the Gestapo fell ill:

> „One of them was known to us. The death of many people was on his conscience. Lucky for him, he fell ill and we condemned him to never be recovered. An injection of carbolineum gave him the end. I did not have the courage to do it myself. A French colleague did it for me.”\(^ {167}\)

Apparantly the hospital staff killed this functionary as a revenge for his deeds or simply to be safe from him in the future. This deed portrays a significant room for manoeuvre that did not depend on the status and position in the hierarchy, but in the workplace, the resources and the pre-war education. Even if the SS suspected prisoners’ involvement in his death, there was probably no way for the SS to proof such cases under the conditions of a camp. Moreover, a functionary prisoner was still a prisoner and his death did probably not justify any effort. Therefore the doctors remained unpunished. Another explanation is that prisoner doctors often had to work hand in hand with SS doctors. Due to the direct and everyday contact it is quite probably that they had a personal relationship to the SS-men in their field of work. Again, the sources from the Dora trial confirm this assumption.\(^ {168}\)


\(^{164}\)Statement Cecil Francis Jay, 7 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 6, 61.

\(^{165}\)Statement Ludwig Leineweber, 29 September 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 1165.

\(^{166}\)See above, also: Sofsky, *Ordnung*, 154.


\(^{168}\)Wagner, *Produktion*, 621.
of the ten SS doctors for the main camp Dora them were especially interrogated during the Dora Trial: Karl Kahr and Alfred Kurzke.\textsuperscript{169} Several witnesses – former inmates who worked in the dispensary, as well as regular prisoners – referred positively to these two doctors. They “behaved correctly”\textsuperscript{170}. Their personal commitment seemingly went beyond the Hippocratic Oath: Alfred Kurzke apparently warned the inmates working in the dispensary of a spy.\textsuperscript{171}

We can see that the relationship between the SS doctors and the functionaries in this detail undermined the camp rules. Hence we can assume that a personal relationship stemming from a working relationship between prisoner doctors and SS-men shaped the functionaries room for manoeuvre.

The possibilities of administrative offices relied on the complex nature of their work. I already introduced an example of Jan Kaczmarek, who lists 12 inmates working in the labour statistics. I believe that the number of inmates in the other offices was most probably not different. These details were of course supervised by the SS, but the sheer number of inmates made transitions of favoured prisoners possible. Even more, the German survivor Willi Steimel further refers to a disinterest of the SS: „For these workers neither orders nor other directions were given by the SS, only the order to organize this office in such a way that information about work detail possibilities was available at any time.“\textsuperscript{172} Jupp Wortmann, a former inmate working in the clerk's office, also portrays the power of these details: He was able to cover an escape attempt by six other prisoners. According to his description, he simply told an asking SS-men, that these missing men were in his office and therefore not attending the roll call.\textsuperscript{173} Also Leineweber, the aforementioned capo of the labour statistics, provides an example of the room for manoeuvre of the functionaries at the administrative offices:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[169] SS-Ostuf. Dr. Karl Kahr was the 'Standortarzt' (responsible doctor for the Mittelbau-Complex) between January 1944 and January 1945. SS-Standartenoberjunker Dr. Alfred Kurzke, who was 'Lagerarzt' (SS camp doctor) and responsible for the SS-dispensary, worked in Dora between November 1944 and April 1945. Wagner, \textit{Produktion}, 621.
\item[170] MA Marcel Petit, 8 May 1966, DMD P1, Vol. 254, 2. Even during the Dora Trial, the prosecution accepted a positive notion on their behaviour. Statement Jean Michel, 1 October 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 107.
\item[171] Perpetuation of Testimony Ferdinand Karpik, 21 May 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 5, 147. Even so: Statement Ludwig Leineweber, 26 September 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 7, 99.
\item[172] Statement Willy Steimel, 26 May 1947, NAW, M-1079, 903.
\end{footnotes}
The prisoners who were to be hanged, had a red line on their file. With the rapid advance of the Allies, such a chaos arose in the camp, so that the former prisoner Wyglendatz exploited the situation and he removed the red line from my file and replaced it by a green line."

Interestingly, not only temporary chaos, but also a general lack of interest of the responsible SS-men opened room for manoeuvre. This becomes visible when we take a look at the composition and recruitment of functionary prisoners in Dora.

The power to appoint functionaries was officially lying with the SS. Transfers between different details lay in the competence of the different administrative offices. This discovered also the previously mentioned research on camp resistance and the work of its members in labour allocation and clerk's office in other camps. Accounts for Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp show that high-level functionaries, especially capos, were able to appoint other functionary prisoners and thereby shape the composition of the functionaries' hierarchy. The Frenchman Jean Mialet, who survived several camps of the Mittelbau-Complex, provides a comprehensive description of his imprisonment. He included his allocation as a higher functionary in his depiction: “that he [the capo] needed an assistant for his contacts with the camp superiors, he hired me as a clerk. The command was to small to occupy such a post, that is why he hired me instead of André, the man from Poitiers, as foreman.” Mialet was appointed to a functionary position by the capo of his command. He did this according to his needs – at the expense of another prisoner who had to give up a function. Another example shows a similar process from another perspective. The French survivor Francine Sprung-Pierrard apparently held a privileged position as a lower functionary. A new capo took over his detail and drove him out of this position, as his daughter describes:

“The barber capo, a Czech, tried to place his fellow Czech inmates as barbers in the camp. He took away the leather from my father and he was angry about my father. He beat him and lead him to the camp elder, a thug, wore him down.”


Even though the incident is not entirely clear, it appears that the hair dresser capo wanted to have one of his fellows in his commando, and succeeded to replace Sprung-Pierrard with this fellow. It was thus not only the SS and the labour allocation office, who promoted regular prisoners to privileged positions and made functionaries resign. Higher level functionaries influenced the composition, too. The authority of the high ranks included the right to appoint their subordinated functionaries. They could further influence the composition of a detail of lower level functionaries.

I already explained the different potencies of both levels. The lower ranks lacked of authority to issue directives. Inmates in these details were subordinated to the changes. The appointments always worked top-down, from a superior higher functionary to a subordinated position. The power to influence the recruitment for functionary positions was a structural feature of the high ranks of functionary prisoners in Dora. The SS was still the entity in power and could of course influence this dynamics, but, as long as everything within the block or detail went according to their aims, there was probably no reason take action.\footnote{Sofsky, \textit{Ordnung}, 163.}

So far, my examples portrayed different entities shaping the composition of functionaries in Dora: the SS, the labour allocation office and especially capos. It is further important to shortly address this power in relation to the position of the camp eldest. During the previous chapter I addressed the shift in predominance between 'red' and 'green' prisoners. I want to shortly refer again to the list of block eldest, which did not reflect any hegemony of one group. This source does not strengthen an enlarged influence of the camp eldest to allocate block eldest. The same most probably applies for capos, too.

A different picture paints the former camp eldest Willi Zwiener: “I, at that time, had put some green ones in the position of block eldest. I had one-third red ones, political prisoners, as block eldests, one-third habitual criminals as block eldest and one-third foreigners as block eldests. The major portion of these were in Protective Custody.”\footnote{Statement Willi Zwiener, 25 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 8, 1052.}

Albeit we have to use this witness account with great care due to the previously outlined conditions under which it was given, his statement provides us with an important
information. He openly says that he was the one appointing the block eldest, and he mentions this freely in his testimony. The fact that he had the competence to do so seemed nothing he wants to hide. We can assume that it was quite a normality in the camp that the camp eldest appointed the block eldest. The camp eldest’s impact in the allocation of capos is unfortunately not reflected in the accessible sources. Every change in the structure and hierarchy of functionary prisoners seemed to be an interplay of different entities. The responsible SS-men were first and foremost in charge. Their approval was necessary for every decision. Changes furthermore needed consent of the labour allocation office. Unfortunately, hardly any survivor describes the official procedure. An exception provides Jean Mialet. I already mentioned his promotion to the clerk of his working detail. He later on lost this position and became a regular prisoner again. As a result, his physical constitution worsened so he went to the dispensary to turn in sick. There he happened to have a discussion with the Dutch prisoner-doctor, where he was able to use his language skills:

“Damn it! A great Man!”

Then, the Dutch asked me kindly:
“What should I do for you now?”
“I want another command.”
“Right, here.”

He wrote something on a piece of paper telling me to go into labour statistics. After this wonderful doctor’s visit, I hastened to come back to the barracks, which housed the labour statistics. I was full of hope but also very uneasy, because I was suspicious of my previous unsuccessful initiatives. This time, the hope confirmed. In the offices of labour statistics Emile helped me a lot, fat Emile, an Austrian intern for years, and a Russian from France. I was amazed that these men talked to me kindly, they were interested in me and did not hate me. On that same day, I was made potato peeler. The terminally ill were sent there on those days, when the SS headquarters was in a good mood, for whatever reason.”

180.
Mialet is referring positively to three people who are working in administrative entities – the doctor, Emile, and a Russian prisoner. He also mentions his astonishment that these men supported him, and thus used their room for manoeuvre for his benefit – without profiting from it, and even though Mialet did not belong to their networks.

It is often impossible to exactly reconstruct the procedure described by Jean Mialet. However, it seems that decisions were often made by functionaries, and the SS only approved them. Certainly it was not possible for functionary prisoners to influence the fate of every fellow prisoner. That is why functionaries concentrated on protecting people from their networks – as the example of the Czech hair dresser capo displayed. The limited possibilities and the hierarchical structure led to favouritism and discrimination of single inmates and groups. As we could see, actually both processes went hand in hand. If one person was promoted to a privileged position, another prisoner was usually degraded. Throughout the next chapters I will examine further examples, focusing on the link between the survivors' views on ethnicity and the shape of the system of functionary prisoners in Dora.

My investigation on the room for manoeuvre in this chapter focussed on the higher ranks of functionaries. I examined two social spaces: the interface between the functionary prisoners and the SS, and the camp administration offices. I outlined how rooms for manoeuvre are constructed in both spaces.

Returning to Suderland’s threefold categorization of sociality, I admit that the military structure determined the functionary prisoners’ room for manoeuvre. First of all, it constituted the behavioural framework in which all the protagonists acted. Moreover, it determined the flow of power. In a top-down direction the functionaries enjoyed the freedom to punish prisoners, as well as to recruit prisoners for certain commandos and positions. The difference between functionary prisoners with disciplinary power, and those without, became most apparent in the case of Zwiener's murder. Regarding the “shadow zone”, we were able to observe that even the SS-men were involved in decisions and actions beyond the official camp rules. The decision not to punish a prisoner, or to promote a prisoner were often not in line with the original camp laws. This fact points to the SS-men’s room for manoeuvre, and how it enlarged the functionary prisoners'. This in turn leads us to the third level of sociality, the agency and interaction of individuals, and partly also groups. Here we could see that it is crucial to include the SS-men, when
investigating the social space of the functionary prisoners. However, they were sometimes able to overcome the boundaries of the military structure in group formation processes. I will address this issue in the following chapters.

It became apparent that the SS-men are not only representatives of the system and hence a part of the military-structure level, but also social actors. They shaped the room for manoeuvre of functionary prisoners by means on individual, partly spontaneous decisions – which were not always in line with the general camp rules. SS officers could ignore violence, punish it but also demand it. The relationship between SS officers and functionaries led for example to a praxis of soft punishment, the bestowal with privileges for the higher ranks of functionary prisoners, and the approval of functionaries’ decision. Hence it directly impacted the functionaries’ room for manoeuvre to a significant extent. It is hence necessary to theoretical integrate the SS-men into the prisoner’s society – without losing sight of the immense difference in aim and power between them and the functionaries.

5.2. Social Differentiation Processes and the Importance of Physical Features

“The aristocracy had everything the other prisoners lacked: sufficient food, warm clothing and sturdy shoes. The celebrities had long hair and were shaved. They did not need to work and had their own bed. In case of illness, they were given preferential treatment in the sickbay, the brothel was open to them, and when they were bored, they were entertained by boxers, bands and theatre groups. During the day they spread terror in the camp, supported and admired by their servants and lackeys. In the evening, they spent what they had carried off that day: a bottle of liquor, cigarettes, a game with the cards. Surrounded by hunger and misery the aristocracy lived in his own world.”

This is how Wolfgang Sofsky describes the social status of the higher ranks of functionary prisoners. In the final sentence of this quote he refers to a demarcation between higher level functionaries and regular inmates. According to him, the functionaries' manifold privileges lead to a formation of an own social class. If the difference between higher level functionaries and the other prisoners was so huge that one can speak about an own class, and if they isolated themselves from the others as it is characteristic for a class, this process of social differentiation was put into practise through interaction. Processes of

181Sofsky, Ordnung, 169.
social differentiation did not only determine behaviour, they manifested themselves in forms of behaviour. Therefore I will deal with classification and social differentiation in this chapter, to elaborate the extent of it, and the impact it had on functionary prisoners’ behaviour.

Returning to Sofsky one must admit that the above cited quote is only one part of the detailed picture he provides. However he fails to provide sufficient proof for a legitimation of his arguments. His description is based on general statements and needs questioning. I will do so by means of primary sources concerning the situation at Mittelbau-Dora. In order to investigate processes of social differentiation and their impact on functionary prisoner’s behaviour, I will first elaborate on the social dimensions of the functionaries’ privileges. My second criticism concerns Sofsky's focus: He solely refers to the higher ranks of functionary prisoners. He thereby ignores the lower ranks. As he provided a distinction between different levels of power, which laid base for my own definition, it is surprising that he does not distinguish between different functionary prisoner ranks.182

I argue, that social differentiation processes are different for lower level functionary prisoners. The lower ranks had some privileges – but they lacked the manifold privileges of the higher level. I believe, that they therefore did not form an own social class.

To investigate the social classification, I will examine in a second step higher ranks of functionaries and the social differentiation processes they are involved in. Similarly I will approach the lower ranks and particularly look at their relation to regular prisoners.

The Frenchman Yves Beon survived the camps Compiègne, Buchenwald, Mittelbau-Dora and Bergen-Belsen. Born in 1925, he was only 18 years old, when he was deported to Compiègne in 1943. In his famous witness account "La planète Dora"183 he describes the harsh living conditions of the camp. He characterises the relation between the higher level functionaries and regular inmates as follows:

"The huge number of prisoners had no chance to come into contact with this hierarchy; it was too far away for them, too abstract. One did not turn to a public official, if you smelled of death and shit. One remained in one’s corner and did everything not to attract attention."184

182Ibid., 169-177.
183I use the German translation “Planet Dora”. Beon, Dora.
184Die riesengroße Zahl der Häftlinge hatte überhaupt keine Chance, mit dieser Hierarchie in Kontakt zu kommen; sie war für sie zu weit weg, zu abstrakt. Man wandte sich nicht an einen Amtsträger, wenn man nach Tod und Scheiße roch. Man blieb in seiner Ecke und tat alles, um nicht aufzufallen.” Ibid., 32.
Beon perceives the social gap between functionaries and regular inmates as insurmountable. He was no member of the system of functionary prisoners and portrays it as a different cosmos. His relation to the higher level functionaries becomes even more visible in the following quote: „The Capos, foremen and block leaders, in principle, all superiors, did not show any reaction on the day of landing. They surely discussed that, but their views were not allowed to reach the ears of the common rank and file.“ This statement points to the fact that the „upper class“, the higher level functionaries created this huge difference between them and the others – for example by not discussing events and changes with them.

In his account, Yves Beon gives as an almost visible description of the hierarchy when describing a roll-call:

“ The functionary prisoners stood near the gate. They were well dressed and most had hair back on the head. They wore polished leather shoes and freshly ironed trousers. A little further back stood the block of carpenters, cooks and messengers. Their prisoner clothes and shoes were still in fairly good condition, just not as plush as for the abovementioned. It was ready-made clothing and no made to measure. The farther away one was from the centre of the square, the worse it was. One could quickly get from poverty to misery and further to the rags figures.”

It is remarkable that the social hierarchy of prisoners was obviously visualized by means of their set up during role call. That means it became physically graspable for everyone, in two respects: First regarding where the people were standing, and second how they looked. Of course you could see that also in other situations of daily life in the camp, but the role call, when all prisoners were assembled, and the differences became even more evident through direct comparison, must have made a much stronger impression. Hence the order of social space manifested itself in physical space. This a materialization of hierarchy certainly not only represented the social order, but also strengthened it.

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The higher level functionaries in Dora had, as we learn from witness accounts, sometimes access to beer\textsuperscript{187}, different pair of shoes\textsuperscript{188} and other goods. They enjoyed a far-reaching access to different material privileges. These accesses defined their privileged status. Previous studies have already depicted the material benefits they enjoyed in sufficient detail.\textsuperscript{189} Therefore instead of describing them I can concentrate on the investigation of these privileges' impetus on social processes and patterns of behaviour.

As described in chapter 2.2, the social position within the prisoner society shapes behaviour. Maja Suderland argues that the belonging to a social class in the camps was enforced by its members. They behave according to their social status and thereby enforce the difference to especially the lower classes.\textsuperscript{190} Moreover she emphasizes the significance of physical characteristics. The inmates' physique is linked to gender – strength represents masculinity.

I argue, that both principles culminate in the characteristics of functionary prisoners. The functionaries' privileges were in my respects reflected in their physique. Their physical appearance made it possible for other inmates to identify their privileged position – as the above cited quote proved. As the physical appearance is not necessarily connected with a certain action or behaviour, it can be called a passive feature. Certainly, it could be enforced by a certain behaviour.

Despite the functionaries' well-fed appearance and strength, their clothes were even more informative regarding their position. According to the Jewish survivor George Stein, the functionary prisoners' clothes made them identifiable on first sight:

„All these privileged group members were recognizable not only by their armbands, but the shiny long boots and fur-lined ¾ coats and the special black French barette caps they were wearing. The only indication that they were also Haftlinge [sic!] was a 10 cm square patch sewn into the back of their coats. The other sign of recognition was the 3 cm thick and 75 cm long gummi insulated metal cable they carried at all times.“\textsuperscript{191}

Hence, clothing signified a privileged position in the camp. The French survivor Albert Birin refers during his statement in the Dora Trial to a specific jacket of Josef Kilian, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{187}MA Albert van Dijk, DMD P1, Vol. 172.
\item \textsuperscript{188}Beon, \textit{Dora}, 159.
\item \textsuperscript{189}A description of certain privileges in Dora is provided by: Wiedemann, \textit{Alltag}, 78-87. Also: Wagner, \textit{Produktion}, 342-345, 398-410.
\item \textsuperscript{190}Suderland, \textit{Extremfall}, 103-110.
\item \textsuperscript{191}MA George Stein, 1997, DMD P1, Vol. 80.
\end{itemize}
hangman of Dora. According to Birin, Kilian always wore it during executions. This jacket was an identification mark of his position and his duties.\textsuperscript{192}

Whereas the regular prisoners had shaved heads, many privileged prisoners were allowed to wear a haircut.\textsuperscript{193} Functionaries, therefore, stood out and were easy to identify by means of their haircuts.

Furthermore, I want to extend Suderland's approach and argue, that the knowledge of these privileges itself supported social differentiation. The prisoners could see the differences between themselves and the functionary prisoners as these were elements of the outward appearance. The huge difference in the way ordinary and privileged prisoners looked did not only remind the ordinary prisoners at every sight about the differences in their living conditions. The unprivileged saw the higher ranks everyday, during their shifts and also in the blocks. They could not avoid to realize the difference between them and the functionaries. Contrasting one's one situation with those of the functionaries could create hatred and hostility towards the functionaries – which was of course supplemented by the experience of beatings and unfair treatment. The perception of the functionary as an enemy based thus not necessarily on a concrete negative experience with that very person – it was more fuelled by negative experiences with some people from that group, and the visible distinction which meant a different fate. The difference could also supported the idea of regular inmates, that higher level functionaries were henchmen of the SS – as the difference between the functionaries and the SS in clothing and body hygiene was smaller than between higher level functionaries and ordinary prisoners.

Wolfgang Sofsky refers to the outward appearance of functionaries in his descriptions: “But the standard rations were distributed in front of everyone, so that everyone saw who was being preferred and who was being discriminated, […] Eventually, the others should note that the aristocracy knew how to live.”\textsuperscript{194} This is another form of a material manifestation of social differences.

The visual distinction between higher functionaries and regular inmates was further actively enforced by the functionary prisoners' behaviour: The Czech survivor Otokar Litomisky refers to general behavioural patterns of higher functionaries and the SS: „The relation of the SS, capos and block elders towards the prisoners was very arrogant. We

\textsuperscript{192}Statement Albert Birin, 28 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, Roll 6, 1112.
\textsuperscript{193}MA Theo Fischer, 1965 or 1966, DMD P1, Vol. 58, 6.
\textsuperscript{194}Sofsky, \textit{Ordnung}, 174.
were just "numbers", but no people. Particularly in the early stages of our stay in K.Z. Dora.”

Yves Beon provides a less general description. He describes how a capo managed to accomplish a work task, which was too heavy for the weak prisoners:

“The capo was proud of his achievement, joked and showed his biceps. He was a strong guy as before the camp. The prisoners laughed with him. “Capo, great boss. Thank you many times, capo, you're strong.” It would not have taken much, and the fool of capo would have bared his chest to show how good he was built.”

The quote points to the significance of physical constitution. The capo is happy about his own strength, and symbolises it by showing his arm muscles. The quote further indicates that through keeping his physical features, the capo kept a part of his pre-camp identity: he was still a strong men. Following Suderland, this exposure of strength and masculinity in an environment were most prisoners had lost their pre-war looks, was crucial for the social differentiation context. The change of the own outward appearance and its impact to one’s own identity has been discussed in previous research by means of the example of female prisoners whose hair was shaped. Through the loss of their hair they lost both the most visible part of their femininity, and their individuality. The quote can be read as the male counterpart of this observation. The capo kept his pre-war look, condition, strength and masculinity. This was a major feature of a differentiation in the camp: to which extent one remained an individual, and to which extent one became an inmate, a number, with hardly any of the pre-war individual features.

Moreover with actively showing his strength, Beon's capo displayed his power and thereby his privileged position. Higher level functionaries could thus use such an active display of their strength to settle the difference between themselves and the others.

When discussing features as good looks, strength, masculinity, and disciplinary power in a camp context one can not omit the topic of homosexuality. I argue that the physical constitution of higher functionaries, in connection with the power inherent in their position, led to or at least allowed for homosexual activities. Moreover, I state, that the ability for sexual activities displayed the power of higher functionaries.

195MA Otokar Litomisky, July 1988, DMD P1, Vol. 2, 3
Accounts on homosexuality are numerous. Most often it is especially ascribed to higher functionaries – mainly to block eldest. Within the social space of the barracks, it was apparently easy for a block eldest to push an inmate into a relationship based on dependency more than affection. The Jewish survivor George Stein writes about the social life of the Jewish block:

„We were accommodated in two barracks at the top of the hill, close to the electric fence and segregated as a prison in a prison. Blockalteste [sic!] and his assistant was a giant Dutchman, violent and anti-Semitic. In addition he was a homosexual and one of our young members became his personal toy. This boy never went to work in the tunnel or stood for three to four hours in minus 16 degrees cold at the Appelplatz. He was sheltered in the block.‖

Relationships like this were also described by other survivors. Apparently, it was of course not limited to block eldest, also capos were able to establish that relationships. They were also able to offer desired goods in the camp, such as “butter and cheese, cigarettes and Czech bread; The capo shares with them the power and the fretting, the only values that apply here.”

Homosexual activities were not limited at all to the group of prisoners labelled with a pink badge and hence imprisoned as homosexuals, and it had different purposes. Certainly it had to do with the satisfaction of physical desires. However it also represented and strengthened a certain status, even if that might have been a side effect.

Dependency relationships of higher ranked functionaries and regular inmates did not always include homosexuality. The Czech survivor Alfred Dube illustrates another reason:

„One day, I just couldn't take it anymore so I decided to play sick. I pulled the little hat I was wearing down onto my face and dropped to the ground moaning. My colleagues next to me called the Capo to come and help me. When he finally arrived, he told me that if I have no fever, he would kill me. He took my pulse and I must have been so terrified that my pulse speeded up because he stated that I was sick and the best thing for me to do would be to come with him up the hill to his shed and I could keep the fire going. This would keep me out of the rain and give me a chance to get well. He gave me a week to recuperate.‖
Block eldests and capos were able to simply take prisoners out of work for some time. However, Dube does not mention which measures the capo undertook to provide him with this beneficial position. There is also no mention of the underlying motif of the capo’s decision. Nonetheless, the representative dimension probably did also apply this case.

Functionaries thus had both the power to exploit and abuse, but also to take special care of other prisoners. This as also a feature of social differentiation: regular prisoners usually did not have the resources, and often not even the strength to significantly harm or significantly support another prisoner.

The functionaries’ privileges further shaped their usage of space in the camp. As Sofsky has shown, space itself was a privilege in the camp. To be more precise, it was a privilege to have individual space, and to be able to occupy and use space. As I mentioned before, higher functionaries did not sleep in the same pallets as other prisoners. Within a block, the block eldest had an own room, which he could share with selected others, most often his room eldest, clerks and other subordinate functionaries. Leopold Claessens recalls: „The block elder had a shack, in which he "lived". The block elder, the barrack duty people and the capos were always together, they ate together, slept together.” In other words, within the blocks a space existed, which was exclusively available for functionaries. Their occupation and usage of this space and their interaction among each other in this space led to the creation of an own, separate social space.

The social space was not limited to the barracks. It was also transferred to other locations in the camp. One of the other most exclusive places in Dora was the canteen. In the canteen privileged prisoners were able to get luxury goods, provided by the camp administration. They officially received 'camp money' for their work and could buy goods there. These material benefits were part of their privileges. George Stein describes the canteen as a place, where “a German speaking theatre group [acted] for the entertainment of SS officers and wives. They performed in the Kantine [sic! canteen], verboten [sic! forbidden] to us common Haftlinge [sic! inmates] to enter, only for the privileged upper class.” Andre Sellier furthermore describes: “The canteen serves primarily as a meeting
place of the block eldests, the capos and the camp policemen. The quotes reveal that the canteen was used both by the SS and the functionaries. This social space was hence shared by two groups whereas usual prisoners were not allowed to enter. The social demarcation line this space constructed was hence not between SS and prisoners, but between functionaries and others.

Entertainment in Dora was not limited to theatre performances, there were also sport events – even a soccer field existed in Dora. The SS organised between different privileged details. Participation in these games was only possible for the privileged prisoners. Charles Sadron, a former French inmate who worked in a production command, describes that only particular prisoners could enter he teams: “Mind you, not among the teams with people of our stand who just have enough force to be able to stand upright, but between well-fed teams: The kitchen command against the command of the orderlies for example.” Although he was to some extent privileged because of his work in a production detail, Sadron describes these games from an outside perspective. He was one of the excluded. Arguably, some of the lower ranked functionaries were able to participate in these sport events. Again, the functionary prisoners' privileges in form of extra food led to a better physical condition compared to regular prisoners. The kitchen detail had access to extra nourishments and was therefore able to participate in these games.

In this chapter I argued similar to Wolfgang Sofsky that privileges led to social differentiation of the higher classes of functionaries. Most privileges had a material basis, such as access to food or clothing, which visibly reflected the higher levels' social status. The privileges did passively and actively enforce the formation of an own social class. Furthermore, I transferred Maja Suderlands notions on social differentiation and the physical features to the specific characteristics surrounding the functionaries. Privileged prisoners fuelled the differentiation by creating an own social space. They interacted with each other in these spaces, thereby excluded other members of the prisoner society.

Whereas these considerations were focussing the higher functionaries, I will now take a look at the social situation of low-rank functionaries. Indeed, they were excluded from

most of these processes. Due to black market activities, some of them also had access to a variety of desired goods. However, the possession of these goods did apparently not determine the forming of an own social class. As we saw in the case of the higher rank functionaries, several features led to this, and the disposal of material goods was only one of them. Another one was disciplinary authority and particularly this feature the lower rank functionaries lacked. Their non-existence as a social class, based on privileges and physical goods, can only be understood by reflecting again on their power between higher functionaries and regular inmates. In a nutshell words, their position within the social space was often closer to less privileged prisoners than to their superiors.

Behaviour patterns of higher ranks towards regular inmates were first and foremost a fragmentation process. They routed in the distinctive features of the hierarchical level of higher functionaries. I displayed the different characteristics of these processes above. My claim that we can not identify formation processes of a social class within the lower rank rests on four observations.

First of all, there is a lack of sources for the Mittelbau-Complex. During the Dachau Trial SS-men and higher-ranked functionaries were investigated. Members of both groups were accused of several crimes. Former functionaries from the lower ranks, on the other hand, were neither accused nor investigated. The investigation during the trial focussed on the living conditions of higher ranks and the regular inmates – often portrayed as perpetrators and victims. I believe, that this perspective resulted in an exclusion of the lower ranks in Dora during the trial. Therefore any investigation for Mittelbau-Dora needs to rely on the survivors’ testimonies. Hence, even a turn towards the unpublished witness accounts is not unproblematic for such an investigation. I already mentioned above the pursued collection of questionnaire and interviews during the 1990s, initiated by the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Memorial. Although the questionnaires include one explicit question on functionaries, it solely refers to the higher ranks. Other survivor accounts usually include the same narrow focus. This is not surprising as it usually formed a contrast to their own existence in the camp. In the source material I have studied, the published accounts provided by far the most information. My further elaboration will therefore mainly be based on these very detailed accounts.

\footnote{Questionnaires, 2001-2004, DMD P1, Vol. 11.}
My second argument concerns the perspective of the inmates. My inclusive definition of the lower ranks is not in line with the perception of several survivors. This is especially true for the former excluded prisoners, who did not hold any functionary position according to my definition. I want to refer to the above mentioned quote by Yves Beon about the role call to elaborate: “The functionary prisoners stood near the gate. They were well dressed and most had hair back on the head. They wore polished leather shoes and freshly ironed trousers. A little further back stood the block of carpenters, cooks and messengers.” Beon distinguishes between the functionary prisoners and the lower ranks. However, he mentions the privileged position of the lower ranks.

Thirdly, the lower ranks were completely subjected to the higher ranks' disciplinary power. They nonetheless had access to material privileges, but they lacked disciplinary authority. Their room for manoeuvre only consisted of access to resources and hence possibilities of resource distribution. This however enables them to support other prisoners – which constitutes a difference to the majority of the regular prisoners. Jean Mialet reports about a lower rank in the kitchen detail:

“A French chef, Marcel Martin, whom I had met in Compegniègne, took me under his amicable or rather pitying wing. Without any hope of success, he gave me special soups to eat that were destined for the SS and the sickbay.”

Mialet stayed in this detail for about two weeks, before he was replaced by another inmate, who was close to death. Even after Jean Mialet lost his position, his connections did not break up: “The active friendship with Marcel, the cook, and Gautherot, the potato peeler, supported me. I ate better than the others.” Mialet’s description of this detail indicates, that they were simply inmates, who were lucky enough to gain a position in a privileged detail.

The quote further reveals a small-scale group formation within the detail. This process was not similar to a dependency relationship. Mialet provides no hint for any expected return. The group formation was based on solidarity, often displayed along the lines of

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common nationality. In this case it consisted of Frenchmen. However, it was very limited in size and time – it could barely extend the boundaries of the working detail. Furthermore, Mialet lost his position after about two weeks: “But these are no fixed jobs because always new candidates appear, for whom one has to make room.”\textsuperscript{211} Inmates in the kitchen detail were subjected to the favour of higher functionaries. The Polish survivor Josef Slek reflects on the often helpless and subordinated position of the lower levels: “At work I was promoted because the capo found that I mended the socks nicely and therefore I was allowed to do that with the socks of the SS-men. For that, I also got more soup.”\textsuperscript{212}

My fourth argument concerns the difference between the lower ranks of functionary prisoners and the inmates working in the production details. The camp’s electrician command formed an interesting detail, worth mentioning at this point. I am aware of the fact that especially this detail was at the outskirts of my definition of prisoner functionaries. On the one hand, this detail was necessary for the running production, so the workers appeared to be usual prisoners. On the other hand, tasks inside the prisoner camp would make them lower level functionaries. It is actually difficult believe that their position is in this case not clearly to define. However, the workers were also privileged, simply because they were mostly exempted from violence and their specific task allowed them to move freely through the entire camp. Their resource therefore was information and contact with other prisoners, not nourishments or clothing. Concerning their importance and relationship to their superiors, Yves Beon recalls the following dialogue with another member of this detail:

“‘Just have a look around. All these men here, what do they have in their hands? Nothing. So you simply put them loads on the back, which they cannot bear, and they fall down. Then, they were beaten to death. We, on the other hand, are electricians, we have our toolbox. When an explosion tears off an electric line, the drilling hammers stop and everything is in darkness. Yes, and what do you hear, my boy? Electrician’ The SS-men scream like donkeys, the capos rush to your work detail. Do they beat you with batons? No way ‘You are more important than they are. You are even more important than the SS-men, those bastards. They can kill anyone, and they even get an award for that. But they do not understand

\textsuperscript{211}Sellier, \textit{Zwangsarbeit}, 196.
Details like the camp's electricians made a specific knowledge necessary and were – at least officially – compiled according to their abilities. Their position was privileged, but Beon's perception resembles a status similar to regular inmates and not to functionaries. They shared features of the lower ranks and of production details: a less privileged status, exemption from chicane and violence, a subordinated status to the higher ranks. I therefore argue, that the lower ranks did not form as a social class because of these similarities.

To summarise, lower ranks are unfortunately not as present in the sources as higher ranks. A closer investigation of this group at Dora is hardly possible. It is nonetheless possible to identify a privileged status of this group. The lower ranks held a hailed out position in relation to the regular prisoners. Their lack of disciplinary authority furthermore excluded them from the social class of the higher ranks. Their position within the social space of the camps was closer to other inmates in the production details. Both groups shared little privileges and were taken out from chicane and violence.

I further want to address two further characteristics of social differentiation: The position in the social space of a camp relied on the individual features of this camp and not every inmate wanted to belong to a superior class. These features are not directly addressed by Suderland and belong to my own assessment of the sources. I decided for an exposed position of these two features, because they are valid for both levels of functionary prisoners. Furthermore, both are unfortunately not well represented in the studied accounts. The two examples I will present below are to my knowledge the only ones in the sources indicating these characteristics.


Their importance is also mentioned in other accounts, such as a source written by an anonymous French survivor: “Er stellt die Spezialistengruppen zusammen z.B. Elektriker, Dreher, Maurer, Zimmerleute, Tischler usw., ohne die zu vergessen, die Deutsche und andere Sprachen sprechen. Zahllose Kameraden, so wie ich, die keine Spezialkenntnisse aufweisen können, werden beiseite gestellt.” The survivor who wrote this account mentioned that he wants to stay anonymous. DMD P1, Vol. 237, 53.
First, social differentiation relied on the individual features of a camp's social space. It was necessary for an inmate to occupy a social position once he entered the camp. Although there were links to experiences in previous concentration camps, the status was not set prior to the arrival in Dora. The position could be very different from the one in the last camp. George Stein recalls such an incident. Before he and a group of 300 Jewish prisoners came to Dora, they went to several other camps. One of these camps was named 'Thiel':

“After our arrival in Thiel he simply proclaimed himself as a Kapo with assistance of about a half a dozen strong bullies as his protectors. The SS confirmed his status and gave him a Kapo armband and heavy baton, leather shoes and his own separate room in the block with full authority over our physical and mental abuse.” 215

However, once they reached Dora, the armband was taken away from this inmate and he became a regular prisoner again. According to Stein, it was not possible for Jewish prisoners to obtain higher positions in Dora. He states, that there have not been “any Jews holding office” 216 and “the “300” were totally unprotected.” 217

Secondly, social differentiation, including duties and privileges, was not always pursued by every inmate. Not every prisoner wanted to be 'different' from his fellow inmates. The reason was prior group formation and identification with this group. The Italian survivor Cesare Pilesi was promoted to a functionary position:

“I had the misfortune to be appointed foreman […] How could I assert myself to them, unfortunate like me, affected by the same pitch as I? Most of them half-starved guys like me, they tried to have a good skive, although this work was not difficult, turned any screws or verified leisurely any component of the bomb, which was passing in our department. Every time the SS came by and found just me and a few others, I was in charge, and punches, lashes and kicks, rained down on me which I was not capable to give my men.” 218

215MA George Stein, DMD P1, Vol. 80, 8.
216Ibid., 10.
217Ibid., 10.
Maja Suderland provides an explanation for Pilesi’s report, although she does not further investigate the described phenomenon. She argues, that social differentiation is based on the perception of differences. Identification with a group of fellow inmates is linked to the concept of 'habitus'. The same applies for the behaviour it leads to. Pilesi apparently identified himself with his subordinates, the social class he belonged to. His social identity was based on the perception of a common fate for him and the members of the detail. A promotion would therefore challenge this identity. However, if we take a more critical approach towards his report, we can assume that this statement probably aimed at least partly at justification. His report is nonetheless unique for Dora and deserves to be mentioned at this point.

My investigation on the importance of social differentiation and physical features revealed the complex nature of functionary prisoners. It displayed, that the functionaries did not act as a homogeneous group. A different display of the higher ranks and lower ranks is necessary. The most powerful and privileged functionaries formed as a social class. They displayed their status willingly or unwillingly with their outward appearance. Their social differentiation towards regular inmates was further enforced by their behaviour. This does not only apply for the behaviour they displayed towards regular prisoners. They also formed as a social class because of in-group behaviour.

A study on the lower ranks is much more difficult, because of the lack of source material. I was nonetheless able to portray their position within the social space of the Dora camp. They did not form as a social class. Furthermore, their role between the higher ranks and regular inmates is not easy to define. Some men from the lower ranks had access to the higher-ranks' activities and thereby their social space. Others were apparently closer to regular inmates. Hence, a further investigation on their behaviour is only plausible, but belongs to future research.

5.3. Ethnic Perceptions of Commonality and Distinction

Maja Suderland considers ethnicity the third differentiation principle. As an underlying motif, this principle works with ascribing attributes to the own group and to out-groups. These attributions become the basis for group formation processes and behaviour. In this chapter I will use her considerations on ethnicity as a perspective and therefore as an
approach for my investigation. This constitutes an innovation as she does not apply her own deliberation to an empirical analysis of survivors' witness accounts.

The extent to which ethnicity impacts behaviour is limited by the room for manoeuvre. I portrayed the different opportunities of functionary prisoners concerning room for manoeuvre above. My considerations in the respective chapter build a basis for my investigation in this one. Furthermore, I will also get back to the resistance movement and their identified patterns of behaviour again. My main argument in this chapter refers to the same patterns – cadre protection and victim exchange. Functionaries could not protect everyone, so they chose favoured individuals or a favoured group. I argue that their choices were often based on the ethnic descent of their fellow prisoners. Ethnicity formed a very similar solidarity and bond as membership in a resistance movement.

This in mind, I will at first outline the underlying attribution of characteristics to the own and to out-groups. I identify three different dimensions within the ascription of features: stigmatic out-group ascription, a focus on individual functionaries and the perception of an own underrepresented status in the overall camp society. In a second step I briefly investigate group formation processes based on ethnic and national similarity. My final focus of this chapter lies on the actual behaviour linked to ethnicity. At this point I will provide the link between the functionaries' room for manoeuvre, social differentiation processes and ethnicity.

Before I turn to my investigation, I want to briefly elaborate on the sources used in this chapter. Interestingly, most of them derive from French survivors. I cannot fully explain this phenomenon, however, I suggest two reasons: The first concerns the perception on the own position within the social space in the camp. There is apparently a connection between the own perceived unprivileged position and an orientation on ethnicity for group formation processes. I will elaborate on this point in my argumentation. The second reason is based on the type of survivor’s account. I already introduced the two reports of Yves Beon and Jean Mialet. Both provide a very detailed description of the social processes in the camps. Their stories offer a comprehensive insight into the social life if the camp. Especially Mialet focusses on the importance of nationality. His focus is unparalleled in comparison to the other accounts on Dora. This account thus constitutes an important source for my investigation.
However, I want to introduce my argumentation with a quote of the Ukrainian survivor Nikolai Aleksejewitsch Leljuk. Describing different nationalities in Dora he links ethnic descent to behaviour character attributes:

“All nationalities were represented in the camp. All had different characters. The French were skilled people. The Italians had an effeminate character. In conversations they always threw out their chest. [...] The Germans with the red triangle had a character similar to the Russians (namely, to do good to others) to create equal conditions for all, and to take responsibility. [...] The Poles were the worst. For a kopeck they would have sold their birth mother. In the camp, they were in good commands because they could speak German well. They worked as spies/informers. All of them had higher posts.”  

Leljuk was born in Ukraine, but he arguably perceived himself as sharing common positive character features with Russian prisoners and German political prisoners. Towards other groups, he mostly ascribes negative attributes. I believe that Leljuk's account is politically motivated, as he, in general, draws a too heroic picture of the camp resistance highlights particularly positive roles of Russian prisoners. Nonetheless does his quote display the different national stereotypes. Given the difficult historical relationship between Ukraine and Poland it is not surprising that he terms the Poles “the worst”. However, survivors do not only recall character traits in relation to ethnicity. Theo Fischer refers to differences in daily routines: “In general, Poles and Russians were very clean. There was only trouble with the French who liked to shirk washing.”

Leljuk's and Fischer's statements reflect the generalisation of the third differentiation principle. Their accounts lack differentiation and adhere to stigmatisation. The stigmatic and unreflected attribution of characteristics to national groups in the prisoner society forms the first dimension of an ascription of features based on ethnicity.

The second dimension is represented in the survivor's focus on an individual functionary and his behaviour in their account. In this case, their attribution relies on their own individual relation to this functionary. They mostly refer to a disadvantageous and
unjust behaviour of foreign functionaries towards the own group. Survivors usually do not question the functionaries motifs and simply state that certain patterns of behaviour were typical for them. Moreover, they portray actions towards their own ethnic group as absolutely negative. Alfred Birin states during the Dora Trial: “I saw the capo who brought in quite a few things from time to time. Where they came from I don't know, but as a Frenchman I never received anything.” Birin's statement reflects the position of a prisoner not favoured by the capo. He was a member of the labour statistics office, and thus a high-level functionary. Even in his position he relied on the favour of his capo.

The third dimension of the ascription of attributes based on ethnicity is to be found at the collective level. Many survivors mention that their own national group was underrepresented in the camp administration. Especially French former inmates refer to a preference of other groups. The Frenchmen Pierre Walter for instance explicitly formulates his perception of the disadvantageous position of his countrymen in Dora. He further links their status to a uniquely tragic fate on the own group: “Dora is not the cemetery of the Jews, Russians or Poles. It is mainly the cemetery of the French. Resistance fighters, patriots and innocent died here.” It cannot surprise that for him, the fate of the French group is most important, as this is the group he identifies with. And indeed the mortality of the French in Dora was particularly high. However he diminishes the fate of the others to emphasize the tragedy of the French in Dora, as he says that it was *not* the cemetery of the others, instead of saying that it was *les* of it. He further stresses, who these people were, and thereby provides a positive moral judgement: he claims that the French survivors were resistance fighters, patriots, and innocent. This emphasis suggests that not all of the prisoners were resistance fighters, patriots or innocent, and thus of such a high moral status.

Walter's assessment is further supported by Stéphane Hessel, who was imprisoned for his work in the Résistance and who after his liberation became an international politician.

> “Since February no more parcels had come from France, at least to Dora. The result was that the life of the French was barely worth something. There were hardly any French Kapos, block elder or room attendants anyway. The positions of power belonged to the East: Poles,

221Statement Albert Birin, 28 August 1947, NAW, M-1079, 1155.
The previous paragraphs have shown, that the perception of ethnicity can be divided in three major dimensions. First, survivors' ascribe negative character traits to other groups in the camp. Ethnic difference therefore leads to social distance and thus a fragmentation processes. I further suggest, that the differences to other nationalities were actively enforced by inmates. The distance and fragmentation processes of the first dimension are created. In other words, survivors actively refer to the importance of this distancing. Secondly, the individual behaviour of functionaries is mostly portrayed from an unprivileged perspective. In this dimension, ethnicity is linked to the own disadvantageous position. Thirdly, on a collective level the own status is equated with the fate of the entire group. Not only the inmate is unprivileged and subjected to the powerful positions of other national groups. It is the whole group, the own nationality within the prisoner society in general, which is presented as unprivileged and disadvantaged.

I argue, that especially the third dimension led to communitarisation processes. Ethnic similarity provided a basis for solidarity and group formation. Common features within the own group are implicitly assumed – while attributes of the first dimension are usually related to specific actions or character traits. Despite Leljuk's statement about Russian prisoners, the witness accounts do not explicitly mention any reasons for communitarisation processes. They are created by the members, because they are apparently natural.

It is again Yves Beon, who describes processes of social formation in a particularly clear manner. His following quote refers to the time shortly after the inmates moved out of the tunnels into the barracks:

“The new conditions gave the weakest, that were previously defencelessly extradited to brutality and crudeness in the camps, a chance of survival. They were finally able to talk to people, get to know fellow countrymen and join a group. A touch of solidarity arose. [...] The struggle for survival became tribal feud. It no longer was “every

223”Seit Februar waren aus Frankreich keine Pakete mehr gekommen, zumindest nach Dora. Die Folge war, daß das Leben der Franzosen kaum noch etwas wert war. Es gab ohnehin kaum französische Kapos, Blockälteste oder Stubendienste. Die Machtpositionen gehörten dem Osten: Polen, Tschechen, einige Russen, meist Deutsche, und in Dora, deutsche Kriminelle.” MA Stéphane Hessel, DMD P1, Vol. 140, 43.
“man for himself”, but "I belong to a group that can count on me, and I am counting on them, perhaps to survive.”

Beon describes the formation of small groups after the camp life was reorganised. These groups were based on ethnic similarity. Founding or joining small groups was an essential survival strategy. I believe that this group formation was enforced by a perception of an unprivileged and particularly low status of the own group – referring to the third dimension explained above. It was the aim of these small-scale groups to resist the destructive influences of the concentration camp. However, how do these processes link to the functionary prisoners?

After the reorganisation of the camp life, functionaries still held the powerful positions. It was therefore useful for small-scale social groups to have at least one member in a functionary position, or at least to establish contact to those who had.

To elaborate on this point I want to refer again to Jean Mialet, who gained access to both ranks of functionary prisoners. There is no doubt, that Mialet was in close contact with other Frenchmen in the camp. He chose his fellows according to their nationality. I already mentioned his friendship with the French cook Marcel Martin. He mentions another friend, whom he refers to as “the legionnaire”. Both were in the same working detail after Mialet lost his privileged position. At this time, Mialet was again one of the unprivileged mass and needed to rely on fellows: “In this command, where I was on my own from the beginning, I felt more lonely.” As he states that the legionnaire “who had done stupidities, had joined me.” He indicates that he was unfavoured, or stigmatized, for a certain reason. He pairs up with him, probably not only as two Frenchmen, but also as two people with a low status. This points to the fact that the group formation process were not only determined by ethnicity, but also by social status – which corresponds to the findings of the previous chapters.

However his friendship with Martin and the “legionnaire” reflects one important aspect of group formation because of ethnicity: It was no dependency relationship. Mialet does

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neither mention any return for the help he received from Martin, nor for the support he provided for the “legionnaire”. As Mialet later on describes, the “legionnaire” became sick and Mialet tried to rescue him. Their mutual patronage reflects the third dimension introduced above. Mialet and his two fellows shared the same nationality, thus leading to a communitarisation process. I want to strengthen this argument by a short recourse to Mialet's time in Harzungen. He came to this sub-camp in August 1944 and describes the status of French inmates in the camp as follows:

“The sickbay was in the hands of the French. The two doctors, the brothers Desprez, one of which had no medical training, and many (male) nurses were doing much for their imprisoned compatriots and preferably helped those who had the same nationality. [...] Especially the kitchen was controlled by our friends.”

In this quote Mialet directly refers to the importance of nationality for in-group favouritism. Negative outcomes of the dissimilar support of the functionaries are not questioned. Thereby the description again reflects the third dimension, a perceived underrepresentation of the own group, and it's natural assumption by inmates.

I want to further use Jean Mialet's account to turn towards my third argumentative step in this chapter: the behaviour patterns linked to ethnicity. During Mialet's time as a foreman in Dora, it was his duty to get soup for the entire working detail. He had to collect it from the kitchen. He therefore was allowed to choose two assistants to support him carrying the soup container:

“Even in the choice of two men, who should help me to return the soup kettle, a vicious battle had broken out. As already said, by getting soup one could leave the building sites for two or three hours, relax a bit and during the sometimes lengthy distribution one could talk to friends. My power, to make a choice under these conditions, was significant, [...].”

Jean Mialet was well aware of his power. A closer look on his opportunities resembles cadre protection and victim exchange: Whoever he selected as an assistant, had the

226 “Das Revier war in französischer Hand. Die beiden Ärzte, die Brüder Desprez, von denen keiner eine medizinische Ausbildung hatte, und zahlreiche Krankenpfleger taten viel für ihre inhaftierten Landsleute und halfen vorzugsweise denen, die die gleiche Nationalität besaßen. [...] Besonders die Küche wurde von unseren Freunden kontrolliert.” Ibid., 135.

privilege to be absent from hard labour for some time. Someone else was forced to remain working. He does not mention any preference of French inmates for his support, but I believe that his orientation towards fellow countrymen determined his decision-making process.

Mialet provides a further example to display the role of ethnicity for the behaviour of functionaries: His “French-Polish capo”\(^\text{228}\) was the one to put him in the position as a foreman. In other words, he was most probably a foreman because of his nationality. Later on, Mialet's capo was replaced by a Czech inmate. Soon afterwards Jean Mialet lost is position as a foreman, too: “He [the capo] had taken my supervisor armband and placed me back there where I had to work, like everyone else, with picks and shovels […]”\(^\text{229}\) I already displayed the room for manoeuvre of higher level functionaries above. They were able to appoint their subordinates. Their lack of opportunities made a selection necessary. I suppose that Jean Mialet's capos apparently based their decision for their choice on ethnicity. Such a motif for the appointment resembles cadre protection, as it was practised in the resistance groups.

Other survivors than Mialet also refer to such appointments. Alfred Untereiner, a former member of the French Résistance, provides a similar and more general assessment:

> “There were some block elders of Czech nationality that favoured their countrymen at the expense of the French. To be honest, it must be conceded that the few French who came to such posts, acted the same way.”\(^\text{230}\)

Untereiner mentions in-group favouritism on the basis of ethnicity. He does Interestingly, he does not limit his description cadre protection to other nationalities. He also refers to his own countrymen regarding this behaviour.

Michel Fliecx, again a French survivor, provides an extensive testimony about his own development in the camp and the importance of his ethnicity for the relationship to his superiors. Fliecx was a member of the so-called 'camp detail'. This detail was responsible for everyday duties in the camp, such as gardening tasks. Fliecx describes his capo as a

\(^{228}\)Ibid., 84.
\(^{229}\)”Er [the capo] hatte mir meine Armbinde als Vorarbeiter weggenommen und mich wieder dorthin gestellt, wo ich wie alle anderen mit Spitzhacke und Schaufel zu arbeiten hatte, [...].” Ibid., 90.
\(^{230}\)”Es gab einige Blockälteste tschechischer Nationalität, die ihre Landsleute auf Kosten der Franzosen begünstigten. Um ehrlich zu sein, muß eingeräumt werden, daß die wenigen Franzosen, die an solche Posten gelangten, genauso handelten.” MA Alfred Untereiner, DMD P1, Vol. 97, 32.
“German, a political; He had worked at Citroen and speaks some French. He prefers us over the Poles and Russians.” Michel Fliecx was to some extent privileged in his detail, simply because he was French. Although his capo was no Frenchman, he apparently favoured those inmates as he worked with a French enterprise. Based on his previous experience he felt closer to the French than to other prisoners. Fliecx furthermore admits, that he shirked from the work and therefore came to another detail, led by a Polish capo. The new capo hated French and had two Polish foremen under him, sharing his opinion. When Fliecx was sent to a new command, he moved to another barrack. In that block he was then – as a new person – an unprivileged prisoner. “The block eldest and most barrack eldests are Czechs, well built, the way that I always noticed about this people, but against the French terribly hard.” He was later on forwarded to another detail, the feared transport command which dealt with carrying heavy loads, because his relation with his Polish capo and two Polish foremen worsened.

The accounts of Jean Mialet and Michel Fliecx require a notion on the relation between social differentiation and ethnicity. Based on my assessment of their stories, I claim that social differentiation was directly affected by behavioural patterns linked to ethnicity. Functionaries could establish a difference between a favoured group and the rest of inmates within the small-scale social sphere of a detail or a block. Also discrimination could establish such a difference, yet in the other direction. In general, favouritism towards one ethnic group diversified the social stratification within the block or command. This favouritism or discrimination was established by functionaries but concerned the subordinated inmates.

Further I state that behaviour based on ethnicity as a guiding principle changed social differentiation between functionaries and regular inmates. If a functionary favoured a certain group on the base of a shared ethnic background, the favoured group was closer to functionary prisoners, and thereby privileged, for two reasons: because of their social relation and sometimes an increased access to material benefits. Jean Mialet and Michel Fliecx both experienced this situation as members of the favoured group in their details.

232”Der Blockälteste und die meisten Stubenältesten sind Tschechen, gut gebaut, wie es mir fast immer bei diesem Volk aufgefallen ist, aber den Franzosen gegenüber schrecklich hart.” Ibid.,114-115.
233Ibid., 127.
Mialet was even supported to a functionary by his capo. However, Mialet and Fliecx also experienced the opposite. They were also members of the unprivileged, disadvantaged group.

Finally, I want to address the posed distinction between higher and lower level functionaries. Formation and fragmentation processes occurred on both levels and the sources do not indicate any particular difference. Nonetheless, I believe that they are apparently more visible for the distinction between higher ranked functionaries and regular inmates. Concerning the lower ranks, their differences are probably less apparent due to the quite similar position in the social space in the camp.

My investigation on the importance of ethnicity followed Maja Suderland's approach. A transfer of her considerations provided the basis for a further analysis of the functionary prisoners' behaviour. My investigation focussed on three aspects. The first concerned different dimensions within the attribution of characteristics linked to ethnicity. This ascription led to communitarisation and fragmentation processes. Ethnic distinction often paved the ground for a negative perception and therefore to fragmentation of different groups of inmates. A common nationality, on the other hand, resulted in group formation. My second focus was based on this result and depicted the outcome of the processes. I argued for a necessity for small-scale group formation of inmates in order to oppose the destructive tendencies of the camp. These groups were based on a common nationality and relied on the formation processes. The third focus was the behaviour of functionary prisoners. Their behaviour was – similar to resistance movements – shaped by a necessary choice, which resulted in cadre protection and victim exchange. Both behaviour patterns rooted in the privileged position of the functionary prisoners. I finally addressed the relation between social differentiation and ethnicity. Within the details or the social space of a block, ethnicity influenced the social stratification. It could enforce the distinction between different national groups by in-group favouritism. The different social status of functionaries and regular inmates depended on a common or disparate national descent. A common descent led to in-group favouritism and thereby to closer ranks in the social space. Dissimilar descent could enlarge the different social positions.
6. Conclusion

Functionary prisoners did not form a homogeneous group. Their power and status varied greatly, so we have to distinguish between different groups. The question whether a functionary possessed disciplinary power or not proved to be a useful tool for distinction.

Higher level functionaries had a disciplinary power over regular prisoners. At the same time their authority made them clearly superior to lower ranks. The based on authority was thus enforced by their various privileges. However, also the lower ranks enjoyed privileges. They had access to at least one certain benefit, for instance food, and were mostly exempted from chicane and violence, too. These two characteristics constitute a definitional demarcation between functionary prisoners and regular inmates.

The empirical analysis of survivor's witness accounts regarding of Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp extended the significance of the authority-based discussion on their internal difference. My investigation portrayed, that the different power and privileges also led to group and even class formation processes. Maja Suderland's sociological considerations thereby composed an approach for this thesis to underpin a further investigation on the functionaries' role of in the concentration camp society.

The functionaries' room for manoeuvre was related to the three levels of sociality Maja Suderland introduced in her study. On the first level, the military structure, the functionaries' behaviour was shaped by their duties. They had to perform in a specific manner towards their subordinates. However, the military structure also provided room for manoeuvre, particularly for the higher levels of functionaries. They were able to name their subordinates, but also to punish them. In the second level, the “shadow zone” SS men played an important role for manoeuvre. They interacted with the functionaries. Even more, their relation shaped the punishment praxis in the camp. Disregard of the camp rules by SS-men further led to the third level, the small-scale organised social life. The functionaries behaviour in this level was not limited to prisoners, they also interacted with SS-men. Here the role of SS-men as social actors becomes best visible.
Based on the introduced definition, my investigation further displayed that social class formation was different for both levels of functionary prisoners. The high ranks formed a social class based on their manifold privileges. Therewith they willingly or unwillingly enforced the difference to regular prisoners by means of displaying their privileged status, their behaviour towards their subordinates and their in-group behaviour. The low ranks were apparently closer to regular prisoners and did not form as a social class. In the context of social stratification of Mittelbau-Dora they were particularly close to inmates working in production details. The lines between both groups blurred. Nonetheless had some of the less privileged functionaries further access to the higher ranks' social space.

The ascription of specific attributes linked to ethnicity shaped the behaviour of functionary prisoners, too. Formation and fragmentation processes constituted a particular result of the inmates' in-group and out-group perceptions. Ethnic similarity led to communitarisation and became apparent in the protection of the own group. Cadre protection was – similar to resistance movements – a main motif of this behaviour pattern. Ethnic difference, on the other hand, led to fragmentation. A third dimension of the connection between ethnicity and behaviour affected the small-scale social surrounding in the blocks and details: In-group favouritism shaped the social stratification and could enforce or decrease the difference between different nationalities.

This in mind, it is yet important to ask for perspectives for future research resulting from this analysis. Particularly the relation between the functionaries' room for manoeuvre on their own hierarchy and the importance of ethnicity provide a good starting point for further investigation. I argue in this respect that the social field, postulated as an inescapable social hierarchy by Wolfgang Sofsky, requires re-assessment. The empirical examples provided in this thesis concerned different groups than the ones belonging to the “upper class” in Sofsky's understanding. In other words, the access to the high ranks of functionary prisoners was not limited to political and 'criminal' inmates. Patterns like cadre protection and victim exchange did hence not only affect other groups, but it was also initiated by them.

At the same time an enlarged focus to the role of the SS and their relation with functionary prisoners is necessary. Although both groups certainly never overcame their
top-down relationship in general, their behaviour led to a maceration of their distinctive roles – at least in Mittelbau-Dora. A groundwork for such a turn towards these other groups and behaviour patterns, departing from the stigmatic connotation of 'resistance', has been provided in this thesis.

7. References

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