

# Practicing feminism

Principles and knowledge-practices of  
feminist grassroots organizing

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

This Master's thesis studies feminist politics by exploring internal organizing practices and the principles guiding them in grassroots activism. The internal organizing practices of feminist movements have not been studied extensively; this thesis aims to fill some of that gap and underline the insights into the political ideas and desires of activists that can be gained when internal practices are analyzed. The research objectives are to shed light on the politics of internal practices, highlight the knowledge and experience generated in grassroots movements as well as analyze the political ideas and desires of feminists by focusing on their organizing practices.

Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with altogether twelve feminist grassroots organizers. The concept of knowledge-practices is used to highlight the perspective of activists as knowledge-producers and that knowledge is generated through embodied and lived experience. Prefigurative politics as a form of knowledge-practice is used to focus on the politics of practices and the groups as a space for experimenting with and creating the desired feminist future in the present. Feminist principles are identified and analyzed as well as how they are put to practice according to the research participants.

The research shows that the feminist activists interviewed view feminism as a broad concept which entails an active strive for equality and a struggle against all forms of inequality. Additionally feminism is described as something in itself, as opposed to being only a reaction towards inequality. The study contributes with perspectives that view feminism as a particular way of being in and organizing the world in which all forms of oppression and inequalities are recognized and to be dismantled.

The study finds that the activists emphasize low and transparent hierarchies over non-hierarchical organizing and that organizing should be according to the time and energy resources in a group. Despite their importance, the principles prove difficult in practice. The challenges and tensions that occur when organizing according to the discussed feminist principles become a central part of organizing as well as of this study. Diversity and inclusivity are presented as feminist principles by the research participants, but the analysis in the thesis shows that they also reproduce the power structures they are intended to dismantle. The study suggests that accessibility and safer spaces provide more practical perspective on organizing according to feminist principles.

While the thesis gathers feminist practices and principles, it is also concluded that feminist practices are contextual and situated. Feminist principles are emphasized, but how organizers put the principles to practice varies according to the specific needs and desires of groups.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords  
Social movements, activism, feminism, knowledge-practice, prefigurative politics

## Referat på Svenska

Denna pro gradu-avhandling studerar feministisk politik genom att utforska interna organiseringspraktiker och principerna som styr dem. Interna organiseringspraktiker i feministiska rörelser har inte forskats omfattande; avhandlingen ämnar fylla en del av denna lucka och lyfta fram hur en analys av interna praktiker kan erbjuda insikter om aktivisters politiska idéer och begär. Forskningens syfte är att belysa det politiska i interna praktiker, betona kunskapen och erfarenheterna som framkallas i gräsrotsrörelser samt att analysera feministers politiska idéer och begär genom att fokusera på deras organiseringspraktiker.

Tio halvstrukturerade intervjuer utfördes med sammanlagt tolv feministiska gräsrotsorganisatörer. Begreppet kunskapspraktiker (knowledge-practices, har inte använts på svenska) används för att framhäva aktivisternas roll som kunskapsskapare och att kunskap formas genom levd och förkroppsligad erfarenhet. Prefigurativ politik som en sorts kunskapspraktik används för att betona det politiska i interna praktiker och att grupperna fungerar som en plats för att experimentera och i nutid skapa den feministiska framtid som eftersträvas. Feministiska principer identifieras och analyseras samt hur de enligt forskningsdeltagarna praktiseras.

Forskningen visar att de feministiska aktivisterna som intervjuades använder feminism som ett brett begrepp som innefattar en aktiv strävan efter jämlikhet och en kamp mot alla former av ojämlikhet. Dessutom beskrivs feminism som något i sig självt i motsats till att enbart vara en reaktion på ojämlikhet. Studien erbjuder perspektiv på feminism som ett partikulärt sätt att vara i och organisera världen där alla former av förtryck och ojämlikheter erkänns och avvecklas.

Avhandlingen visar att aktivister betonar låga och transparenta hierarkier framom icke-hierarkisk organisering och att grupper ska organisera i enlighet med den tid och energi (resources) som finns i gruppen. Trots att principerna är viktiga, visar de sig vara svåra i praktiken. Utmaningarna och spänningarna som uppstår då det organiseras enligt de feministiska principerna blir en central del av att organisera sig samt av denna avhandling. Diversitet (diversity) och inklusivitet (inclusivity) framställs som feministiska principer av forskningsdeltagarna men analysen pekar på att de också reproducerar maktstrukturerna som de ämnar att upplösa. Studien hävdar att tillgänglighet (accessibility) och tryggare rum (safer spaces) erbjuder mer praktiska perspektiv på att organisera sig enligt de feministiska principerna.

Emedan avhandlingen samlar feministiska principer och praktiker, drar den även slutsatsen att feministiska praktiker är kontextuella och situerade. Feministiska principer betonas, men hur organisatörer praktiserar principerna beror på de specifika behov och begär i grupperna.

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## 1. Introduction

Feminist activism in Helsinki during the 2010s constituted a lively scene. I participated in the activities of several groups. In addition to learning the practical skills of organizing demonstrations and events, dealing with bureaucracy, social and traditional media, organizing meetings and so on, the groups taught me feminist theory and perspectives on how to live in the world (regarding theory through everyday life, see Ahmed 2017; hooks 1994). We practiced being feminists together, figuring out how to relate to one another and how to do the things we wanted to do in ways that would better match our politics. We learned and discussed how to care for one another and how organizing could be fun and sustainable. We wanted that our practices would emphasize collectivity and be accessible to different people. We tried to prioritize the equality and wellbeing of all members of the group. In my experience, the scrutiny and critique towards one's own activities and the desire always to improve have been abundant in feminist organizing, in the best of ways. To me the feminist and other grassroots groups I have been a part of, have brought me closest to the kind of societal reality I want. Through activities and practices the desired political ideas in the groups have been realized, if only for the briefest moments.

The research interest for my Master's thesis builds on these experiences and insights. I hold that grassroots movements and groups, through their organizing practices, generate *knowledge-practices* (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008) regarding how to organize people and society in more equal, feminist ways. While the external politics is important, I find that the internal organizing practices of activist groups constitute a space for activists to experiment with the desired future in the present (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010). Previous research on feminist activism has not afforded the internal politics of organizing much attention. Hence, my aim with this study is to gather, document and analyze the principles and knowledge-practices of feminist grassroots organizers in Helsinki.

The empirical data consists of ten interviews conducted in early 2019 with altogether twelve research participants. I consider the research participants as "subjects of knowledge" (Undurraga 2012), and treat them as experts. They have experience and

knowledge on the topic and in the interviews they shared their own analyses and theories regarding organizing practices and the principles underpinning these. With the concept of knowledge-practices I highlight the knowledge produced in activism. At the same time the concept emphasizes that knowledge is gathered and produced through embodied practices. The concept of knowledge-practices further highlights the connection between the theoretical-political analyses and the practical, lived, everyday lives.

I have chosen to approach the politics of practices with the concept of *prefigurative politics*, described by feminist activist and scholar Cynthia Cockburn (2007, 178) as “making sure that your activist practice reflects the kind of society your movement aims to build.”. Prefigurative politics as a form of knowledge-practices highlights the point-of-view in which the desired political future is created in the present, through the enactment of that future in the everyday practices of a group. These research perspectives allow for treating feminist organizers as knowledge-practitioners: through the internal practices they shape analyses, expertise and lived experience of what a feminist society could look and feel like. Additionally, I draw from perspectives that emphasize the processual and experimental aspects of feminism and political organizing. Rather than viewing knowledge as something static and a political vision as something readymade, the process of learning from feminist politics, and the challenges and mistakes it involves, shape what feminism is. As feminist theorist Sara Ahmed (2017, 11) argues, to be a feminist “is to stay a student”.

There are two main aims in this study, one is political. In line with the tradition of militant research (Colectivo Situaciones 2005; Halvorsen 2015; Russell 2015), the purpose of this study is to benefit feminist movements and groups and I see this happening in two ways. First, feminist activists and organizers rarely have the time and energy to document their activities, external or internal. They accumulate knowledge and experience but their learning is lost when it is not documented or archived. It leads to the need of reinventing the wheel. This study is a way of gathering and documenting the knowledge-practices the groups generate. Second, the knowledge-practices shared in the interviews can hopefully be useful to organizers in the future. Many of the knowledge-practices will most likely be familiar to the organizers, but others might be new or provide alternative perspectives. The research participants provide different

practices for organizing according to guiding principles. My hope is that the knowledge-practices presented here will be of use to organizers.

The second research aim is to broaden the perspectives on feminist organizing in academia. Especially recent studies on feminist grassroots organizing are scarce and even harder to come by are those that focus on the organizing practices in grassroots feminism. I want to provide the field with new insights into how grassroots feminist organizers understand feminism and how they put that feminism into practice.

Additionally I want to provide the Finnish field of activism research with insight into feminist grassroots organizing as well as internal organizing practices in grassroots movements, as neither of these have been given much attention in Finland.

In the following, chapter two reviews research on activism, focusing on studies on the politics of organizing practices in social movements. I also present the research questions and how the concepts presented in the research overview will be utilized in this study. In chapter three I discuss the choice of research method and the research process. The rest of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis and findings. Chapter four gives an overview of how the research participants define and discuss feminism as well as how they discuss the politics of practice, how organizing practices are political. In chapter five I discuss the research participants' principles on hierarchies and on resources. Chapter six focuses on the principles of diversity, inclusivity and accessibility. As the principles create challenges in practice, I award attention to the challenges they pose to organizing as well as to the tensions between the different principles. In chapter seven I discuss the insights rising from the findings for the wider question of how feminism is put to practice.

## **2. Research on internal organizing practices in activism and how they are conceptualized**

This chapter gives an overview of research on the politics of internal organizing practices and conceptualizing that informs this study. First I give a brief review of how perspectives on movements among researchers have shifted and present “knowledge-practices” as a concept that allows researchers to recognize various forms of knowledge being generated in movements (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008).

Studies that focus on the internal organizing practices and what political meaning they are given in social movements are somewhat scarce, especially studies on feminist movements. Therefore, the research that informs me is scattered across fields and the movements discussed diverse. In Finland the internal organizing practices of grassroots movements have not been studied, with the exception of Ari Rasimus (2006) who discusses them briefly in his research on radical movements in Finland in the 1990s. According to Rasimus (2006, 232-233) the radical groups emphasized certain principles according to which they organized. *Prefigurative politics* has been used to analyze mostly leftist and autonomous grassroots organizing (e.g. Boggs 1977; Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010) but also feminist organizing (Cockburn 2007). While few empirical studies exist, feminist movements' organizing practices have been conceptualized with an *ethos* and *principles* to illustrate how feminists organize their internal practices according to a shared ethos (Eschle and Maignashca 2010; Roseneil 1995). These concepts as well as the empirical studies will be discussed in this chapter.

### 2.1. Perspectives and questions in social movement research: activists as knowledge-practitioners

The field of social movements research within social sciences expanded in the 1970s and the field grew further in the 1980s (della Porta and Diani 2006). Researchers' perspectives on the movements that they study have varied and changed over time (see also Chesters and Welsh 2011). Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (2000) summarize that the critical stance among researchers towards movements in the 1960s turned in the 1970s to a more sympathetic one. More radical research traditions such as militant research have further emphasized a position in which research is conducted with an explicit desire to support the movements that are studied (see Colectivo Situaciones 2005; Halvorsen 2015; Russell 2015). Despite the turn to more supportive research on movements in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers generally upheld a presupposition that the movements should be studied by researchers from the outside. María Isabel Casas-Cortés, Michal Osterweil and Dana E. Powell (2008) criticize this tendency of researchers keeping a distance to the movements they study. They argue that the boundary between researcher as knowledge-producer and movements as research objects should be blurred. I am informed by the researchers who position



themselves in the political context they study and who recognize the analytical capacity of the movements themselves.

Research on social movements is also often focused on certain questions: what social contexts lead to movements building up, how people are mobilized, whether movements are strategic or emotional and how they relate to institutions (see summary by della Porta and Diani 2006). While these questions are important, other researchers have called for more attention to the everyday practices and the internal dynamics of social movements and how these aspects relate to the political views and ideas of the movements (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Maiguashca 2011). Paul Chatterton and Jenny Pickerill (2010, 481) argue that the everyday organizing of political movements and groups should be studied, because the political vision is enacted in the everyday organizing: “what is still missing are detailed empirical accounts of the messy, gritty and real everyday rhythms as activists envision, negotiate, build and enact life beyond the capitalist status quo in the everyday.”.

Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell present knowledge-practices as a concept to tackle the tendencies presented above. They shortly define knowledge-practices as follows:

We call these diverse practices “knowledge-practices.” This hyphenated term aims to escape from the abstract connotations usually associated with knowledge, arguing for its concrete, embodied, lived, and situated character. (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008, 20)

The concept of knowledge-practices appreciates that movements and groups construct new, transformative knowledge and analyses of the world that researchers should recognize in their studies. By acknowledging the expertise and experience within movements researchers dissolve the boundary between researcher as knowledge-producer and movement as research object. Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell (2008, 28) go even further in their argument by saying that researchers should be interested in the types of knowledge built in movements, because they can be “useful for society at large”. In other words, rather than viewing researchers as the ones constructing knowledge based on their studies on movements, they argue that researchers should “document” and “engage” with the knowledge that activists construct (ibid.).

The concept of knowledge-practices also helps to recognize how knowledge is produced through embodied practices. The seemingly mundane, day-to-day organizing of political

groups and movements is a form of knowledge-practice, in that organizing groups form analyses and expertise on how political visions can be formed and realized. In this perspective knowledge is not something abstract, it is lived and embodied. To summarize: knowledge-practices allow researchers to recognize and engage with the knowledge being produced and practiced in movements. Both activists and researchers are recognized as knowledge-producers. Additionally, the understanding of knowledge is broadened from its abstract form to also involve the practical and embodied forms of knowledge being generated in movements.

## 2.2. Ethos and principles in feminist organizing

There is something politically particular about feminist organizing. Eschle and Manguashca (2010) discuss this in their study on feminist global justice activists and Wanelisa Xaba (2017, 102) touches upon this in her study on the Fees must fall movement in South Africa. In both these cases feminists display a different attitude to organizing than others in the same movements. Sasha Roseneil (1995, 60) develops the concept of *ethos* to illustrate how the internal organizing practices are politically significant. Ethos in Roseneil's (ibid.) terms is a "theory of practice". Ethos is constituted by principles which guide and form the practices in the movement, both internally and externally (Roseneil 1995). In her study (1995) on the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp she emphasizes the importance of a shared feminist ethos at the camp and how it affected how the camp was organized. In addition to political action against nuclear militarism (the external politics), the internal politics of the camp was essential to the movement. The ethos was not formalized and rarely verbalized but still "constituted a powerful moral discourse about the practicing of feminism" (Roseneil 1995, 61).

Roseneil recounts eleven main principles that guided organizing at the Greenham camp: women-only, non-violence, anti-hierarchical and collective, respect of diversity and individuality, personal responsibility and autonomy, communality, caring for the environment, flexibility and reflexivity, the pleasure principle, valuing the 'non-rational' and the inseparability of means and ends. These principles guided the practical organizing of the camp and the actions they took. The camp consisted of several smaller camps which organized somewhat differently and the network had local groups all over Britain which also varied in their activities and modes of organizing. Despite all the

variations and differences, this ethos was generally the same in all contexts. Despite their importance, the principles also caused tensions and challenges in practice. (Roseneil 1995).

Roseneil gives a broad empirical account of how the feminist principles were put to practice at Greenham. For example, non-hierarchical organizing was realized in meetings by rotating responsibilities and tasks and by making sure everyone had a chance to speak. Despite an opposition to hierarchies, it did not mean they would not occur. The hierarchies that appeared were informal ones in which those who had been involved longest or had most knowledge had more authority. Although these hierarchies were not chosen, Roseneil writes that it is understandable that hierarchies occur as knowledge and experience is accumulated more by some than others. Despite the challenges, Roseneil writes that the shared opposition to hierarchies and the willingness to discuss and analyze them prevented them from creating conflicts too difficult to handle. The desire itself to organize according to a shared ethos was central to tackling the challenges in practice. (Roseneil 1995).

Roseneil makes an important contribution to the study of social movements in her detailed description of the internal practices of organizing and connecting them to a political ethos. She illustrates how the seemingly mundane practices and social relations are consciously political to the organizers. Internal organizing offers a chance to create a different social reality to the one that is being fought against externally.

Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca (2010) utilize Roseneil's conceptualization of ethos in their research on Global Justice Movements (GJM) and feminist activists within those movements. The internal ethos among the feminist GJM activists is expressed as an emphasis on dialogue, participation and a "holistic" perspective on activists and women (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010, 123-126). Although Eschle and Maiguashca emphasize the importance of an internal ethos among the activists, it is not extensively discussed empirically. However, the importance of the internal ethos is summarized by Maiguashca (2011, 541, emphasis in original) in a later article: "*how* feminist anti-globalization activists go about pursuing their dreams and goals is as normatively driven and orientated as the reasons *why* they pursue them in the first place." In other words, according to Maiguashca the internal organizing practices are as political and principled as the external political projects.

### 2.3. Prefiguring the desired future in the internal organizing

The concept of prefigurative politics was coined by socialist scholar Carl Boggs in an article on Marxism and prefigurative communism in 1977, in which he wrote: “By ‘prefigurative’ I mean the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal” (Boggs 1977, 100). In other words the focus lies on the practices and the forms of organizing within a group or movement as an enactment of the desired political future, not on the political vision as something to be achieved sometime in the future. Wini Breines (1980) who applied Boggs’ ideas to sociological research in her work on the 1970s US student activism emphasized the idea that prefigurative politics constitute a means of creating and sustaining “relationships and political forms that ‘prefigured’ and embodied the desired society.” (Breines 1980, 421). Although he does not use the concept of prefigurative politics, Marxist theorist Harry Cleaver (2000, 15, cited in Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 487) presents a similar notion when he writes about creating the “future in the present”.

I am informed by these definitions of prefigurative politics. However, both Boggs and Breines have a more normative definition of prefigurative politics than the one I prefer. They define prefigurative politics through specific ideologies, rather than as the embodiment of any ideology or desired politics. For Boggs (1977, 103) prefigurative politics among other things means overturning the state and hierarchical authority and Breines (1980, 421) further adds participatory democracy and community as key aspects of prefigurative politics. In their definitions prefigurative politics does not only signify the perspective on organizing itself –that the way a group organizes indicates the sort of society that is desired – but both Boggs and Breines place the concept within the context of leftist or socialist and antiauthoritarian movements. Daniel Jaster (2018, 66) criticizes the normative definition of prefigurative politics when it is defined according to leftist and antihierarchical ideology, because it limits “the scope of the concept”. Jaster’s critique importantly highlights that if the practices of prefigurative politics are predefined, researchers will only recognize certain practices as prefigurative. Thus by predefining what prefigurative politics means in practice researchers place themselves at risk for not being able to recognize how the movements define their political desires and put them into practice. However, if prefigurative politics is understood by the

broader definitions by Boggs and Breines quoted above, the concept leaves room for determining empirically the desired future and how it is practiced.

Cockburn (2007) discusses prefigurative politics in feminist organizing in her research on feminist women's anti-war movements around the globe. Cockburn's research shows that the internal organizing practices are a feminist and political topic for the groups. Prefigurative politics takes various forms and the practices vary in different groups. The groups' levels and methods of organization are varied and the differences are to a large extent due to what the groups have deemed useful or needed for their specific desires and activities. Non-violence and meeting opponents with respect are examples of prefigurative politics in the external communication and organizing. Similarly to what Roseneil (1995) describes in her research on Greenham Common, the groups Cockburn describes left structures and division of labor at a minimum and prioritized spontaneity and the qualities in the relationships. The relationships between men and women were an important aspect of organizing prefiguratively in Cockburn's study. The relationships needed to be equal and a sensitivity to gendered oppression in the groups was important. Cockburn (2007) observed that the desire to organize prefiguratively is strongly gendered, the women were more emphatic about the need to organize prefiguratively.

#### *Prefigurative politics as an experimental process*

The definitions of prefigurative politics contributed by Boggs, Breines and Cockburn can give an impression that prefigurative politics means that the practices perfectly reflect the desired future. However, prefigurative organizing does not necessarily mean that the groups organize with perfect success or that the desired political future is perfectly realized in their present organizing. The emphasis lies on the processes of experimenting with organizing prefiguratively. These aspects of prefigurative politics are highlighted in other studies on prefigurative politics.

Jaster (2018, 70) notes that prefigurative politics does not mean following "a clear blueprint" of the desired society, experimenting with organizing practices is an inherent part of prefigurative organizing. Geographers Paul Chatterton and Jenny Pickerill (2010) make similar observations. The movements that Chatterton and Pickerill study are autonomous and alternative movements in different forms, but their observations of how the groups organize is informative for this study. Their emphasis on the processual aspects of creating the future in the present is important. They write that "everyday

practices are used as building blocks to construct a hoped-for future in the present, but that this process is experimental, messy and heavily context-dependent.” (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 476). Chatterton and Pickerill also discuss the difficulties and challenges that the principles caused in practice. Similarly Francesca Fois (2019) in her study on living communities in Italy emphasizes how organizing is experimental and processual. Although Fois does not use the concept of prefigurative politics, there are many similarities in what she describes. She describes how the process of exploring and experimenting is preferred, in contrast to having a vision of a perfect society which groups either fail or succeed in creating.

### *Prefigurative politics as knowledge-practices*

In their auto-ethnographic article Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell (2008) present prefigurative politics as one form of knowledge-practices. In the article Casas-Cortés describes her experiences in the Direct Action Network in Chicago and how the prefigurative organizing practices in the group generated knowledge-practices:

All the great analyses and actions organized during that time shared an important component: the way in which each was organized. While perhaps this is not so obviously a form of ‘knowledge,’ it definitely implies a relearning of how to act and think about democracy. (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008, 35)

While practices might not always be viewed as knowledge, Casas-Cortés describes how the organizing practices offered chances to learn different democratic processes. In the processes and practices, the group generated a “grounded notion of democracy” (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008, 36). Casas-Cortés describes how the practices of the groups create experience and knowledge of how to organize people, communities or societies in ways that resemble the future that is desired. Prefigurative knowledge-practices dismantle the division between political ideas and the concrete practices of the groups.

Similarly to other researchers discussed above, also Casas-Cortés emphasizes how prefigurative politics is an experimental process. She even describes the meetings as similar to “experiments in a lab generating co-operative and non-authoritarian relationships” (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008, 34). Organizing was a process which was constantly investigated and developed based on what was learned. Despite the experimental emphasis, Casas-Cortés describes interestingly contrasting organizing practices to the ones Cockburn (2007) and Roseneil (1995) describe. While Cockburn

(2007) and Roseneil (1995) write that groups avoided too much structure, Casas-Cortés describes clear systems and processes in the group. Although the desire to organize according to the shared political desire and ethos is described in all these studies, the practices and desires vary.

What I find is the important addition by Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell(2008) to the other studies on prefigurative politics is the connection between the politics of practice and knowledge-production. The internal organizing practices are not only a prefiguration of the desired society, but they also produce knowledge about the desired society.

#### 2.4. Research objectives and questions

My research objectives regarding feminist grassroots organizing are twofold. Firstly, the political, feminist ideas and desires of the research participants are explored. The second objective is to explore how the political-theoretical views and desires are connected to the day-to-day organizing in feminist activism. In other words the objective is to analyze feminist politics through the principles and internal organizing practices, to understand how feminist ideas are put to practice. I pose three research questions to address these objectives:

1. What does feminism mean to the research participants?
2. What kinds of *feminist principles* do the research participants describe as important to their organizing?
3. What *knowledge-practices* are generated about organizing according to the principles?

The wide question about the meanings of feminism needs to be part of the research task to create context for the questions regarding principles and practices. Chapter four covers this issue as well as how the participants view their practices as political. Research questions two and three are discussed in chapters five and six, where I focus on some of the principles brought up in the interviews as well as their practices and challenges.

## 2.5. Conceptualizing feminist organizing practices

In this chapter I have discussed different studies on and conceptualizations of internal organizing practices in social movements that inform this study. The concepts knowledge-practices, ethos and principles as well as prefigurative politics form the theoretical and conceptual spine for the empirical study. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, feminist theory stems from the lived, the practical, the everyday. In this study it practically means that I try to keep the theory close to the data. The concept of knowledge-practices is used to conceptualize the findings of this study. The embodied experience, the analyses and practices that the research participants share in the interviews are viewed as knowledge-practices on how to organize in feminist ways. The knowledge-practices become a form of feminist theory in practice.

Prefigurative politics as one form of knowledge-practice constitutes the theoretical perspective in this study on the organizing practices that the participants share. It connects the political visions and desires with the present everyday lives and day-to-day organizing. I have gathered knowledge-practices on feminist organizing, with the aim of documenting the feminist practices and desires for a future society that feminist activists uphold. I maintain that by analyzing their internal organizing practices it is possible to understand their feminist politics.

The concepts of principles and practices help make a conceptual distinction when analyzing what the research participants talk about. Principles are used to recognize the political desires and the values that are important for the participants when they consider how they want to organize. The practices are a way to fulfill those desires and values when organizing. Because the process of prefiguring the desired society is messy and often difficult, the distinction between principles and practices help navigate between the desired future and the practices and analyze why the future is sometimes so difficult to prefigure. The participants describe practices and they talk about important principles, but they sometimes prove difficult and challenging. Despite the difficulties, the principles and practices are still present and constitute the messy and experimental process of prefigurative politics.

This study contributes new research on internal organizing practices in feminist grassroots organizing that are largely neglected in previous research both internationally and in Finland. Additionally, this study contributes to social movement studies in



general with insights on feminist organizing practices. Internal organizing practices and prefigurative politics have received some interest within research fields on social movements, but feminist movements has rarely been among those studies. This study contributes with a feminist perspective on analyses of prefigurative politics and thus broadens the understanding of what kinds of societies are prefigured in movements.

### 3. Research methods and methodological considerations

In this chapter I discuss the research process, from conducting interviews to analyzing them. I discuss what implications it had on the research process that I have a personal connection and relationship to the research participants and the activities they describe. While I do not think it is a problem in itself, it needs to be considered how that affected the interviews. I also discuss the expectations that I had for the results and conclusions of this study and what I did to reexamine my readings of the data.

#### 3.1. Interviewing feminist organizers as knowledge-practitioners

As I considered different research methods for this study, I decided on interviews. There is not much published material on feminist organizing practices to analyze and ethnographic methods would have meant it was me defining and interpreting what feminist practices are and if they are accomplished. I am interested in how feminist activists themselves think about feminist organizing practices, and interviews best answer these interests. As the purpose of the interviews is to gather and analyze the knowledge-practices on feminist organizing, the research participants are viewed as “subjects of knowledge” rather than “objects of knowledge” (Undurraga 2012, 424). With this perspective in mind I conducted the interviews as expert interviews (Alastalo and Åkerman 2010, 373-374). The interviews were not about the individuals themselves, but the expertise, the knowledge-practices they could share about the topic of the study, i.e. internal feminist organizing principles and practices. The interviewees are experts in their field who share their analysis and reflections on their experiences and knowledge-practices.

There are risks and lacks with my choice of method. I put a lot of responsibility on the research participants to formulate analyses, which could be challenging for them. Some

research participants might feel they need to show the best sides of their projects or groups and might be careful to discuss problems or critique. Interviewing individuals instead of participating in the group's activities gives a story about the projects from only that individual's perspective. All the research participants are still part of feminist organizing in one way or another, this means that perspectives and experiences from people who have decided to leave feminist activism are left out. Apart from knowing the overall topic of the study, the participants came to the interviews unprepared. Hence, they did not have much time to consider the questions and their answers could be different had they received the questions beforehand or been able to write the answers on their own time. In general the answers would be slightly different in a different time, space or headspace. An interview is always an encounter between the interviewee and the interviewer, the answers are always situational, in the context of when, where, how and by who that interview is conducted (Oinas 2004, 220). Perhaps the interviewees could sense some unuttered expectations from me or maybe I had new interests because of something I had heard in the previous interview.

Despite some risks, interviews also have benefits. In the interviews I could explain the question further if the participants felt confused and ask them to elaborate when I wanted to hear more. I had the same questions for each interview, but the structure and order of them varied and in different interviews different questions received more emphasis. I let the interviews flow in different directions depending on what the participants found interesting or relevant and what I wanted to hear more about, which allowed the participants to discuss what they found important. I believe this gave me more interesting material than I would have found if I had rigidly stuck to my questions and their order. The structure and questions for the interviews can be found in Finnish in Appendix 2.

Because this study focuses on collective organizing, I reached out to groups instead of individuals. There are several reasons for this. Initially the study was to focus more on describing the groups, and for that purpose also it was important to contact groups. As this aspect of the study was left out, the descriptions of the groups function more as context than content. Because I have personal connections to many of the groups contacted, it was also easier to contact whole groups instead of friends who might feel the need to do a favor. By contacting groups no individual felt pressure or expectation to participate. I could also reach more people who are active by contacting whole

groups. However, as responses to my initial request were few, I started contacting some individuals that I knew were active in the groups from which I lacked a response. I asked them if my message had been discussed in the group and if not, if they could share my message again. In that message I also asked them personally if they would want to participate, to which some of them said yes.

There were not very clear criteria for what kinds of groups were fitting for the study. Two criteria were certain: they need to be group projects and the group needs to define itself as feminist. Some groups were an obvious choice and some I intuitively felt did not fit, but could not explain precisely why. To formulate more clearly the criteria, I tried to specify what it was about the groups that I had chosen. I chose groups that organize outside of or are not directing efforts at institutions. The groups put their efforts on their own projects, not towards policy makers, specific laws or institutional change. I chose groups that in one way or another are creating the change and reality they want, rather than demanding it from someone else. This left out organizations that focus on legislation, elections and party politics. I also wanted to focus on grassroots organizing with a volunteer basis. Some of the groups discussed in the interviews have some funding and even pay some salary to some members, however they were still largely organized by volunteers. All the research participants but one in this study organized as volunteers, the one exception had only recently started receiving a salary after organizing as a volunteer for a long time.

The end result is that there are approximately eleven different groups or projects that are discussed in the interviews. Some groups and projects are discussed by several research participants. The groups vary in their activities and organization; activism included in this thesis involves publications, event production, self-organized spaces, art projects, demonstrations as well as other activities. Some of the groups have a formal association as the main format for organizing, some of them have it in the background. Some are just a group of friends with very little structure, some started that way and have grown into a group of friends structured in a new way. Some have become friends along the way and some are more collaborators than friends.

The empirical material for this study consists of ten interviews, two of which are pair interviews. The interviews were all between one and three hours long. They were conducted in three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) and over a timespan of

two months. When quoting from the data, I identify the research participants with their self-chosen aliases, which are <3, Minna, S, Alma, ML, MP, B, R, Maria, M, Sylvi and www. In addition to choosing their aliases, I asked the research participants for their preferred pronouns. Sylvi and www were interviewed as a pair, as were MP and ML, the others were individual interviews. Although the participants were recruited through groups, they do not represent their groups, but speak about their own opinions, experiences and interpretations. In the interviews, they talked about their views on feminism, described their groups, they talked about their thoughts on feminist organizing, what that means and how it ought to be put into practice. They talked about the challenges and difficulties of organizing as well as the joy and excitement they have felt.

Some words need to be said about my relationship as researcher to the research participants. As has already been stated I have been active in several of the groups that are discussed in the interviews and I am close friends or have collaborated with some of the participants. I was open about my affinity to many of the groups and the activities that were to be discussed in the call to participate. In the e-mail that I sent to the groups I wrote shortly about this:

I have been active in feminist and antiauthoritarian groups in Helsinki during the 2010s. Hence, I have a very sympathetic relationship to my topic and I want to do research that is useful for activists. Some of the groups I approach I've been active in myself. However, I want to emphasize that I will try to keep my own experiences at a distance in the research. I will not question the points of view of my informants based on my personal opinions.

While I wanted to make clear my supportive positioning towards the groups and research participants, I also stated that I would let the interviewees speak and not impose my own interpretations on them.

Although I did not want my personal relationship to feminist activism or the research participants to take space in or have an impact on the interviews, it sometimes did. Some of the participants treated me more as a friend or fellow activist in the beginning of the interviews. In some interviews I noticed that the research participants assumed that I knew what they were talking about since I also have been active in feminist activism. In those cases I asked the research participants to not assume I know anything. In the interviews in which the research participants were close friends of mine, the line between researcher and friend was blurred (Yost and Chmielewski 2013). A research

participant speaking seriously could quickly turn to joking in which a shared understanding was assumed. Although my relation to the participants and the subjects played a bigger part in the interviews than I had intended, I believe that these relations to the most part had positive effects on the interviews. I believe that the feeling of affinity created a sense of safety in which the research participants could openly think, ask questions and share uncertainties, criticism and negative experiences. Still, rather than reducing the boundaries between myself as researcher and the research participants, which e.g. Yost and Chmielewski (2013) suggest, I practiced “boundary-making” (Lewis et al. 2015, 4). As it is me writing this thesis and claiming the right to make the analyses, I found it important to uphold my role in this context as the researcher rather than a friend or fellow activist. I also believe the boundary-making helped create clarity in the interviews. Evelina Johansson Wilén (2019, 74) writes about the benefit of making an interview rather than trying to create a conversation, because it gives the participants “more space and a chance to develop their thoughts”.

Despite some risks and challenges the interviews proved fruitful. In general I found the research participants to be open and seem comfortable with sharing their thoughts and experiences. Although some had more to say than others, all seemed interested in discussing the topics. With hindsight I would have preferred more pair interviews, because they allowed the participants to have more of a conversation, to delve deeper and to develop as well as contradict each other’s thoughts. Several of the research participants also expressed an appreciation for the topic to be studied. In a couple of the interviews the research participant did seem to find it difficult to answer some questions, especially when I asked them to elaborate or give examples.

### 3.2. Thematic analysis and questioning expectations

During the whole process of this study, but especially during analysis and writing, I have had to look critically at my own position and expectations. I have personal affects and experiences regarding feminist organizing practices and I have had to examine what those experiences and opinions mean in context of this study. What is my role in relation to the interviews? What is the reality that I am constructing and how does it differ from what someone else would create based on those interviews? Should I be more present in the text to show how the study is “situated” (Haraway 1988) or am I already too much? I cannot answer these questions fully, but it is important to

contemplate on and disclose these uncertainties and hesitations to make the process and outcomes of the study more transparent.

Many times I have asked myself if the analyses and conclusions I make really can be made or if I just want to make them (Ruusu vuori, Nikander and Hyvärinen 2010, 21). As Ruusu vuori and colleagues (2010) describe as common in research, some interviews felt more successful than others. Especially at the time of conducting the interviews, I noticed I felt more excited and pleased about interviews in which the research participants talked about topics that I had expected or hoped for. When the research participants did not really discuss or recognize topics I was interested in, the interviews felt a bit like failures and I sometimes wondered if I had contacted the wrong groups. After self-critical reflection I realized that the interviews which did not meet my expectations were important as they challenged my presumptions and what I thought I knew. While there were many interviews which confirmed the outcomes I expected, the ones which did not proved in a way more informative and insightful. (Aléx and Hammarström 2008).

Similarly to how feminist researcher Mia Eriksson (2016, 61) describes her relationship to the texts she analyzes, the interviews have taken different roles for me throughout the process. One that I first did not find very interesting has later turned out to give a lot of insight. The interviews have changed and reformed through the process. I have, in a sense, been conversing with them and let them converse with each other (Ruusu vuori, Nikander and Hyvärinen 2010).

I had not chosen themes or principles to focus on beforehand. Instead, the themes and principles arise from the empirical data, they were selected for this thesis based on frequency in the interviews. Although a lot of themes and topics were discussed, I have chosen to focus on the ones discussed most in the interviews. This is a result of reading and coding the interviews several times.

Transcribing the interviews was an important way for me to get familiar with the data. I transcribed the interviews almost entirely because I was open to everything being relevant. Perhaps it is due to being an inexperienced researcher or wanting to let the analysis take shape slowly, in any case I did not want to make hasty decisions about the data. With hindsight, time could have been saved because there is a lot that is left

outside the scope of this study, but at the same time it has provided context for the analysis. (Ruusuvaori, Nikander and Hyvärinen 2010).

After reading the interviews once, I started coding citations from them in Atlas.ti. I had not decided what to code beforehand, but created codes along the way, intuitively. As I started coding before all the interviews were done, I assume that the first interviews affected the reading of the later ones to some extent. Because of this I was skeptical towards my codes and categories after I was finished. I worried that they were forced and did not really reflect the interviews. I did not want to be stuck in the assumptions that I had in the beginning and so I started reading the interviews again, trying to let go of all expectations and memory of what I had coded and been interested in. This time around I read the interviews faster. Instead of making notes while reading, I wrote down key words immediately after having read an interview. This allowed me to identify the central themes in an interview without relation to the other interviews or existing codes. When I had done this for all the interviews I looked at the key words I had written down to examine recurrences. This both confirmed what the coding in Atlas.ti had shown and challenged me to recognize that some themes proved more common than I had expected and more common than other themes that I had hoped for.

Rereading the interviews helped locate and choose themes on which to focus in this study and to get a clearer overview of what themes were recurring and how they related to each other. I returned to the coded citations in Atlas.ti to examine more closely the themes I had chosen to focus on. For analyzing the themes of hierarchies and resources the codes were helpful, I had codes named “hierarchies” and “resources”, as well as others which helped gather citations from the interviews that I could look at closer. However, I found my codes lacking when I wanted to examine the themes of diversity and inclusivity. Getting a satisfying overview of how the research participants discussed these themes was not possible with the existing codes, so I started rereading the interviews again. This time I focused especially on and coded “diversity”, “inclusivity”, “accessibility” and “safer spaces”. I knew that these were recurring themes in the interviews: recoding citations in the interviews helped locate specific moments in which they were discussed and get an overview of those themes.

In addition to reading, writing was an essential part of the analysis. In many ways the analysis was not formulated or clear to me until I started writing it. Writing in this case

is more than just reporting, writing was a crucial part of figuring out. While I had some themes and topics planned and formulated, how they aligned and related to each other, the sense-making of it to a large part happened during the process of writing. It was important to read and reread the interviews, to create mind maps and categories and codes. However, not until I started writing did they start making sense. Creating some order and clarity was in many ways an intuitive process of writing and feeling my way forward. (Eriksson 2016, 60).

The themes that I refer to in this chapter largely concur with the feminist principles that structure this study. However, the themes cannot be automatically translated as principles, because not all participants discussed the themes as principles. For example the theme of diversity came up in all the interviews, but only some participants viewed it as a feminist principle. Although I name feminist principles in the analytical chapters of this thesis, it does not mean all the participants view them as principles even if they had talked about them.

### 3.3. Research ethical considerations

Many aspects of research ethics have already been touched upon. The whole premise of the study is an ethical one: I want to do research that benefits the feminist groups and activists that this study relates to. For this it was important to be open to the participants and groups I contacted from the start about what the study is about and what their role is in it.

Anonymity alongside with self-determination of the participants has been important. For the participants to remain anonymous but also feel they can represent themselves, they got to choose their own pseudonyms and preferred pronoun. To ensure anonymity, descriptions of the groups and their activities are kept to a minimum. This decision was made on request of some of the groups I contacted. They did not want to participate if their group was named or clearly described. As I did not feel it inhibited the purposes of this study, their request was met.

I sent out the transcriptions of the interviews to the research participants for them to read and check that nothing important was misheard. However, as the quotes in this thesis are for the most part translated into English, nuances can have altered from the initial phrasing. I have translated in verbatim, leaving in some of the fill-in words



because they illustrate the tone in which the participants speak. It cannot be avoided, however, that the translation tends to be more standardized than utterances in their original languages. For transparency, the translated quotes in their original language can be found in Appendix 1 in numerical order. The transcriptions and recordings of the interviews are stored on an external hard drive with the participants anonymized, but the groups still named.

## 4. Feminism and the politics of practices

As feminism can be understood in a wide array of ways, it is important to know what analysis and definition of feminism is informing the practices and organizing of the activists interviewed for this study. Especially when organizing practices are understood to prefigure the desired society, the political idea is central to the practical methods of organizing as well.

### 4.1. Definition of feminism

All the research participants said feminism is difficult to define when I asked what it means to them. To many of them it is such a broad and big question, its definition is difficult to pinpoint. Despite the difficulties in determining the meaning of feminism, there are three observations especially interesting that many of the participants shared.

The first is that most of the participants define feminism in broad terms, it cannot be specified or pinpointed, rather it involves a broad conception of equality and inequality. <3's definition represents the broad and open-ended definition of feminism that many participants give: "Well, I think it is the acknowledgement and dismantling of structural inequalities." (<3, 1). Feminism means acknowledging and dismantling structural inequalities. Many of the participants do not specify what kinds of inequalities it involves, feminism means to dismantle all of them. Some give a list of structural inequalities that are to be fought against, but also acknowledge that the list is endless. Some of the social structures and mechanisms that come up in the interviews are racism, capitalism, climate change, norms on functionality, national borders and gender. Alma describes how her conception of feminism has changed over time, while feminism at first focused on gender inequality, it nowadays incorporates various forms of inequality:

It means working for equality between all genders and then later I have also started to think more about having an intersectional perspective. Maybe nowadays I think even more about working for equality, also in economic terms and between different ethnicities and functional diversities and the like. In the beginning it was more clearly just a gender thing for me and then it has gone more and more in that direction and now I think that environmental activism is kind of the biggest feminist question as well. There is quite a lot that falls under it and it can be done within so many different areas, politics, art and everything, it is super broad, it is difficult to answer. (Alma, 2)

One interesting note to make in regards to the broad conception of feminism, which is also illustrated in Alma's quote is how feminism relates to gender. In some of the definitions of feminism gender is brought up, in many of them gender is one aspect of structural inequality among others. Interestingly, some research participants do not mention gender at all. While gender is sometimes not mentioned in the definitions of feminism it comes up in other contexts sometimes. It is also possible that gender is not mentioned because it is taken for granted. However, gender inequality is not the focus of feminism as it is discussed in the interviews. In some interviews other inequalities are emphasized more than gender. In many interviews an intersectional perspective of feminism is presented, in some implicitly and in some explicitly, an example is MP when I ask her and ML what feminism means and if they identify as feminists:

Yes, as an intersectional feminist. And well, a worldview and practices, quite wide in a way, a regard to and understanding of power structures and well... (laughs a little) It reflects on kind of everything, so it feels difficult to define all that it means, but maybe this kind of awareness. (MP, 3)

MP's quote illustrates the unwillingness to precisely define feminism. She defines herself as an intersectional feminist, but does not want to be more specific, because feminism relates to everything. The lack of (emphasis on) gender in the definitions and discussions on feminism is important to bring up because it provides a different perspective on feminism than what is often presented in academic research on feminist activism and organizing. In much literature gender is assumed to be the central topic and focus in feminist activism (see e.g. Bergman 2002; Griffin 1995; Hunt 2017; Lewis and Marine 2015). This assumption however is often not defended or argued for. The interviews in this study show a different view on feminism in which feminism incorporates all forms of inequality and strives to dismantle all of them. As it seems based on my research, among activists feminism is often understood broadly and intersectionally. Whether feminist activists define feminism through gender or in other terms needs to be asked and acknowledged by researchers.

The second observation based on many of the interviews is that feminism by definition is an activity and a process. Feminism is not something that you are as much as something that you do. This comes up in different ways in the interviews. Some of the participants emphasize the need for activism, an active struggle against inequalities, Maria criticizes feminism as an identity and states that it means doing something for equality together. Similarly M defines feminism as something active:

It is not just that you need to be for equality, it also means that something should be done as well. It also means, at least for me, that there is a problem, inequality, and that should somehow be solved. And I think that is part of it, or what I think is feminism. And somehow to me, well, actively being part of that kind of change, yes. (M, 4)

In addition to activism, feminism is also discussed as a constant learning, or in Ahmed's (2017, 11) words, being a "student". R describes feminism as learning and "constantly reconciling oneself and the world and other people." (R, 5). Feminism as a learning activity is most clearly described by S:

(laughs) That's a really hard question (thinking). Well, of course like, the base of everything is of course fighting for equality, but it also, I think it's a lot about like support, like coming together to support each other and understand each other and also sometimes learn from each other a lot. And understanding how the discrimination and inequalities are very different for everyone, so for me feminism is a constant learning. Yeah, for me if you call yourself a feminist it's as if you go to school, you have all these different things that you always get more and more knowledge about. I mean for me it of course it involves activism in a way, but it doesn't have to. I don't think you need to be an activist to call yourself a feminist, not everybody has resources to do that. I don't know, it's really hard to have a definition, because it includes so many things. (S)

B also describes feminism as something active. She has been most interested in the tools and practices that feminism offers, the ways of doing feminism can be incorporated in any activity against inequality:

(laughs) Very difficult, but for me it has always been very open and that you really strongly include thoughts of different kinds of mechanisms of oppression and not just gender or, that both gender and different forms of gendered oppression, but also all kinds of things like racism and hierarchies in terms of for example legal status in a country and all those kinds of things. But yes, so quite an open definition and that is why for me maybe it has not been so important to think about precisely feminism, but maybe more what tools and ways of thinking about how one can change, that the feminist movements offer. That is what I think is the most valuable, to try to be [not audible] and take into account different sorts of positions and different situations and the likes, in that way include several kinds of people into one's work too. (B, 6)

More than being an analysis of society or structural inequalities or something that one is, feminism is discussed as an activity and a process. It can mean actively fighting against inequality, learning and analyzing or a way of doing things.

Feminism as something active relates to the last observation. Especially the quote by B above illustrates what several participants touch upon in the interviews: that feminism is something in itself. As B discussed above, feminism provides tools and perspectives to doing things differently, it is not only the struggle against something, but the way things are done. Also Sylvi talks about feminism not as a topic but as a way of being in some way, feminism appears as everyone being able to express and fulfill themselves:

Yeah, for me feminism appears as a thing which makes it somehow possible (thinks) a safe existence for everyone and in a way that you can fulfill and express yourself from exactly the position that feels right and good to you (Sylvi, 7)

The distinction I want to make is that feminism can be understood as in relation to inequalities or it can be understood as something in itself. In addition to being *reactive* to inequalities, it is something *active on its own*. As expressed by Sylvi feminism means people can be safe to express themselves. ML describes feminism in the group he is in: “What is maybe essential in it is a sort of affirmative position with regard to differences, a sort of positive attitude to differences, that we search for, we seek to create something shared based on those differences” (ML, 8). Feminism is not only a struggle against inequality, which hypothetically has an end once full equality is achieved, feminism is something on its own, a way of being in the world.

To summarize, feminism as expressed in the interviews is understood as a broad conception of inequality. It is an activity rather than an identity and that activity goes beyond a struggle against something.

#### 4.2. The politics of practices

The definitions of feminism above, in which feminism is a way of being in the world and relating to others illustrates how organizing practices are political. Feminism in this context means, in addition to fighting inequality, being together in a feminist way.

Therefore the internal organizing practices become a part of doing feminism.

There are variations in how the research participants talk about organizing practices and what political meaning they are given. Some had not thought about the organizing

practices as political before, while some viewed them as an obvious and important part of their political activities. In some interviews a prefigurative desire is not expressed per se, but appears when challenges and difficulties are described. When organizing does not resemble the desired political future it is problematized, which expresses a desire to organize prefiguratively. However, in a few of the interviews a prefigurative perspective is expressed clearly.

An example of prefigurative politics is in Alma's interview. She says that a feminist group internally should resemble a feminist society in miniature form, I asked her to describe it:

Yeah okay, well it is a society, or a group where everyone gets to take space but no one has to take space, but they can take space to express themselves, to actualize themselves and be themselves (thinks) as much as possible. But at the same time it is important that everyone also is considered and no one is, that everyone can also support each other in this process as much as possible, without (thinks), without forgetting to invest (orig.: satsa) in oneself and (thinks) take care of oneself, because you then take care of others so much. I mean, it is a really difficult balance, but where everyone can be as free and safe as possible (thinks). And have as much fun as possible (chuckles). (Alma, 9)

MP expresses a prefigurative desire when she talks about the groups being a space for testing utopias:

I think there is something magnificent in being able to create the kinds of communities in which you can maybe try the utopias or [forms] of organizing... somehow try how things could work, that you don't just go according to some predefined. Of course always within the frames of reality, that we noticed that there has to be some structure, but how we do it is fully up to us. (MP, 10)

The quotes above illustrate a desire for the groups to resemble the feminist politics that is being strived for. The groups are a space for experimenting with and creating the feminist future in the present. However, in most of the interviews prefigurative politics is not expressed quite as explicitly. One reason to this could be that it is assumed that internal organizing practices should be feminist and therefore not often explicitly stated, similarly to how S describes:

But it's not very much explicitly discussed, like 'ok this thing that we do is not feminist, or this should be more feminist', it's not very explicitly discussed. And also I don't feel that this question is brought up that much, that what is feminist organizing for us, but I feel that it's assumed by many people that that's the way we discuss organizing, that we want this to be a feminist group team. (S)

A prefigurative desire is expressed when the participants talk about the importance of self-critically examining whether one's practices really correspond with the ethos and principles of a group.

And of course also, what I also said a little earlier, to be critical about what you promise, if we have just stated that we are this kind of feminist and queer and antiracist and decolonial space, then what does that mean in practice, that it is not a label, but it is concrete function and action that advances it. And that you really do something for it, not just say that you do, that it would be honest in that way, what you say you are and what you really do. (M, 11)

As illustrated in M's quote above, political ethos and principles are not labels, what is more important is how they are put to practice. Because this is often challenging, self-critique in groups is important. Maria says that a collective evaluation is prevalent in the group she has been in. They have had a lot of discussions on what they would like to do better, but also about how they could practice their politics better: "But also the ideological things, like that we want to get better at really trying to work more intersectionally consciously or have ecologically sustainable thinking and those kinds of things" (Maria, 12). Intersectionality and ecological sustainability are important principles for the group, but they are not practiced perfectly. Internal self-critique and examination are especially important when the important feminist principles are difficult to put to practice. When the political vision is not prefigured in the practice, self-reflection and -critique is needed to figure out how the practices could be changed. The emphasis on self-critique as a way to deal with the challenges in organizing according to political principles illustrates a prefigurative desire in the interviews.

A prefigurative desire is also expressed in the frustrations experienced when a group does not manage to organize in a feminist way. In the interview with B a prefigurative desire is clear in how she describes a group she used to be part of and how she feels it became less feminist as the practices changed. She feels that as the group grew, things became more organized. Notwithstanding its benefits, it posed challenges to organizing according to feminist principles for her. The group started to resemble a company or a non-feminist organization more than a feminist group. While the new practices had some benefits, they also challenged the internal feminism of the group with hierarchies and division.

Ina: Well was there a discussion in the group about this change and what implications that can have from a feminist perspective?

B: There was but it was still a bit hypothetical, or it was like pros and cons, a lot of this that if you become a bigger association then you could employ people and it would free time for other things, which was a really good thought. But (thinks) it becomes like a different way of organizing and I don't think maybe that, partly that it doesn't feel like it would be as equal and feminist even if it could maybe be a possibility to make it more (thinks), that it could be a possibility for all the fun work to be done by those who, or that there is so much that is boring that needs to be done and then it doesn't have to be done by everyone who has tons to do anyways, they don't have to take on those tasks, someone who gets money does them instead. But it still has consequences, but I don't know if they are bad or good, or if either way is better, but for me it maybe felt like (thinks) it is more fun and less stress and fewer expectations and requirements on outcomes (orig. tulosvaatimuksen) and (laughs), that you somehow need to show someone what you do and that you do it well. (B, 13)

She is uncertain about what would have been a better solution and what is more feminist, but for her the new way of organizing compromised the equality and feminism within the group. A prefigurative desire surfaces when the group is not organizing prefiguratively.

B's quote above exemplifies an unwillingness to determine too precisely exactly what practices would be feminist which can be seen in many interviews. This is explained in several interviews: feminist practices are situated and context dependent and therefore practices should not be defined independently from the context and situation.

(laughs) No I mean, I'm just thinking, it is fascinating to think about (laughs), what is a feminist method? Or most methods are maybe not, or of course they are nothing, they can be charged with different things and be used in different ways. (Maria, 14)

At least I like to think of it as, or something like an ethics of encounters, applying just what suits whatever situation, to not guess too much beforehand what it is, if there is one certain way of acting. (ML, 15)

<3: Since it can mean such different things in different contexts, so in that way I'm a little, or when it comes to everything feminist I'm a little unwilling to say that 'like this, always'.

Ina: Why?

<3: Maybe precisely because it is (thinks), it relates to the fact that I think it is more doing than being, then I think it is very difficult to be norm critical and strictly normative at the same time (chuckles), so, that's why. (<3, 16)

The participants do not want to define specific practices as feminist or not feminist. Practices are determined by the situated needs and desires in a group. Organizing practices are political, although the politics does not lead to a specific set of practices. Practices gain political meaning in the context, in how they are used and for what

purposes. While the feminist principles are stated and largely shared among the research participants with some certainty, the practices are emphasized to be based on personal experience and preference. The research participants share their knowledge-practices of feminist organizing based on their personal experiences of successes, challenges and failures.

A few words also need to be said about whether the groups are deemed successful in organizing in a feminist way. As the challenges and difficulties have a central role in the discussions on feminist principles and practices, it is relevant that the research participants nevertheless largely view their groups as successful in feminist organizing. This expands the understanding of prefigurative politics. I asked in the interviews whether the research participants think their groups organize in a feminist way, in other words, whether they succeed in organizing according to the principles they find important. All the informants answered yes, although there is always room for improvement. This is illustrated in the quote by S:

I: Do you think, in your opinion, that the group succeeds in organizing in a feminist way?

S: Yeah, I think to our best ability. A lot of things that we discuss, of course, when things are discussed, of how we need to do this better, if you look at all these things, of course a lot of things we don't succeed in, but I think that all these things are a work in progress, again as I was saying in the beginning, a lot of it is learning, so you kind of find out new things and you improve and then you just keep doing that. And this kind of, when things are discussed and some methods or some values are proposed they're very idealistic, and I don't think they're very easily reachable, especially in the kind of climate we live in. So, I think we succeed, but I think there's also a lot of things to work on, but I think everybody tries to do this in their best ability and usually when we discuss things that should be improved, everybody agrees that this should be improved and everybody tries their best. But of course there are a lot of things that are kind of not good enough and could be better (S)

Prefigurative politics in this context of feminist organizing means that feminist practice can be successful though not perfect. Although challenges and difficulties are many and require critical self-reflection and constant improvement, it does not mean that the organizers fail in organizing in a feminist way. Instead prefigurative politics and feminist organizing can be understood as the process of constantly trying, negotiating and reflecting. That process in which the principles are emphasized and prioritized, in which organizing according to the principles is strived for although rarely fully accomplished, is prefigurative feminist politics.



In the next two chapters I discuss the central themes regarding organizing that I identified in the analysis. The two chapters develop further my interest in prefigurative politics and make use of concepts discussed in Chapter two. Chapter five examines how the research participants talk about hierarchies and the need to organize activities according to the resources of the group members. Chapter six considers diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and safer spaces as feminist principles and what implications they have.

## 5. Hierarchies and resources

In this chapter I discuss the principles of hierarchies and organizing according to resources as well as how the principles are put to practice. Hierarchies and resources were frequent topics in all the interviews. Although the principles on hierarchies and resources are often discussed separately, they also blend together and affect each other, creating tensions and challenges to organizing. Therefore the two principles are brought together in this chapter.

### 5.1. Low and transparent hierarchies as feminist principle

One principle for feminist organizing that all the research participants discuss is having low and transparent hierarchies. Some of the participants argue that hierarchies should always be minimal, while for others the importance is that they are negotiated and transparent. Despite variations, hierarchies are a topic in all the interviews. Transparent and low hierarchies indicate equality in groups, with low hierarchies power and responsibility is distributed evenly within a group. As hierarchies are discussed here, they relate to both distribution of power as well as distribution of responsibility.

A distinction that ought to be made to clarify the discussion on hierarchies. Hierarchies, as they are discussed here relate to two different aspects. On the one hand hierarchies relate to the organizational distribution of power and responsibilities. These can appear as hierarchies in for example decision making and sharing of resources (e.g. salary). On the other hand there are hierarchies that stem from societal and structural hierarchies relating to people's backgrounds, identities and other social positions (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity, education). These hierarchies can trickle in from society and be reproduced in

the groups, even when that is not the intention. Although these are two different aspects of hierarchies, they blend together in practice. Societal hierarchies can affect internal group dynamics and organizing (whose opinion is valued, who ends up with what tasks, what kinds of tasks are valued etc.). As the two aspects often blend together in practice and in the discussions, I will not focus on the distinction in this thesis, but discuss the ways in which they blend in practice. Nevertheless, the distinction ought to be noted.

The perspectives on hierarchies in the interviews can be divided roughly into two different perspectives. A few of the participants, though a minority, do not reject hierarchies per se, but instead emphasize their need to be transparent and negotiable. Most of the research participants, however, say that hierarchies should be low in organizing and also openly communicated and transparent. The differences between the participants lie in whether they think feminist organizing should be low in hierarchies or whether they think hierarchies are contextual and sometimes fitting. However, all the participants agree that hierarchies should always be transparent, up for discussion and changed if the group agrees it is needed. Despite these variations, in this thesis I name the principle as low and transparent hierarchies.

In some interviews the desire to analyze and dismantle hierarchies in itself and openly talking about that is viewed as a feminist practice. www phrases it concisely when I ask what feminist organizing is: “Probably at least that you pay attention to, or somehow analyze and think in a new way about how power forms in groups” (www, 17). Similarly, B discusses how it is important to openly state that one tries to organize without hierarchies, because that statement in itself helps recognize and discuss hierarchies in the groups.

Yeah, then just practically of course it is difficult to say that there are no hierarchies here, because there always are, but maybe by saying that you try to not have so many hierarchies in the way you organize, then maybe it is easier, both for oneself participating in organizing to make sure that you don't take too much space for example or interrupt someone or something like that, and also for others, by having a thought of organizing without hierarchies, then maybe other people can also say if they experience something as a problem. But it is a lot easier said than done. (B, 18)

The explicit desire and attempt to organize without hierarchies in itself, although never fully achievable, makes it easier to discuss and dismantle hierarchies. The emphasis then is not on non-hierarchical organizing per se, but on the desire and attempt to understand, discuss and change hierarchies when so desired.

As exemplified by B above, the impossibility of organizing completely without hierarchies is discussed in many interviews. Therefore the principle is largely discussed as low and transparent hierarchies in organizing rather than no hierarchies at all. In many of the interviews it is discussed that hierarchies always occur, for example when different societal hierarchies trickle into the groups or when some group members accumulate more knowledge and experience than others.

Especially the research participants who emphasize the impossibility of organizing completely without hierarchies emphasize the need for transparency and being able to talk openly about hierarchies. <3 talks about the importance of making visible how power is distributed, so that harmful structures would not appear, but at the same time states that they inevitably always do. She is one of the interviewees who does not think hierarchies are necessarily bad in feminist organizing, but that the more important question is whether they are chosen and openly discussed. She emphasizes the importance of being able to discuss the dynamics and relations between people and trying to make it all visible as she does not think it is possible to completely rid all hierarchies:

At least it is thinking about it. Well, probably it is seeing the structures of coming together, or the attempt to see them, so that they wouldn't be hidden, or that there wouldn't be these kinds of hidden power structures which have a hurtful effect, and then of course they appear too. So it's probably in some way striving to acknowledge the relations and hierarchies in a group. Then I don't, I think the whole question of collectivity and low hierarchy or non-hierarchy is really super interesting, but I don't have any, or it comes across especially differently when making art. I don't unequivocally think that a flat structure would be the only way to act in a feminist way. I do think, somehow the openness and verbalizing things when doing something together, some kind of reciprocal understanding of where you are and what you are doing, that's probably the core. [...] In that sense I think, more than the low or the non-hierarchical, especially since I don't believe non-hierarchical is possible, but maybe more than that, then somehow speaking and acknowledging the relations between people and maybe also people's starting points. But that is also really super difficult. (<3, 19)

Similarly to <3, S does not categorically dismiss hierarchies, but states that organizing practices should always depend on context and be transparent:

I don't always know what people mean when they talk about hierarchies (laughs) within a group. I guess it is about dismantling hierarchies, but also I wouldn't say personally that... I think hierarchies need to be talked about and if there are hierarchies within a group they need to be very transparent and very, everybody should be informed of what, if there are hierarchies, what they are and what they entail. I don't think that, maybe some groups are better with no hierarchy at all and some groups need some kind of hierarchy, so I think it depends on the state of the

organization, if anybody gets paid or, how they work, it depends oftentimes on the group and what their goals are. I feel that sometimes in some organizations it's not very transparent, you don't always know who actually gets paid and what kind of work they get paid for and is someone else doing the same kind of work without getting paid, so I think if there are hierarchies they need to be very transparent and everybody needs to know how they work and also choose whether they want to be in a certain type of group in that organization. (S)

Hierarchies become problematic when they are hidden and unclear, the existence of hierarchies does not necessarily have to be a problem in itself according to <3 and S.

The feminist principle regarding hierarchies can then be better understood as a need to always be able to discuss, negotiate and alter hierarchies in groups, rather than categorically dismissing them. The discussions on hierarchies make visible a contradiction that seems to be an inevitable aspect of feminist organizing especially when hierarchies are to be minimized or dismantled. Hierarchies always occur, but organizers should try to dismantle them. Feminist organizers then organize according to a principle that they are aware is difficult, even impossible, to achieve in practice. Because of this the challenges and perhaps even failures to organize with low and transparent hierarchies have a large role when discussing feminist practice. The challenges provide knowledge-practices on what has worked and what has not, what poses problems to organizing with low hierarchies and how perhaps those problems can be solved.

## 5.2. Practices and challenges regarding low and transparent hierarchies

In some of the interviews it is discussed how societal hierarchies are reproduced as organizational hierarchies in the groups. These kinds of hierarchies are viewed as harmful and should be dismantled and discussed in the groups. These hierarchies can for example relate to different educational backgrounds and how education or merits can mean some people get more authority or appreciation. A few of the participants talk about how groups should not assume skills and knowledge based on educational level; different knowledge and experiences should be appreciated equally.

[that] someone has more education and can therefore say more about some specific thing, but that everyone should have a chance to express themselves and have knowledge about many things (B, 20)

Tasks and roles should also be distributed based on what people want to do or learn, not on roles they are given based on their education or other background:

What makes hierarchies problematic there is when they are somewhere just hidden and start to bother and irritate. Of course probably everyone hopes that it at least would work in a way so that you can take different kinds of responsibilities or try different things and that you can learn something new if you want, that you don't have to get stuck in some certain role. (ML, 21)

Similarly to the principles in the Greenham camp that Roseneil (1995) describes, ML states that it should be possible to learn and try different roles and tasks. ML accepts that hierarchies or uneven distribution of responsibility occur due to differing skills and knowledge, if they are transparent and make organizing easier. However, it is also an important feminist practice to let people move beyond their roles, to be able to learn and experiment and do something different from what is assumed and expected of them.

M discusses hierarchies in relation to gender. According to her gendered hierarchies can easily be reproduced in organizing groups. In groups she has been active in she has experienced that the men and women were doing different tasks and that the men made more decisions than the women. Also tasks traditionally viewed as feminine received less appreciation than those traditionally viewed as masculine:

Well, for example [in one group] (thinks) we have talked about how some responsibilities feel like, that they have been divided, or we try to avoid this, at least I remember in the beginning, that even if we had quite an equal amount of men and women in the collective, still in some strange way it felt like it was the men who decide the content and the women who produce and did the practical things. And that's a thing, how to get away from that. We also have this thing, that we now have two equal leaders in the space and how that could be more equal. I feel, in general in art spaces there is a leader and a producer and usually the producer is always a woman (chuckles) in some strange way, so how to get away. Maybe in that sense [in our group] we have tried to be consciously feminist, specifically in that sense, that we take note of the gendered division of labor, which feels like it quite easily forms without notice in collectives and then how to notice it. (M, 22)

Open discussions are presented as a central practice to dismantle these kinds of hierarchies. Groups can also redistribute tasks and roles when they see unwanted hierarchies appearing and they should recognize how different tasks receive unequal appreciation and try to change that:

Ina: Is this, that there are different ways of doing activities or different things within an activity, do you view that as a feminist way of organizing?

M: Well yes, I guess it's part of this, what you experience as a sort of non-hierarchical, maybe also as a way of breaking roles. And that you don't view that activity perceived as feminine would be valued less than activity perceived as masculine (chuckles). So yes (chuckles). (M, 23)

Feminist practice as it relates to these kinds of hierarchies means critically examining and discussing how power relations are constructed in the groups and actively trying to break those relations.

Discussions are also an important element of decision making processes. Making decisions with low hierarchies means making sure everyone's opinions are taken into account. Some research participants prefer votes and some consensus driven discussion. In any case all emphasize the need to discuss and make sure everyone gets a chance to say their opinions. The discussions can be inefficient and take a long time. However, this inefficiency is preferred to decisions being made without ensuring everyone's opinions are heard. MP describes this in relation to a decision the group has been contemplating over a longer period of time:

It's a negotiation that we have had in several meetings so that we give everyone the floor and we have noticed that there are different points of view. You notice that it takes a lot more time, but then the result is somehow much more fruitful. (MP, 24)

MP describes how decisions and discussions prove more fruitful when time is set aside for them, rather than rushing through decisions. Also S describes how decision making happens through discussions, for the group she described the goal is that everyone agrees on the decisions:

we usually just discuss until a common answer is, until everybody agrees. And sometimes, there would usually be some compromise, I mean, something like 'ok yes, there is a problem in this, but let's ask them more questions and then let's see how that', so it's not like one side would convince the other, but more like 'ok, how do we deal with this, that it becomes something that we all agree on'. I think usually it would work like this. I haven't noticed that it would be something like the majority decides or anything like that, I think it would usually be a discussion that everybody who takes part in the discussion would agree on. (S)

The research participants who prefer to vote on decisions, say the alternatives to vote for are agreed upon through discussions. Some of the research participants argue for the benefits of voting instead of trying to reach consensus through conversation. They argue that it can in fact ensure that everyone can voice their opinion, instead of enhancing hierarchies which is a common perception (see Rasimus 2006, 232-233; Roseneil 1995).

www: for example we make a lot of votes about things (laughs quietly) [...] and that all the difficult things should be opened up together.

Sylvi: Yeah, and we are not very consensus driven in a way, or somehow, or that is not the starting point that we are consensus driven, because then it often means, at least to me, that some people just don't dare say their opinion because they are afraid of disagreeing with others. So, for us it has been from the start quite strong, that now everyone really says what they think and it has maybe become that kind of culture, that we also say what we think about things. We'll see how it settles with the [new members] who have come along now. But so then, you can put your opinions on the table and then we discuss them. Yeah, so maybe that's also the important, that there is no one person who would say 'hey, should we do this' and then everyone just says 'yeah yeah let's let's', without really thinking should we or not. It has come from, maybe from this kind of mutual trust. (www and Sylvi, 25)

The pressure to reach a consensus decision can have the impact that some people do not dare voice their disagreement according to Sylvi. Maria expresses similar views, according to her endless discussion can be a way to force groups to agreement. When decisions are made by voting, differing opinions can be expressed without worry of hindering everyone's plans and desires, because the majority can go forward with a plan.

Precicely, hmm, yeah we have always talked about things too and so. But voting has maybe almost more felt like it has been important in the way that, when you talk, then people have maybe presented their opinion when we've spoken, so there's the risk that also in a discussion you urge a consensus without checking if everyone really was on board. So the votes have been, in my opinion, a way to partly, those times we have had slightly different opinions, but then it has usually worked in a way that people have been like 'ok, I'm going to vote against this, but I'm ok with it, because I think, I see the merits of it, but I would maybe do it differently'. But it's never been so that someone would want to dissociate themselves from what we've decided or something like that and it has, maybe it has just been lucky that it has happened that way (chuckles). But I think, there has been a balance between holding to your own opinion and at the same time being ok with the majority wanting to do something different. And I don't know if it's feminist per se really, but it has maybe more to do with it being a pragmatic solution in some way (chuckles). Because I mean voting in itself could of course lead to all kinds of idiotic things (chuckles), that's why I think the discussion is really important also and we have also sometimes, that alternatives we have been voting on have been left out because we've talked ourselves to the decision that 'we can't do this, this is totally, this can't even be an alternative'. (Maria, 26)

Although these perspectives emphasize the benefits of voting, long discussions are still held to agree on the options and to ensure all points of views are given space. Maria discusses how voting could be a bad practice if the alternatives are not agreed upon, but combined with discussions, it can prove to better give space to different opinions.

The perspectives on how to make decisions show how groups can use different practices to organize according to the principle of low and transparent hierarchies. Decision-making with low hierarchies should ensure that everyone can express their opinion and that the opinion is valued and heard. It should also mean that decisions are made

collectively without forcing through decisions that some oppose strongly. For this to be realized some participants have concluded that discussions until everyone agrees are preferable while others have concluded that discussions and voting have better results. Feminist practice cannot be determined as a certain way of making decisions, but ensuring discussion in which everyone is heard is described as a feminist practice.

Setting aside time for discussion to make sure everyone's voice is heard proves challenging when groups are under stress and have a lot to do. These challenges are shared by many of the research participants. When organizing gets hectic and stressful, hierarchies appear as decisions are made quicker, not everyone knows what is going on and responsibilities and tasks are easily shared unevenly. Maintaining slower processes requires an effort, but still gets difficult when groups are under pressure:

Well [feminist organizing] is also that (thinks), it's doing together, so that there won't appear too much any hierarchies or that someone decides, that we avoid those, that there won't be cliques or, that it stays open what we do and everyone knows what's going on. And you need to of course, if there's a lot to do, then you need to take note of that, that if you just do a lot and don't think about it, then it easily, 'well we do this' and like that, but you need to always remember. (Minna, 27)

Stress and rushed decision-making also lead to conflicts and unclarity about how power is distributed in groups. Some of the participants describe conflicts they have had in the groups and how they were dealt with. M describes how they have tried to constantly evaluate their practices and develop them to make sure that decisions are made collectively:

So then, somehow it's maybe been a constant trial and error, what works and what doesn't. It feels like that has continued too, what the practices are and that it isn't so that there are one or two people who in the end decide about everything. It has worked sometimes better, sometimes, yeah (thinks). But maybe that's what has caused most conflicts, the distribution of power within, who gets to decide in the end and who doesn't. Of course there are these natural, that some members can't be involved as much as other because of work, but still, how the decision-making could be more collective. Maybe that has been the biggest self-critical... (M, 28)

At times it has not worked and conflicts have arisen. These conflicts have had to be dealt with through collective conversations. Also <3 describes how conflicts that they had in the group required the group to have long conversations about the dynamics in the groups and how they could improve their organizing and make sure everyone was heard equally:



But I think everything is quite good now, but probably things that we could still talk about, but then it feels like that when we had the conflict, then many got somehow tired of the talking (chuckles) or people were like ‘We’re just not able to talk anymore, we can’t’. Or one of us said then that ‘ok, of course you can do collectivity by thinking in theory what to do, but then you also just need to do and be together’. Then it feels like we now maybe are there, that we see how we are together after all that, all that talking. (<3, 29)

Despite the emphasis on discussion and setting aside time to talk about how to organize with low and transparent hierarchies, both <3 and M point out that groups also need to try and test practices to see what works. Groups cannot figure out what practices work for them by only talking, rather they need to keep practicing, “trial and error” as M says. This relates to the necessary acceptance that organizing according to a principle of low and transparent hierarchies is difficult, that at times it will lead to failures and conflicts.

Several of the research participants discussed some aspects of organizing that proved especially challenging to organizing with low and transparent hierarchies. I will next discuss two examples of challenges that were brought up in several interviews: official associations and dynamics between new and older group members.

#### *Associations and boards*

Approximately half of the research participants were part of or had experience of groups that were organized as official associations, which according to Finnish law requires a board with a few specific roles. It is difficult to know whether having a board causes problems due to the character of organization. What is clear in the interviews is that it poses some specific conditions that some of the research participants find challenging.

The interviewees do not explain in depth why their groups are organized as official associations, but some groups form associations to be able to apply for funding. In some cases the association is old and it has not been a choice for the people who are active now. R, when asked about feminist organizing practices, says it feels silly that they have a board, but it is required because they have an association:

Well, I do think quite an important part of it is that there wouldn’t be much hierarchy or something like that. That the collective is a collective and that the values are in the center also when you do, that not only what we do but also how we do it. With us as well, sometimes it feels silly to me that we even have a board, or it’s just because we are an official association so we have to have a board. (R, 30)

Most of the research participants who had experience of associations and boards described problems relating specifically to boards and associations. The legal

requirements for a board mean there are certain roles, such as a chairperson, that need to be filled. A few of the participants had experience of being a chairperson of a board. The role of chairperson seems to become a role and responsibility distinct from other roles, but the research participants do not comment on why it is so. The chairperson seems to have more responsibility and often needs to take on what no one else will. A potential explanation is that the chairperson has legal responsibilities and that those legal circumstances unintentionally affect the dynamics within the group.

Minna describes the role of chairperson positively, for her it means she needs to have an overview, but does not have authority over what the others do. However, both Maria and R describe the role of chairperson to be straining and that the stress they were under compromised their mental health:

Even though it wasn't so that, no one assumed that I would do everything, but still it was like I felt that, or I realized that ok, because I'm the chairperson in this association there isn't anyone else who will sit there and be like 'oh, but we haven't thought about this thing, someone should take it on', things like that. It was possible to delegate some concrete tasks, but this feeling of overall responsibility (Maria, 31)

Both Maria and R describe how they as chairpersons ended up taking on more tasks and responsibilities even though it was not what the group had agreed upon. While the hierarchies in these cases do not mean more power to make decisions than other group members, Maria describes how the hierarchies appeared as uneven distribution of knowledge. When someone ends up taking more responsibility and tasks, they accumulate more knowledge and experience, which in turn strengthens their position of having significant responsibility. This was not intended or desired by the group, but nevertheless it created an uneven and unequal dynamic. This had negative impacts on both the chairperson whose mental health was compromised and on the rest of the group, who had less knowledge and overview. Maria and R, though they describe their negative experiences in the context of being the chairperson of a board, do not clearly state that the structure of a board is problematic in itself.

Meanwhile, B argues that the structures and the legal requirements for associations compromise feminist organizing as they create hierarchies. When a group she was part of founded an association they had to have a board and deal with money in ways determined by legislation.

I think it started more, I think the [project] started more like an activist and loose project, but then later took more form of some sort of organization. That an official association was founded and there was money involved which had to be taken care of in a specific way and then there were thoughts of developing it to employments and things like that which immediately create hierarchies and who has more to say than others. (B, 32)

According to B the specific roles and responsibilities needed in association boards compromise transparency about what goes on and give some group members more authority than others. The issues that B describes largely relate to the challenges with money and the lack of transparency in regards to how funds are spent and by whose decision. While money could be a problem for any group, it is not a coincidence that these issues concur with being an association. Applying for grants often requires an association to be established which in turn entails bureaucratic ways of organizing the funds.

The participants also describe practices that they have used to enable the groups to have low and transparent hierarchies within boards and associations. R describes how the group has created new, more structured practices to lessen the strain on the chairperson. While the new structure has helped even out the responsibilities in the group, she also expresses worries about the new practices:

But indeed I am a little bit like touch and go at this moment, I've been a bit anxious by the present situation. That is it now too much that we have some board here separately, that thinks things through and then sometimes, and we've talked about this in our conversations, or this has been brought up this thing, that it feels like it is changing so much now. That suddenly this is really bureaucratic and like that we just amongst ourselves put something together and then suddenly somewhere, or then just sometimes send, we've tried that the community would be more involved in it. But this is a sort of testing year, we try how this practice works and probably then in the autumn meeting in the end of the year we see how we continue. But we have negotiated that we try something else, because the old model, even though it was a lot more collective and in a way more relaxed and like that, but it just didn't work for the individuals, because it was so exhausting. It was really, the resources of our association just end when the individuals don't have the energy to do it anymore, so we need to see how it goes from here. (R, 33)

Despite the benefits, the group has lost some of its collectivity due to the new organizing practices, power is now unevenly distributed between the board and the larger working group which used to collaborate more before the change. Both ways of organizing are flawed according to R, one is too exhausting but more collective, the other too rigid and divided, but efficient with manageable workloads. However, to R it

is important that the group discusses the problems and tries new practices to try to accommodate the needs of the group.

Participants also form their own structures and practices within the boards:

If we're talking about the board that I have been engaged with, it tries to function according to a hierarchy as flat as possible, which I would say is, as in quite many cases, for better or worse. I'm of course a hundred percent for the ideology and we try, we have for example rotated, even if we have a chairperson and a vice chairperson and positions like that within the board, so when it comes to the practical meeting processes we usually rotate who is chairperson and who is secretary, so that all board members do it each in their turn, not just the chairperson. (Maria, 34)

The group organizes the meetings according to how they see fit rather than the official instructions for a board. Similarly to how Casas-Cortés (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008) describes the NAD, Maria's group rotates the responsibilities and tasks in the meetings rather than having set tasks and roles.

Associations and boards form structures which enable hierarchies. Although groups want to organize without hierarchies, the structures required by legislation create circumstances that the groups need to take into account. There are practices that groups can take on within the system, but the legislation and bureaucracy also set frames for how the groups can organize and therefore removes some of the freedom to organize according to the desires in the groups.

#### *Dynamics between new and older members*

Similarly to what Roseneil (1995) observes in her research, hierarchies easily occur between older and new members in groups. Not all groups accept new members, but even the closed ones deal with power dynamics arising as some members initiated the groups and others were invited. The research participants agree that there should not be hierarchies between older and new members, but nevertheless they occur. Hierarchies between older and new members should be dismantled, because the research participants think everyone should be able to participate equally, no matter what experience they have. But as knowledge and experience is gathered over time, hierarchies are inevitable, because older members possess knowledge and have the power to share it with new members. The participants agree that older members should make an effort to include new members, to share knowledge and experience and make participating accessible.

That's also one thing I find the most, one of the most challenging things is to first of all make the new people feel like they are as important as the old people and that they have as much power and as much say in everything as somebody... because I think a lot of people who are new, because they feel, because they don't know much and the people who have done it already, they have experience (S)

Several of the research participants are also hesitant to say that their groups manage to dismantle the hierarchies. One reason to this is most likely that most of the interviewees are the ones with the power to include and dismantle the hierarchies, rather than the ones for whom the hierarchies are to be dismantled. <3 and B discuss this because they both made the initiative to start their groups and projects and therefore feel they had a different position in the group than the others. Both discuss how especially in the beginning they were often asked for instructions or for their opinion before making decisions. Although both think that the hierarchies between them and the others have dissolved since, they feel unsure because of their distinct position. As <3 phrases it, she is not sure if it is that she thinks there are no hierarchies or if she does not want there to be hierarchies:

Of course it is difficult for me to say because I am me. (thinks) It has several sides, in a way I don't think, I do think people have made it their own and do, sort of, their own things and initiatives in its name. (thinks) At some point I had the feeling that people kind of checked things with me and then I tried to say that they don't have to do that, that is it still done. Maybe not, when we spoke about this last summer, that do I have some special position and people were like of the opinion that even if the group is, that it wouldn't exist if I hadn't made the initiative, that is it still somehow (thinks). But I don't, I'm thinking that do I answer that I don't think it affects or is it kind of that I hope that it doesn't have an effect (chuckles). I don't believe it affects. At least definitely not in the way that I would make some decisions or that the meetings wouldn't be organized if I wouldn't be there or something like that. (<3, 35)

Also B expresses similar uncertainty. It is easy for someone higher in the hierarchy to say that everyone's opinion is equally valued or that everyone can participate equally.

So there are all kinds of hierarchies and who has experience of organizing a demonstration, so it's easy for me to say that 'yeah, I think there was space [to say if one disagrees or what one wants]', maybe there wasn't as much space for the others, but I would at least want that there was (chuckles), I would have been open to more critique if there had been any. (B, 36)

Longer experience of a group gives authority and privilege which makes it difficult for those members to determine whether they succeed in dismantling the hierarchies between the old and the new members. Although some of the participants share their experiences of joining groups, the uncertainty of talking about whether they manage to dismantle hierarchies is telling of the position from which they speak.

Sharing knowledge and experience with new members is emphasized by many of the interviewees. As a lot of knowledge in groups is not verbalized or documented, it can be difficult for new members to learn what a group does and how. Some of the research participants talk about organizing introduction events and having introduction documents for new members. Another practice that several research participants discuss is to have smaller working groups in which there are both old and new members that organize different tasks. This allows new members to learn by doing, but be able to share the responsibility with someone who has previous experience. This is not to say that new members need to learn and cannot contribute with new knowledge. The emphasis in the interviews is that new members should know how a group has functioned and what the practices have been, because it makes it easier to participate and suggest new practices when one is informed of the previous practices.

Due to the effort that needs to be made to distribute power and responsibility equally, some of the research participants express some frustration about the challenges. If new members do not take responsibility or participate in organizing, it gets tiring for older members because they are both trying to accommodate the new people as well as organizing whatever the group has going on. Because of the effort that this takes, B discusses the benefit of organizing with a closed group of friends instead of having open groups.

I have been in quite a lot of those projects where you have to be really open and everyone should be able to join and it should be super democratic, which is really good, but it also requires a lot of energy and a lot of responsibility. And because many of us have experience of in some way getting tired or burnt out from activist work, I don't think you have to carry all the responsibility of organizing some sort of democratic project where everyone can participate, to be able to initiate a feminist project. (B, 37)

In many groups resources are scarce and a lot of activists are challenged by stress and overwork. Therefore B argues for the benefits of organizing with a closed group or people you already know, where the work of including new members does not have to be a priority. Other participants do not suggest this directly, but the pleasures in organizing with friends is shared by many of them. Many say that it is easy to communicate and organize with friends as the relationships are comfortable. Dismantling hierarchies between group members, old and new alike, is an important practice in feminist organizing. However, it requires effort and resources, which makes it challenging in practice. While some improve their practices to solve the problems,

others prefer organizing with closed groups which allows them to focus on other feminist practices instead.

### 5.3. Awareness of resources and their limits

A recurring principle in the interviews is to organize according to the resources of the group. Resources here mainly refer to the time and energy that group members are willing and able to put into a project and a group. While money is one form of resource that the groups have, much more emphasis is put on the limited resources of time and energy. The principle means that the wellbeing of the organizers is prioritized over productivity and achieving other goals. It is also important to note that this principle entails accommodating different challenges and circumstances that people have. Having mental health problems, care duties or other situations that limit the possibilities to participate in organizing should not be a barrier to participate, but rather accommodated by groups. The different circumstances should be understood and respected, but having limited resources should not mean that one cannot participate in organizing.

Additionally, organizing should give activists joy and for that to be possible, organizing cannot be too draining of energy and time. This principle is discussed by all the research participants.

In several groups it has been explicitly discussed that the activities should be organized in accordance with the resources in the group and that organizers should not take on more responsibility and tasks than they can and want. B tells that it was a discussion they had on the first meeting when the group started planning an event. They decided that they would only do what was possible with what they had and that everyone should be able to say no if they could not do something:

I think we mostly discussed that everyone should be able to say how much they can do and then maybe try, that the work we do should try to match that, that people don't feel they have to do something. To organize this should be fun, not stressful or a burden. (B, 38)

ML also says that it has been important that people can always decide how much they are willing to give. It is more important to have a large enough group than to have a few members who do more than they are able:

Yeah, so there is the idea that you are never forced to do anything (chuckles). That you can decide your own level of activity, but it's good that there are enough people so that there are always enough people who can be active and like that. (ML, 39)

Something many research participants say, which is exemplified in B's quote above, is that organizing should be fun. This relates to the principle of organizing according to resources: organizing will not give joy to the organizers if it drains their resources and becomes a burden. All the research participants discuss positively the principle of organizing according to the resources of a group. They see it as a positive character of feminist organizing to prioritize the joy and wellbeing of the group instead of organizing as much as possible. S describes this when she talks about how the group takes feedback to their project into account. They want to improve the event they organize, but only to the extent that the resources of the group allow:

I feel that's also a very feminist way of working that I haven't found in many groups, of course especially in a commercial setting where the customer is always right and stuff. So I really like how here such things as resources of individuals are very, are paid a lot of attention to. (S)

The principle of organizing according to the resources of a group means that projects are flexible to the resources of a group rather than the organizers being flexible to the needs of a project.

#### 5.4. Practices and challenges in organizing according to resources

Even though many interviewees say that it is important for members to decline tasks they cannot take on, a stronger emphasis is on the collective forms of care in the groups rather than the individual responsibility. Making sure a group is organizing according to its resources is a collective responsibility.

Several of the research participants describe rounds in the meetings where everyone can share how they are doing. A collective responsibility for group members' wellbeing is easier to take if the members know how the others are coping and what is happening in their lives. M emphasizes the need for group members to ask how the others are doing, if they need help and to generally be aware that people have different resources.

Well I think maybe for myself, it has been somehow, that we acknowledge people's resources (orig. voimavara) and ask for people's resources (orig. voimavara) and also, if you can somehow help practically with something, then also offer that. Maybe just that, that we are, that we recognize, that people have different resources (orig. voimavara) (thinks). But I don't know, it could maybe be thought about through even more concrete practices, how you improve that. But the awareness is one thing. Would it maybe also be in the mode of organizing, that you try, if there are meetings, that there would usually also be some food, and keeping breaks and somehow, so that it wouldn't be too excruciating (chuckles), those kinds of small practical things. (M, 40)



Also S describes collective care for the wellbeing in the group as an important feminist practice:

I remember at one point when I was taking quite a lot of work on myself somebody else from the team would, well kind of jokingly but when I would say 'yeah I can do that too', they would say like 'no no, you won't, someone else should' (laughs). I think it's good also to take care of each other, that I think is a very feminist thing to do. And make sure that nobody is overworked, because also some people are not going to say 'I think this is too much for me' or 'I think this is unfair that I have so much work', some people won't say that. So it's good to not just look at the list of tasks, take something and that's it, but also kind of discuss – that is something that's done in [our group] pretty well, I think, that on the face to face meetings this question is always raised, like 'is everyone ok? does anybody have too much work? Does anybody want to share some tasks with someone?' (S)

The importance of taking collective responsibility is illustrated in S's quote above. Because it is often difficult for activists to say they are tired or overworked, the need for others to take responsibility and initiative to ask someone is enhanced.

The research participants describe how the groups have changed their practices and plans and redistributed tasks when group members have been overworked. B tells about how her group reorganized the tasks and responsibilities when she said she had too many. R also says that her group has decided to not organize a project when they realized it was not possible with the resources they had. She emphasizes the need for everyone to be able to say no to tasks and that the group should accept that. This is especially important in her group due to challenges with mental health among group members:

Now it's also like, we've tried to do that as a collective, we have a lot of people with for example backgrounds with mental health problems and stuff like that, and I myself have panic and anxiety disorder, if you take on too much then you easily just can't (laughs quietly), so we try to be as direct as possible, that you can really say if you can't or if something feels too big, so then you can give it to someone else or we skip it if. That it is more important that people can manage to live their own lives (chuckles) and do their own work and stuff like that. (R, 41)

The participants share experiences in which the problems have been solved when a group member has had too much to do. However, there are also experiences when this has not happened. For example, Maria talks about the challenges in dealing with the responsibilities that she felt she was left alone with. Although the group expressed a desire to take on some of her tasks, she found it difficult to share those tasks and she felt that the desire to help did not result in action from the others. What is interesting in its contrast to research on activist burnout (Gorski 2019) is that the research participants

describe a strong will to support each other and to ensure organizers are not overworked. Paul Gorski and colleagues (Gorski 2019; Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman and Rising 2019) describe a culture of martyrdom and an unwillingness to prioritize the wellbeing of activists. In contrast, the research participants for this study emphasize the importance of wellbeing and organizing according to the resources in the group. The challenges then do not relate to the desire to organize in sustainable ways, but rather the challenges of putting that into practice.

In the previous section stress is described to create hierarchies, similarly it tends to challenge the principle of organizing according to resources too. Alma describes how it has been difficult to organize according to resources when the group has had too much to do: “But sometimes it also feels like you have just had to work and you haven’t even had time to think about, or when you are in the middle of the worst” (Alma, 42). S speaks in a similar vein saying: “of course there are some of these things that kind of, they are not meant to happen, but once things get hectic they start happening.” (S). Especially in groups that have projects and plans which are set, it is not as easy to let go of projects. When the groups are under stress and have much to do, the tasks often get more priority than the wellbeing and organizing practices in the group.

A solution to the difficulties in organizing according to resources is having clear organizing structures. Most of the participants discuss the benefits of structures. How much structures are preferred depends on the needs of the group as well as the size and activities. Groups that are large or organize large or logistically complicated events struggle more with resources and a need for structures, similarly to what Cockburn (2007) describes. This need for structures provides interesting contrast to Roseneil’s (1995) description of feminist practice, in which organizing was decidedly unstructured.

The research participants say that organizing should be fun and give joy, much similar to the “pleasure principle” that Roseneil (1995, 67) depicts. However, when the participants talk about structures they provide a different point of view to the joy of organizing. Although they think organizing should give joy, several of the participants say that there are a lot of tasks that do not give joy and that organizing cannot be done only when members feel like it. Rather than not doing those tasks, which was more common in Roseneil’s research, the participants emphasize structuring tasks and responsibilities so that also the less fun tasks are evenly distributed.

I also think it is an important feminist model for organizing, that you have structures, that don't need to be hierarchical, but people, that you can share tasks and make sure things get done so that it isn't like everyone does what they want when they want, because that gets really heavy for some people. (B, 43)

In the quote above B describes the need for structure in feminist organizing, because without structure responsibilities end up unevenly distributed and some members' resources are drained. Structures also provide clarity and stability to organizing, it is easier to redistribute tasks when there is structure in organizing. MP also talks about how structures have reduced misunderstanding and conflicts and made their meetings easier to attend:

It was really messy at first, so after that we started sharing clear roles, at best we have someone who follows the mood and decides that now we take a break, and we also started talking about how decision making happens in the meeting (MP, 44)

What structures entail is often not delved into deeper in the interviews. MP shortly mentions that the structures can be whatever the group sees fit, that they are not necessarily restricting. Although most of the participants talk about the need for structures in organizing, what that means in practice is often left undecided. What is mostly emphasized is the need to divide tasks and responsibilities clearly. Several of the research participants also talk about organizing in smaller working groups:

More maybe talk about cells or, you know, different groups within the group who have different areas of responsibility which aren't that big, so that a group can handle what they have responsibility for, but so that there isn't need for this, maybe overall, not this risk that when things fall they fall on one person, because that hasn't worked. (Maria, 45)

The benefit of having group instead of individual responsibilities is that the workload can be shared. If someone needs a break it helps that several people know what the tasks and responsibilities entail and can take them on.

However, issues occur when structures are too rigid. S describes how structures are difficult to implement as the group and its resources change. The structures need to adapt and be flexible to changing resources. Maria discusses the challenges in maintaining structures with varying resources:

Ina: Would you say that was the problem there? A lack of structure or division of labor?

Maria: Yes, precisely, I would say that and also the ability to implement the structures maybe. Because we did try in the beginning of each year to have a division of labor, but then it still maybe a little bit ended up so that it's up to whoever can at that given

moment, because people have their other lives and it depends on how much time and energy you have at that moment, which I think is how it should be. I do think that type of activity should be, you should be allowed to have too much (chuckles) maybe to do what you promised sometimes. But at the same time it can't, there also has to be some kind of commitment that you've done when you joined for that particular year, where you can count on that 'ok, but you've promised to take the time for this thing' (chuckles). I thought that was difficult maybe, there is a lot of understanding when people say 'now I can't manage, I don't have time, now I'm sick', but that understanding, expressing sympathy for someone who had to say that they couldn't manage, that was very big, but the ability to get people to jump in and do things instead wasn't always quite as big maybe (chuckles). (Maria, 46)

Maria emphasizes that it is important that people listen to their limits and let go tasks if they do not have enough time or energy. At the same time it puts strains on the group if one cannot expect anything from others. Although the principle of organizing according to resources is emphasized, the drive to organize activities and projects can make practicing the principle difficult. The research participants express frustration about organizing which is not in accordance with resources, but also about not being able to organize activities or project due to the lack of resources and the need to prioritize them. Nevertheless, it is agreed among all the participants that it is an important feminist principle to organize according to the resources of group members, to prioritize wellbeing and practice collective care and responsibility for the group.

#### 5.5. Principles in practice create tensions

The principles of low and transparent hierarchies and organizing according to resources are largely agreed upon among the research participants. Despite the general agreement, there are tensions between the principles when they are put to practice. The participants touch upon these tensions when they discuss challenges they have faced with organizing and as they relate to the principles. This is not to say that the principles per se are contradictory or problematic, but in practice they do seem to challenge each other. These tensions provide insight into the complexity of feminist organizing. An interesting question appears when analyzing feminist organizing practices prefiguratively: What is feminist practice when both principles are equally important but seem difficult to implement simultaneously? An answer cannot be provided here, but it is important nonetheless to consider the question.

Structures, although brought up as a solution to many challenges in organizing, also seem to create challenges and tensions in organizing. Several of the research participants discuss these dynamics. Structures can create circumstances for hierarchies

to appear, same as a lack of structures can. The lack of structures can also drain the resources in a group, but so can too many and rigid structures. Although none of the research participants say that structures, or lack of, necessarily create problems, the tensions discussed illustrate how there is a fine balance when organizing according to the principles of low hierarchies and organizing according to resources.

One of the challenges brought up in several interviews is how to maintain low hierarchies but also upholding clear structures and division of responsibilities. Maria discusses the relationship between hierarchies and structures:

Ina: You spoke about a flat hierarchy and then spoke about structures, can you say something more about that relationship? Does flat hierarchy mean structurelessness in some way or?

Maria: Well, I guess that's what I think it shouldn't mean, but it sometimes ends up becoming. Because no, I think that's a really good definition of the concepts, because it's precisely there I think (thinks) maybe that the shoe doesn't fit. I believe in structures in this case, but maybe not in a hierarchy that would be about people having different, that someone would be able to decide over others (chuckles) or something like that. But that there would still be a clear division of labor and a clear, that's what I think. But I think the problem maybe is that a flat hierarchy easily ends up like 'yeah yeah, we'll see who does what, we'll deal with it later, we'll see it case by case', and stuff like that, which maybe isn't that great. (Maria, 47)

To Maria, as well as several others, low hierarchies and structures should not be contradictory. Nevertheless, according to Maria, low hierarchies as a principle can easily lead to unstructured organizing which puts a strain on the resources in the group. B argues that rigid structures create circumstances for hierarchies to occur: "When you make things bigger there is more need for more structures and you easily get more hierarchies and more stress" (B, 48). According to her, as groups and projects grow it often leads to rigid structures, stress and hierarchies. R also discusses the relationship between structures and hierarchies when she talks about the new organizing structures that the group took on. Although she does not think that structures are synonymous to hierarchical organizing, she feels that the structured set up in her group does create some hierarchies:

I think at least before the [practices] have definitely matched [feminist organizing practices] and it has really been this kind of doing together and really fun and we have listened to others and just done with a larger group. But now it maybe isn't, I'm not sure about this new direction yet, because in a way it seems to work, we have achieved a lot now that we've tried to organize in a slightly different way. And it isn't, if you think that you wouldn't want a very hierarchical, or that there would be some 'leadership' or something like that, but on the other hand, is it then a bad thing if you

have a project coordinator (orig. projektivetäjä), so no, because you have to, or I'm thinking that is it a bad thing, but now I'm thinking that it isn't necessarily, because then there is some order in what you do and the things get done, when they still need to get done, that in a way delegating isn't a bad thing or that it is someone's responsibility, as long as the person doesn't have a power to plough things through (chuckles). (R, 49)

As discussed above, not having structures can drain the resources of a group. In contrast, also rigid structures can drain the resources of a group. Structures become problematic when they are too rigid and do not serve the needs of the group. In other words, there is a fine balance between structures that support organizing and structures that impede organizing. MP discusses this tension in relation to her group, according to her it also gets exhausting to organize according to too many and too rigid structures:

It does feel a bit like a struggle, reducing administration... Like, you don't want to create structures that just exist for the sake of structure, but they should all be somehow justifiable, so that it wouldn't get too heavy either. But I don't know if the only way is to experience it somehow the hard way (chuckles). (MP, 50)

The various perspectives on structures illustrate the somewhat tense relation between the different principles. Although none of the research participants view structures as problematic per se, there are tensions and challenges in implementation which can be difficult to articulate. Structures can enable hierarchies and low hierarchy organizing can make structured organizing difficult to implement. To understand this dynamic, a useful distinction to make is between obscure and transparent structures. When structures are transparent and clear they can in fact help maintain low hierarchies. However, when the structures are not transparent and known to everyone in the group, decision-making and responsibilities are suddenly obscured. Structures per se do not lead to hierarchies, but when obscured and hidden, they enable hierarchies in groups. Simultaneously, low hierarchy organizing does not necessarily challenge structures, but if low hierarchies mean people do not take responsibilities or make commitments, it gets difficult to have structures. Structures can also drain resources but a lack of them can be equally exhausting. To enjoy the benefits of structures, groups need to walk the fine line between having clear structures and having flexibility to alter practices and structures according to what is needed in a group.

Another tension which was discussed is between organizing according to resources and having low and transparent hierarchies. It is important that group members can choose the level of activity based on their resources and desires. However, when some group

members are more active than others, it creates hierarchies between people in the group, similarly to what Roseneil (1995) discusses in her research. People who participate in a lot of activities and are able to use a lot of their resources on a group, quickly accumulate more knowledge and experience and hence more power. ML and MP talk about this in their interview:

Yeah, I guess it just, that it goes a bit according to activity, of course there always form some sorts of hierarchies if someone does something, or we know that someone knows how to do something, then we ask that person, that's how it should work too, but as long as we still are somehow, that we understand them, or that they are visible... (ML, 51)

And in a way, about how, that if we just decided that we don't have hierarchy then no (chuckles), it's not going to happen by itself. There is still some kind of structure and if we don't talk about it openly or somehow talk or express it, then it's more like tyranny than a low hierarchical collective. I've noticed that the people who use more time and who have more time to delve into and take responsibilities, then they at the same time have more power and that is ok, but it has also posed challenges. Seeing it, and that the people who have that power see that they have it, it's not necessarily self-evident. But I think we have gotten quite a lot wiser and have gotten smart practices. (MP, 52)

It is not a problem in itself that power and responsibility is divided unevenly because of the different amounts of energy, time and commitment to a project. The tensions that appear, which are discussed by MP and ML, go back to the definition of the principle on hierarchies. These hierarchies are not necessarily problematic in themselves, but if they are not transparent, it compromises feminist organizing. MP and ML emphasize the need to communicate the hierarchies that appear and for those with more power to recognize their position. The principle of organizing according to resources inevitably affects the dynamics in a group and leads to some group members accumulating more knowledge and power than others. To maintain low and transparent hierarchies when organizing according to resources means that special emphasis needs to be put on keeping the inevitable hierarchies transparent.

In this chapter I have discussed the principles of low and transparent hierarchies and of organizing to resources. Feminist organizing prefigures a society with low hierarchies that are transparent as well as a society in which people's resources are acknowledged and respected, in which people are not expected to exceed their resources. The principles are largely agreed upon by all the research participants, but implementation proves challenging in many cases. The knowledge-practices are to a large extent

generated through the challenges and the various trials and errors. Despite the effort and energy that is required, in return organizing is “more fun” (B), “feels nicer” (S), allows “learning something new” (ML) and the processes become “more fruitful” (MP). The practices that prefigure the desired future are also highly situated and contextual, the practices one group finds to benefit their organizing will be opposed by another. The fact that the principles – and structures as a way to put the principles to practice – create tensions between each other, that one principle can compromise the other, puts additional emphasis on experimenting with practices, on reformulating practices based on lessons learnt. Organizing according to the principles entails the acceptance that the process is challenging.

## 6. Diversity, inclusivity and accessibility

Some recurring feminist principles in the interviews were diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and safer spaces. As discussed in chapter 5, feminism refers to a broad conception of equality. Instead of putting gender in the center, the research participants talk about feminism and feminist activism as an active strive for equality for all. Diversity in this context is a feminist principle as it relates to equality and oppression in a broad sense spanning beyond gender equality. Inclusivity to a diversity of people and ways of being in the world is part of a feminism in which all forms of oppression and discrimination are acknowledged and fought against. Although they sometimes are used synonymously in the interviews, I make an analytical distinction between diversity, inclusivity and accessibility, because the concepts prove different in how fruitful they are to understand what kind of feminist society is being prefigured with the organizing practices.

Diversity, inclusivity and accessibility are strongly emphasized in some of the interviews while others only touch upon some of them briefly, but always on their own initiative. Diversity is brought up in all the interviews, if not as a principle for feminist organizing, then as an aspect that needs to be considered. In the interviews the internal and the external aspects of organizing were often interlinked. The importance of diversity within the internal group was often argued for with the external events.



Therefore, diversity and inclusivity is discussed both in relation to the internal group as well as the external activities.

### 6.1. What diversity is and why it is important

Even though diversity is a feminist principle brought up by many of the interviewees, almost all the research participants acknowledge that their groups are lacking in terms of diversity. Almost all the research participants describe their groups as very homogenous. An exception is MP, who talks about how her group is very diverse with the exception of age, the members are all quite young. As diversity is an important principle in the group, the fact that such a diverse group has come together to organize is a success in itself according to her:

Internally maybe what feels like the topmost or biggest is that we've been able to, or that people have come together, so that's in my opinion a pretty big thing because we are a really heterogeneous crowd, considering our backgrounds and. Well, maybe not in regards to age, what are we, maybe 20-35 years old and somehow you'd wish for even more variance, but it feels like the inclusivity is at least to some extent realized, or that we are moving in that direction. (MP, 53)

Except for the age, MP does not specify what diversity means in her group. This is a tendency in many of the interviews. There is not a clear description of diversity in the interviews, in many cases it is not really defined at all. Diversity is expressed in many ways in the interviews, different research participants emphasize and point out different aspect. Rather than have a clear definition, it can be understood in implicit and explicit moments when the composition of the group is described. In the interviews diversity appears as gender identities, physical abilities, mental health, ethnicity, racialization and nationality, level and field of education, class, age differences and personality types. Some of these aspects of diversity are brought up often while some are only occasionally mentioned.

Noteworthy about these aspects of diversity is that not all of them are visible. It is then good to bear in mind that the way the research participants describe the homogeneity and diversity of the group is their interpretation of it based on their knowledge. What can be gathered from the interviews is not whether the groups discussed are diverse or not, but rather what meaning diversity as a principle is given and why it needs to be considered.

Some of the research participants talk about diversity in the group and having diversity in the visitors of events as an ideal and goal of their activities. One main reason is that feminist events and activities should be for all kinds of peoples, often especially to those in the margins. For that to actually happen, the group that organizes an event or activity needs to be diverse:

For me I guess diversity is very important, that a lot of different voices are included when you're doing something, some kind of activism together. Because I think there's a lot of this that one certain group of people are doing things that are supposed to be for everyone, but you can't know that it's for everyone if you don't know what others actually need. So it's like one group decides what everyone else needs, I think that's very important that different voices are included when you do feminism. (S)

Although the importance of and desire for diversity is brought up by many of the research participants, not many give a clear reason to why it is important. Diversity seems to be an ideal taken for granted. S is one of the few who explains why it is important to have diversity in the organizing group. A group which does not represent a wide range of experiences and positions in the world cannot know what different kinds of people might need and want:

So yeah, in that way, because we don't really think about it, so it's good to have people from other backgrounds who have this experience and then we can, the way we can plan the event can also be more, for more different people who want to participate in this discussion. (S)

Awareness of different struggles and challenges is important here. People can learn about the different forms of oppression and discrimination that others face, but they are not aware of what those struggles are in the same way as the people who experience them first hand. According to S, for a feminist activity to really reach out and offer something to different kinds of people, the organizers need to be diverse enough to know what different kinds of people would need and appreciate. These reasons are especially emphasized in those groups that organize events and other projects that are aimed to reach a wide and diverse audience.

In groups whose focus is not to reach an external audience, diversity is not an ideal to be met, but its implications are still acknowledged. The group <3 talks about is a closed one, it is more a group of friends who work on art together and at times only focus on hanging out together. To her the lack of diversity in the group is not a problem that needs to be fixed, instead she acknowledges it and talks about what it means for the feminism that they do in the group:

But I mean, or when I said that people have different backgrounds and that, so yeah, despite that we are like structurally quite a homogenous pack, or like. So, we are thirty-somethings, white, able-bodied, cis-women. So that unites us. This by the way relates a lot to feminism, what we've talked about a lot. That does it become something, that we should somehow represent feminism, because we can't do that, because we can't, because we are still so alike. A really small selection of humanity or feminism. (<3, 54)

The quotes by MP, S and <3 above show how diversity is emphasized differently depending on what goals a group has. Homogeneity is not necessarily a problem in itself, rather the question is what kinds of claims of representation a group can make. If a group wants to do something for a diverse audience, diversity within a group is important. While diversity is not always a goal, as in <3's group, its implications need to be acknowledged. The ways in which diversity is brought up and discussed even when it is not necessarily an aim of a group, shows that it is a widespread topic among grassroots feminist organizers. There seems to be a need to position oneself within the discussion on diversity.

Almost none of the research participants talk about the lack of diversity as a problem they themselves feel affected by. In many of the interviews the research participants describe themselves being part of the homogenous group. Lack of diversity is not described as personally being different. Rather the issues stemming from homogeneity or lack of diversity are mostly perceived to have a personal impact on some others or on the politics that is being done. Only S speaks about personally feeling different and sometimes excluded in the group as she thinks that the rest of the group is quite homogenous. She describes how there is an assumption in one of the groups she is in that everyone has the same educational background:

Well, I think that the thing that has felt a bit wrong to me is the way I explained how I feel that the group would be not diverse enough and the thing that I feel personally would be that people are from these academic circles, that is something that feels like I feel excluded sometimes. So, it's not extremely negative, but I can assume that also other people might feel excluded because of other things, which I don't notice. (S)

S describes how people in the group do not realize that people have different ways of learning and thinking. Her differing educational background means she sometimes feels the language that is spoken and written in the groups is not meant for her. Noteworthy about this is that the educational background of someone is often not known to people unless the person tells about it. As S points out in the quote, it is also possible that there are things that make others feel excluded that she does not notice. To know for sure in

what ways a group is homogenous and diverse and how it affects the people in the group is dependent on people openly sharing these things amongst each other. In other words the diversity or lack of, and its impacts are often not known to everyone in the group and is experienced differently in the groups.

What becomes interesting in the discussions on diversity is the amount of speculation that they rely on. In many cases diversity is not visible to the eye. Most of the research participants express self-critique in regards to the lack of diversity in their groups, but at the same time they do not describe the problems of homogeneity based on first-hand experience. Instead, they are assumed to be experienced by often undefined, assumedly marginalized, Others. However, it is unclear who the Other is that is assumed to be negatively impacted by homogeneity and how. Diversity becomes something that is important to someone else. The impacts of lack of diversity are not concretely described, it is simply defined as a problem.

In several of the interviews there is a sort of nervousness in discussing diversity and lack of it. Although it is brought up by all research participants in one way or another, many seem to find it difficult to discuss. The research participants in many instances lose track, change direction midsentence, it seems difficult to find the right words. The interviews are often messier when diversity is discussed compared to other themes. Although the importance and value of diversity is largely agreed upon, it seems mystical and elusive compared to other topics. As the issues of homogeneity are often not experienced first-hand, it means that the research participants are speaking for imagined Others rather than themselves. They find it important to acknowledge their shortages, but it seems difficult to be specific or discuss openly, because principle and practice of diversity is not as personally experienced as the other principles. It is done for someone else and not as much through personal need or experience. At the same time this is not quite explicitly acknowledged. The knowledge-practices around diversity are not as embodied as the ones relating to hierarchies and resources. To some extent I believe this explains the lack of specificity and the nervousness that often come up in the discussions on diversity.

I want to bring up the distinction between discussing homogeneity and lack of diversity in a group. As I have described, diversity is difficult to define and it is often not specified. It remains an abstract concept and the lack of diversity is often not

experienced personally by the research participants. In contrast, the descriptions of homogeneity in the groups are more often specific and the research participants discuss them with slightly more ease. As is illustrated in the quote from <3 above: she recognizes the limits of a group by describing how it is homogenous. When the research participants describe the homogeneity of their groups, they acknowledge the claims of representation they can make and do not try to represent others. In contrast, when they speak about the lack of diversity, it easily involves assumptions about what Others would provide a group or what their experiences are. The sometimes slippery descriptions of diversity and lack of it are telling of this. There is an unwillingness to speak for others, but at the same time Others are present in the silences, they are ascribed certain meanings and experiences through their absence in the groups. In the interviews these both ways of discussing homogeneity and diversity come up. In the two ways of speaking there is a fine line between acknowledging what homogeneity or diversity means for the group in question and making assumptions about what some unknown Others would contribute to a group.

## 6.2. Accessible practices, mystical inclusivity and personal experience

Although the research participants shared some inclusive practices, it also became evident that inclusivity is difficult to define, partly because it is so context dependent, but also because the role of includer and included are different. What truly makes groups and projects inclusive and diverse becomes unclear and mystical as the interviewees do not share experience of being included but rather are trying to include Others. Although the interviewees share practices to making groups inclusive, I also find their answers raise more questions and uncertainties about inclusivity and diversity. It is not often said explicitly, but inclusivity seems to mean being open and inclusive to marginalized people, not just anyone. This raises questions relating to power which are not discussed much in the interviews. Who is including and who is being included? Who has the right to determine inclusive practices and whose responsibility are they? While inclusivity proves difficult to grasp and fuzzy in the discussions and when put to practice, accessible practices provide more concrete and fruitful knowledge-practices on feminist organizing.

Accessibility to events and groups is discussed concretely, different aspects that need to be taken into account when organizing are described. The research participants talk

about the time and place of meetings and events, is it possible for different people to attend during the time something is organized? Is the place physically accessible? Is the place financially accessible? Is it accessible to all ages and so on? Where can one find information about the meeting or event? Who does the group collaborate with? What kind of imagery and language is produced and who is it perceived to be directed to? What language is spoken and is it accessible to different educational or other backgrounds? What kind of activity is expected of people who participate?

These questions and many more are considered when making a meeting or event accessible. The research participants emphasize different questions and find different solutions, which is important as the groups have different goals and plans. Some of the research participants emphasize organizing in spaces which do not require one to buy anything and organizing events which are free, because they want to be accessible to those who do not have money to spend. Several research participants talk about how the meeting time can be restrictive to people if they have family or other people they need to care for and how that needs to be taken into account. MP mentions how the meeting practices were changed because they realized that not everyone could participate equally as some found it easier and others more difficult to join in on conversations:

We also started talking about how decision-making happens in a meeting, that everybody needs to be asked. Because we noticed at some point that some of us are so much more extroverted than others and then in a way it was forgotten, that some don't get a say if it isn't given to them. So then we took to using these kinds of rounds or question rounds and it happens in almost every meeting (MP, 55)

What MP describes resembles what many research participants talk about, that inclusivity and accessibility require making an effort and actively examining practices and their effects. In MP's example the group changed their practices as they noticed that they were not accommodating everyone's needs and ways of participating. The practices were developed and altered to better prefigure the principles. Several of the research participants talk about how groups should examine themselves and their organizing critically to see whether they really act according to their principles. M calls for being "honest" about what the group does and how it meets the ideals it has. www talks about the publication her group makes and how they with every issue consider whether there really is diversity among the people creating content for the issue. Also Maria says that it requires making an effort to be inclusive and diverse:

Another thing is, that I think it is important to not just talk, for example if we are supposed to be intersectional and accessible, but you also have to constantly then try to actually do it, think about where you meet, in what kinds of spaces, think about what language is used. (Maria, 56)

Language comes up in many interviews as a concrete example of accessibility, also mentioned by Maria above. Language can refer e.g. to whether the spoken language is Finnish, Swedish or English, whether it is trans-inclusive or whether the language is inclusive to different educational backgrounds. Some of the groups are always meeting in English because they want to be inclusive to people who do not speak Finnish. MP talks about this, but acknowledges that the question of language is not straight forward:

I think that's important, that we have the kind of collective where you can come also if you don't speak Finnish as your mother tongue, but I don't know, that of course also excludes, that we speak mainly English. So in a way it lives in that ideal world of inclusivity. (MP, 57)

Having meetings in English makes the meetings accessible and inclusive to some who otherwise would not be able to participate. Simultaneously it might exclude others who are not comfortable with English. Accessibility is not fixed, the practices "live" and are formed in context.

An interesting example that illustrates how inclusive practices can be difficult to determine and differently experienced by different people is academic content and language. In the previous section S talks about feeling excluded sometimes as she does not have the same academic background as many of the others in the group. She says the academic education of many in the group affects what kind of content they think should be in the event they organize. She tells that a lot of the others did not want too much academic content in the events, which she interpreted to be because they are in academic contexts all the time. She points out, that a lot of other people do not have access to academic discussions and information, and therefore they would in fact appreciate that kind of content. In contrast some of the other research participants talk about how they try to not be too academic or that they worry about the language in their organizing being too academic, hence not being accessible to those who lack the education. Knowledge-practices on inclusivity and accessibility are contextual and interpreted in many ways. The same practice in the same context can be interpreted as inclusive and excluding at the same time.

The case above also illustrates how the personal experience and positions of a person affects how they interpret and discuss practices. As was discussed in the previous section, the way feminist principles and practices are discussed depends on whether a person speaks from a perspective of one's own needs or from what they imagine someone else's needs to be. It cannot be concluded here what kind of perspective or practice regarding academic language is most inclusive. However, it is clear that the interpretations vary and are dependent on whether the person speaking has the privilege of being comfortable with academic language and wants to include Others or whether they are outside the academic discourse and feel excluded by it.

In many interviews it is brought up that people can only know what is inclusive and what is excluding based on their first-hand experience. Organizers then need to find out from those they want to include, how they could accommodate their needs more. Inclusivity as practice creates tensions and challenges as the power and right to determine what is inclusive in the end is with those who are outside, who are to be included. At the same time the responsibility to create inclusive groups and activities is with the organizers. R discusses the need to have conversations with people that her group would want to be inclusive to: "That we should have that conversation with precisely that community, whatever community it is, a conversation with that community, what we could do differently and what we could improve. Because of course it shouldn't come from us" (R, 58). Similarly MP says that her group can only know what is accessible and inclusive based on the knowledge in the group and they need to find out other forms of inclusivity from those who need it:

And I feel that we need to be sort of aware, that we don't require our audience to tell us what we're doing, but we need to know. Now we've been talking a lot about accessibility and we have always had, we've always thought about accessibility in terms of the spaces, but we have started to think about it a bit more thoroughly and broadly, all that it means, because in the end it means quite a lot of different things. That people don't necessarily always feel up to saying or asking if a space is this or that, we need to be more aware and in the sense that inclusivity also happens on that level. Probably in that way, we have the knowledge and understanding that the minorities or people in general in our collective have experienced, we can build on that. But then, we still don't have all possible knowledge, so that still requires time and contemplation and maybe still some consulting from people, so that we get feedback. (MP, 59)

In the quotes above some differences in speaking about inclusivity are exemplified. On the one hand inclusivity and accessibility can refer to making sure anyone who wants to participate in a group or activity can, that they are not excluded because of anything. On



the other hand Other communities or groups are desired to participate, but it is not clear why. Diversity and inclusivity are viewed as important, but it is unclear if it is important for the Others being included or for the group who wants those Others to participate in their activities.

The uncertainty and mystery around inclusive practices in my opinion relate to how knowledge and responsibility of inclusivity are two-fold. As organizers are responsible for being inclusive, but cannot certainly know what will seem inclusive to Others, it is always to some extent unknowable whether a group or project is inclusive or excluding. Many research participants discuss how it is difficult to really know what is inclusive and how to improve the inclusivity and diversity of a group or their activities. When I ask MP and ML how they think they have managed to make their events diverse, ML says that it partly is because they have clearly expressed that the event is inclusive, but he also thinks that diversity happens “organically” when different people communicate and talk about the events:

Probably through the grapevine a bit, there's often the problem with those, that often many minorities are quite closed, withdrawn communities, and they don't necessarily feel up to or bother to operate much somewhere else, so then, maybe within those a signal has emanated that this could be kind of nice, or this is at least how I'd imagine, this is my speculation. At least you'd hope that it would happen in a somehow organic way, that people would see for themselves and they'd get a feeling that 'hey, this could be cool'. But also that we have clearly communicated what this is. (ML, 60)

They have done concrete work to make sure representation in the events and organizers is diverse and events are financially accessible and that the information is easy to find. However, he guesses that it has been significant that marginalized people and groups have shared amongst themselves that events are nice to attend for marginalized people. ML's quote above also illustrates how inclusivity is somehow mystified. Concrete practices are shared, but successfully being inclusive is also determined elsewhere, by the Others being included. Organizers are the ones with power and privilege to include, but at the same time the power to determine inclusivity is ascribed to the Others and therefore it is somewhat mysterious and uncertain. What actually makes diversity become a reality is difficult to define.

During the analysis it has been difficult for me to figure out these perspectives. It is clear that inclusivity and accessibility have the purpose of being open, welcoming and safe to those who often experience marginalization and exclusion. At the same time

there seem to be underlying expectations in the discussions on inclusivity when diversity becomes an end in itself. Being inclusive easily has a tone of ascribing marginalized Others a role, they need to represent Diversity. Or as Ahmed (2012, 9-10) phrases it: “diversity becomes associated with certain bodies”. In the uncertainties and questions regarding inclusivity and diversity it becomes unclear where the line goes between being inclusive and accessible to those usually excluded and being essentialist about what Others experience and contribute to a group because of their Otherness.

B discusses these issues problematizing inclusivity when it means including people merely because their personal backgrounds and positions. She describes how it is common that people want to have diverse participation or representation when they organize projects. According to B it is problematic to try to create diversity when organizers do not have diversity in their personal relationships, because it means people ask someone to participate because of specific experiences, identities or positions they have. The Other is expected to provide a project something particular because the includer has some ideas about what the Other knows or wants. She emphasizes the need for diversity in groups because they allow a more complex understanding of the world, but she problematizes diversity when it means that people can only represent the role of whatever marginalized Other they are ascribed. Her solution to improving diversity without forcing people into roles is to base organizing on personal relationships:

I do think that friendship in some way is still a way to that, also creating new friendships through others, so that you have a broader network of different people with different challenges and like that. Otherwise it gets really labored, that if you have a group of friends for example organizing something, or a research group or some kind of group and then you want some other voices there and then you send to some network or group some (chuckles) request that ‘hey, we would need these kinds of people involved’, I think that is really labored and I think it would be really valuable to have those people there from the start, but there is no start if you don’t know them. I think that the road to creating something like that is to have more acquaintances with different kinds of experiences. And it’s a problem when you look at your own friends that you have, or probably not everyone has that problem, but some people do. (B, 61)

She points out earlier that just because something is open it does not make it inclusive and accessible. She emphasizes the need to know people with different experiences in the world. If one does not know different people of different backgrounds and experiences, creating diversity is labored.

B's discussion illustrates the difficulties when diversity and inclusivity are discussed in many cases. Diversity is a feminist principle in itself, it improves understanding of the world, of different experiences and ways of being in the world. Diversity enables a richness in knowledge-practices, as it provides a wider array of embodied knowledge of how to be in the world. At the same time diversity as a goal has the tone of essentializing people, of ascribing people roles whether they want them or not. B problematizes these tendencies, but at the same time when she says people should form friendships to different kinds of people it has connotations in which connections are made with the purpose of creating diverse groups.

Although it is undoubtedly positive that organizing groups are diverse, one cannot ignore the power relations in the discourse on inclusivity. When the discussion moves from the general benefits of diversity or the limits in the claims of representation a homogenous group can make to inclusive practices, there is a shift in what roles and expectations the Others who are to be included are ascribed. The rhetoric reveals a risk in which marginalized people represent diversity and diversity becomes a trophy for already existing members to wear.

It is worth noting that these discussions were different when discussing inclusivity in general and when going into the more detailed and concrete aspects of accessibility. Accessibility is discussed in more practical terms while diversity and inclusivity are elusive, difficult to grasp and define. As principles they are difficult to put to practice. In terms of accessibility it is easier to understand what feminist politics is and what the desired feminist society is, as it can be understood through the organizing practices. Through accessibility it can be understood that the feminist society being prefigured is one in which diverse needs and capabilities are taken into account to ensure that people with different identities, resources, capabilities and obligations can participate in activities. When it comes to diversity and inclusivity as feminist principles they are elusive and fuzzy. The mystique and uncertainty regarding what really makes a group or activity inclusive and who is to be included and why, provide less insight into what feminist politics in terms of diversity and inclusivity means in practice. Although diversity and inclusivity as feminist principles were emphasized by the research participants, in their abstract form they easily reiterate the power dynamics that they are supposedly aiming to dissolve. As they in many ways lack the practice (as opposed to

accessibility), as feminist principles they provide fewer knowledge-practices on how to create the diverse and inclusive desired feminist future in the present.

### 6.3. Safer spaces

Safer spaces are a form of feminist practice that is brought up by several research participants. Approximately half of the research participants bring up safety in the interviews when talking about feminist organizing. It is described as a feminist practice to make sure that different people can participate in organizing, it is a way of creating more feminist spaces. Safer spaces relate to diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in that it is a practical, descriptive way of ensuring that different people have access to and are safe and empowered in feminist groups and activities. Sylvi discusses safety when she describes what feminism means to her:

Yeah, well, I would probably myself say like, that, and what kind of relates to [our project] too, so for myself feminism expresses itself as a thing that makes possible somehow (thinks) the existence of everyone safely and in a way that you can actualize and express yourself from exactly the starting point that feels good and right [...]. And somehow maybe the safety and this (thinks), advancing it not only in the sense that, I don't mean by safety only that there would be some threat of danger, but also on a basic level, that you can develop yourself, do the kind of work that you want and get healthcare and get to educate yourself, so safety is a really broad concept. Then I somehow think, that that's perhaps the most important task of feminism, to create the environment into one where it is possible for everyone, not withstanding their background or anything. (Sylvi, 62)

Safety is a part of Sylvi's definition of feminism: feminism means ensuring safe being in the world. Safety in Sylvi's description is a positive one which Lewis, Sharp, Remnant and Redpath (2015) discuss in distinction to negative safety. Safety does not only mean safety *from* (negative) a threat of violence or discrimination, but it means safety *to* (positive) be in the world, to develop and express oneself freely (Lewis et al. 2015). Although the other research participants do not make as clear a distinction between negative and positive safety as Sylvi, safety clearly means something more than just the absence of danger or discrimination. Alma describes how the organizing group should be safe in both respects:

Well, it should also be a context that is safe and free from discrimination. (Thinks). Well, where everyone feels they can be themselves and be safe to (thinks) express themselves and not be (thinks) hmm. (Alma, 63)

Several aspects of safety come up in the interviews. Research participants talk about making the organizing groups safe, but also making the events that the groups organize

safe for participants. Although safer spaces are a principle in themselves in many interviews, they are strongly related to other principles already discussed here. The research participants discuss safer space in connection to accessibility and to diversity and to organizing according to resources. Safety enables the other important principles of feminist organizing to be realized.

M describes how safer spaces are created and links it directly to accessibility:

Maybe it's also a part of this concept of safer space, that you acknowledge that people have different needs that need to be taken into consideration and I just feel that the physical accessibility is one thing, but actually it's in the end just one part of it. That there's just (thinks), for example also, what time meetings are can impact quite a lot, so if you have some care responsibilities or those who go to work and those who don't, and how to take those things into account, just the different situations in life and that it is even possible to take part in the activity. I think it's also important of course, that the meetings would be preferably in non-commercial spaces, preferably also spaces without age limit, for example in [one group] we have had quite a lot that the events would be in non-alcoholic spaces, which I think has been realized quite well If I remember correctly. (M, 64)

Safer spaces in this description means being aware of the differences between people and the different needs and capabilities in the group and actively taking those differences into account. Safer spaces can entail many things and as it depends on what the people in the group need, the practices will also vary depending on the group. Later M explains why non-commercial spaces and spaces without alcohol are important for creating safer spaces and how that relates to accessibility, explaining that “that might also have been a question of accessibility, if you feel safe in that space” (M, 65). Groups and activities cannot be considered accessible if people do not feel safe in them.

In addition to M's practices for creating safety, also R shares knowledge-practices that make meetings and events safer. One is to have the safer space guidelines explicit to everyone, for example that discrimination is not accepted, people should not make assumptions based on how someone looks, not assuming someone's pronouns or gender. The group also tries to have someone who is trained in safety at their events so that there is a designated person to talk to if something happens or someone feels unsafe. Mental health is an aspect that her group has emphasized: it should not limit people's possibility to participate. For this they have talked about having a separate room at events where people can go if they need peace and quiet. Safer spaces as principle and practice are discussed on very concrete and practical levels. Safer space as

a form of feminist politics in practice is an embodied experience and felt on a personal level.

An important aspect of safer spaces that comes across in the interviews is being able to express one's views and opinions and being able to talk openly among the groups. This is something that is described by Lewis and colleagues (2015) as well. When the people in a group feel safe, they can be more open to express their thoughts, feelings and disagreements. R describes how organizing with safer spaces means being able to say no when one does not have enough time or energy or when one does not feel comfortable with plans. Similar thoughts come up in other interviews in which research participants describe trying to make plans so that everyone feels comfortable in participating. Alma and Maria describe the need for flexibility. Those who want to do something can, without making others who do not, feel obliged to participate or feel uncomfortable with the plans. Groups should create ways of organizing in which different desires get space to be expressed, rather than everyone needing to do or want the same thing.

or if we're planning something that someone doesn't feel comfortable with, for example a program to a Christmas party or something that would involve for example some sort of performance that some think would be a lot of fun and others think just brings stress. Those kinds of things we've tried to find some sort of compromises so that everyone could feel comfortable, but still also so that those who want to do something would also have the possibility of doing it. So, it has been quite a lot of stuff like that, trying to find compromises, we have gotten better at speaking openly about where the boundaries are and how we can make it as nice and safe as possible for everyone. (Alma, 66)

Being able to communicate extends to dealing with disagreements or conflicts too.

Lewis, Sharp, Remnant and Redpath describe that "Safe space, then, far from suppressing conflict, can facilitate respectful exploration of conflict." (2015, 8). Similar ideas come up in the interviews. Minna describes how the group had talked about safe space and that it involves that people are able to disagree and express that disagreement.

actually we have spoken about safer space in the way that, even if we are really, might have disagreed about things and then it kind of, it's really, even if it can get emotional even and if there are different, like 'no like this', 'no, like that', but then just, that you still need to dare to say if you disagree. So yeah, we talked about this, that it has to, it can't like, it's really ok to disagree and then you just need to find the, no one should be like, that they wouldn't say something if they disagreed. (Minna, 67)

Although disagreements and conflicts can be uncomfortable and get emotional, Minna says it is important that everyone can express their opinions and thoughts. S describes

her group and how she feels it has been an important aspect of a safer space in the group that members have been able to bring up issues, such as experiencing racism, without being questioned and challenged:

for example in [one group], I noticed already that, I think several times, there would be a situation when we talk to an organization or to a person or to a place about a collaboration and someone from the group would say, 'ok I have experienced racism in that organization' or 'I have experienced something else', we would right away be like 'ok, we don't know for sure what happened, but we'd rather use something else, we believe that person no matter what', I mean we might ask questions in regards like 'if you don't mind sharing what happened, who was the person', so that we know, but there's no like 'oh yeah, she must have some personal conflict', these things are never questioned and I feel that it's not a question of whether that person is reasonable or not, it's better to stay away from this if there have been people... like, we believe these people even if we don't know what the situation is, and even if that other friend or that other person who is accused of racism is our friend, I feel that it's, I mean I haven't experienced that that would be our friend, but I have experienced that it was a person I knew, and this other person from the feminist group would say that 'this place they're running, I have experienced racism there, I have experienced it from this person in particular, I would rather our organization didn't collaborate with this organization.' And everybody would be like 'yes, thank you for sharing this, we're not going to collaborate with this organization', and to me it feels like the right thing to do. (S)

According to S, especially in feminist groups people are more open to hearing about things that might normally be questioned. It can be difficult to share experiences of racism or other oppression or discrimination. S describes it as an important feminist practice to create a safe space to share something without being questioned or the experiences being belittled.

What S tells brings interesting nuance to the discussions on safer spaces. Safer space means that people can openly discuss what they think and want, share their opinions and express themselves, it is not meant to silence disagreements. Rather safety in the groups allows the disagreements and uncomfortable discussions to be had. At the same time S's example above shows that safer space also means safety from being questioned. This could be interpreted as an avoidance of difficult conversations and disagreements. What is important to note then, is that the situations S describes involve issues of racism or other experiences of oppression. The idea with safer space is that those experiences are believed and taken seriously in feminist practice, because in society they are so often belittled or not believed. In S's example the group prefers to not collaborate with someone because there is a risk of racism, even though they do not know exactly what the situation was. Safer spaces then means being able to talk about difficult and

uncomfortable topics, being able to disagree and have conflict, without anyone's safety to express or be who they are being threatened or questioned. Safer space in this context means both safety from being discriminated or threatened, but also safety to express one's views, hold one's limits and do what one desires.

One aspect of safe space brought up in two interviews was separatism. It is interesting in how it relates to diversity, as it does negate diversity in some forms. If certain identities or social positions are excluded, diversity is somewhat limited. Separatism was not brought up by many of the participants and only R described separatism to be important for her group. Separatist spaces can be defined in many ways, but in the interviews the examples brought up are gender separatist spaces. Separatist spaces can be phrased as either inclusive only to people with certain shared experiences or identities, or as excluding certain experiences or identities. In either case they are described to provide safety for people to discuss certain topics or practice activities. R describes how the projects her group organizes provides alternative spaces where everyone but cis-males can participate to experiment and learn in a safer space:

That we create the kind of space where people can dare to do a thing that isn't necessarily societally much viewed as an activity for them. (R, 68)

M discusses separatism and thinks it can be especially important in providing peer support. People who share similar experiences can discuss them amongst each other without having to explain them to others. She talks about different ways of creating safer spaces, separatist or otherwise:

But those have been more like peer group meetings, otherwise I don't think there have been specifically for women or for example a space that would be organized like that. But I don't know if that's (thinks), or I remember that it's been contemplated, how you phrase that, if you want that something is queer exclusive, that how you say it. Sometimes we've used something like 'everyone, except cis-men', but then it's so much through a negation (chuckles), that could it be formulated somehow differently, (laughs quietly), somehow women-queer-trans, but then on the other hand it feels like it becomes a really long litany. On the other hand I feel like there is a need for that too, separatist spaces, but I haven't really myself been involved in organizing, and maybe it hasn't been part of organizing a feminist space for me, it's more just been that, that you think about how to say that a space is, that it's queer friendly and feminist and doesn't tolerate discrimination (chuckles), that it somehow would create a base, that whoever comes into that space, that then you wouldn't need to appeal to a kind of identity politics as much, about who can be in that space. (M, 69)

The quote from M's interview illustrates the differences in feminist politics, defined through identities or practices. She does not question the need for separatist spaces, but



personally prefers doing politics defined by the practices or principles, rather than identities. Safer and feminist spaces can be defined with shared principles and practices that do not define who can be in a space or group or who cannot. M's discussion on separatism exemplifies the perspective on feminism in which the politics can be understood through the different practices that are used to prefigure the feminist society that is desired. Through safer space practices a vision of a feminist society in the future can be seen in the present. As the safer space and accessible practices described in this chapter have been various, they illustrate that feminist practices cannot be defined as a simple set for all. Rather the individual needs of the people in groups need to be considered to know what will make a space safe for them.

In this chapter I have discussed the feminist principles of diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and safer spaces. Diversity was brought up in all the interviews, but it proved difficult to define and grasp. Similarly inclusivity, despite its purpose of dismantling power dynamics and exclusion, reiterates power relations in the interviews. Diversity enables the groups to organize activities for a wider audience and better recognize the struggles, needs and desires of diverse people. At the same time diversity as a goal easily essentializes the Others who come to represent diversity. It becomes unclear in some contexts for whose benefit inclusivity is, for the Others being included or the includers who want to showcase their diversity.

I argue that the discussions avoid these tendencies when they stay on the more practical and embodied level. The problems due to lack of diversity are not experienced first-hand by most of the research participants, rather the experience of the problems are ascribed imagined Others. However, when the participants discuss the homogeneity of their group they give practical descriptions of what that means for their group. Rather than having mystical meaning, when they recognize their homogeneity they acknowledge the limits of what their group knows and has experience of and what kinds of claims of representation they can make. However, some caution should be taken, because groups can rarely know fully what identities and experiences are represented in a group.

Similarly the accessible and safer space practices offer more fruitful insights into what feminist politics is and what a feminist society looks like. While diversity and inclusivity remain elusive, accessibility and safer spaces provide practical

understanding of feminist principles and how a desired future can be prefigured in the present. The knowledge-practices on accessibility and safer spaces are embodied and personal, they are generated from personal experience and experimentation.

## 7. Conclusions and discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze and understand feminist politics by exploring the principles and knowledge-practices in the internal organizing of feminist grassroots groups in Helsinki. For this purpose my research questions were what feminism means to the research participants (1), what principles they find to be important for organizing (2) and what knowledge-practices they generate on how to put those principles to practice (3). The research had two aims. Firstly, in line with feminist and militant research traditions, to support the movements I studied by documenting the knowledge-practices they generate and sharing those with them (Colectivo Situaciones 2005; Halvorsen 2015; Russell 2015). Second, I wanted to add to the academic analyses of prefigurative politics by studying it in the context of feminist activism, because I find this has not received much academic interest.

Regarding the first research question, a key insight in this thesis is that the definition of feminism in some ways differs from feminism depicted in research on feminist movements and organizing (see e.g. Bergman 2002; Griffin 1995; Hunt 2017; Lewis and Marine 2015). According to this research, feminism does not centralize gender. The participants largely identify with an intersectional feminism in which the question is not only how gender intersects with other social categories, but one in which all social mechanisms causing inequality are equally important and emphasized. Feminism in this study views gender as one component among many that needs to be dealt with to achieve equality. Because research on feminist movements (ibid.) tends to assume that feminists are women and that women's or gender equality is the central topic of feminism, my findings suggest a need to reexamine that assumption. Additionally, research on feminist movements rarely asks what feminism means in the empirical context. I argue that there is need for more attention to the definitions of feminism in movements, as it can broaden our perceptions of what feminist activism entails and who the activists are.

It is also important to ask what feminists want. My analysis is that feminism is something more than a reaction, a fight *against* inequality, as often depicted in research. It is a perspective on how the world could and should be in itself. More attention needs to be given the world that is being envisioned and practiced in feminist movements and grassroots organizing. Hence, research that centers the practices and prefigurative politics in the context of feminist activism ought to be conducted as it both sheds light on what the political visions and ideas are as well as how feminists go about making those ideas a reality.

Interviews as research methods were chosen to put emphasis to the analyses and the knowledge-practices of the research participants. In the interviews the participants were given the right to determine, define and analyze; their expertise was valued. However, I noticed that I was cautious to make my own analyses at first. I did not dare to be critical because of the aim to do affirmative research that supports the participants, their movements and acknowledges their expertise. But as I found myself asking critical questions (especially relating to the discussions on diversity and inclusivity, see chapter 6), I had to come to terms with challenging as well as listening and learning. However, I believe the critical analyses also emphasize the role of the participants as experts, perhaps even helps fulfill the first aim of this research, to be of use to feminist organizers. One of the conclusions of this study is that the challenges and the critique are valuable in the lessons they teach. Hence, the critical questions and analyses I present can also prove insightful to the organizers. Rather than affirm everything, critique can contribute with something new.

In light of this I suggest that there is need for critical reflection when diversity is discussed as a principle. Some of the benefits of organizing as a diverse group are described in the interviews and I do not question those. However, I pose a distinction. I argue that it is descriptive to express what a group is, whether it means describing the diverse experiences in a group or the limited span of experiences due to homogeneity (even so, groups should be cautious to presume they can fully describe themselves). In contrast, it is presumptive to describe a group as not being diverse enough, i.e. that a group lacks something. Critical reflection on what a group is and its limits, gives insight, but focusing on what groups lack easily means that the people perceived to be missing are locked into a position of representing the missing Other. Wanting more diversity means that certain perspectives are expected of imagined Others who will

represent diversity. The questions then remain, what positions represent diversity, what will count as diversity and who benefits from diversity?

While diversity as a principle is elusive and easily reproduces the power dynamics it is intended to dismantle, I argue for accessibility as a more useful feminist principle. Accessibility is more practically oriented and stems from the lived experiences and needs of people and therefore provides more fruitful perspectives for organizing with practices that prefigure feminist politics. Accessibility does not desire the presence of imagined Others for the sake of having Others present. Instead, accessibility means taking into account barriers to organizing and participating. The principles of diversity, inclusivity and accessibility ought to be studied more. Diversity seems to have become a goal and ideal discussed without criticism in feminist organizing. There is a need to examine what meaning diversity is given, what it is thought to achieve and to whose benefit. To what extent diversity and inclusivity dismantle intended power dynamics and to what extent they reproduce them ought to be studied further.

Despite variations in definition and emphasis, principles of low and transparent hierarchies were shared by all the research participants. In contrast to conclusions by e.g. Roseneil (1995) and Cockburn (2007), hierarchies are not categorically dismissed by the research participants. Some participants formulate their principle on hierarchies as inherently impossible to achieve – hierarchies always occur, even though one strives to organize without hierarchies. Because of the impossibility of organizing without hierarchies, the challenges and tensions become an important aspect of this thesis as well as the emphasis on low and transparent hierarchies. Despite a desire to organize with low and transparent hierarchies, the research participants describe how hierarchies occur. Societal hierarchies are unintentionally reproduced in the groups, whether it is reproduction of gendered roles, higher appreciation of certain backgrounds and skills than others or in the name of inclusivity essentializing an Other. Hierarchies also occur as organizing in itself creates differences in knowledge and experience and when people participate in different ways.

Despite the challenges, the research participants in general say they succeed in organizing in a feminist way. Although they conclude that there is always room for improvement, they are successful all the same. Success and a need for improvement are not contradictory, but coexist in the same experience. Organizing prefiguratively comes

to mean something different from the organizing practices perfectly reflecting the political principles. Based on this research, the desired society being created in the present is one which involves experimentation, facing and accepting challenges and difficulties, trying to deal with them, the desire to always improve, but accepting that the goals are unattainable. Perhaps then that is the outcome, perhaps that process is what kind of future is being prefigured. While creating the future in the present in other research (Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell 2008; Chatterton and Pickerill 2010) is described to be messy and experimental, the desired future is described more clearly. I want to cautiously suggest that the desired future is perhaps as messy as the process of realizing it. The desired future perhaps means embracing the messiness and living with it, instead of dealing with the mess to achieve the future.

Regarding the third research question, I found that concrete practices were sometimes difficult to gather from the interviews. While the research participants discussed principles analytically and in depth, the practices often proved difficult to define. This could indicate a flaw in the research methods; ethnographic methods might have given more access to practices than speaking of them in interviews did. However, I interpret this as relating to two aspects. First, practices are easier to describe when the knowledge-practices are embodied and personal. As it relates to the principles of diversity and inclusivity, the practices were elusive partly because they lacked a personal and embodied base.

Second, the hesitancy to determine practices emphasizes that the practices are contextual. While the research participants described how they organize, the difficulty to define what feminist practices are signifies that the practices in themselves carry no political meaning. The practices gain their prefigurative and ethical meaning when they are chosen because of a specific need or desire in the group, when they are used to solve a problem. While the feminist principles are important in organizing, the practices are contextual and so they should be. Different groups will choose different, even opposite practices (take voting as an example). Feminist meaning is given to the practices in the context of what the group needs and desires. Rather than organizing with specific practices, feminist organizing means understanding and prioritizing the needs of a specific group and trying to accommodate those in whatever way is found to be fitting. However, this is not to say that discussing practices is meaningless. Although the practices can gain different meaning depending on the context, the knowledge-practices

generated on organizing still give important insight into how groups can organize and what practices can be and are used to prefigure the desired future.

Whether the aim of generating useful research to the activists has been met cannot be determined here. Nevertheless, I have had to reassess what kind of use this thesis might be of. My initial intention was to document knowledge-practices, to gather a toolbox of feminist practices, so that the wheel would not need to be reinvented in future activism. However, it is evident to me now that the knowledge-practices will not provide a full toolbox to organizers. While the analyses and practices can prove useful, I conclude that there will also be a need to reinvent the wheel, again and again. As feminist practice means being open, hearing the needs in a group, each toolbox will need to be reassembled to fit each group. Feminist practice, the feminist future prefigured is one in which there is no conclusion but constant learning as needs and desires form and change.

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## Appendix 1: quotes in original language

1. ”No mä aattelen että se on rakenteellisten eriarvoisuuksien tiedostamista ja purkamista.” (<3)
2. ”Det är att jobba för jämställdhet mellan alla kön och sen senare också har jag mera börja tänka på att ha ett intersektionellt perspektiv. Kanske jag nuförtiden tänker ännu mera på att jobba för jämställdhet, också som ekonomisk och mellan olika etniciteter och funktionsvariationer och sånt här. I början var det mera bara en sån där könsgrej tydligare för mig och sen har det gått mera och mera mot det hållet och nu tycker jag typ att miljöaktivism är den största feministiska frågan också. Det är ganska mycket som faller där under och det kan göras inom så många olika områden, politik, konst och allting, det är helt superbrett, det är svårt att svara på.” (Alma)
3. ”Joo, intersektionaaliseksi feministiksi. Ja no, elämäkatsomusta ja toimintatapoja, aika laaja tavallaan, suhtautumista ja ymmärrystä valtarakenteista ja niin... (Naurahtaa) Kaikkeenhan se tavallaan heijastuu että tuntuu vaikeelta lähteä määrittelemään että mitä kaikkea se tarkoittaa, mutta ehkä tällasta tiedostamista.” (MP)
4. ”se ei ole vaan sitä, että pitää olla tasa-arvon kannalla, vaan se tarkoittaa myös, että jotain pitäisi myös tehdä. Se tarkoittaa myös, tai mulle ainakin sen, että on olemassa ongelma, epätasa-arvo, ja se pitäisi jotenkin ratkaista. Ja mun mielestä se on osa sitä, tai mitä mä ajattelen että on feminismi. Ja jotenkin mun mielestä, niin, aktiivisesti olla osana sellasta muutosta, joo.” (M)
5. ”semmosta jatkuvaa sovittelua itsensä ja maailman välillä ja muiden ihmisten.” (R)
6. ”(skrattar) Jättesvärt, men för mig har det alltid varit jätteöppet och just att det inkluderar jättestarkt tankar om olika sorters förtrycksmekanismer och inte bara kön eller, att både kön och olika former av genusförtryck, men också alla möjliga sorts saker som rasism och hierarkier av till exempel rättslig status i landet och allt sånt. Men ja, så ganska öppen definition och därför har kanske för mig det inte varit så viktigt att tänka just på feminism, men kanske mera just att vad dom feministiska rörelserna erbjuder för verktyg och sätt att tänka på hur man kan förändra. Det tycker jag är det mest värdefulla, att försöka vara [not audible] och ta i beaktande olika sorters positioner och olika situationer och sånt, på det sättet inkludera flera sorters människor i sitt arbete också.” (B)
7. ”niin itselle se feminismi näyttäytyy semmosena asiana, joka mahdollistaa jotenkin (mieltii) kaikille olemassaolon turvallisesti ja sillä tavalla, että voi toteuttaa ja ilmaista itseään just siitä lähtökohdasta käsin, mikä itselle tuntuu hyvältä ja oikealta” (Sylvi)
8. ”mikä siinä on ehkä olennaista on tavallaan semmonen affirmatiivinen suhtautuminen eroihin, sellanen eroihin positiivisesti suhtautuminen, että haetaan niinku niistä, pyritään luoda niiden erojen pohjalta jotain yhteistä.” (ML)
9. ”Joo okej, nå det är ett samhälle, eller en grupp där alla får ta plats men ingen måste heller ta plats, men får ta plats att uttrycka sig själv till, sådär förverkliga sig själv och vara sig själv (funderar) så mycket som möjligt. Men på samma gång är det viktigt att alla också tas i beaktande och att ingen blir, att alla ska också kunna stöda varandra i den här processen så mycket som möjligt, utan att det (funderar), utan att man glömmar bort att också satsa på sig själv och själv (funderar), att ta hand om sig själv för att man sen tar så mycket hand om varandra. Alltså det är nån jättesvår balans, men där alla ska kunna vara så fria och trygga som möjligt. (funderar). Och ha så roligt som möjligt (skrattar till).” (Alma)
10. ”Siinä on mun mielestä jotain mahtavaa että pystyy luomaan semmosia yhteisöjä jotka, joiden parissa ehkä voisi kokeilla niitä utopioita tai niitä järjestäytymisen... jotenkin

kokeilla sitä miten asiat voisi toimia, ettei mene just jonkun määritellyn mukaan. Toki aina niinku realiteettien puitteissa, että huomaa sen että on pakko olla jotain rakennetta, mutta että miten me se tehdään niin se on vaan meistä kiinni.” (MP)

11. ”Ja tietenkin myös olla se, mitä mäkin sanoin vähän aiemmin, että olla kriittinen sen suhteen, mitä lupaa, että jos me ollaan just todettu, että me ollaan tällanen feministinen ja queer ja antirasistinen ja dekolonialistinen tila, niin mitä se tarkoittaa käytännössä, että se ei ole mikään leima, vaan se on konkreettisesti tapahtumaa ja toimintaa, joka edistää sitä. Ja tekee jotain oikeasti sen eteen, eikä vaan sano, että tekee, että se ois sinänsä myös rehellistä se mitä sanoo olevansa tilana ja se mitä oikeasti tekee.” (M)
12. ”Men just också ideologiska grejer som att vi vill bli bättre på att på riktigt försöka arbeta mera intersektionellt medvetet eller ha ett ekologiskt hållbart tänk och såna saker.” (Maria)
13. ”Ina: Nå fanns det inom gruppen diskussion om den där förändringen och vad det kan ha för implikationer ur ett feministiskt perspektiv?

B: Det fanns nog men nog var det ändå lite hypotetiskt att, eller det var liksom för- och nackdelar att massor just det här att om man sku bli en större förening så skulle man kunna anställa människor och det sku frigöra tid för andra saker, som var en jättebra tanke. Men (funderar) det blir liksom ett annat sätt att organisera sig och jag tycker inte kanske att, dels att det känns inte som att det sku vara lika jämlikt och feministiskt fast det kanske sku kunna vara en möjlighet att göra det mer (funderar), att det sku kunna vara en möjlighet att allt det roliga jobbet sen kan göras av dom som, eller att det finns mycket tråkigt som måste skötas och då behöver inte alla som annars också har massor att göra, behöver inte ta på sig dom uppgifterna, det är nån som får pengar som gör dom istället. Men det har ändå konsekvenser, men inte vet jag om dom är dåliga eller bra, eller om nåndera sättet är bättre, men det för mig kanske det kändes som att (funderar) det är roligare med mindre stress och mindre förväntningar och tulosvaatimuksen och (skrattar), att man på nåt sätt ska visa till nån vad man gör och att man gör det bra.” (B)

14. ”(skrattar) Nä alltså jag funderar bara, det är ju spännande att tänka på (skrattar), vad är en feministisk metod? eller dom flesta metoderna är ju kanske inte, är ju ingenting, dom kan laddas med olika saker och användas på olika sätt.” (Maria)
15. Mä ainakin tykkään ajatella semmosena että, tai jotain sellaista kohtaamisten etiikkaa, että soveltaen just mikä sopii mihinkin tilanteeseen, että ei arvata liikaa etukäteen että mikä nyt on se, onko joku yksi oikea tapa toimia. (ML)
16. <3: [...] kun se voi tarkoittaa niin eri asioita eri konteksteissa, niin sillee mä oon vähän, tai mitä tulee kaikkeen feminismiin niin mä oon vähän haluton sanomaan että ’just näin aina’.

Ina: Miksi?

<3: Ehkä just sen takia että kun se niinku (pohtii), se liittyy niinku siihen että se on mun mielestä enemmän tekemistä kuin olemista, sitten on musta kauheen vaikee olla normikriittinen ja tiukan normatiivinen samaan aikaan (naurahtaa), että tota, niin siksi. (<3)

17. ”Varmaan sitä ainakin, että kiinnittää siihen, tai jotenkin analysoi ja pohtii uudella tavalla sitä vallan muodostumista ryhmissä” (www).
18. ”Ja, sen praktiskt bara att förstås det är svårt att säga att här inte finns hierarkier, för att det finns alltid, men kanske genom att säga att man försöker att det inte ska finnas så mycket hierarkier i det där sättet att organisera sig, så kan det vara lättare för att för, både en själv som en som deltar i organiserandet att se till att man inte tar för mycket utrymme till

exempel eller talar på nån annan eller sånt, och också andra kan genom att ha nån viss tanke om att ickehierarkiskt organiserande så då kanske andra människor också kan säga om dom upplever nånting som ett problem. Men det är mycket lättare sagt än gjort.”(B)

19. “Ainakin se on sen miettimistä. Tota, varmaankin se on niitten, sen yhteentulemisen rakenteiden näkemistä, tai siis pyrkimystä nähdä niitä, ettei ne menis piiloon, tai ettei tulis semmosia piilovaltarakenteita jotka vaikuttaa satuttavasti, ja sit niitäkin tietenkin tulee. Eli se on varmaankin jonkinlaista pyrkimystä tiedostaa niitä ryhmävälisiä suhteita ja hierarkioita. Sit mä en niinku, musta se koko kollektiivisuuden ja vähähierarkisuuden tai epähierarkisuuden kysymys on ihan superkiinnostava, mulla ei oo siihen mitään, tai varsinkin se tulee eri tavalla esille taiteen tekemisessä. Mä en niinku mitenkään yksiselitteisesti ajattele että tämmönen flat rakenne ois ainoa tapa toimia feministisesti. Kyllä mun mielestä niinku, jollain tavalla se avoimuus ja asioiden sanottaminen siinä yhdessä toimimisessa, jonkinlainen vastavuoroinen ymmärrys siitä että missä ollaan ja mitä tehdään, niin on varmaan sitä ydintä. [...] Että sikäli mä aattelen että enemmän kuin se vähä- tai se hierarkiattomuus, varsinkin kun mä en usko että hierarkiattomuus on mahdollista, mutta ehkä enemmänkin kuin se, niin sit jotenkin puhuminen ja tiedostaminen niistä ihmisten välisistä suhteista ja ehkä myös ihmisten lähtökohdista tai eri lähtökohdista. Mutta se on siis ihan supervaikeeta myös.” (<3)
20. “[att] nån har mera utbildning och kan därför säga mera om nån speciell sak, utan att alla ska ha möjlighet att uttrycka sig och kunna ha kunskap om många saker” (B)
21. “Se mikä tekee jostain hierarkioista ongelmallisia tossa on sit se kun ne on jossain kätkössä vaan ja alkaa häiritä ja kismittää. Että pystyy ottaa erilaisia vastuuta tai kokeilemaan eri juttuja ja, niin että ainakin sitä totta kai kaikki varmaan toivoo että se toimii niin että pystyy halutessaan oppimaan vaikka jotain uutta, että ei tarvi jämähtää johonkin yhteen rooliin.” (ML)
22. “No esimerkiksi [yhdessä ryhmässä] (mieltii) me ollaan puhuttu siitä, miten ne tietyt vastuut tuntuu, että ne on jakautunut, tai yrittää päästä pois sellasesta, muistan ainakin alussa, että vaikka meillä oli aika tasaisesti miehiä ja naisia kollektiivissa, niin silti vähän oudosti tuntui, että se on ne miehet, jotka päättää sen sisällön ja naiset, jotka tuottaa ja tekee käytännön asioita. Ja se on sellanen, että miten päästä pois siitä. Sit meillä on myös tää, että meillä on nyt kaksi tasavertaista johtajaa tässä tilassa, ja että miten se voisi olla tasapuolisempaa. Musta tuntuu, että yleensä taidetiloissa on johtaja ja sitten tuottaja ja yleensä se tuottaja on aina nainen (naurahtaa) ja jotenkin jännästi, että miten päästä. Ehkä siinä mielessä me ollaan [meidän ryhmässä] yritetty tiedostavasti olla feministinen, nimenomaan siinä mielessä, että on kiinnitetty huomiota siihen sukupuolittuneeseen työnjakoon, mikä tuntuu, että se helposti muodostuu kollektiivien sisällä aika huomaamattomasti ja miten kiinnittää siihen huomiota.” (M)
23. “Ina: Onko tää, että on eri tapoja tehdä toimintaa tai eri juttuja jonkun toiminnan piirissä, miellätkö sä sen feministiseksi toimintatavaksi?  
  
M: Siis joo, kai se on osa tällasta, mitä kokee tietynlaisena hierarkiattomuutena, ehkä myös sellasena roolien rikkomisena. Ja että ei nähdä, että sellanen feminiiniseksi koettu toiminta olisi vähemmän arvostettua kuin maskuliiniseksi (hymähtää) koettu toiminta. Niin, joo, (mieltii), joo (naurahtaa).” (M)
24. “se on sellanen neuvottelu mitä me ollaan nyt käyty useammassa kokouksessa sillee, että annetaan kaikille se puheenvuoro ja ollaan huomattu että on erilaisia näkemyksiä. Huomaa että se vie paljon enemmän aikaa, mutta sit se tulos on jotenkin tosi paljon hedelmällisempi.” (MP)

25. “www: me tehdään asioista vaikka äänestyksiä (hymähtää) tosi paljon jos on jotain tommosia [...] ja just se, että kaikkia vaikeita asioita pitäisi avata keskenään.

Sylvi: Niin, ja just se, että me ei ehkä hirveesti olla sillee konsensushakuisia, tai jotenkin, että se lähtökohta ei ole se, että me ollaan konsensushakuisia, koska silloin se monesti tarkoittaa, ainakin itselle sitä, että jotkut ei uskalla vaan sanoa mielipidettä, koska pelottaa olla eri mieltä kuin toiset. Niin sit meillä on ollut ehkä alusta asti aika vahva semmonen, että nyt kaikki sanoo oikeasti mitä on mieltä, niin siitä on ehkä tullut semmonen kulttuuri, että me myös kerromme mitä itse ajattelemme asioista. Saa nähdä nyt, että miten se pesiytyy vaikka noihin [uusiin jäseniin], jotka on nyt tullut siihen mukaan. Mutta sit just se, että voi laittaa ne mielipiteet pöydälle ja sit niistä keskustellaan. Niin, ehkä se on myös se tärkeä, että ei ole semmosta yhtä tyyppiä, joka sanoisi, että 'hei tehdäänkö näin' ja sit kaikki on sillee, 'joojoo, tehdään tehdään', ilman että oikeastaan miettisi, että tehdäänkö vai ei. Se on tullut ehkä vaan sillee, semmosesta keskinäisestä luottamuksesta.” (www and Sylvi)

26. “Precis, hmm, ja alltså vi har ju nog alltid pratat om saker också och så. Men röstningen har kanske nästan mera känts som att den har varit viktig på det sättet, när man pratar så då kanske folk har fört fram olika åsikter när vi har pratat, så finns det ju en risk att man också i en diskussion manar fram en konsensus utan att ens kolla att var nu alla faktiskt med på det här. Så röstningarna har varit, tycker jag, ett sätt att dels, då har vi ju också haft lite olika åsikter, men då har det oftast varit så att folk har varit sådär att 'ok, jag tänker nu rösta emot det här, men jag är ok med det, för jag tycker att, jag ser the merits of it, men jag skulle kanske göra annorlunda'. Men det har aldrig varit så att nån har velat typ ta avstånd från det vi har bestämt eller så och det har ju, det är ju kanske bara tur att det har råkat vara så (skrattar till). Men det tycker jag, det har varit en balans mellan det här att kunna vidhålla sin egen åsikt och samtidigt vara ok med att majoriteten vill nånting annat. Och jag vet inte om det är feministiskt i sig egentligen, men det kanske mera har att göra med att det är en pragmatisk lösning på nåt sätt (skrattar till). För jag menar röstning i sig sku ju kunna leda till all världens idiotiska saker (skrattar till), därför tänker jag att diskussionen är jätteviktig också och vi har också nån gång, alltså att alternativ som vi har röstat mellan har fallit bort på grund av att vi har kunnat diskutera oss fram till att 'det här kan vi inte göra, det här är helt, det här kan vi inte ens ha som ett alternativ'.” (Maria)

27. ”No [feministinen järjestäytyminen] on kans sitä (pohtii), kyllä semmosta yhdessä tekemistä on, ettei tuu liikaa mitään hierarkioita tai että joku päättää, että vältetään semmosia, ettei tuu mitään kuppikuntia tai, että se pysyy sillee avoimena se tekeminen, että kaikki tietää missä mennään. Ja siihenkin pitää tietenkä, että jos on paljon tekemistä, niin siihen pitää kiinnittää huomiota, että se että jos antaa, tekee vaan kauheesti, eikä mieltä sitä, niin sitä helposti, 'no tehdään me tää' ja näin, vaan se pitää koko ajan muistaa että.” (Minna)

28. ”Niin sitten jotenkin se on ollut ehkä jatkuvaa sellasta trial and error, että mikä toimii ja mikä ei. Tuntuu, että se on jatkunutkin, että millaiset on ne toimivat toimintamallit ja että ei ole sillai, että on yksi tai kaksi ihmistä, jotka lopulta on päättämässä kaikesta. Se on toiminut joskus paremmin, joskus, niin (mieltii). Mutta ehkä se on se, mikä on aiheuttanut eniten konflikteja, on sellanen, keskinäinen vallan jakautuminen, että ketkä päättää asioista lopullisesti ja ketkä ei. Tietenkin siinä on myös ihan luonnollisiakin, että jotkut jäsenet ei pysty olemaan niin paljon mukana muiden duunien takia, kuin toiset, mutta silti, että miten se voisi olla jotenkin kollektiivisempaa se päätöksenteko. Ehkä se on ollut sellanen isoin itsekritiikin...” (M)

29. ”Mutta kyl meillä nyt on mun mielestä kaikki ihan hyvin, mutta varmaan niinku siis semmosia asioita ehkä mitä niinku vielä vois puhua, mut sit tuntuu just että kun oli se konflikti niin sit tosi moni jotenkin väsy siihen puhumiseen (naurahtaa) tai jengi oli sillee että 'nyt ei vaan enää jaksa puhua, että me ei voida'. Tai yks meistä sano vaan sitten että

'okei että totta kai sitä kollektiivisuutta voi tehdä miettimällä teoriassa että miten me tehtäis, mutta sitten pitää myös vaan tehdä ja vaan olla yhdessä'. Sit tuntuu että nyt me ehkä taas ollaan niinku siinä että katotaan että miten me ollaan yhdessä kaiken sen jälkeen, kaiken tän puhumisen jälkeen." (<3, 29)

30. "No, kyllä se mun mielestä siihen kuuluu ainakin vahvasti semmoinen, että ei olisi mitään kauheeta hierarkiaa tai semmosta. Että kuitenkin se yhteisö on yhteisö ja että ne arvot pysyy keskiössä myös siinä kun sitä tehdään, että ei vaan se että mitä tehdään vaan myös se että miten tehdään. Just kun meilläkin vaikka mun mielestä tuntuu välillä hölmöltä että meillä edes on joku hallitus, tai se on vaan sen takia että me ollaan virallinen yhdistys niin meillä on pakko olla hallitus." (R)
31. "Att fast det inte var så att, ingen förutsatt att jag sku göra allting, så blev det ändå som att jag kände att, eller jag insåg att, ok men i och med att jag är ordförande i den här föreningen så är det ingen annan som kommer att sitta och vara sådär att 'åh men den här grejen har vi inte tänkt på, att nån måste ta itu med', liksom sådana saker. Att det gick nog att delegera vissa konkreta uppgifter, men den här själva känslan av helhetsansvar" (Maria)
32. "Jag tycker att det börja mer, jag tycker att [projektet] börja som ett mer aktivistiskt och löst projekt men som sen senare blev, tog formen av nån sorts organisation. Att det också skapades en officiell förening och det var pengar inblandade som måste bli skötta på ett visst sätt och sen fanns det ännu tankar om att utveckla det till arbetsförhållande och sånt som genast skapar hierarkier och att vem som har mer att säga än andra." (B)
33. "Mutta kyllä mä oon nyt vähän sillee touch and go tällä hetkellä, että mua on vähän ahdistanut toi tän hetkinen tilanne. Että onko se nyt liian semmosta että meillä on joku hallitus täällä erikseen, joka mieltii nää asiat ja sitten välillä, ja me ollaan siis puhuttu tästä siellä meidän keskustelussa, tai tää on tuotu esille tää asia, että tää tuntuu että tää muuttuu nyt niin paljon. Että yhtäkkiä tää on tosi semmosta byrokraattista ja tämmöstä että me täällä keskenään vaan kyhäillään ja sitten yhtäkkiä johonkin, tai sitten vaan laitetaan välillä, että ollaan koitettu sitä että se yhteisö pysyisi enemmän siinä mukana. Mutta tämä on vähän tämmöinen testausvuosi, että me koitetaan että miten tämä käytäntö toimii ja varmaan sitten katsotaan syyskokouksessa loppuvuodesta, että miten sitten jatketaan. Mutta me ollaan neuvoteltu että koitetaan jotain muuta, koska se vanha malli, vaikka oli paljon yhteisöllisempi ja tavallaan rennompi ja semmoinen, mutta se vaan ei toiminut yksilöiden kannalta, koska se oli niin uuvuttavaa. Se oli tosi, meidän yhdistyksen resurssit vaan loppuu, kun yksilöt ei jaksa enää tehdä sitä, niin pitää katsoa miten se tästä etenee." (R)
34. "om vi talar om styrelsen som jag har varit engagerad i, så försöker ju fungera enligt en såpass platt hierarki som möjligt, vilket jag sku säga är som i ganska många fall, på gott och på ont. Ideologin är jag ju för till 100% och vi försöker ju, vi har till exempel rotera, fast vi har en ordförande och en vice-ordförande och såna här poster inom styrelsen, så när det kommer till den praktiska mötestekniken så brukar vi rotera vem som är ordförande och vem som är sekreterare, så att alla styrelsemedlemmar är det i tur och ordning och inte bara ordförande." (Maria,)
35. "Mulla on tietystä vaikea sanoa kun mä oon mä. (pohtii) Siinä on niinku useampi puoli, tavallaan musta ei, että kyl ihmiset on niinku ottanut sen ihan omakseen ja tekee tavallaan sen nimissä sillee omii juttuja tai omia avauksia. (pohtii) Mulla oli jossain vaiheessa semmoinen olo että porukka niinku okeias mun kautta asioita ja sit mä yritin sanoa että ei tarvi tehdä noin, että tehdäänkö sitä niinku vielä. Ehkä ei, kun me puhuttiin tästä just viime kesänä että onko mulla joku erityisasema ja sit jengi oli niinku sitä mieltä että vaikka se ryhmä onkin, että sitä ei ois jos mä en ois sitä alotetta tehnyt, että onko se jotenkin (pohtii). Mutta en mä, mietin että vastaanko mä että en mä usko että se vaikuttaa vai onko se niinku että mä toivon että se ei vaikuta (naurahtaa). En mä kyllä usko että se vaikuttaa. Ainakaan

ei missään nimessä sillee että mä tekisin jotain päätöksiä tai että kokouksia ei ois jos mä en ois siellä tai tämmösiä asioita.” (<3)

36. “Så där finns alla möjliga hierarkier och vem som har erfarenhet av att ordna en demonstration, så det är lätt för mig att säga att 'joo, jag tycker att det fanns rum', kanske det inte fanns lika mycket rum för dom andra, men jag sku i alla fall vilja att det fanns (skrattar till), jag sku ha varit öppen för mera kritik om det sku ha kommit.” (B)
37. “Jag har ganska mycket varit med i såna projekt där man ska vara jätteöppen och alla ska få komma med och det ska vara jättedemokratiskt, vilket är jättebra, men det kräver också massa energi och massa ansvar. Och för att många av oss har erfarenhet av att på nåt sätt bli trött eller utbränd av det aktivistiska arbetet så tycker jag inte att man för att initiera ett feministiskt projekt måste bära allt det ansvaret av att organisera nån sorts demokratiskt projekt där alla får vara med.” (B)
38. “Jag tycker nog att det mesta som vi diskuterar var att alla ska kunna säga hur mycket dom kan göra och sen kanske försöka, att det där arbetet som vi gör ska försöka motsvara det att människor inte upplever att dom måste göra nånting. Att ordna det här ska vara roligt och inte stressigt eller som en börda.” (B)
39. ”niin että on se idea että ei ole pakko koskaan tehdä mitään (naurahtaa). Että saa itse päättää oman aktiivisuusasteensa, mutta on hyvä että on tarpeeksi porukkaa että on sitten aina tarpeeksi tyyppejä jotka pystyy olemaan aktiivisia ja tällee.” (ML)
40. ”No musta ehkä itse, se on ollut jotenkin, että tiedostetaan ihmisten voimavaroja ja kysellään ihmisten voimavaroja ja myös, että jos pystyy auttamaan jotenkin myös ihan käytännöllisesti jossain, niin sitten tarjotaan sellastakin. Ehkä se just on, että ollaan, että tiedostetaan, että ihmisillä on erilaisia voimavaroja (mietti). Mutta en tiedä, sitä vois ehkä enemminkin miettiä konkreettisia käytännöntapoja, että miten sitä edistää. Mutta se tiedostavuus on se yksi asia. Oisko se myös jotenkin järjestämisen muodossakin, että yrittää, jos on kokouksia, että on myös jotain ruokaa yleensä, ja pidetään taukoja ja jotenkin, että se ei ole liian raastavaa (naurahtaa), sellasia pieniä käytännön asioita.” (M)
41. ”Nyt on sillee että on myös, sitä me ollaan koitettu yhteisönä tehdä, että meillä on paljon ihmisiä, joilla on vaikka mielenterveysongelmataustaa ja tommosia, ja mä oon itsekin paniikkihäiriötä ja ahdistushäiriötä, helposti jos ottaa liikaa niin sitten vaan ei pysty (hymähtää), niin että koitetaan olla mahdollisimman suorita, että saa oikeasti sanoa jos ei pysty tai jos joku asia tuntuu isolta niin sitten vaan annetaan muualle tai jätetään tekemättä jos. Että tärkeämpää on se että ihmiset jaksaa elää omaa elämäänsä (naurahtaa) ja tehdä omat työnsä ja tollee.” (R)
42. “Men i mellan åt känns det också som att man bara har måsta jobba och man har inte ens hunnit tänka på, eller då när man är mitt i det där värsta.” (Alma).
43. “jag tycker också det är en viktig feministisk modell för att organisera sig, att ha en struktur, som inte behöver vara hierarkisk men att människor, att man kan dela på uppgifter och se till att saker blir gjorda så att det inte är så att alla gör vad dom vill när dom vill, för blir det jättetungt för vissa personer.” (B)
44. ”se oli aluksi tosi sekavaa, että sitten sen jälkeen me alettiin jakaa selkeitä rooleja, että parhaillaan meillä on joku joka seuraa sitä tunnelmaa ja päättää että nyt pidetään tauko ja alettiin puhua myös siitä että miten kokouksessa päätöksenteko tapahtuu” (MP)
45. “mera tal om kanske celler eller, vet du, olika grupper inom gruppen som har olika ansvarsområden som inte är så stora, så att en grupp ska klara av det man har ansvar för,



men så att det inte ska behöva finnas den här, kanske helhets, inte den här risken att sen när saker faller så faller det på en person, för det har inte funkat.” (Maria)

46. ”Ina: Sku du säga att det var det som var problemet här? En saknad av struktur eller arbetsfördelning?

Maria: Jo, precis, jag sku säga det och också förmågan att implementera strukturer kanske. För att vi försökte ju nog i början på varje år att göra en arbetsfördelning, men sen blev det kanske ändå lite så där att det blir upp till vem som kan just då, för att folk har sina andra liv och det är beroende på hur mycket man har tid och energi för just då, vilket jag tänker att det också ska få vara. Jag tycker ju nog att en sån typ av aktivitet ska kunna vara, man ska få ha för mycket (skrattar till) kanske för att kunna göra det man har lovat ibland och så. Men samtidigt så kan det heller inte, det måste ju också finnas nån form av commitment som man har gjort när man har gått med för just det här året, där man sku kunna lita på att 'ok, men då har du lovat ta dig tid för den här saken' (skrattar till). Att det tyckte jag kanske också var svårt att, man har väldigt stor förståelse för att folk sa att 'nu orkar jag inte, nu hinner jag inte, nu är jag sjuk', men den där förståelsen, att uttrycka sympati för en som måste säga att den inte orkade, den var väldigt stor, men förmågan att sen få folk att hoppa in och istället göra saker var inte alltid lika stor kanske (skrattar till).” (Maria)

47. “Ina: Du talade om platt hierarki och sen sa om strukturer, kan du lite säga nåt mer om den relationen? Innebär platt hierarki nån sorts strukturlöshet eller?

Maria: Nå det är väl det som jag tänker att det inte borde betyda men som det kanske ibland blir. För nej, jag tycker det där är en jättebra begreppsdefinition, för det är just där jag tänker att (funderar) att skon kanske klämmer. Jag tror ju på strukturer i det här fallet, men inte kanske just på en hierarki som sku handla om att folk sku ha olika, att folk sku kunna bestämma över andra (skrattar till) eller så där. Men att det nog sku finnas en tydlig arbetsfördelning ändå och tydlig, det tänker jag. Men jag tror problemet kanske är att platt hierarki lätt blir så där att 'ja ja, vi ser vem som gör vad, vi tar det sen, vi tar det från fall till fall' och sånt, vilket kanske inte är jätte hejsan.” (Maria)

48. “När man gör saker större finns det mera behov för mera strukturer och det kommer lätt in mera hierarkier och mera stress” (B).

49. ”Mun mielestä ainakin aiemmin [toimintatavat] on todellakin vastannut [feminististä järjestytymistapoja] ja se on ollut tosi semmosta yhdessä tekemistä ja tosi hauskaa ja että ollaan kuunneltu muita ja ollaan just isommalla porukalla tehty. Mutta nyt se ei ehkä, mä en ole vielä varma tästä meidän uudesta suunnasta, kun se tavallaan tuntuu sinänsä toimivan, että me ollaan saatu tosi paljon aikaan nyt, kun me ollaan koitettu järjestäytyä vähän eri tavalla. Ja eihän sinänsä, jos ajattelee että ei haluaisi kauhean hierarkkista tai että olisi joku 'johtoporras' tai semmosta, mutta eihän toisaalta, mutta onko se sitten huono asia että on projektivetäjät, niin ei, koska kyllähän pitää, tai mä siis mietin että onko se huono asia, mutta mä nyt rupesin miettiä että ei se välttämättä ole, koska sitten siinä on kumminkin joku järjestys siinä hommassa ja ne asiat tulee tehtyä, kun ne kuitenkin pitää tehdä, että ei se tavallaan delegoiminen ole huono asia tai että se on jonkun vastuulla, kunhan sillä ihmisellä ei ole semmosta jyräysvaltaa (hymähtää) niissä asioissa.” (R)

50. ”Kyl tää niinku tuntuu vähän semmoselta struglaamiselta sen hallinnollisuuden vähentämisen... Semmosen niinku et ei halua tehdä semmosii rakenteita jotka on vaan olemassa sen rakenteen vuoksi, vaan ne kaikki pitäis olla sit jotenkin perusteltuja, että jotta se ei kävisi liian raskaaksi myöskään. Mutta mä en tiedä sitten että onko ainut keino kokea se sitten jotenkin kantapäähän kautta (naurahtaa).” (MP)

51. ”Niin kai se on vaan sillee että se menee vähän aktiivisuuden mukaan, että totta kai siinä muodostuu aina jonkinlaisia hierarkioita sillee että jos joku tekee jonkun jutun, tai tiedetään että joku tyyppi osaa tehdä jonkun jutun niin sitten siltä kysytään, mutta niin sen kans pitäis toimia, tai niin kauan kuin ollaan jotenkin, ymmärretään niitä, tai että ne on näkyvillä...” (ML)
52. Ja tavallaan just siitä että miten, että jos vaan päätetään että meillä ei oo hierarkiaa niin ei, (naurahtaa) ei se tuu tapahtumaan itsestään. Siellä kuitenkin on olemassa se joku rakenne ja jos sitä ei puhuta ulos tai jotenkin puhuta tai ilmaista niin silloin se on enemmänkin tyranniaa kuin matalahierarkinen yhteisö. Mä oon huomannut että ne jotka käyttää enemmän aikaa ja joilla on enemmän aikaa perehtyä ja ottaa vastuita, niin niillä on samalla enemmän valtaa ja se on ihan ok, mutta siihen liittyen on ollut haasteita. Että näkee sen, ja että ne ihmiset joilla on sitä valtaa näkee että niillä on sitä valtaa, että se ei välttämättä oo itsestäänselvyys. Mutta musta tuntuu että me ollaan aika paljon viisastuttu ja ollaan saatu semmosia järkeviä toimintatapoja (MP)
53. ”sisäisesti ehkä tuntuu että päällimmäisenä tai isoimpana ehkä se että on pystynyt, tai että jengi on tullut yhteen, niin mun mielestä se on tosi iso juttu koska me ollaan tosi heterogeeninen porukka taustoiltaan ja. No iältään ei ehkä, mitä me ollaan, ehkä 20-35-vuotiaita että jotenkin toivoisi vielä varianssia, mutta tuntuu että se inklusiivisuus on ainakin jossain määrin toteutunut, tai että me ollaan matkalla siihen suuntaan.” (MP)
54. ”Mutta siis, tai kun mä sanoin että kun ihmisillä on erilaisia taustoja ja näin, niin kyllä siitä huolimatta me ollaan sillee rakenteellisesti aika homogeeninen lauma, tai sillee. Että me ollaan kolmekymppisiä valkoisia, ablebodied, cis-naisia. Että se meitä yhdistää. Tää muuten liittyy paljon siihen feminismiin, mistä me ollaan paljon puhuttu. Että tuleeko siitä joku semmonen että meidän pitäisi jotenkin edustaa feminismiä, koska ei me voida tehdä sitä, koska ei me voida, koska me ollaan niin kuitenkin samanlaisia. Tosi pieni otanta ihmisyydestä tai feminismistä.” (<3)
55. ”alettiin puhua myös siitä että miten kokouksessa päätöksenteko tapahtuu, että kaikilta on kysyttävä. Koska me huomattiin jossain vaiheessa että osa meistä on ihan tosi paljon ekstrovertimpiä kuin toiset ja sit tavallaan unohtu se että jotkut ei saa puheenvuoroja ellei niitä anneta niille. Niin sitten otettiin semmosien kierrosten tai kyselykierrosten käyttäminen ja se toteutuu melkein joka kokouksessa” (MP)
56. “En annan sak är att jag tycker att det ska vara viktigt att man ska kunna inte bara tala om, till exempel att vi ska vara intersektionella och tillgängliga, utan att man måste hela tiden då försöka faktiskt göra det, tänka på var man träffas, i vilken sorts utrymmen, tänka på kanske vilket språk som används.” (Maria)
57. ”Se on mun mielestä tärkeätä, että meillä on semmonen yhteisö mihin voi tulla myös ei suomea äidinkielenään puhuvat, mutta mä en tiedä että sekin toki sulkee ulos, että puhutaan englantia pääosin. Että tavallaan se elää siinä inklusiivisuuden ideaalimaailmassa” (MP)
58. ”että meidän pitäisi käydä just sen yhteisön kanssa, mikä yhteisö se sitten onkin, niin sen yhteisön kanssa keskustelua, että mitä me voitaisi tehdä eri tavalla ja mitä me voitaisi parantaa. Koska eihän sen pidä tulla meidän suusta.” (R)
59. ”Ja musta tuntuu että meidän pitää kuitenkin olla tavallaan valveutuneita, että me ei vaadita meidän yleisöä kertomaan meille mitä me tehdään vaan meidän pitää niinku tietää. Että just nyt ollaan paljon puhuttu esteettömyydestä ja meillä on aina ollut, aina ollaan mietitty esteettömyyttä niiden tilojen kannalta, mutta me ollaan ruvettu miettiä sitä vähän tarkemmin ja laajemmin, että mitä kaikkea se tarkoittaa, koska se tarkoittaa lopulta aika paljon erilaisia asioita. Sitä että ihmiset ei välttämättä aina jaksaa sanoa tai kysellä että onko

tää tila tätä vai tätä, että meidän pitäisi olla tiedostavampia ja sen suhteen että se inklusiivisuus toteutuu silläkin tasolla. Varmaan just semmonen niinku, meillä on se tieto ja ymmärrys mitä meidän kollektiivissa vähemmistöt tai ihmiset ylipäättään mitä ne on kokenut, ollaan pystytty rakentaa sitä kautta sitä. Mutta sitten, ei meillä oo kuitenkaan kaikkea mahdollista tietoa, että se vaatii vielä aikaa ja pohdintaa ja ehkä vielä jotain konsultaatiota jengiltä, että me saadaan palautetta.” (MP)

60. ”Varmaan vähän viidakkorumpujenkin kautta, noissa on usein se ongelma, että usein monet vähemmistöt on aika suljettuja, sulkeutuneita yhteisöjä, että ne ei välttämättä jaksa tai viitsi operoida hirveesti jossain muualla, niin sit, ehkä niiden piirissä on saattanut kulkeutua sitten jotain signaalia että tämmönen vois olla niinku jees, tai näin mä ainakin kuvittelisin, tää on mun spekulatiota. Ainakin toivoisi että se tapahtuisi jotenkin organisaation tavalla, että ihmiset itse näkis ja tulis semmonen fiilis että ’hei tää vois olla jees’. Mut myös se että selkeästi viestitään siitä että mitä tää nyt on.” (ML)
61. “Jag tänker nog att vänskap ändå på nåt sätt är en väg till det, också att skapa nya vänner genom andra, så att man får ett bredare nätverk av olika människor med olika utmaningar och så där. Annars blir det jättekonstruerat, att om man har en vänskapsgrupp som till exempel ordnar nånting, eller en forskningsgrupp eller nån sorts grupp och sen vill man ha några andra röster dit och då skickar man till någo nätverk eller grupper, nån (skrattar till) request att 'hej vi sku behöva såna här människor med', det tycker jag är jättekonstruerat och jag tänker att det sku vara nyttigt att ha dom mänskorna med från början, men det finns ingen början om man inte känner dom. Jag tänker att vägen till att börja skapa nåt sånt är att få mera bekanta med olika sorters erfarenheter. Och det är ett problem sen när man tittar på sina egna vänner som man har, eller alla har säkert inte det problemet, men en del har.” (B)
62. ”Niin, no mä varmaan itse sanoisin sillee, että, ja mikä jollain tavalla liittyy myös [meidän projektiin], niin itselle se feminismi näyttäytyy semmosena asiana, joka mahdollistaa jotenkin (mieltii) kaikille olemassaolon turvallisesti ja sillä tavalla, että voi toteuttaa ja ilmaista itseään just siitä lähtökohdasta käsin, mikä itselle tuntuu hyvältä ja oikealta [...]. Ja jotenkin ehkä se turvallisuus ja semmonen (mieltii) sen edistäminen ei pelkästään siinä, että, en tarkoita turvallisuudella pelkästään sitä, että ois joku väkivallan uhka, vaan myös ihan perustasolla jossain, että saa kehittää itseään, tehdä semmosia töitä mitä haluaa ja saa terveydenhuollon ja saa koulutustua, että se turvallisuus on tosi laaja käsite. Sit mä jotenkin näen, että se on ehkä kenties feminismin tärkein tehtävä luoda sitä ympäristöä semmoseksi että se olisi mahdollista kaikille taustasta ja mistä tahansa katsomatta.” (Sylvi)
63. “Nå, det borde också just vara ett tryggt och diskrimineringsfritt sammanhang. (funderar). Nå, där alla känner att dom kan vara sig själva och vara trygga att (funderar) uttrycka sig själv och inte vara (funderar) hmm.” (Alma)
64. ”Ehkä just sellanen turvallisemman tilan konseptiin kuuluu myös se, että tiedostetaan, että ihmisillä on erilaisia tarpeita, mitä pitää ottaa huomioon ja just tuntuu, että se semmonen fyysinen esteettömyys on yksi asia, mutta oikeastaan lopulta vaan yksi osa sitä. Että just on (mieltii), esimerkiksi sekin, että mihin aikaan jotkut tapaamiset on voi aika paljon vaikuttaa siihen, että jos on jotain hoivavastuita tai ketkä käy töissä ja ketkä ei, ja miten huomioida sellasta, just eri elämäntilanteita ja että on ylipäättään mahdollista ottaa osaa siihen toimintaan. Mun mielestä on myös tärkeää tietenkkin, että tapaamiset on mieluiten epäkaupallisissa tiloissa, mieluiten myös ikärajoittomissa tiloissa, esimerkiksi [yhdessä ryhmässä], meillä on ollut aika paljon myös, että tapahtumat olisi alkoholittomissa tiloissa, mikä mun mielestä aika hyvin on muistaakseni toteutunut.” (M)
65. “sekin on saattanut olla saavutettavuuskysymys, että kokeeko olonsa turvallisiksi siinä tilassa” (M).

66. “eller om vi håller på att planera nånting som nån inte känner sig bekväm med, till exempel något program för nån julfest eller nånting som sku innebära till exempel nån form av uppträdande som vissa tycker att är jätteroligt och andra tycker att det bara medför stress. Sådana saker har vi försökt komma, hitta nån sorts kompromisser som alla sku kunna känna sig bekväma med, men ändå också just så att dom som vill göra nånting, att dom också sku ha möjlighet att göra det. Alltså det har varit mycket sånt där, att försöka hitta kompromisser, att vi har nog blivit bättre på att tala öppet om var dom här gränserna går, eller hur vi kan göra det så kiva och tryggt som möjligt för alla.” (Alma)
67. ”ollaan me itse asiassa puhuttu turvallisesta tilasta sillee, että vaikka me ollaan tosi, on saatettu olla eri mieltä asioista, niin sit se niinku, se on tosi, vaikka se saattaa mennä tunteisiinkin se jos on eri, et on 'eiku näin' 'eiku näin', mutta sitten vaan että silti pitää uskaltaa sanoa jos on eri mieltä. Että joo, me puhuttiin kyllä tästä, että pitää, että se ei niinku, se on tosi ookoo olla eri mieltä, että sitten pitää vaan löytää se, että kukaan ei saa jäää sillee, että ei sanois jos on jotain mieltä.” (Minna)
68. ”Että luodaan sellasta tilaa missä ihmiset uskaltaa tehdä semmosta asiaa, jota ei välttämättä yhteiskunnallisesti niin paljon ajatella heidän tehtäväksi asiaksi.” (R)
69. ”Mutta ne on sit ollut enemmänkin jotain vertaisryhmätapaamisia, että muuten ei mun mielestä ollut nais erityistä tai esimerkiksi sellasta, että tila olisi järjestetty sen kannalta. Mutta en mä tiedä onko se (mieltii), tai mä muistan, että on pohdittu, että miten sen ilmaisee, jos haluaa, että joku on queereksklusiivinen, että miten sen sanoo. Joskus on käytetty jotain 'kaikki muut, paitsi cis-miehet', mutta sitten se on tosi negaation kautta (naurahtaa), että voisko sen muotoilla jotenkin toisin (hymähtää), jotenkin nais-queer-trans, mut sit tuntuu toisaalta, että siitä tulee tosi pitkää litaniaa. Toisaalta koen, että sillekin on tarpeensa, separatistisille tiloille, mutta että en ole itse oikein ollut järjestämässä ikinä, ja ehkä se ei ole kuulunut mulla siihen feministisen tilan muodostamiseen, että enemmänkin on ollut just se, että mieltii, että miten todetaan että se tila on, että se on queerystävällinen ja feministinen ja ei syrjintää sietävä (naurahtaa), että se jotenkin lois semmosen pohjan, että ketä sinne tilaan tulee, että sitten tarttis vähemmän vedota sellaseen identiteettipolitiikkaan, että ketä siellä tilassa saa olla.” (M.)

## Appendix 2: Interview structure

Lyhyt alustus tutkimuksesta ja haastattelusta

Onko teillä kysymyksiä?

*Yleiset / omat / varsinaiset kokemukset*

*OMAT* - Mihin ryhmään/ryhmiin kuulut(te)? Mitä aktivismia olet(te) tehneet?

- Ylipäättään, mutta erityisemmin feminististä
- Samaistutteko sanaan aktivismi

*OMAT* - Mitä feminismi tarkoittaa sinulle/teille?

*OMAT* - Kertokaa ryhmästä missä toimitte, minkälainen se on?

- Kuvaillkaa ryhmää
- Mitä te teette?
- Mitkä aiheet ovat tärkeitä?
- Miellättekö ryhmän toiminnan aktivismiksi?
- *YLEISET* - Miten ryhmässä määritellään feminismi?

*YLEISET* - Mitkä aiheet ovat näissä ryhmissä keskeisiä?

- Mitä feministisiä pyrkimyksiä teillä on ryhmässä?
- Mitä mieltä olette tästä? Oletteko samoilla linjoilla ryhmän kanssa? Onko teillä eriäviä ajatuksia näistä?

*YLEISET* - Miten teidän ryhmässä toimitaan?

- Keskustellaanko teidän ryhmässä siitä, miten te järjestäydytte?
- Käytännötasolla, miten toimitte yhdessä? (Kokoukset, viestittely, työnjako, uudet ihmiset jne.)

*OMAT* - Mitä te (henkilöt) ajattelette että on feministinen järjestäytyminen? Onko feministisiä tapoja toimia yhdessä?

*YLEISET* - Onko mielestänne ryhmässä samat näkemykset?

*KOKEMUKSET* - Järjestäytyykö ryhmä teidän mielestänne feministisesti?

- Onko ryhmässä keskusteltu siitä, miten järjestäytyään feministisesti?
- Onko feministinen järjestäytyminen ollut ryhmässä tavoite?
- Minkälaisia keskusteluja teillä on ollut? Miten nämä keskustelut tapahtuvat käytännössä?
- Koetteko, että omat ajatuksenne sopivat yhteen ryhmän toiminnan/yhteisen näkemyksen kanssa?
- Pystyttekö vaikuttamaan toimintatapoihin?

*KOKEMUKSET* - Jos ryhmässä puhutaan siitä, miten järjestäytyä ja olla enemmän feministisiä – käydäänkö läpi tai arvioidaanko siinä onnistumista?

- *OMAT* - Onnistutaanko mielestänne ryhmässä järjestäytymään feministisesti? (Jos tämä on pyrkimys)
- *YLEISET* - Onko ryhmässä teidän mielestä näkemystä siitä, onnistutaanko? → miten tästä puhutaan tai miten tämä ilmenee?

*KOKEMUKSET* - Voitteko kertoa esimerkkejä feministisestä järjestäytymisestä? – tässä ryhmässä tai muissa tilanteissa

*KOKEMUKSET* - Voitteko kertoa tilanteista, joissa feministinen aktivismi on tuntunut hyvältä?

- Miten silloin on toimittu?
- Oliko se feminististä toimintaa?

*KOKEMUKSET* - Voitteko kertoa tilanteista, kun feministinen aktivismi on tuntunut huonolta?

- Miksi?
- Käsiteltiinkö tätä ryhmässä?

*KOKEMUKSET* - Miten päätitte, vai päätittekö, että sinä osallistut?

*OMAT* - Jos ehtii ja jos relevanttia – miten akateeminen feminismi ja aktivismi liittyy toisiinsa jne

*LOPPU* - Onko jotain muuta, mitä haluaisitte vielä tuoda esiin mistä ei olla puhuttu?