CHRISTINA HANSEN

SOLIDARITY IN DIVERSITY

Activism as a Pathway of Migrant Emplacement
in Malmö

SOLIDARITY IN DIVERSITY

Dissertation series in
Migration, Urbanisation, and Societal Change

Doctoral dissertation in International Migration and Ethnic Relations
Department of Global Political Studies
Faculty of Culture and Society

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Malmö/Gothenburg, September 2019

Main activist groups featured in the thesis

Aktion mot deportation (Action Against Deportation):
<https://www.facebook.com/aktionmotdeportation/>

Allt åt alla (Everything for Everyone):
<https://alltatala.se/malmo>

Asylgruppen (The Asylum Group):
<http://asylgruppenimalmo.se/>

Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint, a social centre):
<http://www.kontrapunktmalmo.net>

Skåne mot rasism (Scania Against Racism):
<https://www.facebook.com/skanemotrasism/>

Glossary and abbreviations

AFA	Antifascist Action
Amalthea Bokkafé	A leftist bookshop and café in Möllevången
Autonomous	Activists involved in radical, left-wing, extra-parliamentarian groups
Autonomt motstånd	Autonomous Resistance: activist group that existed in Malmö (1997–2003) and important precursor to Allt åt alla, formed in 2009
Asylstafetten	The Asylum Relay: a recurrent pro-asylum march taking place every summer since 2013, starting from Malmö and goes to different, politically defined places (e.g. Stockholm, Almedalsveckan in Visby, Åstorp refugee detention centre)
COP 15	Conference of the Parties, 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen
COP 21	Conference of the Parties, 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris
‘Dublin’	‘Dublin’ refers to a person who applied for asylum in Sweden, but whose application was rejected by the Swedish Migration Board on the basis that the asylum seeker was already registered in another country in the European Union (EU). The Dublin Regulation states that every person seeking asylum should do so by filling in an application in the first country of arrival in the EU (which, for many migrants, are the countries in Southern and Eastern Europe); in 2014, minors were exempted from this rule

	(Regulation EU No 604/2013). Many people subject to the Dublin Regulation stay in Sweden undocumented for 18 months or more. After that period, ‘Dublins’ may seek asylum anew in Sweden
Ensamkommandes förbund	The Unaccompanied’s Association: a formal organisation made up <i>of</i> young refugees <i>for</i> young refugees. It was formed in May 2013 in Malmö and later spread to 17 other towns and cities in Sweden
ESF	European Social Forum
FARR	The Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups (Flyktinggruppernas Riksråd): an umbrella organisation for individuals and groups working to strengthen the right of asylum
<i>Fika</i>	‘A coffee and cake break’ together with colleagues, friends, or family
Flyktingfängelse	‘Refugee prison’: the official name for migrants’ and refugees’ detention centres in Swedish is <i>flyktingförvar</i> (refugee custody), <i>förvar</i> literally meaning ‘storage’. Activists use the term ‘refugee prison’ in order to inform the general public of how it resembles a prison and to not allow language to distort reality by calling it something different
Glassfabriken	Ice Cream Factory: an anarchist café in Möllevången (2001–2015)
G8	Group of Eight: the most powerful industrial nations (reformatted as G7, the Group of Seven, in 2014).
Knarkrondellen	The Drug Roundabout: the standard, popular name for a roundabout in Möllevången (which formally has no name)
Kämpa Malmö	An imperative meaning ‘Keep on fighting, Malmö’, literally translated as ‘Fight,

	Malmö': the main slogan and term used to describe the large-scale anti-nazi protests in 2014
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer
Mangla	A radical class struggle-oriented feminist group
Möllan	Popular name for Möllevången
Möllevångsgruppen	The Möllevången Group, formed in 1994: important predecessor to the Möllevången Festival and Kontrapunkt
Nassar	Slang term for <i>nazister</i> (nazis)
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
Nyanländas Röster	Newcomers' Voices: an activist group formed <i>by</i> and <i>for</i> newcomers in Malmö
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Punkväggen	The Punk Wall (sometimes called the Crust Wall) is the popular name for the north-eastern corner of the square Möllevångstorget, where punks used to hang out in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s
PUT	Permanent residence permit (<i>permanent uppehållstillstånd</i>)
REVA	Legally secure and efficient work for enforcing deportations (<i>Rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete</i>): a joint administrative project 2009–2014 between the Swedish police, the Prison and Probation Service, and the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket)
RWM	Refugees Welcome Malmö
Skåne/Scania	The southernmost county of Sweden, also called Skåne County in English

SDL	Swedish Defence League
SEK	Swedish Kronor
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
Sorgenfriläget	A Roma settlement in Malmö (2013–2015) located in Norra Sofielund, Malmö
SOU	Statens offentliga utredningar (‘State public reports’), reports appointed and convened by the Government of Sweden
SUF	The Anarchosyndicalist Youth Federation (Syndikalistiska Ungdomsförbundet)
SYLF	Support Your Local Feminist: a radical feminist group
Tältaktionen	The Tent Action: a protest camp lasting six weeks in spring 2014. It aimed to protest the deportation of four asylum seekers whose applications were rejected and to show solidarity with, and raise awareness of, other rejected asylum seekers in the same situation
<i>Vänner</i> /Friends	The non-homogenising term used to refer to people in precarious legal conditions connected to the activist scene: undocumented people, asylum seekers, and Roma migrants, whom the activists assist in different ways and create alliances with to forge joint struggles
Ung vänster	The Young Left of Sweden: the youth organisation of the Swedish Left Party
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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PREFACE

I moved to Malmö,² located in the southernmost part of Sweden, in 2004 to take an undergraduate course at the recently founded university as the first one in my family to acquire higher education. I moved from Båstad, a rural town with approximately 5,000 inhabitants located about an hour's drive north of Malmö. I had visited Malmö in my teens and while most of my friends from school moved to the two larger cities in Sweden—Stockholm and Gothenburg—or abroad to cities such as Copenhagen, London, and even Sydney to work, I found Malmö attractive for its grassroots political activities and international character, with residents from all over the world and stores with foreign foods to be found around the centrally located neighbourhood of Möllevången. I used to buy chickpeas and tahini when visiting the city and bring them home to Båstad where they went old in the fridge because I didn't know how to prepare them. After having lived in Malmö for more than ten years, hummous is now a natural part of my everyday food habits.

“Malmö was called Sweden's Chicago at the time”, as one of my schoolmates remembers Malmö's reputation in the 1990s, “a place that was kind of lawless”. However, despite the city's bad reputation, poverty, and high crime rates, most of my friends from school back in Båstad eventually moved to Malmö too. Everything they wanted in terms of education, leisure, and work opportunities—as

² As the third largest city in Sweden, Malmö has a population of 335,000 inhabitants, compared with Gothenburg's 566,000 and Stockholm's 950,000 (SCB 2018c), and is located in the country's southernmost county of Scania. Malmö is connected by the Øresund Bridge with Denmark's capital Copenhagen.

nurses, restaurant staff, or in the cultural sector—they found there despite its relatively small size and, importantly, living there was cheaper compared to Gothenburg and Stockholm.

Upon moving to Malmö, I immediately got to know people with Latin American backgrounds: political refugees, children of political refugees, and those who had moved to Malmö and Sweden only recently to live with their Swedish partners whom they had met in their home countries.³ These people constituted my first social network in Malmö and some of them became close friends. We had the Spanish language in common and an interest in politics and music. In fact, moving to Malmö meant regaining the Spanish that I had learnt fluently as a child—while growing up in Spain until the age of ten—but which I had lost during my teenage years due to not being able to practice it in the small town in which I then lived. It was the ‘non-Swedishness’ of Malmö that instantly made me like the city, even to feel ‘at home’ in a sense that I had never experienced in the various places and different countries that I had lived in while growing up. I moved into a studio (sublet, short-term contract) flat in Möllevången. Gradually, I became acquainted with the extra-parliamentarian political circles connected to the neighbourhood. Just living in the area made me somehow feel ‘political’. It was easy to ‘consume’ politics and be a participant (without being an activist) in the political activities taking place in the city and especially in the neighbourhood of Möllevången. I attended Kvinnocafét (the Women’s Café), which was arranged every other week in 2004 by a group of activists affiliated with The Möllevången Group,⁴ where we met over coffee and cakes to learn and talk about feminism.

Activists from other Swedish cities perceive Malmö as having a very distinct activist scene. One described it as more continental and polarised. “The left is more radical; it looks more like the activism in Denmark and Germany.” Another activist said that there is always something going on in Malmö compared to Stockholm;

³ It became quite common for Swedish middle-class youth born in the 1980s, after finishing high school, to travel abroad to study or work while ‘exploring the world’, some of whom attended Swedish left-wing oriented colleges (*folkhögskola*) located abroad.

⁴ Möllevångsgruppen (The Möllevången Group) was one of the first important groups of activists in Möllevången, formed at the beginning of the 1990s. See Chapter 3 for further description.

people hand out leaflets in the streets and “even the local hairdressers put up demo posters inside their windows saying ‘Anti-fascism is self-defence’”. A person who became an activist upon moving to Malmö, where she participated in a demonstration for the first time in her life, perceived the activism in Malmö as mainstream—meaning activism is conducted by ‘ordinary people’—and not as subcultural as in her city Umeå located in the north of Sweden.

Among local activists, Malmö is called ‘Kärlekens huvudstad’ (the Capital of Love), expressed repeatedly on social media and daily speech. ‘Love’ here means radical love as articulated through resistance against racism, sexism, and inequality. A similar and related expression circulating is ‘Motståndets huvudstad’ (the Capital of Resistance), referring to the activist scene in the city. A third nickname is Crime City (original use in English), due to its reputation as a crime-ridden city.⁵ We find many names for those we love.

Malmö is indeed a place with a reputation. It carries associations of an industrial past and contemporary social problems such as crime, poverty, and segregation. Activists perceive Malmö through the lens of Möllevången as the centre of their experiential knowledge of the city and through it, they bring in new associations, such as anti-racism, diversity, and a vivid political life. When talking about Malmö, many activists are actually talking about Möllevången. Activists are not only found in Möllevången, however. Through their activities in different parts of the city, the activists are trying to expand the space of Möllevången.

The activists I talked to have compared Möllevången to Nørrebro in Copenhagen, Kreuzberg in Berlin, and even Exarcheia in Athens—iconic neighbourhoods characterised by a central location in their respective cities, affordable housing, ethnically diverse populations consisting largely of low-income households, the presence of anti-racist and pro-asylum activism, and a high percentage of leftist voters in local and national elections. With a population

⁵ The nickname Crime City is related to the national and international image of Malmö as rough. The local roller-derby team Crime City Rollers was founded in 2010 and a film was made about them in 2013: *Crime City Love* (Levin 2013).

of just over 300,000, it is safe to say that Malmö hosts one of the most, if not *the* most, vibrant and visible activist scenes in Sweden today.

But Möllevången is a complex space with a number of interacting and paradoxical currents and multiple stories are told of the place. Focusing on political struggles that arise in the context of such conditions, which can be thought of as an incubator for resistance, this thesis reveals frictions within the activist scene and Möllevången. The chapters that follow show how creating a political space may contribute to gentrification; how solidarity-based activities (i.e. activities based on horizontality that strive towards equality) may cover up and even reproduce relations of inequality; and how the construction of Möllevången as ‘anti-racist’ may prevent the revelation of the extensive unregulated labour force and the fact that abuse of racialised migrants occurs in the neighbourhood. Notwithstanding the specificities of Möllevången, the conflicts in the neighbourhood reach far beyond the place itself and its perceived boundaries and indeed the city of Malmö itself. These conflicts and contradictions are indicative of what is happening in many parts of Europe.

The voices that come forward in this thesis are only a few out of many politically engaged people living in and around Möllevången. I know I miss out on stories that would be worthwhile telling. My ambition was never to write an exhaustive story of activism in Möllevången, however. Drawing on a representative sample of activists, I want to convey the experiences of activism in Malmö and Möllevången that tell us something beyond the very place: how the particularities of a certain city, and even of a certain local neighbourhood, affected by global processes of restructuring, dispossession, and migration, have enabled this kind of activism. Activism helped me to trace the global processes that affect Malmö and to explain the ways in which the particular, historically embedded, local, socio-political dynamics are crucial for understanding the local responses to these processes. The specific activist groups featured in this thesis were selected for being those that, during my fieldwork, affected the most people through their large mobilisations involving citizens from the general public and solidarity-

based work involving people in precarious legal conditions. However, as contradictory as it may seem, this kind of activism is increasingly becoming incorporated into the cultural diversity that constitutes the attractiveness of the city in the context of neoliberal economic changes.

The activist scene in and around Möllevången is diverse in terms of lifestyles, age, and backgrounds even within one and the same activist group. Although all my research participants would regard themselves as left-wing in the broadest sense, their political viewpoints, concepts, theories, and practices differ widely. There are students, the unemployed, the self-employed, white- and blue-collar workers, PhD students, and academics, who live in flat-shares, rented single flats, and tenant-owned flats. Their financial situations vary, ranging from some who rely on benefits to others—the majority of the activists I met during my fieldwork—who are clearly located in the middle class.⁶ There are vegans, vegetarians, and meat-eaters and, as far as subcultural fashion is concerned, there are hipsters, punks, anti-brand hippies, but also the anti-hippie subgroup that wears mainstream clothing such as Adidas as well as those who don't care what they wear. Amidst this variation, one important link between them all is Möllevången, which, as a place, enables productive relationships and alliances.

These activists are utterly frustrated by the vast and growing disparities in the world—as of 2017, eight people (all men) own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world's inhabitants (Oxfam 2017)—and therefore desire a socially just and radically democratic society. Activists in Malmö attempt to find ways to build concrete, practical links between disparate struggles, and to engage in the extremely difficult task of dealing directly with the divisions and inequalities that exist among social groups, such as between white Swedish citizens and racialised Swedish citizens, or between Swedish citizens on the one hand, and asylum

⁶ 'Middle class' is a vague term and commonly used to refer to the broad group of people who are socio-economically located between the working class and the upper class. The definition of the term is highly contested and it is defined differently depending on the political interests of those (e.g., economists) who define it. Some narrower definitions focus on income, profession, or lifestyle. What is termed middle class in common usage is what many leftist oriented activists would identify as the working class.

seekers, undocumented migrants, and Roma migrants on the other. Issues such as economic injustice, racism, and sexism are fundamental concerns for the activists featured in this thesis. They question the neoliberal ethics of individualism and personal responsibility for one's own disposessions, and instead point at how political-economic structures constrain the lives of individuals.

The political space of Möllevången has supported emergent activists. Rather than hiding, some migrants under threat of deportation or eviction have publicly claimed their rights to inhabit the city too, through assertive and sometimes disruptive collective actions in Malmö, such as occupations, sit-ins, and blockades. However, these actions would not have been possible without the already established network of local activists who support and enable the resource-poor people to concert their oppression into collective political actions. Formerly undocumented migrants have become prominent activists in Malmö and have formed their own organisations, which adds a new dimension to the activist scene.

Explaining how activism in Malmö contributes to the social and spatial emplacement of people with different social, economic, educational and migrant backgrounds, and how it creates space for shared experiences and solidarities, is one of the main theoretical points of this thesis. Additionally, I wish to offer an understanding of the particularities of the city while also illuminating the links to other cities. In other words, I wish to contribute to new ways of theorising solidarities born on the ground in an urban context marked by immigration and economic restructuring.

No study in a single place or city can ever prove a point but can offer suggestions for new ways of conceptualising, theorising, and categorising. Things keep changing: Swedish migration policies may have changed by the time this thesis is published, some of the activists might exit the activist scene, new ones might enter, different conflicts and alliances might emerge, and Möllevången might become a much more gentrified urban place under more surveillance than it was at the time of my fieldwork. However, ethnography allows for showing, in detail, the multiple interconnections between migration, dispossession, and urban restructuring as they emerged at a particular time and in a particular, historically

shaped, local setting. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and conversations with a number of activists, this thesis provides sound empirical groundwork for exemplifying and explaining those interconnections. It thereby contributes to scholarship pertaining to migration, urban studies, and social movements occurring in times of global economic restructuring.

The activists pose provoking questions: how did we end up here—to the state in which people who have fled from war and are in need of help are being sent back to their war-torn homelands? Why are there such high rents in certain urban areas of Sweden/Malmö/Möllevången that only relatively wealthy people can afford? Why does the city build tenant-owned flats that only a few people can afford to buy? Why are neo-nazis,⁷ who wish to abolish democracy and create a nation based on ethnicity and culture, allowed to march in the streets? Scholars, journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and others ask these questions too, but the activists act upon them, and they do so collectively and bodily in the streets and in direct contact with people living in precarious conditions. This thesis is about those actions, about bodily strategies, solidarity, political socialisation, and the friendships that are built and enabled, in large part, through storytelling about a place—the Möllevången neighbourhood in Malmö as an ‘anti-racist zone’—shared by people who come from near and far and are in different situations and have different needs.

⁷ In this thesis I do not capitalise neo-nazis, nazis, or nazism unless the words refer to the historical form pertaining to Germany 1933–1945.

Figure 1. Möllevången by cartoonist Nanna Johansson.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns the interaction between place, power, and resistance by addressing two major interrelated issues: how collective actions and spaces of solidarity are created and enacted in Malmö and how they impact the place (Malmö/Möllevången) and social relations (between activists as well as between activists and non-activists). I explore these issues by analysing a particular political practice—activism as carried out by the extra-parliamentarian left—based on ethnographic material collected 2013–2016 in Malmö, Sweden. A decisive aspect of the context of the collective actions—people joining together for a common cause—that is being studied is the particularity of the city of Malmö, a city with a high density and diversity of activist groups. Their actions are concentrated mainly within the Möllevången neighbourhood, which, in the period of its transition from industrial to financial capitalism (neoliberalism) and due to its central location and affordable housing, has attracted politically engaged people to live there.

Two important sources of urban social change are of particular interest when studying political activism in Malmö: migration (both internal and international) and neoliberal restructuring. The changing patterns of urban restructuring (gentrification and segregation), migration (labour-related and refugees), and the privatisation of the commons have resulted in new forms of activism born on the ground. With the understanding that neoliberalism produces “new battle zones around privatisation, retrenchment and social polarisation” (Mayer 2006, 204), I analyse the trajectories of power as they emerge at a particular time in the form of activists’ collective actions of resistance and solidarity, many of them (but not

all) in the particular urban location of Möllevången. The term ‘action’, short for ‘direct action’ or ‘collective action’, which is the term I mainly use in this thesis, is used by activists for undertakings varying widely in scale and means as well as in principles, purposes, and implications. It can be used “for anything from leafleting in front of a supermarket to shutting down a global summit” (Graeber 2009, 359).⁸ These actions are not isolated instances of disobedience, but rather “clues to underlying structures and relationships which are not observable other than through the particular phenomena or events that they produce” (Wainwright 1994, 7).

The activist groups presented in this thesis (see also Chapter 1), I claim, open up spaces for counter-hegemonic politics and ‘emplacement’, which is the social process through which an individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015). They are: Aktion mot deportation (Action Against Deportation); Förbundet Allt åt alla (The confederation Everything for Everyone, hereafter called Allt åt alla); Asylgruppen (The Asylum Group); Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint, a social centre); and Skåne mot rasism (Scania⁹ Against Racism). Their activism concerns migrants’ and asylum seekers’ rights, anti-deportation, anti-racism, anti-fascism, and ‘right-to-the-city’ struggles (e.g., against gentrification and welfare retrenchment), which they address with strategies ranging from solidarity-based work and advocacy to more radical forms of direct action like blockades and sit-ins. These different strands of struggle are interrelated not only through the individuals and groups of activists who participate and build alliances across these struggles, but structurally: the different struggles emerge as reactions to, and at the intersections of, racism, commercialisation, and restrictive migration policies. They form part of a larger network of leftist, extra-parliamentarian activists that strives towards urban and social equality in Malmö, other cities in Sweden, as well as abroad. Even though the activist groups listed

⁸ In daily usage, it refers to any collective undertaking that has political aims and is carried out with the awareness that it might be met with hostile intervention on the part of the police or other antagonists (Graeber 2009, 359).

⁹ Scania is the southernmost county of Sweden, also called Skåne County in English.

above differ in many ways, they are analysed as part of the same vivid activist scene in the city—as part of the same ‘alternative milieu’ (for a review of the term see Longhurst 2013)—associated with Möllevången.¹⁰ My inclusion of different groups is, however, not intended to cover up the dividing lines that also exist. In the empirical chapters, I examine the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts that emerge in their processes of ‘commoning’, which are based on practices of building common spaces, interests, and experiences (Dawney 2013).

All activists in this thesis have a connection to Möllevången (popularly called Möllan): an inner-city, socially mixed, gentrifying neighbourhood in Malmö (see Figure 1). They either live or have lived there, or it is the place where they spend much of their daily and activist lives. The neighbourhood is known for its high presence of activists but also of migrants of different origins and with different migration trajectories and times of arrival in Malmö or to Sweden. These characteristics are used in the city’s narrative to attract residents, tourists, and investments.

An important understanding of place in this thesis, beyond its actual physical dimensions, is that *places* are social constructs; they are interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined (Soja 1996). Places are imbued with meaning as well as power, which is important in activism. Activists often seek to strategically manipulate, subvert, and signify the places, practices, and narratives they are contesting, to defend places that stand for their practices and narratives, and to produce new spaces where such visions can be practiced, both within that place and beyond (Leitner,

¹⁰ While my focus is on activities carried out by the above-mentioned groups, it is important to acknowledge that there are many other initiatives that in a variety of ways resist and contest the effects of neoliberalism, racism, and the enforcement of national borders, including detained migrants in detention centres on hunger strikes; doctors who treat patients in hospitals irrespective of their legal status; children in schools who, together with their parents and teachers, protest the deportation of classmates; alternative media that engage in promoting non-neoliberal forms of knowledge; worker cooperatives; artists; and university-civil society partnerships. There is also NGO-based activism. However, these fall outside the scope of this study. This thesis engages with resistances made by members of, or in the name of, political groups within the extra-parliamentarian left whose principal aims are precisely to enact resistance outside of formal institutions and state structures by using methods of direct action and civil disobedience. I see an important distinction between formal organisations and non-institutional, grassroots, and confrontational forms of mobilisation (Juris and Khasnabish 2013, 16).

Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008). Möllevången is a product of various and sometimes conflicting narratives. The concept of narrative, or story, allows one to explain how different people can give the same object different meanings.

This thesis is informed by Doreen Massey's (1995; 2005) understanding of place. She argues for thinking of geographical places as temporal and not just spatial, or as set in time as well as in space. History is thus important for a better understanding of an urban place. Stories that are being told and retold about Möllevången in the past and present have influenced the construction of that place. Two historical interpretations are competing: one understands Möllevången to be a slum, as dangerous and thus horrible, and another perceives Möllevången as wonderful and fantastic, always inclusive. The claims on its present character depend on "particular, rival, interpretations of its past" (Massey 1995, 185). A narrative of Möllevången that is gaining ground today is as an 'anti-racist' place or as representing the politically left 'red zone' of the city. The stories people tell of Möllevången as 'red' (the colour traditionally associated with socialism) help generate strong relations among activists, which are needed in order to facilitate mobilisation, which is the process by which people assemble and prepare for a joint political action. These articulations further attract not only activists and leftist-oriented people in general to the neighbourhood but also asylum seekers, especially if their application has been rejected and they travel to Möllevången to seek support from pro-asylum activists. Also, Roma migrants who hold citizenship in another EU (predominantly Eastern European) country are attracted to beg here for a living due to its favourable conditions, including the presence of amiable people who defend them if attacked by passers-by.

Massey (2005) further sees place as a clash of trajectories: a 'throwntogetherness'. Möllevången is constructed out of multiple social relations and trajectories—the baker, the shopkeeper, the resident, the activist, the landlord, the undocumented migrant, the tourist, the fieldworker, and the underpaid labour migrant—a multiplicity of relations that is constitutive of its space. If time is the dimension in which things happen one after another and hence

change, space is the (social) dimension of multiplicity and simultaneity. All these relations are marked by power and thus Möllevången is also a geography of power, and the distribution of those relations mirrors the power relations we have within society. Space is indeed political because power is distributed unequally (Massey 2013). Some places have power over others (such as London over Malmö) and some groups over others (citizens over non-citizens, rich over poor).

‘Space’, as used here, does not refer to physical space, although there may be physical manifestations of it. Rather, space is an abstract place that is socially and structurally produced (Lefebvre 1991). Beyond being a geographical place and a product of storytelling, Möllevången is a space that has a meaning that is not limited to the actual boundaries of the neighbourhood. In this thesis, I will show how Möllevången emerges as an idea of a better place.

The city of Malmö is the entry point for studying how place and space are created through activism that challenges and reconstitutes particular power relations. Drawing on Massey’s (1994) relational and global view of place, I further understand Möllevången, just as any other place, as a product of social relations that stretches far beyond its geographical borders. I will show how Möllevången is not only a ‘neighbourhood’ in the sense of a delineated place on a map, but also a network of social relations and friends in the city who identify with the idea and the place of Möllevången. However, Möllevången is not just ‘any place’ but an important one in Sweden today due to its rich and supportive activist environment. It is the unique constellation of trajectories that produces particular places and spaces, and, as I have suggested, the activists’ presence in Möllevången plays a central role in this neighbourhood’s particularity. Many activists moved to Malmö because, as many have said, “no other city has a Möllan”. It is a city in which they can be politically active within a supportive milieu in the way they desire. Taking the definition of the political *space* of Möllevången as a product of interrelations, it becomes clear that “space matters” (Massey 2005). This particular space is not to be seen as a ‘container’ of activism but as a process that produces relationships and networks (including the processes that produce gender, ‘race’, and

class identities). While places may be designated as private or public and have different symbolic values expressed in terms of dangerous, festive, trendy, politically charged, etc., spaces are gendered, raced, and classed (Sewell 2001, 64). In line with Anthony Giddens's (1984) understanding of social structures as 'dual', space shapes people's actions, but it is also people's actions that constitute and reproduce space. Certain spaces can put constraints on people's actions, but spaces may also enable actions.

If Malmö and Möllevången, then, are understood as ever-shifting constellations of trajectories, it is in this disorder of 'throwntogetherness' that the possibility of political action opens. Since place is open, relational, unfinished, and always under construction, it is possible to create alternative imaginaries of the place, to create new spaces, and to challenge the accepted givens of, for example, free market- and state-oriented social relations and formulate disruptive political questions. "It is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics" (Massey 2005, 15). The organisation and production of space—for example, who is allowed access to the place and who has power over it (Valentine 2017), who is meant to feel at home there (Ahmed 2007), how long one must be there to become a local—can be challenged and changed.

In the theoretical chapter (Chapter 1), I provide a discussion in which the spatial perspectives of activism and politics are clarified. My take on both space and place in this thesis, in simple terms, is that they are not about physical locality as much as about relations between people, which makes them political. As will become clear in the empirical chapters, Möllevången takes the form of a social network stretched out across the whole city and beyond rather than of a 'neighbourhood' in the geographically material and bounded sense. This network of social relation was discerned by using ethnographic methods, which are described in Chapter 2.

The political space of Möllevången, explored in Chapter 3, is defined by the density of activists, activist spaces (cafés, social centres, bookshops, etc.), and frequent mobilisations in public spaces, which, together with the stories told about the place, enable and facilitate the transformation of people's displacement and dispos-

session into collective actions. Möllevången further constitutes an efficient platform for forging ‘politicised collective identities’ (Simon and Klandermans 2001): ‘us’ (the dispossessed) against ‘them’ (representatives of dispossessive forces, such as politicians, corporations, institutions, and the state). This ‘us’ created by activists depends on each particular struggle, i.e. the collective effort to address a political issue. It can be ‘us’ as referring to everyone who makes up the social fabric of the place: residents, workers, as well as Roma migrants, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants who, with different needs, all claim access to Malmö. However, a more totalising and homogenising ‘us’ is created when referring to the ‘agents of change’ in Möllevången, who are ‘the activists’ and are examined in Chapter 4.

Two central claims are made in this thesis: that (1) activism in Malmö has generated alliances and friendships that cross social, cultural, and ethnic divides; and (2) these relationships constitute an important resource for not only resisting material, emotional, and aspirational dispossessions, but also for enabling resource-poor people to transform their dispossession into large-scale mobilisations. The relational opportunities of Möllevången have even enabled the formation of a new generation of formerly undocumented migrants to become activists and form their own organisations. In other words, the political space of Möllevången provides the resources and relational opportunities that can support emergent activists (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 8). Established activist groups have supported the creation of new activist groups: migrants with precarious legal status have formed their own organisations (e.g. Ensamkommandes Förbund and Nyanländas Röster, see Glossary) and taken action to assert their rights to be in the city (e.g. Tältaktionen, Asylstafetten, and a 24-hour sit-in outside the Swedish Migration Agency in Malmö). Some of these struggles unfold at the regional and national scale: for example, the recurrent pro-asylum march Asylstafetten, which took place every summer 2013–2018. The first march, in 2013, lasted for 34 days. The participants marched 750 kilometres from Malmö to Stockholm calling for asylum seekers’ rights (Joorman 2018). However, this thesis does not focus on these new groups and the direct action they take,

but on the established groups that I claim have enabled the formation of the new ones.

I am not studying a neighbourhood or city as such but rather using them as points of entry for better understanding how activists create a place through their activities and how the place generates activism. The activists' political practices play an important role in the making and remaking of Möllevången, which is a place that has been made and remade through historical forms of activism, class struggle, and working-class identity. I therefore approach activism in this thesis as a 'city-making practice' (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). Despite the fundamentally different conditions met by a refugee or a Roma migrant in contrast to a Swedish citizen, they are all nevertheless co-creating the city through the building of social relationships by engaging in solidarity and by protesting against their own and others' dispossession. Solidarity here means a relationship forged between actors in unequal power relations that aims towards a more equal order.

My research shows that activist sociabilities in Malmö, established by people who, despite their differences, construct locally embedded solidarities and shared experiences and narratives, enable the transformation of dispossession into political struggle against the growing disparities and displacements of global capitalism. My research includes the experiences and views of people in relative positions of power (economic, cultural, legal, and social) who inhabit the same city that was founded on the exploitation of the many by the few (Harvey 1976). Hence, activists and residents in more privileged positions (middle-class, citizenship) also experience dispossession. Activists experience dispossessive processes within a concrete setting, "not as the end result of large and abstract processes", but rather "it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger" (Piven and Cloward 1977, 20–21). The precarity effected by neoliberalism is not confined to those at the bottom of the class structure, since the antagonism between capital and labour is no longer concentrated in specific places of work, but traverses the whole of society (Tyler 2015). This thesis thus reveals how people of different back-

grounds and positions are affected, albeit in different ways and to different extents, by ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey 2004) and how they come together and take action against their own and others’ dispossession.

The processes of dispossession produce various forms of physical and social displacement, including border-crossing migration (precipitated by war, so-called development, structural adjustment, impoverishment, and environmental degradation) as well as unemployment, part-time employment, lower wage rates, loss of employment security, forced relocation, and downward social mobility (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015). Many of the activists I talked to are middle class and thus economically privileged in relation to working-class activists and residents. Furthermore, most activists are Swedish citizens, thus clearly privileged in comparison to residents and activists in precarious legal conditions. However, even Swedish activists (with citizenship) experience and are affected by the changes in Möllevången as well as by the marketisation of housing, labour, and healthcare, although they are usually even more concerned with and affected by the dispossession of people more vulnerable than themselves. I use displacement and dispossession (terms further discussed in Chapter 1) to refer to the unpredictability and precarity brought about by neoliberal restructuring and migration policies. I also use dispossession to refer to the emotional and aspirational yearning to foster collective interests and collective ways of being in the ‘post-political condition’, meaning here a condition in which individualism, self-interest, and competition are assumed to be the guiding principles in people’s lives.

While the city is the entry point for studying how place and space are created through activism, activism is my entry point for studying social relations. As a social phenomenon and a process that changes social relations, activism can reveal how various identity markers (such as class, gender, sexuality, ideology, generation, ethnicity, and disabilities) interplay in the creation of ‘us’. The collectivities based on such markers are of different scales and constantly in flux, meaning that these collectivities encompass all kinds of empirical phenomena: from formal belonging and identification with a particular local activist group to the perceived collectivities

that my interviewees see themselves as being affiliated with, such as ‘no border global citizen’, ‘the working-class’, ‘precariat’, ‘anti-fascists’, or ‘feminists’. This thesis is an exploration of the relational impacts of this kind of activism in Malmö, and how space is created through concerted action. ‘Space’ enables me to better understand social relations and the people who access and appropriate place. Particular attention is paid to how activism enables social relationships and even close friendships across the divides of class, ethnicity, legal status, and gender and between Swedish citizens and people with a precarious legal status, such as undocumented migrants or Roma migrants who hold citizenship in another European country. Even though a lot of activism takes place online, urban space is nevertheless crucial for the forging of these relations.

Before elaborating on the aim and research questions of this thesis, I want to make a few remarks on the networks of power within which the activist groups operate. As noted above, all relationships are fundamentally spatial. No space is without power and hence no relationship is either. Space matters precisely because it is relational (Miller 2013). To adopt a multiscalar analysis, which is my intention in this thesis, means to situate activists within various networks of power. I cannot study activism as a bounded phenomenon but must trace the network of relations that the political groups and activists have with other activist groups, institutions, discourses, media, state institutions, etc. The surrounding conditions of a protest event or activist group are crucial for its occurrence or existence in the form it eventually takes. I intend to make those interdependencies explicit in my explanations, and they are mainly illustrated in the form of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts.

As elaborated in the empirical chapters, the activist groups are located in power hierarchies with one another. Each group’s position of power and influence varies depending on the issue, place, and time of struggle. All collective actions involve “ongoing tensions between building and breaking relationships” (Miller 2013, 293). What I want to underline here is each group’s dialectical relationship to the others, as well as to other groups and institutions in society (anti-immigrant groups, the media, the general public, po-

litical parties, NGOs, state institutions, corporations, local governments, etc). Hence, there are different ‘scales’, or ‘spatialities’, of power in which activist groups act. And these relations are dependent on time and place and reshaped through struggle. Therefore, activist groups continuously reshape scalar relations.

Aim and research questions

The overarching aim of this thesis is to explore how activists’ aspirations for a more equal society were practiced in Malmö, particularly in the neighbourhood of Möllevången, during 2013 to 2016. I analyse activism as a place-making practice that opens new spaces of politics and pathways of emplacement. As an ethnographer studying activism, I aim to analyse the locally embedded emergence of social relations, values, and categories while teasing out the activists’ tacit, underlying assumptions concerning their activities and subject positions as well as the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts found within this specific socio-political practice. As a migration scholar, I aim to identify how activism impacts social relations between different people in hierarchies of power in an urban context that is affected by global patterns of (labour and refugee) migration and neoliberal restructuring. This thesis is an exploration of activists’ *doing* in both a discursive and a bodily sense. ‘Bodily’ indicates what is revealed in a place in the form of collective actions or solidarity, and ‘discursive’ indicates the ways in which activists talk about the issues and people they address.

My approach to Möllevången is based on the understanding that no place is bounded since every place is connected to multiple places (Massey 1995). The local is multiscalar; the global is always ‘here’. Understanding place as multiscalar means defining locality as processes of the mutual constitution of the local, regional, national, and global through time (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2015). Places have some type of territorially based system of governmental authority, yet are relationally constituted within multiple, intersecting trajectories of power (ibid.). To focus on a socio-political practice (activism) in a certain neighbourhood thus requires the consideration of regional development, capitalist processes of accumulation on a global scale, migration patterns, and urban restructuring

at the same time. I therefore understand the city, Malmö, as an entry-point and not as a bounded unit (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011) in order to trace and document processes of restructuring, dispossession, migration, and emplacement by looking at activism. Hence, my entry point for studying inequalities and their contestations through activism is twofold: (a) the place, Malmö/Möllevången; and (b) the processes of activism, which are local struggles that travel beyond the borders of Malmö. This thesis therefore poses questions that address the interconnected fields of urban restructuring, dispossession, and activism.

The overarching question guiding this thesis is: How is solidarity created and enacted in Malmö by left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activists and with what impacts? The more detailed questions asked are:

1. How is activism in Malmö linked to economic and urban restructuring, migration, and inequality?
2. How is activism facilitated by, and how does it affect, the place in which it occurs?
3. What challenges do the activists face in their attempts of formulating common interests and creating common spaces?
4. What are the effects of left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activism in Malmö on a larger societal scale?

An ethnography of activism is a powerful resource for exploring activism in a particular place and its connection to larger structures of economy and migrations. I make use of theories on how structures impact and engender activism while also recognising the activists' agency and their capacity to create and recreate space. This study provides interpretations of social settings, events, and processes by considering the meanings that the activists involved have given to them (Vidali 2014).

As this thesis explores the locally embedded emergence of social relations and the processes that enabled them, ethnographic meth-

ods have been central (presented in Chapter 2), mainly involving participant observation complemented by in-depth interviews with a number of core activists and numerous informal conversations with politically (formerly and currently) engaged people. Also, although to a lesser extent, I have explored how the activists and their actions in the public space are perceived by a range of non-activist actors against the background of a shared urban space and in relation to place-making and the representation of place, from urban redevelopers to local residents. This has contributed to my ability to answer the research questions on activism's impact on place.

I have strived to take seriously the experiences of the people who are featured in this study—some of whom I lived with, were my neighbours, or were people I met on the ‘barricades’—by linking these people's daily struggles, frustrations, and aspirations to global processes of accumulation and dispossession (Koch 2018). One important tension that this thesis reveals is the one between political aspirations for the future and the demands of the present (ibid.). For example, while the activists strive towards a classless society without borders, they often find themselves engaged in short-term and short-lived direct-action at the expense of building alternative structures or in the never-ending task of relieving precarious people's everyday needs, which is exhausting and may obstruct political work on a long-term basis.

As this thesis is in major part ethnographic, it includes a number of lengthy descriptions of events and places, the sort of ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1973) that convey a deep understanding of an experience. I have made use of many different empirical examples (activist encounters, meetings, collective actions, individual acts of disobedience, online mobilisations, etc.), which are, however, by no means a comprehensive set of examples and are not intended to be representative either; they should rather be seen as illustrative of my arguments. I have also made use of photographs¹¹ to complement the textual descriptions, but they should not be seen purely as illustrations of the written text. The selection of photographs I

¹¹ The photographs in this thesis have been taken by me, Jonathan Pye, Victor Pressfeldt, and Lars Brundin.

have made is based on their ability to contribute to a deeper understanding of the places, events, and the people involved.

The main theories that underpin the empirical chapters draw on Jacques Rancière's (1999; 2001; 2010) thoughts on 'the police' and 'the political', which give attention to the relationship between space and power and resistance and the status quo, and Hannah Arendt's (1998) 'politics of presence' and joint action. Their understanding of what constitutes politics, similar to more recent theorists such as Simon Critchley (2007) and David Graeber (2009; 2013), concerns spatial practices that are disruptive and prefigurative. In other words, these practices open up spaces for counter-hegemonic politics. David Featherstone (2012), a geographer inspired by Doreen Massey's (2005) understanding of space, conceptualises solidarity as a relation forged through political struggle that seeks to challenge forms of oppression. This understanding is useful for my analysis of activism's impact on social relations in which I focus on the processes by which activists enter collaborations and alliances with others in unequal power relations, and how, through joint action, they negotiate differences in positions, identities, and histories and create new ways of relating. I am particularly interested in the kinds of relations that are generated through collective action and embodied solidarity when it comes to activists of migrant and non-migrant origin and between activists with citizenship and people in precarious legal conditions as well as the political trajectories that emerge from these relations.

This thesis' findings highlight strategies of resisting one's own and others' dispossession and displacement, strategies that I conceptualise as 'commoning' (Cumbers 2015; Dawney 2013; De Angelis 2010)—the processes and practices by which common spaces, interests, and experiences are created—based on the principles of solidarity (Scholtz 2008; Featherstone 2012; Stjernø 2018). Solidarity and commoning are two concepts by which the characteristics and effects of activism are explained. The creation of spaces, interests, and experiences in common with others and of solidarity in a place (in a certain space, in a certain time) are simultaneously strategies and results. Looking into what is achieved in the here and now from a prefigurative perspective, we see that activists suc-

ceed in approaching the conditions of equality within the spaces they open in the city. According to Doreen Massey, such spaces are what we need a lot more of: space “that brings us together to talk and to argue about the kind of future world we want” (Massey 2013). Mainstream and social media then amplifies and expands the political space of collective action. Solidarity and commoning, I claim, contribute to the resistance against not only material dispossession wrought by neoliberal restructuring (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009), but also the emotional and aspirational dispossession caused by hegemonic principles of individualism and competition (T. Sager 2015; Leitner et al. 2007; Brown 2015) and the ‘post-political’ condition that denies the antagonism between the Right and the Left (Mouffe 2005; Rancière 2004; Žižek 1999; Swyngedouw 2009).

My findings not only contribute to a better understanding of the link between economic and urban restructuring, migration, inequality, and activism, but also help to comprehend the ethnographic dimensions of activism, such as the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts that the activists deal with as political agents acting against hegemonic processes. By examining the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts, I intend to de-romanticise activism by showing how it is a contentious and demanding process for those involved. I further show that migrants in precarious legal conditions are not passive, oppressed victims, but are highly aware of their circumstances and use the activists’ resources in ways that benefit themselves and their peers. Migrants in precarious legal conditions participate in activism by negotiating and engaging in the processes on their own terms and for their own gains, which reveals their agency in structures of inequality.

With the research questions in mind, I now turn to discuss the important ethical, conceptual, and methodological backdrop of this study.

The dilemma of categorising

Categorising a researcher’s targeted population is a necessary and indispensable component of research design (Hasselberg 2016, 7). It is a practical issue of establishing and delimiting the unit of anal-

ysis, but it is also a conceptual and ethical issue. The development of analytical categories labelling people—in this case ‘activists’, some of whom create alliances with ‘migrants’—is not neutral; on the contrary, it is filled with assumptions pertaining to the chosen criteria of inclusion and exclusion (*ibid.*).

All classifications are social constructs by which people are divided according to pre-established categories with the aim of creating a social order (Brubaker and Cooper 2013, 15). What constitutes an ‘identity marker’ or category depends on when, where, and under what conditions it is being constructed, its boundaries, and its relational aspects rather than the characteristics of the person or group (Barth 1996). I therefore do not use categories in a way that reifies them as if they were ‘true’ or essential.

‘The activist’

While ‘activist’ commonly appears as a taken-for-granted category in social movement scholarship, my interviewees addressed the term ambivalently and some rejected it altogether. So, by using the term ‘activist’, I confirm and legitimise a category that some of my interviewees actively try to challenge. There are many myths, stereotypes, and misunderstandings surrounding the figure of ‘the activist’, and empirical research has made me see the importance of problematising the different meanings ascribed to the notion. In this thesis, I use ‘activist’ as it is commonly defined in dictionaries: a devoted and action-oriented person affiliated with an organisation that upholds certain political beliefs.¹² It is a widely used term associated with people who believe strongly in political or social change and are involved in public protest to make this happen. Thus, ‘activists’ are found in a variety of political groupings (parties, unions, and extra-parliamentarian organisations) on both the left and the right of the political spectre. I use the term to delimit my study to people who engage in activism with the purpose of creating a more equal society, more specifically to the people affiliated with left-wing, extra-parliamentarian political groups in

¹² However, political actions have only quite recently been talked about in terms of ‘activism’. According to the free Online Etymology Dictionary, the word activism was first used in the political sense in English in 1920 (<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=activism>).

Malmö that arrange meetings, solidarity work, campaigns, demonstrations, and other collective actions in public spaces as well as online. Importantly, I use ‘activist’ to indicate a political positioning, revealed through each person’s practices and aspirations for another kind of society, and not as the ‘identity’ of the people doing the activism.

As will be displayed in Chapter 4, there is not *one* kind of ‘activist’. Just because a category exists and is ascribed by researchers or the media does not mean that the individuals generally included in that category identify with it. Individuals consist of more than their membership and participation in political collectives, of course. Interestingly, the ambivalence some individuals have towards the term commonly relates to power relations and the particular kinds of cultural and political capital associated with ‘the activist’. Some migrants with precarious legal status who take part in activism did not see themselves as deserving this ‘title’, which suggests that assumptions about ‘the activist’ are rooted in politicised inclusions and exclusions. Many Swedish activists—those with Swedish passports—are aware of this, and therefore actively try to popularise or neutralise the notion or abolish it altogether by saying, ‘we are not activists, we are just common people’.

Descriptions and definitions of ‘the activist’ have varied and changed over time. Activism appears as a social practice and a process of becoming, always situated in particular circumstances and particular locations in Malmö (as elsewhere). ‘The activist’ nevertheless appears as a form of identity, albeit not a constant one. It is defined in temporal and contextual terms and is situational and relational. The interviewees’ diverse reflections on the notion revealed in Chapter 4 indicate how fluid the term is.

‘The migrant’

The great majority of the activists featured in this thesis were not born and raised in Malmö, and none of them is originally from Möllevången. Once I realised that all of the activists were ‘migrants’ to Möllevången, which made me rethink migration as being confined to international migration only, a different picture of the social world in Malmö emerged. This was an interesting fact to

look into, especially considering the wide-ranging representations of Malmö as a city of immigration. Most activists in Malmö are Swedish citizens from other parts of Sweden, both rural and urban. Some are citizens of Nordic countries such as Norway and Denmark; others are non-citizen migrants from war-ridden countries, such as Afghanistan, Syria, and Palestine. Despite the diversity of trajectories, the biographical interviews with individual activists revealed a shared narrative. This is *a narrative of migration*, the act of leaving one's place of birth and childhood because of war and poverty or the lack of work, study opportunities, and service facilities, and of *emplacement*, as the process of re-establishing one's life in a particular locality, building networks, making friends, and developing a feeling of belonging to a new place (in this case, Malmö and Möllevången). A crucial difference between these migrant trajectories is between those who migrated voluntarily and those who, in the process of migration, were dispossessed of their rights and citizenship. These fundamentally different trajectories nevertheless meet and merge through activism in Malmö.

In order to acknowledge the vast social and legal differences among the activists under scrutiny, I separate them by referring to 'Swedish activists' (citizens) and 'migrants', meaning the people who have crossed national borders and have lived (or live) with a precarious legal status. This thesis' focus concerns precisely solidarity and alliance-building between (mostly) Swedish activists and people with precarious legal status. However, while using the term 'Swedish activists' to underline the particularity of citizenship and the rights that come with it, this thesis critically questions the "fantasy citizenship" (Anderson 2018) of full social inclusion. As Bridget Anderson (2018) has pointed out, the current obsession with immigration as problematic turns people's attention well away from the gendered, classed, and racialised borders within formal citizenship, and hence enables the depiction of all citizens as being fully and equally included. Citizenship theorists have long challenged the assumption that citizenship is a status of equal membership in terms of diversity of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or disability (see, e.g., Young 1989).

In activist circles in Malmö, particularly noticeable in pro-asylum groups, there is a large number of activists with migrant backgrounds, i.e. born to immigrant parents, mostly from Middle Eastern and Latin American countries. Many of their parents came to Sweden from Iran, Argentina, and Chile in the 1960s and 70s as political refugees. Although these activists have full residency rights or legal citizenship and were even born in Sweden, they are still subject to anti-immigrant discourses that subject them to racialisation¹³ and marginalisation (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, 2). An individual may be *legally* recognised by the state as a citizen, but this does not mean that the individual (and the group that the individual belongs to) is *socially* recognised as belonging to the nation or the people (Anderson 2018). Therefore, the ‘migrant’ (or ‘immigrant’) label is often rejected by people of migrant background because it casts them as foreigners despite their legal citizenship. Nevertheless, the so-called ‘second generation migrants’ among the Swedish activists possess a level of cultural capital that cannot be compared with many migrants arriving today, many of whom have little or no education and have lived in very precarious conditions in their countries of national citizenship. Whereas both are racialised in Swedish society, and thus may suffer from everyday and structural racism, the oppressive effects are far stronger for the newly arrived, working-class migrants.

The ‘migrant’ is a category constructed by research as well as by law, policies, and media representations. Undoubtedly, the constitution of the figure of ‘the migrant’ is nation-state centred. This means that whether someone is seen as migrating or not ultimately rests on whether that person has crossed a nation-state border (Anderson et al. 2012, 75), which, in urban locations such as Malmö, excludes the vast number of Malmö residents who have moved to the city from elsewhere in Sweden. But the question of

¹³ There are different definitions of the term ‘racialisation’ (see Molina 2005 for an overview). For example, Robert Miles (1989, 74) defines racialisation as “the representational process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological (usually phenotypical) human features, on the basis of which those people possessing those characteristics are designated as a distinct social collectivity”. Racialisation, as a form of dispossessive social positioning, has worked as an incentive for activism and the formation of several activist groups in Malmö. One example is Välkommen till motståndet (Welcome to the Resistance) (see <https://www.facebook.com/Motstandet/>).

who is and who is not a ‘migrant’ does not end there. In the process of unfolding ‘the migrant’, a complex spectrum of different positionalities and constructions appears, depending on whether the migrant is referred to statistically, in law or policy, or as a subject of public debate. For example, while I am statistically referred to as having a ‘foreign background’, since I have one parent born abroad (Denmark), I would not be referred to as a migrant in the context of either law or policy since I was born in Sweden; likewise I would not qualify in public debate, since I am white and fluent in Swedish. Thus, people who have moved to Sweden from the Nordic countries—Danes being the third-largest immigrant population in Malmö after people born in Iraq and Yugoslavia¹⁴—or are highly skilled migrants from the United States, for example, are not perceived as ‘migrants’ although this is what they are in the statistical sense. Clearly, assumptions about ‘migration’ and who constitutes ‘the migrant’ are often rooted in racialised inclusions and exclusions (Anderson 2018; Lundström 2017).

In Malmö, the local understanding of ‘the migrant’ denotes a person who is not Swedish by ancestry and who typically does not occupy the highest socio-economic positions in society. This category includes people who came to Malmö to work in industries at the time when mass labour migration was necessary for Swedish economic expansion, as well as those who arrived later as refugees and struggled, or still struggle, to match the needs of the local labour market, which is nowadays geared towards attracting professionals. In the Swedish context in general, ‘the migrant’ today connotes non-white (Muslim) refugees, Roma people, and labour migrants.

As a scholar, it is a challenge to write about ‘the migrant’ in a way that does not contribute to the negatively classed and racialised ‘migrant’ as found in contemporary public debate and misdirected discourse on immigration in many countries in Western and Eastern Europe (Lundström 2017). In Sweden, contemporary far-right discourse claims that immigrants burden the welfare state and undermine social cohesion due to cultural differences (Hellström

¹⁴ In 2017, residents of Malmö included 11,655 people born in Iraq, 7,831 born in Yugoslavia, and 7,444 born in Denmark (Malmö stad 2018d).

2016; Vargas Löfstedt 2018). In opposition to these current discourses, this thesis portrays migrants as political agents who, just as Swedish activists and residents in general, strive to make friends and to create a meaningful life in the city.

In studies of migration, the ‘mobilities turn’ (see, e.g., Urry 2000)¹⁵ and the literature on transnationalism (see, e.g., Vertovec 2007; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) have been used to address the inability of binary distinctions to capture the full range of socially and legally constructed migratory projects and subjects. People who have migrated might have a wide array of legal statuses, from the undocumented to those with temporary and permanent residency, to labour migrants, mobile EU citizens, and national or dual citizens. Different legal statuses imply different rights and opportunities. However, despite great differences in privileges defined by (the lack of) citizenship, there are also similarities between people with different legal positions: as jobseekers or jobholders, for example, they share a vulnerability in terms of layoffs and insecure short-term contracts. There are also similarities in the experiences people in unequal power relations have concerning urban changes and processes of segregation and gentrification in Malmö. While recognising the legal and discursive power of a nation-state’s institutions to define individuals as foreign in status, culture, or religion, the concept of ‘migrant’, as used in this thesis,¹⁶ does not assume differences between state-differentiated categories (particularly migrant and citizen) and nationalised identities, but seeks to examine *points of common interests found in joint actions between people in unequal power relations*. It is precisely the different positionalities that are used strategically by activists in individual and collective acts of solidarity against inequality, displacement, and dispossession.

¹⁵ John Urry was a prominent voice in what became described as the ‘mobilities turn’. This turn highlighted the importance of the intersection of everyday lives with mobility systems for the global economy and promoted the new field of ‘mobilities’. Urry argues that we need “to develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order” (2000, 18).

¹⁶ I use the term ‘migrant’ (documented, undocumented, labour, refugee, temporary, permanent, mobile EU citizen) and ‘born to immigrant parents’ as descriptive terms when it is important to explain someone’s position in the analysis, and not as ‘belonging’ to these categories.

Importantly, activism in Malmö is not a clear-cut relationship between the ‘privileged’ (activists) and the ‘non-privileged’ (non-activist migrants). In the past years in Malmö, some people with a precarious legal status have, through a process of political socialisation, become activists themselves, not only engaging in ‘their own matter’ such as pro-asylum issues, but participating and supporting other struggles in the city, such as struggles related to feminism, LTBTQ rights, anti-racism, and anti-fascism. Hence, the activist scene in Malmö is becoming more diversified in terms of class, ethnicity, and nationality. But with increased diversity, challenges may follow.

Similar to my dilemma of categorisation discussed above, the activists featured in this thesis also continuously struggle with categorisations. They are acutely aware of the power of language, such as the state’s power to control people by means of defining certain groups as being deviant from the norm of a white, middle-class citizen. With the awareness that categories reduce complex realities into single dimensions and of their ability to reproduce stigma, activists commonly do not use the public narrative or categorisation of ‘immigrants’ and do not refer to people’s ethnic background, but instead try to find non-homogenising language. Examples of this include the phrase ‘our friends’ when referring to people in a precarious legal status, or ‘EU citizens’ when referring to the begging Roma people who are commonly termed ‘EU *migrants*’ in European discourse (Yıldız and De Genova 2018). Activists rather emphasise categories based on class to clearly point to a person’s position in the class hierarchy. In other words, since ethnic, cultural, and national categories are today used to polarise society, activists reject them. Since categories of class (working-, middle-, upper-) can be used to visualise economic inequalities and political antagonisms, these are used actively.

But I also found an ambivalence particularly in white activists’ use, or rather non-use, of the notions of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. While not wanting to polarise, they also did not wish to dismiss the power structures by which people are treated differently based on conceptions that categorise them according to culture, ethnicity/‘race’, nationality, and phenotype (black/white), which have very

real consequences for these people in their everyday lives. An emerging debate in Sweden, both in activism (through, for example, Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund¹⁷ and their protests against Afrophobia, or Välkommen till motståndet¹⁸ and their protests against the increased racism in the public space) and in scholarly work (see, e.g., Hübinette, Kawesa, and Samson 2014), concerns the re-introduction of ‘race’ into the public debate and analyses of injustices and discrimination in order to fight racism more efficiently.¹⁹ Activists find themselves in a constant vacillation and a quest for a language that neither homogenises people nor neglects racist structures. The two strategies described above—avoiding giving importance to ethnicity and making the role of racialisation in creating racist structures visible—exist simultaneously, where the act of categorising can appear as strategically important in certain times and spaces.

Using the activist lens

This thesis focuses on collective actions and embodied solidarity as arenas of action and interaction in which ethnicity or migrant background may or may not matter to the people involved and are just two of many markers of diversity. Pointing at the existence of many possible forms of differentiation and belonging in social life is a productive alternative to the ethnic framing that has characterised many large-scale, quantitative surveys as well as small-scale, ethnographic community studies in the field of migration research (Olwig 2013, 471). This is of crucial importance since my thesis focuses on activists, not migrants, while at the same time being in-

¹⁷ Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund (Afro-Swedes’ National Organisation) aims to counteract racist structures in society (see <http://www.afrosvenskarna.se>).

¹⁸ Välkommen till motståndet (Welcome to the Resistance) was formed after the national elections in September 2018 by a number of Malmö residents with foreign backgrounds and experiences of being racialised (Zillén 2018).

¹⁹ For a long time in Sweden, ‘race’ has actively and consciously not been used in public discourse. ‘Race’ can also not be found in legislation. The parliament and government have stated in various contexts that the word ‘race’ should not be used for people in the constitution, because there is no scientific basis for dividing people into races (Engholm and ten Hoopen 2017). The European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the UN Committee on Citizenship and Political Rights have criticised Sweden, stating that “the word race has been removed in the new anti-discrimination and *regeringsformen*, which can lead to difficulties in assessing and treating racial discrimination notifications and thus preventing judicial review” (ibid.).

terested in political activism that includes as well as addresses and seeks to resist various forms of dispossession that most clearly affect migrants. By using the ‘activist lens’, this study moves “away from treating the migrant population as the unit of analysis and investigation and instead direct[s] the focus on parts of the whole population, which obviously includes migrants” (Dahinden 2016). Activism in Malmö includes Swedish citizens, some of whom were born abroad or have foreign backgrounds, as well as people with experiences of forced migration living in precarious conditions in Malmö. The activist lens thus enables me to capture a broad range of experiences without ending up in the trap of the ethnic lens (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Glick Schiller 2008), which would exclude from the picture the ‘migrants’ to Malmö from other parts of Sweden, since they are not ethnic ‘others’, and children of migrant parents, categories that describe many of the Malmö activists.

Hence, this study adheres to the critique of methodological nationalism, which is an intellectual orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of single nation-states (Glick Schiller 2008; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). Methodological nationalists confine the concept of society to the boundaries of nation-states and assume that the members of these states share a common history and set of values, norms, social customs, and institutions. Viewing migrants as culturally and socially separate from ‘national societies’ comes with the assumption that these populations require social integration into the nation-state in which they have settled (ibid.). This research, however, does not rely on an ethnic lens to study migrant-related activist practices, social relations, or identities (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2013). Instead, this study is part of the emerging call for ‘methodological de-nationalism’, which brings people in various legal, social, and cultural positionalities together into hierarchies of power in the same social field (Anderson 2018).

The ‘turn to diversity’ in migration scholarship has entailed a change from focusing on entities to focusing on relations (Berg and Sigona 2013). ‘Diversity’ captures new patterns and practices bet-

ter than, for example, the concept of multiculturalism, since it avoids a focus on the category of culture and its supposed essential connection to ethnic affiliation or national origin. Activists generally oppose the version of the theory of multiculturalism that paints a picture of different ethnic groups as each having a certain culture and identity that they represent, which activists see as divisive and as denying the multitude of overlapping and often conflicting group affiliations and interests (Fenton 2010). The politics of multiculturalism, activists claim, essentialises culture and ethnicity, and thus constitutes an obstacle for breaking down the classification of people based on cultural and ethnicity. Activists in Möllevången counter multiculturalism without denying the multiple heritages of the neighbourhood's residents (see Povrzanović Frykman 2016).

The diversity turn, and the emergence of the notion of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) in academic and policy discourse, recognises that previous ethnicity-based clustering is no longer an adequate analytical lens for understanding the complexity and dynamism of urban diversity (Berg and Sigona 2013).²⁰ In order to be useful for studying activism in Malmö, the concept of diversity should include not only the common aspects of diversity found in migration literature, such as class and cultural and legal differences, but must also allow for the inclusion of political affiliation, migrant generation, and the (urban) location as related to perceptions of belonging and related identifications. Geographical segregation and injustice within cities mean that “ultra-local or neighbourhood identities may be more important than national identities for both minority and migrant groups as well as for majority groups” (Berg and Sigona 2013, 352; see also Oosterlynck et al. 2016).

Malmö and Möllevången have their own histories and memories of migration, as well as of dispossessed people's struggles for rights and recognition, which affect and structure present-day social rela-

²⁰ Within migration studies, ‘diversity’ holds the potential to do what ‘intersectionality’ has done within feminist scholarship, that is to conceptualise the interrelationships between gender, class, ‘race’, and other social divisions (Berg and Sigona 2013). Ethnicity plays a role, but other variables may be more important to consider. Class is, for example, an important variable in the history of Möllevången pertaining to the unions and working-class presence. I also make observations on the matter of different *generations* of migrants.

tions. When studying activism in Malmö, I therefore consider how streets and squares are not only physical places but also social constructs in which identifications are important (Högdahl 2006). This thesis shows that the identification with, and agency in, local urban transformations and struggles are more important to the activists I studied than their own or others' ethnic or national ancestry. Empirical research on the ground allows one to see what particular differences mean to particular individuals, how they affect them, and how they play into the processes of group-making. This makes the focus on political activists relevant, since they continuously point to the political and socio-economic issues that they perceive as problematic while they act as political subjects. They claim and make use of their agency, which becomes political agency facilitated by and affecting a specific urban space. Although differences between activists do appear in the material, my focus is not on diversity as such but on the *domains of mutuality and common practice* (see Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018) created through activism. My inclusion of the terms 'solidarity' and 'diversity' in the thesis' title points to the various ways activists attempt to re-create the city and their aspirations for another, more equal and diverse society. It also refers to the diverse conditions of Malmö as a 'migrant city' (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016) and the activists' ability to mobilise a diverse set of people. 'Migrant emplacement', as used in the subtitle, refers to migrants in the broadest sense of the term, not only those who have crossed international borders but all those Swedish citizens who have moved to Malmö from elsewhere.

Emplacement

My key assumption is that activism contributes to the social and spatial emplacement of people with different social, economic, ethnic, and legal status backgrounds and creates space for shared experiences and solidarities. Drawing on Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2015), I define emplacement as the social process through which an individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the

constraints and opportunities of a specific city and as pertaining to the contemporary restructuring of cities.²¹

Emplacement is not synonymous with integration.²² Unlike the terms ‘integration’ or ‘assimilation’, as used in a discourse that targets migrants as threats to social cohesion,²³ ‘emplacement’ emphasises the ongoing processes of establishing social relationships within space and time. Emplacement invokes a sense of place-making that encompasses both migrants and non-migrants, who are generally differentiated by scholars and policymakers as either ‘migrants’ or ‘natives’ (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). I thus set aside the discourse of integration, which often utilises terms such as ‘culture’ and the ‘functional’ domains of integration as pertaining to, for example, the labour market within a particular nation-state.²⁴ Instead, I investigate emplacement in Malmö through activism by addressing the ongoing social processes in which its residents constitute the social fabric of the place. The activists also get emplaced by building relationships with other activists and by engaging in activism, which gives them a sense of meaning. In the process of creating conditions of emplacement for people with precarious legal status in a city, the activists thus manage to resist some of their own disposessions too.

Examining emplacement through the activist lens allows for an analysis of “migrant and non-migrant displacements within globe-spanning, but locally and temporally situated, neoliberal processes of the destruction and reconstitution of capital” (ibid., 21). Hence,

²¹ In Glick Schiller and Çağlar’s own words, “We define emplacement as the relationship between the continuing restructuring of place within multiscalar networks of power and a people’s efforts, within the barriers and opportunities of a specific locality, to settle and build networks of connection. Thus emplacement within the local is always a relational process and cannot be explained from within a bounded locality, whether defined as a neighbourhood, city, or region. It is for this reason we have always emphasized a global perspective on migration and city-making” (2015, 5–6).

²² For a critical discussion on the idea of integration, see Chapter 7 in Robert Miles’s (1993) *Racism After Race Relations*. Miles describes the notion of integration as generally referring to a “process of mixing or amalgamation of a previously external population with another, pre-existing population in a nation state. The process is defined a priori as problematic, if not conflictual. The assumption is that the former population is not yet a participant, or not yet an equal participant, in social relations. Herein lies the origin of the problematic of the concept” (175).

²³ This threat is linked to the ‘lack of trust’ migrants are said to evoke wherever they settle (Putnam 2007).

²⁴ Similar to the discourse on integration, the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ in both public and scholarly debate suggest a fixed, homogenous social order based on racialised national belonging to which ‘cultural others’ are added or rejected.

I am interested in the emplacement that occurs through activism, understood as a city-making practice, in relation to the processes of dispossession and displacement that encompass migrants as well as non-migrants. This thesis is inspired by the call to link the study of transnational migration to the contemporary restructuring of cities and the social movements that address it: “Those migrants who are in precarious positions cannot be seen as tolerated strangers or threats to national social order but as sharing the precarity of the dispossessed and therefore as part of the movement for social and economic justice” (Glick Schiller and Povrzanović Frykman 2018, 200).

Previous research and this thesis’ contributions

This thesis contributes to the international migration and ethnic relations literature, urban studies, and studies of resistance and social movements. By writing a thesis that crosses the boundaries of these three multidisciplinary fields, I hope it will serve as a bridge between them in trying to understand how migration processes and urban restructuring play into the creation of politicised places, political struggles, and the reshaping of identities and social relations. I also hope my interdisciplinary approach helps scholars to better understand how different regimes of power and processes of dispossession interact and feed into each other. Generally speaking, this thesis forms part of a new emerging field that attempts to understand the transformative forces of migration in relation to neoliberalism, changes in the welfare state, and right-wing strategies of Othering in terms of class, gender, and racialisation (Hamann and Yurdakul 2018). I will present my contributions to the field of international migration and ethnic relations—the discipline in which this thesis has been formally written—, followed by contributions to the research on activism, and I end by elaborating on this thesis’ contributions to urban studies.

In migration studies, work on pro-asylum and pro-migrant activism in Sweden is scarce, however, with a few recent exceptions (Povrzanović Frykman and Mäkelä 2019; Joorman 2018; Kleres

2018; Djampour and Söderman 2016),²⁵ and there are more works written by scholars who were activists themselves and involved in pro-asylum groups while doing fieldwork focusing on aspects such as ‘deportability’, irregularity, borders, and citizenship-enactment by migrants (see, e.g., M. Sager 2011; Nordling 2017; Djampour 2018; J. Lind 2017; Keshavarz 2016; Nordling, Sager, and Söderman 2017). Various scholars maintain the city as a crucial site where migrants practice local citizenship and may access certain rights (Nyers 2008; Holgersson 2011; Bhimji 2014; Mayer 2017; Kleres 2018). In Malmö, for example, social mobilisations have put pressure on the local government, which then introduced certain social rights for undocumented children (Nordling 2017; Lundberg and Söderman 2015; Nordling et al. 2017). Accordingly, most research within migration studies related to activism in general deals with ‘illegality’, citizenship, and borders with the focus on migrants (Nyers and Rygiel 2012).

Therefore, this thesis contributes to the ‘de-migranticisation’ (Dahinden 2016) of research on migration. By connecting migration studies with social movement theories and concepts, I reorient the focus of the investigation away from ‘migrant populations’ towards social processes that concern ‘overall populations’ (ibid.). By constructing my research field on activism in a way that includes both migrants/non-citizens and non-migrants/citizens and how they co-construct the city at a specific time and place, this thesis contests the ethnicity-centred epistemology that often informs the migration studies discipline (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). In addition, by connecting studies on migration and migrant activism with social movement theories, I contribute to liberating research on migration from one of its prevailing frameworks, namely humanitarianism (Caraus 2018). By exploring the link between pro-migrant and pro-asylum activism with the pro-distribution demands of a ‘translocal commons’ (Cumbers 2015) beyond the state as it is connected to global processes of capital accumulation, this thesis captures the radicalism of this kind of activism. In this way, I show how pro-migrant and pro-asylum activism ties into broader

²⁵ For international scholarship, see, e.g., Milkman (2014); Nyers and Rygiel (2012); Nicholls and Uitermark (2017); Rosenberger et al. (2018); Feischmidt et al. (2019).

questions of global inequality and the legitimacy of the entire system.

It is recognized that allies are often divided by ideological disputes and competition with each other (della Porta 2018a). However, as noted by Cappiali (2018), very little research in migration studies looks into the role of ideology, interaction, and conflicts among pro-asylum and pro-migrant groups in shaping migrant mobilizations, which this thesis improves the understanding of.

Regarding activism research, this thesis contributes to the general theoretical and empirical understanding of contemporary activism in Sweden and contributes in particular to the current and growing body of literature on radical activism in Sweden (see, e.g., Jacobsson and Lindblom 2016; Sörbom and Wennerhag 2013; Jämte 2013; Pries 2008; Brink Pinto and Pries 2013; Wennerhag 2010; Peterson 2001)²⁶. Similar to my own approach, cities have been used as entry points by various scholars for the study of social mobilisations and political struggles (see, e.g., Andretta, Piazza, and Subirats 2015; Miller and Nicholls 2013; Martínez 2017; Greenberg and Lewis 2017). Despite the increase of political mobilisations by migrants and solidarity activists in recent years, analyses from a social movement perspective remain scarce (della Porta 2018b; Steinhilper 2018; Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016). By looking into pro-migrant and pro-asylum activism from a contentious political perspective, this thesis contributes to the ‘migranticisation’ (Dahinden 2016) of social movement literature by bringing in new perspectives and analysis related to migration, migrants’ political agency, ethnicity, and emplacement, which are only marginally considered in this research field.

Another important contribution to this field is my analysis of the connections and relations made between different activist groups, which have so far received scarce scholarly attention (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 230). By focusing on a place, I have been able to tease out the intense interactions between activists mobilising around different issues and how alliances and collective struggles across different activist groups emerge and develop. These interac-

²⁶ For international scholarship, see, e.g., Graeber 2009; Leach 2009; Maeckelbergh 2011; De Angelis 2003; and Juris 2008.

tions and cross-pollinations across groups illustrate the structural interconnection between the different struggles: how pro-asylum activism is inseparable from anti-racist or anti-fascist struggles, or how struggles for the rights of Roma migrants are inseparable from anti-capitalist struggles.

Furthermore, from the perspective of social movement scholarship, which has recognised the value of ethnographic research for studying activists and their actions (della Porta 2014), this thesis contributes to the growing body of ethnographies on activism generally (see, e.g., Flesher Eguarte 2005; Graeber 2009; H. Holm 2010) and specifically on pro-asylum and pro-migrant activism. By employing ethnographic methods, it is possible to gain insights into how mutual interests and experiences in relations of unequal power are shaped and to better understand how social relationships at the individual level play into the construction of political struggles in a certain time and place. For example, in this thesis, I look at how the role of friendship enables political socialisation and engagement in activism. The existent literature in both social movement and migration research tells little of how politicised relationships are forged between migrants in precarious legal conditions and citizens (Cappiali 2018; Steinhilper 2018), which specifically indicates the importance and novelty of this study.

Moreover, this thesis on activism takes seriously the role of place in political struggles as connected to global processes of financial capitalism. As a general contribution to urban studies, I show the role of place and space for enabling collective actions of resistance and thus contribute to a growing scholarly field that explores the relationship between contentious politics and space in Sweden (see, e.g., Franzén 2005; Wahlström 2010; Brink Pinto and Pries 2013; H. Thörn 2013; Stahre 2014). and internationally (see, e.g., W. Nicholls, Miller, and Beaumont 2013; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008; Dikeç 2007; Mitchell 2003; Martin and Miller 2003; Sewell 2001). As a specific contribution to urban studies, I offer insights into the role of social movements and activism in urban gentrification processes (Ley 1996; Franzén 2005; Lees et al. 2008; Thörn 2012).

By using a multiscalar approach (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2015) as viewed through the activist lens, I enable the examination and better understanding of local processes as embedded and as constituted and constitutive of global processes of migration and capitalism. This thesis therefore also represents an effort to link migration studies with urban studies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009).

Outline of the thesis

I will here outline the thesis' chapters and describe the main content and theoretical concepts in each. Following the Introduction, the book is organised into eight chapters ending with the Conclusions.

Chapter 1—**Locating Activism**—navigates the discrete sets of selected literature on urban restructuring, gentrification, and activism in greater detail. A framework of power and resistance is invoked to better specify the role of the city as a locus of power as well as a place for resisting it. A framework of power and resistance offers insights into the relationship between structure and agency and between capitalist dynamics and social conditions.

The first part of the chapter locates activism in Malmö in connection to social-movement concepts, in empirical studies on the kind of extra-parliamentary left that features in this study, and in the central changes within this movement milieu. In order to understand the specific political space of Möllevången, I claim it is important to jointly analyse different activist groups, which encompass class struggle-oriented, pro-asylum, as well as anti-racist groups, that are equally visible and active in Malmö. The first part of this chapter concludes with brief presentations of each activist group and their sociological composition.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the role of cities in connection to activism. To show how power and resistance come together in cities, I employ a theoretical framework through the notions of 'hegemony' (Gramsci 1971), 'the police' (Rancière 1999, 2010; Dikeç 2007; Uitermark and Nicholls 2014), and politics and post-politics (Mouffe 2005; Swyngedouw 2009; Žižek 1999; Rancière 2004). I illustrate power in the form of neoliberal hegemony in which urban restructuring is coupled with the strengthening

of national borders, increased racism, and the growth of right-wing populism. The different but interrelated dispossession processes have led to the formation of the activist groups featured in the thesis.

In the third and last part of this chapter, which is based on an understanding of activism as counter-hegemonic, contentious politics, I discuss the importance of solidarity and commoning in resisting the established (neoliberal) orders. Activists who engage with people in precarious legal conditions attempt to implement horizontal and inclusive modes of social relations and use direct forms of democratic decision-making, all of which are central components of solidarity. While activists resist material, emotional, and aspirational dispossession through various forms of activism, their practices simultaneously contribute to creating value for city land and property.

Throughout the thesis, references are consistently made to this theoretical chapter, while concepts that are directly connected to the specific subject of each chapter in the thesis are additionally employed.

In Chapter 2—**Doing fieldwork at ‘home’**—I present the methodology of the study and discuss the research techniques and issues of epistemology, reflexivity, and transparency. Being an insider geographically (to the place) and ideologically (leftist politics), I owe the reader and myself particular transparency concerning the production of the material analysed in this thesis.

By employing biographical interviews, I have been able to examine the personal aspects that underlie people’s present political engagements and gain insights into the importance of the role of friendship in general life and in terms of activism in particular. Special effort is made in this chapter to reflect on the relations between research and activism and on my role as a researcher in relation to the personal experience of activism. I also discuss the impact of my relation to the neighbourhood of Möllervången and my prior connections to parts of the activist scene in the city. The argument I make in this chapter is that my position as partial insider has enabled easy access to the field and close communication with

radical activists, and my partial outsider position has enabled critical reflections on the social processes being studied.

Chapter 3—**Not all cities have a Möllan**—a phrase borrowed from an activist about Malmö in the national context, aims to situate the reader geographically and temporally in Malmö. I approach Möllevången as a *case*, defining case as “both specific and representative of a larger phenomenon” (Wieviorka 1992, 172). Möllevången is part of a global trend but also specific within that trend. It is representative of a larger phenomenon, the gentrification of inner-city areas, but also specific within it: not all gentrifying neighbourhoods are important political spaces that enable and encourage collective struggles for equality. I show that the circumstances of Möllevången presented in this chapter are historical products of a period when living in Möllevången was cheap, diverse, and attractive—but still not too attractive—rather than being static properties of the neighbourhood. It is the period between the era when the area was run-down and avoided by many and the possible near future when it will be too gentrified to allow many activists to live there.

My empirical analysis suggests that neighbourhoods in the early stages of gentrification are conducive to strong activist scenes, which has been confirmed elsewhere (Creasap 2016). This also confirms the significance of place to the establishment and formation of activist groups. The agglomeration of activist groups in a city, as has been observed elsewhere (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 231), allows activists to specialise in specific and different issues while at the same time provides opportunities for networking across different clusters of activists. The presence of many different activist groups does not necessarily imply efficient collaboration between them, however. Activists do not always connect with others and produce productive political relations, as there are many factors that may impede such relations (*ibid.*). One explanation as to why activists in Malmö connect across activist groups is that they have a connecting place: Möllevången. Continuous networking among individuals from different activist groups permits the flow not only of information, ideas, and resources, but also the construction of common narratives (Miller and Nicholls 2013).

I show the importance of narratives, or stories, in the processes of constructing Möllevången as ‘anti-racist’, stories that try to challenge the ‘crime-due-to-immigration-discourse’ otherwise associated with Malmö and cheered by far-right political parties and their sympathisers. However, the construction of the place as ‘anti-racist’ may cover up the racist structures found there, particularly present in the abuse of unregulated and racialised labour in the many restaurants and small businesses. In the last part of the chapter, I investigate the different forms of boundary making that take place in the political space of Möllevången from a non-activist resident perspective.

Chapter 4—**The Activists**—explores subjective understandings of what constitutes activism and ‘the activist’. Building on theories of identity construction, I show the fluidity of the activist’s identity and reveal a variety of perceptions of activism. I explore boundary making between ‘us’ the activists and ‘them’ the non-activists, but also within the ‘us’. Identity has two central dimensions, individual and collective, both of which are shaped by a third dimension, that of public identity (Laraña et al. 1994, 28). Many activists reject the label of ‘activist’ as it is constructed in public discourse and underline the importance of doing activism without creating an identity connected to such practices, since such an identity would hamper the potential for engaging with a broader range of participants (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 487). My argument in this chapter is that activists’ wish to challenge or even abolish the term ‘activist’ represents an attempt to turn activism into an inclusive political practice. I interpret this attempt as an expression of commoning that opens up the possibility for emplacement for ‘non-standard’ activists (among them migrants in precarious legal conditions) to be included through activism in the traditional activist circles in the city. In other words, the aim is to create political commons that involve more people in the city. This chapter offers direct insights into the ideological standpoints of the activists in Malmö.

Chapter 5—**Activism and enforced deportation**—illustrates how activists mobilise, plan, and act, as well as the reactions they encounter from non-activists and other challenges they meet along the way while engaging in political work. Empirically, I use the ex-

ample of the mobilisation against REVA, an acronym for *Rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete* (Legally secure and efficient work for enforcing deportations), which was a joint administrative project 2009–2014 between the Swedish police, the Prison and Probation Service, and the Swedish Migration Agency. I show how the various activities sparked by the enforced deportation of rejected asylum seekers utterly depended on the presence and initiative of knowledgeable and experienced activists in the city. What may look spontaneous (and sometimes spectacular if an event mobilises a large number of residents from the general public) in the eye of the public is commonly a carefully planned action by a small number of activists. While mobilising, activists face challenges, such as: a lack of local anchoring in certain neighbourhoods when conducting out-reach activities; being too few wanting to do too much with burning out as a result; and activists' different opinions on the methods to be pursued. I further identify activists' ambivalent relationships to mainstream media, towards their own work, and the issue of radicalism vs. their wish for recognition by the general public. One particular ambivalence and, at times, a source of conflict between different activist groups in Malmö is that of differing conceptions of charity and solidarity. This is such a crucial topic within the extra-parliamentarian left that it is dealt with separately in the last section of the chapter.

Chapter 6—**Embodied solidarity**—investigates the activists' creation of friendships and alternative structures. By embodied solidarity, I mean the solidarity-based kind of activism that is commonly carried out on an everyday and 'silent' basis and hidden from public attention. This kind of activism has a more long-term character than collective public actions that take place in a specific time and place. Embodied solidarity presupposes a mutual emotional and bodily engagement between people in unequal power relations. This chapter builds on Featherstone's (2012) understanding of solidarity, which emphasises the 'us-ness' created across differences. Special attention is given to 'commoning'—the processes and practices that help make things common, for example knowledge, spaces, and experiences—through activism. Activists create common spaces in the city that include non-activists, among

them migrants, and thereby create pathways of migrant emplacement in the city.

Friendship is an important resource for commoning and emplacement; it allows some people, not least the migrants with precarious legal status who come into contact with the activists, to experience a process of politicisation. This chapter illustrates how activists prefigure their ideal society by creating experimental or alternative social relations and structures in the present, although the creation of friendships and alternative structures is not without frictions, challenges and ambivalences. Despite the fundamentally unequal relationship between newly arrived migrants in precarious legal conditions and Swedish activists (with citizenship), these relationships have been decisive for a new generation of migrants to become activists. This is dealt with in the last section of this chapter, exemplified by a sit-in outside the Swedish Migration Agency in Malmö organised by the new (migrant) activists.

Chapter 7—**Collective actions**—examines the role of place and public space, where collective actions are performed, and what effects these actions have on social relations (between activists as well as between activists and non-activists). I do this through the examples of solidarity with Roma migrants in the Sorgenfri settlement (Sorgenfriläget), a Roma migrant settlement in Malmö 2013–2015, and Kämpa Malmö ('Keep fighting, Malmö'), a recurrent slogan for various mobilisations against racism and neo-nazism (starting in 2014) after a nearly lethal instance of nazi violence in Malmö. Beyond being two instances of remarkable mobilisation in Malmö's history (and Sweden's), they both illuminate how activists relate to current multiscalar processes of material, emotional, and aspirational dispossession, displacement, and restructuring and the effects of such actions. I analyse how these actions, by way of creating alliances and mass mobilisations, contribute to creating common spaces involving and politicising many non-activists. However, this process is marked by a number of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts. I illustrate the role of the body, emotions, and story-telling in creating solidarity and collective identities, which are essential for collective actions to take place. Both examples of activism analysed in this chapter represent

struggles for a certain narration (or framing) of precarity and dispossession. In both instances, activists attempt to narrate the struggle as a struggle *together with agents* (i.e. the Roma migrants or people who suffer from fascism and racism), and not as a struggle *in support of victims* of precarity and dispossession. The meaning of solidarity is nevertheless constantly negotiated between these two understandings of what conducting a struggle means.

Chapter 8—**What difference does activism make?**—in major part examines and answers the last research question: what are the effects of left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activism in Malmö on a larger societal scale? I address important issues concerning notions of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ in extra-parliamentarian activism and suggest alternative modes for assessing the effects of this kind of politics. I end this chapter by reflecting on Möllevången’s future as a relational incubator.

The **Conclusions** summarises the findings and systematically answers my research questions. I also list the contributions this thesis makes to the fields of international migration and ethnic relations, urban studies, and social movement studies and suggest some directions for future research.

1 LOCATING ACTIVISM

‘Activism’ is the term I use to refer to the practice carried out by activists who are discontent with the current order of things and act collectively in order to change it. I understand activism as ‘contentious politics’, the scholarly term used to refer to “concerted, counter-hegemonic social and political action, in which differently positioned participants come together to challenge dominant systems of authority, in order to promote and enact alternative imaginaries” (Leitner et al. 2008, 157). This formulation by Leitner et al. (2008) builds on the definition developed and elaborated by Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly, and Sidney Tarrow (McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow 2001; see also Tilly and Tarrow 2007)²⁷ and, at the same time, constitutes a critique of the definition by McAdam et al. as overly state-centric and interest-oriented, thus showing that it does not acknowledge the differences within collective action.

I use ‘activist groups’ as the term describing the different organisational units with which the activists are affiliated. Some of them (e.g., Allt åt alla and Asylgruppen) may, to some extent, be regarded as social movement organisations (SMOs),²⁸ which is the schol-

²⁷ Contentious politics involve “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 4).

²⁸ Social movement organisations (SMO) are defined as the “formal organisations that take the collective pursuit of social change as a primary goal” (Armstrong and Bartley 2007, 4448). As pointed out by den Hond et al. (2015), it is important to take a less formal view of organisations to fully understand the types of collectivities found in social movements.

arly term for the organised component of a social movement. Since the definition of a SMO does not entirely correspond to the groups in focus here (e.g., to Skåne mot rasism or Aktion mot deportation) and neither SMO nor ‘activist group’ applies to all of them, I use the less formal term ‘group’ as a descriptive term to indicate a collective effort of some kind involving several or more activists.²⁹ The number of ‘members’ (although not all the groups have formal membership structures) in each group is difficult to assess due to their generally fluid composition of active and passive members. During the time of my fieldwork, their size varied between 5–30 active individuals participating in scheduled meetings and commonly with double that amount of ‘members’ connected to the group (who participate in actions but who rarely attend the meetings).

Together with a number of other activist groups (including media, film, and art collectives), these groups in Malmö compose the left-wing, extra-parliamentarian scene in Malmö. This scene is what is considered a ‘social movement scene’ in scholarly literature; namely, it is “a network of people who share a set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms, and convictions as well as a network of physical spaces where members of that group are known to congregate” (Leach and Haunss 2009, 260). A scene is always geographically located since it is defined by a local infrastructure of bars, cafés, bookshops, and cultural and social centres. This means that a scene is composed not only of activists (‘core members of the scene’), but also of other people who identify with, support the cause of, and frequent the scene’s spaces and actions in the city, such as parties, lectures, and workshops arranged at social centres, book cafés, book fairs, or demonstrations and other events organised by these activist groups. The notion of a scene emphasises the importance of the place in which counter-hegemonic narratives and collective identities are constructed (ibid.). Since a scene is located in a place, it facilitates contact between the general extra-

²⁹ One activist described Aktion mot deportation as a ‘name’ and not an organisation. Any group of people that wants to conduct a collective anti-deportation action can do it in the name of Aktion mot deportation and use their Facebook platform. Activists in Asylgruppen preferred to describe themselves as a network due to its very fluid composition of participants.

parliamentarian movement and people who would otherwise have little interest in its political actions. The activist scene in Malmö is probably made up of several hundred people in the city, possibly constituting the strongest and most visible scene of its kind existing in Sweden today, as discussed in Chapter 3.

To understand the kinds of activism that were carried out in Malmö during the time of my fieldwork, I have made use of theories and concepts from the social movement studies field. The study of people's collective political actions, as in social movements, for example, contains a variety of perspectives, theoretical approaches, and methodologies and has been a central field of study in sociology, history, and political science (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Social movement scholarship emerged as a major research area in the 1970s, while an anthropology of social movements, a much more recent development, can be considered to have been an emerging field since the first decade of the 21st century (Gibb 2001; Salman and Assies 2007; EASA 2013). However, the interest in studying social movements dates back to the 19th century when various researchers, including Max Weber and Karl Marx, tried to understand the working class movement's implications on society (Eder 2015).

There are three major perspectives in this research field historically: collective behaviour³⁰ (dominant prior to the 1960s); political opportunity structures and resource mobilisation theory;³¹ and collective framing and the identity paradigm.³² Currently in sociology, 'contentious politics' has come to replace earlier terms for describing and analysing the phenomenon of organised resistance to hegemonic norms. The perspective of contentious politics focuses on relations and historical processes. Mario Diani (2015), for example, argues that relations are central to understanding contentious

³⁰ Another term used is 'crowd behaviour'. See della Porta and Diani (2006, 11ff) for an overview.

³¹ These perspectives mainly explained social movements as resulting from external opportunities (political and resource-wise). Influential scholars in this field were Charles Tilly (1978), Doug McAdam (1982), and Sidney Tarrow (1998).

³² In Europe, the so-called identity paradigm was formed, focusing on social movements' creation of collective identities, the broader social context and conditions in which these movements acted, and on the social conflicts that their identities were related to (Thörn 2005). Influential scholars promoting the identity paradigm were Alberto Melucci (1995) and Alain Touraine (1981). The identity paradigm is related to the framing theory proposed by Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow (2000).

politics, which is crucial to the way I present and explain activism in this thesis. In the following, I will give some historical references to the development of the social movements research field, which helps to explain the roots and influences of today's activist scene in Malmö.

In an attempt to understand the plethora of alternative movements appearing in the 1960s and onward in many Western countries, the term and theory of *new* social movements appeared (della Porta and Diani 2006, 6). Examples of movements that introduced new political conflicts in Sweden were the women's movement, the environmentalist movement, and the anti-imperialist and anti-apartheid movements (for an overview of the major trends in contentious politics in Sweden 1950–2015, see Peterson, Thörn, and Wahlström 2017). Examples of 'new' movements in Sweden since 2013 are the upsurge of migrants' and asylum seekers' struggles for rights and recognition, some of which are referred to in this thesis.

Alberto Melucci (see, e.g., 1989, 1995) strongly influenced the definition of new social movements. He showed that the new movements, unlike the traditional workers' movements, do not limit themselves to material gains but rather challenge the notions of politics and society themselves. This shift from class politics to the new diverse sets of actors and issues generated disagreements. This new form of politics is sometimes termed 'identity politics' and it is often criticised for reducing politics to a matter of individual identities (see H. Thörn 2002; Wasshede 2010). The critique usually refers to the tendency of each identitarian group—the disabled, women, the racialised, etc.—to form a separate social movement demanding recognition, social justice, and rights, which critics say leads to fragmentation and disconnection. However, research shows how identity politics implies a new way of interpreting politics, which includes the politicisation of the personal as well as of everyday life. Identity politics combines claims of distribution and claims of recognition, which is to say structural issues and identity-related issues (della Porta and Tarrow 2005).

The study of social movements and activism does not only concern left-wing groups and movements but also applies to the right-

wing side of extra-parliamentarian politics. While right-wing activism is not the focus of this thesis, I will present some of the far-right groups existing in Sweden below in this chapter, since some of the collective actions discussed in this thesis were direct responses to far-right activists' presence in Malmö.

Activism in cities

Manuel Castells's *The City and the Grassroots* (1983) is considered to be one of the most important works written on urban social movements (Miller 2006; Mayer 2006). Inspired by Lefebvre, Castells's analyses social relations in terms of the social production of (and struggle over) space (Miller 2006; see also Harvey 1985), particularly by exploring the relationship between people and urbanisation. Such a relationship is most evident when people mobilise to change the city in order to change society (Castells 1983, xvi), such as in the recent 'Right-to-the-City' urban movements. In contrast to Castells's *The Urban Question* (1972), an influential Marxist contribution to the study of cities as concrete reflections of wider processes within capitalism, *The City and the Grassroots* took a post-Marxist turn. Instead of being overly class-oriented and economic, in this book Castells focuses on urban social movements as powerful cross-class alliances gathered around issues of collective consumption (including housing, health care, education, transportation, food, and public space itself). The role of the state, gender relationships, processes of racialisation, and migration patterns also affect how the city is shaped since these too are part of the organisation and production of capital and dispossession (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018).

This thesis accords with the critique of the rather inaccurate distinction between old and new movements and the attempt to confine the complex character of movements into either 'urban', 'global', 'new', or 'identity'-related categories (see, e.g., W. J. Nicholls and Uitermark 2017; Pleyers 2010; Mayer 2009; H. Thörn 2012). The activist groups in Malmö, while mostly acting in the urban environment and taking into consideration that the urban is a strategic and important space for the activists to conquer, address issues that reach beyond the merely 'urban'. In recent works (see, e.g., Ó

Dochartaigh and Bosi 2010; Miller and Nicholls 2013), space has become an important explanatory dimension for the understanding of the emergence, development, and dissolution of collective action.

Henri Lefebvre (1996) states that the act of inhabiting the city must be the basis for making claims on it. It is the users of urban space, “those who inhabit” the city, who are in a position to claim a right to it (Lefebvre 1996, 158; see also Mitchell 2003; Purcell 2013).³³ Undocumented migrants, labour migrants, asylum seekers, Roma migrants, activists, and residents in general are all users of urban space. The activists’ mobilisations in Malmö that I am interested in concern precisely struggles to ‘inhabit the city well’ (Purcell 2013), invoking demands of emplacement in the city as pertaining to processes of dispossession and displacement.³⁴

I found Walter J. Nicholls and Justus Uitermark’s (2014; 2016; 2017) work on cities and social movements inspiring for my own analysis, since they too analyse different groups with regard to certain places’ relational qualities. According to them, these relational qualities are concentrated in cities and, within those cities, in specific neighbourhoods. Continuous and close interaction over time between different activist groups can create strong relationships that facilitate and enable collective actions (Nicholls, Miller, and Beaumont 2013; Tilly 2004; Coleman 1988). Möllevången in Malmö, as I will argue, helps generate strong relations among activists within a larger social movement milieu in Sweden (meaning the network of scenes across the country). These relationships further generate a sense of obligation to contribute to the struggle of fellow activists (J. S. Coleman 1988), which is clearly the case in Malmö as seen through the continuous public (through the sharing

³³ Here, Lefebvre’s Marxism is apparent; he is making a distinction between those who inhabit or use urban space and those who own it. For owners, urban space is a commodity to be owned by those with property rights. Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ is thus a counterclaim against the idea, and increased tendency, of commodified urban space (Purcell 2013, 567).

³⁴ Mark Purcell (2013) mentions a few concrete aspects. ‘Inhabiting well’ would require “affordable, comfortable shelter; meaningful work at good wages; convenient movement around the urban environment; stimulating recreational spaces for children; public spaces to gather, interact, and demonstrate; ecologically sustainable urban development; physical safety in space, [...] and affordable, high-quality food, childcare, education, and health care.” (2013, 567). He further argues that none of these necessities is more significant than the others: “each is bound up with the others into the complex geography of a city that actively fosters inhabitance” (ibid.).

of each other's Facebook events) and sometimes practical support between the different activist groups in the city.

Cities are distinct environments with unique constraints and opportunities (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016). Malmö, being a 'migrant city' (ibid.), is a place where marginalised migrants encounter established activist groups and, in the process of creating relations with them, create their own actions and groups to struggle for recognition and equality. Due to left-wing activism, Möllevången is an example of an environment that is "able to facilitate the growth of seeds of resistance into large and entangled struggles for rights, equality, and protections" (ibid., 7–8). The relational qualities of Möllevången make it possible for people with precarious legal status (asylum seekers, the undocumented, Roma migrants) and victims of racism and neo-nazi violence to make use of the rich resource pool connected to the city's activist scene in order to build large-scale struggles for rights and equality that reach beyond the city borders.

Activism as collective actions and embodied solidarity requires the building of social relationships that assure and enable such resources. Shared narratives are particularly important for activist groups to be able to also mobilise people from outside their own groups into broader mobilisations. These relationships are fundamentally spatial (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1980). As I show in the empirical chapters, place and space (offline as well as online) play a constitutive role in collective actions and works of solidarity (Nicholls et al. 2013). By drawing on a common narrative about Möllevången, such as the construction of the place as 'anti-racist' or as the 'red zone' of the city, activists manage to evoke collective emotions and mobilise a large number of protestors, as shown in Chapter 7 in which the large-scale anti-nazi protests of 2014 are analysed. The politicised conditions of Möllevången empower activists. A clarifying discussion on the role of urban space in activism is provided towards the end of this chapter.

The construction of 'us'

Associating social movements and social movement scenes with a distinctively collective identity entails, in this case, no assumptions

about the homogeneity of the actors sharing that identity (della Porta and Diani 2006, 24). Collective identification is the process by which social actors recognise themselves, and are recognised by others, as part of collectivities and develop emotional attachments to them in interaction with other social actors (della Porta and Diani 2006, 91–95). Collective identities are always multiple, partly overlapping, and sometimes even conflicting, as individuals may feel attracted to several types of collectives at the same time (Simon and Klandermans 2001, 321).

Furthermore, as part of our concept of self, we possess an array of identities tied to social roles, memberships, and categories (Stryker, Owen, and White 2000) and, as will become clear in this thesis, various places, which brings about a sense of belonging, feelings of personal significance, and a sense of location relative to others (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996). An activist can identify herself with the punk scene, the feminist movement, and her profession as a teacher, for example, while being involved in each to a different extent both practically and emotionally and at various times. And all these aspects of her identity coalesce within the context of a certain place, which grounds the multiple elements in relations made possible by the place's specificity (and those who share the context of that specific place).

A key component of activists' identity construction is place. In this era of mobilities, and keeping in mind that all activists considered here are 'migrants' (in the broadest sense, see Introduction) to Möllevången, place becomes a crucial site for the construction of one's social identity (M. Savage, Bagnall, and Longhurst 2005). People consciously seek out places that reflect their identity: "People who come to live in an area with no prior ties to it but can link their residence to their biographical life history, are able to see themselves as belonging to the area" (Ibid., 29). The Möllan-identity is not ethnically bound. I suggest that 'being a Möllan resident' is a referent for being left-wing or anti-racist, which is inclusive of different ethnic and racial identifications. This idea of Möllevången thus enables politically engaged people to construct a meaningful sense of self (an identity as being anti-racist, for example) and to create a sense of belonging to a meaningful place (an

‘anti-racist’ place). In summary, the relationship that people have with their physical environment and the ways in which they understand that relationship through different conceptualisations of place are important aspects of identity construction (on both an individual and group level) (Easthope 2009).

Furthermore, activities within the context of collective action and solidarity involve a dynamic mix of individual and collective confirmations of identity (Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield 1994).³⁵ For example, individuals’ formal membership or involvement and therefore identification with certain activist groups influence individual activists’ identity construction. However, membership in the activist groups under special attention in this thesis is fluid, as already mentioned: some people join and leave after relatively short periods of time and individuals are often engaged in different groups and networks simultaneously. One activist said, for example: “I’ve never been a member of Asylgruppen, [though I am] still quite involved in the group.” Another activist put it like this: “We exchange members with one another”. Since the duration of individuals’ formal involvement in activist groups varies, coupled with the fact that these collectivities overlap and collaborate, it became clear how certain collectivities and collective identities were formed through joint actions at particular times rather than defined on the basis of ‘membership’ in a particular activist group.

The ‘us-ness’ in the context of activism is what Simon and Klandermans (2001) refer to as “politicized collective identity”, which they argue is an intensified collective identity with stronger effects than its non-politicised counterparts since it is likely to motivate political action aimed both directly or indirectly at third parties: the authorities, the general public, or potential allies. The creation of a ‘we’ versus a ‘they’ is an important part of ‘the political’—the kind of politics that Chantal Mouffe (2005, 2013) advocates—which is conflictual and (ant)agonistic.

³⁵ Although the boundaries are blurred, personal identities can be distinguished from collective identities (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Personal identity represents a sense of self as different from others, while collective identity is made up of the connections and commitments a person makes to a broader group of people, i.e. a shared sense of solidarity or ‘us-ness’ (Benford and Snow 2000).

Kevin McDonald (2004) argues that one should study activist groups in terms of a shared experience rather than ‘us-ness’, saying that identity exists but it is grounded less in conceptual fixity and more in an embodied presence where the ‘I’ meets the ‘other’. This ‘us-ness’ that is constructed out of bodily presence resonates with Emile Durkheim’s (1912) theory on the effect of ritual chants and songs as effacing oneself of individuality. Building on Durkheim’s theory, Randall Collins (2004) emphasises the importance of collective emotions, or ‘collective effervescence’, for the emergence and reproduction of social solidarity (discussed further towards the end of this chapter). Durkheim’s concept of ‘collective effervescence’ refers to the contagious excitement and exhilaration achieved through chants and cheering, which strengthen the ‘us’-feeling with other participants. In this ‘magical’ moment of group fusion, individuals are strengthened and expanded by feeling themselves as part of something more powerful than themselves (Peterson 2001).

Emotions provoked by a strong sense of injustice are crucial for many activists’ motivation for doing activism. The role of emotions is central to activism (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Juris 2008); most accounts I collected touch upon ‘feeling’ and the desire to ‘do something’ in some way in response to the feeling (Derickson and Routledge 2015). The ethnographic vignettes in this thesis reveal how emotions are central to the creation of collective and embodied forms of social relations.

It is not only embodied co-presence that is important in the construction of ‘us’; virtual encounters play into the process of politicised collective identity and experience as well. Various forms of symbolic production occur online. Webpages, Facebook groups, and Twitter feeds filled with images, slogans, and narratives become platforms for broader, translocal identifications (Merrill and Pries 2019).

The extra-parliamentary left in Sweden

In social movement scholarship, the groups that are featured in this study are often categorised as ‘radical’ and described as composed by individuals with a belief in revolutionary, left-libertarian solu-

tions, inspired by a number of left-radical outlooks such as syndicalism, anarchism, communism, and autonomous Marxism, normally forming part of a broader struggle against what is perceived to be an oppressive social structure (Jämte 2013, 35, 37). The activists featured in this thesis thus form part of the so-called radical, extra-parliamentarian left, which has, since the late 1980s, been an influential agent in the Swedish political milieu (Jämte and Sörbom 2014). This political flank, which is based on a critique of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and authority, has been described as creating experimental spaces in which new ways of living life, organising structures, and perceiving theory are practiced (Melucci 1989). The most noted experimental spaces are those that take on the forms of direct democracy, which has long been practiced within extra-parliamentarian, left-wing groups (Leach 2009). Also, the theory of intersectionality (or ‘triple oppression’ as it was first called, see Jones 1946; Lynn 2014) was embraced early on and practiced in the radical, extra-parliamentarian circles in Sweden (Jämte 2013, 315ff). Hence, activism in this context can be considered to be a practical-intellectual endeavour.

In Sweden, both activists and mainstream media use ‘autonomous’ and ‘extra-parliamentarian’ interchangeably to label these groups, yet the definitions of these terms are not clear-cut. Both terms allude to groups that seek to accomplish social and political change outside the framework of institutionalised politics. ‘Autonomous’ grows out of the autonomous Marxists movement in Italy in the 1960s and activists in Sweden began to use it in the 1990s (F. Mikkelsen and Karpantschof 2003) when this kind of extra-parliamentarian practice and theory was established in the country, which was especially influenced by the German *Die Autonomen*-movement that began in the 1980s (Eley 2002). In most countries in Europe, the ‘autonomous movement’ grew as the radical branch of each country’s ‘alternative movement’,³⁶ a term describing the new kind of movements and subcultures that emerged in the 1960s and 70s in Sweden and was associated with groups of people that sought alternative ways of living, producing, and consuming while

³⁶ The ‘alternative movement’ and ‘alternative culture’ grew in popularity to also include a particular set of (often green/spiritual) practices and beliefs (see Longhurst 2013).

working for environmental sustainability, peace, and solidarity with ‘the third world’ (Ekberg 2016; Peterson, Thörn, and Wahlström 2017). Another important predecessor, beyond these new social movements, is the traditional workers’ movement. The new branch of autonomous activists, with roots in both ‘new’ movements and the labour movement, is associated with a turn away from pacifism towards more militant methods and the unlawful activities of street politics, such as squatting (the best-known squatter movement in the Nordic context was the BZ-bevægelsen in Denmark in the 1980s, see F. Mikkelsen and Karpantschhof 2003), and with bodily confronting neo-nazis and fascists in the streets (see Brink Pinto and Pries 2013; Jämte 2013; Jämte and Sörbom 2014). The importance of militancy reached far beyond the question of the use of violence as a tactic but signified a radically oppositional standpoint with a refusal to be co-opted or to let one’s behaviour be dictated by the laws and norms of the dominant society (Leach and Haunss 2009).

Ever since the Swedish secret police started using the phrase ‘the autonomous milieu’ (*den autonoma miljön*) in 2002 for radical class-struggle oriented and anti-fascist groups in Sweden (Brottsförebyggande rådet and Säkerhetspolisen 2009; SOU 2002), several activists I talked to have self-critically tried to stop using the term. But as revealed in several interviewees’ quotes in this thesis, ‘autonomous’ is still frequently used. Considering the narrow institutional (policing) definition of ‘autonomous’, ‘extra-parliamentarian’ is a more encompassing term as it also includes radical pro-asylum groups that are important and highly present in Malmö.

In the 1990s, a process of the transnationalisation of protest occurred in many Western countries in which the far-left, libertarian-socialist Zapatista movement (formed in 1994) in the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas was a key source of inspiration for a new generation of activists world-wide. Activists travelled across borders to join large protest events against global, neoliberal policies. This new transnational activism (Tarrow 2005) came to be known as the global justice movement (also called the anti-

globalisation or alter-globalisation movement), which is elaborated upon in the next section.

The transnationalisation and localisation of activism

The global justice movement refers to the mobilisations against the global representations of neoliberalism, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisations (WTO) in Seattle in 1999, in Prague in 2000, the EU summit in Gothenburg and the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, and the counter summits for the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre 2001–2003 and Mumbai in 2004 as well as the regional European Social Forums (ESF) that followed (Mayer 2007).

However, the counter-summit protests that were part of the global justice movement between 1999 and 2001 were met with severe repression by state forces and police (see, e.g., Wåg 2011), which generated a feeling of hopelessness among activists. This feeling of hopelessness is dealt with by J-K Gibson-Graham (2006), who says that the so-called ‘left melancholia’³⁷ stems from a perception that post-capitalism appears to be an impossibility. The feeling of powerlessness in front of the forces of the state, multinational corporations, and financial capitalism can be overwhelming (ibid.). This ‘political disappointment’ and sense of something lacking or failing arises from the realisation, for some activists, that the world is violently unjust and that the wealthy West is “governed by fear of outsiders, whose current names are ‘terrorist’, ‘immigrant’, ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum seeker’” (Critchley 2007, 6).

In Sweden, after the global justice movement campaign in Gothenburg in June 2001, known as the ‘Gothenburg riots’,³⁸ and the subsequent political repression and disappointment, the movement was forced into a period of isolation and internal renegotiations (Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015). The activists in Kämpa

³⁷ ‘Left melancholy’ is a term coined by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s (see Brown 1999; Traverso 2016).

³⁸ The EU summit in Gothenburg included a visit by the US president George W. Bush. During three days in June 2001, around 50,000 activists participated in various forms of collective action. Several peaceful demonstrations were held. However, violence escalated when activists became furious with the police for intruding on and isolating an activist camp during President Bush’s visit. The escalation continued until three activists were shot by the police, one of whom was severely injured (Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015).

tillsammans (Fight together) argued for a ‘turn to the everyday’ (*vändningen mot vardagen*), and Stockholm’s autonomous Marxists published the pamphlet ‘Give up activism’ (Sandén 2009; Andrew X 1999) in which they discussed the problems involved in the role of ‘the activist’. As pointed out by former activist Salka Sandén (2009), what the extra-parliamentarian left needed was not militancy but a rootedness in their own social reality, in contrast to the global issues that were on the agenda during the 1990s and early 2000s. This led to a movement that focused inward towards local and material issues (Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015), a tendency also seen in other countries (Pleyers 2010). Activists started to redefine militancy by reconsidering the use of violent and unlawful actions (Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015; see also Jämte 2013, 357, 360f).³⁹ While not rejecting illegal actions and violence on moral grounds, they increasingly acknowledged that their actions, as they were carried out in the 1990s, did not achieve change. Adding to that, their violent repertoire of contentions carried the risk of alienating the public as a potential ally (*ibid.*)

The ‘turn to the everyday’ is a concept that grew out of the activist milieu in Sweden and describes the change that occurred in that milieu in Malmö as elsewhere in Sweden. All activism happens locally in a physical place, including counter-summit protests, but the ‘turn to the everyday’ narrative refers to the changes in motivations, practices, and issues raised by the activists, which are geared towards collective, urban consumption: public transport, housing, healthcare, schools etc. Activists started to frame global issues as local problems (Mayer 2007, 101). This localisation of activism, in Malmö and elsewhere (*ibid.*, 106), has taken the form of campaign organisation and demonstrations on issues such as the rights of migrants, the protection of labour rights, the privatisation of public infrastructure, and welfare reform. This localisation further entailed a shift from being exclusive, reactive, and ‘spectacular’ to being more open, proactive, slow-process oriented, and engaged in

³⁹ As noted by Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015, 727), militancy is still part of the self-definition and identity of the radical, extra-parliamentarian left in Sweden. According to their observations, “militancy is interpreted by the activists as an uncompromising attitude, where you do not give in easily. It includes an openness to incorporate violence in one’s political action if needed. Violence is not necessarily practiced, but it is not ruled out either.”

local community work (Jämte 2013; Lundstedt 2016; Mayer 2007). The concept ‘turn to the everyday’ thus also refers to the idea of activism as something people in general can do, not only ‘activists’. This contemporary tendency of openness and slow-process-oriented activism is intimately connected to changes in attitudes among activists toward representative democratic institutions (Piotrowski and Wennerhag 2015), meaning here engaging in a dialogue with politicians and embracing hope in achieving political change through an interaction with institutionalised politics.

During a period after the global justice movement, summit hopping (travelling only to international protest events against the corporate world) was therefore looked down upon as something wealthy activists did instead of getting down to the hard and nitty-gritty work of changing local everyday realities. This turn has made today’s activists critical of the former type of activism that emphasised martyrdom and dangerous, spectacular actions (Lundstedt 2016, 31).

The ‘turn to the everyday’ was arguably not only a reaction to disappointment but also an expression of an orientation towards rejecting representative struggles; individuals, it was argued, should fight based on their own conditions and not have representatives do it for them, a stance that goes back much further in time. At a meeting of European ‘autonomous’ activists in Padua in 1981, an (informal) eight-point programme for the movement was formulated, of which the first one read:

We fight for ourselves and others fight for themselves. However, connecting our struggles makes us all stronger. We do not engage in ‘representative struggles’. Our activities are based on our own affectedness, ‘politics of the first person’. We do not fight for ideology, or for the proletariat, or for ‘the people’. We fight for a self-determined life in all aspects of our existence, knowing that we can only be free if all are free (Geronimo 2012, 173).

This standpoint rejects the Old Left’s hierarchical structure, and representative parliamentary politics in general, in favour of ‘poli-

tics of the first person'. This perspective is highly present in Malmö's activist scene and creates a tension between theory and practice: activists do not want to 'represent' the precarious though, at the same time, are unable to abstain from intervening in the precarity of others. Is it possible to conduct activism within relations of unequal power without, to a certain degree, 'representing' the most severely dispossessed? I will come back to this issue below.

An interesting question that the quote from Padua in 1981 raises is how, and to what extent, might neoliberalism, which emerged around that time, have influenced these activists and the activists of today. The degree to which the activists' political stance is affected by 'the neoliberal self' (McGuigan 2014) is, however, a topic that falls outside the aims and scope of this study.

This 'turn to the everyday' trend, a recent study shows, has developed into a process of 'de-radicalisation'—a turn towards openness and pragmatism—of the radical extra-parliamentarian left (Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag, forthcoming). This process has been called 'sossification' (*sossifiering*) by critical activists and media analysts (P. Larsson 2019), a term that alludes to *sossar* (nickname for Social Democrats) and meaning a process by which radical leftists seem to approach and sometimes adopt traditionally Social Democratic politics. Two important characteristics of this turn to openness and pragmatism include the encouragement of cross-movement coalitions and the advocacy of transgressive but non-violent forms of action (Jämte et al. forthcoming).

Notwithstanding the extra-parliamentarian left's noted development towards using less violent tactics, the Swedish government appointed a national coordinator for countering 'violence-promoting extremism' (*våldsbejakande extremism*) in 2014 to 'safeguard democracy' (SOU 2013). Beside preventing left-wing extremism, the focus was on radical Islamism and right-wing extremism.⁴⁰ The government's anti-extremism project was met by critical voices that highlighted the danger of conflating leftist extremists with fascist and far-right extremists, since this might lead to problematic comparisons between civil-disobedience and radical direct

⁴⁰ The project, which in its original form ceased in January 2018, mainly communicated through lectures, seminars, and a website called *Samtalskompassen* ('The conversation compass').

action (e.g. blocking, occupying) on the one hand and terrorism on the other (Boréus et al. 2015; Ekman et al. 2014; Wennerhag, Sörbom, and Ekman 2014). This governmental project for counter-ing leftist extremism is a form of ‘soft repression’, a term used in social movement theory to describe government-led projects that attempt to prevent, control, and influence social movement protests without coercion or violence, for example through methods of stigmatisation, ridicule, or silencing (see Wennerhag and Jämte 2019, 23).

Activists enact violence—other-directed, self-directed, or property-directed—that is anticipated, threatened, or actual (Peterson 2001, viii). The activist groups in this thesis assume Gandhian principles of non-violent action and civil disobedience, which most commonly include self-directed and property-directed violence but condemn other-directed violence. In this thesis, activists’ militancy for the most part takes the self-directed form, meaning here that they risk being beaten by the police, arrested, fined, or jailed. However, in a few cases (though not in the name of any of the activist groups featured in this thesis) there also existed violence as property-directed, as in smashing a window so that a rejected asylum seeker who has been detained can escape and find refuge. However, the individual activist who may have committed property damage as an act of resistance or solidarity (and not as a public, collective event), does not carry it out in the name of a specific activist group. The individual may not even be committed to a particular group, but still carries out an unlawful act of solidarity (as many non-organised individuals did during the Refugees Welcome Movement in 2015, see Chapter 5). When addressed in this thesis, such acts are nevertheless identified as political acts based on ‘radical equality’ (Rancière 1999). I did not observe any other-directed forms of violence among participants of the collective actions featured in this thesis, which confirms research that shows the tendency of radical activists today to use less other-directed enactments of violence than in the previous two decades in Sweden (Jämte et al. forthcoming).

Activist groups in Malmö

The groups featured in this thesis were selected for their prominent presence in Malmö during the time of my fieldwork. While I define these groups as part of the extra-parliamentarian scene in the city, each one of them has a distinct ideological orientation and political project(s).

Aktion mot deportation (Action Against Deportation), formed in 2009, works for the closure of migrant detention centres and against migration policies that criminalise refugees. They contest Swedish and European migration policies that focus on enforced, internal surveillance and the deportation of undocumented migrants and work to make racism and discrimination against racialised migrants visible.

Asylgruppen (the Asylum Group), formed in 1991, works together with and in support of asylum-seekers (mostly unaccompanied minors) whose applications have been rejected. They see their work as part of “the global struggle for freedom, equality and solidarity” (Asylgruppen 2019). Their work consists mainly of assisting asylum seekers and undocumented people in finding unauthorised shelter and other kinds of support (legal aid, food, clothing, access to healthcare, homework, school admittance, school materials, and communication with authorities, etc.).⁴¹ Each month, Asylgruppen distributes between 50–100,000 SEK (€5–10,000) to cover the expenses of the people they assist. In 2013, the group assisted around 100 people in Malmö (*Studio Ett* 2013).

Allt åt alla (Everything for Everyone) was formed in Malmö in 2009 with the aim of organising a society in line with the Marxist slogan “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” (Allt åt alla 2019).⁴² They engage in struggles that aim to create equality and to generally improve the lives of the city’s inhabitants, such as their working conditions, housing conditions

⁴¹ Asylgruppen was the initiator of Fristad Malmö (Malmö City of Sanctuary), which had the explicit aim of making Malmö into a sanctuary city for undocumented migrants. The idea of sanctuary cities is to develop citizenship at the city level, so that local policies would include undocumented migrants (J. McDonald 2012, 129).

⁴² According to members’ own statements, they deal with class struggle-oriented issues and take part in conflicts “which bring the working class together” and do not partake in collaboration with people who live off of other people’s work.

(through anti-gentrification and anti-segregation campaigns), and also anti-racism and anti-fascism actions. From being a rather small group of activists, with about 30 members but only some ten members actively participating in meetings, their size more than doubled in the wake of the Kämpa Malmö mobilisations described in Chapter 7. “Suddenly, we were about 30 people in every meeting”, as one member put it, saying it had a big impact on their organisational structure.

Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint), established in 2009, is a social centre and important activist venue located a 15-minute walk from Möllevången. The activists connected to this centre use cultural and artistic expressions in their struggle towards a more equal order by arranging and housing solidarity parties, concerts, festivals, educational events, and workshops. As far as political struggles are concerned, Kontrapunkt has stirred anti-gentrification campaigns and solidarity-based work with refugees (described in Chapter 6) and Roma migrants (described in Chapter 7) in the city.

Skåne mot rasism’s (Scania Against Racism) aim is to fight racism, neo-nazism, and fascism. Through their Facebook page, established in 2011, they call for mobilisations concerning any racist expressions in the city, commonly in the form of counter-demonstrations against far-right organisations’ public gatherings in the city (featured in Chapter 7).

What singles out Kontrapunkt and Allt åt alla in comparison with Aktion mot deportation, Asylgruppen, and Skåne mot rasism, is that the latter three are considered ‘one-issue groups’, working ‘solely’ with pro-asylum or anti-racism issues, whereas the two former collectives of activists work with manifold issues. Both Kontrapunkt and Allt åt alla are interested in finding ways to be a (supporting) force in different struggles unfolding in the city.

The activists featured in this thesis embrace a structurally critical analysis of the system in which racism, neoliberalism, class society, and nation-state borders are often seen as ultimate expressions of problems deeply embedded and embodied in society. Their solutions require far-reaching changes of the system. They have low or no confidence that racism, dispossession, displacement, and the exclusion and precariousness of non-citizens can be solved within the

existing system of global capitalism, which was brought about and facilitated by liberal democratic governments in nation-states. Therefore, activists do not hesitate to take the measures they consider necessary to come to grips with the injustices here and now, such as making it possible for ‘illegalised migrants’ to stay in the city or for Roma migrants to have decent living standards; they also scare off neo-nazis and far-right politicians through large counter-demonstrations. Hence, contentious direct action, civil disobedience, and acts of solidarity (including unlawful acts) are part of these activists’ repertoire of actions⁴³ (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on the conceptual differences between direct action and civil disobedience). The examples presented in this thesis include the releasing of rejected asylum seekers from detention centres and attempts to bodily prevent deportations from taking place, squatting houses for evicted Roma migrants, and a blockade to confront neo-nazis in a public space. Most actions are conducted in the streets and some are conducted only online, but most are simultaneously manifested off- and online.

While all groups adhere to principles of horizontalism and participatory democracy, their level of formalised structure varied. Allt åt alla is the only group that has a monthly membership fee and conducts meetings with a rigid structure. At their weekly meetings, Allt åt alla elects two new facilitators (preferably one old and one new member), one secretary, and one babysitter⁴⁴, and everybody is encouraged to take on the tasks so that organisational

⁴³ Charles Tilly coined the phrase ‘repertoires of contention’ to refer to the historically changing array of means available to a given population for making contentious political claims (see McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow 2005). Repertoires thus change over time and can vary from place to place, determined both by what the actors know how to do and what is expected from them (Tarrow 1998). During the industrial era in Malmö, common repertoires of action included strikes and food riots (caused by, e.g., rises in the price of food or a shortage or unequal distribution of food) (Nyzell 2005). The repertoire of contention common today in liberal democracies, as carried out by activist groups and social movements more broadly speaking, include the creation of special-purpose coalitions, as well as street marches, strikes, sit-ins, hunger strikes, blockades, occupations, boycotts, petitions, awareness-raising activities, statements to and in mainstream media, and leafletting.

⁴⁴ By having one babysitter as a rotating responsibility within the group, starting in 2014, Allt åt alla aimed at making child care a collective responsibility, which was perceived as a benefit for the group as a whole by giving more people the chance to commit themselves to activism. The purpose was to facilitate and encourage parents to participate in meetings in particular and to continue doing activism in general, not least for women, who tend, to a larger extent, to be the ones in heterosexual relationships who stay at home with the children. Many activists in Malmö have children: seven of my interviewees (out of 24) had or got children during my fieldwork.

knowledge and practical experiences might be distributed to all members. All positions of responsibility rotate among the members. These formalised structures work upon a non-hierarchical basis without appointed leaders.

Meetings held by Asylgruppen and Aktion mot deportation have, in contrast, no formalised structure but develop in a looser and more 'organic' manner. A facilitator is commonly appointed and preferably makes decisions based on consensus (as will be described in Chapter 5). In contrast to other groups in Malmö, Kontrapunkt has a more conventional organisational structure in the form of a steering group. Their organisational form and decision-making process are inspired by the participatory democratic method called sociocracy.⁴⁵ Moreover, Kontrapunkt has a selected amount of people who are professional activists, which means that they have an internal form of a salary-based system for a dozen activists who are prepared to work full-time, partly with the financial assistance of the culture department of Malmö municipality.⁴⁶ Their argument is that "capitalism works full-time, so we also have to work full-time to counteract it". However, the great majority of the activists connected to Kontrapunkt engage voluntarily while they work or study.

The groups that see the main line of conflict in society as between social classes, such as Allt åt alla,⁴⁷ I term *class struggle-oriented* groups. Being a class struggle-oriented group within the extra-parliamentarian left means conducting activism based on the interests of the working class⁴⁸ in horizontal ways using direct democratic methods of decision making (therefore not to be confused with vertically structured, Leninist-inspired groups). Class

⁴⁵ Sociocracy is characterised by its use of 'consent' rather than 'consensus' and majority vote. To learn more see, e.g., Rau and Koch-Gonzales (2018).

⁴⁶ Despite this funding, activists of Kontrapunkt maintain that they have no constraints put on them and can work autonomously. If the municipality would stipulate any conditions, the activists would stop accepting their money according to one of Kontrapunkt's key activists.

⁴⁷ I also include here their close allies Syndikalistisk Ungdom (The Swedish Anarchosyndicalist Youth Federation), Support Your Local Feminist, Mangla (the name of a radical feminist group), Revolutionär Ungdom (Revolutionary Youth), and Antifascist Action.

⁴⁸ Unlike with other Marxist definitions of key concepts, activists in extra-parliamentary groups commonly adopt a broader definition of the working class (influenced by autonomous Marxism, see Negri 1991), which also includes, beyond wage-earning workers (both white collar and blue collar), the unwaged (students, the unemployed, homemakers, self-employed, etc.).

struggle-oriented groups usually position themselves as different from (however not against) groups that mobilise based on identity (such as in terms of gender or ethnicity/'race') or on subcultural lifestyles such as punk or veganism (which characterises some animal-rights groups).

When using the term *pro-asylum groups*, I refer to activists involved in Asylgruppen,⁴⁹ Aktion mot deportation, and Kontrapunkt. Another common term used to address the same kinds of groups in scholarly literature is 'migrant rights groups'. I chose the term 'pro-asylum' since these groups are primarily made up of activists with Swedish citizenship or permanent residence permits who are 'pro' migrant rights and not of the asylum seekers themselves. Skåne mot rasism is an anti-racist group composed of representatives primarily from class struggle-oriented groups in the city, of which Allt åt alla is a major component. The different types of activism—class struggle-oriented, pro-asylum, and anti-racist/anti-fascist—constitute the activist scene in Malmö and are thus jointly analysed. This joint analysis is motivated by their shared (basic) ideological foundation and repertoire of action, their shared urban space (Malmö), and the fact that they publicly support each other's causes and sometimes collaborate.

The Malmö activist scene has close ties to the local branches of the Swedish Left Party, as will become apparent in Chapter 5. The Left Party constitutes a resource for the extra-parliamentarian scene (offering them, e.g., printing facilities, venues for activist meetings, sound systems for demonstrations), and Left Party representatives in Malmö claim (Nordling 2017, 189) that the extra-parliamentary left is vital for their political achievements in the city council (for example, concerning social rights for undocumented children in Malmö). Some activists are simultaneously members of the party and of an extra-parliamentary group. Most activists in Malmö vote for the Left Party, or possibly the Feminist Initiative, in local and national elections, while some abstain from voting due to their strict anti-state and anarchist principles.

⁴⁹ In addition to Aktion mot deportation and Kontrapunkt, Asylgruppen's close allies include Asylstafetten (The Asylum March), Ensamkommandes förbund (The Unaccompanied's Association), and Nyanländas Röster (Newcomers' Voices).

These blurred boundaries between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary branches of left-wing politics, and the fact that they collaborate and therefore impact each other's politics and practices, partly explain and make visible a significant tension between theory and practice in extra-parliamentary activism. This tension can be formulated as a constant vacillation between radicalism on the one hand and tactical pragmatism and a yearning for legitimacy in the eyes of the general public on the other hand. Although many of the activists hold anti-state attitudes in theory, they also engage in pragmatic solutions to achieve changes in the here and now through institutions (for example, by demanding social rights for migrants in precarious legal conditions within the framework of the city council). Similarly, while rejecting representative struggles in theory, many activists also engage in activities that could be considered as taking the form of representing people with no vote and voice in society (albeit outside state and city council institutions).

Allt åt alla is the group in Malmö that most clearly, in theory, rejects representative struggles. Liberation, according to these activists, is reached only when each individual fights based on his or her own situation, without representation. In other words, this means activists should organise around their personal experiences and interests while simultaneously working to minimise the degree to which their own behaviour contributes to the oppression of others (Leach 2009).

The question that then arises is how activists define representation. Rejecting representative struggles would impede certain forms of political work, such as pro-asylum activism if it is defined as representing people who have no formal voice or vote in society (such as in the case of non-citizens). Representation is complex and there is no consensus within the left on its definition. Activists' critiques of representation take different shapes: sometimes as general disapproval of the state, party politics, or large organisations such as NGOs, and sometimes as a critique against homogenising identities as formulated by 'representatives' of a certain (commonly oppressed) group. According to Gayatri Spivak (2010), every representation occurs within a hegemonic structure, and therefore one

needs to be critical of the relation between group, subjects, identity, and agency. Spivak shows the extent to which historical circumstances and ideological structures conspire to efface the possibility of being heard for those who, in various ways, are located in radically precarious and dispossessed positions, a social group that Spivak calls 'the subaltern'.⁵⁰

Spivak further claims that people who enjoy a structural privilege (such as Swedish activists with citizenship) must strive to identify and work against this privilege if they hope to establish relations of solidarity with those who do not share it (migrants in deprived social and legal conditions, for example). As an activist in a relatively privileged position (citizenship, middle class) who works against the subalternity of the subaltern, it is not possible, Spivak maintains, to *give* the subaltern a voice, but only to work *for* them and against the 'space of difference' in which they are located by the hegemonic order. The main spaces of difference that appear in the collaborative actions analysed in this thesis, which involve people in unequal power relations, are those of citizenship, education, material resources, and processes of racialisation.

A citizen-centred understanding of legitimate political agency is rooted in nation-state theory and practices of sovereignty (Johnson 2012, 118), which means national citizens' political participation is regarded as *the* legitimate form of participation. That having been said, I do not dismiss actions by, for example, undocumented or Roma migrants but rather want to highlight the role of 'citizenship' as *sometimes* a necessary bridge between non-citizen activists and state power (ibid.). The citizen thus becomes a central ally for organising and formulating demands, for the voices of marginalised people to be heard, and for contentious politics to happen. The creation of solidarity between people in unequal power relations, and keeping in mind the immanent risk of speaking on behalf of 'others', is discussed in more depth at the end of this chapter. As I

⁵⁰ 'Subaltern', as formulated by Antonio Gramsci (1971), describes the groups that are excluded from a society's established institutions and thus denied the means by which people's voices in their society are manifest. Among others, it was Spivak's scholarship on the subaltern in the 1970s that meant the term began to denote the colonised peoples of the Indian subcontinent and describe a new perspective on the history of an imperial colony as told from the point of view of the colonised rather than that of the colonisers.

will show in this thesis, the support and solidarity of persons outside of a marginalised group are essential for a struggle to be realised, since it is difficult (albeit not impossible) for non-citizens, who, beyond social and political rights in the country, often also lack knowledge about and experiences of activism in order to conduct struggles on their own.

Commonly, class struggle-oriented activists dismiss precisely pro-asylum activism on the basis of the above argument. Different perceptions of ‘representative struggles’ constitute a dividing line between the different activist groups in Malmö. This, however, has not prevented collaboration and solidarity between Allt åt alla and Asylgruppen, Aktion mot deportation, and Kontrapunkt. Also, in 2015-2016, Allt åt alla engaged in a struggle that crossed social boundaries with Roma migrants by creating an alliance with the Roma, which features as an ethnographic example in Chapter 7. By framing their joint struggle as an alliance, they want to separate their practice from ‘representative struggles’. However, calling it an alliance covers up the fact that it is not an alliance between two equal parts. Considering the activists’ resources and cultural capital, their joint struggle can be assumed to have been influenced strongly by the activists’ ideas, resources, and strategies. Importantly, the Roma dwellers of the Sörgefri settlement in Malmö 2013–2015 may, without the support (or ‘representation’?) of the Malmö activists (citizens), have been unable to politicise their situation.

Skåne mot rasism can be considered to be a development from the early, radical anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Sweden established in the late 1980s. Skåne mot rasism serves as an example of the changes observed in the extra-parliamentarian left (see Jämte 2013) in terms of attempting to mobilise large inclusive actions and being open to diversity yet preserving some degree of militancy. The mass-blockade against the neo-nazi Svenskarnas parti (Party of the Swedes) in the neighbourhood of Limhamn in 2014, described in Chapter 7, is an example of this tendency. So, today’s activists are not turning away from militancy (as in confrontational or transgressive collective actions) as such, but instead aim to turn militancy into something the general public can do, which is seen

to be better than what the exclusive clusters of activists in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s did. Skåne mot rasism supports a 'diversity of tactics', asserting that this is the most effective strategy for civil disobedience aimed at social change. The theory on a 'diversity of tactics' argues in favour of non-violent resistance that ranges from confrontational modes of resistance (as in blockades and sometimes damaging private property) to humour and theatrical modes of resistance in one and the same mass mobilisation. To condemn certain tactics (e.g. making a blockade or singing hymns) would fragment the broader scene and since marches are about numbers, denouncing some tactics would be counterproductive. The tactics are underlined by a mutual understanding between the various groups of the need for different ways of reaching the same goal, and by the acceptance among and between different activists of a multiplicity in preferred modes of making resistance happen (Vinthagen 2002).

To summarise, one tension that characterises the activist scene in Malmö comes from the scene's two different historical roots: working class-oriented issues on the one hand and the 'new' movement-oriented issues (pro-asylum, anti-racism, anti-fascism, environmentalism, etc.) on the other hand. This tension creates challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts between the different activists and groups, but also productive moments of collaboration, alliance, and collective identity, as I will show in this thesis. A final note is that there are several other groups in Malmö that are part of the extra-parliamentarian scene, but which fall outside the focus of this study. If, for example, animal rights, queer, or pro-Palestine groups were to be part of the analysis, other kinds of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts would appear.

Sociological composition

Due to differences in focus of interest and also their slight variations in organisational structures as described above, the groups discussed here attract different people in terms of class, theoretical outlooks, age, gender, sexuality, migrant background, migrant generation, and former activist experiences. Ruth Milkman's (2014) comparison between migrants' rights activists in The

Dreamers (consisting mostly of undocumented immigrant youth) and the class struggle-oriented activists of Occupy Wall Street is interesting since it points at the same kinds of differences and similarities that I see between their equivalents in Malmö. The demographic composition in Malmö resembles that of groups in the USA, in which white males and females are overrepresented in the class struggle-oriented activist groups. In general, pro-asylum activism attracts more activists who have had personal experiences of, or had parents with experiences of, migration to Sweden, asylum processes (some with the experience of having lived in refugee camps before coming to Sweden), and racism. The activists with migrant backgrounds whom I talked to felt motivated to act on their identification with newcomers who struggle with similar matters as they themselves had experienced or that their parents had experienced. In what follows, I will outline the composite characteristics of the main activist groups, including class, age, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

In terms of class background or trajectory and educational background, the different activist groups were generally alike. The majority of the activists, but far from all, had middle-class backgrounds and experiences of attending university (from individual courses to whole programmes). However, some activists with middle-class and educated backgrounds had themselves taken on traditionally working-class professions. The formerly undocumented youth who eventually became activists in pro-asylum groups commonly had working-class backgrounds and were born in Afghanistan or Somalia, for example, and had little or no schooling. Many of them had worked in factories and sweatshops from a very early age, for example knitting carpets from the age of seven or having experiences of living and working as undocumented in Iran or Pakistan. Many, but not all, of the new activists from Afghanistan belong to the ethnic group Hazaras, who, for decades, has suffered from structural discrimination and racism in Afghanistan as well as in the neighbouring countries (Mousavi 1998). Beyond experiencing harsh racism, many of them had witnessed violence and death under Taliban rule and had experienced a traumatic and long journey to Europe. A typical trajectory for the new migrant activists in

Malmö was that upon arrival to Sweden and when applying for asylum, they were considered ‘Dublin’, which means that their fingerprints had already been taken in another country in the European Union (EU). According to the Dublin Regulation, Sweden must send migrants back to their first EU member state of arrival (or formal registration). Hence, for ‘Dublins’ to have a chance to apply for asylum in Sweden, they must hide for 18 months, which was largely done with the support of activists. In sum, the entry of new migrant activists in Malmö contributes to making the activist scene more heterogeneous in terms of class.

Concerning gender composition, in *Allt åt alla* and *Kontrapunkt* males and females generally participated in equal numbers, whereas females were clearly overrepresented in the pro-asylum groups *Asylgruppen* and *Aktion mot deportation*. More lesbians and queers were involved in pro-asylum groups than in *Allt åt alla*. The composition of *Aktion mot deportation* was slightly different from *Asylgruppen* in terms of having more male participants. Some activists explained this by saying that gender norms make males generally attracted to short-term, action-oriented activities whereas females are drawn more to the caring and long-term oriented activities. Research has shown that, compared to their male counterparts, female activists tend to attach more value to helping others, feel guiltier when they have not been compassionate, and believe they are expected to care for the personal and emotional needs of others (Wilson 2000). One of the activists involved in *Asylgruppen*, Gabriel, 32 years old, is an odd bird, he explained to me, as he is male and has a migrant background in an activist network composed largely by white females.

The age of the activists I met during my fieldwork commonly stretched between 18 to 45 years old, with an overrepresentation of activists 25–35 years of age. The general discourse on radical activism often trivialises this sort of activism as something only ‘rebellious youth’ engage in, meaning here 15 to 25-year-olds, and, as such, indicates that it is a sign of youthful immaturity and unreasonable citizenship (Peterson 2001, xii). When the activist grows older, the discourse implies, the activism is naturally abandoned. However, I met numerous politically engaged people from the ages

of 30 to 45 years old, some of whom (among the activists in their forties) have been active within the extra-parliamentarian left in Malmö or elsewhere in Sweden since the end of the 1990s. The activists themselves claim that the activist scene in Malmö is ‘older’ and less ‘youthful’ than in their former places of residence. Older members have also contributed to the continuation of their groups over the years.

‘Race’, ethnicity, and the whiteness of most of the groups have been a continuous source of discussion and problematising within activist groups in Malmö in general, especially in view of the fact that their ethnic composition is not representative of Malmö’s diverse migrant population. Within Allt åt alla, there is a self-awareness of being composed mainly of white, middle-class members with a university education. Their ‘whiteness’ is perceived with scepticism by some activists in pro-asylum circles, who have generally attracted more activists with experiences of racialisation in Swedish society. When members of Allt åt alla discussed the issue of representation, beyond the awareness of not having members from the lower social classes and few of migrant background, they concluded that what their group most of all lacked was people from Malmö. None of the activists in their group was originally from Malmö. As one of their members, Jacob, 31 years old, said, “we lack workers and *malmöiter* [‘Malmöites’]”. Within pro-asylum circles, they mostly talked about the lack of white male activists. The social centre Kontrapunkt seems to have attracted the most heterogeneous group of people in terms of class, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, and migrant backgrounds.

The context in which the activism I study takes place is that of urban restructuring and gentrification and the processes of displacement and dispossession associated with them in a city of immigration. Therefore, with the help of theories from the fields of critical urban and migration studies, I discuss these terms in the following section of this chapter to illuminate what is taking place in the city of Malmö.

What cities can teach us

Saskia Sassen (2005) writes of cities as nodes where different global processes cross one another. Les Back (1996) argues that the ethnic diversity in cities makes them into the most racist and tolerant places at the same time. Consequently, activism is most visible in cities too. Large, intense, and heterogeneous constellations of people in cities make city life inescapably political: how do we live together (Massey 2005, 151)? Beyond the study of cultural and ethnic mixing, the city is a suitable place to study the effects of economic restructuring since it operates as a strategic site for commodification processes under capitalism (Brenner et al. 2009; Brenner and Theodore 2002). Coupled with urban restructuring, scholars have identified a crisis of legitimacy, marked by decreasing confidence in political, elite, and liberal democratic systems of representation (Cumbers 2015; Dikeç 2018), which has been made especially visible through the various urban uprisings after the economic crisis in 2008.

Many influential scholars have convincingly argued that the most significant structural social conflicts of the 21st century concern the production, control, and effects of urban processes (see Mayer, Thörn, and Thörn 2015). Since the city plays a central role in the constitution of capital, the city can be considered a system in which capitalist relations can be studied (Castells 1972). Capitalism is a system that concentrates wealth, which makes possible new investments that further concentrate wealth (Tsing Lowenhaupt 2015, 62). Capitalism, as Marx stated, rests upon the perpetual search for surplus value, i.e. profit (Harvey 2013). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) have compared the city, as a locus of socio-political mobilisation, with the role of the factory during the industrial era. Factory owners concentrate wealth by paying workers less than the surplus produced by the workers each day. Owners ‘accumulate’ profit assets from this extra value. Profit making now requires ever larger revenue sources—traditional factory production is not enough. Capital seeks to resolve crises through geographical expansion, which may be redirected into the built environment (Paton 2014, 25). Urbanisation is thus required in the current economic situation for this perpetual search for prof-

it (Harvey 2013). Therefore, city leaders (often through private-public collaborations) in Malmö as elsewhere need to find new profitable terrains for capital accumulation and investment. The strategies for capital accumulation currently employed worldwide will be discussed in the following section.

Cities are structured by both local and transnational inequalities, including differential access to political and economic power, and cities are situated in interdependent relationships affecting, and being affected by, the constitution of other cities (see, e.g., Brenner 1998; Smith 2008; Glick Schiller and Schmidt 2015). Since cities are positioned in different ways internationally, city leaders actively seek to maintain or improve their positioning through competition with other cities. Malmö is a global city in the sense that it has been affected by the globe-spanning processes of neoliberal restructuring and rescaling⁵¹ (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, 5). However, it is not a global city in the sense that Sassen uses the term (2005), which is to describe dominant nodes where wealth and power tend to be concentrated and commanded, such as London. Global economic restructuring repositions localities in hierarchies of economic and political power, and this is the reason why cities compete with one another to attract capital, investments, and people, so as to improve their position in this power hierarchy. The positionality of each locality, Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2015, 2) state, “affects the opportunities, aspirations, and the ways in which the city’s residents, including newcomers with migrant backgrounds, construct social relations and seek to forge sociabilities”.

The globe-spanning processes of neoliberal restructuring and rescaling include, on the one hand, the extensive de-regulation of the cross-border flows of capital (in its diverse forms as investment, finance, and commodities), and on the other hand the escalating re-regulation of human mobility, particularly of migratory and refugee movements (De Genova 2014; Massey 2005). These seemingly

⁵¹ ‘Scaling’ refers to the ordering of socio-spatial units within multiple hierarchies of power, while ‘rescaling’ refers to a reordering of these relationships (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, 6–7). Taken together, the terms scaling and rescaling serve as a conceptual shorthand that allows the researcher to investigate the area in-between two processes that are restructuring, including movements of various forms of capital and the reorganisation of the relationships of power between specific socio-spatial units of governance (ibid.).

contradictory processes of de-regulating flows of capital and re-regulating movements of (some) people take place alongside the rise of right-wing populism and neo-nationalism on a global scale (see, e.g., Fenton 2010; Hellström 2016), the growth of anti-Muslim racism (Malm 2009; Gardell 2010), and racial attacks on, and the negative racialisation of, refugees and asylum seekers (Anthias 2006; Fekete 2009). This is articulated in various European countries through formulations of a deeply racialised, and sometimes openly racist, politics of citizenship (see, e.g., De Genova 2014; Peter 2004). This is not, however, as Bridget Anderson, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright (2012, 73; see also Massey 2005) argue, a contradiction. The simultaneous process of granting more freedom to capital (and wealthy people) and less to migrants is rather a crucial underpinning of global capitalism and the global system of nation states. Capitalism needs 'free' individuals as a cheap labour force, but it simultaneously wants to control their movement since it cannot afford the same freedoms and rights for all people (Žižek 2016, 54). In other words, capitalism is dependent on uneven geographical development and profits by differentially valuing people.

In order to examine, in the remaining pages of this chapter, the role of the city as a node for both capital accumulation and resistance to dispossessions, I make use of a theoretical framework of power and resistance. I begin with discussing power, mainly through the notions of 'hegemony' (Gramsci 1971), 'the police' (Rancière 1999, 2010; Dikeç 2007; Uitermark and Nicholls 2014), and politics and post-politics (Mouffe 2005; Swyngedouw 2009; Žižek 1999; Rancière 2004) under neoliberalism. In the subsequent and last sections of this chapter, I examine resistance, mainly through the notions of 'the political' (Rancière 1999; Mouffe 2005; Arendt 1998), 'prefigurative politics' (Boggs 1977; Maeckelbergh 2011; C. D. Trott 2016), 'solidarity' (Scholtz 2008; Featherstone 2012; Stjernø 2018), and finally 'commons' and 'commoning' (Cumbers 2015; Hardt and Negri 2009; Dawney 2013; De Angelis 2010).

Antonio Gramsci (1971) uses the term hegemony to explain how the ruling class exercises power through its intellectual and moral

capacity to win the consent of the mass of the population. The Marxist theory of hegemony, as developed in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, originates from the question of why the working class does not revolt more than they actually do, considering that they live under continuous oppression and exploitation. In other words, the notion of hegemony seeks to explain how governments or the ruling class exert power without the use of force. In order to maintain dominance under capitalism, the ruling class strives to present their interests (maintaining a capitalist economy) as a common interest and capitalist structures as natural and universal. To present the status quo as a non-ideological, natural state of things, which is done through the mass media, makes people increasingly support ideas that reproduce the system and prevent revolutions (Gramsci 1971, 199). What hegemony constructs, then, is a kind of dominating culture that has more influence or power than other possibilities. Since people must find a meaningful existence within these structures, which are controlled by the elite and characterised by domination and inequality, people adapt to the norms, ideas, and attitudes that are expected from them by the ruling cultural framework (Roseberry 1994). When a culture becomes hegemonic, it becomes 'common sense' for the majority (S. Hall 1993). Hence, hegemony is mainly reproduced through the consent of the people who hold no power. Hegemony is not only a site where power is established, however, but also a site where it is potentially unsettled. The notion of hegemony, or the 'hegemonic process' (Roseberry 1994), can thus be used to understand not only power and consent but to also understand struggle, which is simultaneously enabled and constrained by the processes of domination. Resistance that challenges the hegemony can be defined as 'counter-hegemonic', a term I elaborate on under the section on resistance further below.

Another theorist who also tries to examine and understand how power works in a society is Jacques Rancière. He uses the notion of 'the police' to refer to the status quo. 'The police' defines what is visible and sayable, what is noise and what is voice (Uitermark and Nicholls 2014, 972), and establishes a social order of governance "with everyone in their 'proper' place in the seemingly natural or-

der of things” (Dikeç 2007, 18). ‘The police’ is used in a broad sense to refer to all activities that create order; policing is thus not necessarily repression by force, but “distribution—distribution of places, people, names, functions, authorities, activities, and so on—and the normalisations of this distribution” (Dikeç 2007, 19). It is a disciplining process with the purpose of governing bodies (Rancière 1999, 2–29).

Both Rancière’s ‘police’ and Gramsci’s ‘hegemony’ help one to understand that order is created and power is maintained not (only) through force, but through people’s consent: an order is produced that then appears as the natural order of things. Today’s dominating order is characterised by a consensus (between political parties on the left and right) on neoliberal policies, which is the kind of ‘post-political’ (some call it ‘post-democratic’) condition that is criticised not only by Rancière, but also by contemporary political theorists such as Chantal Mouffe, Slavoj Žižek, and Eric Swyngedouw.

Mouffe (2005, 2013) criticises today’s liberal democracies for ignoring antagonism and for instead promoting the idea of ‘politics as consensus’, demonstrated by the increase of centrist governments that are jointly ruled by political parties on both the Right and the Left in many Western countries. She argues that this liberal idea of politics as consensus creates an unhealthy political climate that paves the way for anti-democratic forces such as far-right populism. Žižek (1999a) argues that the post-political condition of consensual neoliberalism is characterised by a recognition of inequality but it is depoliticised and becomes an individual phenomenon. This condition thus increasingly prevents marginalised people from politicising their marginalisation. Swyngedouw (2009) similarly shows how the post-political condition at the level of city governments has brought along technocratic arrangements based on agreement on environmental management, which prevents questions of urban environmental justice from being tackled.

What these contemporary theorists have in common is their view of the neoliberal hegemony as being post-political. For them, ‘real’ politics is that which recognises and tackles conflict and disagreement since society naturally contains different interests. Before go-

ing on to theorise politics in this antagonistic and conflictual sense, I turn to examine more closely the node of power as it appears in Malmö and Sweden.

Neoliberalism and urban restructuring

With ‘neoliberalism’, I refer to a theory of political economic practices that produce a series of contemporary projects of capital accumulation through a reduction of state services (health, education, housing) and workers’ rights, as well as through processes of privatisation, deregulation, the lessening of restrictions on business operations, and the increasing of public-private partnerships (Harvey 2005; Brenner and Theodore 2002). Neoliberalism can be viewed as a restructuring of the relationships between private capital owners and the state, which rationalises and promotes a growth-first approach to urban development (T. Sager 2011; Peck and Tickell 2002). It is thus a useful concept for understanding the contemporary trend of politics worldwide, which relies on the principle that all economic and social problems have a market solution (Peck and Tickell 2002). Beyond being referred to as a series of projects for reorganising capital accumulation that indicate a shift from the welfare state to the logics of the market, I understand neoliberalism as a specific form of political rationality: it is a particular form of governance that constitutes individuals and institutions in compliance with the norms of the market, producing individualised subjects responsible for their own well-being—or misery (Brown 2015). Individualism, entrepreneurialism, competition, and freedom of choice are central values of neoliberalism (T. Sager 2015). To maintain legitimacy, neoliberal states find it necessary to maintain some welfare provisions and to acknowledge human rights, although effort is taken to redefine justice along neoliberal lines (Leitner et al. 2007, 10). The legitimacy of states today nevertheless relies on their ability to successfully secure and promote the market (Brown 2015).

Neoliberal (de)regulations of the international monetary order were fostered by corporate, governmental, and intellectual actors in the wake of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system at the beginning of the 1970s (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, 4; Peck and

Tickell 2002). During the brief historical era before that (1945-1972), liberal capitalism operated under a hegemonic model of relations with the working class in the United States and Western Europe, known as the Keynesian welfare state (Day 2005, 7; Brenner and Theodore 2002). Unions were allowed to exist and to fight for improvements for workers, and, in return, corporations received a guarantee that strikes would occur only under controlled circumstances. However, the neoliberal model, aiming to increase profits, sought to free itself from state regulation and working-class resistance (ibid.). Neoliberalism purports to give priority to individual freedom and the right to private property. The state's role under neoliberalism is thus to set up the military, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure the private property rights of individuals and to guarantee, by force if necessary, the proper functioning of the markets. Global financial and governmental elites meet precisely for this purpose on an increasingly regular basis (Day 2005, 8), such as in G8 summit meetings (reformatted as G7, the Group of Seven, in 2014).

Urban space is a crucial target for neoliberal intervention, coupled with the reduction of taxes, welfare retrenchment, privatisation, and de-regulation of public resources (Harvey 1989; Brenner and Theodore 2002). With this neoliberal trend in mind, city leaders seek new revenue sources. If markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, housing, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary (Harvey 2005, 2). Flows of capital generate revenue, and revenue in cities comes from people buying property, investing, working, and consuming in the city and paying taxes. A way for local governments to generate revenue is therefore to attract better-off residents to their cities, and they do this by engaging in urban regeneration projects, such as prestigious commercial and housing projects. This development is visible in Malmö, where urban land and property development are today crucial areas of investment and profit and where the exchange value of urban space has taken priority over social investments (Holgersen 2017).⁵²

⁵² Johan Pries (2017) suggests a slightly different tale of neoliberal development in Malmö, a development he terms 'social neoliberalism'. With this, Pries claims the importance and prominent role of

Just as in many other European cities, the City of Malmö has changed its approach to regeneration in comparison to previous decades. The city's politics and economy, physical landscape, and the residents' identities have changed radically in this period, marked by both substantial growth and deep crises (*ibid.*). The switch in Sweden's urban economic-political approach during the previous decades has been, in simple and general terms, as follows. During the welfare regime in the social-democratic tradition (Esping-Anderson 1990), which was built on Fordist-Keynesian theories, the city focused on building houses for the working class. During the post-industrial, neoliberal 'workfare' regime (Jessop 2002)⁵³, however, the city's strategy has been to build houses for the wealthy (Grander 2018). The leading motif of local urban development is that planning must support economic growth (Holgersen 2017; Peck and Tickell 2002). Various urban restructuring projects have been implemented in Malmö since the beginning of the 1990s to create "urban space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth 2002, 815), including large shopping malls (Emporia, Entré), concert and sports arenas (Malmö Arena, Swedbank Stadion), luxury hotels and concert and conference halls (Malmö Live), and luxury residential areas (Western Harbour, Turning Torso). Upcoming projects include Cultural Casbah in Rosengård and a cycling path that will connect the inner city with its periphery.

Västra Hamnen (Western Harbour), one of the city's largest luxury residential clusters, erected on a former industrial water-front site, is one example of an urban restructuring project aimed at stimulating economic growth in Malmö. Based on the trickle-down theory, the project aims at creating vacancy chains, which in the long run would benefit the lower sectors in society and decrease segregation in the city. The term 'urban restructuring' refers pre-

social governance in Malmö's neoliberal formation, "where social regulation was reconfigured rather than abandoned by neoliberal reforms" (*ibid.*, 215).

⁵³ As Magnus Dahlstedt (2015) notes, flexibility, innovation, and international competitiveness constitute the overriding goals of this workfare regime. To make the labour market more flexible and competitive, economic policy is given precedence over social policy. Social welfare expenditure is thus currently viewed more in terms of a cost of production than as a means of redistributing resources.

cisely to these kinds of changes and to the accumulated impact of the transformations wrought by neoliberal projects on specific places, as well as the policies, rhetoric, and technologies that accompany these changes (Smith 1996; Harvey 2007; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009). The goals of ‘trickle down’ (see Holgersen and Baeten 2016) have not, however, been reached; the development in Malmö rather reveals the opposite tendency (Rasmusson, Grander, and Salonen 2019). In the words of anthropologist Tania Murray Li (2007, 20):

Experts justify intervention as a measure to optimize the general good. Even though they do not stand to profit directly from capitalist enterprise, they promote growth because they are convinced it is beneficial to the population at large. Yet interventions that set the conditions for growth simultaneously set the conditions for some sections of the population to be dispossessed. Winners and losers do not emerge naturally through the magic of the market, they are selected.

As the quote suggests, a hegemonic understanding of capitalism as something positive and beneficial for everyone prevails in both private and state business. It also points to how capitalism inevitably relies on the existence of haves and have-nots: if one sector of society is to benefit from certain interventions, another sector will lose.

The urban transformations that have taken place in Malmö since the introduction of neoliberal economic and political governance in the 1990s are dependent on a redistributive political process that David Harvey (2004) has described as the neoliberal drive towards ‘accumulation by dispossession’: a process that lies at the core of today’s urbanisation and constitution of capital. Harvey uses this term to refer to wealth accumulation that takes place by dispossessing people of their resources, for example their housing, water, and transportation through privatisation, their neighbourhood through urban transformation projects, and their public spaces through the commodification of urban space.

One central example of a dispossessive process that has had a major impact on segregation and increased inequality in Swedish

cities is the marketisation of public housing (H. Lind and Lundström 2007; Hedin et al. 2012; Christophers 2013; Grander 2018), which is argued to be one of the most liberal market-governed housing markets in the Western world (Hedin et al. 2012). Since 1932, Swedish politics has been dominated by the Social Democratic Party.⁵⁴ In the tradition of the ‘Swedish model’, state regulation and control over the housing stock were seen as a prerequisite for offering equal opportunities for people to live in the city by allowing them to find housing with low rents and for areas not to be exclusively for people who had the means to buy flats (Hedin et al. 2012).

One of the first things the new government, which came into power in 1991 led by the conservative party Moderaterna,⁵⁵ did was to close the Department of Housing. Under the new government leadership,⁵⁶ housing was not to be distinguished from any other commodity (Hedin et al., 2012). Longstanding legislation regulating the housing sector that prevented the commodification of housing was abolished.⁵⁷ In the new so-called Danell system for housing finance, established in 1993, subsidies were either dropped or radically reduced. The new neoliberal politics was tacitly endorsed and eventually further developed by the Social Democratic governments that followed (Lindbom 2001). It was shown that 90 per cent of the rent increase between 1989 and 1997 was directly related to political decisions, primarily related to the reduction in subsidies and an increased taxation on rental properties (Hedin et al. 2012).

Since 2011, public housing companies have operated in accordance with demands for competitiveness and a business-like return on investments, which in practice means that public housing increasingly strives for profit (Grander 2018). In Malmö, the municipal housing company MKB made a profit of about 1 billion SEK

⁵⁴ The Social Democratic Party was uninterruptedly in government 1936–1976. 1976–1982, Sweden was led by liberal conservative coalitions, then again by the Social Democrats 1982–1991.

⁵⁵ The Moderate Party (in Swedish Moderata samlingspartiet (M), commonly referred to as Moderaterna [the Moderates]) is a liberal-conservative political party in Sweden.

⁵⁶ The first government in Sweden led by a Conservative prime minister (Carl Bildt) since 1930.

⁵⁷ This includes the housing provision law, the housing assignment law, and the land condition law (requiring municipal land ownership or transfer for loan subsidies). Also, housing allowances according to income and family size, directed to households in need, were reduced (Hedin et al. 2012).

between 2010 and 2014 (Baeten et al. 2016; Wahlgren 2016). Public housing companies' universal aim to retain 'good housing for all' is thus under pressure: several studies have shown that in practice public housing is no longer open to all, but only for those with a sound economic base and good references (Hedin et al. 2012, 6; see also Grander 2018). The above-mentioned redistribution of national income through political housing reform made owner-occupiers gain and tenants in rental housing lose (ibid.). These changes in the sphere of housing are of central importance for the development seen in Möllevången, which I explore in depth in Chapter 3.

Another important strategy of neoliberal urbanism that is related to the marketisation of housing and forms of tenancy is the gentrification of inner-city areas and commercialisation of its public spaces. Gentrification is conceived as part of a wider process of the uneven development of urban space under the capitalist mode of production (Smith 1996) in which housing is a major vehicle of capital accumulation (Harvey 2013).

In the first decade of the 21st century, the political scientist Richard Florida (2003) was invited to municipalities around the world to lecture on his proclaimed book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. He argued that cities can no longer compete only by developing mega-projects or attracting companies, but need to reach out to 'the creative class', which he saw as key to economic growth in cities: gay people, artists, bohemians, foreign-born residents, intellectuals, and tech workers, who are seen as key agents of gentrification.⁵⁸ This 'new middle class', to use sociologist David Ley's (1980, 1996, 2003) term, has been referred to as 'yuppies' (young urban professionals) in the United States; in the context of Malmö and Möllevången today, such people are called 'hipsters'.

Changing the demography of Malmö has been an official aim of the local government since 1996 (Pries 2017, 112). The establishment of Malmö University must be understood in relation to this

⁵⁸ Based on statistics, Florida claimed a positive relationship between the number of bohemians and gay residents in a city and its economic growth (see Florida and Gates 2001). To measure this, he created 'the Bohemian Gay Index'. While embraced by city developers and economist world-wide, Florida's creative class theory has been criticised by scholars for contributing to the increased socio-spatial inequalities in cities (Peck 2005).

aim, since an important part of the new creative class are academic professionals and university students. This partly explains the general change of the class composition seen in the activist scene in the city during the past two decades: in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the majority of activists had working-class jobs, whereas the majority of activists today consists of students and professionals with university degrees.

The new middle class desires tolerance, diversity, and historic architecture, and if the city leadership can create that in inner city areas development will occur. With this new perspective, migrants are re-valued as assets in a branding strategy based on economic competitiveness in the city as an open, diverse, and cosmopolitan place (Hadj-Abdou 2014). Indeed, Malmö is revaluating (Nilsson 2010) migrants, students, and activists as important assets for the creation of an interesting and internationalised urban space that can attract capital.

Gentrification

Beyond Florida's affirmative thesis, most academic work on gentrification has been critical of it (see, e.g., Atkinson and Bridge 2005) and has focused on how it threatens 'cities for the many not the few' (Amin, Massey, and Thrift 2000). Gentrification has become one of the main concerns of urban scholars, planners, developers, and political activists.

Uitermark and Dyvendak (2007, 127) argue that gentrification is currently the "means through which governmental organisations and their partners lure the middle classes into disadvantaged areas with the purpose of civilising and controlling these neighbourhoods". It has also been argued that gentrification imbues working-class people with consumerist and traditionally middle-class habits of homeownership (Paton 2014, 40). Gentrification efforts thus involve introducing a new set of ideas, such as encouraging ways of living that support relations of accumulation. Public housing, traditionally a working-class support mechanism, has increasingly been replaced by legitimisation-narratives of property-ownership (ibid.).

There are many complexities and controversies around the concept of gentrification, which I will only briefly address with the help of the book *Gentrification* (2008) by Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, in which they have succinctly summarised the debate. The classic definition of gentrification is associated with the meaning Ruth Glass (1964) offered when she first used the term: the displacement of the working-class population that inhabits a certain built environment by members of the middle and upper classes. Urban scholar Philip Clay (1979) made the first attempt to systematically assess the process of gentrification and he distinguished four stages, which should be seen as an ‘ideal type’ of certain recurrent tendencies that have been observed empirically in processes of gentrification in various places (see, e.g., Lees et al. 2008, 31-33).

In the first phase, a group that shares some form of identity (artists, bohemians, students) move into a couple of properties in a declining neighbourhood. No displacement of the local residents occurs at this stage since the new residents move into vacant flats. This particular stage was given attention to in sociologist Sharon Zukin’s (1982) study on the gentrification of Manhattan’s SoHo neighbourhood starting in the 1970s. She focuses on artists’ role in this process. There is an economic reason as to why artists or students move into run-down areas, which is important in the case of Möllevången at the end of 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. One could commonly live cheaply and relatively spaciouly. The kind of artists that Zukin refers to are poor in economic terms but are able to generate cultural capital through their art. Zukin means that the establishment of art galleries is the first sign of an initiated process of gentrification.

Considering the case of Möllevången, I want to shift attention from artists and workers within the cultural sectors, although they too constitute an important part of the population in Möllevången today, to students and political activists who also moved there due to cheap and centrally located flats. Their cultural and ‘political capital’ are confirmed through their political practices (like political protests, including left-wing-oriented festivals) in the public space, and their establishment of leftist bookshops and cafés in the

neighbourhood attracts ‘the new creative class’ that wants to live in this ‘politically vibrant milieu’. David Ley (1996) pointed out that a great deal of the people who moved into the North American cities where gentrification processes started in the 1960s and 1970s were also young middle-class students, especially those within the humanities and social sciences. In this first phase, artists or students renovate their flats for their own use, mainly through their own labour. “Glassfabriken was literally built by us”, as one activist told me. The activist had participated in the renovations and the establishment and the opening of the anarchist café in Möllevången in 2001 in a building that historically had housed an ice cream factory.⁵⁹

The second phase of gentrification is reached through these people’s own social networks, which takes the form of more people moving into the neighbourhood and expanding their reach throughout the entire area, which leads to a lack of available flats. Real estate businesses start becoming interested in the area and professionals in the real estate market make their first investments there. With this increased attraction, intersected with both professional and pioneer renovations of houses, a process of displacement of early residents who lack both cultural and economic capital is initiated.

In the third phase, public attention through mainstream media starts playing an active role in the gentrification process, which triggers gentrification further. New actors enter the scene, such as private investors who buy and renovate properties and build new ones. Also, entrepreneurs and local businessmen mobilise in efforts to redefine what is commonly a strongly stigmatised identity. Crime-prevention measures are taken, such as increased policing, to make sure the new residents and the many visitors feel safe in the neighbourhood.

In the fourth and last phase, a larger number of properties are gentrified and middle-class people continue to move in. What is significant with the new residents is that more of them are from the

⁵⁹ Café Glassfabriken (literally ‘ice cream factory’), a non-profit, vegan café with the aim of creating “a democratic, gender egalitarian, ecologically and economically equitable society”, was founded in 2001 in a former ice cream factory building in Möllevången, and closed down in 2015.

wealthier middle class, commonly working in the managerial and business sector rather than the professional one. Economic capital is more important than cultural capital for these people, so small and specialised businesses, like exclusive boutiques that correspond to these people's interests, are commonly established. Land and real estate values have now increased to such a level that those who have bought or kept a flat with speculative motives can now sell and profit (H. Thörn 2013, 276; Lees et al. 2008, 31-33).

As has been said, the process described above has been highly debated and many new directions of gentrification have been observed depending on local contexts (see, e.g., Baeten and Listerborn 2015; C. Thörn and Holgersson 2014; A. Holm 2006). The main issue at stake is nevertheless the driving forces behind gentrification processes, and studies have shown their multiple and contradicting causes and impacts. From a market-economy model, residential mobility patterns are understood to be a result of the relationship between availability and demand on housing and land. In contrast to this explanation that highlights consumption, Marxists theorists such as Neil Smith (1996) and David Harvey (1989) point to the production side as the driving force of gentrification. While the market-economy model is rarely able to explain why decay occurs, the Marxist model explains decay by directing attention to those who are fundamentally responsible for the maintenance of properties, namely the property owners. Maintaining properties is a fairly bad investment, especially if the renters are made up of low-income households. Good investments are rather newly built houses or those that have been renovated to increase standards and status.

Josef Schumpeter (1942) tried to explain why decay occurs through the notion of 'creative destruction', meaning that de-investment is also done with an aim to make space for new investments and thus capital accumulation. Departing from this dynamic, Smith (1979) formulated the rent-gap thesis, "which explains gentrification as the product of investment and disinvestment in the urban land market" (Lees et al. 2008, 61). The rent gap is basically the difference between the return of income that a particular property generates presently and the return that could be earned if the land were put to its optimal, highest, and best use (Smith 1979). As

the rent gap grows larger, it creates lucrative profit opportunities for developers, investors, and home-buyers.

In conclusion, a central debate in this field of research has been whether it is the quest for profit or the expansion of the middle class that offers the best explanation for gentrification (Slater 2010). In recent scholarship, the attempts to explain gentrification in terms of ‘either or’ binaries of production or consumption, supply or demand, structure or agency, and economics or culture have been abandoned in favour of much more complex understandings that recognise the importance of both production and consumption factors (*ibid.*). But even if it were ever the case, the gentrification of Möllevången is no longer only about individual middle-class actions, but rather “it is the result of a number of actors and actions, the most important of which is now the state through the import of gentrification into urban policy, and indeed other public policy” (Lees et al. 2008, xxvi). That having been said, “the effects of gentrification are multi-dimensional: indirect and direct, positive and negative” (Paton 2014, 37), as I will show in Chapter 3 through activists’ and residents’ personal experiences of the changes in Möllevången.

The history of Möllevången resonates with the gentrification of many other neighbourhoods in Europe and can be understood as the result of a shift from Fordism to neoliberalism, commonly in former working-class, inner-city areas, which, at a certain point, began to decay. Importantly, the upgrading of Möllevången is affected by and dependent on planned and ongoing restructuring projects in adjacent urban areas, such as Norra Sofielund and Rosengård, or even farther away such as Western Harbour (see Chapter 3).

With labour and refugee immigration to Sweden in the 1960s to the 1990s, Möllevången became populated by immigrant, low-income households, many of which opened small businesses in the area. Then artists, students, and politically engaged people followed in line with the logic of gentrification described above. In this thesis, I adopt anthropologists Ayse Çağlar’s and Nina Glick Schiller’s (2018) understanding of migrants living in precarious conditions as not being just a marginal surplus population outside

the processes of capital accumulation, but as contributing to the processes of creating value in city land and property in several interrelated ways. One important dimension of the gentrification process seen in Möllevången is highlighted by Çağlar and Glick Schiller with regard to other smaller European cities: migrants (refugees and labour migrants), in search of affordable housing and small-business opportunities, have contributed to the development of formerly rundown neighbourhoods. Owners of small businesses have played important roles in Möllevången's development. Their investments, together with activists' political and cultural capital, have contributed to the revitalisation of the neighbourhood, which is a process that is examined in Chapter 3.

In the case of Möllevången, it is important to investigate the role of social movements in gentrification. Scholars have investigated this relationship in Sweden before: in the Södermalm neighbourhood in Stockholm (Franzén 2005) and in the Haga neighbourhood in Gothenburg (H. Thörn 2013). A defining characteristic of Haga and Södermalm historically, as in Möllevången presently and in other centrally located neighbourhoods in many European cities, is that for a longer period of time they have constituted an important physical place of (political) encounter in the central parts of the city. Most of these spaces seem to have been dissolved through gentrification, with the exception of Christiania in Copenhagen, Denmark, which, despite the high pressure of real estate value and spatial exploitation in the inner-city, has managed to maintain its relatively autonomous space (Thörn 2013).

Margit Mayer's (2007) reflections on the unintended consequences that can accompany activism—consequences that may end up furthering neoliberalisation—are highly relevant in the case of the activist scene and gentrification of Möllevången. Mayer writes that “the radical and imaginative inner-city actions are frequently only short-term types of protest, emphasize creativity more than resistance, and thus often remain ambiguously stuck between protest and carnival” (2007, 97). In Malmö, examples of cultural and creative events such as the Möllevången Festival (that took place once a year 2006–2010) and the Möllevången Carnival (1998–2011), both of which were cultural and musical events arranged by

local leftist cultural activists and musicians in Möllevången and Malmö, have been the subject of vivid debates internally in the activist scene in Malmö. Many activists are aware of how these forms of local activity risk contributing to the gentrification of their neighbourhood. As Mayer (*ibid.*, 109) notes, these cultural-political articulations may constitute an antagonistic challenge in one perspective (promoting local alternative narratives) yet, at the same time, they may act as agents for the regeneration of local economies. Events of this kind are increasingly becoming incorporated into the cultural diversity and attractiveness of the neoliberal city (*ibid.*, 98). The Möllevången Festival and the Carnival have both been used in official documents by agents of urban regeneration to attract visitors and investors to Malmö (Povrzanović Frykman 2016). Hence, a major dilemma presenting itself in Möllevången and Malmö is that the complex work of ‘empowering’ the groups disadvantaged by neoliberalism is embedded in a process of permanent production and reproduction of inequalities through capital accumulation (Mayer 2007, 99).

All of this notwithstanding, a neighbourhood that goes through the transition from Keynesian-Fordism to neoliberalism and thrives through its different stages may produce an environment with certain relational qualities and resources for facilitating resistance, not least for vulnerable and resource-poor people, and enable large collective actions for rights and equality, which is the topic of Chapter 3. Möllevången is such a neighbourhood, and though it is threatened by ongoing gentrification it is not yet at the ‘end point’ of that process. It is not yet even close to what Södermalm in Stockholm or Haga in Gothenburg are today. It is impossible to foresee the exact dynamics or the pace of the gentrification process in Möllevången, but the paradox remains: the nicer you make the neighbourhood (which the activist scene contributes to), the more chance there is that the activists will lose access to it. The challenge for Möllevången is to remain an ‘alternative neighbourhood’, as it is known today, while simultaneously remaining accessible for low-income earners.

Dispossession and displacement

Parallel with neoliberal urban restructuring, scholars have noted an increased polarisation in many post-industrial societies (Mukhtar-Landgren 2012; Harvey 2005; R. Andersson, Molina, and Andersson 2003). The new neoliberal regime has led to uneven economic development, both locally and globally, and generated processes of dispossession and displacement in various forms. Dispossession and displacement are two key interrelated concepts for explaining the objectives of activism in Malmö. ‘Displacement’ is a much-used term in both urban studies⁶⁰ and migration studies⁶¹ but with different connotations. Since this thesis is written in an interdisciplinary research environment that merges these two fields, I will clarify my use of the term in the next few paragraphs.

As stated above, accumulation by dispossession occurs when the wealth and power of the few is derived from the dispossession of the resources of the many (Harvey 2003). A related term is Karl Marx’s (1976) ‘primitive accumulation’, which concerns the origin of capital and the dispossessive processes through which it was initially accrued to fuel industrial capitalism in Europe.⁶² Capital, in turn, established class divisions between the haves, who possess the means of production and can make money from surplus value, and the have-nots, who must work for the haves and create the surplus value.⁶³ Among contemporary forms of accumulation by dispossession, Harvey (2004) includes not only older practices such as the

⁶⁰ Commonly used to connote forced relocation because of the lack of means to stay in a neighbourhood due to rent and price increases. For a discussion on the term and the impacts of rent increases through renovation in Sweden, see Beaten et al. (2017).

⁶¹ In the literature on migration, displacement is commonly related to the categories of internal and international migrants and linked to the ways in which they are displaced, such as war and impoverishment.

⁶² This form of dispossession took many shapes, ranging from the violent seizure of land and resources during conquest and colonisation to the enclosure of the commons in England (see chapters 26 and 27 in Marx’s *Capital* Volume One).

⁶³ In Harvey’s words (Harvey 2003), “What accumulation by dispossession does is to release a set of assets (including labour power) at very low (and in some instances zero) cost. Over-accumulated capital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use. [...] Privatisation (of social housing, telecommunications, transportation, water, etc. in Britain, for example) has, in recent years, opened up vast fields for over accumulated capital to seize upon.” Although significant contemporary processes of dispossession related to land revaluation and governance are not solely an urban phenomena, several important pieces of scholarship on contemporary dispossession have been examinations of urban restructuring processes (Smith 1996; Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2009; Künkel and Mayer 2012).

seizure of communal land, precious resources, and public spaces but also capital acquired through all of the neoliberal reforms described earlier: the privatisation of public utilities, schools, housing, hospitals, etc.⁶⁴ Because of these processes, the lives of an increasing number of people around the world are becoming precarious, a social class that has been referred to as the precariat (Standing 2013; Fassin 2015), the dispossessed or disposable ‘other’ (Butler and Athanasiou 2013), and the displaced (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). Processes of dispossession produce various forms of physical and social displacement, which implies not only border-crossing migration (precipitated by war, so-called development, structural adjustment, impoverishment and environmental degradation), but also the increasing precarity of those considered locals who experience dispossession in the form of unemployment, part-time employment, lower wage rates, loss of employment security, forced relocation, or downward social mobility (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015). In scholarly literature, being ‘dispossessed’ is commonly described in material terms: “as the politically induced deprivation of lands, rights, livelihoods, in which certain groups become differentially exposed to poverty, debt, or death” (Velicu and García-López 2018, 65). In simple terms, the condition of precarity is life without the promise of stability (Tsing 2015, 2).

Importantly, displacement and dispossession are not related to the origins, culture, or the inherent properties of the displaced. Regardless of being considered ‘native’ or of migrant descent, anywhere in the world those who experience unemployment, part-time employment, lower wage rates, loss of employment security, forced relocation, and downward social mobility are subject to the forces of dispossession and displacement.⁶⁵

The residents and activists of Malmö experience dispossession in different ways as people are unevenly affected, depending on their legal, social, and economic situation. Some activists who are privileged (in terms of citizenship, economy, education, employment,

⁶⁴ Also integral to contemporary accumulation through dispossession are new and revitalised instruments that financialise risk and debt based on markets in mortgages, student debt, and car loans (Smith 1996, 110).

⁶⁵ Gregory Feldman’s (2015) book and his thesis of “We are all migrants” is useful for understanding how disempowerment is experienced by both ‘citizens’ and ‘migrants’.

and dwelling) act in solidarity with more vulnerable people such as undocumented and Roma migrants, while some activists share the experiences of unemployment and a lack of housing and other resources with the migrants for whose rights they fight as activists. However, all activists—along with other Möllevången residents, including the wealthy ones who may enjoy its benefits—experience the effects of the neighbourhood’s gentrification in the form of higher rents and greater difficulties in finding affordable housing, and everyone witnesses the local businesses being shut down and being replaced by chain stores or exclusive restaurants. I use the terms ‘displaced’ and ‘dispossessed’ to refer to the insecurity and unpredictability brought about by neoliberal restructuring, while recognising that this sort of precariousness is fundamental to contemporary processes of capital accumulation⁶⁶ beyond the ‘traditional’ capital accumulation through the exploitation of labour in processes of production.

While recognising the material aspects of dispossession, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) suggest that being dispossessed can also be measured in the form of our vulnerability in relation to others, in that we are exposed to the precarity and vulnerability of others:

During our lives, from the start, we owe ourselves to others, we are affected by others in often unpredictable ways. All power relations include the possibility of altruism/cooperation as well as harm/exploitation. We are always already potentially hurt and loved, sustained and damaged in all our relations (quoted in Velicu and García-López 2018, 65).

This is especially urgent in social relations between two unequal parties or groups in which the possibility of exploitation and harm increases. Or as formulated elsewhere: “Precarity is a state of acknowledgment of our vulnerability to others. In order to survive, we need help, and help is always the service of another, with or

⁶⁶ As Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018, 18) note, while the understanding of the dynamics that underlie contemporary dispossessive processes vary, there is general agreement among observers of diverse political outlooks that massive amounts of wealth are now controlled by a handful of people (see, e.g., Oxfam 2017; Piketty 2014; Milanovic 2016; Sassen 2014).

without intent” (Tsing Lowenhaupt 2015, 29). Accordingly, I use dispossession not only to mean deprivation of resources or ‘things’, for example the commons, but also to indicate ways of being and feeling and connected to exclusions and inclusions deeply engrained in patriarchal, racist, heteronormative, and ethnonationalist histories and relations of power. As activists are exposed to another’s dispossession, with the acute awareness “of their power inequalities—yet recognising a relatedness and mutual vulnerability, they engage in a commonality of political resistance and transformative action” (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 193). By actively engaging in horizontal and communal forms of living and being, activists resist the emotional dispossession wrought by individualism, self-interest, and competition that are the guiding principles in people’s lives under the neoliberal hegemony.

The third and last form of dispossession addressed in this thesis concerns the aspirational dispossession emanating from the post-political condition of Left-Right consensus (Mouffe 2005; Rancière 2004; Žižek 1999b; Swyngedouw 2009). Activists resist aspirational dispossession by being and acting in disagreement with the ruling norms and by instead creating collective interests, experimenting with horizontal ways of forging relations, and through collective actions with the aim of creating a more equal order. Ultimately, activism gives meaning to their lives. The ‘neoliberal self’ (McGuigan 2014) is a neoliberal subjectivity that normalises the logics of individualism and entrepreneurialism and redefines citizens as consumers and clients by equating individual freedom with self-interested choices, which makes individuals responsible for their own well-being (Leitner et al. 2007, 2). This form of the neoliberal self is directly challenged by activists’ contentious politics, which promote collective interests and collective ways of being in the world.

Immigration and segregation

The ethnic and social segregation in Malmö is affected by global processes of displacement and dispossession. International migration to Sweden has, since the Second World War, been substantial, increasingly diverse, and has accelerated in the past three decades

through its connection with a growing demand for labour, family reunification, and the reception of refugees fleeing war and political conflict (Righard and Bevelander 2015).⁶⁷ In 2015, Sweden received more asylum applications per capita than any other European Union country, second only to Germany in absolute numbers, although first in terms of the number of people arriving from Syria (Tanner 2016). In recent years, the number of youths arriving on their own to seek refuge in Sweden has increased dramatically (Lundberg and Söderman 2015, 255).⁶⁸ In 2015, more than 35,000 young refugees came to Sweden without their parents or other family members. This large number can be compared with the numbers from 2016 (2,200) and 2017 (1,300) that were drastically less, mainly due to enforced border controls and the EU's migration agreement with Turkey. Most of the young newcomers are from Afghanistan, followed by Somalia, Syria, Eritrea, and Morocco (Migrationsinfo 2018a).

In Malmö, the foreign-born population has gone from 5 per cent in 1960 to 16 per cent in 1990 and to 33.1 per cent in 2017.⁶⁹ By including people who were born in Sweden to foreign-born parents, the figure increases to 45.1 per cent in 2017 (Salonen 2015, 90; SCB 2018a, 2018b).⁷⁰ As of 2017, Malmö had the fourth-highest proportion of foreign-born residents among municipalities in Sweden (SCB 2018a).⁷¹

The variation of ethnicities, languages, countries of origin, immigration histories and status, labour market experiences, gender,

⁶⁷ Sweden is the country in Scandinavia that has received the most migrants in the post-WWII period (Righard, Johansson, and Salonen 2015).

⁶⁸ The number has grown from fewer than 500 in 2005 to more than 2,000 every year since 2009. In 2013, almost 4,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in Sweden—the highest number in Europe (A. Lundberg and Söderman 2015, 255). Almost half of them arrived in Malmö. In 2013, during the time when the Dublin II Regulation was applied to minors, 265 unaccompanied minors were being sought in Malmö for deportation (ibid.). In 2015, the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers to Sweden reached 35,400 (Migrationsinfo 2018a). 14,500 of these sought asylum in Malmö (Malmö stad 2018c).

⁶⁹ As of 2017, the foreign-born population in Sweden was 18.5 per cent. When adding the population that was born in Sweden to foreign-born parents, the total is 24.1 per cent (SCB 2018b).

⁷⁰ The largest immigrant groups in Malmö are from Iraq (11,655), the former Yugoslavia (7,831), Denmark (7,444), Poland (6,989), Syria (6,440), Bosnia (6,360), Lebanon (4,301), Iran (3,863), Afghanistan (3,649), and Romania (2,429) (Malmö stad 2018d).

⁷¹ The three cities with a higher proportion of foreign-born residents, or whose parents were born outside of Sweden, are: Botkyrka (41.5 per cent), Haparanda (41.3), and Södertälje (39.1) (SCB 2018a).

and age of Malmö inhabitants could be called super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), although the scale of diversification varies between neighbourhoods. The creative city's need for highly skilled labour, together with the privatisation of the housing stock, has initiated a process of gentrification of some inner-city neighbourhoods such as Möllevången, low-income filtering⁷² in neighbourhoods such as Rosengård, and super-gentrification in sea-front neighbourhoods such as Limhamn (Hedin et al. 2012; see also Rodenstedt 2014). Class segregation is nothing new in Malmö: as an industrial city the affluent people already moved to Limhamn and there were pronounced working class neighbourhoods. During the first half of the 20th century, Möllevången was home to better-off workers who were generally more politically engaged and organised. However, spatial urban divides nowadays coincide to a greater extent with ethnic demarcation. Hence, there are significant disparities between different neighbourhoods in the city regarding income, employment, housing, and the presence of migrants (Rodenstedt 2014; R. Andersson, Bråmås, and Hogda 2007).⁷³

In high-income neighbourhoods such as Western Harbour and Limhamn, less than 20 per cent of the inhabitants are of foreign background, while in Rosengård, a low-income neighbourhood, it is nearly 88 per cent (Malmö stad 2018d).⁷⁴ The neoliberalisation of the housing market has increasingly created barriers for low-income earners (of whom many are newly arrived labour migrants and refugees) to find housing other than in low-income neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the city (Salonen, Grander, and Rasmusson 2019).

In sum, while the inner city becomes gentrified and a wealthy middle class has settled in Western Harbour and other neighbourhoods near the sea, little has changed for the inhabitants of the pe-

⁷² As opposed to gentrification, filtering is associated with decreased status and disinvestment (Hedin et al. 2012).

⁷³ There are urban concentrations of high-income households in, for example, Limhamn and Bellevue, and low-income concentrations in other neighbourhoods, such as Rosengård and Hermodsådal, as well as central neighbourhoods populated largely by low and middle-income households, for example, Möllevången and South Sofielund.

⁷⁴ There is also ethnic segregation within the foreign-born population. The Danes are the largest group in the neighbourhoods with the least people with foreign background, while people from non-Western countries tend to live in the districts where the ratio of foreign background is high (Malmö stad 2018b).

ripheral neighbourhoods; Malmö remains a city of sharp social and ethnic divides and high unemployment (Salonen et al. 2019).

Border enforcement and the city as refuge

Beyond processes of segregation in cities, another way to understand dispossession and displacement in Sweden is to look at it from the perspective of the state's system of deportation. Rejected refugees in Sweden, who were severely dispossessed in their countries of citizenship, are again displaced by force from Sweden. Being dispossessed of rights, security, and citizenship, undocumented migrants are found at the bottom of the precariat in Sweden.

The economic restructuring in Sweden has redefined the relations between state and society and the country and society's relation to 'Fortress Europe'⁷⁵, and it has changed Swedish migration policies (Mulinari 2011), not least following the large reception of refugees in 2015 and the implementation of very restrictive internal and external immigration controls.⁷⁶ "My Europe does not build walls. We help each other when in dire need", said Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven (Social Democratic Party) on 6 September 2015. About three months later, on 26 November 2015, when nearly 163,000 people had applied for asylum, the Swedish government introduced checkpoints at the border with Denmark with the aim of reducing the number of asylum applicants.⁷⁷ Later the same month, the government suggested further measurements to create a 'respite' in Swedish refugee reception. About a year later, the Swedish government implemented a number of even more restrictive measures to decrease the reception of asylum seekers, and was accused of introducing a law that violated the Child Convention because it hindered family reunification (Marmorstein 2016).

⁷⁵ This is a pejorative term used today to refer to the barriers to immigration into the European Union and the border fortification policies pursued by several European Union members states with external borders (e.g., Spain, Italy).

⁷⁶ Alina Sajed (2012) notes a tight link between immigration policies, securitisation measures, and anti-terrorist laws in Europe, partly explained by the general anti-Muslim rhetoric/tendencies in which 'immigrant' and 'Muslim' are almost synonymous in various countries.

⁷⁷ More than 50,000 out of the nearly 163,000 people who applied for asylum in 2015 were from Syria (SCB 2016). While reinforcing the national frontiers through border controls, the temporary Aliens Act of 2015 (SFS 2015:1074) led to an increase in internal controls of foreigners within Sweden (Philipson 2016; SFS 2015:1073). ID-checks remained obligatory for all travellers crossing the border between Sweden and Denmark until May 2017 (Horvatovic and Österberg 2017).

From being the country in the EU with the most generous asylum policy, Sweden reached the EU's minimum levels in 2016⁷⁸ (ibid.). In 2016, the government announced that 80,000 people were to be deported (A. H. Svensson, Matsson, and Magnusson 2016), many of whom will supposedly try to stay in the country,⁷⁹ though the practice of internal controls on foreigners is expected to increase within the years ahead.

Anderson et al. (2011) point at a 'deportation turn' in Western states' ways of dealing with unwanted non-citizens. Research suggests that the act of deportation is not only an act of state regulation, but is a technique of social control that aims at 'disciplining' migrants (De Genova 2010). Deportation also has implications for how we understand and conceptualise citizenship. It establishes 'an ideal citizen' and potentially creates conflicts between citizens and non-citizens (Andersson et al. 2011). Since detention centres regulate the pace of migration, they also function as regulators of the production and reproduction of labour. Excluding migrants from legal status often means their inclusion into legally vulnerable and precarious labour situations (De Genova 2013, 1181; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

In 2013 in Sweden, REVA, a Swedish acronym for 'Legally secure and efficient work for enforcing deportations', made headlines because of the police's ethnic profiling and internal control of foreigners, which came to dominate the public debate. REVA was the joint administrative project 2009–2014 between the Swedish police, the Prison and Probation Service, and the Swedish Migration Agency (*Migrationsverket*). It was commissioned by the Swedish government in 2009 and piloted in Malmö in 2010 with the aim of locating and deporting undocumented migrants more efficiently. This was met by local opposition that included many activists

⁷⁸ On 21 June 2016, the government passed changes in the Aliens Act, significantly restricting the possibility of permanent residence permits and family reunification for persons who have received asylum as well as an increase in the requirements for employment and income as grounds for permanent residence permits for migrants (SFS 2015:1073; SFS 2015:1074).

⁷⁹ Migration to Sweden is primarily achieved through the asylum system. Undocumented migrants in Sweden are commonly former asylum seekers whose applications were rejected (Öberg 2015). The number of undocumented migrants is difficult to estimate with any degree of certainty, but in 2010, 35,000 (of which 2,000–3,000 were children) people were estimated to reside in Sweden without documents. In 2017, the border police stated that the number of missing rejected asylum applicants was steadily increasing (Migrationsinfo 2018b).

(Stille 2011; *Skånska Dagbladet* 2011) and went largely unnoticed nationally. Activists pointed out the increased police presence, very notable in Möllevången since many of the activists lived there, and that the police presence was rapidly becoming normalised. More people than before were subjected to ethnic profiling and the humiliating experience of being stopped and questioned by the police and treated as suspects simply for ‘looking foreign’. Even more people were affected indirectly seeing friends, or strangers for that matter, being discriminated against, detained, and even deported. In Sweden, the police have no right to make ID-checks without reasonable grounds for suspecting a crime. However, they used alternative methods, such as subway ticket and bike checks, in order to check IDs and residence permits. Police searches also took place at workplaces, weddings, and there have been occasions in which migrants were detained when they left school or psychiatric care (Bardon 2013; Sundkvist 2013).

However, it was only after REVA was implemented in Stockholm three years later (in January 2013) and made headlines in the media that it was met with strong national opposition and thousands of people marched against ethnic profiling in Malmö, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Norrköping, and Uppsala. The protests against REVA (the one in Malmö on 9 March 2013 being the focus of Chapter 5) opened up an intense national debate on the parameters of Swedish racism and came largely to be associated with the profiling of non-white people in the subway and other public spaces by police, and less with Swedish immigration policies and the detention and deportation of migrants (Philipson 2016). In addition to street protests, politicians from several parties, celebrities, academics, and writers voiced their critique in the national media, which is also described in Chapter 5. The Swedish Police, however, maintained that the public debate on REVA contained several misinterpretations (Clerton 2013), accusing journalists, especially Linda Stark (2012), who was the first to write about REVA in the national media, for initiating ‘the wrong story’. According to the police, there was no connection between REVA as an administrative strategy and the so-called internal control of foreigners (*inre utlänningskontroller*) (Kaliber 2014).

Another social group in a precarious legal condition in Malmö are ‘EU migrants’ as they are called in the mainstream media, or ‘EU citizens’ (*EU-medborgare*)⁸⁰ as they are commonly called by activists. These are poor Roma people who hold citizenship in (predominantly) Eastern European countries and who use their right of mobility within the European Union to find day-labour in construction and cleaning and care work, but who also often beg in the streets. As mobile EU citizens, these Roma people are in an irregular and contradictory situation in Sweden. They are legally allowed to move and reside within the EU for up to three months without restriction.⁸¹ At the same time, as citizens of another EU country, they are excluded from most dimensions of social citizenship in Sweden, including welfare entitlements of housing, employment services, and social assistance.⁸²

Since the mobile EU citizens involved in the struggle over the Sorgenfri settlement in Malmö were Roma, I refer to them as ‘Roma migrants’. Keeping in mind the discussion on the dilemma of categorisation covered in the Introduction and inspired by Can Yildiz and Nicholas De Genova (2018), I use ‘Roma’ and ‘migrants’ to address and acknowledge their particular, precarious, irregular, racialised, and marginalised position in Swedish society. Despite being EU nationals, Roma people seeking work in other countries are exposed to the uncertainty and precarity of migranthood: “they do not know how long they may be permitted to stay and work or what their entitlements will be” (Yildiz and De Genova 2018, 430).⁸³ The insecurity produced by precarious legal status has been conceptualised as ‘deportability’ (De Genova 2002) and ‘evictability’ (van Baar 2016). Deportability is not the act of deportation itself but the possibility of deportation, a risk that shapes a person’s possible range of choices, positions, and spaces of action. Roma people in Europe have long been the target of ra-

⁸⁰ The term ‘EU citizen’ is considered a non-stigmatising term in Sweden.

⁸¹ The Citizens’ Rights Directive 2004/38/EC defines the right of free movement. To stay longer than three months requires employment, self-employment, or that you formally register as a job-seeker.

⁸² Furthermore, in Sweden, they have been largely denied formal recognition as homeless persons, and therefore barred from accessing services geared to those homeless persons who hold permanent resident status (Persdotter, forthcoming).

⁸³ The condition of Roma migrants as being neither purely free nor strictly unfree has also been termed “un/free mobility” (Yildiz and De Genova 2018).

cialisation, marginalisation, and criminalisation (De Genova 2019), even in their ‘own’ countries of formal citizenship. Therefore, many of their experiences resemble those of refugees as they flee regimes of discrimination and marginalisation.

Begging was not a common sight in Sweden before 2013. The sudden presence of Roma migrants has been vividly debated nationally (see e.g. SVT 2015) and locally in Malmö (F. Palm 2013; Häggström 2015). In Malmö, the Roma migrants often inhabit temporary, self-made camps, mostly located in parks and at former industrial grounds. They have been evicted many times by the local government and have suffered harassment from passers-by. “It is untenable that they live there: it’s part of the Malmö residents’ living room”, said the local councillor Carina Nilsson (quoted in Häggström 2015) a few days before the Roma migrants were evicted from Pildammsparken, one of the largest parks in Malmö. She employed a discourse that clearly instantiates and separates ‘them’ from ‘us’ in which ‘they’ are not welcome in ‘our’ living room. In June 2015, Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson pledged to revise the rules on evictions in order to make it easier to evict squatters from private land. The proposal was sent to the Council on Legislation (Lagrådet) in 2017 (Johansson 2017). For activists, the message was crystal clear. First, private property rights need to be upheld while the social needs of the dispossessed come second. In December 2018, the Supreme Court of Sweden made a precedential ruling, allowing the first municipality in Sweden, Vellinge, to prohibit begging in the public space (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2018). Vellinge is an affluent municipality located just south of Malmö.

At the same time as the state reinforces its external and internal borders, migrants in precarious legal conditions increasingly find refuge in cities (Mayer 2017; Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012; Holgersson 2011; Darling 2017).⁸⁴ Urban sociologists have shown

⁸⁴ In Sweden, asylum seekers have legal protection by the police, access to emergency health and dental care, a daily allowance (albeit low; for details, see Migrationsinfo 2019), accommodation arranged by the Swedish Migration Agency, the right to work legally if their identity can be established, and the possibility of demanding fair salaries from employers. All these rights, however, though officially proclaimed, are not necessarily accessible. Further, Theodore and Habans (2016)

how the number of people in larger cities along with their diversity facilitate anonymity, which breaks down social control mechanisms and favours tolerant or at least indifferent dispositions among residents (Wirth 1938; Fischer 1975; Saunders 2013). Beyond the demographic characteristics of the city offering refuge to people who are in some way visibly different from the majority, local regulations in Malmö are more inclusive than their national counterparts regarding access to social rights for undocumented migrants (Nordling, Sager, and Söderman 2017). In Malmö, as in other European cities, the idea of non-discrimination of undocumented migrants has gained increased attention in the public debate, posing an important challenge to state definitions of migrant illegality (McDonald 2012, 131). Gradually, the City of Malmö has expanded the target groups of its welfare services to include undocumented children, which is partly due to initiatives by the Green Party, the Leftist Party, and a vocal, broad-based pro-asylum movement in the city (*ibid.*; Nordling 2017). These rights, however, are being subject to debate in the local government for abolishment (Bubenko 2017; Lönnaeus 2018a).

What can be concluded from the discussion above is that Sweden at the national level and some municipalities at the local level have increasingly implemented harsher migration and disciplinary policies in the past years, such as increased efforts of finding and deporting undocumented migrants and criminalising migrants' begging and precarious migrants' temporary camps in urban areas. At the same time, while the policing of precarious migrants is most visible in cities, cities also constitute a refuge to many migrants who are attracted by the ethnic diversity and anonymity of cities and, as this thesis will show, they are sites where activists work for the rights of migrants and against direct and structural racism, which open up pathways of migrant emplacement in the city.

find that immigrants are much less likely to call the police and report crimes out of fear that such activities would place them or their family members at risk of detection and deportation.

Racism

- How much immigration can Sweden bear? [*Hur mycket invandring tål Sverige?*] (question posed by broadcaster on Swedish Television's *Agenda*, 7 October 2012.)

This question was asked on the nationally televised, primetime, live-broadcasted programme *Agenda* in which party leaders⁸⁵ met to debate nationally significant questions, among them immigration. The question, and the way it was formulated, was heavily criticised (Magnusson 2012) for being “xenophobic in its construction”, which “could not be answered without establishing racist untruths” (Priftis 2012), such as: 1) immigration is a burden for Sweden; 2) it is possible to define a maximum number of immigrants for Sweden; 3) we are approaching that number today (ibid.). For the critics, this question became emblematic of the clear rhetorical bend towards a generally more xenophobic discourse in Sweden. It is in this context that one must view local reactions consisting of pro-asylum and anti-racist mobilisations in Malmö. As Irene Molina (2008) points out, it is important to understand that racism, as an ideological framework, is a product of intricate social relations between superiors and subordinates and not something reserved for the activities of organised right-wing extremists. Structural racism in Sweden affects immigrants’ possibilities in the labour as well as the housing market.⁸⁶ In this section, however, with regards to the activism featured in this thesis, I focus on the increase of far-right, anti-immigration parties and movements and their presence in the public space (public meetings and demonstrations, posters, and stickers) as well as in parliament, which has

⁸⁵ Participating party leaders were Fredrik Reinfeldt (Moderates), Annie Lööf (Centre Party), Göran Håggblund (Christian Democrats), Jan Björklund (Liberal Party), Stefan Löfven (Social Democrats), Jonas Sjöstedt (Left Party), Åsa Romson (Green Party) and Jimmie Åkesson (Sweden Democrats).

⁸⁶ Structural racism in the housing market (ECRI 2012; Molina 2008) as well as in the labour market (Magnusson Turner 2008) is materialised in the form of increased inequality and spatial segregation along class and ethnic lines in Swedish cities. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI 2012) published a report criticising Sweden for residential segregation and for migrants being discriminated against in the housing market. The report emphasises that segregation is a particularly serious form of discrimination and stresses the importance of facilitating social inclusion in non-segregated neighbourhoods.

paralleled the neoliberal restructuring in Sweden. Some scholars maintain that neoliberal governance has contributed to the increase in right-wing, anti-immigrant activism (Mäkinen 2017; Tyler 2015; see also J. Palm and Rydgren 2018).

The far-right mobilisation in Sweden is commonly based on hostility directed at immigrants who are seen as a threat to the power, privilege, and opportunities of the dominant groups in society (Hellström 2016; Lundström 2017). In the 2010 general election, the far-right, anti-immigration party The Sweden Democrats passed the 4 per cent election threshold and entered parliament for the first time. In the general election in 2014, they became the third largest party with nearly 13 per cent of the votes, and in the latest election in 2018, they received nearly 18 per cent (after The Moderate Party with 19.8 per cent and The Social Democrats with 28.4 per cent). In the local elections of Malmö, the Sweden Democrats received more than 16 per cent of the votes in the 2018 elections. This is a relatively small percentage compared to most other municipalities in Scania County, however, where the highest support for the Sweden Democrats in Sweden is found (Quiding and Abrahamsson 2018; Åberg 2017). For example, the Sweden Democrats gained 35.4 per cent of votes in Hörby, which is the highest percentage in the whole country.

The Sweden Democrats party was formed in 1988 by people who had earlier been members of white supremacy and neo-nazi parties and organisations, which are legal in Sweden, such as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish). The party has an anti-immigration and, in particular, an Islamophobic agenda (Mulinari and Neergaard 2012). Ever since its formation, the party has strongly focused on the question of the economic cost of immigration (A. B. Andersson and Gerin 2018). During the reception of a large number of refugees in 2015, representatives of the party travelled to the Greek island of Lesbos and handed out flyers to arriving refugees warning them that there are ‘no money, no jobs, no homes’ in Sweden and also stating falsely that halal-meat and veils are to be banned in the country (Helmersson 2015).

A number of far-right groups and parties have appeared and disappeared in the past decades in Sweden. In Malmö, counter-

demonstrations were organised against the presence of some of them, as follows. (1) Svenskarnas parti, SvP (Party of the Swedes) was a neo-nazi political party formed in 2008 that had earlier existed under the name of Nationalsocialistisk Front, NSF (National Socialist Front, founded in 1994). In the election of 2010, they won a mandate in a rural Swedish municipality on the west coast of Sweden.⁸⁷ However, failing to achieve any influence and losing members in the election in 2014, they decided to disband the party in May 2015. (2) Svenska motståndsrörelsen, SMR (Swedish Resistance Movement) is a neo-nazi movement founded in 1997, which also works under the name Nordiska motståndsrörelsen, NMR (Nordic Resistance Movement), and is considered to be the most active and violent of the white-power movements in Sweden today (Dalsbro 2016). (3) Swedish Defence League (SDL), inspired by the English Defence League (EDL), is an organisation that has existed in Sweden since 2011 with the primary aim of fighting the ‘Islamisation of Europe’. The organisation has only managed to mobilise around 10-20 people to its public meetings and has mostly been an Internet phenomenon with members taking part in discussions on webpages and Facebook (Wåg 2013). (4) The Germany-based Pegida protest movement (‘Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West’) is a nationalist, anti-Islamic, and far-right political movement with successful mobilisations in Germany, but which was considered a fiasco when launched in Sweden. Lastly, (5) Soldiers of Odin is an anti-immigrant vigilante group founded in Finland in 2015 as a response to the thousands of refugees who arrived in the autumn of 2015. The group is also present in Sweden. In April 2016, they had planned to officially patrol the streets of Malmö (in order to, among other things, ‘protect’ ethnic Swedish females from being raped by immigrants), but the few ‘Odin soldiers’ that appeared dissolved due to the presence of 50 anti-fascist activists (AFA Malmö 2016; T. Karlsson 2016).

There have been numerous cases of arson against housing facilities for refugees, including 92 of them in 2016 alone. The region

⁸⁷ In the elections for City Council in Grästorps municipality in 2010, the party received 102 votes (2.8 per cent) and one mandate. The party became the first nazi affiliated party to sit in a local democratic government in Sweden since the 1940s.

with the highest amount of these attacks, 25, was the southern police region, which Scania County is a part of (Håkansson 2016).⁸⁸ Temporary Roma settlements have also been attacked (*Studio Ett* 2015; P. Lundberg 2015), mosques have been vandalised, and continuous attacks against leftist activists, homosexuals, and migrants have been reported (Mulinari 2011). The most well-known case of ‘race’-motivated violence in Malmö occurred between 2003 and 2010, when the serial killer Peter Mangs (see Gardell 2015) rode around on his bicycle shooting with the intent to kill people with dark skin and dark hair. He was convicted of two murders and four attempted murders. Mangs’ deeds resembled the convicted murderer *Lasermannen* (‘the Laser Man’) in Stockholm, who in 1991 and 1992 shot 11 non-white people, of whom one died (Tamas 2002). Another recent case was in June 2017 when a young man engaged in the neo-nazi Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen (Nordic Resistance Movement) drove his car into a crowd of protestors outside the Swedish Migration Agency in Malmö, largely made up of a group of Iraqis protesting against deportations to Iraq (Thornéus 2017).

While racism and anti-immigration activism in Sweden relates to the specific histories of the welfare state and national imageries of whiteness in the Nordic countries, Katariina Mäkinen (2017) suggests that another relevant explanation can be found in the European-wide spread of neoliberal and austerity politics and their underlying configurations of citizenship and class. This thesis is written in the context of this increased neoliberalisation of the commons and urban restructuring alongside the government’s efforts to enforce its borders and the increasingly hostile climate facing racialised migrants, which are important elements that help explain why activists mobilise anti-racist and pro-migrant struggles in Malmö.

A locus of power

So far, I have attempted to illustrate how cities emerge as strategic nodes of financial flows, migration, policy and social norm for-

⁸⁸ The southern police region contains Kalmar, Blekinge, Kronoberg, and Scania (*Skåne*) counties.

mation, and the practice of state power (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). Despite the existing power structures that distribute, control, and govern bodies and spaces unevenly, the measures aimed at upholding them “are contradictory and imperfect, which provides interstitial openings for seeds to grow into potential disruptive mobilisations” (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 10). Important to Rancière’s conceptualisation of ‘the police’—and similar to Gramsci’s hegemony as a process and not an accomplishment—is that since it is never objective nor accomplished there is always the possibility of counter-hegemonic politics (Dikeç 2007, 20). Hence, while being the principal sites of neoliberal modes of governance, cities are also sites of oppositional movements, contestation, and alternative social narratives (Leitner et al. 2007, 312, 315). Beyond coming under pressure to be competitive in order to generate their own resources and wealth, cities emerge as crucial sites where access to rights, benefits, and services for inhabitants, including migrants, are based (Çağlar 2016). Where there is power there is resistance, as Michel Foucault (1990, 95) put it to explain why resistance is not only a possibility but remains inevitable and inherent to a system of power relations. His understanding of power is similar to Henri Lefebvre’s (1991, 23) claim that “state-imposed normality makes permanent transition inevitable”. Therefore, as much as the city is a locus of power it is also a locus of resistance. The city is a vital laboratory for social change and solidarity building (Greenberg and Lewis 2017). The production of urban social space is a process of conflict, domination, and resistance to domination and directly linked to the dynamics of class struggle (Lefebvre 1991). Importantly, cities become central arenas of this struggle because they can usually provide the resources and relational opportunities that support emergent activists (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 8).

The concepts of displacement and dispossession, entangled up with the accumulation of capital and the restructuring processes of cities, provide me with an analytical framework that traces the connections between the ways in which activists (migrant or not) respond to the on-going processes of the restructuring and repositioning of the places where they strive to build their lives. Next, I

turn to locate activism in relation to political theories and the related concepts of prefiguration, solidarity, and commoning.

Where there is power there is resistance

Resistance happens everywhere and can take many shapes: “everything from revolutions to hairstyles has been described as resistance” (Hollander and Einwohner 2004, 534). One example is what John Scott (1990) calls ‘hidden transcripts’, which refers to a covert everyday resistance in the shape of a discourse that represents a critique of the powerful. He also refers to forms of resistance that go beyond words and organisation, such as lying, acting ignorant, slowing down work, and sabotaging equipment. Another form, particularly relevant to activism in Malmö, is resistance in the form of contentious and collective political actions. Although resistance can happen everywhere at any time, not all instances of resistances grow into collective political struggles. Only resistance enacted by politically organised individuals in the form of concerted political actions falls within my use of the term ‘activism’. The activists in Malmö act collectively to simultaneously challenge, dismantle, undermine, and make visible the power that creates displacement and dispossession.

I therefore term their activism as counter-hegemonic, which is defined as activities that attempt to unsettle the ruling cultural dominance. As this thesis will show, counter-hegemonic activities may take many shapes. One activity is to be understood through language and discourse, which activists and dispossessed people use to “invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1991, 67). Activists have the understanding that discourse—a framework of meaning through which we make sense of objects, relations, and events (Foucault 1975)—is a crucial source of discipline within a society. Discourse, for example, can take a form of talking that contributes to the normalisation of anti-immigrant sentiments. Therefore, activists engage in resisting dominant ‘truths’ and battle over what meaning is attributed to events, actions, and people. With the understanding that every definition is a subject for struggle and negotiation (S. Hall 1982), activists seek

to challenge the ruling definitions by way of creating new collective understandings and mobilising support for a particular definition. Activists play with words and images and bring in new associations, such as calling Malmö ‘The Capital of Love’ and ‘The Capital of Resistance’ to challenge the discourse that associates the city with crime as a result of immigration. Another example is activists’ attempt to turn the public discourse on ‘segregation’, which always directs attention to the poor neighbourhoods with high proportions of residents with migrant backgrounds (Molina 2005), to look at the affluent, ‘white’, and definitely segregated, neighbourhoods of Malmö. A further example is activists’ attempts to use non-homogenising terms for people living with precarious legal status, such as referring to them as ‘friends’.

Generally, the notions I employ when analysing activism are committed to an understanding of politics that is disruptive and inaugurative: a politics that introduces something new and interrupts the established order of things. The idea of activism as disruptive and inaugurative reflects Rancière’s idea of ‘the political’, a discussion of which I turn to in the next section.

Activism as politics

Rancière’s concepts of ‘the police’ and ‘the political’ have helped me to examine the interaction between place, power, and activism in which activism is understood as “acts on the police” (Rancière 1999, 33) with ‘police’ defined as a consensual hierarchical order that distributes spaces and people in ways that are conceived of as the natural order of things. The politics of left-wing, extra-parliamentary activism originates from, and is fed into, a desire to negate that hierarchical order (Uitermark and Nicholls 2014, 972). Through the notions of ‘the police’ and ‘the political’, Rancière (1999) rethinks the idea of politics itself. Seen from the street level, Rancière (2001) explains:

The police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space of circulating is nothing other than the space of circulation. Politics, in contrast, consists in transforming this space of ‘moving-

along' into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e., the people, the workers, the citizens: It consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein.

For Rancière, true politics is whatever shifts a body from the place that 'the police' assigned to it, or that which changes a place's function: "It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where there was once only place for noise" (Rancière 1999, 30). Understood as an interruption of the natural order of domination, this gives politics the characteristic of momentary activities that, Rancière notes, actually happen very seldom or rarely (*ibid.*, 17). Hence, politics is not about achieving agreement—"consensus is the reduction of politics to the police" (Rancière 2001, 17)—but about the challenging of the consensus by those who are not part of the normal order.⁸⁹ Politics thus is and appears in the eruptions of disagreement, *dissensus* (Rancière 2010), as in, for example, the collective actions discussed in this thesis.

Rancière thus theorises one particular kind of participatory politics (while many other kinds exist) that he defines as 'the political', which is written from a certain position that assumes an emancipatory struggle with equality as its end-goal. In other words, 'true' politics, according to Rancière (2011), is an event that challenges, questions, resists, and disrupts the established order by opening up spaces for the verification and enactment of equality. Politics, in Rancière's use of the word, is not just a conflict of interests between different groups within society, but rather a performance of a deeper clash between police logic and egalitarian logic. Politics is sparked by a fundamental disagreement with the established order. My research focus is on this particular kind of (disruptive) politics (which has equality as its aim) in a particular place.

What differentiates left-wing from right-wing activism, and what is at the centre of Rancière's conceptualisation of politics, is equality. Today's system of liberal nation-state democracies, which relies

⁸⁹ "Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part" (Rancière 1999, 11).

on citizenship and therefore creates a privileged group that excludes others, is inherently prejudicial and oppressive since it relies on hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. True politics, according to Rancière, is therefore the breaking down of all those barriers and it can therefore only exist in marginal and oppositional activity (Rancière 1999). The activists presented in this thesis attempt to create spaces that include people irrespective of their legal status, and activists demand emplacement in the city and access to its resources for everyone based on sharing and inhabiting a common urban place. One example concerning Roma migrants will be analysed in Chapter 7.

That having been said, I want to underline the possible confusion in using such binary terms as ‘politics’ and ‘the police’ as if they were two opposite spheres representing the difference between “spontaneity and institution” (Rancière 2011, 249). Based on an understanding of how hegemony works and of power and resistance as inseparable elements of social life, I accordingly understand the police and politics not as two rigidly distinct spheres, but rather as two entwined processes. At every step of contentious politics, activists face the risk that their activities will become mainstreamed and co-opted by dominant powers and, as such, that they will in effect start working in accordance with dominant (liberal) understandings of inequality instead of challenging them. One such example examined in this thesis is when activists feel forced to leave behind their counter-hegemonic narrative of anti-capitalism and instead ambivalently formulate claims commonly made within the liberal narrative of human rights so that they might be heard at all by the city and national governments. However, hegemonic processes not only define the parameters of the sayable and seeable in society, they also constantly redefine if and how stances are said and seen as contentious (S. Hall 1981). Radical concepts, slogans, discourses, and actions can be adopted by the dominant powers and neutralised, depoliticised, and eventually commodified.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ A typical example of such a hegemonic process is when multinational corporations such as Nike and Adidas start using feminism in their advertisements as a strategy for capital accumulation. Feminist performances that are considered subversive, such as hairy armpits and hairy legs, become depoliticised and commodified.

Another philosopher who engages in the meaning and content of politics is Hanna Arendt, who coined the notion of ‘space of appearance’ (1998, 199ff) as synonymous with politics. ‘Space of appearance’ refers to moments in which people (in particular the dispossessed) find a voice and demand equal access to a place. Arendt’s idea of politics is grounded in people’s possibility to speak and act publicly and thus be rendered as meaningful political actors. This can only happen when political actors act and present themselves to each other as in, for example, contentious collective actions. This form of political agency, which Arendt would call ‘action’, thus “requires a self conceived as a plurality [...] a self that comes into being, and can only come into being, on the occasion of relation with others” (Butler and Athanasiou 2013, 122). The Arendtian understanding of politics is ‘located’ precisely in this publicly disclosed relation between the ‘I’ and ‘the other’. In other words, the space of appearance is a space, created, for example, through demonstrations, in which political subjectivities are constituted. These are temporally constructed spaces in which participants turn into political agents and where strangers may turn into comrades, perhaps even into friends. Arendt’s space of appearance and her understating of (joint) action resemble Rancière’s definition of ‘the political’. Both assume a temporal activity that changes a place’s function. For example, a street or square in which people normally just pass by each other to go to work or somewhere else is turned into a space of appearance in which the assembled bodies create new political subjectivities and make new discourses heard.

More recent theorists, such as the anthropologist and anarchist David Graeber (e.g., 2002) and philosopher Simon Critchley (2007),⁹¹ build on Rancière’s political thought and it, to some extent, resonates with parts of Arendt’s thinking (see Berkowitz 2018). They are all committed to an understanding of politics that is different and distinct from institutionalised practices of government and administration (Dikeç 2012). They all interpret practices

⁹¹ Simon Critchley’s idea of politics is anarchist, specifically neo-anarchist. While the classic anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin was a philosophy of freedom aiming at the destruction of the state, the neo-anarchism of Critchley, Graeber, and others is a philosophy of responsibility that aims at creating a space of autonomy within but against the state.

of resistance as opening up ‘new beginnings’ (Arendt 1998, 177): spaces for politics from which to challenge the established (unjust) orders.⁹² Critchley understands politics as an ‘interstitial distance’ within, yet against, the state, which allows for the emergence of new political subjectivities (2007, 13, 114). While having to deal with the forces that are set up against them by the state (regulations and police repression), corporations (e.g., commercialisation of public space), and civil society (racism, sexism, homophobia), the activists are nevertheless able to enact responsibility for each other’s wellbeing in situations of precarity within their self-made spaces. Activism, in Critchley’s view, is thus an ethical practice that is driven by the urge to respond to situated injustices and wrongs. It is in these ‘interstitial distances’ that activists may prefigure something new.

The creation of something new

So-called prefigurative politics has recently attracted growing attention among social movement scholars and is increasingly used to describe contemporary forms of radical activism. Prefigurative politics is a practice that assumes ‘the ends’ and ‘the means’ to be inextricably linked (Maeckelbergh 2011, 8).⁹³ The notion refers to scenarios in which activists express the political ends of their actions through their means, or in which they create experimental or alternative social relations in the present (Yates 2015, 1), which is what I see happening in the case of left-wing, extra-parliamentary activism in Malmö. Prefiguration has further been described as a different form of theory: a ‘direct theory’ that theorises through action, through doing (Maeckelbergh 2011, 3). What the activists *do* is their *ideology*, as David Graeber (2002, 70) explains when he argues that the new forms of activists’ horizontal organisation *are* its ideology.

Prefigurative politics has been closely aligned with anarchism and the non-violent direct actions that see authoritarianism and

⁹² For a discussion on the similarities and differences between Arendt and Rancière, see, e.g., Dikeç (2017) and Berkowitz (2018).

⁹³ Uri Gordon (2018) says that prefiguration is an abstract and confusing term and instead argues that prefigurative politics should be theorised as ‘practices of concrete utopia’.

coercion as fundamentally unjustifiable (Yates 2015) and which thus discredit the linear principles of social change of the Old Left and its communist organisation based on hierarchy. Prefigurative politics thus has resemblances with Rancière's politics as both refer to actions that create new spaces in which radical equality can be practiced.

Carl Boggs (1977), who coined the term prefigurative politics, used it as a political critique against vanguardist interpretations of Marxism, particularly Leninism, and structural reformism (C. D. Trott 2016).⁹⁴ The critique was that the means were in tension with the ends: hierarchical organisation and violence were used to achieve a peaceful, non-hierarchical society (*ibid.*). Groups engaged in prefigurative politics therefore commonly do not share the belief, as found in classic Marxism and liberalism, that 'freedom' can only be achieved within the state form (as Leviathan or the dictatorship of the proletariat). Instead, anarchists sought to transcend the dichotomy between revolution and reform in parallel with struggles against racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia by striving for liberation based on bottom-up, community-level, non-hierarchical work (Day 2005, 15-17).

The activists in this thesis do not use the term 'prefiguration' to describe their activism, but they do formulate their politics in line with the theory of prefigurative politics as outlined here: 'we struggle for a society with equality by creating, in the here and now, what we wish to see in the future' (see Chapter 6). A common example of prefigurative politics is activists' use of participatory democratic methods to promote egalitarian decision-making, i.e., an organisational form in which decision-making is decentralised, non-hierarchical, and consensus oriented. Activist groups in the extra-parliamentarian left in Malmö spend a great amount of time discussing how to make their structures more horizontal and inclusive. Their practices of horizontality rest on an assumption that power always plays a role in human interaction, that inequality

⁹⁴ According to Carl Boggs (1977), three principles guide prefigurative politics: (1) the rejection of hierarchy; (2) a disregard for political organisations with rigid and centralised power structures that (re)produce power imbalances; and (3) a "commitment to democratization through local, collective structures that anticipate the future liberated society" (1977, 4; see also C. D. Trott 2016, 268).

permeates every social interaction, and that power tends to be centralised. Activists thus set up structures of horizontality to avoid a centralisation of power in their own structures (Maeckelbergh 2011, 10). Horizontality implies remaining open to diversity and difference (Juris 2004). This is not easily achieved, however, and generates ambivalences and conflicts between activists as well as between activists and non-activists.

The discussion so far raises some important questions: Is prefiguration always possible? Is *pure* prefiguration possible? Activists' ideals and practices of horizontality are continuously challenged by (hegemonic) power hierarchies that permeate even the most well-intended, self-conscious activist groups. Activists cannot undo their own hierarchical socialisation (Gordon 2018). Nevertheless, as Uri Gordon points out, "the very desire to inhabit social settings which work to undo domination is what motivates their construction" (ibid., 532). Hence, prefiguration is simultaneously an aspiration and a continuous practical attempt to implement these aspirations.

In this thesis, I perceive activists' actions as prefigurative when I see elements of inclusion, horizontalism, and collaborative egalitarianism appear, such as when migrants in precarious conditions are included in decision making processes and encouraged to formulate their own demands, or when close relationships are forged in ways that challenge common forms of affiliation and power hierarchies. Activist practices are not always explicable in terms of prefiguration, for example when they use social media as a tool for mobilisation and communication with the mainstream media. Nevertheless, the concept of prefiguration has helped me analyse the empirical data and to identify activists' processes and practices that simultaneously question the hierarchical order and create new spaces and social relations. Accordingly, Chapters 6 and 7 are organised around themes in terms of what I see the activists are doing and creating from a prefigurative perspective. What the activists do and create is the substance of their 'practices of utopia' (Gordon 2018). The generative substance of such prefigurative politics is analysed under the themes of friendships, alternative structures, alliances, and mass mobilisations.

In the literature on prefigurative politics, two main strains are found: prefiguration as project or protest. The former pays attention to projects that, for example, experiment with alternative norms and social organisation, and the latter to the means through which protest is carried out (Yates 2015). These doings (project and protest) are intertwined, but for the purpose of analytical clarity, I try to deal with them separately, adding useful concepts in each sub-chapter when explaining my ethnographic examples. I categorise activists' creation of friendships and alternative structures as 'embodied solidarity', the topic and title of Chapter 6, referring to solidarity-oriented projects that entail close emotional and social relationships between Swedish activists and migrants with precarious legal status. This form of solidarity is what I claim (in Chapter 6) has enabled some migrants to embark on a trajectory of political socialisation and to become activists.

Alliances and mass mobilisations are categorised as 'collective actions', the topic and title of Chapter 7, and are explicit elements of protest in the public space. I use the notion of alliance as a unified effort involving two or more organisations, groups, or individuals to achieve common goals with respect to a particular issue (Gudergan 2007).⁹⁵ Through a collective enactment of protest, activists and protesters in general engage in constructing a transient space for their liberated utopian society in which they achieve the feeling of happiness and strength that they were unable to acquire elsewhere (Arendt 1990, 119). In the examples provided in this thesis, as in many demonstrations in general and despite the seriousness of the slogans and messages, the atmosphere is festive rather than anger-ridden. I conceive of these mobilisations as prefigurative in the sense that a diverse set of people exercise politics and power in the streets by their bodily presence while jointly countering authoritarian, hierarchical, dispossessive, and racist structures and ideologies. Also, the mass mobilisations described in this thesis represent fleeting realisations of the activists' ideal society in which not only activists but also non-activists engage in politics and act to achieve social change.

⁹⁵ An alliance is 'a close association for a common objective' or 'for mutual benefit', synonymous with the idea of a league, a coalition, or a union (Bowser 2007).

So, by putting into practice the principles of solidarity, diversity (of tactics as well as of people's social, cultural, ethnic, and ideological backgrounds), equality, and horizontality, the activists in Malmö attempt to create alternative structures within and against the neoliberal organisation of society, racism, and the migration regime. Importantly, the activists discussed in this thesis are not motivated "by a cultural ideal of building their own community", but their prefiguration is rather outward looking with the ultimate goal of transforming governing structures on a larger scale and showing people through *doing* that it is possible (Maeckelbergh 2011, 14).

Activism and public space

I will here further clarify the connections between place, space, and activism with the help of the notion of 'public space'. There is extensive research on the multiplicity of meanings of the term 'public' (for a review on public space in geography, for example, see Staeheli and Mitchell 2007), but I will here outline my own take on the term. Public space and the associated terms of 'public realm' and 'public sphere' are here understood as describing an open space in a city where politics can take place. Public space plays a key role in activism since it constitutes the main site where activism can take place. When rejecting institutional politics, streets and squares become key sites for activists to conduct their collective actions of discontent. Hence, public space is a space of contestation and a site where conflicts are expressed (Staeheli and Mitchell 2007).

Whereas public space has traditionally been associated with an open and equally accessible space that is opposed to the private space, both scholars and activists have challenged this technical view of 'public' by showing how power relations and norms shape how particular bodies negotiate and access it. Some groups are denied equal access to public space, such as the homeless, beggars, women, racialised migrants, informal and illegal workers, undocumented migrants, disabled people, and protesters⁹⁶ (Kern and

⁹⁶ One example is the Occupy movements of late 2011, which were efforts to rise against neoliberalism. It began with Occupy Wall Street and then spread globally to other cities large and small. It was done in the name of 'the 99 per cent', the vast majority of the world's inhabitants who accumulate

Mullings 2013; Mitchell 2003). Also, in the era of neoliberal urbanism, public space is commonly being appropriated by private capital through commodification and enclosure (Bodnar 2015). According to Don Mitchell (2003, 5), this development means that “the need to continue to struggle over and for public space is now greater than ever”. The exclusive character of public spaces through management by private capital and public state ownership as well as by social control makes the idea of public space crucial to democracy and social equality. Mitchell (2003, 20) argues that ‘the right to the city’ and its public spaces requires struggles that “undermine the power of property and its state sanctions”. This right is more than only making demands on houses and flats in the city, but a demand to redevelop the city in a form that is “responsive to the needs, desires, and pleasures of its inhabitants, especially its oppressed inhabitants” (ibid., 21). Activists take to the streets to challenge the hierarchical and oppressive order of the existing public spaces. Actions that claim another (more equal) form of public space will always and inevitably be disobedient and contentious (Mitchell 2003, 231). The Roma migrants’ struggle over the Sorgenfri settlement represents an example of such a struggle for the ‘right to the city’ that centres on public space.

I further understand public space as a space of sociability: a place for people of diverse backgrounds to meet and where new identities may be forged. In Richard Sennet’s (2010) terms, the public realm is the place where strangers meet. However, as much as it is a location for socialisation and collective actions, public space is also a location for state surveillance, as addressed above in terms of immigration and border controls. Lastly, police forces are responsible for the surveillance of the activities of citizens and the use of coercion to enforce laws and maintain order. The state’s control over territory is particularly manifest in the policing of protest in which the police act to protect territorial, political, and economic interests (Reiner 1998). The following forms of policing in

little or no wealth and/or have their labour appropriated by the 1 per cent who will accumulate wealth. The Occupy camps were violently removed, which shows “the extent to which the state will not tolerate even peaceful dissent or modest disruptions to the city’s ability to generate capital flows through consumption, tourism and development” (Kern and Mullings 2013, 72).

Malmö have generated activist responses: the police's racial profiling of non-white people, the state's deportation of rejected asylum seekers, the policing of volunteers assisting refugees within the context of Refugees Welcome initiatives, and the municipality's eviction of Roma migrants who beg in Malmö.

The activist scene in Malmö enables marginalised people to enter the public sphere and to make themselves visible as political subjects. Together with the activists, they produce space by claiming space and thereby make it public—"a space in which the cry and the demand for the right to the city can be seen and heard" (Mitchell 2003, 35). 'Publicness' is thus something that is produced through action.

With the emergence of the Internet, new means of communication, networking, and mobilisation have been created. The Internet has radically altered the sense of place (Sennet 2010) and extended 'the public' into cyberspace. Some online forums could be conceived of as 'virtual squares' where strangers meet and communicate (although some with anonymous digital identities). Hence, the Internet has created new spaces of contentious politics. Furthermore, social media has changed the way information about demonstrations is spread, and indeed how people become motivated to participate in collective actions. Facebook, in particular, emerges as a highly important means of mobilisation (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, and Wollebaek 2012), as will become clear in Chapters 5 and 7. Facebook events that announce upcoming demonstrations can be seen as the modern form of street posters or pamphlets that were usually put up (and still are but to a lesser extent) on walls, bus stops, subways, electric cabinets, and other places in the public space. The digital poster in the form of a public Facebook event is interactive and offers dialogue and for users to comment, whereas an ordinary paper-poster is normally information that is transmitted one-way to by-passers on the street, although they may be ripped down or damaged by antagonists (also a form of dialogue).

The examples of mobilisations provided in this thesis bring together online as well as offline public spaces and show how relationships between activists are "complex dances of face-to-face en-

counters, scheduled get-togethers, dyadic telephone calls, emails to one person or several and broader online discussions among those sharing interests” (Wellman in Urry 2010, 148). To summarise, public spaces (offline as well as online) are sites where dispossessed people can conjugate, engage in debate, and make demands for either inclusion in, or the transformation of, the wider public sphere.

Solidarity

There are multiple forms of solidarity and the understanding and meaning of the term have changed historically. There is national solidarity based on the feeling of affinity with fellow citizens within the nation-state⁹⁷ and forms of solidarity that stretch far beyond the borders of the state, like religious, political, ethnic, and subcultural groups, as well as economic and political groups (Wennerhag and Lindgren 2018).

In sociology, there are understood to be four sources of solidarity: interdependence, norms and values, struggle, and encounter (Oosterlynck et al. 2016). Each one identifies a distinct source for feelings of shared fate and group loyalty with a specific perspective on the value and role of social difference and individuality in society. Hence, the four sources reflect different ideological positions on how societies develop social order and cohesion as outlined in the following. (1) Interdependence is the liberal orientation on solidarity, which stresses the positive aspects of social differentiation. It assumes that solidarity emerges from the division of labour and the awareness of interdependence (*ibid.*, 766). (2) Shared norms and values refer to Durkheim’s idea that interdependencies are insufficient for nurturing solidarity; they need a common belief system in order to be sustained. So-called communitarian scholars are the main proponents of this perspective, which has generated a whole body of research on social capital and social cohesion (see, e.g.,

⁹⁷ For example, Sweden and other Nordic welfare states’ redistribution of income and high taxes are motivated in reference to solidarity. Instead of making redistribution between rich and poor dependent on charity, the early social democratic governments in Sweden institutionalised everyone’s equal right to a basic income and decent living standards (Stjernø 2004). It is argued that the kind of resource distributive solidarity that was seen in previous decades in Sweden is harder to maintain today after decades of neoliberal rhetoric in which issues of social justice and equality have been toned down in favour of market-oriented values such as individual responsibility, entrepreneurship, and salaries that are based on productive achievement (P. A. Hall 2017).

Putnam 2007). (3) Struggle as solidarity is based on the work of Marx and Weber and is related to unequal power relations and their capacity to engender collective action. Solidarity is rooted in a joint struggle around common interests against a shared enemy (Oosterlynck et al. 2016, 768). This perspective is the most relevant for the activism that is focused upon in this thesis. (4) Encounter, the fourth source of solidarity, is associated with the work of Simmel and the urban sociologists of the Chicago School. Sociologists doing research in today's cities note that "traditional social bonds were eroded by the division of labour and the weakening of family attachments and replaced by informal social relations and solidarities in the neighbourhood" (ibid., 769).

Solidarity is a central concept in the analysis of social movements; it was re-introduced into social debates in Europe in light of international migration and neoliberal economic restructuring (ibid., 764). The large immigration of refugees to Sweden in 2015 generated a debate about the limits of solidarity in national media (see A. B. Andersson and Gerin 2018). International solidarity was pitted against national solidarity with the argument that, in order to enact solidarity with the people *in* Sweden, we cannot afford to show solidarity with an unrestricted number of people from outside Sweden, i.e. refugees. National interests were pitted against the right to asylum. Today's asylum politics in Sweden resonate with what Will Kymlicka (2015) calls welfare chauvinism: the state favours national solidarity at the expense of migrants.

In line with welfare chauvinism and in response to increased pro-asylum activism across Europe, several EU governments have criminalised the acts of solidarity of those who try to give support to refugees (Fekete 2009; Fekete, Webber, and Edmond-Pettitt 2017). Some people who assisted transit refugees on humanitarian grounds across the border from Denmark to Sweden during the autumn of 2015 were sentenced to jail on the grounds of human smuggling (Pernbro 2017). An activist affiliated with Kontrapunkt was held in custody for six hours after being detained for 'illegally driving refugees', which is to say driving them for free from Malmö Central Station to Kontrapunkt to receive shelter, legal aid, and food—a trip of about five kilometres. Similar events were reported

in which activists were harassed by the police (Kontrapunkt and Muslimska församlingen 2015). After the introduction of border controls in 2016, 36 cases of ‘human smuggling’ across the border from Denmark to Sweden were registered in the first three months (Betzler and Emel 2017), one of which was a German deacon who helped a family to reunite in Sweden. Another case was a taxi driver who drove a person without a residence permit across the border; he was sentenced to three months in jail (ibid.). The criminalisation of this sort of solidarity activism has been argued to legitimise far-right harassment of those who support people in precarious legal conditions (Anderson 2018).

I am here mostly interested in ‘political solidarity’ (Scholtz 2008), a perspective closely related to that of struggle as one of the four traditional sources of solidarity presented at the beginning of this subchapter. I am inspired by philosopher Sally Scholtz (2008), who distinguishes political solidarity from social and civil solidarity, seeing it as an active response to injustice, oppression, or social vulnerability. This form of solidarity is thus not merely a passive feeling, but an action-oriented solidarity that implies the creation of relations with the people who suffer injustice. “All forms of political solidarity involve activism, but not all forms of activism constitute political solidarity” (ibid., 189). The political aspect lies in the aim of creating more equal orders, similar to Rancière’s politics, that are fought for *jointly*. Activist groups engaged in political solidarity need not promote their own needs or interests but can express solidarity with the groups whose unjust treatment is the reason for acting. Political solidarity is thus a relation that, depending on the situation, may involve two parts in unequal power relations. These relations require mutuality and collaboration and involve elements of awareness-raising and politicisation. Political solidarity thus strengthens the cohesion between differently positioned people who jointly act against injustice, which commonly accentuates the importance of each individual’s conscience and commitment (ibid., 33).

Solidarity has historically been a central practice of the political left and is an important term and discourse in activist circles in Malmö. Solidarity can be forged with social groups within a city or

with those far away beyond the national borders. One example is Allt åt alla's solidarity with YPG/YPJ (People's Protection Units/Women's Protection Units) in Rojava in Kurdistan. Another is Aktion mot deportation's arrangement of renting a house in Kabul for Afghani deportees from Sweden. The examples in this thesis, however, concern activities conducted by activist groups in solidarity with racialised people and migrants with precarious legal status in the city of Malmö.

Importantly, the kind of solidarity I observed in Malmö is commonly built on an 'us' mentality, which can be clearly distinguished from practices of charity related to altruism and sympathy. Charity's aim is usually to alleviate someone's suffering—it focuses on 'the other's' wellbeing—whereas the aim of (political) solidarity is to approach equality between the giver and the receiver and, as such, implies an 'us' that is a mutually constituting whole (Laitinen and Pessi 2018). In order to separate solidarity from charity, it is common to highlight mutuality, meaning mutual recognition or mutual aid (Kropotkin 1902). Unlike charity, mutual aid does not connote the moral superiority of the giver over the receiver. The activists featured in this thesis are engaged in solidarity rather than charity due to their attempts of creating horizontal relations of empathy and mutual aid and recognition. Nevertheless, the charity versus solidarity discussion is a basis for a division of opinions and actions among activists in Malmö, as explored in Chapter 5.

It is difficult to argue that one is engaged in mutual aid when there is a clear asymmetry between the giver, an activist with a Swedish passport, education, and resources, and the receiver, who may be a migrant living in precarious legal and social conditions. Here, I note a tension between prefigurative politics, solidarity, and 'politics of the first person' (i.e. not wanting to represent another). As explained above, prefiguration is assumed to imply participatory and direct forms of democracy. But when a struggle involves social groups in relations of deep inequality, it is hard to require direct and equal participation by those whose deep dispossession is the cause of the struggle. In such struggles, Steinar Stjernø (2018, 75) argues for the toning down of the 'mutuality' aspect and instead highlighting the presence of a struggling subject. Indeed, in

Malmö many (albeit not all) of the people supported by the activists are, to some extent, involved in political work, either through joining the political groups as active members or at least as participants in demonstrations. They thus experience political socialisation and a process of becoming political subjects. Migrants may thus gain from building relationships with the Swedish activists, with whom they may formulate demands and engage in practices that enable emplacement in the city.

Notwithstanding the above, many activists define their motivation for engaging in solidarity within their unequal power relations in terms of mutuality and commonness. Commonness here means that they, as Swedish citizens and Malmö residents, confront the same dispossessive forces of capital as do, for example, the Roma migrants in Malmö, even if these forces of capital affect them differently. Importantly, solidarity is not based on commonness, but on the *sense* of commonness (Sahlström 2018) and of ‘us together’ despite differences in economic, cultural, and educational status. Hence, there is a belief in a *potential mutuality* based on a sense of commonness under the neoliberal regime. Based on this understanding, solidarity is closely aligned with principles of friendship as a social relationship based on mutual interest in each other, recognition, and care (to which I devote special attention in Chapter 6).

While altruism is commonly associated with charity, Stjernø (2018) argues that solidarity requires, at minimum, a sense of ‘political altruism’ (Passy 2001). This means that the elements of caring for others must be based on the aim of societal change and transforming power relations towards equality. However, a problem intrinsic to initially asymmetric relations is that they may reproduce and consolidate hierarchical power relations. Activists’ strategies for avoiding the repetition of social structures of hierarchy include creating spaces of direct democracy and horizontality, political socialisation (awareness-raising), rotating organisational positions of responsibility, and sharing resources. Hence, the kind of solidarity that I study is not grounded in pity but is based on intellectual reasoning with the aim of political and economic justice. The goal of equality motivates the activists’ acts of solidarity.

David Featherstone's (2012) take on solidarity has been particularly useful for my understanding of solidarity as it appears in Malmö. He has analysed the extent to which activists have collaborated across differences and to what effect. Solidarity, Featherstone writes, consists not only of support and recognition between like-minded people, but also between social groups that may have different agendas but nevertheless create something new together, such as formulating new political aims. Hence, this thesis is critical of the understanding of solidarities as based purely on 'given' attributes such as class, nationality, and ethnicity since these categories trap our understanding of solidarity within a reductive binary of similarity and dissimilarity (ibid., 23). Such an understanding would ignore the ways that solidarities are located in and forged through particular contexts and the many ways that they come to be practiced and enacted by particular actors (ibid., 19). Solidarity is not something detached but intimately dependent on the places and groups that are brought together (ibid., 31). It is a spatial and bodily practice. Solidarity formed in action involves one's body being in close proximity with the bodies of those in need of support as well as with other bodies in collective actions as when, for example, trying to stop a bus carrying deportees or when blocking excavators from levelling Roma migrants' shacks. It is precisely the activists' bodily commitment, in combination with social equality and justice aims, that creates certain pathways for migrant emplacement in the city, since the experiential, emotional, and bodily component of creating group solidarity (Durkheim 1912; Collins 2004) is achieved through individuals acting together, not by thinking together (Peterson 2001, 59). This bodily understanding of solidarity resonates with Emile Durkheim's (1912) writings on solidarity as generated through action, in particular through mass mobilisations.

Closely following the emergence of solidarity at the local scale allows me to analyse the configuration of domains of commonality and mutual practices. The very local level is key for understanding expressions of solidarity as lived experience and for understanding when, where, how, and why joint actions are formed.

The 'us' that emerges in activist circles in Malmö is always in flux and dependent on each particular struggle, but it is always constructed in opposition to the prevailing (unequal) society. Activists' creation of 'us'-ness serves several important psychological and political functions and ultimately contributes to a meaningful social existence (Simon and Klandermans 2001) and emplacement in the city for people who have moved to Malmö from elsewhere.

Strong solidarity, however, is not a guarantee for achieving equality. Strong solidarity can, in fact, turn into practices of excluding 'outsiders'. In Möllevången, this has been expressed by some local residents who not only feel excluded from the 'political space' of Möllevången because they have not adapted wholeheartedly to the activists' norms of life (e.g., being vegetarian or engaging in protests) or subscribed to the correct '-isms' (e.g., socialism, anarchism, feminism), but have also been physically excluded by, for example, being thrown out of the 1 May demonstrations by organisers who have certain perceptions of who is and who is not allowed to participate in their struggle (as examined in Chapter 3). Such tensions and boundary making are primarily found between different political clusters, or between politically engaged people and those who are not engaged, even if they have the same social and class background. While people living in precarious conditions are commonly included with less demands posed on them, peer-citizens have to live up to certain activist standards. Nevertheless, as much as actions of solidarity may confirm existing identities and power relations, they also actively contribute to the creation of new ways of relating, as will be shown in Chapters 6 and 7. While not dismissing the inevitable aspects of boundary making, I primarily focus on the process of commoning as part and parcel of solidarity. In doing so, I adopt Sven-Eric Liedman's (2007) definition of solidarity as an expression and creation of 'the commons', which is one of the key political terms for contemporary radical politics (Cumbers 2015; Hardt and Negri 2009; Harvey 2011, 2013; Holloway 2010).

Commoning

The theory of ‘commons’ was developed by Elinor Ostrom (1990), who sought to document and explain the possibilities of collective action in terms of cooperation between individuals to address common problems. This was an attempt to challenge Garret Hardin’s (1968) ‘tragedy of the commons’, which is the traditional ‘rational egoist’ model in neoclassical economics in which individuals are not expected to cooperate when facing a common problem.

Discourses of the commons as material resources (lands and laws) are often related to the idea of loss: the ‘commons’ as that which we once had, but have now lost (Dawney 2013, 33). Instead, Leila Dawney points to the importance of moving away “from thinking about commons as that which is lost and which needs mourning, towards practices of commoning that in many ways on different scales work to produce a feeling of being in common” (2013, 33). In this thesis, I define commoning as the processes and practices involved in helping to build common spaces, interests, and experiences (Dawney 2013). I therefore pay attention to events that have made deep impacts on activists’ sense of being in common: seeing oneself in ‘the other’, as when Swedish activists claim they have stakes in common with the undocumented or with Roma migrants, or when the undocumented who become activists claim that they have stakes in common with LGBTQ and racialised Swedish activists. In collective struggles such as anti-deportation campaigns, the anti-fascist ‘Kämpa Malmö’ mass mobilisations, or against the eviction of the Sorgenfri settlement, shared spaces are constructed involving Swedish activists and migrants in precarious legal conditions. Through these practices, a sense of being in common is achieved. This sense, in turn, has the potential to create new subjectivities that may resist neoliberal orders.

In line with this way of thinking about commons, Andrew Cumbers (2015) identifies a growing interest in ‘a translocal global commons’: a different kind of leftist project that transcends both the state and capitalist forms of appropriation, one that promotes collective and democratic forms of social relations over individualising and competitive ones. Hardt and Negri (2009) are important

promoters of the kind of commons that looks beyond the public/private dichotomy and instead focuses on the “cultural creative common” (Harvey 2011) that “is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships, and so forth” (Hardt and Negri 2009, 139). Based on this understanding, Harvey (2011, 103–104) argues that “through their daily activities and struggles, individuals and social groups create the social world of the city and, in doing so, create something common as a framework within which we all can dwell”. Through transformative efforts of commoning in Malmö, where the city represents the battlefield for the commons (Hardt and Negri 2009, 250), activists resist displacement and dispossession.

While all activist groups featured in this thesis engage in a politics of the commons, Allt åt alla is the only group that actively and consistently uses the concept of commons (in Swedish *allmänningar* or *det gemensamma*) in their political rhetoric. But I consider Malmö’s pro-asylum activists’ call for ‘No Borders’ to be part of the struggle for ‘a global commons’ (Cumbers 2015). What pro-asylum activists engage in, through their practices of solidarity, is not a question of ‘immigration’ but of global inequality (Anderson interviewed in M. Sager 2018) and, as such, it is a struggle for the global commons. Pro-asylum activists demand that every person have the freedom to move and, in this era of dispossession and displacement, the related freedom not to be moved (i.e. to stay). Hence, they question the legitimacy of the global system of nation states by pointing to the role of border controls in capitalist social relations (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012, 82). Such challenges to the nation-state’s sovereign right to control people’s mobility, which is done through the releasing, befriending, marrying, sheltering, and mobilising of people with precarious legal status, indicates “a new sort of liberatory project, one with new ideas of ‘society’ and one aimed at creating new social actors not identified with nationalist projects (projects that have shown to be deeply racialized, sexualized, gendered and productive of class relations)” (ibid.).

Activists' contemporary politics of 'No Borders' (which emerged in the mid-1990s)⁹⁸ is marked by the re-politicisation of the very legitimacy of (im)migration restrictions and the distinctions between 'national' or even 'regional' or 'continental' (e.g., 'European') subjects and foreignness (ibid.). This kind of politics is different from liberal immigrant-rights approaches as it refuses to settle for 'fairer' immigration laws such as a larger number of accepted migrants or more generous legal statuses. It is also different from liberals' call for 'no borders'. Liberals want to achieve a flexible and unrestrained labour market with the aim of increasing productivity and capital accumulation and is thus part of the dispossessive accumulation strategy; if the means of production remain controlled by the few, open borders will not be a radical change for the many. Instead, the right to move and to stay is understood as a vital part of a system of common rights and rights to the commons. Therefore, in this thesis, I use Anderson, Sharma, and Wright's understanding of the No Border politics of pro-asylum groups, which is part of "a broader, reinvigorated struggle for the commons" (2012, 85).

Informed by the above theories, I understand the 'commons' as being constituted by forms of direct access to social wealth, access that is not mediated by competitive market relations nor led by state institutions, but rather mediated by and through social networks in which mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human relations promote communal and egalitarian forms of life. When using the notion of commoning, I refer to this kind of relational politics: the sharing of particular socio-political relations as well as the social process that creates and produces the commons (De Angelis 2010). Commoning stands for productive moments that build group identity, shared experiences, spaces and understandings as well as repertoires of tactics (Featherstone et al. 2013; De Angelis 2003; Linebaugh 2008). As such, commoning is a politicising process (seeing the world with new 'political' eyes). Through common-

⁹⁸ This is in contrast to the fact that the everyday practice of resisting borders has existed for as long as borders have (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012, 82). No Borders is also the name of a transnational network that coordinates migrant resistance and anti-deportation campaigns in refugee camps, cities, and airports (Carau 2018).

ing, individuals create new politicised understandings of self and 'us' connected to certain spaces and places.

Importantly, commoning highlights the importance of sharing (Susser 2017). The activists in Malmö engage in sharing in material terms, such as through alternative structures of resource distribution, but also in political terms through the opening up and sharing of political spaces through collective actions and in social terms by building social networks and friendships in horizontal ways based on reciprocity, trust, and care. Activists' commoning in Malmö contributes to making people feel that they have collective stakes in a shared urban space. Collective actions and embodied solidarity in Malmö contribute to a sense of shared experience not only when acting together in demonstrations, but also when eating together or sharing traumas and grievances (Dawney 2013, 34), for example, in flats where activists let people without legal documents stay with them. Or, as was done during many nights at the campfire in the Sorgenfri settlement, when activists and Roma dwellers kept vigil to be ready to resist the police and excavators. Commoning is contentious since it works in disagreement with, and is possibly disruptive of, capitalist social relations. I thus regard commoning as an antidote to displacement and dispossessive processes under the neoliberal hegemony.

In sum, when using the notion of commoning, I am referring to the counter-hegemonic sharing of resources and the creation of social relationships, spaces, and practices of horizontalism as well as collaborative egalitarianism, language, narratives, and knowledge. What are these resources that the activists share concretely? Activists in Malmö have different kinds of resources. The most important resources include an awareness of contemporary processes of inequality and segregation; knowledge and theories on how and why these processes come about and how to counteract them; and an extensive network of relations with other activists that reaches outside the city and country, allowing them to mobilise people in a short period of time. Furthermore, the activists' resources also include: knowledge and experience concerning direct action methods (e.g., sit-ins and mass blockades) characteristic of the extra-parliamentarian left; the cultural capital of a middle-class back-

ground, education, and occupation (as some activists are lawyers, journalists, writers, artists, or scholars); relations with professionals in the news media, which enables the activists to turn certain issues into news; knowledge about advocacy work and how to affect public opinion; a willingness and preparedness to transgress laws and regulations; and also a willingness to receive jail time or fines due to the supportive networks that mobilise resources to cover fines or loss of income during jail time. The sharing of these resources is key to the activists' commoning that is analysed in this thesis, which has enabled the creation of pathways of emplacement in the city for some migrants with a precarious legal status. Next, I conclude this chapter by summarising the main points that have been made.

Activism as city-making

As I have made clear in this chapter, cities are sites where wider economic and political processes are played out. Cities are also sites where social relations are 'condensed' and where strangers meet (Sennet 1991) and where languages, images, knowledge, affects, norms, habits, and practices are produced (Hardt and Negri 2009). Contemporary cities are also sites of hierarchy and exploitation and antagonism and conflict, and therefore sites of potential resistance (*ibid.*, 258). The processes of dispossession and displacement outlined in this chapter are not unique to Malmö but rather part of a global phenomenon. These processes are felt and dealt with by people everywhere, but the sense of injustice and discontent does not always grow into collective political action. The density of activist groups in Malmö, as will be shown in Chapter 3, facilitated by the specific conditions of Möllevången, enables and encourages collective action to take place.

The underlying processes in this thesis concern a specific moment in the history of (neoliberal) urban regeneration. The city's urban restructuring is crucial for understanding how activism has grown into a central feature of the city and, more specifically, of a certain place, Möllevången, which is undergoing gentrification. On the one hand, this thesis examines the dynamics of activism and place-making when people identify with a larger social movement

for social justice and equality; on the other hand, it is an examination of a specific place at a specific time and its transformation in the course of urban redevelopment and regeneration and the ways in which left-wing, extra-parliamentary activism contests this particular form of capital accumulation but also ends up, in some ways, contributing to it. In each of the following chapters, I attempt to acknowledge these two dynamics by distinguishing the one from the other.

While public spaces—in the city as well as those online—are important sites of doing politics, I also refer to actions and work of solidarity done clandestinely and unlawfully, such as squatting houses for homeless migrants or releasing undocumented migrants from arrest. By acting, the activists construct new spaces and new relations and are thus protagonists in the city-making process. Neither activists nor migrants with precarious legal status are a ‘surplus population’ outside the processes of capital accumulation; they contribute to the processes of creating value in city land and property in various social, cultural, political, and economic ways (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018). Through the relations that their activities generate, migrants as well as activists play a role in city-making and the ongoing gentrification of Möllevången. I thus analyse activism within various networks of power, “ranging from the daily life experiences of residents and organizers to the local economic and political context and broader national and global forces operating on and affecting the urban area in which the neighbourhood is situated” (Martin 2003, 730). I pay special attention to small-scale actions that construct alternative modes of social, political, and economic organisation, and see them as elements of a prefigurative politics that avoids both ‘waiting forever for the Revolution to come’ and attempting to change existing structures through reformist demands (Day 2005, 16). In other words, if place and space are products of interrelations, always open and under construction (Massey 2005), space inherently contains the possibility of prefiguration: to create more equal social relations in the here and now while aiming for a more equal order tomorrow on a larger scale. These marginal spaces, however, are not liberated from power hierarchies and control mechanisms. They produce new

rules, norms, symbols, and power relations. Accordingly, I do not romanticise the spaces created by activists in Malmö, but attempt to reveal the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts within them.

Before turning to empirically explore the characteristics of Möllevången as an important contemporary activist hub in Sweden, I will present my research methodology for the fieldwork conducted in Möllevången.

2 DOING FIELDWORK 'AT HOME'

Employing ethnographic methods in the field of political activism raises questions about positionality, impact, possible overidentification with the people or groups studied, and distinctions between theory and action and epistemology. The boundaries between research, advocacy, and everyday life were blurred when I became involved in the social setting of the activist groups (Davis 2003; Petray 2012). Since my sympathies lie with the activists, I have made special effort to reflect on the relations between research and activism and my role as a researcher. This is elaborated in the section on ethical and emotional considerations below in this chapter.

I engaged in fieldwork 'at home' in two respects: in terms of my history in relation to Möllevången and Malmö, where I have lived for ten years, and in relation to the leftist, extra-parliamentarian activist scene in the city that I have, to some extent, become a part of. My personal acquaintances with activists and previous experiences of the extra-parliamentarian scene in Malmö were incentives for starting this PhD project. As a researcher, I was immersed in a number of activities that I observed as an ethnographer. However, efforts to separate the professional and the personal are not only difficult but also rather illusory (Amit 2000, 5). The sense of 'leaving the field' is illusory as well, since one cannot help taking the field along with one's self, as 'the field' is incorporated into one's biography, understandings, and associations (Amit 2000, 9). The long-term ethnographic fieldwork I conducted generated close social relationships (Trigger, Forsey, and Meurk 2012) and I believe it was possible to sustain friendships and acquaintances that both

constituted and transcended my fieldwork engagements without jeopardising the quality of the research.

All along, I have been stunned by the activists' passion for politics and action. In all interview encounters with activists, I felt a kind of affinity with the interviewees (similar to what is described by Wasshede 2010, 59). These feelings and affinities have forced me to continuously reflect on their possible implications for my fieldwork and writing. Proximity and shared experiences were of great advantage, since distance from the field would have prevented interviews with core activists; they also meant that I was relatively acquainted with the language, codes, and central problematics existing in the activist milieu that I set out to study (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, being an insider geographically (to the place) and ideologically (leftist politics), I owe the reader and myself particular transparency concerning the production of the material analysed in this thesis. This chapter explains what was like to conduct ethnographic research on activism in my own socio-cultural environment. I also describe how the material was collected and analysed.

Creating the field

The ethnographic field I studied did not simply exist, waiting for me to discover it, but rather came into being through my own laborious construction of it (Amit 2000, 6). This process of construction was shaped by my previous experiences and positionalities in power hierarchies, including the conceptual, professional, financial, and the relational opportunities and resources accessible to me (*ibid.*; Haraway 1988). I assume that the field is 'performed' (S. Coleman and Collins 2006), framed by boundaries that shift according to the analytical and rhetorical preferences of the ethnographer and, more rarely, the research participants. The metaphor of 'performance', unlike conventional notions of fixed places, can be deployed to describe the construction of the field, referring to "the sense that a field is constructed through a play of social relationships established between ethnographers and research participants that may extend across physical sites, comprising embodied as well as visual and verbal interactions" (*ibid.*, 12). Performances can be seen as repeated or transformed over time, created anew

each time the ethnographer, with or without the research participants being physically present, invokes the field in the process of research or writing (ibid.). This notion is useful in my research since I look at activists' practices: what they *do* at particular times and places, which are considered as performances that I was at times a part of.

I explore how activism was enabled by the place, how activists (re)create the place through their activities, and what their impacts are with regards to emplacement in the city, in particular for people in precarious legal conditions. My 'ethnographic object' was thus contingent and emergent. In the process of constructing my field, I also explore the role of the place by "looking at politically and analytically charged constructions of locality and neighbourhood" (ibid., 2). My research participants' perceptions of space and place in relation to 'the global' inform my understanding of the field (ibid., 15).

Furthermore, by examining the activists' actions, I simultaneously examine how "the global is brought down to earth" (ibid., 3). This is important with regard to the issue of gentrification processes and economic restructuring in Malmö as a part of the city's current transformation, as well as with regard to the forms of solidarity enacted on a number of scales (the household, local, national, and online), which impact the construction of Möllevången.

Multi-sited and multi-sighted fieldwork

'Multi-sited fieldwork' (Marcus 1995) has come to represent the transformations in fieldwork practice within anthropology (Candea 2007). The term describes the handling of new practices involving more complex objects of study and ethnography's move "from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the 'local' and the 'global,' the 'lifeworld' and the 'system'" (Marcus 1995, 95). In order to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space, George Marcus (1995, 97) suggests the strategy of "following" (the people, the thing, the metaphor, the conflict,

etc.) to look for paths of circulations, connections, and associations.

Multi-sited ethnography is perhaps most common in migration studies (ibid.). Social movement studies is another research field for multi-sited ethnography. Activists are mobile and active agents in international solidarity. Part of the activist life is to travel to support the struggles of people in distant places. However, I did not need to follow the activists physically in order to trace their networks and interconnections. Multi-sited ethnography misinterprets the concept of the single site based on the assumption that single sites constitute a bounded entity and a binary vision of the 'local here' and the 'global there' (Glick Schiller 2006). Any 'global' entity is, and can only be, manifested locally, and from this it follows that each 'localised', sited study is simultaneously a study of the 'world-system' (Appadurai 1996; Marcus 1995). Hence, any local context is always intrinsically multi-sited (Candea 2007). An urban space, whether a building, neighbourhood, or city, is always multisited since every place is connected to multiple places (Massey 1995).

In this study of activism, the particular location of Malmö/Möllevången is understood not as a self-contained, local instance in communication with a global system, but as an ethnographic location for the direct study of the system itself (Candea 2007, 170). I thus employ Çağlar and Glick Schiller's (2018) concept of multi-*sighted* fieldwork, instead of multi-sited, with the main aim of revealing the multiscalar processes happening on the ground in Malmö and Möllevången that pertain to economic restructuring under global capitalism and migration processes. Multi-sighted fieldwork required that I look at activism from multiple viewpoints and intersecting scales.

In conclusion, by employing multi-sighted ethnographic methods in a multi-sighted way, it is possible to trace the interconnections of unequal power in order to analyse processes and relationships and make visible the multiscalar power structures that connect the different places (ibid.).

Choosing the place

I chose Malmö as the place of study since the city has gained the reputation, among activists at a nation level, as a key activist city in contemporary Sweden and I wanted to explore the reasons why that is. In the initial phase of my research, I ‘followed’ collective actions wherever they popped up in the city. By following activists’ actions, it soon became clear that most collective actions and practical solidarity took place in Möllevången, while some moved around the city (like demonstrations with a starting and end point).

Following activists’ actions also lead me online, where I found a great deal of activist *doing*. Digital sites complement the physical sites of activists’ activities. The distinction between online and offline worlds is thus becoming less useful because activities in these realms are becoming increasingly merged with the two spaces interacting with and transforming one another (Garcia et al. 2009).

Matei Candea’s (2007) observation that the status of locality has changed is of particular interest for my research. The locality, the site itself, has become an object rather than a tool for ethnographic inquiry. That is to say, the ethnographer is increasingly understood to be working ‘in’ (and ‘on’) the sites that are meaningful to the people he or she works with. The relevant boundaries of the analysis are not fixed a priori, but are rather ‘discovered’ on the ground: “The bounded site, the locality itself, becomes an object of study, and the ethnographer is now free to follow others as they do the bounding, the localisation, and the delimitation” (ibid., 172). Thus, I framed my field-site with the help of the activists themselves, but these sites were not treated as bounded units isolated from the world. A multi-*sighted* analytical approach, as introduced above, enabled me to examine the multiscalar processes of power in that particular place.

Methods, material, and fieldwork

Three main methods served me in my collection of data: participant observation, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews. I also used complementary sources of data in order to deepen the contextual understanding of the neighbourhood and of activism as a phenomenon, including previous research on Malmö, print media

articles, official city documents, statistics, tourist adverts, websites, video clips (mostly from YouTube), and photos that broaden the range of representations available for analysis.

While ethnographic fieldwork implies using a variety of qualitative methods, it always includes engagement with the lives of those being studied within the context of their daily lives and over an extended period of time. Ethnographies therefore permit detailed, local, contextual analysis and the portrayal of global economic forces simultaneously (Clifford 1986, 22). Methods such as participant observation, formal interviews, and informal conversations are “close to the way we all make sense of the world around us, and yet can be scientifically rigorous and systematic at the same time” (O’Reilly 2005, 1).

I undertook participant observation in various collective actions (demonstrations, social gatherings, book fairs, and cultural events among others) during the period 2013–2016. I observed and took notes on any protest situation in Malmö. The purpose of the participant observation was initially to map the field of activism in Malmö and, later, to gain a more detailed account of the activists’ activities. Who are the activists? What groups are they members of? What are they doing and why? Participant observation allowed me to gain an understanding of how the activists use urban space, which strategies they employ, and how different activist groups interact with each other and with the public. I therefore took notes on what I saw and heard, noting descriptions of my meetings with particular activists in the field, anecdotes, verbal exchanges, and on the places where we met. I used a mobile phone and sometimes a digital camera both to take still pictures and record videos. These were used to support my memory and complement my fieldnotes. Through this process, a ‘natural’ selection grew out of my material.

As an important part of my fieldwork, I engaged in dozens of informal conversations with both activist and non-activist Malmö-residents of various class backgrounds, migrant statuses, ages, genders, sexualities, and professions, and in brief interviews with passers-by (non-activists) at political events such as demonstrations. None of these was recorded, so I noted them down afterwards. Moreover, I attended the meetings of three different activist groups

important for my background knowledge. My own direct involvement in the work of Aktion mot deportation is featured in Chapter 5. Since much of activist mobilisation, organisation, and communication happens in and through Facebook, the social network also became a relevant part of my research field. I made observations of the activists' communication and interactions online. To document my observations, I made screenshots of the quotes, pictures, and news feed updates on Facebook.

In addition to ethnographic observations and conversations in the course of my fieldwork, which are my main material, I collected formal interview material with a total of 35 research participants, of which 25 were activists and ten were non-activists but either residents or workers in Möllevången. I selected the activist interviewees in this study on the basis of their current or recent involvement in major, organised political actions or campaigns and their affiliation with certain political activist groups in Malmö. However, as shown in the course of the interviews, they do not necessarily call themselves 'activists' (see Povrzanović Frykman and Mäkelä 2018). I conducted in-depth interviews with 18 activists: nine women and nine men. I moderated a panel debate on activism (in which I posed the questions) between seven local activists: four men and three women. This was recorded with the activists' consent and then transcribed. In addition, I conducted formal (short) interviews with ten non-activists who live and/or work in or around Möllevången and have witnessed collective actions or experienced the activist presence in order to see what their perceptions are of activists, activism, and the neighbourhood of Möllevången. This was to explore how the activists and their actions in the public space are perceived by non-activists against the background of a shared urban place and in relation to place-making and the representation of place. Concurrently, the non-activists' perceptions of collective actions and activism illuminate why some people engage in collective actions while others do not. It also offered an understanding of the local effects of collective actions in public space concerning the possibilities of emplacement in the city, especially as it is related to local gentrification processes, anti-racism, and asylum seekers' rights.

Each in-depth interview was recorded and typically lasted for approximately two hours. I used an interview guide with areas of interest that I wanted to highlight, which were formulated as open-ended questions. The interviews usually developed into conversations in which many of the questions were brought up and discussed without me having to ask them. Since the interviewees were partly free to elaborate on the issues that they themselves found important, the interviews differed in length and content and produced rich material that illuminates a variety of aspects concerning my topic. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I included questions on a variety of topics, while towards the end, when the focus of the thesis was clearer, I narrowed down the number of questions.

The interviews were conducted in public spaces such as parks, square benches, cafés, and restaurants, except for the three that were conducted in my own home and the two conducted at the activists' own flats in Malmö. All in-depth interviews were conducted in Swedish, and therefore have been translated into English by me. Most informal conversations were held in Swedish, but with some recent migrants we spoke English. The panel debate was conducted in English, but for the purpose of clarity I have corrected the language where needed. Translating the interviews from Swedish into English helped to anonymise the participants since a person's mode of talking will not be revealed. Not only did transcribing involve translation from one language into another, but also from an oral language, with its own set of rules, into a written language with another set of rules (Kvale 1996, 165). These transcripts are thus not representations of the original reality, but rather interpretative constructions made by me as tools for my analysis (*ibid.*). I have tried to be as true to the conversation as possible, yet pragmatic in dealing with the data (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). Importantly, what interests me is not the interviewees' individual statements in themselves, but what they say at the level of commonality or generalisability as building blocks for a theoretical idea or rationality for action.

Biographical interviews

The in-depth interviews I conducted were based on the practice of biographical interviewing used as a way of collecting personal narratives with the aim of exploring individual activists' experiences of activism in the context of their life histories. Marita Eastmond (2007) discusses how we can know something about other people's experiences and how we can represent those experiences in ways that do them justice. Biographical narratives are not transparent versions of 'truth' but reflect the dynamic interplay between life, experience, and story. My interpretations are based on a solid grasp of the larger context in which the activists' lives, experiences, and actions are embedded. People's stories can tell us something about how social actors, from a particular social position and cultural vantage point, make sense of their world (*ibid.*). These stories also tell us about how people choose to present themselves in a particular setting to a particular person. Narratives are always situated: "the personal voice is always interwoven with those of many others, and in narrative analysis it necessarily includes that of the researcher" (*ibid.*, 261). Therefore, I have considered my role and impact as a researcher in narrating the experiences of other people.

Eastmond argues that biographical analysis is a particularly useful method for research about migration (see also Cederberg 2013) and it is equally appropriate for the purpose of this study. Placed in their wider socio-political and cultural contexts, biographical narratives can provide insights into how political activists seek to make sense of matters such as dispossession, displacement, injustice, resistance, and identity-creation. Biographical narratives connect the personal with the political. Also, they challenge reductionist discourses—simplified stories of much more complex social realities—about activists by presenting alternative knowledge of activists' lives and identifications. Considering how people present their activist experiences in the broader context of their lives enables a complex understanding of the meaning-making processes involved (Eastmond 2007). Activists' biographical stories about what contributed to their politicisation in terms of family background, upbringing, adult experiences of injustices, etc. expose the personal

that underlies people's present engagements with their environments, which adds perspectives to dominant understandings. The different activist trajectories revealed throughout my fieldwork were influenced by people's different social and political backgrounds. I also found a spectrum of motivations that got them into political activism in the first place. Whatever the initial motivation to become engaged in activism was—anger, compassion, frustration, a yearning for a social network and/or purpose in life—activism has had a very important effect on the direction that their lives have taken.

Through the use of biographical interviews, the role of friendship in life in general and in activism in particular developed as an important element to investigate, which is done in Chapter 6. Importantly, by approaching activists' narratives from an intersectional perspective (Hooks 1984; Crenshaw 1989; Haraway 1991) in Chapter 4, the interviewees' multiple positionings are used to problematise group-based categorisations (Cederberg 2013).

Empirical data and the analytical process

The qualitative data analysis software NVivo helped me to store, organise, and code my data. It was a process of 'asking questions' of the set of fieldnotes, interview transcripts, newspaper articles, and collected pictures (Charmaz 2006). What is going on here? Why is it interesting? How do these subjects characterise and categorise the people, activities, and places around them? The initial, broad themes I used when doing the first rough sorting were: what is said about activism? What is said about place—about Malmö and Möllevången—in relation to other places? What is said about migrants and other categories and identifications (class, gender, ethnicity, generation, ideology, place, etc.)? How are activists' experiences related to processes of dispossession, displacement, and emplacement? Importantly, when analysing people's statements, I searched for any recurrent phrases or contradictions or even recurrent contradictions.

Not only did I pay attention to what was said, but also to how it was said. Did the interviewees convey feelings of fear, frustration, deception, happiness, or strength? Were they emotionally agitated

about certain things? This way of asking one's self questions while trying to answer them involves constantly going back and forth between the data and the questions, themes, and concepts that drive the research (Radice 2010). I then carefully examined sections of text that spoke to a particular theme and assigned them to a code (or 'node' as it is called in NVivo). Since one statement can have multiple meanings, one segment of text can 'belong' to numerous codes. In the early stages of the analysis, I created various codes for a very broad range of potentially relevant themes, both large and small, descriptive and analytical (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, 150–55). As the analysis progressed, some codes were discarded while others became more important and some were grouped together into higher-level categories. In this way, I was able to search for all the data relating to a given theme as the writing process progressed. Regarding the analysis and organisation of my observations, I asked myself *what are they doing?* from a prefigurative perspective. In the process of going back and forth between the data and the questions, the prefigurative politics of creating alternative structures, friendships, alliances, and mass mobilisations grew out of the material.

One last note on the analytical process is that I asked two activists to read an early draft of the entire thesis. This enabled me to revise my thesis constructively and create a more nuanced picture of activists' achievements with the help of the activists' deep insights (see Chapter 8).

Reflections on the academic-activist relationship

Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is important for all forms of research. It refers to the ways in which the outcomes of research are affected by the people and processes involved in doing the research, which naturally includes the researcher. Moral and ethical decisions arise at all stages of the research process, from the selection of the research topic to the final writing-up and presentation of the results (Akeroyd 1984, 137). Reflexivity is nevertheless particularly central to the practice of ethnographic research wherein the relationship between researcher and research participants is long-term and more intimate. Nevertheless, there is a risk of over-

stressing the importance of the researcher as a person within the research process (Fuller 1999), yet the risk remains insignificant compared with the “false and misleading presentation of the researcher (and research itself) as inert, detached and neutral” (ibid., 224). This subchapter presents a reflective account on the research process and the academic-activist relationship, with a specific concentration on emotions and negotiating positions in the field. These reflections aim to offer the reader transparency in terms of these aspects’ impact on my research. First, I present my personal experiences and emerging acquaintances, which were the starting point for this study.

Being an ‘insider’

Since my late teenage years, I have regularly participated in political mobilisations such as demonstrations, more as a ‘political consumer’ (a term used by activists to distinguish activists from non-activists) than as an activist if this latter term is defined as an organiser of what is revealed in the streets. Nevertheless, I do have experiences of big protest events, including the EU summit in Gothenburg 2001; the Stop the War (in Iraq) demonstration in Malmö on 15 February 2003; the anti-Bush protest in London in 2003; the G8 summit in Heiligendam in 2007; Blockupy Frankfurt in 2011; the European Social Forum (ESF) in Malmö in 2008; the Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen in 2009 and in Paris in 2015 (COP21); Ende Gelände in Germany in 2017. The experiences of political protest listed above create an ‘insider’ position for my research on activism. By living in Malmö, I further gained an insider position of the fieldwork site.

In 2004, I came to Malmö to attend Malmö University and moved into a studio flat located a couple of blocks from Möllevångstorget. Malmö was my base until the autumn of 2014 when I moved to Gothenburg for a year. While in Gothenburg, I was able to ‘take a step back’ and look at my field from a certain distance. I made the acquaintance of activists in Gothenburg, which gave me insights into their perceptions on Malmö, Möllevången, and the activism taking place there in comparison to Gothenburg.

Immediately upon moving to Malmö, I became aware of the activities and presence of Asylgruppen and acquainted with several of the activists from that group. I knew about the formation of Aktion mot deportation, an offshoot of Asylgruppen, in 2009. In 2013, I became involved directly in the group for some three months, which occurred for several reasons. I wanted to do something concrete and learn more about how activists plan for actions, their aims and strategies, and to see how I could contribute. But I was also curious as a researcher, although I became active before I knew that this very network was to become part of my study. I decided to approach the group (as a possible case study) as an activist in order to show my commitment to the cause and to gain the deepest possible understanding of the group. I attended meetings and helped with organising demonstrations and other kinds of actions. It was a bit later that spring, after I enrolled as a PhD candidate in the MUSA programme at Malmö University in February 2013, when I started to take field notes about what I saw and experienced. I knew some of the activists before I became involved, which eased my access and certainly enabled trust. Also, friendships with some of the activists that existed prior to the research offered a pre-established level of trust that helped me gain deeper access. In addition, through my partner, who used to be involved in the anti-fascist movement in Sweden and can therefore be considered as a sort of gatekeeper, I have met many activists in the extra-parliamentarian scene in Malmö, particularly in the class struggle-oriented groups. Trust was crucial for gaining access, in particular when it came to approaching activists who use civil disobedience or unlawful modes of action; they are in a precarious situation as they sometimes operate in legal grey zones and generally face repression from police and state authorities (McCurdy and Uldam 2013).

Since the start of my research project, I've attended numerous activities by Allt åt alla, such as workshops and actions. I also participated in a number of anti-racist mobilisations organised by Skåne mot rasism, usually in the form of counter-demonstrations against different far right-wing groups' public gatherings and demonstrations in the city. In sum, I was not an insider in the sense

of being organisationally involved in any of the groups featured in this thesis throughout the research period. However, I am not a complete outsider due to my previous knowledge and experiences of attending activists' public events (more so at the beginning of the research) and perhaps even more due to my personal relations to some of the activists and my brief engagements as an activist in *Aktion mot deportation* (February–May 2013) and *Allt åt alla* (February–March 2015).

Ethnographers who are 'insiders' and do fieldwork on activism are also affected by the emotional character of activism, which is the topic I discuss next.

Emotions and positionalities

Activism is a field charged with emotions. It involves bodily experiences and sensory involvement, particularly when participating in collective actions in public spaces such as demonstrations. All your senses sharpen. You keep attentive, walking in the middle of a crowd, people chanting, laughing, singing, clapping. Sound crackers are thrown, flags wave above you. At times, you bump into the person in front of you. You exchange glances with a feeling that both of you are part of something shared, something bigger. If people start running, will you run too? You see police dogs with muzzles and hear their choked barks. You see people on the sidewalks watching you, sitting in cafés, looking down from private flats and through office windows. You wonder whether they know why we are protesting, perhaps they don't support our cause or are annoyed by us: the noise we make and the traffic jams we cause. And there are those that smile at us and clap their hands, nod their heads, give us the peace sign or thumbs up.

Affects and emotions have a revelatory potential in fieldwork (Frykman and Povrzanović Frykman 2016; Henry 2012; Trigger, Forsey, and Meurk 2012) and placing myself bodily in the same situations as those I study gave me a deeper understanding of their world than if I had restricted myself to verbal inquiry (J. Savage 2000, 331). The researcher's lived experience can be recollected after the event as the body also becomes a source of memories. Therefore, whenever I felt something strongly during my fieldwork,

I tried not to ignore or neutralise the emotions, but instead reflected upon them and asked myself whether they might tell me something more about the situation that triggered them. This sort of immersion in the field—which is first and foremost *participation*, while the *observation* part of the *participant observation* method is done subsequently in a self-reflexive manner—required considerable practical and intellectual effort on my part as a researcher.

Duncan Fuller (1999) considers the potential role of the ‘researcher as activist’ and attempts to illustrate how the maintenance of a critical, multi-positioned (and repositioned) identity can be seen as a beneficial, reflexive learning experience for researchers within ethnography and in terms of the research itself. He argues as follows:

In our daily lives, we are constantly repositioning and renegotiating our identities and personalities in line with different situations, different spaces and different people, and we seem to do so relatively unproblematically; we are different people in different circumstances, we have different identities or roles in different spaces or places. When confronted with the seemingly straightforward task of moving between academic and activist identities or activities, however, a range of concerns seems to come to the fore (Fuller 1999, 223).

These concerns are partly due to the fact that shared physical experiences are likely to develop collectively shared but individually constituted sets of emotions between the researcher (me, in this case) and the research participants (Petray 2012). I further share national citizenship, ideological sympathies, activist experiences, city, and a particular city district, among other things, with many of my research participants. Shared nationality and local experiences are considered to be aspects of an insider position (McCurdy and Uldam 2013). In my case, the abovementioned aspects, together with my personal relations with some of the activists, which further accentuated my ‘insider’ position, were of great advantage when accessing the field. However, there are no clear-cut insider and outsider positions in terms of being a participant observer:

these roles were negotiated on a continuum that shifted between field sites and were related to the varying degrees that I either shared or did not share the abovementioned aspects with my research participants. The question of where I found myself on the insider/outsider continuum demanded critical reflection throughout the fieldwork and research period.

Another relevant approach for this study is Helen Owton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson's (2013) 'friendship as method' within ethnographic research encounters. The friendship approach seeks to reduce the hierarchical separation between researcher and participant: it encourages a dialogical relationship and an ethic of caring that invites expressiveness, emotion, and empathy between the two actors (*ibid.*, 285). Yet it is important to acknowledge that however much of the research field I share with my participants, our experiences of activism are never quite the same. I have been wary of assuming the commonality of experience (*ibid.*, 297), which has led me to, for example, examine the boundary-making between different activists within the scene as well as boundary-making practices between activists and non-activists.

In summary, the critical engagement I pursued in my research involved a continual questioning of my positioning in the research process (in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, activist experiences and acquaintances, and experiences of living in the neighbourhood) in addition to the physical location of my research and my political position. Put simply, as a researcher, I learned how to move between my various identities and to be aware of (and to be able to read) the effects these movements had on my research as a whole. I continuously developed these skills throughout the research process, which I see as an integral part of the learning and documentation of the ethnographic method.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board in Lund (Etikprövningsnämnden Lund) on 4 March 2015 (with registration number DNR 2014/782). Matters concerning anonymity and potential harm to the participants have been carefully considered in this study. All interviewees were introduced to the content

and purpose of my research and their participation was based on free and informed (oral) consent. They also consented to the interviews being digitally recorded with the understanding that the audio files would be transcribed and anonymised. Prior to the interviews, they were given a formal letter of invitation to participate in my research, which also explained its purpose.

Initially, my main concern with this study was the risk that the ethnographic material could be used by the police in their surveillance of activists. Upon raising this doubt with a core activist with vast experience in the extra-parliamentarian milieu in Sweden, he said to me calmly: “you won’t really be able to write anything that the police don’t already know about us”. Still, I can’t take his statement as fact. Recently, a vivid internal debate in the activist scene in Malmö has taken place concerning research projects conducted on activists. This was after it was made clear that an activist had taken a job as a research assistant in a project financed by the same state department that leads the project on identifying and counteracting ‘violence-promoting extremism’ (see Chapter 1) in which the group that the research assistant was a member of has been defined as ‘extremist’ by the government. The situation provoked a debate on the activists’ relationship to and perception of the state. This debate, and more to the point the fact that parts of the activist scene perceived it as legitimate to take this kind of job, could be a sign of a recent pragmatic turn in today’s generation of activists who do not dismiss the state entirely (Piotrowski and Wennerhag 2015), not even when it comes to collaborating in state-financed research on themselves.

To the fullest of my abilities, I have attempted not to write anything, or reveal any information, that can be used by state or police officials in a way that may harm or hinder the activists’ work. This is also why there is no detailed presentation of my interviewees in the thesis. However, since this study is limited to Malmö and Möllevången, and people in activist networks often know each other, there is a risk that activists reading this thesis would be able to relate some information (age, profession, experience) to certain activists, although this would only be guesswork. As one interviewee said, “If you write ‘an activist of X-country-descent’, all of Malmö

will know who it is, because there is only one or perhaps two". I thus not only changed the names of the research participants but also removed details concerning some (but not all) of the interviewees that might permit easy identification, such as country of origin or citizenship.

Presenting many, and not only a few, of the activists' stories in line with the emerging themes helps, to a certain degree, to prevent identification from happening. During the interviews, I raised this issue with my research participants. They expressed an understanding of the risk but no real concerns about being identified by friends and 'political comrades'.

Online research raises ethical questions as well. On the Internet, the researcher is not 'around' but rather observes from a distant computer screen. This can appear as 'lurking' (Garcia et al. 2009). The blurring of public and private in the online world raises ethical issues around access to data and techniques for the protection of privacy and confidentiality. What is to be considered public and private on Facebook? Since a large part of activism and political discussion happens online, it was crucial for me to include online observations. As discussed in the previous chapter, I interpret social media platforms such as Facebook as 'virtual squares', thus public spaces where unannounced ethnographic observations are made. Importantly, I have not been a member of any closed groups on Facebook for the purpose of this study.

3 NOT ALL CITIES HAVE A MÖLLAN

In the Preface, I shared my own biographical story on what got me to Malmö in 2004—moving from a small rural town to study at the university—a trajectory I share with many other people whom I met in Möllevången. The inauguration and growth of the university in Malmö have attracted thousands of students to the city, out of whom the politically interested and engaged students in particular are attracted to live in Möllevången or nearby. The inauguration of the university is part of the city's post-industrial strategy of creating a 'knowledge city', a strategy that influences the gentrification of Möllevången. The transition from industrial Fordism to neoliberal urbanism constitutes the overarching context in which the gentrification of Möllevången is taking place—from working class pride to slum to revaluation and upgrading—which is the topic I address in the first section of this chapter. Earlier, this transition had enabled the establishment of a dense network of interrelated and allied activist groups, which is the topic of the second section of the chapter. Activists' spaces and activities form an important part of Möllevången's attractiveness, which, in turn, contributes to the development of a rent gap in the area that in part drives the gentrification of Möllevången. In the third and last sections of the chapter, I show how the activists have successfully given the place an 'anti-racist' and 'red zone' identity through their practices (events, demonstrations, posters, etc.) and narratives of place, which I claim are important resources for mobilisations in the city.

My experience of Möllevången as a particular political space, and as something different from what is found outside of it, is in

no way unique and resonates with the perceptions of all of my friends and interviewees. Daniel, an activist from the west coast of Sweden who moved to Malmö in 2014 and was one of my interviewees, argued that Malmö's particular political milieu, which cannot be found elsewhere in Sweden, is due to the fact that 'not all cities have a Möllan'. He meant that other cities in Sweden used to have 'a Möllan', a centrally located neighbourhood with affordable housing, but such neighbourhoods, for example Södermalm in Stockholm and Masthugget in Gothenburg, were dissolved through gentrification. He said:

I never experienced Södermalm when it was like that, but I kinda experienced Masthugget when it was like that, an area where there are still people from many different backgrounds [...] where most people do not have that much money, and where it is still quite relatively cheap to live. So, it's [Möllevången], the last neighbourhood like that in Sweden. That is worth fighting for. [...] [Möllevången] is the last such area where there is an opportunity to live centrally and cheaply with other people who one would definitely not live close to otherwise.

'Other people' can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be understood in terms of ethnic diversity: 'people from many different backgrounds', as Daniel put it. In a city that is ethnically and socially segregated, Möllevången still constitutes a place that, to a large extent, is equally shared by residents and visitors of Swedish as well as of foreign background.⁹⁹ The second interpretation is that the place allows one to live close to other activists. In comparison, activists in the two larger cities of Gothenburg and Stockholm are forced to live in peripheral and cheaper suburbs, with the result that they end up being scattered around the city. During the city's current economic transition, Möllevången, on the other hand, offers activists the opportunity to live in one and the same neighbourhood (or at least nearby). Activists across the country as well

⁹⁹ According to the municipality's district statistics, 44 per cent of Möllevången's residents had a foreign background (migrants born abroad or children of immigrants) as of 2017 (Malmö stad 2018d).

as from abroad are drawn there because of the political excitement associated with the place. One activist put it bluntly: “being an activist in Malmö is a dream coming true. I mean, it is amazing that there are so damn many activities [going on], and there are so damn many driven activists, and there is an environment that encourages driven activists.”

Malmö as a city possesses a range of different activist groups engaged in various issues. A shared place enables shared experiences and understandings of collective interests, which can stimulate collective organisation and mobilisation (Uitermark et al. 2012). When activists from different clusters (e.g., class struggle-oriented, pro-asylum, academic, cultural, and artistic, etc.) work with one another for an extended period of time, they develop webs of exchanges (Uitermark and Nicholls 2014). Recognising and being recognised by others not only create a sense of belonging in inner-city areas (Amit 2000, 64), but are central to producing powerful emotions between activists (Collins 2001). Möllevången offers spatial proximity, which, in turn, generates strong emotive relations among activists that are crucial for sustaining mobilisations in the city.

The activist Gabriel, 32 years old and involved in pro-asylum activism, compared Malmö with Stockholm (where he recently moved for work) and thinks that Malmö is unique because the activist groups are integrated in their everyday social lives:

I think Sapla [a small restaurant in Möllevången]...you should write a chapter about Sapla. I think it's a really interesting thing that affects Malmö's...you know... I, a dull Left Party member, have hung out with weird Allt åt alla members at Sapla and argued with them. And then, the day after, you realise that we all had the same kind of views after all. While in Stockholm, it's like one [group] hangs out here, and one hangs out there, and a third is hanging out over there.

The recurrent social interactions enabled by a shared place (Möllevången), as referred to in the quote, have led to the development of reciprocal relations in which the different clusters may feel com-

pelled to contribute to campaigns outside their immediate areas of interest. These kinds of reciprocal exchanges and structural interdependencies bind activists together into more generalised struggles, such as seen in the broad anti-racist and anti-fascist mobilisations in the city as well as in the solidarity work that took place during the large reception of refugees in 2015 (featured in Chapters 6 and 7). These connecting actions, and Möllevången as a connecting place, encourage activists with diverse interests to interrogate the commonalities of their various struggles. Are ‘we’ simply demanding renovation without an increase in rents for local residents, or are ‘we’ fighting the same systemic forces that exclude migrants in precarious legal conditions from various aspects of city life?

Research on activism has shown that strong activist scenes seem to have an autonomous capacity to motivate people living in the city, which in turn may make specific organisational connections unnecessary (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 123). Through their various venues and activities, the activist scene connects with and attracts residents from all over the city and between cities and countries, who come to identify with leftist ideals. I therefore argue that the activist scene in Malmö—created *in* and *through* Möllevången—is an example of productive relations being made that connect to many more people in the city, making non-activist residents more prone to participate in demonstrations. Importantly, it is not a single activist group responsible for the place’s high mobilisation capacities, but the entanglement of diverse activist groups that contribute to the enhanced mobilisation capacities (Sampson et al. 2005).

Furthermore, Möllevången is excellently designed for large demonstrations as it is home to one of the largest squares in the city. Proximity and a square certainly facilitate mobilisations. In geographic terms, it is strategically located: proximity to local governmental buildings gives the place ‘agency’. ‘Acts on the police’ (Rancière 1999, 33) are more disturbing if they take place geographically near those who hold power. Möllevången thus provides a common and accessible platform for coordinating expressions of shared discontent.

Beyond having a connecting place, activists also have a common narrative that links them. Activists' storytelling of Möllevången contribute to the elaboration of common 'narratives' (Polletta 1998), 'collective action frames'¹⁰⁰ (Benford and Snow 2000), and 'place-frames' (Martin 2003). Narratives are simultaneously forms of discourse, instruments of ideology, and elements of collective action frames (Polletta and Gardner 2015). One definition of narrative is someone telling someone else at a certain occasion and for some purpose that something happened (Phelan 2017). In reference to Francesca Polletta (1998, 140) one kind of traditional narrative may "not only make sense of the past and present but, since the story's chronological end is also its end in the sense of moral, purpose, or telos, they project a future". It is therefore useful to listen to the stories that people tell and they may be linked to better understanding a specific place.

Möllevången is commonly talked about in positive terms in connection to perceptions of diversity (in the sense of residents and visitors with various backgrounds and migrant trajectories), its international character (foreign food), and politics, in particular anti-racism (manifested in the urban space through posters, stickers, graffiti, and through events such as festivals and protests). Many activists experience these characteristics of the neighbourhood as a projection of an ideal future society. Activists and many residents' stories of Möllevången are not, in the strict sense, objectively 'true' versions of reality, but they do play into how that place is created and experienced by people.

In certain milieus, such as Möllevången, activists can be considered key agents in the production and maintenance of meaning for residents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers (Benford and Snow 2000). Along with the media, the local government, and the state, they are deeply involved in what has been referred to as "the politics of signification" (S. Hall 1982, 64). The very existence of activist groups in Malmö indicates differences within a society in

¹⁰⁰ Inspired by Goffman, mobilising frames, or collective action frames, are "schematas of interpretation" that "help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action" (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Beyond its application to activism and social movements, 'framing' refers to how individuals organise experiences or make sense of events (Goffman 1974).

regard to the meaning of some aspects of reality (Benford and Snow 2000). In simple terms, activists are important storytellers and also strategic users of stories to enable mobilisation, to recruit participants, and for enlisting allies. Importantly, the context matters in terms of how effective the stories are (Polletta and Gardner 2015).

In order to understand activists' narratives of Möllevången, and sometimes the whole of Malmö, as anti-racist (such as 'the capital of love' or 'the capital of resistance' narratives noted in the Preface), it is necessary to look at them in relation to the stigmas facing Malmö in general and Möllevången in particular. Contested places are frequently associated with both strongly negative and strongly positive conceptions (Thörn 2013, 62). Möllevången is also crime-ridden, which worries and affects activists. Drug dealing has been a subject of debate in the media for a long time. Also, the occurrence of many shootings in the past years has brought about an image of the neighbourhood as dangerous (Kvällsposten 2017; Mikulic 2018). However, the manner in which the neighbourhood's crime rate (and that of the city in general)¹⁰¹ is connected to 'immigration' in the anti-immigration discourse in Sweden (and internationally) worries activists even more. Such a discourse may fuel racism and simultaneously direct attention away from other possible sources that explain why crime occurs, such as the increased inequality, segregation, and poverty in Malmö¹⁰²—coupled with neoliberalisation in Sweden more generally. The Sweden Democrats use Malmö continuously as Sweden's prime example of failed inte-

¹⁰¹ In the newspaper *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, the article 'Malmö, most dangerous in the Nordic countries—but not Sweden's Chicago' (Lönnaeus 2017) describes how Malmö has the highest rate of lethal violence in Sweden (but is not even close to the 50 most dangerous cities in the world). However, in the past few years, the number of reported crimes in total in Malmö has been in steady decline and is currently down to a record low. The trend of a declining crime rate is not new, but seems not to be noticed in the mainstream media (Gerell 2016). Instead, due to non-nuanced media reporting, the majority of Malmö's population indicates in surveys that they believe that the crime rate is increasing. The image of Malmö as 'Sweden's Chicago' (Höök 2011; Cantwell 2015; Lönnaeus 2017) thus lingers. Möllevången has a higher rate of violence in the public space than the Malmö average, which is mainly explained by the dense nightlife as well as the poverty found in this particular area of the city in comparison with other centrally located neighbourhoods in Sweden (Gerell 2016).

¹⁰² Even if the unemployment and social assistance rates in Malmö have decreased since the mid-1990s, the total rate of social assistance reaches levels almost double the amounts in Gothenburg and Stockholm (Malmö stad 2018a). The child poverty rate in Malmö is the highest of all municipalities in Sweden (Salonen, Kaharascho Fridh, and Soares Lindberg 2018).

gration (Lönnaeus 2018b). Online, far-right news channels such as *Avpixlat*, which ceased to exist in 2017 and was recreated as *Samhällsnytt*, have used Malmö in their anti-immigrant rhetoric for a long time, especially in terms of Muslim immigration (Schclarek Mulinari 2017). This, in turn, has been reproduced by the international media (Holgersen 2017, 15). For example, the conservative media company Fox News (known for its conservative political standpoints and anti-Muslim rhetoric) and the far-right Breitbart News Networks¹⁰³ have reported on Malmö multiple times, each time connecting crime with immigration (Lönnaeus 2017).¹⁰⁴ Activists' narratives, I suggest, are efforts to counteract racist stories of Malmö as 'burdened by immigration', which are often discursively related in reference to crime in the city. Activists want to resist stories that may instigate hostility between 'us' and 'them'.

One contradiction in the activists' presence in Möllevången and their successful production of its space as 'anti-racist' is that the anti-racist narrative risks covering up the very real structures of racism experienced by many people in Möllevången. Such racism increasingly manifests itself not only through verbal attacks against racialised migrants in the streets, but even more so through the racist structures of workers' abuse in the many businesses, such as bars, restaurants, and groceries, in the neighbourhood. The unregulated labour that occurs in the area and the racist stratum of abuse related to it that has been revealed is a subject of concern for activists. These complex conditions in Möllevången are in no way easy for activists to address. Activists approach them ambivalently: they want to support migrant businesses (rather than, e.g., chain stores) to prevent their displacement while, at the same time, they do not want to support the abuse of the employees that has been

¹⁰³ Breitbart is a far-right American news, opinion, and commentary website founded in 2007 by conservative commentator Andrew Breitbart.

¹⁰⁴ Some examples are found in Fox News's reporting on Rosengård from 2004 and 2011: (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/2004/11/26/swedes-reach-muslim-breaking-point.html>, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/10/28/swedens-immigration-debate.html>). Regarding Breitbart's reporting see for example: <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/03/08/population-malmo-growing-solely-migration/> <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/11/10/child-rape-migrant-occupied-malmo/> <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/09/18/interview-retired-swedish-police-chief-says-malmo-crime-skyrocketing-due-uncontrolled-immigration-no-go-zones/>

revealed at some of the local businesses. Activists do not want to welcome fancy restaurants that only the new middle-class residents can afford while, simultaneously, they are supportive of the better working conditions that employees at such restaurants may have. An ambivalence is also found in the awareness among activists of how a salary, in whatever form it may take, regulated or unregulated, is crucial for many migrants with a precarious legal status. To work against labour abuse may indirectly work against these migrants' direct wishes and needs (to have an income and to gain work experience in order to apply for a work permit, for example).

The multiple problems found in the neighbourhood are part of the explanation of why this space incubates resistance. I suggest that the social problems found in Möllevången (drug abuse, crime, poverty, labour abuse) are conducive to activism as they provoke shared grievances in everyday urban life. Activists conceive of the social problems as a public problem rather than a private issue of the dispossessed. Activists want a safe and socially just neighbourhood 'for all'. Living side by side with poverty inclines activists to act. Möllevången thus offers a common ground on which to disrupt and disturb such established, unequal orders that are seen and experienced in that very neighbourhood. As such, the city, through the neighbourhood of Möllevången, provides the resources and relational opportunities that can support emergent activists. Möllevången has proven to have "the relational qualities of places that make it possible for deprived and stigmatized outsiders to tap into rich resource pools and build powerful struggles for rights and equality in inhospitable countries" (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 7). However, as Nicholls and Uitermark (*ibid.*) point out, 'outsiders' cannot tap into and simply make use of these resources automatically: "They must develop *relations* with more established actors in these environments to make use of embedded resources, knowledge, and information", as will be exemplified below.

The purpose of this chapter, however, is to show how "space matters" (Massey 2005): to tease out the particularities of this neighbourhood that have made it into a political hub and 'relational incubator' (Nicholls 2008). One particularity can be found in the history of the neighbourhood. The past is present in places in

a variety of ways (Massey 1995, 186). One way is through the materiality of the place, such as the monument The Glory of Labour (from 1931) on the square Möllevångstorget (see Figure 9). The monument is an important symbol of the workers' movement's strong influence on the history of Malmö and particularly on Möllevången. It represents women and men lifting the city up with their bare hands. The city, Malmö in the 1920s, is proudly presented as an industrial city with its skyline of factories.

The other way in which history is present in places is through stories. From a historical perspective, we see how Möllevången's cultural meaning has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. The very identification of a place as a particular kind of place is always temporary, uncertain, and in process. The description, definition, and identification of a place is always inevitably an intervention, not only into geography but also into the (re)telling of the historical constitution of the present (ibid.). The ways stories are told represent the actual process of producing the place (de Certeau 1984, 81). For example, by repeatedly designating a place as 'fantastic', 'dangerous', or 'anti-racist', these will eventually become part of people's perception and reproduction of the place.

In a book on Malmö from 1950 (see Högdahl 2013, 57) that lacks a single reference to Möllevången, the neighbourhood is rendered invisible. Möllevången was insignificant in the grander socio-cultural narratives of that time. Half a century later, we see the opposite occurring, where Möllevången has turned into the city's multicultural poster child.¹⁰⁵ Since the 1990s, leftists and liberals have celebrated Möllevången as *the* representative place of the 'new' Malmö, namely in its role as a symbol of successful integration (Högdahl 2003). Officials, politicians, and tourist guides proudly present Malmö as a city that is home to people from 184 countries and who speak 150 languages (Malmö stad 2016, 2018b), and Möllevången is commonly the face of this diversity. More recently, media coverage has focused on stories of regeneration and gentrification and on Möllevången as a trendy, artsy, sub-cultural place, even referred to as Malmö's SoHo (Guidebook

¹⁰⁵ Several books and articles have conveyed the story of Möllevången as 'multicultural' (see, e.g., Westholm et al. 1996).

Sweden 2019) or ‘little Berlin’ (Wendel 2019). The hip urban redevelopment of Möllevången has helped Malmö to rebrand itself as ‘multicultural’, ‘exciting’, and ‘alternative’ to attract investment, tourism, and more affluent consumers and residents. In September 2018, I found a flat advert on www.hemnet.se—a site where all private property objects that are for sale can be found—that referred to Möllevången’s strong political past and present as a selling point for a flat in the neighbourhood. These kinds of narratives are part of city officials’ attempts to get rid of the image of Malmö as an industrial working-class city and ‘Sweden’s Chicago’.

In the next section, I will describe historical events that have influenced the development of Möllevången into the alternative and politicised neighbourhood it is known as today. In particular, I will focus on historical events that show that the neighbourhood has a history that extends into its present-day narrative of place.

From working class pride to slum

Möllevången was the first large-scale housing quarter built for industrial workers in Malmö, following a plan made by the city engineer Anders Nilsson in 1903. It was established in the wake of the city’s fast-paced industrial expansion.¹⁰⁶ Many industrial factories were located in and nearby Möllevången. In the 1920s and 30s, Möllevången was the centre of the labour movement in Malmö (Billing and Stigendal 1994, 192), a time when Malmö was referred to as Sweden’s Mecca for the workers’ movement due to the Social Democrats’ strong position in the city (Billing and Stigendal 1994, 240).¹⁰⁷ Few places are associated as much with

¹⁰⁶ Malmö was one of the first and most industrialised cities in Scandinavia. In 1840, Frans Henrik Kockum founded the workshop from which the Kockums shipyard eventually developed to be one of the largest shipyards in the world. In 1973, it was the world’s fifth largest shipyard after four located in Japan. The Kockums Crane became a landmark and symbol of the city’s manufacturing industry when it was erected in 1974. By the time Sweden went into recession in the mid-1970s, Kockums shipyard had become the city’s largest employer. The recession and new neoliberal political and economic changes hit the industrial sector especially hard and led to high unemployment in the whole of Scania (Billing and Stigendal 1994). Kockums shipyard closed in 1986. In 2002, the crane was dismantled and sold to South Korea (P4 Malmöhus 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Since universal suffrage was introduced in 1919, Malmö has traditionally been governed by the Social Democrats except for two periods: 1985 to 1988 (local elections in 1985 broke 66 years of continuous social democratic power) and from 1991 to 1994 when the right coalition ruled (Danestam 2009, 116).

the labour movement's development and expansion in Malmö as Möllevången is (Nyzell 2005). The influential magazine *Arbetet* (The Work) and the cooperative bakery Solidar¹⁰⁸ were located in Möllevången, which are illustrative of the place at the time. Also, Folkets Park (The People's Park), Sweden's first citizen-founded park, inaugurated in 1891 (Billing and Stigendal 1994, 158ff),¹⁰⁹ is located in Möllevången. The park became a meeting place for the city's workers. In August 1909, during the Swedish general strike (*storstrejken*), thousands of workers gathered in the park to attend strike meetings, during which the bakery Solidar distributed bread for free to all of the strikers (Malmö stad 2009, 2008).

Since Möllevången was the neighbourhood in which many organised and politically active workers lived, it was *the* location for many workers' demonstrations. In 1926, one of the most severe labour disputes of the interwar period took place in Malmö at a pram and basket furniture factory in Möllevången. As was common at the time, the employer had called in strike-breakers who were housed in the factory. Outside, strike sympathisers gathered in demonstrations. In November 1926, a strike-breaker attacked a striking basket weaver, who subsequently died of his injuries some days later. His death caused immense outrage, and riots continued for days in the so-called Möllevången riots (Möllevångskravallerna) (Nyzell 2009; Billing and Stigendal 1994, 192). The most well-known national strike, however, occurred two decades earlier, from 1907 to 1908, among Malmö Harbour's dockworkers, which led to a bomb attack against the boat *Amalthea*, which housed English strike-breakers and resulted in one death (Nyzell 2009, 10:109). The leftist book café Amalthea in Möllevången was named after this event.

The strikes and political actions of the time are illustrative of low wages, but also a sign of solidarity and a rich social and political life. Möllevången was a good place to live with plentiful jobs, housing, and solidarity. But during the 1940s and 50s, a number of

¹⁰⁸ Solidar was founded as a bakery by over one hundred members in 1907 under the name of The Cooperative Baker Association Solidar (Kooperativa Bageriföreningen Solidar).

¹⁰⁹ Folkets Park was founded the same year (1891) that the Social Democratic Party bought it from the businessman Frans Suell, who had established the park in 1800.

decisive changes took place. Those families who could afford it moved out to the newly built high-rises in the suburbs. A large portion of the dwellings in Möllevången were maintained at a bad standard, consisted of only one room and a kitchen, and lacked modern facilities such as a WC, bathroom, and heating. As the social composition changed among its residential population, Möllevången lost much of its prior political and social significance. Folkets Park's popularity as a space of recreation declined dramatically in the mid-1950s. In the 1960s, Möllevången's decline continued. In 1965, Möllevången had the highest crime rate in Malmö and was mostly inhabited by low-income households (Billing and Stigendal 1994, 194). It was portrayed as a slum in city reports from the 1970s to the 80s (Högdahl 2003, 66); the square was a central hang-out for drug-users after the grocery market closed for the day. In the 1980s and 90s, many flats in Möllevången stood empty (Höök 2012). Available flats and cheap rents attracted immigrant families to move into Möllevången. For a long time, Möllevången had been a locus of immigration and emigration. In 1961, the neighbourhood reached its pinnacle of almost 14,000 residents, while the lowest level of around 7,500 residents was reached in 1985.

Similar to Håkan Thörn's (2013) description of Haga in Gothenburg, Möllevången became a place for stigmatised groups and activities in society: drug abusers, hippies, punks, clandestine clubs, etc. Hence the neighbourhood became a place with a high level of tolerance for the 'different', and a place in which 'different' people could live relatively isolated without having to continuously be confronted by 'normality'. Perceptions that 'anything goes' in Möllevången, as a space open to different activities, lifestyles, and appearances, were expressed by my interviewees. As the activist Tariq, 21 years old and who used to live as an undocumented in Möllevången, said: "Möllan is a free space. You can hang out there as long as you want and do whatever you want. I don't mean illegal stuff, but you can have a party, you can put up a tent, and no one would come and ask you why." Another activist, Jacob, 29 years old, said: "you are allowed to be youthful a little longer, you can drink beer on a Tuesday, hanging out and playing video games

on a Wednesday is totally socially accepted [...]. It's totally fine to be a polygamous 37-year-old with a fixie bike and with a cool moustache and funny shoes in Möllan.”

One explanation for a neighbourhood's decline is that property owners speculate on the rising value of the real estate. Rather than improving or investing in the properties, they are allowed to run into disrepair in order to later make money from their total demolition (Clark 1988; Ohlsson 1994). As part of the neighbourhood's redevelopment 1965–1975, six thousand flats were demolished, most of them located in Möllevången and its adjacent areas. New housing premises replaced them. But Möllevången is still dominated by four-story housing blocks from the beginning of the 20th century with a large number of stores on the ground floor (R. Persson 2008, 232).

Möllevången's social and residential structure, which was made up of mainly residents with working-class professions or those who lived on social welfare (see Malmö stad 1996), started to fracture during the 1980s when young people started to move in (Högdahl 2003). This trend grew in the 1990s when students, cultural workers, and activists (among them political refugees) moved into the area and formed left-wing community-organising groups involving the people living and working in the area.

The upgrading of Möllevången

The changes and upgrading in Möllevången that started in the 1990s must be understood in relation to the transformation of Malmö from an industrial to a post-industrial neoliberal city as portrayed in Chapter 1. In the next two paragraphs, I briefly describe the recent historical events in Malmö that have had a direct impact on Möllevången's trajectory, followed by a more detailed examination of the current changes seen in Möllevången during my fieldwork. This is followed by four subsections that examine different elements that are involved in a place's gentrification: unregulated labour, changing commercial infrastructure, increased rents and ownership dwellings, and increased attractivity and displacement.

The financial crisis of the early 1990s exacerbated Malmö's decline as an industrial city; between 1990 and 1995, Malmö lost about 27,000 jobs and its economy was hit exceptionally hard (Möllerström 2011; Dannestam 2009). From 1990 to 1993, the unemployment rate in Malmö increased from 2.8 per cent to 16 per cent. From 1994 onwards, under the new leadership of Ilmar Reepalu, who was head of the local government 1994–2013, the City of Malmö started to create a new economy with the ambition of becoming an attractive 'city of knowledge' or 'creative city' so that it might compete with other cities in the globalised market to attract financial capital (Holgersen 2017; see also Pries 2017).¹¹⁰ The Social Democrat Ilmar Reepalu¹¹¹ was inspired by the trickle-down theory based on the following idea: if the city attracts companies and affluent people to live there, they will pay taxes that will go directly into welfare or they will indirectly aid the poor by creating new jobs in the city (Dannestam 2009; Holgersen 2017, 120).¹¹²

Malmö has been successful in attracting people and investments, but less successful in its distribution of money for the benefit of the poorer sector of the city (Mukhtar-Landgren 2008; Holgersen 2017). Malmö is thus characterised by the contradiction of, on the one hand, its increasingly impressive architectural properties like Turning Torso and Malmö Live, the top-notch urban planning (for example, Bo01 in Västra Hamnen), the new infrastructure (Öresund Bridge and The City Tunnel), shopping malls (Entré¹¹³ and Emporia), sports arenas, and hotels, and, on the other hand, increasing segregation and inequality (Holgersen 2017, 146).¹¹⁴ The

¹¹⁰ Since that time, Malmö has become a city internationally known for its 'environmental sustainability'. Ståle Holgersen (2017, 15), geographer and former urban planner, argues that this profile is a means of branding with the aim of attracting investments and capital more than it is an actual effort to stop climate change.

¹¹¹ Malmö's neoliberalisation is in large part the achievement of the Social Democrats who were the ones pushing this development. For its eventual success, it was crucial for the Social Democratic Party in Malmö to want this development, and they could rely on the right-wing parties to support it (Holgersen 2017).

¹¹² This is an outline of the neoliberal plan for building new-economy cities. It relies on massive public investment, which takes the form of increased public debt in most cases (Peck 2012).

¹¹³ The shopping mall Entré in Malmö has, ever since its inauguration in 2009, been considered a failure due to low sales (J. Mikkelsen 2014).

¹¹⁴ Since the completion of the Øresund Bridge (between Copenhagen and Malmö) in 2000, Malmö has undergone a major transformation with architectural developments and has attracted new bio-

million programme properties¹¹⁵ built in the 1960s and 70s are in decay while inner-city neighbourhoods are being gentrified. The uneven development seen in Malmö is a result of a complex, inter-related process of neoliberal reforms in the spheres of housing, health, education, employment, finance, and taxation. All of these have had an impact on Möllevången's revitalisation.

The gentrification of Möllevången resonates with the stages described by Richard Clay (1979) and Sharon Zukin (1982) as described in Chapter 1 and is connected to the emerging post-industrial society. Gentrification commonly occurs in inner-city areas where prior disinvestment in urban infrastructure creates opportunities for profitable redevelopment. It also commonly occurs in neighbourhoods that were formerly strongly stigmatised, which, due to a period of decay and the inexpensive housing that resulted, were inhabited by working-class households and people living on the fringes or outside of the labour market—the elderly, divorced single mothers, the unemployed, and the poor—as was the case in Möllevången (Högdahl 2003, 66). Gentrification also often occurs in those societies where a loss of employment in manufacturing and an increase in service employment has led to an expansion in the number of middle-class professionals with a disposition towards central city living and the associated rejection of suburbia (Slater 2010), as in the case of Malmö.

A centrally located neighbourhood with many vacant flats with cheap rents attracts immigrant entrepreneurs and residents, artists, students, and political activists who import foreign, cultural, artistic, and political activities and goods and, as such, contribute in

tech and IT companies and, in particular, students through Malmö University, which was founded in 1998. The expansion of Malmö University, located in Kockums' former dockside, has increased the level of higher education in the city. Further redevelopment of the deserted south-western harbour followed. Today, ecological buildings and villas form the core of a new water-front city district, Western Harbour (Västra Hamnen), designed to attract the economically wealthy middle class (Holgersen 2017). In 2005, Malmö got a new landmark to replace Kockums: Turning Torso, the tallest skyscraper in Scandinavia. The event centre Malmö Live is the latest big investment in the city and was financed by the municipality. It was opened in 2015 and contains a concert hall, conference facilities, offices, and a hotel. In total, Malmö Live cost the taxpayer 1.3 billion SEK and became the City of Malmö's largest investment ever. It was criticised because the costs were initially promised to be much lower (Ivarsson 2015).

¹¹⁵ The housing construction in the post-war period culminated with the legendary *miljonprogrammet* (the 'million programme'), the government's ambitious proposal from 7 April 1965 to build one hundred thousand flats per year for ten years, a promise that was kept.

making the neighbourhood interesting and 'alternative'. The Möllevången Group (Möllevångsgruppen), founded in 1994 by local residents, represents an important part of the neighbourhood's early activist engagement. Their first meeting attracted 350 residents: they wanted to clean up the area and make it safer and friendlier for children and put pressure on politicians to open a school in the area (it was inaugurated in 2005, ten years after the demand was first put forward). The Möllevången Group organised a number of well-attended and appreciated cultural activities in the neighbourhood, for example the yearly Carnival and the Möllevången Festival, a local grassroots music- and cultural festival that took place over a couple of days every summer from 2006 to 2010.¹¹⁶ Beyond social and cultural activities, The Möllevången Group's work was mainly aimed at preventing crime and the privatisation of the rental housing stock (Eklundh Paglert 2005).

Through their social and cultural activities in the neighbourhood, the Möllevången Group generated cultural capital in that part of the city and, according to classic gentrification theory, the first phase of gentrification was thus initiated. Activists commonly show an awareness of the complex processes that produce gentrification and how their own entry and creativity in the neighbourhood have contributed to its upgrading. Nina, an activist and 38 years old, reflected self-critically:

you begin to work for improvements in your residential area, and then you realise that these improvements only lead to the fact that we cannot afford to live here anymore. That by improving the area you are eventually displaced. It's so damn... gentrification is such a... hell. Glassfabriken was the first café in Möllan. It's us who are driving the gentrification [laughing].

Glassfabriken is another typical element in the first phase of gentrification: the new residents renovate former industrial grounds, mainly through their own labour, and open cultural and political

¹¹⁶ The aim of the festival was to involve and engage local residents in Möllevången and it had the motto 'by the people, for the people'. The festival was created through people's voluntary involvement, independent of the municipality or any commercial organisation.

spaces. The quote suggests that activists are realistic and accept that anti-gentrification will be contradictory and will weave together practices and values that will sometimes feel embedded or trapped in capitalist ways of doing things while at other times will be more creative or antagonistic.

In the third stage of gentrification, in which Möllevången can be said to be today, the neighbourhood is characterised by an upgrading of both housing and businesses and residents and entrepreneurs with less resources are increasingly replaced by wealthier residents and companies. It is these changes that will be the focus in the remaining pages of this section. I start by describing some general characteristics of this neighbourhood and then focus on activists' spaces, activities, and imprints in this neighbourhood that simultaneously contribute to the politicisation and gentrification of the place.

Kristianstadsgatan, which cuts straight through the neighbourhood (see Figure 1),¹¹⁷ is considered to be the principal activist street in Malmö (Rasmussen 2016).¹¹⁸ On the one end, you find the leftist bookshop Amalthea and, on the other end, the anarchist café Glassfabriken was located until 2015. Glassfabriken was an important meeting place for the leftist activist scene in Malmö for one and a half decades. In the middle of Kristianstadsgatan, there's a roundabout that is currently known as *knarkrondellen* (the drug-roundabout) due to the presence of drug dealers (L. Larsson 2017).¹¹⁹ With its benches and artsy light installation, the roundabout is a meeting place during the day as well as at night (see Figure 4). However, when the shifting colour light frames were installed in 2004, local activists protested the initiative saying that the municipality is merely using 'make-up measures' instead of targeting the root causes of the problems found there. In *knarkrondellen*, as well as in the rest of the neighbourhood, one sees po-

¹¹⁷ When referring to Möllevången as a delimited neighbourhood in the city, I refer to its official borders along the following streets: Spårväggsgatan, Södra Förstadsgatan, Bergsgatan, Amiralsgatan, and Nobelvägen.

¹¹⁸ An alternative name for the street Kristianstadsgatan is Röda gatan (the Red Street), which was attained because of the activities that took place on this street during the Möllevången Festival.

¹¹⁹ Previously, as when I moved to the area in 2004, the roundabout was known as *bajsrondellen* (the poo-roundabout) due to the ponies on the other side of the wall in Folkets Park and the smell from their faeces (see M. Andersson 2014).

litical messages spray-painted on sidewalks, graffiti on the walls, posters on electric cabinets, and feminist and anti-capitalist stickers plastered on drainpipes and benches (see Figure 2 and 3). These relatively durable political imprints in the public space are widely visible in the whole of Möllevången.

Along Kristianstadsgatan, separated by a high wooden wall, lies Folkets Park, which lost its political character in the mid-20th century but has regained a political element with The Feminist Festival,¹²⁰ which has been organised in the park since 2014, and the de-growth conference that took place there in 2018.¹²¹ It is not a coincidence that organisers chose Möllevången for these two events; no other place in Malmö embodies the themes of these events as much as Möllevången does.

Walking Kristianstadsgatan towards the large square Möllevångstorget—perceived as the centre of the neighbourhood—one passes the small grocery store Bagdad Livs, which has been in operation since the 1990s. Everyone knows Bagdad, as it is popularly called, and Bagdad is a common point of orientation when trying to explain directions in this area. Bars, restaurants, hairdressers, small grocery shops, travel agencies, and money-sending offices with inscriptions in Arabic and Persian surround Möllevångstorget and its surrounding streets. On sunny afternoons, (mostly young) people gather on the ground along *punkväggen* or *crustväggen* (‘the punk wall’, or ‘crust wall’, as in the subgenre ‘crust punk’) to catch the last beams before the sun sets behind the residential houses opposite the square. The wall got its name from the time when mainly punks hung out there in the 1990s and early 2000s. Also, the punk wall has shrunk since the two businesses working there previously, a butcher’s shop and an Asian grocery, closed down and were replaced by two restaurants that have outdoor seating, which is illustrative of the process of commercialisation and enclosure of public space.

The Arabic-speaking population of Malmö has their own name for Möllevångstorget: The Vegetable Market (سوق الخضار). Every day except Sundays, there is a fruit and vegetable fair on the

¹²⁰ See <https://feministiskfestival.se> for more information.

¹²¹ See <https://www.degrowth.info/en/conferences/conference-2018/> for more information.

square. It gets especially crowded towards closing time at 3 p.m., when the salesmen announce lower prices or distribute fruit for free. One can see a young white woman chatting with a salesman of foreign background who offers her two trays of fruit for free as they exchange laughs and friendly greetings; this is an ordinary kind of encounter around here. The vegetable fair on Möllevångstorget features widely in the City of Malmö's promotion material for the city.

The biggest change in Möllevången, according to the local shopkeeper Babak, who emigrated from Iran to Malmö in the 1970s and has seen the changes that have taken place since then, is the market. "Before there were mostly potatoes and strawberries. Now the aubergine has taken over." His statement indicates the entry of the global market in the form of imported groceries (which is not specific to Möllevången) and, along with the entry of the global market, the demography among the vendors in Möllevången changed, coupled with the larger change in the Swedish economy in general in which small-scale family operated farms have been replaced by large-scale industrial agriculture and labour migrants and refugees have taken jobs in the manual and industrial sectors. In the beginning, the vendors were local farmers, but then wholesale merchants took over and the majority of the market vendors today have a foreign background. Another local entrepreneur, also from Iran, runs Nansi's bakery, established in Möllevången more than two decades ago. When I moved there in 2004, it was the only place in Möllevången where you could buy cheap loafs of *barbari* bread (Iranian flatbread with sesame). The baker said things were a lot better before for the storekeepers. "You couldn't find sesame bread anywhere. Today there are five places and all of them sell sesame bread and baklava". His statement refers to the influx of local businesses and thus increased competition among the entrepreneurs. Also, as a non-local resident who works in the neighbourhood, his impression is that the people living in the area are mostly Swedish, whereas a majority of those working there are immigrants. "Here reside Swedes who like baklava", he observed. Earlier, when Möllevången was a slum, many people lived here due to the lack of alternatives. Today, Möllevången attracts people

who choose to live there in part because they can get baklava and have the feeling of living in an international place.

An important influence on Möllevången's changing demographic composition was the opening of the train station Triangeln in 2010, a three-minute walk from Möllevångstorget. This has attracted more and more high-income people to live in the area who can now easily commute to their jobs in Copenhagen and Lund, for example. Möllevången maintains its historical image as a working-class neighbourhood, although 41 per cent of inhabitants have a university education compared to the average of 29 per cent in Malmö (*ibid.*). The supply of services, entertainment, and culture in combination with an abundance of small flats has resulted in young people being overrepresented in the neighbourhood: half of the population is between the ages of 20 and 40 (Malmö stad 2018e). There is also a category of residents, whose numbers are increasing, who have a middle-class background and predominantly support left-wing parties. In the municipal elections in 2018, the polls showed an overrepresentation of residents voting for the Left Party compared to the city-wide average. For example, in the election district of 'Möllevången-Folkets Park', which does not cover the whole neighbourhood, the following results came in: the largest party was the Left Party with 45 per cent of the vote (compared to 12 per cent in Malmö and 8 per cent in the national elections); and the second largest was the Social Democrats with 20 per cent (compared to 31 per cent in Malmö and 28 per cent at the national level) (Valmyndigheten 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).¹²² Interestingly, in another voting district in Möllevången—Möllevången-Bangatan—nearly 12 per cent voted for the Sweden Democrats (Valmyndigheten 2018d), the right-wing anti-immigration party. This shows how the neighbourhood has a large degree of internal difference in terms of residents voting either left or far-right, although the latter are a minority.

¹²² Figures from the municipal elections in 2014 for the same district of Möllevången-Folkets Park show the following results: Vänsterpartiet (Left Party) 25 per cent (compared to 7.5 per cent in Malmö) and Feministiskt initiativ (Feminist Initiative) with 24 per cent (compared to 5.5 per cent in Malmö) (Valmyndigheten 2014b, 2014a).

The demographic composition of Möllevången is clearly changing. Gentrification does not only concern the arrival of a new residential population, however; it also concerns a change in its transient population, including all visitors by day as well as at night (Franzén 2005). The increased presence of fancier restaurants in the neighbourhood attracts visitors from all over the city. They appeal to ‘the creative class’—or, in popular terms, hipsters—who, if they don’t move to the neighbourhood, will appear in the form of frequent visitors. The increased presence of so-called hipsters has not gone unnoticed. In 2015, one could find stickers on lampposts in Möllevången saying “Leave Möllan, hipster swine!” (M. Svensson 2015). Already at the end of 1990s, a group called Aktionsgruppen Röda Möllan (‘Action Group Red Möllan’) distributed a flyer with concrete advice on how to stop the ‘yuppification’ of Möllevången (Högdahl 2003, 71–72; Bergmark 2005, 71–72). The flyer contained appeals, such as to be nice to the ‘good’ residents and support the local square market and small grocery stores. It also encouraged residents to litter the streets and squares: “Let plastic and paper fly with the wind. It must be clean and neat for the bourgeoisie to thrive” (Bergmark 2005, 72, my translation). It further encouraged residents to put up loudspeakers in their windows and let a mix of Arabic music, Twisted Sister, and Nick Cave roar out, since this is the music that neoliberals don’t like. As Högdahl (2003) points out, the flyer is interesting since it is a narrative produced from within the place but which plays with and reproduces the stereotypes of the neighbourhood as found in the media.

Another sign of gentrification is when chain stores begin to be established in a place. In Möllevången, however, such attempts have been met with resistance as when Subway—the world’s largest fast-food restaurant chain (as of 2011) (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2011)—moved into one of the corner shops on Möllevångstorget in 2012. The property used to be a store—American Wear—run by an Iraqi family. Subway’s opening was met by local residents’ protests, who called it gentrification on social media (*Sydsvenskan* 2012). A couple of days after its opening, one of the Subway windows was smashed (Gillberg 2015). After three years, Subway in

Möllevången closed down due to low sales. The international chain of convenience stores 7-Eleven met a similar destiny. It moved to a street one block from Möllevångstorget at the beginning of the 2000s but shut down in May 2015 (Barkman 2015). When it opened, their windows were smashed too. Property damage and failing sales may be illustrative of the generally critical attitude towards these kinds of stores among parts of the local population. Criticism and boycotts of local businesses also occur in instances when bad working conditions have been exposed, however.

Unregulated labour

Managers' use of unregulated labour and their abuse of workers in the many restaurants and kiosks in Möllevången is a key subject of public debate. These elements are not, however, specific to Möllevången, but are representative of a larger phenomenon found beyond the neighbourhood. The specificity of Möllevången, however, is the presence of left-wing politically engaged residents who are attentive to these elements. The topic of bad working conditions therefore possibly receives more attention in Möllevången than in other parts of the city. However, there is also a comparatively high concentration of kiosks, restaurants, and other service businesses in this specific part of town. In the space of a two-hundred-meter walk along the two main streets of Möllevången—Ystadsgatan and Bergsgatan—I counted 20 falafel and kebab kiosks. In 2004, a falafel wrap cost ten to fifteen SEK (around €1-1.50). Ten years later, a falafel costs double that but is nevertheless still the cheapest fast food in the area. Möllevången is known for its tasty falafel, referred to as 'Malmö's national dish' (*Sydsvenskan* 2018a; Lagerström Dyrssen 2018). The kiosks nowadays even serve vegetarian kebab (with 'chicken' or 'beef' soy meat), vegetarian fish and chips, and vegetarian hotdogs and burgers, which indicates the presence of a large local vegetarian and vegan clientele in this part of the city.

The working conditions and low salaries of falafel kiosk workers have been a subject of debate for some time (Cleris and Oldberg 2012; J. Karlsson 2014). A Stockholm activist, while travelling by train to Malmö, wrote on Facebook, "Malmö. Falafel. Möllan.

Beware!”, which illustrates the narrative that associates falafel with Malmö and specifically Möllevången. His update set in motion the following comments, which indicate the widely held perception of these kiosks’ bad labour conditions.

Person 1: Möllan’s falafel <3 <3 <3

Person 2: Inexpensive because of blood, sorrow, and wage slavery without any decent wages. Enjoy your meal.

Person 3: Falafel made by serfs are the tastiest falafels.

Person 4: “Slaveafel”.

Person 5: Is there no falafel with collective union agreement down there?

As of 2013, only two kiosks had collective union agreements (Moreno 2013). But according to activists who themselves worked in these branches, it is very hard to achieve improvements even with a collective agreement.

Also, restaurants in Möllevången have been subject of criticism in the media. For example, in 2012, an article written by one of the employees of a restaurant in Möllevången was published (J. Karlsson 2012). She had seen some of her colleagues earn 25 SEK an hour (while approximately 120 SEK an hour is the Swedish average), sleep in the basement’s liquor storage area, and work 12-hour shifts (while eight hours is the Swedish standard). Two years later, a similar story was exposed. A 27-year-old student from Poland worked in one of the restaurants in Möllevången to finance her studies. She witnessed how the employees were paid according to their ethnicity (Yifter-Svensson 2016; J. Karlsson 2014). As she was from Poland, she earned more than the man from Bangladesh who had a temporary work permit, but less than a Swedish woman. As a musician in a punk band, she developed connections to the left-wing scene in Malmö and made friends who encouraged her to take action with the help of the Syndicalist Union, constituting an example of how ‘outsiders’ can make use of embedded resources, knowledge, and information by creating relations with more established actors (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017). When she told her colleagues about her plans, they became afraid for their

jobs and did not join her in the struggle for achieving better and fairer working conditions (the whole story can be read in *Wage Slaves* by Bogdanska 2016). Her story, as well as those of her colleagues, show the difficult position of workers with precarious legal status in the Swedish labour market.

Undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and labour migrants on short work permits are easy targets of abuse and thereby an easy source of extra profits for local shopkeepers, restaurants, and other businesses in Malmö as elsewhere in the world (Khosravi 2010). Hussein, one of my interviewees from Afghanistan, told me about his personal experiences of being cheated at work. His first formal job in Sweden was a so-called *instegsjobb*, which was an employment service programme (initiated through a large government integration investment) for newly arrived migrants to get jobs in which 80 per cent of the worker's salary is subsidised by the employment service. The cost for the employer is thus 20 per cent of a regular employee's salary, which is meant to make employing migrants with no experience of the Swedish labour market more attractive. Hussein was not paid the salary he was promised, and he was persuaded to work extra hours at night with no extra pay. Revelations have shown that some employers abused *instegsjobb* by keeping the money instead of paying it to their employees (Green 2013; *Svenska Dagbladet* 2015a). To object to such treatment was unthinkable: Hussein would then lose the little he had. He called and told the employment service about the abuse, but they did nothing about it.¹²³

The example outlined above was not the first time Hussein had been abused by an employer in Sweden. When his asylum application was rejected, he fled from the asylum shelter in the countryside to Malmö. A couple of weeks after arriving in Malmö, being homeless throughout that time, Hussein eventually got help from the owner of a Kebab kiosk who helped him with accommodation. To compensate, Hussein worked in his kiosk from nine in the morning to ten at night. Hussein referred to the kiosk owner as a

¹²³ Several similar experiences of abuse within the framework of *instegsjobb* were shared with me when I interviewed Danish citizens with non-European backgrounds living in Malmö through my job as a research assistant before embarking on my PhD project.

friend and as someone who had helped him despite their unequal relationship and what was clearly, viewed from the outside, labour abuse. The relationship between employer and employee was a form of capital that Hussein used to manage everyday life in the city (Öberg 2015, 173).

Hussein's experiences can be better understood with the concept of 'deportability' (see Chapter 1), which indicates the construction of positions in the precarious labour market in which migrants are forced to be flexible participants (De Genova 2005; C.-U. Schierup and Jørgensen 2016). It is a position that employers use in order to keep a cheap and flexible worker in submission (Öberg 2015). Being deportable means being among the most vulnerable of the precariat and living without access to the rights and services enjoyed by other people living in the same urban space. Undocumented migrants, even more than asylum seekers, cannot afford to say 'no' to poor working conditions, low or unpaid wages, and other abusive behaviour on the part of employers (*ibid.*, 173). Despite the formal right of undocumented migrants to seek protection by the police from abusive employers who refuse to pay wages, it is profoundly unrealistic to expect migrants with precarious legal status to report a crime to the police when it means running the risk of deportation as a result (*ibid.*).

The unregulated and low-paid labour market is an essential part of Möllevången, and the cheap products, such as from the vegetable fair on Möllevångstorget, and services found in this part of the city are important components of why many people like it there. Following the large refugee reception in 2015, the salary of the migrant workers at the fair decreased drastically: it went from 20 SEK (approximately €2) per hour (8–10-hour shifts) before the autumn of 2015 to only 70 SEK (€7) for a whole day's work in 2017. The sudden increase of the cheap and precarious labour force in Malmö increased competition and pushed down salaries. This also shows how Möllevången is affected by international patterns of migration. People's state of deportability in Möllevången (and poverty and unemployment in Malmö in general) are part of what constitutes the place. This kind of cheap living has become the 'charm' of Möllevången (see Mikkelsen 2012). As mentioned, la-

bour abuse is not specific to Möllevången but representative of a larger phenomenon, but since many left-wing, politically engaged people reside in this part of town, there have been attempts to criticise and contest the bad working conditions and abuse, although the process is difficult and filled with ambivalences, as described at the beginning of this chapter. The activists find it very hard to address these problems as ‘outsiders’, because they are not employed at the restaurants themselves, but do show their support when an employee dares to take up the fight, as with the Polish student exemplified above. When labour abuse is exposed to the public, through media articles or rumours, activists commonly boycott those places. These boycotts are seldom organised into public, collective actions, but commonly occur in an informal way via individual people’s calls for boycotts on social media.¹²⁴

A changing commercial infrastructure

When a neighbourhood’s attractiveness increases and more and more affluent people move in, competition is triggered and prices and rents increase (Malmborg and Berg 2012). The competition for commercial space has intensified in Möllevången, which means the economically stronger entrepreneurs push out the less wealthy ones. Several exclusive restaurants have established themselves in Möllevången, which illustrates the upgrading process in which urban space is increasingly geared towards “progressively more affluent users” (Hackworth 2002, 815). The increase in rents for commercial venues has directly affected activist spaces in the neighbourhood. In August 2015, Glassfabriken could no longer afford the rent and closed down. From its opening until it closed, the rent increased from 6,000 SEK (€600) to 24,500 SEK (€2,400) per month (Funke 2015). Many other local merchants have closed down and moved their businesses to cheaper commercial areas. An Iraqi owner of a local electronics store complained about his rent increase, calling it “Stockholm prices”. “But this is not Stock-

¹²⁴ One exception is ‘Malmö 26’, which is the name of a labour dispute that occurred in 2006 between Malmö LS (The Syndicalist Union of Malmö) and the sushi restaurant Izakaya Koi. It is also the name of the Union’s campaign in support of those 26 people on the picket line who were charged with disobedience (see SAC 2008; Rydén 2008).

holm!” In 2015, he paid 19,000 SEK (€1,900) monthly for a 20m² shop. He has seen other merchants closing their stores in the area and opening up in other neighbourhoods, such as the Iraqi family who ran the clothing store before Subway took over, who moved their business to the mall Rosengård Centrum. All the shopkeepers I talked to were indeed worried about rent increases and the imminent threat of having to close down.

Babak, the local shop owner mentioned above, argued that there is a “chainisation” (*kedjesering*) going on in Möllevången. He referred in particular to the local shopping mall Triangeln located next to Möllevången. “It is killing the unique businesses around here, those who have their own profile and character. The variation is disappearing.” He told me about a survey in which Malmö won the prize for the ‘best weekend city’ and the rich city life was one of the reasons given. “City life is not Emporia, it is not Mobilia, it is not Triangeln or Entré [names of shopping malls in Malmö]. People come to see the Nordic culture in Lilla Torg (the old town) and Möllan.” He sees that businesses are moving out of town and offices are moving into the centre. “You can see how it went for the US who had the same development. It killed their cities.” The process he was referring to was outlined by Jane Jacobs (1992) in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Möllevången is indeed appreciated for its rich pavement life, which brings about a feeling of safety (or ‘warmth’ or ‘belonging’). The activist Ingrid, 28 years old, who used to live in Möllevången but temporarily moved to Limhamn, associates Möllevången with ‘warmth’: “It’s about where I feel warmth. Or...not that I don’t have nice encounters in Limhamn, but...I mean *that* [Limhamn] is not Malmö for me. I live there now, and I am happy to live there, but it is not my home.” The activist Tariq, 21 years old, also contrasts Möllevången with neighbourhoods like Limhamn where more affluent people live, who, according to him, are boring people. “They stay at home; they don’t go out to meet other people in the streets. People living in wealthier areas want the neighbourhood to be calm and quiet. They don’t want noisy places, to hear demonstrations and things like that.” He pondered further: “You have to go out and dare to meet people if you want to create a nice

city". To Tariq's delight, in Möllevången one can be entertained by the sight of people during the day as well as at night. Clearly, he identifies more with neighbourhoods characterised by middle- and low-income households where people with migrant backgrounds live and where there is still a vivid milieu of small migrant businesses, pubs, and restaurants.

Jane Jacob argues that urban renewal disregards the needs of city-dwellers; slum clearance and high-rise residential projects create isolated, unnatural urban spaces. Instead, diversity is essential to keeping a city lively and safe. She believes that low-rise, mixed-income housing and the social diversity that is encouraged by contact on the pavement work against segregation and racism (ibid., 71). Möllevången resonates with the interesting city that Jacobs advocates for, "where life swirls, where there is work, cultural, residential and commercial activity" (ibid., 101), characteristics that simultaneously contribute to its attractiveness and gentrification.

In her research, Kirsteen Paton (2014) shows a contradiction in gentrification: working-class residents embrace the upgrading of their neighbourhood even though it may end up harming them. This relates to many of my activist interviewees' ambivalent statements on Möllevången's gentrification. While being aware of gentrification and its discontents, many activists nevertheless embrace the hip cafés and restaurants. A local Möllevången resident involved in Allt åt alla said that the changes have brought her a lot of the things she enjoys. "I can buy a lot of vegetarian and ecological products in ICA [the local supermarket], and I can buy tasty coffee, dumplings...."

The trend with commercial spaces in Möllevången can also be seen in the sphere of residential housing. Möllevången was previously an area almost entirely comprised of rental dwellings (the majority in the possession of private landlords). But since 2004, when the first privatisation of a rental premise in Möllevången took place, rented flats have increasingly been converted into ownership flats, a development that has been a subject of debate in the local media and met by resistance from activists.

Increased rents and homeownership dwellings

There are three principle forms of tenure in Sweden: private ownership (usually single-household homes); joint ownership (in the form of joint tenant-owned cooperatives); and rental housing (both public and private). The increased stock of ownership dwellings in Möllevången is the direct result of the creation of a market for tenant-owned flats (*bostadsrätter*) and co-operatives (*bostadsrättsföreningar*), the Swedish substitutes for owner occupation, in the 1990s (see Chapter 1) and the growing value gap between owned and rented flats (Franzén 2005). Between 2004 and 2012, every seventh rental flat was converted into a tenant-owned flat (Höök 2012; Malmberg och Berg 2012). In 2018, 26 per cent of the housing stock was ownership tenure, 15 per cent public housing, while 50 per cent remained rental flats with private landlords (Salonen et al. 2019), which gives a total of 65 per cent rental housing. These figures can be compared to 37 per cent tenant-owned flats in the whole city and 41 per cent rental premises (ibid.).¹²⁵ While ownership tenure has increased, Möllevången remains a neighbourhood with a large portion of rental flats, which means it is more accessible for low-income earners than other areas of the inner-city

Linn, 32 years old and a resident on Kristianstadsgatan, told me about when her flat, in a property consisting of 19 flats, was converted into an ownership object, a long process that started in 2012 and was completed in 2014. “My neighbour calls himself ‘Möllan’s last communist’, but it was he who was the pushiest for the privatisation to be realised. Which I thought was a bit comical.” At the start, two households were against the conversion, and then only one. However, it was enough that 16 out of 19 households were in favour for the change to be achieved. Linn herself was also ambivalent but did not resist it. As a non-activist resident in Möllevången—she has a working-class family background and works professionally as a nurse—she nevertheless knew of the

¹²⁵ In 1996, 85 per cent of the housing stock in the neighbourhood was rental flats, 2008 it was 79 per cent, and in 2012 it was 75 per cent (Höök 2012; Malmberg och Berg 2012). The few already existing housing co-operatives (*bostadsrättsföreningar*) in Möllevången in 1996 were built as ownership tenure.

widely recognised slogan “don’t sell out Möllevången”. Working-class tenants can participate in gentrification and benefit from it financially.¹²⁶ In the words of Kirsteen Paton (2014, 5), “working-class residents are invited to participate in gentrification processes and, at times, wish to be part of them. They can be colonisers, displacers and, at times, become gentrifiers”. Some activists have upgraded their living standards from living in a flat share (*kollektiv*) to buying their own studio flats, becoming private property owners. “And that’s a whole different life than living in a flat share”, said one activist who had bought a flat in Möllevången.

The interest in privatising rental flats in Möllevången, however, declined in 2011 as property prices rose and came to a near halt in 2013 (*ETC* 2013). The fact that the privatisation of housing in Möllevången started only in 2004, which was much later than in other parts of Malmö and Sweden (Ossian 2014), may illustrate a general critical attitude towards privatisation among the residents in the area, in combination with the inability of its many low-income residents’ to convert and buy their flats. But whatever the reason was for the late start in privatising rental flats in this particular part of the city, it enabled this part of the inner-city to remain accessible for low-income earners for a longer time than other parts of the inner-city. Yet, an increased part of the housing stock in Möllevången has become accessible only for those who can afford to buy property (or are allowed to take bank loans) while, at the same time, access to rental flats in Möllevången has also been circumscribed. Since public housing companies are now run with business-like principles (see Chapter 1), tenants who are not materially or socially productive are excluded (Grander 2018): low-income renters are outnumbered by higher-income renters (who also have better references). Another reason why the rental stock has become increasingly accessible only to those with higher incomes is due to luxury renovations. The residential mobility in Möllevången is higher compared to the city’s average due to the many students living in Möllevången (Malmborg and Berg, 2012, 39). A high lev-

¹²⁶ Through this form of marketisation of rental flats into tenant-owned flats, tenants typically acquire their flats at prices well below the market price and are able to realise immediate profits through an open market sale (Christiophers 2013, 892).

el of residential mobility facilitates renovations and rent increases by private property owners.

While some activists can afford to stay fixed in the neighbourhood, others are forced out to more peripheral residential areas. Today, Möllevången has a population of nearly 11,000 inhabitants and, as of 2017, the waiting time for a rental contract in the neighbourhood is above four and a half years (through the public housing cueing system) (Almlöf 2017). Michaela, an activist in her thirties with a working-class family background who holds a typical working-class job, moved to Malmö in 2001 from a small town on the west coast of Sweden. She was affected by the increased popularity of the neighbourhood some years later:

After having lived in a flat share for many years, I was to move in with my partner but it wasn't possible to get a flat in Möllan anymore. Considering it used to be easy...or easier...it had become more difficult even when I moved down [to Malmö], but you could always get a flat. It was more a matter of how much you wanted to pay. You could choose. But from being easy to get a flat [...] it was now basically impossible. There were queues and much higher requirements by property owners. They can now check the salary you have stated. But we got a flat in Seved.

Seved is a poor residential neighbourhood south of Möllevången and the target of numerous drug and crime prevention measures and various social projects in an attempt to break the cycle of social deprivation in the area (A. Persson 2010; Mikulic 2017). Similar stories to Michaela's above were told by other activists who have moved out of Möllevången and into adjacent areas with more available flats.

The gentrification of Möllevången, with the resulting displacement of some people and their replacement by higher-income households, risks the dismantling of the particular political conditions that characterise the place today.

Characteristics of the activist scene

Throughout my fieldwork, it became clear that far from all activists live *in* Möllevången in the sense of a geographically bounded unit of a ‘neighbourhood’. Many activists live in areas outside of it such as Seved, Sankt Knut, Sorgenfri, and Sofielund. Despite technically residing in these adjacent neighbourhoods, the activists felt as if they lived in Möllevången. The use of the notion ‘Möllan’ commonly referred to the network of social relations forged through, but stretching beyond, Möllevången and created and nurtured through interactions in everyday life. Many activists in Malmö are ‘friends’, which is to say they have relations as people who don’t necessarily know each other intimately but whose faces are familiar due to recurrent interaction and shared experiences in collective actions. In this sense, Möllevången, as it is used in this thesis, grew out of the collected material, not as a ‘neighbourhood’ in the sense of a delineated place on a map, but as a network of social relations and friends in the city who identified with the idea and the place of Möllevången.

What also characterises the Malmö activist scene is that the great majority of activists have moved there from elsewhere and thus naturally seek to create community. One activist said honestly, “we are many newcomers and we are uprooted, so it [activism] is a way to create connection and belonging”. Activists thus seek emplacement through a supportive social network of (activist) friends in the city. The need to establish social networks for so many newcomers in the city has possibly aided the processes of mobilisation and successfully drawn people into activist groups. An activist scene composed by a majority of ‘migrants’ (in the broadest sense), however, may also constitute a disadvantage. As ‘migrants’, activists lack anchorage, local knowledge, and connection with locally-born residents, which makes it more difficult for them to gain legitimacy for their political demands (a topic explored further in Chapter 5).

The constitution of Möllevången as a network based on a shared identity is an important mobilising force in the city. But as gentrification continues and activists increasingly live elsewhere in the city,

they may lose a common place for socialising across activist groups and a shared platform for political struggles.

As the gentrification of Möllevången proceeds and activists are relocating into other neighbourhoods, so are their political spaces. Various activist venues are found beyond Möllevången. The activist scene embodied in Möllevången is thus constructed by its connection to various other places. One such important space is the social centre Kontrapunkt, located in a street called Norra Grängesbergsgatan. The street passes through an old industrial area that separates the southern inner city, which Möllevången is part of, from Rosengård. The street is known for its warehouses, shady businesses, and clandestine night clubs open hours after the official closing time in Sweden. It was here that Kontrapunkt found its first venues in 2009. The idea of establishing a social centre came about as a result of the Möllevången Festival. The main organisers eventually felt the need for a more stable and permanent location rather than just an annual event, so the activists decided to turn the festival into a permanent place that could exist the whole year around. Kontrapunkt was run through voluntary work, just as the Möllevången Festival was, and the activists themselves built, renovated, and started to run the social centre. For five years, Kontrapunkt housed weekly events—parties, workshops, a free shop, a community kitchen, etc.—until the autumn of 2015 when they announced they would cancel all upcoming events in order to house and assist the transit refugees arriving to Malmö (which figures as the ethnographic example in Chapter 6). Kontrapunkt became known throughout Sweden for its work as a transit centre for asylum seekers, entirely run by activists and volunteers. Kontrapunkt is an example of how, similar to Glassfabriken, activists bring in and generate cultural capital in an industrial or run-down part of the city, which is characteristic of the first phase of gentrification. Notwithstanding, Kontrapunkt also became a platform for the struggle against the gentrification of that area, as described in the next section.

Another important site that connects with and feed into activism in Malmö is Copenhagen. There are active activist networks that span the bridge to Denmark's capital that involve Malmö activists

in friendly collaborations and relations. As revealed in two demonstrations described in this thesis, a couple of dozen activists in one case and nearly 100 activists in another travelled across the bridge from Copenhagen to join and support their Swedish comrades, showing the close transnational relations between the two sites. Also, parts of the activist scene in Lund have close connections to parts of the activist scene in Malmö, which support and feed into each other's political milieus.

Another particular characteristic of activism in Malmö is the total absence of 'suburban movements'. While both Gothenburg and Stockholm have had movements that have emerged in the suburbs—for example The Panthers for the Restoration of the Suburb and The Megaphone (C.-U. Schierup, Ålund, and Kings 2014; Sernhede, Thörn, and Thörn 2016) in the two cities respectively—the space that is Möllevången works as a centralising hub. Möllevången thus contributes to a geographical unevenness in absorbing political resources that appear in the city. This absorbing tendency may produce a centre-periphery cleavage in the city (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 20) and hamper the establishment of peripheral, locally bound activist groups.

Next, I will describe a number of organised attempts to politicise and make visible the ongoing upgrading taking place in the city and what its consequences will be for Möllevången in the future. The main activist groups working on gentrification issues in the past two decades in Malmö have been *Autonomt Motstånd* (Autonomous Resistance), *Kontrapunkt*, and *Allt åt alla*. As these examples are examined, it will become clear how a place is connected to multiple places (Massey 2005). It is hard to address the gentrification of a certain neighbourhood without linking it to the larger processes of segregation taking place in the city in general. Activists' awareness of the multiscalar composition of place is revealed through their collective actions against gentrification and segregation in the city.

Activism against gentrification and segregation

In early June 2001, a group of about ten activists from the then-existing group *Autonomt Motstånd* swam from a public pier to the

Western Harbour. They brought along bathing rings, flags, water pistols, and an inflatable dolphin to the ecological housing exhibition Bo01 that was on display with an entrance fee. The activists had no plans of paying. “If the rich move to Möllevången, we move to Bo01!” was the statement one could read on the activists’ posters aimed at mobilising people against the 2001 exhibition of the neoliberal regeneration project in Western Harbour (Müller 2009a).¹²⁷

At the time, renovations had begun in the area of Möllevången, which worried local residents because they believed it would lead to an increase in rents and the transformation of Möllevången into a fancy district. The activists perceived the upgrading of Möllevången as part of the city’s restructuring strategy. A series of articles in *Sydsvenskan* made clear that local property owners in the area had plans to turn Möllevången into a ‘new Söder’ (i.e. Södermalm in Stockholm, nowadays an exclusive inner-city area), a statement that “for us was equivalent to a declaration of war”, writes one of the activists engaged in the collective action above (Müller 2009a). They further arranged a street party in Möllevången to protest against ongoing ‘luxurious renovations’, but, at the same time, to celebrate the local resistance against such developments. This articulation of protest features in the short film entitled *Möllevången – adjö?* (Möllevången – Farewell?) (SUB TV 2002) made by a media collective in collaboration with The Möllevången Group. In the film, one hears the views of some Möllevången residents and activists on how the neighbourhood is changing, for example, the difficulty in finding a flat and higher rents for merchants. The term ‘gentrification’ was not used by commentators or residents at the time, however. Nevertheless, the collective actions above show the activists’ awareness of how the upgrading of one neighbourhood is intimately connected to other places and projects, such as the mega-project Western Harbour.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Initially, the housing project Bo01 was intensely criticised. The most striking critique was that the Social Democratic Party had built a new neighbourhood only for the wealthy (Holgerson 2017, 137).

¹²⁸ Most recently, both the media and activists have directed attention to the city’s site plan to regenerate Rosengård starting in 2019, including the construction of Culture Casbah, the 80-meter-tall skyscraper with 200 new flats and a shopping mall on the ground floor. This plan has been met by protests by the Left Party, among others, which argues that the rent in the area will increase drasti-

In June 2009, activists organised another street party, Reclaim Western Harbour, right outside the high-rise Turning Torso with a banner that read 'Houses for everyone' (*Bostäder åt alla*). But it was not until around 2010 that a debate on gentrification and the rapid changes in Möllevången took place in the mainstream media. According to the activists themselves, it was the joint anti-gentrification action Stad Solidar 2010–2011 that put the term on the political agenda. Since then, a number of articles about local residents' concerns over the gentrification of the area have been published (see, e.g., Oldberg 2010; Esmailian 2015).

Stad Solidar was a tactical appropriation of space by activists, who built their own little city to protest the building of ownership housing (Söderström 2012, 25). The construction company Peab was to build 147 flats on an empty plot where the former cooperative bakery Solidar had been located until 2002. Maja, connected to Kontrapunkt and one of the activists in this action, describes it as follows:

It was the last area in Möllevången that was not built on, except for the parks. And they [the company] were going to build tenant-owned flats instead [of rented flats]. So that is why we then occupied it [the plot] for a while. We called it an art installation and we built shacks, artsy shacks, for a week and mobilised the community to be there during a week, and it got a lot of attention and it actually brought up the concept of gentrification in Malmö. By doing that, the discussion started and people had to think about the concept of gentrification.

The activists argued that building properties for purchase rather than for rent meant that only people who could afford to buy flats would move into the neighbourhood. Stad solidar was a joint ac-

cally as a result (Pedersen 2016). Apart from owning Culture Casbah, the same real estate company, Rosengård Fastigheter (Rosengård Real Estate), will build a new 'attractive path' that will bind Rosengård together with Malmö's inner city (*Sydsvenskan* 2018b).¹²⁸ Several urban researchers claim that the overall aim of the project is to increase the real estate value in the area by attracting households with higher incomes than those who already reside in the neighbourhood (Baeten et al. 2016). The selling off of public housing for the benefit of real estate business will generate further segregation rather than preventing it, they claim.

tion by activists not only connected to Kontrapunkt but also from Allt åt alla and The Möllevången Group. Their aim was to make local residents' voices heard, expressing their views on the urban changes in Möllevången and how this space could be perceived and used differently. They wanted to visualise for the public other ways of creating a city, ways that are more inclusive and egalitarian. In this way, they brought in a counter-hegemonic discourse that simultaneously showed alternatives to, and criticised, the city's neoliberal policies that aggravated the socio-economic segregation in the city.

Inspired by abovementioned short film, the new film collective RåFILM (2012) followed up the discussion ten years later with *Vet ni! Gentrifiering! (Do You Know! Gentrification!)*.¹²⁹ The new short film examined the question: for whom is the new city built? - The film does so by examining the origins and definitions of gentrification. In the film, we follow a local resident named Marcelo on a walking tour in which he guides people through the neighbourhood and explains the characteristics of the place from a social and political perspective. We also follow the retired city planner Rose-Marie and hear her professional views on Möllevången's public spaces and the changes happening there. Local residents' perceptions of the area's gentrification are presented through creative drawings. Lastly, we meet the activists of Stad Solidar, as addressed above. Both of these films are examples of the close relations forged between different activists as well as between activists and professionals, residents, and film collectives, among others, in Malmö, enabled through their shared ideological orientation and identification with Möllevången, which again shows the importance of place in providing the opportunities for networking across different clusters of activists.

¹²⁹ The titular phrase 'Vet ni!' ('Do you know!') is a reference to the widely known local store featured in a sequence in the film that was located at the north-west corner of Möllevångstorget. It was unique in its character and was run by a cobbler who, besides repairing shoes, copied keys, ground knives, and sold all kinds of products: bike chains, children's toys, umbrellas, backpacks, porcelain, and so on. He announced all of these services and products on hand-written sheets of paper in his windows with the exclamation 'Do you know!'. In 2014, it closed down and was replaced by a café that took the name Vet ni!.

Every year since its formation in 2009, Allt åt alla has arranged Stadskampsvveckan (with the double meaning ‘the week of city struggle’ and ‘the struggle for the city’) in which collective actions, lectures, and workshops are organised during one week on the current housing situation in Malmö, the privatisation of the commons, and to bring attention to how injustice is manifested in the urban space. The activists want to “change the way we talk about Malmö” by raising the issue of income inequality and segregation. Segregation is a highly debated topic, and the activists point to how the media and the general public often talk about ‘problem neighbourhoods’ and ‘exclusion’ when talking about segregation, which is implicitly understood as referring to low-income neighbourhoods like Rosengård where a majority of the residents have foreign backgrounds (see Molina 2008). Allt åt alla wants to turn the debate by pointing to the problems in the opposite direction and, as such, they contest the common sense among the general public and their consent to the hegemonic structure that is characterised by inequality. Instead, they focus on the ‘voluntary separation’ of the wealthiest citizens of Malmö into high-priced, private neighbourhoods (Salonen 2015),¹³⁰ saying that “they do not want to be integrated with the rest of the city” (Ivarsson 2009). In this way, the activists make heard a discourse that was not meant to be heard. Among other activities, Allt åt alla arranged a bus safari in 2009—called a ‘class safari’—to the well-off neighbourhoods of Fridhem and Bellevue where the ‘tourists’ could pose in front of big villas and take pictures.

Furthermore, Allt åt alla has arranged different actions to contest the commercialisation and enclosure of public space. For example, in May 2013, they conducted an action outside the Entré shopping mall near the city centre with the aim of showing how injustices are articulated in urban space. “How many shopping malls can Malmö bear?” the activists asked, referencing the television programme *Agenda*’s debate question “How much immigration can Sweden bear?” (see Chapter 1). The collective action took the form of a performance of possible alternatives to public-private

¹³⁰ Meanwhile, many low-income people do not have a choice of where they live, but are forced into low-rent areas that are stigmatised.

shopping malls, like an indoor swimming pool, a green area, or an activity house (*Sydsvenskan* 2014). Activists brought sun chairs, beach tennis, and beach balls with them.

In 2017, activists involved in Allt åt alla created the network (in the form of a public Facebook group) called Möllan åt alla (Möllan for everyone). The purpose of this network, they announced, was to “consolidate Möllan as a red zone. We want to create a voice concerning the development of this neighbourhood [*stadsdel*] that contributes to community [*gemenskap*] and a safe and nice Möllan for everyone who lives, resides, and works here.” Among other things, they want to work towards the total termination of conversions of rental dwellings into ownership objects, for good working conditions, and against racism: “For example, no harassment of beggars, no hunting of undocumented people, and no establishment of racist groups in this area”. One year later, in October 2018, Allt åt alla arranged a ‘funeral’ for our ‘good friend’ Cheap Rents on Möllevångstorget. This creative demonstration against the gentrification of the neighbourhood attracted merely a couple dozen people. However, the main aim of the action was to film it and turn it into a video¹³¹ for distribution on social media and in this way reach more people about the changes taking place in Möllevången.

Kontrapunkt also recently started an anti-gentrification campaign, not in Möllevången, but in the industrial area in which their venue is located. In 2016, Kontrapunkt criticised the new festival¹³² that would take place in Norra Grängesbergsgatan, claiming that it would contribute to the gentrification of the area. They criticised the festival organisers for calling it a ‘grassroots festival’ despite the fact that powerful actors were involved, among others the City of Malmö and Kontrapunkt’s landlord Eroom Properties, a key property owner in the area.¹³³ In what seems like revenge for the activ-

¹³¹ The video can be seen on <https://www.facebook.com/alltattallamalmö/videos/761125534231366/>.

¹³² The name of the festival is NGBG Gatufest (NGBG Street Festival) and has been arranged every September every since 2016. The following story is one-sided in the sense that it is based, beside newspaper articles, primarily on information and experiences as told by the activists.

¹³³ According to Kontrapunkt activists, it was their critique that made their landlord want to force them out of the venues (see J. M. Karlsson 2017). Their landlord’s wish to expel the activists from the property, according to one activist, was also partly because the activists had started using their venues for social work (aiding transit refugees as well as Roma migrants) instead of continuing with

ists' critique of the so-called 'grassroots festival' (a critique that indeed reached a large number of residents in the whole city, many of whom chose to boycott the festival), the property owner informed the activists of a retroactive rent increase and drastically increased rent for the following year. Kontrapunkt involved a lawyer and eventually initiated a 'rent strike'. Both parties went into negotiations but were unable to reach an agreement. During these months, Kontrapunkt was forced to abort all their activities (Westerberg 2017; TT 2017). Kontrapunkt continued to contest the property owner's requirements, which eventually made the property owner take them to court for not paying their rent (Östh Gustavsson 2017). A few days before the lawsuit in November 2018, the activists were informed that the property owner had withdrawn from the legal complaints. Kontrapunkt was freed from the economic requirements (i.e. from paying two years' rent) and instead—to the activists' surprise—was compensated with one million SEK for their economic loss of not being able to pursue their activities throughout that time. In return, the activists were to leave the venues. The activists had, from an early stage, attempted to find new venues, which they did in September 2018. So, with compensation money and new venues, they publicly declared that Kontrapunkt would continue to exist as a social, political, and cultural node in the city: "This struggle is over, but many other remain. Now we focus on continuing to build a just, loving, and solidarity-based Malmö, which we all know is possible" (Kontrapunkt 2018, my translation).

The various and different forms of anti-gentrification campaigns and actions presented above are examples of how activists can engage in direct action that challenges the gentrification process by generating knowledge and counter-hegemonic discourses. As in the last example above, activists may pose a real threat to the interests of property owners and city developers who work in favour of gentrifying a specific area. Their powerful presence in the area may thus block or slow down gentrification (Franzén 2005). These are also examples of how collective actions may encourage and create

their usual cultural activities. Cultural production was better for the 'upgrading' and revaluation of the area.

greater participation and communication among local residents and in that process create shared interests and experiences that may engender larger mobilisations. Notwithstanding, such civic engagement simultaneously contributes to the city leadership's aim of attracting the creative middle-class.

Narrating Möllevången

Activists use Möllevången as a terrain to help build common worlds. Möllevången can be considered a “storage site for stories of events” (Peterson 2001, 4). As I have already suggested, Möllevången's most recent story, which is gaining prominence, concerns its political character: Möllevången as ‘anti-racist’ or Möllevången as *the* ‘red zone’ of Malmö. This ‘anti-racist’ narrative embedded in Möllevången is, in turn, generalised by activists as applying to Malmö as a whole, a narrative that is in sharp contrast to the rest of Scania County, which is associated with racism and anti-immigrant sentiments and in which the highest support for the Sweden Democrats in Sweden is found (see Chapter 1). When media articles address Möllevången, its diversity in ethnic terms is referred to less while more attention is paid to its *political* character (see, e.g., Shakrah 2014). I thus consider activists' attempts of positioning the anti-racist Möllevången as including the whole of Malmö as a negotiation of what the city *should be*. Narratives describe common experiences among people in a place, but they can also be used to imagine an ideal of how the neighbourhood ought to be (Martin 2003). I use the idea of ‘narratives’ to examine place-oriented discourses in the remaining part of the chapter. During my fieldwork, I sought representations of the neighbourhood by activists, most of whom are also residents, including group and individual portrayals and written and spoken accounts, both public and private. I focus here on activist groups' narratives through public speeches as well as individuals' perceptions and experiences of Möllevången through interviews.

The narratives I identified suggest that activists construct the neighbourhood as a place for commoning and shared political identity. Narrating Möllevången as anti-racist is a form of commoning: creating a space that is shared by a diverse set of people

who are characteristic of the place. In the narratives, it is as if Möllevången were a utopian neighbourhood in which one could experience what a different (future and ideal) world might look, sound, and feel like. Möllevången thus offers activists a place for imagining an alternative future but also a place to live an exciting and rewarding political life.

Activists tell stories that relate the conditions of the place—the common experiences of people in a place—to their different agendas for collective action. In doing so, they construct the neighbourhood and its activist groups as the appropriate sphere for political activism and thereby consolidate Möllevången as a salient political place. Activist groups produce the place's identity as part of their articulation of reasons and goals for activism. These narratives have material consequences both in shaping people's ideas about the place and in promoting collective action (Martin 2003). In other words, activists create a narrative connected to Möllevången to situate and legitimise their activism. The construction of Möllevången as anti-racist can be potentially subversive in relation to 'race'/ethnicity as a conflict line in society and simultaneously potentially complicit in relation to economic imperatives (Schlarek Mulinari 2017) as it contributes positively, from the city leadership's point of view, to the way capital accumulates in the city.

Activism and the political narration of a place are not without frictions. In the last section of this chapter I examine exclusionary (emotional as well as physical) processes found within the activist scene as well as tension with 'outsiders'.

Importantly, much of activists' experiential knowledge of the city is of Möllevången. When talking about Malmö, they are often actually referring to Möllevången. Möllevången as being activists' point of departure in terms of place is succinctly formulated by the activist Lukas, 29 years old: "You are in Möllan or you are not in Möllan. You reside in Möllan or you do not reside in Möllan." The same activist said he perceived Möllevången as "a city on its own within the city" and as "a border that you cross": "It is both a concept and a physical place, an identity and a subculture".

In the following, I attempt to make it clear when the specific neighbourhood is being addressed, when its political space (a net-

work of social relations) is being referred to, or when the characteristics of Möllevången are used to create a narrative that concerns the whole city.

A leftist stronghold

Although memories of the notion of class struggle, which are inscribed in the square Möllevångstorget, are stored there, today's activists rarely refer to Möllevången's political past as *the* workers' movement's stronghold. Despite Möllevången's many historical working-class mobilisations, it is only recent history, such as events that happened within the past 20 to 30 years in Malmö, that is present in activists' recent public speeches. This suggests that activists do not want to romanticise historical struggles, but instead use a future-oriented rhetoric. Nevertheless, activists claim the accumulated memory of Möllevången in the past two decades as their own in a struggle to redefine the history of the place (Peterson 2001, 4). The activists usually select stories of glory and struggle—not of social problems, conflicts, and decay. Activists confirm certain events in history while others, which remain unnarrated, are eventually forgotten. Any claim of establishing the identity of a place depends upon presenting a particular reading of its history (Massey 1995). The events that are narrated in activists' place-based narratives constitute a form of commoning, I want to suggest: they are attempts of producing common worlds (Dawney 2013) and of pre-figuring a certain future. In the following quote, certain historical characteristics are assigned to the neighbourhood and are used as an argument to support working for their continuation.

We want Möllevången to remain what it has always been: an open and inclusive neighbourhood. You don't have to be a 'professional' activist or an expert in Marxism to be able to say: 'I don't want any fascists or homophobes in my city' (Showan Shattack, quoted in P. Öberg and Ramos 2017).

The first sentence is clearly referencing the place's history (a narrative of the place as having always been 'open and inclusive') in order to say how 'we' (the activists) want the place to be in the fu-

ture. I interpret the claim of an ‘open and inclusive’ past as being linked to the activists’ aim of consolidating Möllevången as ‘open and inclusive’ today. The narrative is powerful for leftist activists’ purpose of prefiguring the place as ‘anti-racist’ and challenging anything that threatens this ‘inclusiveness’. The second sentence I see as related to the ‘turn to the everyday’ discourse that emerged in the early 2000s (see Chapter 1), in the sense of wanting to dissolve the figure of the activist by implicitly saying that the current setting (the presence of fascism and homophobia in society) concerns everyone living in a neighbourhood (not only ‘activists’). Thereby the activists are encouraging all residents to engage in what the activists define as a common matter. Activists want to create a space for ‘all people’. In practice, this means excluding the people who represent or practice homophobic and racist ideologies and attitudes and preventing them from accessing the neighbourhood. Interestingly, in the first sentence, Möllevången is the centre of attention, but, as revealed in the second sentence, what the activists want Möllevången to be should be extended and concern the city as a whole.

There are no figures on how many activists live in Möllevången. The fact that activists say that there are many is part of Möllevången’s story: it helps create the image of a powerful leftist stronghold. Jacob self-critically surmised that if the activists actually could be counted, they would be very few in comparison to the non-activists residing there:

Möllan is a bubble, a fun bubble if you are part of it. There are a lot of people living here who are not in ‘our’ Möllan bubble, because our Möllan bubble is very particular. I think that 90 per cent of the people living here barely know that this is a leftist stronghold [*vänsterfäste*]. Well, perhaps they get it, but it doesn’t affect their lives.

He nevertheless maintains it *is* a leftist stronghold, but questions how it actually affects people outside his own circles.

In the following, I will give some examples of how Möllevången and Malmö are narrated in public political speeches. In such speeches, Möllevången is equalled with Malmö, meaning that the

characteristics that are commonly attributed to Möllevången are narrated in terms of the whole city.

On 15 December 2013 in Stockholm, members of the group Linje 17 mot rasism (Line 17 Against Racism) arranged a protest against recent neo-nazi activities and displays, like pamphleteering, stickers, and tags in neighbourhoods along subway line number 17. Around 500 people had gathered in the suburb of Kärrtorp: all age categories, including families with their children and prams, were represented and eight police officers were also present. During one of the speeches, a group of 30-40 men from Svenska motståndsrörelsen (the Swedish Resistance Movement) attacked the protest with sticks and brass knuckles and threw bottles, sound bombs, and burning objects into the crowd. Organised anti-fascists, who were among the protesters, as well as other participants in the protest, fought back. Eventually, the protesters pushed them out into a nearby forest.¹³⁴ In total, 23 neo-nazis were convicted after the event along with one anti-fascist for stabbing a neo-nazi.

In the following days, solidarity demonstrations took place in 25 cities around Sweden. On 19 December 2013 in Malmö, 600 people gathered on Möllevångstorget in front of the monument to protest against racists' violence in solidarity with the anti-racist protesters who were attacked in Stockholm (Kniivilä 2013). The first speech was given by Showan Shattack, at the time 25 years old, as a representative of a network called Malmö hjärta mångfald (Malmö Heart Diversity). Shattack is the only activist in this thesis who appears with his real name. While not being one of my interviewees, he was a key activist figure during my fieldwork who, in 2014, became *the* symbol of Malmö's anti-racist and anti-fascist activism. He was the most severely wounded and the only anti-fascist activist to be publicly identified in connection with the altercation between anti-fascist activists and members and sympathisers of the neo-nazi Svenskarnas parti (Party of the Swedes) in Möllevången on 8 March 2014 (as analysed in Chapter 7). In the speech, Shattack said the following:

¹³⁴ This can be seen in a short video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00FXm0q-IaQ>.

In Malmö, we have a proud history of resisting fascism when it appears. But we don't forget our history, do we? It was only 19 years ago, on St. Knut's square [a square next to Möllevången/Folkets Park], when 40 Sweden Democrats gave the 'heil' salute. Only five years ago when activists were attacked at a cultural centre [Glassfabriken] on Kristianstadsgatan and got their windows shattered by nazis in bright day light. [...] Three years ago, in the winter of 2010, when it became clear that Trez West Persson and Kooros Effatian had not been murdered by chance, but that a serial killer was searching for targets with immigrant backgrounds. [...] Therefore, I would like to remind you, dear residents of Malmö, that today's absence of any fascist organisation in Malmö is not a given. Many have paid a high price, and it is a battle that must be fought constantly in order to defend the working class from fascist attacks and divisions. Fascism isn't something that can be combated by laws or regulations. Neither can we assume that fascism is stopped by the same authority that has created REVA¹³⁵ and the Roma registers.¹³⁶ [...] Let us never forget the memory of Trez West Persson, Kooros Effatian, and the 20 other deaths that fascism has caused since the 1980s.

Shattack is evoking a history in which fascists did exist in Malmö, such as the Sweden Democrats' demonstration in 1994 when skin-heads with bomber jackets (the majority of the participants) and one wearing a full Nazi uniform made the Nazi salute (see Schön 2014). He invokes these particular historical events to make the argument that organised racism no longer exists due to 'the proud history of resisting fascism', meaning the work of anti-racist and anti-fascist activists in the city. The concrete events that are referred to, such as via the names of serial killer Peter Mangs's two victims (see Chapter 1), are selected out of a historical flow of events; it is in the selection that history is being created through

¹³⁵ See Glossary and Chapter 1.

¹³⁶ He is referring to when it was revealed, in September 2013, that the Scania police had made a secret register of Roma people in Sweden, among them over 1,000 children, which, as a register based on their ethnicity, is forbidden by law in Sweden (Orrenius 2013).

relevant causal connections (Ristilammi 1994, 15). By referring to history, a certain future is being invoked (Massey 1995): one in which racists are absent. This narrative of a ‘proud history and present’ reaches beyond the activist scene in the city. An activist in Gothenburg told me how activists from Malmö usually bragged about how “there are two anti-racist organisations for each *nasse* [slang for nazi] in Malmö”. The anti-racist narrative connected to Malmö is related to extra-parliamentarian activism in particular; it maintains that it is only ‘true politics’ that can disrupt the ‘police order’ (Rancière 1999).

The following speaker that evening on Möllevångstorget, a young male activist from SUF (The Anarchosyndicalist Youth Federation), continued narrating Malmö as free from any sort of intolerance, claiming no one needs to fear any racist or homophobic-motivated violence thanks to the strong resistance in the city:

In Malmö, there are no organised nazis. In Malmö, you rarely see stickers on lamp posts with messages about the threat of mass immigration or advertising *Mein Kampf*. In Malmö, I, as a socialist, need not be afraid of getting beat up if I share flyers or have a red star on my jacket. In Malmö, LGBTQ people need not be afraid of getting beat up by organised nazis [...]. In Malmö, people with skin colours other than white need not be afraid of getting beaten. There’s a reason for that. [...] In Malmö, we have many organisations actively working against fascism and racism that point to the links between fascism and the capitalist system: The Anarchosyndicalist Youth Federation, Asylgruppen, Allt åt alla, Amalthea, the Left Party, the Young Left, Aktion mot deportation, the Left Student Union, and Anti-fascist Action. Just choose one. [...] [I]t is when we organise ourselves that we can make a change. ¡*No Pasarán!*

The quote illustrates what I mean by activists’ attempts to ‘push the position’ of Möllevången to cover the whole of Malmö. There are, in fact, organised nazis in Malmö, but they do not reside in Möllevången. There is indeed racist propaganda in the public space in parts of Malmö, although it is rarely seen in Möllevången (since

it is noticed immediately and ripped down by activists). Racialised migrants are indeed harassed in Malmö, even in Möllevången. However, by attributing certain characteristics to a place means producing that place at the same time (de Certeau 1984; Massey 1995; Polletta 1998). The quotes above are examples of competing stories of the present, wielded as arguments over what the future should be (Massey 1995).

The speaker highlights the many (extra-parliamentarian) groups and organisations that exist in Malmö and encourages people to get involved in any of them in order to counteract racism and fascism in organised ways. In this narrative that calls upon individual residents to get involved in activism, residents are encouraged to think of themselves as part of the political space of Malmö and the struggle being fought. Activists want to incite the feeling that we inhabit common worlds—that we have shared stakes that extend beyond the immediate (close family, friends, and work colleagues)—in order to encourage collective responsibility and care towards ‘the other’. The quote represents a narrative that is aimed at encouraging participation in making worlds beyond our immediate desires and needs and to contribute to people’s sense of commonality and our feeling of being in common (Dawney 2013).

The narrative of Malmö as a strongly anti-racist space is also appreciated locally by non-activists. Hakim, 20 years old, formerly undocumented, and now involved in Asylgruppen, shared his experience of coming to Sweden: “When I came here, I felt as if I was not allowed to be here, because this is not my country. ‘I am not allowed to be here.’ But not so in Möllan, in Malmö, but when I go out of Malmö.” He felt ‘the right to be here’ (Eastmond 2007) when in Möllevången.

Appreciation is also illustrated in the following quote made by a black Swedish teenager¹³⁷ who explains why Malmö, the town she grew up in, is “the best city there is”. She calls it “the city of love” because she feels that people care, which makes her feel safe. This suggests that activists’ creation of Möllevången’s and, to some ex-

¹³⁷ Interviewed by ‘Faces of Malmö’, created by the local project ‘Malmö: The true story’: <http://pedagog.malmo.se/artiklar/malmo-the-true-story/>, published on Facebook 8 July 2014: <https://www.facebook.com/FacesOfMalmo/?fref=ts>

tent, Malmö's identity as anti-racist has successfully reached beyond their own circles and is experienced and restated by non-activist, racialised youngsters in Malmö:

Malmö is the best city there is. It's small but comfortable. It's the city of love. Don't you remember the days when it was kind of about racism and stuff? Or when everyone protested against racism in Möllan [referring to the mobilisation after the clash between neo-nazis and leftist activists in Möllan on 8 March 2014], remember? Do you? Look, Malmö is just the best city there is. If anyone says anything racist, people care. So, you can feel safe in this city. One need not be afraid. [...] Well, Malmö is also a small ghetto place anyway. It is. But even if a lot happens here [crimes] you are safe.

Even though bad things happen there, like crimes, referring to the lasting representation of Malmö as rough—a “ghetto place”—that is nothing that worries her. Rather, it is the fact that “people care” (i.e. call for demonstrations) when racism appears that makes her, as a black Swedish teen, feel safe. The girl refers to the Kämpa Malmö protest that took place a week after four local activists were violently assaulted in Möllevången (Shattack was one of them). On 8 March 2014, only four months after the speeches described above were given on Möllevångstorget, a group of about five members and sympathisers of the (neo-nazi) Party of the Swedes showed up in Möllevången and confronted leftist activists. Shattack was severely beaten on Kristianstadsgatan outside Amalthea book café in Möllevången. The protests that are mentioned are featured as ethnographic examples in Chapter 7.

The following quote (Shakrah 2014, my translation), referring to the event, tries to explain why the attack actually happened in Möllevången. The quote neatly encapsulates the strong political narrative about Möllevången that sometimes stretches to concern the whole of Malmö:

It became apparent that Malmö is currently Sweden's political hub, both in terms of being a haven for multi-ethnicity and as a

deterrent for those who hate multiculturalism. [...] Malmö always takes the lead as the main target of racists' hatred [...] Malmö, and especially Möllevången, encapsulates everything they hate: multiculturalism, socialism, and feminism.

Activists' successful narration of Möllevången as anti-racist and the strong presence of activists in this part of the city may have had a direct impact on the local police department's decision on where far-right groups have been allowed to hold their public meetings. In March 2013, the Swedish Defence League (SDL) announced that they would hold a public demonstration in Malmö. Immediately, Skåne mot rasism created a Facebook event with information in Swedish, English, Spanish, and Arabic in order to mobilise a counterdemonstration. SDL's demonstration was first planned to be held in Rosengård, illustrating how they imitated the strategy of their predecessors the English Defence League who are known for arranging demonstrations in neighbourhoods with large immigrant populations. However, when the police defined their demonstration as a threat that could cause riots, the SDL requested permission for Möllevångstorget instead. This was met with sheer laughter by activists. Eventually, the SDL, in dialogue with the police, changed their location to Stortorget, the main square of inner-city Malmö in a commercial area. The reason, according to the activists themselves, was the mobilisation conducted by Skåne mot rasism, an event on Facebook that had thousands of 'attendees'. The fact that Möllevången was theoretically threatened supposedly helped to mobilise a large number of counter-protesters to the event in real life.¹³⁸

Politicised boundary making

Narratives and commoning inevitably imply boundary-making. During my fieldwork, I was told of several negative experiences from Möllevången's activist scene, especially by politically in-

¹³⁸ Approximately 15 members of Swedish Defence League gathered in Stortorget, Malmö's largest inner-city square, surrounded by a metal fence, riot police, plainclothes police, dogs, and police vans. The counter demonstration, which started at Möllevångstorget and walked through the city to Stortorget, was made up of more than 1,000 people (SVT Nyheter 2013).

formed non-activists. Thus, two contradictory images emerge of Möllevången: open and loving on the one hand, but not really ‘anything goes’ on the other. The question arises: to whom is Möllevången welcoming and whom does it exclude?

Linn, the local (non-activist) resident of Möllevången mentioned in the section about the neighbourhood’s upgrading, said Möllan is the best place in Malmö. She feels comfortable there, that it has a carefree atmosphere, and that it is “*multikulti*”. However, she also has the feeling that an arrogant attitude exists among some of the “Möllan kids”, as she calls the local residents and visitors that she perceives as somehow political or as activists. Although Linn considers herself a feminist, she feels as if she is looked down upon because she does not exactly dress or look like the ‘Möllan feminists’ (Linn shaves her armpits, for example). She therefore complained about a perceived inconsistency in being left and promoting a politics of equality and justice but still creating hierarchies of good and bad ways of being ‘left’ or a ‘feminist’. Linn’s perception nevertheless relies on a stereotype of feminist activists that does not correspond with many of the feminist activists’ appearances and lifestyles who live in Malmö.

Another example is Yazmin, a visiting student from Palestine, who comes from a politically involved family although she is not an activist herself, who felt a strong tendency of labelling among activists in Möllevången:

When I came to Möllan, I felt this. This labelling is very strong in Möllan. Here you have to label yourself, whether you are a socialist, a Marxist, a feminist, and so on. I felt very uncomfortable with this. What does it matter? How can you prove if you are a feminist? [...] And if you don’t label yourself in this way, you feel you don’t fit in, that you cannot be part of it.

She further illustrated this with the example of a Facebook event in which a new flatmate was being sought for a flat share. There was a list of requirements that you had to fulfil: vegan, feminist, socialist, etc. An example of what Yasmine experienced also happened to Rana, also a visiting student in Malmö but who had been an activ-

ist during the first years of the revolution in Syria. Rana was described to me as a “radical and revolutionary person”. Rana attended a private party in Möllevången one night and another guest questioned her whether she was a socialist or not. Another experience of discomfort was expressed by Alfred, 68 years old, who moved to Möllevången in 1979 and has been active in leftist politics for decades.

The unfriendly atmosphere in Möllevången created by the extreme left has contributed to my bad mental health and to me wanting to withdraw from my beloved Möllevången in order to reach peace and regain energies, which is not possible for practical and economic reasons. I still belong to the ‘precariat’ who needs to pick up jobs from time to time to manage both rent and food on my meagre pension.

The boundary making described above are exclusions based on affect, but there are examples of enforced exclusions in Möllevången as well, commonly concerning the delimiting of who is and who is not allowed to participate in the extra-parliamentary left’s demonstration on International Workers’ Day on 1 May. In the May Day march conducted in 2005, Nathalie, 25 years old, participated together with a group of four other friends of hers who also formed part of a *capoeira* (Brazilian martial arts) group. To make the experience more festive, they brought some of their instruments (*berimbau* and *pandeiro*) used in this particular martial art. A few minutes after the demonstration started, a person who said he was one of the organisers asked them to leave since they were considered an organised group who had not announced their participation. Nathalie, who self-identifies as part of the extra-parliamentarian left, said:

I had previously felt a tendency to sectarianism and prejudices in some parts of the autonomous groupings in Malmö, and this event did not make that tendency look better. I didn’t feel like abandoning it [extra-parliamentarian politics] altogether, but temporarily I felt rejected and disappointed.

Rumours later reached them indicating that they had been perceived as a religious sect. In addition to revealing the organisers' ignorance of this kind of martial art, it primarily indicates their very narrow boundaries of inclusion.

A similar occurrence happened on a May Day demonstration in the mid-2000s when a group of animal-rights activists appeared unannounced and formed their own block. They were also forced to leave by organisers of the demonstration. In Gothenburg, the organisers similarly adopted a policy stating that animal-rights and the climate struggle do not fall into their definition of class struggle and groups associated with these themes are therefore not allowed to participate (Wasshede 2010, 147).

The unwritten rule of participation as a 'block' (a group of people that are united behind a banner, certain political message or an activity) in May Day demonstrations is that you ask the organisers for permission. Organisers have shown irritation when, for example, samba blocks (a drum orchestra) appear unannounced. However, as in the case with the animal-rights block, perhaps they did not ask as they knew they would have been denied the right to participate. The politicised boundary-making that is common within the extra-parliamentary left concerns perceptions of what constitute 'true' working-class struggle and what does not, and even more concretely: who are allowed to participate in this struggle and who are not? Who decides? Many activists within the extra-parliamentarian scene today consider animal-rights activism (or a samba orchestra, for that matter) to have nothing to do with the working-class struggle, whereas two decades ago, animal-rights activism was intimately connected and at times inherent to the autonomous struggle. The definition of the working-class struggle is a question that the class struggle-oriented activists struggle with, which also plays a role in shaping their activism.

The boundary-making examined above are illustrative of how strong solidarity between 'insiders' can, in fact, turn into practices of excluding 'outsiders'. Narrow definitions that result in the forced exclusion of some people may thus impede productive collaboration in disruptive political mobilisations, a topic that I discuss further in the last chapter. But whether boundary making is

taking place or not, or to what extent, depends on what kind of collective actions it is. Some actions are for members only while others are ‘open’ actions and they are inclusive and at times massive (as in the Kämpa Malmö protest, which features in Chapter 7).

Activism is a complex process since the activists have to relate to a number of stakeholders including not only ‘the other activists’ within the extra-parliamentarian scene and the general public ‘outside’ the scene, but to NGOs, political parties, institutions, and alternative as well as mainstream media. These relations create different power relations at different times and places. The different groups thus have different levels of power depending on the context, which is usually related to the time and effort invested in the particular collective action. For example, Allt åt alla is the main organiser of activities on 1 May as the date is symbolically connected to class struggle and the labour movement, which gives them the power to organise it in the way they see fit. When it comes to acquiring funding and resources to conduct struggles (for example aid-work or pro-migrant campaigns), however, Asylgruppen or Kontrapunkt are in a more influential position vis-à-vis the public, as Allt åt alla has been defined as extremist by the government (see Chapter 1) and is thus stigmatised. This gives pro-asylum groups a more powerful position to set the framework of such struggles in the city.

Consolidating Möllevången as anti-racist

The analysis in this sub-chapter points to how neighbourhoods are socially constructed in particular times and places, and therefore they are not fixed and specific (Massey 2005). Möllevången is a “temporary constellation” (Massey 2005, 141) shaped through the social interactions that produce space and place (*ibid.*; Lefebvre 1991). Since the 1990s, Möllevången has been especially shaped by political activism. In Malmö, activists use the narrative of Möllevången (and sometimes the city) as anti-racist as a ‘position’ from which to unite coalitions of citizens for common goals (Martin 2003). They make use of a place-based narrative to highlight the potential relationship between activism, based on an idea of neighbourhood and city, and the material experiences of that place: the

daily life experiences residents are likely to have in the neighbourhood (such as common perceptions or conditions in the neighbourhood) (ibid.). Nevertheless, with regards to daily life, socially constructed neighbourhoods have real, material consequences for the people who live in them. The experiences and feelings connected to Möllevången, as expressed by activists as well as non-activists, are 'warmth', 'the right to be here', 'fun', and 'anything goes' and, to a lesser extent, 'intolerant', 'sectarian', 'hierarchical', and 'dangerous'.

Activists' consolidation in the neighbourhood has created a new politicised Möllevången that is defined as being 'anti-racist', which is a narrative that alludes to the fact that 'here people with multiple backgrounds live side by side in peace and alliance' and that it is also 'red' in the sense that it is in line with the socialist values of feminism and equality. The fact that activists have successfully narrated Möllevången as anti-racist and as a red zone is in itself an important resource that enables and encourages collective actions of resistance against forces that threaten their ideals. They are powerful 'place-frames' (Martin 2003) or 'collective action frames' (Benford and Snow 2000) that is deployed to constitute the place, collective identities, and actions. Activists actively seek to ascribe and establish certain loaded signifiers to Möllevången, which forms part of the struggle against the hegemonic norms of individualism, competition, inequality, and racism. This is illustrative of the importance of place in activism in general, and for a strong activist scene in particular (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017; Leach and Haunss 2009).

The argument I make here is that the activists' presence and their collective actions in Möllevången contest and shape the representations of the neighbourhood and have helped to constitute the place as a site of commoning, solidarity, agency and resistance. Not only does place shape people's political outlooks but it is vital in helping disparate actors join larger mobilisations (Nicholls et al. 2013). Möllevången empowers activists to mobilise a large number of ordinary residents in the city, as will become clear through the ethnographic descriptions in the empirical chapters that follow. If an injustice is committed, mobilisations are smoothly carried out

through the vast relational qualities and resources found in and through the activist scene.

Activists' positive narratives of Möllevången potentially ignore pressing concerns, such as racism, labour abuse, and segregation within the neighbourhood. The construction of its space as 'anti-racist' may also give a false sense of security and safety from antagonists (far-right or neo-nazi activists) or racists' harassments. Furthermore, their successful redefinition of the place has contributed to the local authorities' plans for upgrading inner-city areas and their ambitions of giving the city a 'positive face' (in opposition to its crime-ridden reputation). Local authorities seek to promote a positive image of the city in order to attract inhabitants like my research participants with the aim of reconfiguring the class composition of the city along the lines of neoliberal urban policy. Activists' contribution to gentrification is an unintentional consequence of their place-making. As gentrification progresses, activist scenes become increasingly fragile as activists are pushed out of gentrifying neighbourhoods by evictions and rising rents (Creasap 2016).

In sum, the constellation of processes that makes up Möllevången, as described in this chapter, offer the conditions that enable and encourage activism and emplacement (regardless of whether one is of Swedish or of foreign descent). The task is to understand what commoning and solidarity look like at the individual level and the ways they challenge the established orders. This is explored in the remaining chapters. Before turning to a sharper ethnographic focus on different collective actions and the solidarity work that took place in Malmö 2013–2016, I next examine and interrogate 'the activists'.

Figure 2. Sticker on a bench on the square Möllevångstorget saying, “We put out the fires that fascism has lit”, signed Antifascist Action, May 2016.

Figure 3. The 90-meter graffiti wall (made legal in 2013) along Folkets Park next to Knarkrondellen with the painted words, “Antifascism is self-defence”, 16 March 2014.

Figure 4. Light installation in Knarkrondellen on which someone has scribbled the text, "If we all are just nice and we are nice to each other everything will turn out fine... Except nassar [nazis]. Give them shit. Fuck the fascists!", December 2013.

4 THE ACTIVISTS

In this chapter, I explore ‘the activists’. Based on in-depth interviews, I examine activists’ perceptions on the figure of ‘the activist’ and what constitutes activism. The chapter concludes with a discussion on what these perceptions mean from the perspective of prefiguration and commoning. Many statements reveal uncertainties and ambivalences, yet all interviewees have their own understanding and moral position on ideal and fake activism, although these positions change. The kind of activism I have undertaken to study, as stated in the Introduction, is related to solidarity-based work, advocacy, forms of collective action such as demonstrations, and more confrontational street actions such as sit-ins and blockades. Independent of their group membership, all interviewees had engaged in all of these areas and many activist groups’ activities concerned all of them. While most of the interviewees had a clear understanding of the groups constituting the extra-parliamentary scene in Malmö, their conceptualisation of activism commonly expanded far beyond their own circles: doing activism is not reserved for organised activists but is a practice that can be conducted by anyone independent of a political organisation. Therefore, my research participants hesitated in defining ‘the activist’ in line with its common associations in the public debate, which brings to mind individuals connected to extra-parliamentarian groups. Some activists from the class struggle-oriented groups made ‘anti-activist’ statements in order to position themselves as not being different from ‘the great majority’. These activists made a distinction between ‘doing activism’ and ‘being an activist’: they want to do activism without creating an activist identity, since such an identity

would hamper the potential for engaging with a broader range of participants (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 487). This could be an example of, in Gibson-Graham's (2006, xxiii) words, activists engaging in "new practices of the self", a self that does not exclude non-activist others.

Following the decline of the global justice movement, the activists argued that one of the problems with their own activism was the activists themselves. Or rather, the problem lay in how the identity of 'the activist' had been constructed: as an exclusive practice of the few belonging to some kind of obscure subculture (see Chapter 1), which resembled the Old Left's vanguard. The Old Left's privileged agent of social change consisted of people who dedicated their lives to transformative politics and offered their leadership to the many in order to develop the movement's ideology (see Lenin 1902).

Activists further fear the development of a growing emphasis on "lifestyle over strategic organising" as resulting from increased jargon, affinities, and habits within the group (C. D. Trott 2016). This is a process noted by Cristina Flesher Fominaya (2019, 2015) in Spain, which she terms the paradox of anti-identitarian collective identity, which is similar to what I have observed in parts of the activist scene in Malmö. The 'political identity paradox' refers to the necessity of a strong group identity in collective actions, which can nevertheless lead to group polarisation and alienation (Smucker 2012; see also C. D. Trott 2016; and Leach 2009).

This desire for anti-identity by some activists forms part of the 'turn to the everyday' discourse (see Chapter 1) and its criticisms of how exclusionary practices (militant, 'spectacular' actions by a privileged agent) and identities (connected to certain lifestyles and consumption patterns) do not allow for broad mobilisation and liberation. How to impact society if you live and act separated from it? These activists have an understanding that solidified cultural patterns risk creating their own norms, which in themselves may become as oppressive as those the activists say they are fighting against (Lundstedt 2016, 27–28).

Identity has two central dimensions, individual and collective, both of which are shaped by a third dimension: public identity (La-

raña et al. 1994, 28). What underlies many of the statements presented in this chapter is the attempt to challenge the activist identity as ascribed by state authorities and mainstream media. Since that ascribed identity is associated, to some extent, with extremism (see Chapter 1 for a description of the government-led project for countering so-called ‘violence promoting extremism’) and the stigma of using violent methods, it may exclude potentially engaged people who feel unfamiliar with, or even opposed to, these attributes. Hence, there is a tension between chosen and ascribed identities. From the public’s point of view, activism is generally interpreted as radical actions, while activists themselves do not conceive of their political practices as radical. The perception of activism as radical and often visible in the public space, according to many of the activists that I interviewed and talked to, misinterprets a major part of what activism consists of: hours of meetings, planning, and preparations but also the mostly hidden unspectacular actions that equally address structural inequalities albeit on an individual and everyday level.

Another discursive trend found in my material, based on a similar goal of inclusiveness and pro-diversity, was to call ‘anyone’ (who struggles against structural oppression) an activist, including the temporary participants in collective actions or non-citizens who at some point in life, for example, have hidden from the authorities but who have no connection whatsoever with the political groups in Malmö. I interpret this as a wish to neutralise the category of ‘activist’ for the same reasons as those who want to abolish the term altogether, which is described and analysed in the following pages.

I thus found that activists’ ambivalent approach to ‘activism’ and ‘activist’, including their negotiation of the meanings of the terms and the wish to challenge or even abolish them, represent attempts to turn activism into an inclusive political practice that does not only concern the ‘activists’ as constructed in the public discourse. Hence, they are expressions of commoning. Such a commoning, I claim, opens up for emplacement and political agency and for ‘non-standard’ activists to be included through activism in the traditional circles of activists in the city. In other words, they are

making contentious politics common. Commoning, as De Angelis and Stavrides (2010) argue, must overcome current material and discursive divisions within the ‘working class’ or ‘the multitude’ (Hardt and Negri 2004). One central division existing between Swedish activists and migrants in precarious legal conditions, as addressed in the Introduction, can be understood through ‘privilege’, a position that comes with responsibility according to many of the activists. Privilege, for example white privilege, makes the complex relations of domination and oppression visible (Pease 2010). Privilege is a relative position and a source for acquiring benefits in society (ibid.). Privilege is not, however, a precondition for engaging in activism, as illustrated in this thesis through the political socialisation of various deprivileged migrants who become activists.

Towards the end of the chapter, I examine statements that, in one way or another, imply a positioning of oneself in relations to ‘the other activists’. Inspired by the theories of identity construction presented in Chapter 1, I look for distinction-making between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but also within the ‘us’, trying to understand what activists will accomplish by making such distinctions (Becker 1998, 150). I also explore the premises upon which such line-drawing are based. When members of one activist group make invidious distinctions between themselves and the members of another group with whom they regularly interact, the distinctions reflect the interests of the members of the first group in the relationship (ibid., 154). I also pay attention to statements in which something is said *not* to be what it is claimed to be, for example: ‘that isn’t activism’ or ‘that isn’t class struggle’. These formulations are often signals of someone trying to maintain privilege (ibid., 158). Another version of such line-drawing occurs when someone says he or she isn’t something (for example an ‘activist’, see below) in order to prevent being treated in a certain way.

As will become apparent from the statements below, identities are constructed as *relational* processes: ‘I’ or ‘we’ are defined in relation to ‘the other(s)’. Boundary making in the activist scene impacts how space and place are produced and thus the conditions of emplacement and the feeling of being welcomed into the scene and

the ‘right to be here’. The positioning of oneself and ‘the other activists’, I suggest, takes place primarily on a continuum of political positionalities from ‘radical’ to ‘liberal’¹³⁹ (or ‘radical’ versus ‘liberal’) and on perceptions of what constitutes ‘the true struggle’ and not according to other divisions such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity/‘race’, abilities, etc. These internal divides reveal historical antagonisms between political cultures, identities, and movements such as, for example, between Marxist, anarchist, autonomist, etc. as well as between differences in understandings of fundamental change (revolution) and political reform. As addressed in Chapter 1, this tension can be argued, albeit in a simplified manner, as being a product of the current movement’s two historical roots: the ‘cultural turn’ (new social movements) and the workers’ movement. Each activist group leans more towards one or the other in terms of theory.¹⁴⁰

The following vignette describes a lengthier conversation that highlights perceptions of what constitutes activism and activists while conveying ambivalences in defining these concepts.

What is activism and who is an activist?

We meet on Möllevångstorget. It is half past three in the afternoon. Gabriel sits on a bench in the sun with Nazir.

“We have just come back from the Migration Agency. Nazir needed help with some stuff.” Gabriel had just engaged in one of the most central activities as a member of Asylgruppen. He is one out of many so-called ‘contact persons’ in Malmö. A contact person helps undocumented, unaccompanied minors with practically anything, and continues to help them after they become documented. They support them in accessing healthcare and housing, show them how to acquire a library card or ad-

¹³⁹ In leftist circles, the term ‘liberal’ has taken on a negative connotation and refers to the liberal political ideology with an individual’s freedom at its core. It can describe a person or an idea that supports free markets and limited government intervention concerning redistribution of wealth through taxes. ‘A liberal’, in leftist circles, thus usually refers to a person who upholds the current hegemonic relations of power, implicitly or explicitly.

¹⁴⁰ This positioning of ‘self’ and ‘the other’ within the left partly reflects the discourse and theoretical line of division between so-called ‘identity politics’ vs. ‘class struggle’, a discussion beyond the scope of this thesis.

mittance to the gym and school, help them with homework or buy them pens and notebooks. And also, they are a friend.

Gabriel tells me that Nazir participated in Asylstafetten earlier that summer. Nazir looks at me and confirms with a nod. Asylstafetten was a protest march that aimed at raising awareness of undocumented persons' living conditions in Sweden and at bringing asylum and human rights issues to the political agenda. The starting point was Möllevångstorget and it took them three weeks to walk 400 kilometres and reach the city of Visby. They attended the so-called Almedalen Week, which is a politicians' gathering where current political issues are discussed for a whole week.

"Think about it, before Asylstafetten many of them [migrants in precarious legal conditions] had never been in a demonstration in their lives. And now they have the experience of a unique demonstration, all the way to Almedalen", Gabriel says and looks at Nazir.

I ask if there were any undocumented migrants who participated.

"Yes, some", says Nazir.

"It was a safety issue", Gabriel fills in.

It was something that the activists had talked a lot about before going forward with the march. How secure is it to participate as undocumented? Could the police detain them, or could they be harassed by racists?

Nazir, 18 years old, is from Afghanistan. He was an asylum applicant during the first Asylstafetten, which took place the year before, but was rejected. He appealed the decision.

"Three weeks ago, I got PUT [short for 'permanent residence permit' in Swedish]", he says and smiles.

"Do you remember when the nazis threw eggs at us?" Gabriel asks Nazir. "They came driving in a car", he continues. "They had already driven past us once and filmed us with a camera. I was really scared at that point."

Gabriel continues sharing some short glimpses from last year's Asylstafetten in which both he and Nazir participated, then he looks at me and says:

“Shall we?” We say goodbye to Nazir and walk up the street, turn left by Golden Restaurant, cross Knarkrondellen heading to Folkets Park.

Gabriel got involved in political youth organisations in high school and since then he has been engaged “within the left” in a broad sense, as he describes it. Ever since he moved to Malmö, he has become more engaged and in the last two years he has focused on pro-asylum activism, mostly through Asylgruppen and Asylstafetten. Asylstafetten attracted many participants who had no previous experience of political mobilisation.

I ask Gabriel whether he would call the people who protested for the first time in their lives ‘activists’.

“Well, no doubt. No doubt. Just think about how everything turned out. Hakim knows all of Malmö. And think about Tariq [who became an active member]. Look at Nazir whom we spoke to just now, this thing that they help each other. This is also the cool thing with Asylgruppen and, at the same time, a problem. That we think that the activists are us who are engaged in the traditional leftist groups and drink beer in Sapla [a local restaurant]. But we forget that the majority of the people hiding, I think, without having any figures, are hiding at relatives’ or friends’ homes, etc.”

We walk towards the lawn and agree to find a place to sit on the grass. “How many have you interviewed so far?” Gabriel asks me. This was in the summer of 2014.

“Not that many. I have mostly been doing participant observation up to this point. But I have talked to Zahra and Lisa...”, I say. The people I mentioned were activist friends of Gabriel’s. “Wow, not a bad start, huh. You start with the best!”

“Speaking of the devil”, he says and points with a nod. Zahra is sitting on the grass under a tree in front of Moriskan. She has company. We wave and smile.

“She is a real lunatic”, he says and sighs. “How the hell is she even capable”, he continues. “How does she cope?” He is clearly impressed by Zahra’s level of political engagement. But he also seems to say it out of concern.

“Do you see yourself as an activist?” I ask Gabriel.

“I see myself as an activist. But most of all as just being ‘left’. That’s my main identity. And anti-racist. I also think that activism, since I’ve worked in the NGO world, has to do with not earning money for what you do. Then you are something else. There are a lot of people working in Save the Children, the Red Cross, and doing a great job. But they are not activists.”

Gabriel has difficulties being in political contexts in Stockholm, where he recently moved for a job position, because there “everyone is a blogger”. “You should hand out some bloody leaflets, you must *do* something”, he says.

Gabriel continues pondering on the ideal activist as someone relatively invisible, or who does not care about being visible, and who criticises careerist politicians and others who want to present themselves as activists. He exemplifies his point with Zahra, who is incredibly active in the pro-asylum movement but keeps a low profile.

An important part of Gabriel’s activism is working with “people who are not yet full-fledged”. Most of his efforts have been directed at encouraging young migrants to learn about and formulate their rights and to be in ‘the front line’ (meaning taking the lead and representing themselves).

“For some of them [asylum seekers, undocumented], I believe the word ‘activist’ doesn’t even exist in their vocabulary. For others it does. Some are a bit more [activist] than others, I guess”, he says, clearly not convinced by his own definition. “What is...I really do not know what an activist is”, he says. “But I am pretty sure it has to do with something that you somehow do in your everyday life.”

Gabriel is the pro-asylum activist who was also quoted in a previous chapter. He is a member of The Left Party and was born in Sweden to parents who immigrated to Sweden from a non-European country as political refugees. Gabriel thus grew up in an environment in which left-wing politics was a given. Nazir, 18 years old, is one out of many migrant youths who have received assistance from activists in Malmö. In this process, Nazir became involved as a participant in *Asylstafetten* (a recurrent collective ac-

tion that has taken place every summer since 2013). Zahra, in her forties, grew up in a non-European country and has personal experiences involving the status of being undocumented and political activism before coming to Sweden.

The vignette serves as an example of the general ambivalence and uncertainty among activists in defining ‘the activist’ and what constitutes activism. It also reveals a wish to expand the definition to encompass more people, not only people like Zahra who is a “real lunatic” due to her vast and long-term activist engagement, but also people like Nazir who only participated in one collective action (although it lasted 34 days). Being part of the organised activist circles in Malmö is not a precondition to being an activist according to Gabriel: anyone can be an activist, such as young people (formerly or currently without papers) who, at the same time, are not considered part of the traditional leftist circles in Malmö and don’t “drink beer in Sapla”. Gabriel also criticised those who use their activist identity to show off as someone ‘good’, a criticism raised by many others, which suggest that such a tendency exists.

One year earlier, in 2013, I had sat in the same park and talked to Zahra about her political activism. As we sat in the grass, midway through the interview, we saw two policemen stop a black man 20 meters from us on the other side of a hedge. “Let’s go and have a look”, said Zahra and we both got up. As we approached we saw the well-known Swedish folksinger Mikael Wiehe, who has a history of personal and musical political commitment, talking to the police. Someone was already being a witness; we went back and sat down again in the shade of the tree. Zahra described her activist life to me as something emotional and intellectual, which may, and often does, affect one’s entire life:

For me, activism...uh, I don’t like that word very much but...eh. Yes, it’s like it becomes an integral part of my life. It’s not like a job, it’s not like my private life, but it’s like always there. It also characterises...it has changed my view of society, my view of my private life, or my job... [...] it affects a lot. [...] It’s not activism [as such] that is important in this matter, but what we work with. We know that both here, or if I travel, meet my brother or

my mother, or I'm with a friend, still this *matter* will be around us, there's no getting away from it.... And you saw when we came here, we would surely not be activists, but we saw a police car and we sort of became.... It is very difficult, the deeper you go into this kind of work, get to know the issue, get to know how it affects others, then it's like you will also become a part of it. And that issue also becomes a part of you. And you get very deeply involved in it.

Zahra is reluctant to reduce what she does into the notion 'activism', as if one did activism for the sake of the 'activism' itself. One has to describe what one is doing and why, she said. The fact that Zahra doesn't like the term 'activism' illustrates how it has become a sort of 'dirty word' in parts of the extra-parliamentarian scene, in line with the 'turn to the everyday' discourse (as discussed in Chapter 1). As expressed by Zahra, which resembles the statements made by many other activists, activism has to do with a gained political awareness that affects oneself emotionally and intellectually. Zahra cannot undo her critical thinking about injustice, inequality, and, in particular, the conditions of displaced and dispossessed migrants. Once she gained that critical thinking, it affected her being in the world; it was as if she had crossed a line and then nothing was ever the same again (Cobo-Guevara, Zechner, and Herbst 2018). This self-transformative process of political socialisation was addressed in most interviews and will be explored further in Chapter 6. This critical lens became a part of Zahra. For her, as for other activists, it constitutes an important part of her self-perception and identity.

Another activist, Nina, 38 years old and a citizen of another Scandinavian country who works in administration and has been engaged in feminist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist activism for a long time, said she tries to push her activism "one step further". For example, she helps other members of her group with their university studies. Nina, with her own academic background, wants to make her transferable academic skills available for those activists with non-academic backgrounds. Therefore, she has helped other activists with how to structure their academic essays and arguments.

Nina thinks that this kind of informal help should be a part of activism. “Things become easier when it is about politics, and a lot harder when it is about things that are considered private.” In other words, Nina’s activism includes offering support to other people in ‘private’ matters such as studies and homework on a private, inter-personal relationship basis. Activism can thus be performed on an everyday, individual, and unspectacular level. Nina’s example of sharing at a local level addresses structural inequalities at the local scale (among the people she knows and meets in Malmö).

Nina is indirectly criticising the figure of the ‘radical activist’ who demonstrates and focuses on public space activities, which are traditionally associated with male activists. Doing political work within the ‘female sphere’ is generally thought of as less important. ‘Doing politics’ in private, where you gain no recognition, rather than in the public space seems generally to be more common among female activists. Similar to Gabriel, Nina suggests that there are many people who do acts of activism, not merely those who fall into the public’s conceptualisation of what an activist is. She exemplified her thoughts with a recent struggle in which parents had joined together and formed a network to protest the deficiency of pre-schools in Malmö, which affected hundreds of families who were not given a place for their children. Nina further questions if an activist is something you can ‘be’; it is something you become through your practices. The term is elitist, Nina said, if it is defined as a practice that only a particular category of people can participate in. While the protagonists in this thesis fall into the dictionary definition of activists (see Introduction), activists express a wish to blur the boundaries (as they have been set up by the public discourse on activism and activists) between political acts by organised activists and similar political acts conducted by non-organised individuals.

Three interviewees had a well-thought-out argument about the importance of not calling oneself an activist. Their arguments relied on what is nowadays a well-established discourse, especially within class struggle-oriented circles, that is critical of the notion of ‘activism’. One of them is Henrik, 26 years old, involved in Allt åt alla, who has been politically active since his early teenage years.

He grew up in a family with politically engaged parents and works today as a teacher's assistant.

We don't call ourselves activists. I think we should say, like, 'that is a bad word to say'. Because then you are dividing yourselves from the people you want to organise together with. But that's like this 90s autonomous self-critique about 'we're not campaigners, we are not lobbyists, we are not activists, that is not our identity'. When I presented myself, I presented myself with my job. That's my identity. That is where I spend [my time], [in] my neighbourhood, my workplace. But of course, in all the other definitions, like if you look it up in a textbook, I would be an activist, so.... But...I don't think we should say or perceive ourselves in that sense as activists.

Clearly, Henrik wants to dissolve the dichotomy with 'us' activists on one side and 'them' the general public on the other. He is concerned that the label activist may alienate people from engaging in political activism. As he himself clarifies, Henrik bases his ideas on the critique of militant and spectacular activism in the 1990s and the 'turn to the everyday' discourse that emerged in the early 2000s that is influential for large parts of the contemporary extra-parliamentarian left in Sweden. Many activists are well aware of how creating an identity of 'the activist' may exclude potentially engaged people who feel unfamiliar with the notion or with the public image of the activist. This forms part of the idea and aim of making political practice common, as something that concerns everybody, and not a thing of the few. The quote references some activists' attempts to counteract the creation of an 'activist-identity', which activists fear will lead to an emphasis on lifestyle rather than on conducting political actions. This tendency is referred to, by activists, as 'lifestylism', "a form of prefigurative politics focusing on the transformation of oneself and one's immediate vicinity" (Jämte et al., forthcoming).

Rebecca, 28 years old and a student who recently became involved in Allt åt alla, said she was aware of the internal critical discourse on the term 'activist', but she talked about it from a certain

distance. It is a relatively established discourse within her circles, she claimed. She described it as a critique of the autonomous movement before she became involved in it, when activism was something that was conducted as clearly separated from society: “That when you do activism you are a political person, but then you go home and you aren’t any longer”. She pondered further as follows:

That concept is...it’s quite interesting. Well, I think that in some ways, of course, it is clear that that is what we do. That we are engaged in political activism. We do stuff, we are active, that’s what we do. But I know, as well, there is a very strong...eh, criticism of the concept of activism because you do not want to see yourself as a person who goes and does politics elsewhere, or who has it like some kind of hobby. It is also a criticism of the identity, like this, “I’m an activist, I’m walking around and having a political ...” or something, some kind of pathos to enact a little bit here and there. Rather, this is more about something like...something else than people who are some kind of professionals involving political actions. But that we are just people living, acting, working in Malmö, in Möllevången, other places.

Rebecca’s statement illustrates how this ‘anti-identity’ discourse represents a yearning for legitimisation and a wish to be part of ‘the great majority’ and not positioned (by others) as deviant. She tried to explain the criticism as an attempt to bridge the idea of “you go to a meeting to become an activist in two hours” with the fact that “politics [may] happen all the time”, which reflects the idea of the constant possibility of invoking politics (Arendt 1998; Rancière 1999; Dikeç 2007). One does not become a political agent only in instances of being an ‘activist’, in meetings or demonstrations, for example, but it is something that you are, or can be, at any time in any context. The aim of building egalitarian social relations is something you can work on every day where you live, in relation to your neighbours and your colleagues in your workplace, *and* in activist meetings.

Given the ambivalence towards the notions of activism and activist, my interviewees struggled to give a comprehensive definition. Nina, for example, wondered ironically if the lady writing angry notes in their shared basement laundry room could be considered a 'laundry room activist'.

I haven't really come to grips with this concept of activist, and have never myself...well, I have been referred to as an activist many times but I've never actually called myself that because I find it.... I've probably randomly used the term sometimes but I've never.... Or should you specify what kind of activist you are, if you are really committed against something or in favour of something? Then perhaps one may use the word...the one who is engaged in doing things. Well, I think that it should perhaps be a way of saying that someone is doing something to change something concerning an issue. But then it's actually also the angry old lady in our laundry room. [laughs]

While ambivalently trying to approach what an activist really is, she said, "Yes, and I have pretty much also periodically been that classic activist who sleeps on a mattress in the basement and cuts fanzines at night". Nina conveys the idea of the 'classic activist' of the past, those who did politics separated from 'the rest of society' and as something that existed on the political and societal fringes. Interestingly, politics is not mentioned in the above quote as a feature of what 'the activist' does.

Several interviewees identified the 'real' activists as those who do the unspectacular work, which, according to them, is the actual core of activism. Some activists separated political consumers (those participating in demonstrations) from political doers (the organisers of the demonstrations). As one of them, Jacob, a 31-year-old student who had earlier held jobs within the industrial sector and who is a member of Allt åt alla, put it:

[I]t requires commitment, it is necessary to do...the dirty job. Like every demonstration requires one and a half hours of engagement on the spot by each participant, but for a certain

group of people, several hundred, sometimes several thousand hours of preparatory work was required, and that...my definition of becoming an activist is when I started doing the background work.

Jacob argued that the invisible work ‘backstage’ is what activism utterly depends on. He compares this with (commonly women’s) work in the reproductive sphere, which is unpaid and rendered ‘invisible’:

There are so many things that are never seen and never acknowledged like in the home, it’s like the reproductive work in the home. It works in the same way in the activist role: there is an incredible amount of work that is not noticeable to the consumer, who just takes it as a given. [...] It is the person who cleans the room after the meeting, making sure the coffee maker is on, ensuring the minutes are printed on time. The role of the cashier, for example, the most unattractive and at the same time the most important role in each organisation.

Similar to what Gabriel called ‘bloggers’ in Stockholm in the chapter’s introductory vignette, Jacob was critical of what he called the “Twitter-left”,

who haven’t really ever done anything for real but just sit there and type on the Internet [...]. They are so damn politically correct and know exactly what term to use not to oppress anyone, but they don’t know anything about reality.

This statement reveals a perception of activism as something practiced in, and oriented towards, the streets or involving the backstage ‘dirty’ work. It may also illustrate a generational change in combination with the technological development and the digitalisation of the public space, as addressed in Chapter 1. According to this line of thought, only posting political articles on Facebook is not enough to make one an activist, not even solely writing blogs while, in fact, the ‘digital leaflet’ might be read by many more than

its physical counterpart. Perceptions of 'doing' reveals an ideal type of activist from the past who stood in the streets and passed out flyers. Notwithstanding this image, activists do use Facebook in many different and important ways.

Lukas, a 29-year-old carpenter with a working-class family background who is also engaged in Allt åt alla, rethought the first definition he gave in line with the consumer versus organiser dichotomy and instead put forward an alternative one:

I usually think of [activism] as bringing things to their extremes, for example, what would people be prepared to do. Do you identify yourself as someone who would go out on the street if it were necessary for some reason, or if there were a need to block a bridge or open a bridge or...to...hide a refugee? If you are prepared to do that then you are an activist, I guess.

Here, in contrast to the requirement of doing background work as a member of a group, Lukas expands the category to encompass everyone prepared to take contentious political action when needed and to trespass laws, thus leaning towards the more action- and spectacular-oriented definition. Some activists oscillated between 'the activist' as an individual committed to an organisation and non-affiliated individuals. Others did not see organisational commitment as making you more or less of an activist. For example, Maria, 26 years old, who moved to Malmö because she wanted to engage in the work of Asylgruppen, did not separate individuals' political acts, such as undocumented migrants hiding from the authorities, from organised activists' work. She defined both types of activity as activism since they constitute, albeit in different ways, resistance against existing laws and policies.

For me, being an activist means doing something actively [...] you really do an action against something. [...] I'm opposing the politics that I don't like in my country. And yeah, maybe it is seen as being an activist in some sense, and in some other sense it is like...I'm also using my political voice somehow. I don't think it is enough to vote every fourth year. I have to do

something more about the politics and laws I don't like. It's an active thing, but I also think that hiding, for example, if you get denied [a] residence [permit], it's also an active thing. Maybe you don't see yourself as an activist if you hide [from the authorities], but for me, it is very active, you really take a stand [...]. While hiding might not be organised, you are actively being an adversary to laws, or to politics.

The first part of the quote resonates with activists' view of politics that exceed conventional perceptions of politics as electoral party politics and elections. This does not mean that activists altogether dismiss governmental politics, but they are convinced that governments "cannot exhaust all political possibilities or address all political wrongs" (Dikeç 2018, 53). Hence, Maria conveys activists as those who address instances where equality has been denied and that the established institutions fail to address. In a similar vein, another interviewee metaphorically defined his own role as an activist as being a needle with the tip directed upwards towards the economic and political elite, stinging them whenever possible and, in this way, being a continuous irritating element to those in power. It is, according to the activist, an element that can't be tamed and that will always question their power and the ways they reproduce structures of inequality. Activists' perceptions of the role of 'the activist' reflect the activists' perceptions of politics.

In the second part of the quote, Maria seeks to give agency, rather than victimhood, to the undocumented migrants who hide from the authorities. This reflects many other activists' choice of labelling undocumented migrants as 'activists': they emphasise the agency of people living in very precarious conditions, an agency that does not depend on being connected with any activist group.

In the course of analysing the interviews, I discerned a general ambivalence both towards 'activist' as a chosen identity and 'the activist' as an ascribed identity. One interviewee expressed his concern for the problems that come with the label: 'activist' sounds like something radically different from 'ordinary citizen', an ascribed identity that alienates the 'activist' from 'the general public'.

The following interviewee, Alex, 23 years old and a member of Allt åt alla, pondered on the notion of activist in the following way:

It's like an idea of how, like, the media or the state gives you an identity. They say, like, 'ok, but this is the activist'. So, everything the activists do, we could just say 'well, that is just activists being activists [...]'. So, breaking down the [ascribed] identity has a lot to do with how you define yourself in society. And that is an important part of our political [thought/practice].

Alex's statement reveals the ambivalence between chosen and ascribed identities. Alex, as well as Henrik who was quoted previously, are acutely aware of the logic of language, which categorises them as activists in the mainstream media and research. A label, which is an ascribed identity, describes the process within which the complex experiences of an individual or a group are being reduced to one dimension, thereby impeding them from gaining credibility or legitimacy for their complex political struggles. In the mainstream media, the activist is conveyed as someone deviant from the 'ordinary citizen' and this has political consequences. Activists thus try to fight discourses that intend to de-politicise and ridicule them, such as the "they are just activists being activists" notion stated above, or the widely held preconception of militant activists as being "troublemakers with no theoretical and political analysis and aims" (Jämte 2013, 441).

The risk of being associated with extremism is one of the reasons why the category of activist is contested, according to Maria:

[M]y interpretation of why [some] people prefer not to call themselves activists is because they [people in general] have a negative [association with the term], almost of an extremist, left-wing activist. It has a negative connotation [and] that's why people prefer not to call themselves activists.

She maintained, however, that there is nothing extreme about resisting the existing politics and laws in a country. Some activists, especially those involved in Allt åt alla, who have formally been de-

defined as extremists by the government (see Chapter 1), attempt to re-claim the label and therefore now present themselves as ‘extremists’. As the activist Michaela put it: “people [the activists] were like, yes, sure, we are extremely pro-democracy, we are extremely pro-feminism, we are extremely against racism. Sure, it’s correct. [We are extremists.]” This may represent an instance of negotiating and counteracting the stigma that comes with such a label as ‘extremist’ and as an attempt to revert the label into a resource for mobilisation (Wennerhag and Jämte 2019).

Privileged actors?

As I described in the Introduction, most of the activists that feature in this thesis, as well as most of those who exist in Malmö in general, are privileged in the sense that they hold Swedish passports (or passports from other Western countries) and possess social and cultural capital. This privileged position was only explicitly mentioned by a few activists, who said that it was this privileged position that made them feel inclined to act. The activist Lisa, 36 years old and working as a teacher, comes from a family background with working-class parents who vote for the Social Democrats. Lisa has been engaged in pro-asylum activism for a long time and rationalises what she does in terms of privilege:

And then my...well, I think like this...how should I put it without sounding...I think we have...that I have a sort of obligation and a right to try to improve this society. And the obligation I think comes from the fact that I’m an incredibly privileged person, and because of that I have an obligation to actually try to improve this society [...]. I have an obligation in a way, but I also have a right that not everyone has. Undocumented people do not have the right to get into an argument with the police, as I have, because I have my documents. So, I also have a completely different space for manoeuvring in many ways, where I can actually give vent to this improvement that I believe in, which other, less privileged people don’t have.

Lisa discusses her privileges in terms of having a political voice as well as room to manoeuvre, which she can use to support those people who don't have these same possibilities. Privilege comes with obligations, she is saying. Lisa's positioning can be interpreted, with a Spivakian reading, as follows. As a privileged activist working against the subalternity (dispossession) of the subaltern (undocumented migrants), she represents an attempt of working against the 'space of difference' that separates her from the subaltern, a positioning that follows the logic of the hegemonic order (citizen vs. non-citizen).

Lisa's political beliefs are grounded in the 'No Border' philosophy and based on the fact that people are born into either dispossession or privilege by chance, as expressed in the following quote:

I believe that life is a kind of lottery, and where I was born, in which geographical area, in which kind of family, just as with social class, as with sex, as with something called 'national belonging', it's just a lottery. [...] That is why I think people have the right to live wherever they want. And I have not had to face that question...

She means that she has not had to face the question of being displaced by war and poverty. Due to the simple fact that she was born in Sweden, Lisa gained numerous privileges that most people in the world don't have but, in her view, should also have access to as equal rights. Another activist, Emma, 30 years old and a student involved in Allt åt alla, defined privilege as follows:

[B]ut I think that I also do it [activism] somehow because I have to do it. I don't want to live in a society that looks the way it does now. And I guess it depends on what one means with 'must'. I would manage even if I weren't organised [committed to an activist group]. Having time [to engage in activism] is a privilege. So, there are huge differences [between people's possibilities].

Here, privilege is defined in terms of having time to engage in activism. Deprivileged activists (migrants who became activists through their personal struggle to stay in Sweden) commonly defined activists as privileged people who have the time and resources to do activism. Therefore, they felt they did not deserve the ‘title’, which reveals their perception of the category’s implicit high-status connotation internally within the leftist political scene (which is distinct from how it is defined by the media). Since the majority of the activist scene in Malmö is made up of privileged actors, in relative terms, it is not surprising that migrants who engaged in activism (in the dictionary sense) did not regard themselves as activists. The norm for ‘an activist’ is holding a privileged position.

“I’m not sure if I want to call myself an activist but something like that”, said Hakim, 20 years old and engaged in Asylgruppen. Sanad, a 26-year-old male activist from Afghanistan who was facing deportation and therefore organised and participated in the Tent Action (a protest camp, see Glossary), said, “How I became an...I can’t right now call myself an activist, but I’ll try to be one in the future.” Both Sanad and Hakim hesitated to call themselves activists, as if it required certain characteristics and social positioning. Sanad understood the true activist to be someone who acts unselfishly on behalf of another person. In a similar vein, Hakim explained that activists have a choice to act or not, since they are relatively privileged. But as for himself, deportation would mean a threat to his and his family’s lives. He therefore acted out of necessity, he claimed.

Maybe those who do not need to do anything, but they still want to have a better society, I usually call them activists. [...] [I]t means you don’t want to just sit still, that if you are unsatisfied, you do something. [...] But for my own part, I cannot call myself an activist because it feels like I have to do it [...]. It’s a bit like, now I kind of fight for my friends’ rights but at the same time I could not get my own rights so.... [...] I’m compelled to be here, so I’m forced to fight for my rights. [...] I don’t know, if I weren’t undocumented, I’m not sure I would’ve participated in Asylstafetten.

Hakim's statement reveals a similar logic to Sanad's: if one is forced into action, one is not an activist. He is not even sure he would have engaged in political activities the way he has done if he weren't living in a state of deportability, which, according to him, forced him into activism. The ambivalence is found when he says that he actually also fights for his friends' rights as he fights for his own. Then he rethinks privilege as a defining characteristic and says he has learnt to see that the activists who initially helped him also live under structural oppression and dispossession:

It was a few months after I had been at some meetings with Asylgruppen and I thought, oh, how come there are so many girls and how come many of them are lesbians, and how come many were really odd to me? Why do they have hair here [points to his armpits], and why are they vegans and why do they not want to eat meat? They do not buy clothes because they usually find clothes, exchange clothes, or buy clothes from Emmaus [leftist second-hand store] and stuff like that. It was a big issue. Because when I was in Iran, where I guess I was a bit religious, they always said that lesbians or gays are not good people. [...] And I thought, oh, but right now, those who help me, and who help many others, are such people, they are lesbians. But why is it so? [...] It's not just because they do not have money, they have money, but they pay money for some undocumented, for their rent, for food, but they do not want to pay for clothes [...]. But they want to help other people, and I thought a lot about it. [...] I think those who are in Asylgruppen, they fight for [the rights of the] undocumented, yet they fight for their own rights too. The way that society looks upon an undocumented person is almost the same way as they see a lesbian, and the way they look at a gay too. I think those who are activists are the ones that society looks upon in a bad way. The commonality is how society perceives them.

Hakim's impression of the Swedish activists is that they are not poor, but instead of spending money on expensive clothes they use their money for others who need it. This was confirmed by my ob-

servations, especially among pro-asylum activists, who do live life in cheaper ways in order to afford to pay (rents, bills) for migrants in precarious conditions who had come into contact with the activist scene. What Hakim's quote further indicates is that he has, through a process of political socialisation, realised that the activists, in particular the activists who are lesbians, are also fighting against dispossessive processes, in this case sexism and homophobia. Hakim thus relates his own dispossessive conditions with others' dispossessive conditions, thus recognising and problematising the broader structures in which he finds himself as well as the Swedish activists. And it is this experience of structural oppression that brings them into activism in solidarity with other oppressed groups. His statement thus indicates that doing something for others may also imply doing something for oneself.

So, Hakim rethought his earlier claim that he partook in activism out of necessity while others did it out of choice, now claiming that the activists he came to know through Asylgruppen were also 'forced' into activism. He claims that their different dispossessions create a mutual understanding across different motivations for activism and bring them into common solidarity.

[B]ut I think in any case that for many of those who are in Malmö, Möllan, those who are activists, they also feel they must do it. [...] Society treats those who are homosexuals in a different way, and that is why they struggle for society not to treat them that way. And that is why they are also forced [into activism].

This quote, as well as the previous one, confirm what Miller and Nicholls (2013) claim, namely that the exchanges of ideas, arguments, and narratives between different groups as well as between different individuals within a group allow different people to empathise with the concerns, struggles, and suffering of other people, such as when migrants in precarious legal conditions come to feel commonalities of suffering and aspiration with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community.

In the process of becoming an activist, Hakim, as well as two other young interviewees with similar backgrounds of undocumentedness and activism, adapted some of the practices he mentioned above, such as wearing second-hand clothes, wearing a *kef-fiyeh*, and eating vegetarian food. This shows that lifestyle and consumption are closely related to identity and that becoming an activist means, at least in these cases, being affected by and eventually adopting certain codes of consumption and lifestyle that are present within the activist scene. In the position of activist, Hakim eventually realised how he had changed. He perceived himself as different from the undocumented migrants that he now assisted: “Now...something that is quite funny, we who sit in meetings in Asylgruppen, those who are undocumented, they have nicer clothes, more expensive clothes, than those who are there to help them.”

Along with activists’ efforts to create an inclusive movement milieu in order to involve ‘non-standard activists’, there is also ever-present boundary-making. In the following, I present a number of examples to illustrate a particularly pronounced kind of line-drawing within the activist scene.

Boundary-making within the ‘us’

The boundary-making examined in the previous chapter focused on the practices and discourses of exclusion towards non-activists, as perceived by residents who are not part of the extra-parliamentary groups. In this chapter, I focus on the boundary-making between different activists within the activist scene. Many activists affiliated with class struggle-oriented groups defined the ‘autonomous movement’ as only encompassing class struggle-oriented groups, while many pro-asylum activists self-identified as autonomous too. For example, Jacob, involved in Allt åt alla, makes clear distinctions between the groups based on what it is that he perceives they do in terms of class struggle:

My definition of the movement is quite limited. I don’t define Kontrapunkt to be part of my movement, for example. I want them as allies, but I think their work is extremely problematic

in many ways. I think their democratic structure is extremely problematic. They are part of the movement, I guess, but they are not part of *my* movement. [...] [A]sylum activists, for example, I wouldn't define as part of the autonomous movement because they, by definition, do not conduct class struggle.

A full discussion on what constitutes 'working class struggle' according to the activists as well as the scholarly literature is beyond the aims of this thesis. Here I intend, however, to identify activists' boundary making, which may have an impact on the activists' creation of space and place.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the statement above is a clear sign of someone trying to preserve a privilege, of having or wanting to keep something without sharing it with some others. I interpret the quote above as a self-definition indicating that one is more radical than the 'other', and this self-perception of radicalism is important to this individual's, as well as the collective's, identity. It also indicates that activists organise their activities based on a line of thinking that defines certain ways of doing and seeing things as the 'right' way.

Beyond the perception (by activists located within pro-asylum groups) of Allt åt alla being 'too white' (as noted in Chapter 1), statements about them being 'too communist' were also voiced, presumably meaning in terms of the sort of formalised organisational structures they utilise (as described in Chapter 1) as well as their strong ideological focus on the working class and their narrowly defined working class struggle.

What became apparent in the course of my fieldwork was that activists within the same group had different opinions about that group. Henrik, also involved in Allt åt alla and quoted earlier, said that he sees the different Malmö-based activist groups as being part of the same 'autonomous movement', yet they cooperate more closely with some groups, such as SUF (the Anarchosindicalist Youth Federation), for example, than with Asylgruppen. "Which is really strange when I think about it...I don't know why it is so, maybe tradition", Henrik concluded. This confirms how collective identities are always multiple, partly overlapping, and sometimes

even conflicting, as individuals feel attracted to several types of collectives at the same time (Simon and Klandermans 2001, 321).

The activist Lukas, involved in Allt åt alla, told me about the “different cultures” characteristic of the activist scene in Malmö. With culture, I assumed Lukas meant the traditions, political theories, customs, organisational structures, and political positioning that defines each group.

Pro-asylum activists feel a particular closeness to the LGBTQ community, and many LGBTQ activists are involved in pro-asylum activism. In Malmö, pro-asylum groups sometimes cooperate with, and receive support from, LGBTQ organisations such as RFSL (www.rfsl.se). Thus, intersectionality theory permeates pro-asylum activist circles. For example, in Asylgruppen, it is customary to start every meeting with a round in which each participant presents themselves with their name and the pronoun they prefer to be referred to with: he, she, or *hen*.¹⁴¹ The aim is to make group discussions more trans-inclusive and to prevent possible misgenderings.

Although intersectionality is actively practiced within class struggle-oriented groups too, the sort of ‘no borders’ discourse in the transgender sense is less prevalent. When the practice of trans-inclusive rounds at meetings was brought up during our conversation, Lukas reacted: “That would *never* happen in Allt åt alla. There are more hippies in the asylum movement”, he concluded.

‘Hippie’ is one historically constituted category that is still being used (Graeber 2009, 256). Another such category is ‘punk’. It is rare that someone refers to oneself by these terms, but they are used to describe others (in a pejorative sense mostly). In activist contexts in the US, ‘hippie’ is a synonym for a pacifist, whereas ‘punk’ is associated with “younger, radical anarchists” (Graeber 2009, 257).¹⁴² In the context of the activist scene in Malmö, I see the term ‘hippie’ as similarly being associated with a ‘less radical’ position or a liberal-oriented position, where ‘liberal’ means being less involved in the ‘working-class struggle’ and leaning more to-

¹⁴¹ *Hen* is a gender-neutral personal pronoun in Swedish intended as an alternative to the gender-specific *hon* (she) and *han* (he).

¹⁴² Today in Malmö, however, ‘punk’ is used as a term to describe someone less politically serious, someone who might even drink beer during demonstrations, which breaches the non-alcohol demo codex.

wards 'identity politics'. But the term is also associated with a sort of subculture that is expressed through lifestyle and certain attributes (e.g., particular clothing, vegetarianism). While some activists adapt to a certain politics of 'life-style' (Giddens 1991), it is not with the intention of spreading one's personal lifestyle, but rather an attempt to define the limits for one's mode of living based on international solidarity, as argued by Thörn (2002, 177ff).

To define 'the others' as hippies communicates a need of behalf of the person who makes such a distinction to construct a collective identity in opposition to the associations of 'hippie'. The interviewees that most emphasised line-drawing between themselves and 'the others' were members of class-oriented groups, while activists within pro-asylum groups showed less interest in such boundaries and were less prone to delineating or talking about 'the others'. This may indicate the former's perception of holding a privileged position as radical, which is being threatened by the other's activities and expansion into their shared political space.

Clothes and appearance are important parts of identity production and performance and part of the social interaction that signals statements to other people in one's environment. For example, within activist circles, there are people who use their appearance to challenge or resist gender norms and also as a way to resist the commercialised and consumerist society under global capitalism (Wasshede 2010). Also, clothing is used as a way to recognise other in-group members. For example, Adidas and North Face are two popular brands particularly among class-struggle oriented activists who commonly use them as their 'uniform' during collective actions to maintain a level of anonymity and to perform a 'faceless resistance'. For some activists, it is important to wear T-shirts inscribed with radical political messages, mainly as a way to be recognised by, and to recognise other, in-group members. However, if such T-shirts are worn by out-group members it causes irritation among some of the activists. I have observed instances in which activists question non-activists for wearing patches with the AFA¹⁴³ logo while not, in fact, being an active member of Antifascist Ac-

¹⁴³ Short for Antifascist Action, known as Antifa in other countries.

tion. Thus, levels of internal as well as external policing are revealed.

During the global justice movement era, there seems to have been much stricter codes of conduct within activist circles (Jämte 2013, 440–451) that parts of the older generation of activists, together with the new, have resisted. In the 1990s, the autonomous identity was policed to a larger extent by in-group members (*ibid.*). Not just anyone could claim the activist identity; one was to look, behave, think, and talk in certain ways. As the activist Jacob put it:

in the movement that I became a part of as a teenager, it was very important what you ate, who you shagged, how you shagged, where you lived, how to dress, what music you listened to. There were an awful lot of lifestyle choices one had to make...

Jacob is happy that these strict moral codes are not as present in today's extra-parliamentarian scene any longer, "because you do not have to be a weird person to be part of our movement". For example, today it is okay to listen to sexist hip-hop, which was strictly 'forbidden' before, and buying fair trade is not a prerequisite for being part of the movement. Jacob admits, though, that there are still tacit norms, but they are at least much broader now, he claimed.

The past's lifestyle-bound activist identity, beyond being exclusionist, was also unsustainable, and some activists claimed that the identity was a source of burnout. It was exhausting to adhere to principles based on 'politically correct' consumption concerning clothes (usually non-brand), food (organic and fair trade, commonly vegetarian or vegan), and music (non-sexist, leftist, and anti-racist), etc. in the context of an otherwise meat-dominating capitalist patriarchy. Beyond those already mentioned, other characteristics associated with the activist identity within the global justice movement era (and to some extent still present today) in Sweden (also in the US, see Graeber 2009) were ideas like not being a consumer but rather becoming a dumpster diver and, if possible, refusing wage labour.

All these moral codes, the critical activists said, became obstacles for people from the general public who would not identify with this kind of lifestyle in order to join the movement. This is the reason why parts of the activist scene have worked, and are still working, to consciously lower the threshold for joining the movement through, among other ways, making mainstream consumption choices. Jacob's statements are part of this discourse: "be an activist but don't look like one". The activists affiliated with this standpoint are therefore commonly critical of the creation of subcultures with certain attributes that identify its members as 'punk' or 'hippie', for example. The problem with subcultures, according to these activists, is that they become homogenous, which thus works in opposition to diversity. As the student Daniel, 30 years old, involved in Allt åt alla, put it:

As soon as a political movement starts to become a subculture, it means it begins to become very homogeneous. That it begins.... Then, perhaps some sort of attribute becomes the most important thing rather than the political content. But at the same time, all political movements create a certain identity, but the question is how...what that identity looks like.

As a consequence of the perceived unsustainability of activists' morally based identity from the past, it is common today, particularly with class struggle-oriented activists, to attempt to 'act normally' and 'live normally' as people in general do. While in the 1990s in Sweden it was considered politically correct as an activist to sacrifice comfort in the name of ethical and moral concerns (e.g., veganism), this trend and discourse have today taken the opposite turn in parts of the activist scene. This is, in part, based on a political non-belief in consumer power. The inequalities characterising society cannot be resisted merely through certain modes of consumption. As Rebecca, part of the new generation of activists involved in Allt åt alla, put it:

I'm really one of those who is dogmatically against all 'lifestyle-ism'. I really hate it. Like, I can be extremely provoked when

people are vegetarians, which is a bit ridiculous, but it's the way it is. It strikes a chord with me. Everything of the sort, like, 'I live this way, I do not eat this, I only buy organic'. 'Yes, you do that, but I'm not interested in it.' I belong to those who scoff a little over that and think it's liberal, like, 'oh, you live your life that way, well, that's completely uninteresting'. 'What do you *do*? Like, what do you *really* do?'

Based on the belief that consumer power is not an efficient political tool, activists like Rebecca disregard lifestyle as a political practice, such as being a vegetarian, for example, or not travelling by airplane due to its effect on climate change. Lifestyle as political practice is even considered 'liberal', implying that these practices are not political (i.e. not part of any class struggle against inequality). What one *really* does is measured, by these activists, according to a perception of what constitutes class struggle that challenge the hegemonic unequal order. Being a vegetarian or looking like a hippie or a punk or consuming second-hand items does not challenge capitalism, according to these activists.

Another interpretation of the critical voices against 'life-style' politics is that these activists want to share the message of, and warn against, 'false' politics. Personal consumption should be seen as private and not political; class struggle takes place beyond the 'private sphere'. Rebecca pondered further:

I think it [life-style politics] is annoying...But also because it has ended up in such ridiculous conflicts over things.... [...] Since it [life-style] is something about people's private lives, it becomes very personal, of course. Because it is very personal. And then you may end up in unnecessary conflicts, like, I don't know...whether you shave your armpits or not, things like that, for me these are not political practices but choices you make yourself. [...] I think that ideally, there should be room for everyone. It is absolutely uninteresting what you are wearing. Whether you have strange tights with the cosmos painted on them and, like, blue eyebrows, or if you are super-made-up and paint your nails every day, which I do. It shouldn't matter.

Since we are all political beings anyway.

This reflects a discourse that disbelieves that individuals' everyday lifestyle-bound practices can change structural inequalities and, as such, that they are a narrow understanding of what constitute political practice. Some feminist theorists argue, however, that identity construction is indeed a practice, or a *performativity* (Butler 1990), which can be subversive, in particular when it comes to performativity that challenges heteronormativity.

Notwithstanding this feminist stance, I interpret the above statements as the activists' wish to shift the focus from identity towards practice in a manner in which only the latter matters in achieving fundamental change. Eventually, Rebecca self-critically re-assessed her statements:

I think that if I'm going to interpret it in a positive way, it's still an idea of the 'I'm doing what I can' kind. Like, if I have the choice to buy a product that has been manufactured under great conditions, I'll buy it. And there's nothing necessarily negative in that. Rather, what I and many others criticise, for example, is the effect of 'green washing' or the idea that 'your consumption can make you a better person or save the world'.

Rebecca says that there is nothing negative about consuming politically correct goods, but that she worries that the political struggle might end there by making people believe they are making a change merely through consumption.

Finding scapegoats

Since the activist identity of the past turned into an exclusionary lifestyle with limited political impact, according to the new, critical generation of activists, that lifestyle had to be abandoned. Therefore, the discussions taking place at the beginning of the 2000s came down to the question of what 'the typical' activist looked like. As Jacob explains:

The issue is that 'oh, but this scares away this group because

people look like this'. Within the left, it can be that people thought...‘people were too punk’, then people were ‘too dude’, or people were ‘too...feminist’, or whatever it may be. But it is the same idea: assuming that these types of people scare away other groups of people.

This forms part of the explanation to why parts of the extra-parliamentarian scene took a step away from punks and animal-rights activists, who were considered too subcultural and sectarian in their choice of lifestyle and forms of activism, which alienated large parts of the working-class general public. Both animal-rights activists and punks were central agents in the extra-parliamentarian milieu in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, but are much less visible today, probably partly due to the ‘successful’ exclusionist politics towards subcultures: ‘behave but don’t look like an activist’. Jacob claims that “punks are very welcome to our movement, but the movement shouldn’t be punk. We shouldn’t be a subculture.” The punk scene has clearly withdrawn in Malmö, at least from the political activist scene. There are rarely punks sitting along the punk wall (described in Chapter 3) on Möllevångstorget today.

Martin, a former anti-fascist activist, 39 years old, explained this development as being about wanting to find scapegoats for the activists’ own failures:

Activists are of the opinion that the people [*folket*] should join the movement. Then when they don’t, they ask themselves why, because activists want the best for the people. So, you try to find scapegoats to explain this. The latest [scapegoat] is the vegan, which is an extremely despised figure by some members of the movement.

This quote reflects a general development seen within the extra-parliamentarian milieu in the past two decades in Sweden: during the global justice movement era, animal-rights activists constituted an important part of the movement (and veganism was an ideal in general), but today these groups only act in the margins. The rejec-

tion of the lifestyle associated with the former generation of activists in Sweden has nevertheless generated new activist norms (prevailing in some circles more than others). These imply that one should live a 'normal life' and consume whatever the mainstream consumes, such as Adidas wear, leisure travel, private property, Coca Cola, (meat) burgers at McDonalds, etc. This is also partly a matter of a political tactic of camouflage to not be identified by their antagonists (like organised neo-nazis or the police) (Wasshede 2010, 206). A similar tactic can be observed within neo-nazi circles: today's nazis have abandoned their 'uniform' of bomber jacket and shaved head in order to 'look normal' and reach out to the general public.

This idea of positioning oneself as a working-class subject who is associated with an imagined 'working-class identity' (which, in my material, develops as an identity in opposition to any attributes associated with liberals, hippies, punks, or vegans) seems to have become more important in today's movement than it was before (in the 90s and 00s), as Wasshede (2010) also notes. Such a position risks creating an identity that, although intended to be 'inclusive', instead excludes those who do not adapt.

When I interviewed the activist Tim, who was involved in Autonomt Malmö in the beginning of the 2000s, about the changes and differences between his generation of activists and that of today, his first reaction was to comment on the differing class compositions: "We didn't have any academics". Tim perceived that most of the people involved in activism when he was active belonged to the working class (i.e. they held traditional working-class jobs) and that they self-identified as working-class. Today, many activists seem to be academics, according to him.

In the course of my fieldwork, I talked to many activists who held the same perception: today's activists are seen as being composed by a majority of people with university degrees. Most of the activists I interviewed and met had experiences of studying at university. Two of the interviewees who told me their parents were working-class (having no university degree and holding working-

class jobs) and who held typical working-class jobs themselves still self-identified as “some form of middle-class”.¹⁴⁴

An interesting point in this context is the establishment of Malmö University in 1998, which had the result of a large number of young students moving into the city (see Chapters 1 and 3). Hence, the activist groups in Malmö may partly reflect this overall demographic development in the inner-city areas.

Creating new norms

Although activists actively try to fight the exclusivist norms created within the scene, they are very aware of how new exclusions emerge. As Daniel put it:

It is obvious that every group of people, no matter if it's your friends whom you meet every day or, in the case of a political group, whom you meet quite often, there is an internal culture created, both in terms of clothes but also...or not clothes maybe so much, but like, how to talk or how to formulate problems and some preunderstandings and so forth. But...I think we've gotten better at counteracting it. Before it [Allt åt alla] was still a quite open [organisation] formally, yet difficult to get into because there were so many invisible rules, invisible ideas and invisible...like, a consensus on certain issues that is not pronounced.

Daniel points to the less tacit norms that are created within groups, such as those expressed through language and discourses, which may be more difficult to counteract than just changing one's clothes or diet.

Hence, internally in each activist group, members also have to tackle boundary-making and the different kinds of hierarchies that emerge. The activist Michaela, a member of Allt åt alla, pointed at how their internal hierarchies reflected society in general in terms of class and education: those who have the means and possibilities

¹⁴⁴ The yearning for a 'working-class identity' among activists today, a political tendency since the New Left of the 1960s, seems to be in tension with many contemporary activists' self-identification as middle-class, which is an interesting topic to explore further but beyond the scope of this thesis.

to study and read are those who become most knowledgeable in political theories, which in turn makes them the people who speak more convincingly at meetings. Hence, informal power structures also emerge out of the inequality of resources and education.

In some interviews, activists revealed an ambivalent attitude towards academia. One activist said he was critical towards activists who engage in intellectual conversations with references to particular theorists, which alienates activists who are not used to that way of talking. However, in the same interview, the activist used the notions of social and cultural capital (associated with Bourdieu) to underpin his intellectual reasoning. It became clear that when the activist used these notions in the interview, they enabled a different kind of conversation that gave access to the nuances of social life and power. In certain situations, however, such academic language works to the opposite effect, as when it is isolating and exclusionary (when not everyone is schooled in the same theories). The scepticism against academia and academics as formulated by some activists, combined with the fact that theories continue to be utilised, suggests that they seek to find a balance between accessibility and theoretical depth in their political practices.

The use of a certain kind of language was pointed out by some activists as the new form of line-drawing, not only as constituting a prime obstacle for reaching out and involving people from the general public, but also between different activist groups. Each cluster of activists develops a certain language, and these languages are perceived and interpreted differently by the various groups. The idea that there is only one 'right way' to talk about the world and the modes of intervening in it may create a hierarchical and judgmental culture internally within the activist scene as well as towards groups beyond the traditional extra-parliamentarian circles but that nevertheless engage in political community work. The activist Michaela from Allt åt alla self-critically pointed out:

we have a self-image of being very radical, and just because another group does not use exactly the same words [as we do], then we do not see them as allies. Or we don't even know about them because we do not spend time in their circles.

‘Another group’ can be interpreted as another activist group, or another group or organisation outside their immediate network. Michaela further said that she thinks that activists in general fail to look beyond people’s words and fail to see the ideological motivation ‘behind the words’, something she says they are working on and trying to achieve. “People express themselves in certain ways and we have to go beyond that”, she claimed.

This suggests that the different modes of talking that are internal to the activist scene in Malmö, if not combined with any other modes of interaction between different groups, may impede constructive collaborations and alliances. In Malmö, however, the different activists live and act in the same shared urban space (Möllevången) and, as such, they are forced to interact and collaborate despite their different ‘languages’ and ‘cultures’. It seems, however, in line with the quote above, that these interactions may not always stretch beyond the extra-parliamentarian field, which suggests that some form of common (basic) language or shared collective identity is nevertheless required for enabling communication and collaboration.

Ideas surrounding the ‘correct ways’ of talking also create tendencies of internal policing, which causes conflicts between individual activists. The activist Gabriel told me about the following experience:

Once, by mistake, I said LGBT, and someone reacted: ‘Why do you invisibilise the Q?’ I was, like, shit.... At first I thought that it had to do with my ignorance, that I am ignorant, but eventually... I was a bit drunk too... I was like, I can’t be bothered. Fuck off. The day you share some flyers in the street you can come back to me and talk about the Q.

The quote indicates an experience in which Gabriel felt upset for being called out on a mistake while the work he does and his views are ignored. His experience shows the extent to which language can be taken. Language is important, but language alone is not going to change the world.

I observed a general ambivalent understanding among activists towards the impact of language and action on society or, in other words, on whether social change is achieved by simply using the ‘correct’ words or through actions (e.g. sharing flyers). Many of the activists I met and talked to acknowledged and combined both understandings: both language and actions construct reality. What Gabriel and other activists want, however, is to underline that the politically correct language of many of the activists constitutes an obstacle to talking to the wider public. Gabriel has a lot of experience working with, and supporting, disadvantaged youth from working-class suburbs. He said that many of the youngsters he met commonly used a language that would devastate a ‘standard activist’, such as sexist language, although in practice they were respectful and gender conscious towards their sisters, girlfriends, and mothers. Gabriel pondered further: “Us guys within the left have learnt how to talk [in a politically correct manner] about sex and gender, but that doesn’t mean we are feminists in practice. There are loads of leftist guys that are complete assholes.” Gabriel’s point is that it becomes a problem when a certain way of talking is a requirement for joining or being in the movement, since most people do not have the same level of education and political schooling as standard activists. Gabriel concluded: “Q is tricky. Even academics have a hard time grappling with the Q, it’s just not so easy.”

Negotiating identities and boundaries

I have analysed two separate themes in this chapter: first, I examined conceptions of what constitutes activism and the category of ‘activist’; second, I provided an examination of boundary-making among activists within the activist scene. Boundary-making within the ‘us’ partly reveals different political traditions and ideological roots.

The excerpts from interviews with activists provide support for the claim that identities (individual as well as collective) are incomplete, relational, and hybrid (see Introduction and Chapter 1). When interrogating ‘the activist/activism’ and the different forms of line-drawing, it becomes clear that both themes deal with activists’ constant concern with and wish for making their social

movements broader and more inclusive. Here I will summarise and analyse the results.

Independent of group affiliation, the majority of the interviewees were ambivalent about the term ‘activist’ or said it was not a term they usually used to refer to themselves. However, it seems to be one of those expressions that is taken for granted, since it was in fact a term used habitually during meetings and informal discussions. It is a convenient term for separating the organisers of collective actions and practical solidarity from the non-organised individuals who, at best, ‘consume’ the activists’ activities by joining them as they are unfolding. Activists’ constant usage of the term ‘activist’ indicates the lack of a vocabulary to describe the nuances and different activities within activism, from making coffee at meetings to giving public speeches, or to indicate whether one is acting within the private or public sphere or on an individual or group level. The revealed ambivalence suggests an ongoing negotiation over what can be considered political practice.

Despite this ambivalence, the figure of ‘the activist’ is given a number of recurrent attributes: they are “committed against something or in favour of something”; “doing something actively, for their own or others’ sake”; “they give of their time”; “they use their voice”; they have organisational commitment; they do not earn money out of it; and they are politically conscious. Also, an important precondition for doing activism, as a few of the activists stated, is their privileged position, including having citizenship and available time. Despite their possibility of living a relatively comfortable life in the city, activists nevertheless attempt to reach out to other less privileged actors to jointly create resistance against the unjust societal order. This is an illustration of cross-class consciousness, which is a leftist stance that wants a more equal order. However, I want to emphasise that Swedish activists’ relative privilege does not mean that they are not dispossessed, only that they are less dispossessed than migrants in precarious legal conditions. As described in Chapter 3, Swedish activists also experience gentrification and displacement, commercialisation of their public spaces and welfare retrenchment.

My material opens up the notion of activism and activists' practices to be problematised. The statements presented in this chapter reveal how activists negotiate their own and others' political practices and positioning in a constant dialogue with the mainstream discourse on activism (sometimes considered 'extremist') as well as the internal discourses on 'new' and 'old' generational norms of activism (concerning the different norms and discourses existing today compared to the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s). One central explanation for some of the interviewees' hesitancy in using the term 'activist' is due to its strong connotations and its negative impact on attracting a wider public, similar to what has been shown by Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) in regard to activists in the UK.

Today's activists, influenced by anarchist-oriented theories (and possibly neoliberalism) reject this 'activist elite' mentality and history and rather believe that each and every person has to take responsibility for bringing about the change he or she desires (Maeckelbergh 2011, 14). No one represents 'the people', but rather 'we are the people'. Therefore, some activists go so far as to actively claim that 'we are not activists' (Chatterton 2006). I also interpret this self-critique as an attempt to transform activism into a more accessible set of practices and politics that can resonate and influence the political mainstream rather than exist on the political fringe (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010). This aim shows activists' awareness of the crucial role of 'the great majority' in achieving structural change.

In approaching the statements that challenge the discursive boundary between the activists and the general public, I identify two ways in which they are framed. On the one hand, 'everyone can be an activist' and, on the other hand, 'we are not activists, we are just common people'. Maeckelbergh's (2011,14) study on activists in the US confirms my findings: the prefigurative strategy prevalent today within the leftist extra-parliamentarian scene does not posit a distinction between 'activists' and the public in the sense that activists are responsible for first bringing major structural change and then 'the people' get to benefit from it. Instead, the artificial differentiation between 'activist' and 'non-activist' is actively challenged (B. Trott 2005), as was confirmed in several of

the quotes above. So, the general public, for many activists, is theoretically not considered to be a separate category: the public simply consists of more people who are also politically disenfranchised and suffering the consequences of neoliberal economic policy but who are not yet linked to activist networks (Maecklebergh 2011, 16).

By theoretically interrogating and expanding the category of activist with the aim of including ‘ordinary people’ into their networks, I claim activists contribute to creating the conditions for migrant emplacement. Such attempts point to activists’ persistence and their aim of opening up political spaces, thereby expanding rather than confining spaces of politics and making it possible for anyone to become a political subject and anything a political issue (Dikeç 2018, 52). This, I argue, is a form of political commoning: the sharing of political spaces, experiences, and knowledge.

I also interpret this tendency of blurring boundaries between activists and non-activists as a wish to ascribe the ‘activist’ body onto the ‘ordinary citizen’ as well as onto the displaced non-citizen. The activists want to challenge the public distinction between the activist as radical and the ‘non-radical body’ of the ‘ordinary citizen’ or ‘victims’ of precarious livelihoods. People in general can and indeed do radical political deeds. Interestingly enough, I observed a humbleness and tolerance towards defining someone as an activist if it is a dispossessed individual doing the political acts (for example, an undocumented person hiding from the authorities), which stands in contrast to a privileged blogger or a Twitterer. If a person is privileged, organisational commitment seemed more expected. This discursive inclusiveness, I suggest, nevertheless allows for non-standard deprived activists’ inclusion in the established circles of activists.

I further identified a contradicting tendency of boundary-making between those who are organised and arrange political actions and the non-organised individuals who consume politics. Defining the activist as someone organised (committed to a formalised collective) implicitly means that without organisational commitment one cannot do ‘real’ activism. This was commonly said by the same activists who expressed a wish to abolish the concept assigned to

people ‘doing activism’ as described above. Activism defined as organisational commitment and actions in the name of a collective may also simply reflect the activists’ strong belief that organising as a collective is essential to achieving change: individuals have no power in front of the system unless they are united.

While making efforts to create a more inclusive activist scene and social movement milieu, there are inevitable and constant line-drawing processes and new norms that create exclusion. Elements that activists pointed out as sources of exclusion were, for example, habits, lifestyle, and language. Perceptions of exclusionist practices created by ‘the other activists’ create a hierarchical and judgmental culture internal to the activist scene. As claimed by Haiven and Khasnabish (2013), the misconception that there is only one ‘right way’ to effect change is damaging, and judging others for not contributing in the same way as oneself may lead to frustration, disappointment, and isolation.

The internal hierarchy that grows out of the material reveals perceptions that ‘class struggle’ is in a higher position than other struggles, and the activists who see themselves as engaged in class struggle self-identified as the ‘true radicals’, whereas doing pro-asylum activism or being engaged in creating a lifestyle of moral and ethical consumption, labelled by some as being ‘liberal’, is sometimes disdained by ‘the radicals’. This hierarchy of ‘ideal’ activism was addressed by the following female activist, 35 years old, who has been engaged in Asylgruppen for a long time: “I feel like what we do is found at the bottom of the hierarchy. We do what others [other activists] look down upon.” This clearly indicates how these conceptions are widely rooted and internalised within the scene.

These divisions and judgemental tendencies, however, do not seem to impede solidarity and collaboration between the different activists and groups in practice. Activists meet and discuss across groups and traditions with the general conviction that collaboration is crucial for a greater impact. This, I suggest, is enabled by their shared political space of Möllevången. In certain times and places, these divisions may still constitute obstructions for even more efficient collaboration in creating a stronger movement and

activist scene in Malmö. Chantal Mouffe (2005) argues that it is necessary for people within the left to accept this heterogeneity of different traditions and theoretical roots and continue to create a pluralist ‘we’ against the ‘they’, which is defined as the established centrist governments that have wiped away the distinction between Left and Right, which is unhealthy for democracy and prepares the way for right-wing populism. From this perspective, conflicts may also be productive between different positionalities on the Left, as long as the other activists’ struggles are perceived of as embedded in one’s own struggle despite being different from it. Such an approach enables collaboration in a broader coalition made up of a heterogeneous ‘multitude’ (Hardt and Negri 2004) against the powerful who recreate the structures that channel capital and resources upwards.

The vignette introducing this chapter provided an insight into one out of many relationships being established between Swedish activists and new (migrant) activists in Malmö. These relationships are constitutive of the activist groups and collective actions sparked by strict migration laws and enforced deportations, the topic of the next chapter.

5 ACTIVISM AND ENFORCED DEPORTATION

This chapter's aim is to describe and analyse the *doing* of activism, specifically the doing that represents the activists' aspirations and continuous practical attempts of implementing 'radical equality' (Rancire 1999) between people of different legal statuses and ethnicities. Concretely, the doing consist of the planning and preparing of actions (e.g., demonstrations), awareness-raising and outreach activities (e.g., leafletting), and civil disobedience and unlawful activities (e.g., releasing migrants from arrest or detention). Beyond some activists' belief that real 'freedom' can only be achieved beyond the form of the state (see Day 2005), their prefigurative politics (as discussed in Chapter 1) come forward in this chapter most clearly, visible in their leaderless and non-hierarchical organisation and the execution of their activism.

The descriptions and analyses in this chapter attempt to provide the reader with an in-depth understanding of what activism in Malm looks like and bring an understanding of the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts the activists face in the process. Activists' commoning, their sharing of experiences, communication, and particular socio-political relations, is shown when they open common spaces such as activist meetings or in their creation of 'truly public spaces' (Arendt 1998) through demonstrations and visiting neighbourhood events. It is through the activists' attempts of formulating common interests and creating common spaces that the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts appear most clearly, as examined towards the end of this chapter. As activists conduct their

political actions, they open up pathways of emplacement for those who have ‘no part’ (Rancière 1999, 11), that is those who have been excluded in the existing distribution of places. The most urgent examples provided in this chapter are when activists resist the state’s enforced deportation of migrants (by, e.g., hiding, marrying, or releasing them) and, by doing so, open up the possibility for them to (re)apply for asylum or legal status in Sweden.

For the purpose of describing and analysing the doing of activism, I use the example of the mobilisations triggered by REVA that started in early 2013. REVA is the Swedish acronym for ‘Legally Secure and Efficient Work for Enforcing Deportations’ (*Rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete*), which was a joint administrative project 2009–2014 between the Swedish police, the Prison and Probation Service, and the Swedish Migration Agency. REVA was launched in Malmö in 2010. Police statistics show that the border police in Skåne County, which served as the pilot region for the project, deported 23 per cent more people during REVA 2009–2013 than before the project (M. Larsson 2014; Oldberg 2013). This was explained by an improved cooperation between the Prison and Probation Service and the Swedish Migration Agency, increased use of specialised chartered airplanes, and improved communication with embassies.

REVA was only implemented in Stockholm three years later, in 2013. Activists in Malmö already noticed REVA in 2010 due to the increased presence of police in the public space and they tried to mobilise against the increased surveillance but with no success. It was only when it was launched in Stockholm that it became a national affair and activists in Malmö could finally get the attention that they had sought in the previous years. “We got help from Stockholm”, as one activist put it. REVA, from being a term that few people among the general public knew, was on everyone’s lips in 2013.

This instance of sudden attention illuminates the links between the two cities of Malmö and Stockholm and how, as nodes of power, they are structured by inequalities and, as such, create specific constraints and possibilities for their residents. When spectacular things happen in Stockholm it tends to be framed as a national

concern, whereas if something similar happens in Malmö it is framed as a 'Malmö problem' (such as in the two examples of the serial killers Ausonius and Mangs, see Gardell 2010). The weaker position of Malmö in relation to Stockholm constrained the activists' possibilities of raising the public's attention to their cause at an earlier stage.

The mobilisations against stricter internal border controls included the first Asylstafetten action, in the summer of 2013, which was referred to in the vignette in the previous chapter, in which some of my interviewees engaged as activists. It is no coincidence that the first Asylstafetten action took place in 2013. That particular year was an intense period for pro-asylum activists, with many different, albeit connected, public political protests concerning Swedish migration policies and the lives of people with precarious legal status (meaning people in asylum processes and the undocumented) taking place.

Collective actions are coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 5). They are forms of protest that convey messages directed at political opponents, sympathisers, decision-makers, and the general public. Their principal aim is to attract attention, to appeal or threaten, to make claims heard and seen, and eventually to have an impact on politics and society (Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhardt 1999).

Demonstrations (or 'marches', 'rallies') are the first and most common form of protest. Coordinated demonstrations, i.e. demonstrations taking place at the same time in various locations, often cities, are more likely to attract the interest of the media (Espeland and Rogstad 2012), which was also the case of the nation-wide Stop REVA demonstration that is described below. The aim of the REVA demonstration in Malmö was to put as many people as possible in the streets in an attempt to exert pressure on powerful people, particularly elected politicians, and make an impact on the general public, which meant media audiences. In the following, I differentiate, in simplified form, between two kinds of participants in large mobilisations: on the one hand there are the activists who are involved in political groups and, on the other hand, there are

‘participants’ or ‘protesters’ who support the cause and therefore participate.

Demonstrations, however, form only one piece of a broader puzzle of campaigns, acts of civil disobedience, and a variety of ‘invisible’ activist work, which are explored below. An important audience for protests is the protesters themselves. Protests are considered important events for the maintaining of a collective identity (Melucci 1995). The powerful process of group fusion, or ‘collective effervescence’ (Durkheim 1912), contributes to participants’ politicisation and constructs a sense of ‘we’. It is the acting together, and not necessarily shared beliefs, that generates solidarity in such experiences (Peterson 2001, 59). Demonstrations further inspire people to come up with new ideas, meet new friends, and expand their network of contacts and be re-encouraged in their commitment to political mobilisation in all its forms (Graeber 2009, 368). When it comes to demonstrations concerning pro-asylum issues, it is also about showing moral and public support to the people directly affected: migrants with precarious legal status.

In the following, I first list and describe the different elements of activism ethnographically and then offer an analysis of the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts concerning activism. One key ambivalence highlighted by my material, as also noted by Jacobsson and Sörbom (2015), is that social movements in general, but particularly those involving radical activists, face a dilemma because they are dependent on a certain degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the wider public yet, at the same time, they wish to stage a fundamental challenge to the current economic and political order. Another ambivalence, and at times a source of tension between different activist groups in Malmö, is that of differing conceptions of ‘charity’ versus ‘solidarity’. This is such a crucial topic and key subject of debate in the extra-parliamentarian left that it is dealt with separately at the end of the chapter.

Stop REVA

Two important events led up to the formation of a group of activists in Malmö who wished to collectively resist and challenge REVA. These were the freelance journalist Linda Stark’s (2012) article

about the REVA project published in December 2012 and the public panel debate on 12 January 2013, held in Moriskan in Folkets Park, the cultural event building in Möllervången (presented in Chapter 3). The debate was organised by the magazine *Re:public*¹⁴⁵ to follow up on Stark's widely read article. Stark's motivation for writing the article was based on her fear of a society in which people do as they are told without questioning official decisions, a statement that resembles many activists' sentiments.

The quotes from the public debate on REVA below are a combination of my own fieldnotes from attending the event and quotes published in the newspaper *Sydsvenskan* on 14 January 2013 (Funke 2013). Invited panel members for the January event were representatives from the border police, the Swedish Migration Agency, FARR (*Flyktinggruppernas Riksråd*, the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups, an umbrella organisation for individuals and groups working to strengthen the right of asylum), and the Swedish Green Party. All seats at the event were taken and people were standing in the back and along the sidewalls. The atmosphere was tense and hostile towards the representatives of REVA throughout the one and a half hours the debate took place. If there were any REVA sympathisers they kept silent.

"The methods are not humane", said the representative Nils Karlsson from the Green Party. The REVA project was criticised for using ethnic profiling, controlling people of 'non-Swedish' appearance, and criminalising refugees.

"We don't differentiate according to skin colour", said Petra Stenkula, head of the border police department, but the statement was booed by the crowd. "That is bullshit!" a man shouted from the crowd in the back rows.

"We only enforce decisions", continued Petra Stenkula.

Later that spring, the Swedish journalist Gellert Tamas (2013, my translation) wrote a debate article in Sweden's largest newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, stating that structural racism evidently exists in Sweden:

¹⁴⁵ Their website is: <https://www.tidningenrepublic.se>

[It is] clearest, perhaps, in connection with REVA. The search for undocumented people ripped apart the societal ‘we’, the city, and the notion of citizenship. It is not an excess to describe the project as historical. Never before in modern times has the basic societal contract—everyone’s equal value regardless of appearance—been so openly challenged and questioned by state powers.

A common comparison used in the critical discourse on REVA by activists and users of social media was with Germany in the 1930s. For example, a female activist with parents from an East-African country had the experience of the police, together with the social services, knocking on doors in the area where she lives, asking for IDs. Due to an anonymous tip to the police, they came to her apartment to check if she was hiding undocumented migrants. She felt deeply humiliated and was convinced she was targeted for not ‘looking Swedish enough’ and not having a Swedish sounding name: “It feels more and more like we’re back in the 1930s when neighbours reported on each other”. Another example is from March 2013, when activist groups and private individuals shared a picture of Anne Frank widely on Facebook; she is sitting by her school desk with a book in her hands, smiling, with the accompanying text: “Anne Frank would have lived if a law-abiding citizen had not told the authorities that someone was hiding undocumented refugees in the attic above an office.”

As will become apparent, activism—in its various expressions—is in constant dialogue with other ‘outside’ complementary elements and scales from both the past and the present, which feed into and impact activist activities, such as Stark’s article and the subsequent public debate in Moriskan or activists’ references in social media to Anne Frank and Nazi Germany in connection with REVA. Activism also invokes the future: activists act in order to bring about possible future circumstances (Peterson 2001; Maeckleberg 2011), such as a safe and loyal space between neighbours irrespective of legal status and ethnicity.

Preparations

A month after the panel at Moriskan, on 25 February 2013, the first open activist meeting about REVA took place in the small leftist bookshop and café Amalthea in Möllevången. The meeting and the following mobilisations during the spring of 2013 were organised by activists connected to Aktion mot deportation, though the involved activists later decided they should work under another name: Solidarity Group Against REVA. The following depiction is based on recollections from attending the meeting. We were about 25 people in one small room; the meeting had gathered new and old activists from Aktion mot deportation, The Young Left of Sweden (hereafter The Young Left, which is the youth organisation of the Swedish Left Party), Asylgruppen, and others who were not affiliated with any group, party, or organisation. There were as many men as women whose ages varied and a handful of them had a migrant background. A female activist, who was one of the main organisers and who had been engaged in the struggle for a long time, opened the meeting by suggesting a facilitator be elected. A male activist, who had worked with the woman in pro-asylum issues earlier, suggested that she be the facilitator and the participants nodded their assent.

The facilitator then explained that they had all gathered there to organise a demonstration against REVA. On a humorous note, she referred to ‘us’ as the ‘dangerous activists’, referencing the mainstream media discourse on anti-racist and migrant rights activists as ‘extremists’.

Since some of the participants who were present did not speak Swedish, it was decided by consensus to hold the meeting in English. This illustrates activists’ attempts to make meetings as inclusive as possible. But inclusion for some may mean exclusion for others. The facilitator pointed out that it was fine to speak up in Swedish for those who felt more comfortable with that language and she would help to interpret.

The discussions that followed reflected the differences in activists’ viewpoints and wishes. The facilitator was careful in asking everyone if they agreed on the suggestion brought up before the next decision was to be made. Most decisions were made through

consensus, but when there were opposing opinions, they voted. When the issue of voting came up, one young male activist and member of The Young Left spontaneously raised his hand and said that he was a Leninist and would therefore adjust to what the majority thought.

The purpose of a meeting such as this one is to plan a collective action, in this case a demonstration. However, meetings can be considered to be even more important than the actions themselves since actions might involve confrontations with police or antagonists while “meetings are pure zones of social experiment, spaces in which activists can treat one another as they feel people ought to treat each other, and to begin to create something of the social world they wish to bring out” (Graeber 2009, 287). The consensus process “operates on a kind of institutionalised generosity of spirit” (ibid., 287). Generally, in the activists’ meetings in which I participated in Sweden and abroad, I have been struck by the sense of responsibility each individual exhibits and their pursuit of honesty and well-intentioned behaviour. Activists attempt to speak and act in ways that do not interfere with other activists’ possibilities to speak and act. I have also observed how male activists are aware of internalised patriarchal structures and therefore work to change their behaviour and take up less space in meetings. One male activist whom I talked to said that he had put a restriction on himself to counteract gender inequality in meetings: during any discussion point he allowed himself to speak his opinion only once.

One female activist in her mid-thirties who was present at the meeting suggested we should form smaller groups and discuss how to organise the demonstration. This was met by consent. The activist was a teacher by profession and also uses her pedagogic skills in activism to make meetings more inclusive and efficient. As only a few voices are usually heard at conventional formal gatherings of big groups of people, forming smaller discussion groups is a way of decentralising power and making more voices heard.

In the small discussion group that I was a part of, a female activist suggested some creative elements as part of the march, like inventing different ‘stations’ along the rally route. One, for example, could be doing REVA checks but the other way around: “To stop

and control—by asking for identification documents—white men who are passing by”, she said. “Another station could be the detention centre: the prison before deportation. And a third stop could be the war in Syria, bombs are falling and it is full of chaos, represented as theatre.”

The purpose of this was to visualise for the people passing by and watching the demonstration what REVA means to those people directly affected by it. Another woman raised her hand and objected. “We risk being demonised by bystanders as ‘the shouting activists’, ‘we are tired of them’, ‘we don’t want to have anything to do with them’ and be further stigmatised as ‘those annoying activists’. Perhaps it is better to just organise an info table at the end with *what can you do?* and music and an encouraging atmosphere.” None of these ideas were eventually realised. At this stage of preparing and planning for actions, it is common that activists come up with imaginative and grand suggestions that are eventually not doable due to a lack of resources.

After the small group discussions, everyone gathered again in the big group and presented the suggestions. One group claimed that politicians should be held responsible for REVA, thus the march should head to the City Council Hall (Stadshuset). Another group thought the police were the target, thus the demonstration should end at the Border Police Department (Polishuset) at Davidhall’s Square. Activists normally locate their protests at sites where key decisions are made concerning the activists’ grievances (Routledge 2017, 20).

Via vote, it was decided that the demonstration should end outside the Police Department and start at Möllevångstorget at 3 p.m. The fact that the march would start at Möllevångstorget was not even discussed but taken for granted, which shows how activists perceive this neighbourhood as the ‘natural’ starting point for demonstrations. Next, which is a common procedure, working groups were formed, each with certain responsibilities: info/PR (creating posters and leaflets), march route, banners, the sound, etc.

A male activist raised his hand to say that we should not use ‘anti’ in the PR. “It would be better to use STOP or something that

doesn't sound so 'anti'." He meant that 'Stop REVA' sounded more constructive and less confrontational, and he was voicing a concern on behalf of those activists who care about what the general public will think of them. Activists' views on the matter of language differ, but in this case the suggestion to adopt a less militant political language that appeals to non-activists was accepted by the whole group. An example of a similar kind of point was described above when the activist raised the concern of being regarded as annoying by passers-by during the protest. Some would probably argue that this is part of the point in making resistance, though, on the other hand, it might prevent some potential participants from joining or at least supporting the cause.

The meeting continued, and the facilitator raised the issue of a police permit; a short discussion again revealed differences of opinion. Eventually everyone agreed on not applying for a police permit.¹⁴⁶ Without a permit, a march becomes a direct action. It becomes a matter of occupying public space in defiance of the law (Graeber 2009, 269). Especially in the case of protesting against a *de facto* police operation, asking for a police permit felt inherently contradictory to the activists, like asking one's oppressor for permission to object to their repression. But some activists thought that they should at least state explicitly that there was no permit on the event page on Facebook to warn undocumented migrants in case of disturbance and in case the police would detain participants in the demonstration.

The facilitator, however, argued that the risk for disturbance was very small. "If the police want trouble, they will make trouble anyway, with or without the police permit to march. The right to demonstrate is based in the constitution." Her statement is in line with the general attitude of activists, who usually don't feel much of a difference between organising a legal or illegal demonstration. According to their experience, the attitude of the police can be 'friendly' or 'hostile' independent of the legal circumstances. It was

¹⁴⁶ While organising and conducting a demonstration without appropriate permission is punishable by law, a non-authorised demonstration is not automatically illegal, since it is protected by the citizens' rights of assembly and demonstration (Wahlström 2010).

eventually decided that nothing would be written about this on Facebook.

The next meeting took place two weeks later, again at Amalthea, five days before the rally. The young male activist and member of The Young Left showed up with 300 posters and 700 flyers, which had been printed at the Left Party's office in Malmö. When the meeting was about to start, a journalist knocked on the door asking if he could join, as he was going to write about the upcoming Stop REVA demonstration. He was asked to stay outside while the activists had a round of discussion on the matter. He was let in with the argument that it would help the activists to mobilise more people to protest in the upcoming demonstration.

The Stop REVA demonstration, 9 March 2013

The demonstration in Malmö on 9 March 2013 took place the same day as protests in Stockholm and Gothenburg. The activists expected to attract more social and mainstream media attention that way. More than a thousand participants mobilised in Malmö, which is considered a large amount in relation to political protests in general in the city.

The demonstration participants were socially, generationally, and ethnically diverse. Hussein, mentioned in Chapter 3, whose employers abused him, was undocumented at the time of the Stop REVA protest. He was scared but participated nevertheless. He kept attentive to the police presence. He thought it was important to protest that day since the consequences of REVA were something that affected him. But the activist Hakim, quoted in the previous chapter, did not participate due to his precarious legal status and fear of persecution, but had followed the march's progress through updates on Facebook and told me he was thrilled to see so many people in support of 'his' cause.

The demonstration moved through the central streets of Malmö. The banners read: "Rip up REVA!", "No to a police state, yes to a city of sanctuary", and "Smash borders!" It is not quite clear to whom these slogans were directed. I assumed they simultaneously called out to different audiences: the authorities, the audience (media audiences and passers-by to join their struggle), and the fellow

marchers to strengthen group solidarity (Graeber 2009, 368). Such slogans reveal the ambivalences of the notion of protest action: calling on the authorities to change their behaviour means in effect recognising their authority, an authority that many activists see as the key agent in creating and recreating inequality in society (by implementing strict migration policies and encouraging neoliberalisation of the commons). In practice, pro-asylum activists demand that politicians create more humane and generous migration policies, but what they really want (as stated on their webpages, banners, and slogans) is the abolition of national borders altogether and free movement for all. This shows how activists, despite perceiving the state's authority and power as being illegitimate, accept democratic principles and act within those frames while also attempting to use repertoires of action that can promote and expand democracy to include more people.

"Kampen fortsätter, rasismen ska krossas!" the crowd chanted. An acquaintance from Syria walked by my side and asked me what it meant since he did not understand Swedish well. "The struggle continues, smash racism", I interpreted. "Good, very good", he said, paused and added, "demonstrations here are very different from those in Syria". He said they have other kinds of problems: they don't mobilise around racism. Of course, I thought: the civil war in Syria had at that point already lasted for two years.

The experience of chanting slogans can be profound. This feeling of being part of a larger 'we', experienced through bodily proximity and group fusion (in the Durkheimian sense of effervescence), are central elements of large-scale collective actions.

As the march reached Davidshall, the final destination of the demonstration where the border police office was located, two activists from Aktion mot deportation entered the police office and handed over 79 written complaints to the police concerning racial profiling.

It was cold that day, so the great majority of the demo participants disbanded upon reaching the final destination. A couple hundred people stayed to listen to the speeches, however. One of the speakers was Mohammed, a formerly undocumented migrant, who said:

[I] came to Sweden as a 15-year-old without my family. I got a residence permit in February this year after living for four years in Sweden and other countries in Europe. Four years of my youth that I will never get back, and it is four years that I will always carry with me. It has been a mix between hope and despair. During these four years, I have given up several times [...] people around me tried to give me hope again [...]. It really means a lot to me and I am glad that there are people like that. A big round of applause for those who help refugees and undocumented migrants [*applause and cheers from the crowd*].

Only after the demonstration had officially ended did tension arise between a small group of activists and the police. That day I saw only a handful of protesters with covered faces, and I overheard a fellow-protester shouting at them that it was unnecessary to mask oneself, clearly annoyed.

The group of masked activists started shouting, “Fuck the police!” and formed a line in front of the entrance to the police office. They carried home-made cardboard signs that read: “The Auschwitz guards also ‘just did their jobs’”; “The 1930s called and wanted Nazi Germany back”; “Stop deporting people you fucking monsters!” (see Figure 6); “Just like in Nazi Germany. We said never again!”; and “No one is illegal”.

The above as well as the previous section illustrate how various conflictual relationships are made visible in collective actions, including between activists, different participants in demonstrations (e.g. masked and non-masked), demonstrators and bystanders, and demonstrators and the police. Another conflictual relationship is that between activists and the media, the topic of next section.

Activists and mainstream media

Activists’ relationship to mainstream media is ambivalent and has been described as one of friend *and* foe (Peterson 2001). Activists generally have little to no trust in mainstream media journalists but, at the same time, they know that media is a crucial channel for achieving public visibility. As the activist Lisa put it, “we have a sound scepticism against mainstream media journalists”. Many ac-

tivists experience that they are de-politicised, ridiculed, or misinterpreted by media journalists, and they feel as if journalists don't seek to understand the activists' political motivations for acting. Activists' critical relationship to the media is based on experiences and knowledge that it can go wrong. Activists even interpret some journalism, despite its good intentions, as having negative consequences for the most vulnerable. One example is the article series *Svarta Malmö* (The underground Malmö) in *Sydsvenskan* from 2011 in which one article investigated the working conditions of people with precarious legal status (J. Mikkelsen 2011), which resulted, activists claimed, in increased police raids in restaurants to detain and deport undocumented people (see Stille 2011; J. Mikkelsen 2012).

Many activists raised criticism towards the journalist mentioned above, who was let in to attend one of the meetings of the Solidarity Group Against REVA, because of his news story in the national daily *Dagens Nyheter* (17 March 2013) on undocumented youth living in Malmö (Orrenius 2013). The activists felt deceived since his reason for wanting to attend the meeting was not to write about the Stop REVA demonstration as such but it was only one piece of the puzzle for his lengthy reportage on undocumented youths in Malmö. The journalist had become friends with the youths who opened up and let him into their lives. The same youths were friends with many activists. The journalist published their pictures and mentioned the school they attended and other places where they used to hang out. This meant a real threat to them, since the police could easily locate them with this information. One boy in the reportage was considered to be living in danger and was therefore temporarily moved away from Malmö. Not only did activists react, but national journalists made a programme broadcast on Swedish Radio specifically about ethics and the possible negative consequences of this article for the youth featured in the story. The criticised journalist as well as one of the critical Malmö activists were interviewed on the programme (see Medierna 2013).

The wariness notwithstanding, mainstream media is also used by activists to benefit their struggle. For example, on 27 February

2013, almost two weeks before the Stop REVA protest, activists shared quotes from the TV programme *The Crime of the Week* (*Veckans brott*) widely on Facebook, featuring the criminology professor and well-known TV profile Leif GW Persson (*Veckans brott* 2013):

If you ask me, I think it's absolutely unacceptable to approach ten people, while only one of them has anything to do with it [i.e. having no documents]. It's not possible. The consequences will eventually be terrible. [...] So, if they approach you and ask you to identify yourself, say, 'How come?' And then, they will claim they 'want to check this and that, can you show your passport?' Then you say there is nothing that says you are obliged to show your passport, and you can just refuse. You've suddenly made a lawsuit out of it that you will win. But in these cases, most people give in, and have an erroneous and excessive perception of the police's mandate...

Broadcaster: So, one should just refuse to show one's ID then [to the police]?

Leif GW Persson: Yes, I think one should do that if one belongs to those nine out of ten. Because then it will be problematic in another way: these policemen who are forced to do this dirty job start protesting, and then their leadership will change their minds, and then the politicians will suddenly face a situation they have tried to stay away from.

This partly helped the activists: it problematised the operation and the fact that non-white citizens were targeted. But it did not help the activists who also wanted to help the one out of ten who had no documents. The mobilisations against REVA during the spring of 2013 aimed at not only criticising the police operation and the above-mentioned effects (creating an environment of suspicion among neighbours, ethnic profiling, ordinary people being victims of uncomfortable police encounters) but to show solidarity with all people affected by REVA and, at the same time, to protest against

the current system of border and migration policies, as stated in Aktion mot deportation's press release:

We are calling out for a demonstration against REVA, against the emergence of a police state, against racial profiling, deportations and the whole inhumane migration policy that increasingly dehumanises all those who are not born as 'ethnic Swedes' (as the prime minister so nicely called it). We meet at Möllevångstorget on Saturday, March 9, at 3 p.m.

A few days after the nationwide demonstrations, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, a renowned Swedish author (whose mother is Swedish and whose father migrated from Tunisia) published an open letter to the Minister for Justice Beatrice Ask (the Moderate Party), criticising her attitude towards the police operation REVA: "I am writing to you with a simple wish, Beatrice Ask. I want us to change skins and experiences. Come on. Let's just do it" (Hassen Khemiri 2013, my translation).¹⁴⁷ The letter spread like wildfire in social media and was ranked the most-read cultural article in Swedish history (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013). It continued:

A voice says: They have no fucking right to judge us in advance. They cannot [...] cut off the city with their uniforms. They are prohibited from making us insecure in our own neighbourhoods. But the other voice says: what if it was our fault. We talked too loudly. We wore hoodies and sneakers. Our jeans were too big with suspiciously many pockets. We made the mistake of having a criminality prone hair colour. We could have chosen less melanin in our skin. We happened to have a surname that reminded this small country that it is a part of a larger world. [...] And it is impossible to be a part of the community when the Authority constantly assumes that one is an Other. [...] Everyone just did their job. Guards, police officers, civil servants, politicians, the people. And here you interrupt and

¹⁴⁷ The letter was published in the largest Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. The next day, Beatrice Ask answered questions in the Swedish Parliament on the highly criticised police operation REVA.

say: But how hard is it to understand? Everyone must follow the law. And we answer: But what if The Law is illegal? And you say: It's all about priorities and we actually do not have infinite resources. And we answer: How is it that there is always money when the resource-poor are to be persecuted, but never money when the resource-poor are to be defended?

Hassen Khemiri describes his own experiences concerning aspects of life in the city in relation to everyday racism and the functioning of REVA, the feeling of being 'cut off' in the city and how the police make people feel insecure and unwanted in their own country. Similar to what could be read on cardboard signs during the demonstration in Malmö, he brings up the responsibility of the people (i.e. the police) who are involved in REVA, questioning the moral aspects of their job, and ends by challenging the law and questioning the moral legitimacy of pursuing resource-poor people. Khemiri's question "What if The Law is illegal?" pinpoints the experiences of many activists under liberal representative democracy and describes their motivation for engaging in activism in the first place.

The attention and debates in the mainstream media, such as those centring around Hassen Khemiri's letter, played an important complementary role to the different actions initiated by activists during the spring of 2013, which shows how different spatialities intersect with one another in activism (Leitner et al. 2008).

Online-offline activities

By joining Facebook pages and groups and engaging in online discussions and the sharing of information, one can be part of the broader activist network without ever visiting the activist scene's urban places. However, physical places and face-to-face interaction seem to be important in the maintaining and creation of trustful relationships (Urry 2010, 148). A Facebook group can be affiliated to an existing offline organisation or exist online only. An online group propagates certain standpoints and is linked to a network of followers. Many activist-related pages on Facebook have a particular political foundation, which was decided by the individuals or

groups of people who created them. Then anyone who adheres to these aims can 'like' the page (by a simple click), which means that that person will receive information in his or her newsfeed from this page.

Some examples of activist-oriented pages on Facebook are *Ta tillbaka välfärden* (Reclaim welfare), *Europeans Against the Political System*, *Slutpixlat* ('End Pixle', a paraphrased take on the far-right website *Avpixlat*/'Unpixle'), and *Vi tar kampen* (We take the battle). Most of their online activity consists of sharing news articles, images, quotes, and video clips (often via YouTube) that somehow relate to public events such as demonstrations, strikes, blockades, or violent encounters with antagonistic groups (e.g., between anti-racist and neo-nazis groups) or clashes between protestors and police. The posts also draw from news that relates to politicians' statements that left-wing Internet users are critical of. Anyone connected to the group *We Take the Battle* can post an article and encourage people to counter-comment antagonists' statements in the comment field. By doing this, the users create a form of territorial digital counter-power that is connected to certain digital spaces. Other Internet forums take on a role of watchdog and follow the current debates and comment on them in a humorous way, like *Vita kränkta män* (White humiliated men) and *Inte rasist, men* (I'm not a racist, but).

Activists strategically use, and are simultaneously dependent on, social media as a way of disseminating information. Several activist groups in Malmö, like *Skåne mot rasism* and *Kontrapunkt*, shared the *Stop REVA* Facebook event. Individuals connected to these networks shared it further and it spread widely to Facebook users in Malmö and the whole of Sweden (and beyond). This was an instance that confirmed how social media has changed the way information about demonstrations is disseminated and showed how people became motivated to participate in this demonstration. The Internet enabled the efficient spread of activist-related information concerning the event and access to it. Information from conventional channels, like pamphlets, fanzines, or reports, normally distributed face-to-face at organisational meetings, political cafés, book fairs, or the like in specific geographical locations, was in-

stead widely and instantly shared online among people across distant locations. In particular, Facebook is a highly important means of mobilisation (Urry 2010, 145) in Malmö's activist scene.

Ever since REVA became public knowledge, activists mobilised online and created ways of warning people about police controls in the streets.¹⁴⁸ For example, REVA Spotter on Facebook¹⁴⁹ was a direct way of providing valuable information to undocumented migrants living in Malmö and Stockholm so that they could avoid places where police were doing ID checks as part of operation REVA. The REVA Spotter Facebook page states: "Report the location and time of the police ID check and help save people from persecution." REVA Spotter, as well as REVA Spotter Malmö, created a short time later, allowed anyone who saw police in the streets to immediately report it via Facebook, specifying the location and hour of the spotted police. The instant reporting on ID checks by police in the streets was simultaneously place-based and virtual, and it was done by Aktion mot deportation as well as by private Facebook users (activists and non-activists, including formerly undocumented migrants) who were acquainted with people with precarious legal status within their network of Facebook friends. Here are some examples of the messages issued in 2013:

Activist, 17 February 2013:

MALMÖ Right now: Police checks in Möllevången, Möllevångsgatan. Share! If you're there, ask the police what they are doing. If you are stopped and have documents: Ask for legal support, keep the police busy, ask them to identify themselves and make a JO notification!¹⁵⁰

Activist, 18 February 2013:

According to a press release: This week, the Malmö police will stop and check more cyclists than usual to check receipts and papers. Especially in Rosengård, Kirseberg, Arlöv, Husie, and

¹⁴⁸ Before REVA was known to the general public, activists had also created SMS lists for sharing warnings about police controls in urban settings through a network of connected mobile phones.

¹⁴⁹ See <https://www.facebook.com/RevaSpotter/>

¹⁵⁰ JO refers to the Swedish Parliament's Ombudsman, (Justitieombudsmannen, JO), whose basic work is the individual's interests in being treated lawfully and correctly by the authorities.

Oxie. Be careful. Please share!

Aktion mot deportation, 19 April 2013:

Malmö at 18:10: seven confirmed plainclothes police in Seved. Entering various stairwells throughout the area. Watch out!

REVA Spotter Malmö, 19 April 2013:

In recent days, the police seem to have increased their REVA controls. Today, for example, they have been in Södra Förstadsgatan [name of a street] and stopped cyclists. Those who have refused to show their ID have been fined for “not observing the obligation to stop”. Similar things have happened in several different places in Malmö. Yesterday, there were also several reports on different controls, as you probably saw. Keep your eyes open and post warnings on Aktion mot deportation and REVA Spotter Malmö. If you are a witness or are affected yourself, it’s important to make a report to JO.

Activists are attentive to what happens in their own neighbourhoods, which for most of them is Möllevången and the adjacent areas. A local activist wrote on Facebook to raise awareness of the fact that ID checks also happen in areas where the activists don’t see them:

On Wednesday, there were ID checks around Möllan all evening. What I hear usually comes from there, but it happens even more in Rosengård, for example. It just does not reach out as easily, because many people who live there do not always feel comfortable in Swedish activist circles and do not have the media contacts to make their stories reach the public.

In Stockholm, Aktion mot deportation launched a photo competition as a creative way of conducting resistance against REVA. The “Best Picture Award!” indicated that anyone witnessing the police doing ID checks should photograph them and send the photos to stalkaREVA@gmail.com. Although this call was directed at people in Stockholm, the practice of photographing police checks as a

means of resistance and documentation was common among activists in Malmö as well. REVA Spotter was updated many times with a photo added to the written information.

One example of a collective action conducted only online was Aktion mot deportation's 'mailbombing action' in 2013 through Facebook: they called out to encourage people to send emails to BK Buss Company, a bus company hired by the Swedish Migration Agency to drive deportees from detention centres to the airport. Subsequently, BK Buss was involved in many of the mass deportations to Afghanistan. After pressure was put on the company, the following email was sent to Aktion mot deportation from their CEO: "Hi. A decision has been made. We no longer participate with the Migration Agency with our resources. Kind regards, NN." This successful outcome was followed by an internal debate on whether the CEO should be appreciated as a hero, as some believed, or, as most activists thought, it should be considered that he deserves no credit in the sense that the decision was taken to protect his company's brand and he probably did not care much about the deported migrants.

Although they use social media, many activists have an ambivalent relationship to it, in particular Facebook, knowing that it is a multinational corporation that enables the registration of its users' interests and movements for the creation of targeted advertising. Some activists do not have a Facebook profile for this reason.

Beyond the criticism concerning Facebook specifically, I have observed a general ambivalence among activists, especially among the older generation of activists, towards the digitalisation of activism. They are wary of how street protests and political activity in general have increasingly moved online. As a prominent activist wittingly posted on Facebook as a recollection of an action in the past: "This night, twenty years ago, all bank windows in the whole of Stockholm got smashed as a response to the EU results. That era's equivalence of today's Twitter storm."¹⁵¹ What this statement indicates is an understanding that a furious online protest does not have the same impact as when it is conducted in the streets. This

¹⁵¹ The activist is referring to the European Union referendum in Sweden in 1994 in which 52 per cent voted for and 47 per cent against membership.

resonates with some activists' definitions of what constitutes 'real' activism as discussed in the previous chapter in which activism conducted merely online is de-valued. A central difference between doing an online or offline activity, for example leafletting, is that the digital version mostly reaches already 'converted' people, those who are already affiliated with those online groups as supporters, whereas the street leaflet reaches people beyond those who already agree with the leaflet's sentiment.

Related aspects that worry activists are whether the Internet has de-radicalised activism and whether the Internet has made activism more event-based at the expense of long-term campaigning and mobilisations. While the Internet has opened up many important ways for activists to mobilise, it also seems to have contributed to an individualisation of activism. Individuals can now sit at home doing online activism ('clicktivism') without going out and acting in the public space as a collective and without being formally committed to an activist collective.

Awareness-raising activities

Activists believe that a certain knowledge—i.e. an awareness of and engagement in societal conflicts and injustices—exists in Möllevången among its residents but needs to be raised elsewhere in the city. Leafletting activities therefore usually take place outside Möllevången (except for on issues that directly concern Möllevången residents, such as the gentrification of the area). In connection to REVA, activists talked about the importance of raising people's awareness about the police operation and its aim and implications. After the nation-wide demonstration on 9 March 2013, the Solidarity Group Against REVA in Malmö met many times to plan and organise further work. Most of the activities following the REVA protest were mainly oriented towards raising awareness about REVA and to incite solidarity among residents.

The activists realised they wanted to share much more information than would fit onto a single leaflet, so instead it was decided to have a multi-page booklet printed. They further decided that the booklet should contain constructive information, not just 'this is what's happening', but also 'this is what you can do'. It was to

be written in a simple language in Swedish, English, Arabic, and Persian in order to reach out to more people in Malmö, including non-Swedish speakers.

One activist suggested that they not write so much about the REVA project as such, but rather describe what the activists want, such as ‘We say no to a police state’ or ‘No to the hunt of undocumented people’, since “what all of this is about is that we do not want to have a police state”. Her statement was in line with a widely shared conception of REVA among activists: that it was a sign of an emergent ‘police state’. A ‘police state’ implies governmental control of people’s freedoms by means of the police (Chapman 1970). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the term has “taken on an emotional and derogatory meaning of a government that exercises power arbitrarily through the police [...] in disregard of the rights of the citizens” (Tipton 2013, 14), which is the meaning used in activist circles. ‘No to a police state’ is a common banner in pro-asylum protests in Sweden. Another activist suggested avoiding the use of exclusionary signs such as barbed wire, which is a common graphic representation of national borders used in the pro-asylum movement.

The activists decided the following information, which was specifically directed toward undocumented migrants, also needed to be included in the booklet: use bike lights when it is dark since the police are not allowed to ask for an ID without suspicion of a crime. This is the reason it is important not to break traffic rules. Ideas aimed at the general public included that anyone witnessing an ID-check should film and document it and upload the video onto Facebook and YouTube. Another important thing to include was the contact information for Malmö Against Discrimination, a group of lawyers who give support if someone wants to make a JO notification.

The booklet was to be handed out in public spaces, such as libraries, squares, health care centres, the hospital, and what was to become known as the Solidarity Carnival Against REVA (*Solidaritetskarnevalen mot REVA*), an ambulant carnivalesque event that would go from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in Malmö with the aim of sharing information about REVA and how to resist it.

At that stage, someone had anonymously donated 10,000 SEK to Aktion mot deportation. Most of this money was to be used to print hundreds of copies of the booklet and some went to covering *fika* (coffee/tea, cookies, and juice), the material for making banners, and painting material for kids to use during the neighbourhood visits. The official aim of ‘the carnival’ was stated in a press release:

[W]e have mobilised a carnival against REVA to create a community in Malmö in the struggle against state racism. By sharing information about REVA, exchanging experiences, and talking about the resistance we can take part in, we want to make sure not to let [migration] policies divide us into ‘us’ and ‘them’.

During one of the planning meetings, one activist asked whether the activists themselves were going to do racial profiling, which provoked spontaneous laughter from some while others kept quiet. One activist responded, with a serious face, that activists need to be more persistent in their struggle: “This does not only affect *blat-tar* [pejorative term/slang for Swedish citizens with foreign backgrounds], but also *svennar* [pejorative slang for Swedes/people of Swedish origin]. It’s a question of what kind of society we want to live in. We have to incite solidarity.”

She meant the booklet should be directed at different kinds of people: undocumented, foreign, and *svennar* alike. She used the pejorative term *blatte*, which is considered okay to use if you have a foreign background yourself. She was ‘entitled’ to it as a child to immigrant parents.

The question of whether activists should try to identify undocumented people, who are the most vulnerable to REVA, in order to offer them their support, made the activists feel uncomfortable. Instead, the activists framed it as everyone’s problem—‘not only *blat-tar* but also *svennar*’—not only direct victims of REVA, but also a responsibility of white Swedes too. Thus, the leaflet was to be handed out indiscriminately since everyone can help those who suffer from REVA, create an understanding of what it actually means in the long run, and create an environment of resistance. This can

be done by anyone, independent of legal status. This instance illustrates the activists' aspirations and practical attempts of commoning: the sharing of experiences and knowledge.

The activists decided to get in touch with local associations, stores, and residents prior to the carnival event. Their aim was to attain some local anchoring in the neighbourhoods they were to visit, which would ideally take place as collaborations with local residents. Therefore, some activists were responsible for networking with neighbourhood associations and asking them if they thought the awareness-raising activity was a good idea and if they wanted to join in planning and engaging in it.

As the activists discussed the importance of local anchoring when conducting actions in neighbourhoods other than Möllevången, the street party Reclaim Rosengård from 2009 was mentioned by one of the activists. This was no coincidence. Reclaim Rosengård is an example of a collective action in which activists went into a neighbourhood other than their own with the aim of creating an alliance and joint struggle together with the stigmatised youth living in that suburb in order to politicise their problems (poverty, police repression), but is considered a failure by most activists. Reclaim Rosengård was a direct response to the social unrest in Rosengård about half a year earlier: cars were set on fire and clashes erupted between police and young local residents (see Hallin et al. 2010).¹⁵²

The activists of Reclaim Rosengård, most of whom were involved in class struggle- and anti-fascist-oriented groups, conducted the street party on the first day of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. The activists expressed their apologies for this afterwards and admitted that the chosen date was "deeply problematic" (Arrangörsgruppen Reclaim Rosengård 2009). Apparently, the activists were not close friends with any practicing Muslims.

¹⁵² The unrest was said to have been sparked due to the forced closing of a mosque located in a basement, which the youth in the area protested against by occupying it. The same year, several articles reported on the very bad condition of the high-rise buildings in that area. During the unrest, a short film was taken inside a police van and leaked to the public media in which a police officer's voice was caught uttering racist statements about the youth in Rosengård, calling them 'monkey bastards' among other things (Uhnöo 2015). The activists felt sympathy with the deprived residents in Rosengård and felt deeply affected and outraged by their poor living standards, which they blamed the property owners for. They were also outraged by the police's racist statements.

In Reclaim Rosengård, the organisers wanted to highlight issues of segregation, the police's treatment of and attitude towards the neighbourhood's non-white youth, and inequalities (Kullving 2009). However, a group of local residents with migrant backgrounds physically tried to push the activists out of their neighbourhood before the street party had even started.

Thus, Reclaim Rosengård is a well-known and debated action written into activist history in Malmö. It created divisions in the activist scene between those who were critical of it and boycotted the action (not only because of Ramadan but also for the fact that they were intervening in 'another neighbourhood's problems') and those who supported it and participated in it. After the action, it also became apparent that the invited speaker, a resident of Rosengård, had connections to one of the criminal groups in Malmö, which polarised residents in Rosengård. The main reason why most activists today are ashamed of the action was their lack of local anchoring and the fact that the local anchoring that they did have was deeply problematic due to the internal conflicts it created among residents in Rosengård. The reason the activists were pushed out was not only because of the wrongly picked date and residents' general scepticism of outsiders' involvement in 'their own problems', but also because of the Rosengård representative's connection to a certain criminal group.

The activist who mentioned Reclaim Rosengård wanted to use it as an example of how solidarity actions ought *not* to be conducted so that they might learn from former mistakes. Most activists agreed and only one female activist present said that she had participated in it and claimed it was the most beautiful riot she had ever experienced: "And those who wrote about it weren't there themselves", she added, criticising what was written in the mainstream media in the aftermath. She said that the public misunderstood the aim of the action. Nevertheless, the preconception of activists being detached and thoughtless middle-class youth gave grist to the mill. Mainstream media and people who are generally critical of these radical activists thought they could finally claim that they were right and the activists were wrong, since some residents of Rosengård actually pushed the activists out of their own neigh-

bourhood. But this also meant that the media lumped together these few active residents with everyone else living there (see, e.g., Neuding 2009), thus losing sight of the nuances and the fact that there are residents, just as in any other neighbourhood, who vote right, left, are xenophobic, etc. In the media's attempt to criticise the activists' action of Reclaim Rosengård, they contributed to the homogenisation of the residents of Rosengård. This recollection of a past event confirms how activism moves between different temporalities in complicated processes that are both challenging and educational and bring the past to bear in different ways on the present and even the future (Peterson 2001, 4).

The activists of Solidarity Group Against REVA used Kontrapunkt's venues to create banners a week before the carnival was to start. With colourful patterns and materials like glitter, fabrics, and paint, the following slogans were inscribed: "Stop Deportations", "Refugees Welcome", "Fuck REVA", "No to racist police", and "Solidarity! Together against racism".

Social and political frictions

Activists struggle to reach out to the general public, including people classified in Sweden as 'immigrants' (new and old) and so-called 'second-generation immigrants'. It is difficult and therefore an issue of continued debate within activist circles. Some days before the Stop REVA demonstration on 9 March 2013, I approached a group of men in their early twenties to hand them the leaflet (see Figure 7) announcing the demonstration. They glanced at it and reacted: "We are not undocumented! Do we look like we're undocumented? Is it because of my hair?" They laughed but were clearly annoyed by my perceived belief that they were non-Swedish residents. I had approached them to inform them about the Stop REVA demonstration. I felt awkward and tried to explain what the whole campaign was about, but they did not seem interested.

This instance shows the potential frictions arising from attempts of commoning and creating common interests and spaces, and how activists in general struggle with their vision of 'everyone being included'. Activists have to navigate a geography of perceived, felt, and imagined positions, where it is far from granted that migrants

of different provenance, generation, and legal status will support the activists' cause. Making themselves understood and 'legitimate' in the eyes of people who see themselves as (not) belonging to particular 'categories' is clearly a challenge.

The Solidarity Carnival will here serve as the example of how social and political friction may arise along with activists' attempts of creating common spaces, interests, and the sharing of knowledge and communication. The carnival was planned in five different neighbourhoods in Malmö during five successive Saturdays, of which four were completed in Lindängen, Rosengård, Seved, and Holma. At first, the activists wanted to cover all the areas in Malmö where migrants lived, which was impossible to realise. It was again a question of too few activists wanting to do too much beyond their actual resources. The four neighbourhoods listed above are characterised by low-income households, social welfare sustenance, high levels of unemployment, and a large population with a migrant background. These were defined by the activists as neighbourhoods in which people's appearances could make them victims of REVA's controls and where undocumented people live. And they also seemed to be the neighbourhoods that the activists conceived of as most lacking knowledge about REVA, since the activists did not pay visits to Limhamn and other high-income neighbourhoods in Malmö.

The aim was thus to share information about what individuals could do to resist and avoid REVA and hopefully mobilise solidarity between neighbours. In this way, the Solidarity Carnival aimed at creating spaces where experiences could be exchanged among people who were directly affected and those who could enact solidarity with them.

On the first Saturday, the carnival took place in Lindängen between one and three o'clock in the afternoon. Most of the activists had never been to Lindängen before. The activists brought *fika*, amplifiers and music, a megaphone, posters (see Figure 8), banners, and the rights booklets that had just come from the printing company. It was laid out like a passport. Here are two excerpts from the rights booklet:

Undocumented people are hunted in Malmö and the rest of Sweden, for example, by the police checking the IDs of people who they think do not look 'Swedish' enough.

It's not only the undocumented who suffer from REVA. All people who do not look 'Swedish' runs the risk of being controlled and under suspicion by the police simply because of their appearance. This is called racial profiling and it is illegal! Neither whiteness or citizenship should be a free pass to become more legally or humanly treated than others [from English version in the pamphlet].

Activists also brought lists to collect signatures for the online petition against REVA. That day, a total of 140 names were collected. The activists had placed themselves on the neighbourhood square, a small public place in between a small grocery and commercial shops in front of the only local pub. There were about ten to fifteen activists and supporting participants in total. It was a sunny May day. People who seemed to be elderly local residents of Swedish descent, both male and female, sat in the pub's open-air tables drinking beer. My fieldnote jottings from the event are:

- One activist got into an argument with a couple of older men and sympathisers/members of the Sweden Democrats.
- Two policemen passed by and an activist gave them the passport booklet to read, which they did.
- The local library refused to let the activists put their booklets on their information desk.
- Suddenly, eggs were thrown at us from behind the building. One egg splashed on the table in front of a female customer drinking beer who became furious and her male companions stood up shouting to find out who it was. An activist who ran after the perpetrators saw youths running away from the scene.

These youths probably saw the activists as intruders. The eggs were directed at the activists, not at the local pub customers. This inci-

dent made me think of what a documentary activist-filmmaker told me about a kind of portable cinema she partook in. A group of movie activists showed films for free in low-income neighbourhoods. When they did so in the low-income neighbourhood Seved, some children threw stones at them and they felt very strange and sad about it. However, as will be revealed in a later vignette, a similar thing happened when activists and protesters marched to the affluent neighbourhood Limhamn to protest against the neo-nazi Party of the Swedes' public gathering, as described in Chapter 7, so perpetrators wishing to push 'strangers' out of their neighbourhoods is something that occurs independent of a neighbourhood's socio-economic level.

It is indeed difficult as an outsider to go to unfamiliar places and gain legitimacy and credibility from local residents, whether it is activists or state officials or civil servants. None of the activists lived in Lindängen. Moreover, the activists looked different from the local residents, some with queer appearances, and the carnival theme made the activists who wore colourful outfits appear bohemian.

The carnivalesque outreach actions made in this and other neighbourhoods in the spring of 2013 would have been perfectly normal in Möllevången, where frequent cultural and political expressions are a part of the neighbourhood's identity. But placing 'Möllan activities' in other Malmö neighbourhoods with different identities and histories, places that are relatively strange for the activists, revealed class, ideological, and cultural frictions within Malmö. This instance points to the time and space aspects of neighbourhoods. The 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005) of Möllevången is different from Lindängen, and each space has its own geography of power. Also, Möllevången's position in the city at the centre-periphery has an impact on the place's power and influence.

When the activists evaluated the first day of the Solidarity Carnival, they concluded the reception by the locals had been fifty-fifty. "The idea was not to make them happy to see us", an activist pointed out. Another activist, however, herself a black Swedish citizen and personal experiences of racism in Sweden, experienced mostly positive attitudes among the local residents and had talked

to many people who seemed to feel the need to tell the activists about their experiences of racism and uncomfortable encounters with the police. The local shopkeepers, all of whom had a migrant background, received the activists well. However, they were presumably also interested in the activists as customers.

Stress and burnout

An internal dispute arose later about how the next Carnival Saturday in Rosengård was to be planned. Conflicting ideas and viewpoints were presented. At that point, many of the activists were stressed and tired from all of the preparations that they had been working on during the previous weeks. They were few people holding many practical responsibilities, such as creating alliances with local immigrant associations, mobilising people through social media, designing political posters, leaflets, and banners, putting up posters around town, leafleting, collecting and bringing all of the materials (sound system, *fika*, banners, etc.) to each activity, as well as the continuous email correspondence. One activist got up from her chair, put on her jacket and said it was better if we planned without her. She thought the others were caught up in small details and reminded everyone that it is important not to be petty-minded. She was irritated. The other activists begged her to stay, she was the only one of the activists who had lived in Rosengård and was well acquainted with the neighbourhood. She would stay, she said, but had to go out to get some air.

Even though the atmosphere is generally generous in activist meetings, occasions like this one occur in which people are tired of one another and disagree over methodologies, which is usually preceded by stress, a lack of resources, and time pressure. Commonly, it is only a few people working backstage on large campaigns and demonstrations, which requires hard work both in time commitment and emotions invested, which, at some point for many activists, reaches high levels of stress and even burnout. It may also lead to conflicts between those taking on many responsibilities and those activists who are perceived of as not doing enough work. The activists who are forced to leave or scale down on activism due to high levels of stress may feel failure, guilt, or shame for not coping

or doing enough, which has been expressed by several (former) activists. To quit activism due to stress seems to be difficult to accept for some pro-asylum activists, since they relativise their own hardships with those of the people living with precarious legal status and hence conceive of their own problems as minor compared to those of other dispossessed people.

Local anchoring and legitimacy

The activists experienced the visit to Rosengård as more successful. Everyone was acquainted with this neighbourhood, as opposed to Lindängen, and had visited it multiple times, and one of the activists lived there. The neighbourhood suffers from poverty and high unemployment rates and has therefore been a target of many social projects for a long time. The local residents are thus used to encountering 'outsiders' and their projects.

One street dancer was invited to perform in order to create a festive atmosphere, and a locally (and even nationally) known singer was invited to sing. Having an Iranian background and being the leader of various projects conducted in the neighbourhood, the singer was known and admired by the local youth and children. During the day, the activists had, it seemed, many successful and warm encounters with local residents, children as well as adults, who approached the activists to have *fika* and talk to them and sign the Stop REVA petition.

The third neighbourhood visit (in Segevång) was cancelled due to bad weather in combination with a lack of people willing to carry it through. The carnival taking place in Seved the successive Saturday was a collaboration with an established festival (Sofielundsfestivalen), enabled by a municipal grant, taking place on the same day. It was a successful and easy action due, in part, to the fact that many of the activists lived in the neighbourhood and thus made up part of the network of social relations in that neighbourhood. Furthermore, they conducted the leafletting as part of the already ongoing festival taking place. At the last Saturday action in Holma, another peripheral neighbourhood that many of the activist had never visited before, the leafletting and encounters went well without major frictions.

A few conclusions can be drawn from these examples. Doing activities with a political aim with prior local anchoring, such as being residents or part of the network of social relations that make up the neighbourhood, possibly contributes to making such actions legitimate in the eyes of the general public residing there. However, just residing in a place does not mean that you are socially anchored. In one interview, an activist specifically highlighted the difficulty of gaining local knowledge and legitimacy among the residents of a neighbourhood. The activist Michaela, involved in Allt åt alla, put it as follows:

if I would go back there [the town where she grew up], I know how to talk to the people because I grew up there. You know everything about the different families, whom they married, their cousins, and all that. But in a neighbourhood in a large city, where there is, like in Seved [where Michaela now lives], which is very densely populated, how...I mean.... What is the common denominator for people? And can you talk in a way so that we can understand each other, about where we come from and about what's important [...]?

Michaela points at the challenges, from the point of view of political mobilisation, of living in a 'migrant city' like Malmö, in which many residents have no roots, no prior social networks, and no common history compared to a village where families have known each other for decades and 'talk the same language'. Michaela continues by saying that, in order to successfully conduct community work for social change (which is an important principle of the extra-parliamentarian groups in today's activist scene, see Chapter 1), local knowledge about the place, the people living there, and the problems they are facing is important. Not only are the activists 'migrants' to Möllevången and Malmö, but many of their neighbours (non-activists) are too. This constitutes a challenge for activists to successfully mobilise residents for actions.

Trapped in direct action

Extra-parliamentary groups have become the main organisers of contentious mass mobilisations in the public space (and not NGOs or political parties, for example). This major responsibility made various activists feel they didn't have the resources to do more work beyond that. In the words of Michaela, the member of Allt åt alla:

After all, it is the extra-parliamentary left who has taken on the responsibility for mass mobilisations. And there are no others who have entered and taken that responsibility either. And this is also one of the problems, that we cannot do anything more than that. Because after us there is nothing, and then there is nothing, and then comes the Left Party.

When saying 'then there is nothing' twice, the activist is referring to her perception of the large gap between radical extra-parliamentarian activists and the Left Party. In between them, there are no other actors who could take on the role of mobilising demonstrations. For activists, to have 'taken on the responsibility' of conducting collective contentious politics means, considering their scarce resources, a lack of time and energy for long-term work, which makes them somehow trapped in a direct-action ephemerality. Self-critically, Michaela also admits that the typically short-term work characteristic of extra-parliamentarian activism (as in actions or campaigns) is not ideal for achieving long-term impact. She contrasts the autonomous tradition of short-lived actions with party politics:

the autonomous organisation, when it is at its best, grows out of the base [*basarbete*]: it assumes that everyone who participates does the things themselves and it is based on a local knowledge of issues, while the [political] party has a long-term perspective and it can just keep on rolling. The other [form] means that, ok, usually there is no long-sightedness, normally you don't put up a ten-year plan in an autonomous organisation. And that is actually what is needed in such work if you are

going to work locally, for example, against gentrification. Because it is also difficult: if you work politically, you must be able to feel that there are victories or otherwise you won't cope. And then it feels as if people are mistaken about not being able to win victories with a long-term final goal.

The activist Daniel, also a member of Allt åt alla, explains that their main arena of doing politics is still the street since they do not want to enter parliamentary politics. Therefore, Daniel ambivalently commented that their relative power gains a fleeting character. He means activism is limited to the actual protesting part, while activists are not useful anymore in the next step of change:

it has also come to a dead end, that you only become a helping hand. And then, when you can no longer offer help in the next step, like taking over the hospital department [referring to the nurses' struggle for better working conditions], then we are not interesting anymore. So, that's a question we're dealing with. And it's the same with the EU citizens [Roma migrants]. You're only interesting as long as you have something you can offer, and in the extra-parliamentarian left it is mostly extra-parliamentarian methods and knowledge about how to conduct advocacy and actions and such.

The quote may also reflect a lack of political theory on the actual building of a possible alternative society (with participatory, democratic, non-hierarchical, and non-exploitative institutions and economy), however, which is a topic that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Activists' awareness of, yet ambivalence towards, being 'experts' in extra-parliamentarian direct action reveals a yearning towards longevity and long-term structures. Michaela's experiences of activism have generated a growing feeling of loss. In her own words:

what I feel, the longer I have been organised...is perhaps a bit of a feeling of loss, things are usually worked on within very short periods. And that, when it is needed again, people start

from the beginning. So, I see the advantages of the long-term aspect that parties or a trade union movement can build. But those are also very difficult to influence because they are incredibly large structures. Especially [considering] such a hegemonic country as Sweden in which social democracy has existed for a very long time.

The rejection of ‘large structures’ points to many of the activists’ awareness of the difficulties in influencing them, but also the awareness of how easy it is to be co-opted by these structures and, as such, how they would lose their ability to act radically and contentiously. Activists are commonly aware of how most ‘large structures’, even the Left Party, as Michaela underlined when I interviewed her, work in accordance with power and, as such, reproduce the neoliberal hegemony. Therefore, streets and squares become *the* available sites to conduct contentious politics. As examined in Chapter 1, the public space is a space of contestation (Stæheli and Mitchell 2007) and therefore, activists try to find ways of making the street an actual place of power instead of something that only appears every now and then. People need to, as Daniel claimed, find ways of seizing the street properly. The activists’ counterhegemonic project, from this perspective, can be interpreted as a never-ending struggle to increase popular control over the production of urban space (Purcell 2013). One way of gaining control is activists’ attempts of territorialising ‘Möllevången’ by inscribing political marks into the public space, such as stickers, graffiti, posters, and establishing it discursively as a ‘red zone’, which then turns Möllevången into a launching-platform that facilitates and enables large-scale mobilisations.

Civil disobedience, direct action, and unlawful activities

Civil disobedience is a method for achieving social change. Activists break the law—non-violently as in the Thoreau, Gandhi, and King tradition—with the aim of challenging the law. This means the activists are prepared to suffer the juridical consequences of their acts. To be ‘arrestable’ is part of the game. An activist’s arrest may offer an opportunity to explain to the public what one was

doing or to challenge an unjust law (Graeber 2009, 393). Civil disobedience is part of the Malmö activists' repertoire of contention, as are blockades, for example, which are more confrontational in their configuration than a mere demonstration. Another related term, sometimes used as a synonym, is 'direct action'. As the term 'direct action' indicates, it is an immediate implementation of something without intermediaries. The achievement may be temporary or fragile, but it does not involve intermediaries. Hence, through direct action, a group (or individual) "uses their own power to prevent an injustice or supply a good, as opposed to appealing to an external agent" (Gordon 2018, 529). One example is when activists squatted a house for the evicted Roma migrants from the Sorgenfri settlement. This was not an act to appeal to the public but an urgent act of providing a clandestine shelter for the homeless Roma migrants to spend nights. In the literature, there is a conceptual difference between civil disobedience and direct action. In practice, they sometimes look alike and are guided by the same principles, but a couple of differentiations can clarify each term's particularity.

At the beginning of the 1990s in Sweden, a new generation of activists emerged in connection with the foundation of Antifascist Action in Sweden and some radical parts of the environmentalist movement, as addressed in Chapter 1. These new activists got into a heated debate with the pacifistic activists of the anti-nuclear ploughshare's movement who applied a strict definition of civil disobedience (Wåg and Persson 2018). Since civil disobedience is conceptually defined as always being a public act, activists who did similar actions that had the same aim, but did them in a clandestine manner (or not 'aiming' at being arrested), searched for another term that could describe what they were doing. Similarly, since civil disobedience by definition is non-violent, there was no term that could describe acts with the same aim but that contained violent acts.

The new generation of activists felt restrained by the strict rules of the civil disobedience tradition. Although they wanted the same thing as the non-violent activists, they argued there were other ways that were strategically better for making politics truly disrupt-

tive. According to Wåg and Persson (ibid.), this polarisation couldn't be resolved since the discussion revolved around whether violence can be morally justified. Therefore, 'direct action' became a term used to refer to those actions that fell outside the strict definition of civil disobedience (for another discussion on the similarities and differences of the terms, see Graeber 2009). While civil disobedience strictly refers to the breaking of the law, albeit non-violently, direct action may connote action that both breaks the law, uses violent methods, and is done clandestinely. As I already addressed in Chapter 1, enactments of violence by the radical left that are directed towards other people or property are rare in Sweden today (Jämte, Lundstedt, and Wennerhag, forthcoming).

The common term used by extra-parliamentarian activists today is *konfrontativt icke-våld*, literally 'confrontational non-violence' (in English it is usually referred to as 'passive resistance' or 'non-violent direct action'). In the following, I will describe actions in which activists (collectively or individually) purposefully break the law to achieve change, including unlawful actions such as 'smuggling' refugees over national borders or the criminal act of breaking people out of detention.

A common collective action with the character of non-violent direct action that took place during the years of my fieldwork was the attempt to physically prevent deportations. As of the end of 2013, several mass deportations to Afghanistan had taken place. As a reaction to this, fundraising activities, sit-ins, and demonstrations were arranged by Aktion mot deportation. According to Aktion mot deportation, most deportations happen in an invisible and secretive way in order to avoid public attention and protests. They are carried out at night on buses with their company logos covered. On 10 December 2013, a collective action took place at Åstorp detention centre with the aim of blocking the buses carrying deportees to the airport. The next day, one of the activists who was present shared an emotional update on Facebook about her experiences from the action. She describes the buses as 'the white buses' (*vita deportationsbussar*), which is the common term used by activists. The white buses are symbolically linked to the buses used in Sweden's history when Jews fled persecution during World War II.

They arrived in Sweden on the renown *vita bussarna*. In the past, they were considered welcoming buses and have been presented as a Swedish humanitarian contribution to history, but today they are used as deportation vehicles (Keshavarz 2016). Since deportations affect people's deep and direct well-being (for some being a matter of life and death), emotions play a central role in this kind of actions. The activist's update on Facebook from 11 December 2013 went as follows:

Yesterday, another mass deportation to Afghanistan took place. This time from the detention centre in Åstorp. We were unable to count the number of police officers—nothing was going to affect their plan [of deporting the people]—perhaps 60, perhaps more. We tried to stop it. The police laughed. Our friends waved to us [from the bus] while the two big white buses drove off at the same time as someone [an activist] lay on the ground under a police officer. Someone cried, someone continued to push [...]. To hell with this! Is this what we are to put our time and energies into? I long for a life full of love, caretaking, conversations, and other fine things. For everybody. Now!

The kind of collective action at Åstorp detention centre represents an attempt to both physically prevent the deportation and to sway the authorities through an appeal to public opinion (Graeber 2009, 393). 'Friends' or 'our friends', as used in the quote referring to the deportees on the bus, is the common term generally used among activists in Malmö to refer to the people with precarious legal status who get in touch with activist networks in search of support.

Beyond such collective actions of civil disobedience, there are individual acts of civil disobedience. I will illustrate what these might look like with a short excerpt from an interview with the activist Ingrid. Ingrid is 28 years old and comes from an upper-middle-class home in the northwest of Scania and moved to Malmö in 2010.

Ingrid: This isn't something that one plans beforehand.... Will I be anonymous in this [interview]?

CH: Yes.

Ingrid: Well, I do that myself too, other stuff such as civil disobedience [...]. I have been at the detention centre, however in those cases I've never done anything against the law but have attempted to block buses from leaving. And I have helped a friend who was captured by the police to not be captured anymore. [I have] participated in releases. But what has happened when such situations occur, mostly I have been the one who...when the situation arises...like when I came home to my apartment and there were police.

CH: Where there was someone without documents?

Ingrid: Yes, who was arrested but who...who wanted, or well, I simply opened the door to the police car so that the person could run away, so that I would be arrested instead. So, it is not about a direct action planned ahead of time, but just because *I was there*.

CH: So that person was able to escape.

Ingrid: Yes, and to apply for asylum.

CH: Were there any juridical consequences for you?

Ingrid: Yes, I am being charged but waiting to be called for an interrogation [...]. [H]ere I think it is all about humanity and solidarity [...] this was a case where a friend was about to end up in danger and it was a question of life and death. And [two] people with very different...uhm...possibilities and privileges [in a situation] where I could contribute and where there was no danger for me in being arrested.

This illustrates the situational character of political action in which an opportunity lasting seconds made Ingrid act politically and dis-

obediently in order to save her friend, a migrant without legal status in Sweden, from arrest and deportation. The young migrant had successfully hidden from the Swedish authorities, with the help of activists, for 17 months, thus had only one month left to be an eligible applicant for seeking asylum in Sweden according to the Dublin regulation. Ingrid describes their different and unequal power relations and argues for the benefits of using one's privileged situation in order to assist another person who lives under much more precarious conditions. Activists do not expect undocumented migrants to make similarly disobedient actions since the real-life impact of political action conducted by people with a precarious legal status can be devastating, more devastating than for citizens (Johnson 2012, 213). The activists who are legally residing in Sweden (and typically also hold Swedish passports) clearly hold a power position as 'protector' and 'enabler' since they can buffer some of the profound effects of activism for migrants with precarious legal status.

Ingrid was later convicted of obstructing the work of the police officers and charged with fines. I also had a personal experience of acting disobediently with the purpose of being a citizen witness and, as such, possibly prevent a racialised resident from being maltreated by police officers. It was night when I witnessed two policemen aggressively approaching a black man on a bike. This is a typical situation to which activists keep attentive. I happened to walk close by when I heard the black man say in Spanish to the police that he did not understand. I offered to help interpret, whereupon one of the police officers asked me to leave. When I refused, wanting to be a witness in case further maltreatment would occur, the officer arrested me for 'being drunk' on false grounds to get me out of the way. The black man had legal documents but was fined for not using bike lights.

The autumn of 2015 was another period of my fieldwork during which many individuals conducted acts of civil disobedience (activists as well as non-activists). In October, nearly 2,000 asylum seekers were arriving in Malmö every day (Povrzanović and Mäkelä 2018) and people drove over the bridge to Denmark to pick up refugees walking along the highways in order to drive them across

the border to Sweden. This was eventually considered a criminal act, but it didn't stop activists (and non-activists) from doing it.

To offer shelter to undocumented migrants, and to help them hide from the authorities, is a common act of solidarity among activists not only within pro-asylum circles but also among class struggle-oriented groups. To 'hide' undocumented migrants is not a crime in Sweden. Within the activist scene in and around Möllevången, it is fairly common to have shared an apartment at some point, for a shorter or longer period, with an undocumented migrant who is hiding from the authorities. There are also examples of when whole flats are rented by activists only for the purpose of housing undocumented migrants. At one point during my fieldwork, an activist from Aktion mot deportation asked me whether my one-room apartment in Malmö was available. She knew I was going to move to Gothenburg for a year, so she took the opportunity to ask if two undocumented migrants could stay in my apartment while I was away. I thought it was a good occasion to offer something of value to these people. One of them was Hussein from Afghanistan, the rejected asylum seeker who was unemployed and participated in the Stop REVA protests, almost 30 years old, and the other was Ahmed from Morocco, undocumented, 17 years old. Since they were old enough and could take care of each other, the activist claimed they would do just fine by themselves without the help of Swedish hosts. Activists who let undocumented people stay in their flats also help them, as much as they can, to have a decent life despite their non-legal status. Hosting undocumented migrants and helping them to hide are two concrete examples of pathways of emplacement offered by activists in Malmö.

Hussein, mentioned above, who escaped the refugee camp in rural Sweden and lived under very precarious circumstances in Malmö, as described in Chapter 3, was eventually arrested in Malmö by two plainclothes policemen. While Hussein was ordering a pizza at a restaurant, the police entered and asked for his ID. Hussein recalls:

"I was thinking a lot about how to escape from their grip. I planned to push with my feet against the side of the door, outwards, to get out of their grip and run fast. When I did, I missed

and instead hit the police on his leg.” He spent two nights in police custody before he was taken to the detention centre in Åstorp, where he stayed for 40 days. After a week there, he had already met some activists from Malmö who came regularly to the detention centre. They kept in touch. Hussein escaped the detention centre with help from the outside:

“They [the activists] saved my life. I promised never to say who did it”, Hussein told me. They smashed the windows, Hussein jumped out, and they ran off together to their hiding place.

Hussein was to marry a female activist in Malmö to enable a legal stay in the country. But this meant that he had to leave Sweden and return to Afghanistan to be able to come back, since marriage-based resident permits have to be applied for from one’s country of residence. Hussein was scared of going back. Eventually they instead arranged a domestic partnership, and Hussein received permanent residence a year later after many interviews with civil servants at the Migration Agency to prove his authenticity.

If it wasn’t for the activists, Hussein wouldn’t have been able to escape detention or stay in the country, since one of the activists was willing to help him through a fake partnership. He is immensely grateful for this and expressed a desire to engage more in political activities than he actually had as a way of ‘giving back’ to the activists. Therefore, he participated in the Stop REVA protest, although he does not have politics as a prior interest.

Activists not only practice civil disobedience themselves as part of their activism or individual acts of solidarity and resistance, but also encourage ordinary people to practice civil disobedience when needed, such as in the following leaflet, Flight Action concerning flight deportations, with the capitalised text stating:

IF YOU NOTICE THAT THERE IS A PERSON UNDER DE-
PORTATION ON YOUR FLIGHT, TRY TO CONTACT
THEM AND OFFER THEM YOUR HELP.

MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE WILLING
TO RESIST THEIR DEPORTATION.

THE AIRPLANE CANNOT TAKE OFF UNTIL ALL PAS-
SENGERS ARE SEATED.

UNFASTEN YOUR SAFETY BELT.

STAND UP AND DO NOT SIT UNTIL THE DEPORTATION
IS CANCELLED.

INFORM YOUR FELLOW PASSENGERS ABOUT THE SIT-
UATION AND ASK FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

THE PILOT IS THE AUTHORITY, NOT THE POLICE.

This flyer has been handed out at various leafletting actions in airports. Activists have managed to stop deportations with juridical tools such as last-minute appeals or protests on airplanes and in airports (U. Andersson et al. 2016, 21; see also P. J. Larsson 2018). One story is told by a young man who was going to be deported from Copenhagen Airport. Upon arrival to the airport he had friends, most of them Swedish activists, protesting his deportation:

“I shouted so much that the pilot said he could not take me on the plane, so they [the police] could not deport me that day” (ibid., 185). The police thus decided to arrange a special chartered aircraft for the young man’s next deportation. The only passengers on board were the man, handcuffed, another deportee and six policemen. The deportation was successfully accomplished the second time. This indicates the short-livedness of direct action and civil disobedience: they might achieve change in the here and now but are mostly unable to achieve lasting structural change.

Challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts

In this chapter, which has so far examined different ‘doings’ within activism, it is possible to discern the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts that exist to different extents depending on the situation. These can be analysed based on a schema of five different relationships: 1) between activists and their own activism; 2) between the activists themselves (within as well as between different groups); 3)

between activists and non-activists from the general public; 4) between activists and residents with migrant backgrounds among the general public; and 5) between activists and the mainstream media. A sixth relationship, the one between Swedish activists and migrants in precarious conditions seeking support from the activists, is considered separately and in more depth in Chapters 6 and 7. These different, albeit interconnected, relationships are addressed below under the headings of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts.

Challenges

A key challenge that all activists deal with is a lack of resources (people, money, time) and the tendency towards heavy workloads that may lead to stress and burnout. Many activists expressed the challenge of combining activism with a normal job or having children. ‘Sustainable activism’ is an ever-present issue of debate internally in the scene and a common topic of workshops at anarchist book fairs and the like. Radical activists, research shows, are especially susceptible to burnout, since their work is filled with unique challenges (see, e.g., Klandermans 2003; Chen and Gorski 2015; Plyler 2009; Haiven and Khasnabish 2013).

Activist groups are generally vulnerable since they are usually dependent on a few people’s lasting and deep engagement. Commonly throughout activist history, if two to three (core) members quit, the group as such dissolves. Throughout my fieldwork and personal activist experiences, I’ve met many people who dedicate most of their spare time, and some of their working time, to political activism. Even for the most active activists, however, the intensive periods vary and are usually not constant year in and year out. Activists are usually busy with particular campaigns that last for a limited period, while some are engaged in activism to the extent that they drop out of their university studies or even high school. Many activists whom I talked to began their university education only towards their thirties after scaling down on their activism (which, for many, seemed to peak around the age of 25 to 30). As the activist Nina, 36 years old, told me, she didn’t finish her education until later than usual due to her political engagement. During

her twenties, she was a ‘full-time activist’: “But you get tired after a few years, you can’t live like that”. Nina needed an income and yearned for a ‘normal life’. “You need to travel a bit, go on vacation, hang around, chill, and be a human being.” Nina suggests that activists may become engaged to the extent that they sacrifice other things in life, like a career, travelling, and leisure activities.

Characteristic of the activism conducted by pro-asylum groups is that it involves embodied solidarity, meaning close social relationships to migrants who live under precarious conditions. This particular characteristic of pro-asylum activism was mentioned by some activists of the class struggle-oriented groups as the reason for not engaging in it, since it requires a high level of emotional capacity. In the words of Allt åt alla member Rebecca:

I personally think it is amazing that they [Asylgruppen] exist.... I thought at some point that I should join Asylgruppen because it feels, because...it is just so damn good to do something purely practical, like ‘now you can really help people with things they actually need, rather than just sit and read a book, like’ [...]. But I don’t know if I have the emotional capacity for it.

Rebecca further said she avoided such activism, which is so emotionally requiring and time consuming, because she had seen how people easily get burnt out from it. This is confirmed by Gabriel’s statement: “It can be really exhausting to have an extra person living on your couch for a long time. No doubt about that.” For Swedish activists to create close bonds with migrants in precarious legal conditions they take on a feeling of great responsibility. Gabriel thinks that one reason for the high levels of burnout among pro-asylum activists is the incapacity of many to say “it’s enough”. This feeling can be illustrated by the following quote from Ingrid:

For a year, I’ve tried to say a little more ‘no’ to such practical support...ehm...to have room for other things in life [...]. For a long time, I couldn’t see the point in doing anything else [than solidarity work]. But now I’ve realised I need that other thing too. I couldn’t see why I should go to a party when there is

someone who hasn't got a place to live. [...] I used to think 'if I only just fix a house for that person too' it would be solved. But the inquiries that reach us through our email [from homeless undocumented migrants] never end.

To be able to say 'it's enough' in the sense of taking on only as much workload as one can bear while balancing it with other things in life (leisure, travel, work, etc.) was perceived by most activists as crucial in order to endure. "It is a loss for a movement if people burn out", Ingrid concluded.

Due to the workload from combining activism with a full-time job, I have observed it is common to engage less in activism or even leave the activist scene altogether once you have children. As mentioned above, Allt åt alla have tried to counteract this by appointing a 'nanny' for each meeting to make it possible for members, especially female members, to continue attending activist meetings. Research shows that female activists are less likely to be married or have children than their non-activist peers (Roth 2007).

Another challenge is that activism inherently carries with it a certain level of risk of confrontation and repression because it directly threatens the functioning of systems and groups who profit from exploitation and injustice (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). This will become clearer in the following chapters.

Despite the challenges that come with activism, all interviewees pointed at different kinds of gains and the mutuality involved while conducting activism. "You gain energy from working together with another human being", as Zahra put it. The activist Emma said she thinks it is fun or else she wouldn't be doing it. Lisa, for example, explained her activism as a meaning-making activity in her life: "There is no heavy burden on my shoulders, it's not like I walk around and think it's really hard; on the contrary, it is actually also what fills my life with a kind of meaning". A fourth activist, Lukas, said he was grateful for the person he had become through the political consciousness he reached through activism and his network of political friends. Hakim also pointed to the vast network of friends that he had gained by becoming an activist as the central source of energy in his life. I conceive of these statements as illus-

trations of how activism constitutes a form of resistance against the aspirational and emotional dispossession under the neoliberal post-political condition. The political disappointment and loneliness that people feel today is partly transformed through ‘antagonistic politics’ (Mouffe 2013) and communal living, which give meaning to life.

Ambivalences

Activists’ ambivalences towards their own activism are commonly related to the issue of radicalism versus legitimacy in the eye of the public. Activists aim to challenge the status quo and stand apart from politics as usual, yet they yearn for legitimisation, which can pull them into politics as usual. Activists’ wish to win the battle over public opinion, which would require a certain level of recognition from the general public, confirms that activists see themselves as involved in a wider societal struggle, yet with the belief that only ‘true’ politics, in the Rancièrian sense, can disrupt the established orders.

One point that has been illustrated in this chapter is the activists’ wish to convey a radical message, like no borders, while not *appearing* to be too radical for fear of alienating ‘ordinary citizens as potential allies’. This can concern the formulation (‘stop’ instead of ‘anti’) or design (avoiding barbed wire) of their political messages as well as their collective actions (not shouting or appearing as annoying). Activists swing between different ideals when it comes to the society they imagine for the future and the realistic and pragmatic recognition of the way change can be achieved. Activists’ goals, such as ‘systemic change’, ‘overthrowing capitalism’, and ‘smashing racism and borders’, are translated into more pragmatic and short-term goals. These sub-goals, seen as necessary steps towards the greater aim, can be worked on more realistically and they keep activists motivated to continue their activism. The major ambivalence I observed in the pro-asylum scene concerned the activists’ pleas for ‘no state’ and ‘no borders’ while they simultaneously demanded a strong but a much more ‘humane’ welfare state through human rights claims (Young 2001). In the words of the political economist De Angelis (2003, 13):

We do want proper and honest people representing us, even if we know that existing mechanisms of representations are dis-empowering. We do want policies that help promote social justice, even if we know that competitive relations defended and promoted by states perpetrate injustice. And we do want democratisation, in fact, lots of it, even if we know that this is not compatible with existing arrangements of 'Western democracies'.

In line with this quote, activists perceive of 'Western democracies' as 'post-political' or 'post-democratic': that democracy itself has become corrupted and is not really democratic, just as with Mouffe's (2005, 2013) theory on the post-political condition (see Chapter 1). Despite activists' rejection of the unjust order under liberal democracy, they recognise that human rights claims can be a first step in expressing demands for justice and equality and for opening a space for politics by those otherwise excluded. It is a way of doing politics in a post-political era.

Another ambivalence I observed was activists' relationships to the categories of 'ethnicity', 'race', or 'nationality'. Such terms usually did not make sense to the activists and were therefore used reluctantly or not at all for fear of reproducing lines of division that the activists were trying to fight. This ambivalence can also be traced to the general non-discourse of 'race' in Sweden (as I addressed in the Introduction) and the inexperience of using a language of 'race'. A term that is gaining usage is 'racialised', which is embraced for its associations with process, a performativity, and because it does not point to any essential characteristic of the person being racialised.

A further ambivalence that I observed, well-established within the extra-parliamentarian left, is activists' relationship to the mainstream media. While many activists dismiss public opinion work as too mainstream, others plea for more representation in the media to win over the public (Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015). Hence, at the same time as the media is generally considered an enemy, activists realise that they have to deal with them in order to reach out with their messages. While dealing with the mainstream media, there is

always the risk of being misinterpreted. Or, as in the case of people with precarious legal status, to be put in danger if identities are revealed. Usually, the activists who are appointed to contact the media are carefully selected and often (if new to the group) media-trained by experienced activists.

The final ambivalence I observed involved activists' awareness of their 'expertise' and their 'responsibility' for conducting activism. This awareness was coupled with a growing feeling of loss and yearning for more rigid, long-term structures without, however, being depoliticised and co-opted in the process.

Conflicts

Conflicts occurring between activists within and between groups are often related to the methods and strategies for collective actions, as in, for example, whether a police permit should be obtained, what the target of a march should be, or on how out-reach and awareness-raising actions should be conducted. Clearly, activists within one and the same group may have conflicting viewpoints involving these issues. Another source of conflict is masked faces at demonstrations. In almost every public protest, verbal confrontations take place between the (usually small) group of masked protesters and ordinary citizen protesters, ordinary citizen bystanders, or, albeit rarely, other activists.

Local anchoring and gaining legitimacy among the residents in a neighbourhood are challenging, and if activists lack these two elements there is a risk for conflicts, as confirmed by Reclaim Rosengård and the Solidarity Carnival. Concerning actions that aim to reach out to the general public, a former male activist self-critically said: "Activists have the pre-understanding of people living in Rosengård that just because they are part of the working class, they should automatically be interested in class struggle". Similarly, activists seem to sometimes believe (or hope) that people of migrant background should automatically be interested in the anti-racist struggle. But when local residents of a neighbourhood with a large migrant population show little or no interest in the activists' appeals, the activists feel disillusioned. Another former activist, in her forties and working as a teacher in a school in

Rosengård, was surprised to hear about the Solidarity Carnival. “They [the activists] should’ve gone to Limhamn [the high-income neighbourhood] instead. There the people don’t know [and should know] about REVA. In Rosengård, they [the residents] know everything that has to do with the police.” While youth in Lindängen possibly perceived the activists as intruders, in the case of Rosengård, the activists’ presence did not appear as strange or disturbing, which is in part explained by this neighbourhood being *the* target of the city’s manifold social projects.

The rejection, suspicion, and indifference from the very migrants (who don’t feel they need activists’ support) whom activists are trying to reach out to can be contrasted with the (former) asylum seekers who do get involved in activism. Mere participation in protests doesn’t mean they become politicised, as in the case with Hussein. But some of the undocumented migrants who got in touch with the activists experienced a process of politicisation and became activists themselves, often in parallel with receiving citizenship, which is the topic addressed in next chapter.

One major conflictual line of division within the broader activist scene is that of solidarity versus charity. Because of its importance within the activist scene, the next and final sub-chapter will consider this topic separately.

Solidarity vs. charity

The fear of doing ‘only charity’ is constant among pro-asylum activists, and an ambivalence towards charity is central to the activist scene in general. This ambivalence can be illustrated with the following quotes expressed by a female activist during a collaborative meeting between Asylgruppen, Aktion mot deportation, and other groups that support their cause, among others an activist media collective.

“We shouldn’t only be an aid organisation, we do politics too”, said an activist, indicating that the fear and tendency towards doing only charity exists. She continued: “We do projects, we raise important political issues concerning the asylum regime through collaborative projects”, and listed a few examples, like the *No*

Border Musical (Söderman 2019), Asylstafetten, and the edited volume *Flyktingfängelser* (2016).

First of all, aid-oriented work, whether it has political motives or not, concerns people in unequal power relations. The ways in which these relations are made, I claim, is what separates solidarity from charity. Solidarity can be recognised as an expression of the commons and processes of ‘commoning’, as discussed in Chapter 1, involving making things common, for example experience or interests. Solidarity, whether formed at an individual level (as in offering one’s sofa to an undocumented migrant) or at the group-action level (trying to block buses carrying deportees or blocking excavators from levelling Roma migrants’ shacks), regularly involves the body in close proximity to the one(s) in need of support. My understanding of commoning refers to this kind of relational politics—the sharing of particular socio-political relations—and productive moments that build group identity, shared experiences and understandings, as well as repertoires of tactics (Featherstone et. al. 2013).

Some activists at times perceive their work of solidarity (such as providing shelter and other resources to the undocumented) as more urgent than organising protests (to sway public opinion), since the former concerns people’s immediate wellbeing in the city. Others consider solidarity as a means to an end, a stepping stone, a way of getting to potential allies or potentially mobilising actors. Nevertheless, this form of solidarity that includes elements of aid provision is conducted with an awareness that as such, it is not enough to change society, especially if that change is meant to last. Many activists within the pro-asylum circles in Malmö have expressed their concern over not doing enough political work, or rather of not having enough time to mobilise collective actions as much as they would want to due to the never-ending work involved with providing for many people’s daily needs (which is common in most socially oriented movements). Some activists legitimise aid-oriented work as long as they put the same amount of time into political work, such as putting pressure on the state and municipality (through actions, advocacy, etc.) without becoming their instruments (Candil 2016; Wikström, Svensson, and Wåg

2016). Generally, however, activists fear it is counterproductive to engage in aid work while, at the same time, it is impossible for many of them not to do it when it is ultimately about people's basic needs, such as food, shelter, and safety. For example, during the autumn of 2015 in Malmö, activists participated in aid work with the following ambivalence: if we help the refugees, the local government will not feel as pressured to act since we are doing what should be their job, but if we don't do anything, these people will sleep in the streets and go hungry and we can't live with that. Many activists connected to Asylgruppen struggle with the same sentiments. The activist Ricardo, interviewed by Swedish Radio (*Studio Ett* 2013), expressed his concerns as follows:

I'm afraid that what we do facilitates the migration regime in continuing to create undocumented people and, in that way, we contribute to making people end up in that situation. If there are people who willingly and voluntarily assist these people [activists, NGOs, churches, etc.], then it will not be as dangerous to be undocumented.

Ricardo suggests that activists are part of the process of reproducing unequal orders: if activists 'prevent' migrants from suffering, their predicament will not become a political issue of debate and concern and politicians will then not make efforts to change the regulations that are making these people suffer in the first place. This kind of ambivalence is familiar from many other pro-refugee and pro-vulnerable activist contexts (see, e.g., Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat 2019; Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017). Activists are faced with moral and ethical decision making at every step of activism, from the initial idea to conducting meetings and carrying out their activities. Regarding aid-oriented activities, many activists legitimise them by adding some degree of political work, as noted above. But when not carrying out actions, they find themselves in a position of 'only' working to meet precarious people's direct needs without working for structural change.

The political aims of their activities seem to be of utter importance for considering an act as either 'resistance' or 'compli-

ance' to the system, as formulated by the following activist (Ramquist 2016, 29):

We shouldn't ask in the first place whether it is a problem that parts of our work take the shape of charity, but ask ourselves why we are doing it and what we want to achieve with it. [...] If the aim is to reduce distress, the work has no end point.

In this quote, we explicitly see the link being made between process (what are we doing today?) and prefiguration (what do we want to achieve with it in the future?). The goal can never be, as the activist above argues, merely to relieve suffering, but to eradicate the underlying reasons for the suffering, which, for activists, is inequality fuelled by capitalism.

Another activist from Allt åt alla explained to me that if what you do aims at changing the system in the long run, charity-like activities in the present can be legitimate. Another activist put it similarly: "As long as you have analysed it and realised that it is problematic to engage in charity, I don't think it is a problem by definition." This reasoning suggests that it is crucial to have a political understanding in order to legitimise aid-oriented work. In other words, it is *the political aim* that matters, or rather, the *mind-set* while doing it. The ultimate aim is to create equality, not to merely alleviate suffering, which resonates well with the theory of political solidarity (Scholtz 2008; Featherstone 2012; Stjernø 2018).

The theoretical debate on solidarity versus charity represents a classic conflict within the political left and its main idea can be formulated as follows: to work for the amelioration of individual problems is a praxis associated with liberal ideology and only maintains the status quo instead of trying to change the system and structures that produce the problems. Charity may counteract a revolution (structural change). This line of argument divides activist groups in Malmö, at least ideologically (from the activists' point of view), since, in practice, they do collaborate and support each other's work and both pro-asylum and class struggle-oriented groups organised some sort of aid- or charity-oriented activities during the time of my fieldwork.

In line with the theory of prefigurative politics (see Chapter 1), activists' critique of charitable work is aimed at when this charitable work takes the shape of a hierarchical organisation with the simple aim of alleviating suffering without acknowledging and working against the system of exploitation that made the particular people suffer in the first place. This hierarchical relationship between the giver and the receiver, which neither problematises their inequality nor formulates an aim of equality, stands in opposition to the fundamental democratic demand for equality and inclusiveness as formulated in Rancière's understanding of 'the political'. Charity, if conducted as described above, does not negate the hegemonic order, but rather works in accordance with, and thus recreates, the unjust hegemonic order. True politics, according to Rancière, is to break down all those barriers that inhibit radical equality. Therefore, solidarity, and not charity, can constitute "acts on the police" (Rancière 1999, 33). Through the lens of prefiguration (Boggs 1977) and 'the political' (Rancière 1999), it is possible to see the creation and transformation of social relations towards equality as central to the activists' work. Another critique is when aid work is conducted without a sense of being in common with the dispossessed or without the principles of horizontalism, as examined below.

Horizontalism as ideal

The activist Elisabeth, 26 years old, explained why she decided to become engaged in Asylgruppen. She described it as different than the work conducted by institutions. The activists do not make a differentiation between 'us' givers and 'them' receivers, but are seen as friends, as part of the same collective:

We help undocumented persons in their everyday lives. It's not like a professional institution where we have a large distance to the people. They are not our clients, they become our friends. And we also do things together. It's not like 'we Swedish citizens doing things for others'. We do things together and we come up with...so it's like a flat organisation and people are able to do whatever they want to do, so the group creates what

the group is doing. Which I feel is what I can stand for [...]. It's not like party politics in that sense that we...but we want a more humane asylum politics. And that is also what we are trying to create. To be a counterpart to the asylum laws that our friends face—those who are not allowed to stay, for example—so then we help them to stay.

Elisabeth's comment provides a clear example of the 'us' mentality that characterises political solidarity (Laitinen and Pessi 2018; Scholtz 2008): *We* do things together. This is also revealed by Elisabeth's, and many more activists', claims (confirmed by my observations) that they attempt to create horizontal relationships with migrants in precarious legal conditions and that they try to 'share' their privileged conditions with those in precarious conditions. "We help them to stay [in the country]". The great majority of the activists I interviewed described their experiences in line with the theories of 'political solidarity', 'mutual aid', and horizontalism. Indeed, horizontalism, a 'sense of commonality', and 'us together' were common themes in the interviews.

Elisabeth's perception of the undocumented migrants as friends and Asylgruppen's collaborative methods, similar to a flat organisation, make the movement unique and something Elisabeth 'can stand for'. She contrasts the movement with party politics, which connotes hierarchy and bureaucracy, and frames the activists' practices in terms of building egalitarian relationships with the migrants with precarious legal status in the here and now ("they are not our clients, they are our friends") and emphasises how they do things together. Elisabeth mentions citizenship status—"we Swedish citizens"—but does not suggest the discourse of 'migrants versus Swedes'. Elisabeth's quote thus points to the central ground of how inclusion is perceived and done. The activists thus challenge the paternalistic politics of care or protection that is associated both with the hierarchical relationship between protector and protected and with the distinction between those who are worthy of protection and those who are not. In this way, activists together with the migrants create commons beyond mediated neoliberal (competitive) and state (individualising) forms of relations, and in-

stead promote collective and democratic forms of social relations. This is a commoning that constitutes forms of direct access to social wealth that are not mediated by competitive market or bureaucratic state institutions. Activists' acts of solidarity point to the ways in which commons are constructed within relations of unequal power. The activists' statements further confirm the prefigurative aspects of their actions: the means equal the ends. Activists' aspirations for more generous, democratic, and horizontal relations in the future are struggled for by attempting to create them in the present.

What makes solidarity political?

Like now, Allt åt alla is engaged in homework support activities. Why are we doing that, is that liberal charity? Does it stop being liberal charity because we have a thought behind it? I mean, what's the difference between a good Christian buttering bread and giving it to EU migrants and me buttering bread, which I have done a couple of times, if I have a different theoretical analysis? But the act is exactly the same. [...] Does the reason why I am doing it matter for the person who gets the bread in her hand? How do they perceive us? (Jacob, 31, involved in Allt åt alla)

Activists move anxiously between the notions of liberal humanitarianism and radical social change. What unites the different activist groups (regarding aid-oriented work done by the groups featured in this thesis) is that while they do engage in activities that look much the same as charity work, they frame their deeds politically in order to legitimise their activities to themselves and others and to differentiate themselves from non-political groups (e.g. churches) in Malmö doing similar kinds of charity-oriented work. Framing their deeds politically makes the activists in this thesis perceive themselves as different from other charity and humanitarian organisations that do not define their work as political. The activist Lisa argued in this way about her activism:

For me, it's about a very practice-oriented solidarity, which means that every month I actually, with my own money, pay other people's expenditures. I pay other people's rents, electricity bills, or if it's about pocket money or a bus card. I see these sorts of things as a very political thing that does not really have anything to do with charity, which I have also learned to politicise in a way that I do not need to see it as charity, the way how I do it.

Lisa's quote points at the importance of a political consciousness as the basis and motivation for her deeds. Beyond this, when Lisa helps someone else economically, the receiver doesn't know who it comes from, for she doesn't say that it is from her own pocket but from 'the organisation'. For Lisa, it is important to 'de-personalise' the economic support so that the act of giving does not create a power relation between the giver and the receiver in which the latter is forced into a conditional situation of having to show gratitude. Hence, giving support yet describing it as general and collective rather than as an individual gift is an important element of political solidarity.

Doing it for oneself

Many activists said that what they do in solidarity with others actually means improving the situation for themselves. In Jacob's words:

They are part of us and...I'm a communist because I am selfish. I'm a communist because I want as pleasant of a job as possible, I want to work as little as possible, I want to eat...of the cake. I'm not a communist because I... I'm a communist because I want to get rid of parasites. That's how simple it is for me in relation to the EU citizens [Roma migrants]. Partly, it is real pity for them, but there are plenty of people to feel pity about. You can't put your energy into that...it's not possible. Then you're on a freaky charity race. But you can see it like this: they [migrants with precarious legal status] are agents of wage dumping; they are an example of how bad standards are acceptable to

people. And when it's considered okay for society to kick on one group [migrants with precarious legal status], then it will be okay to kick me next. So indirectly I work for my own benefit.

This is part of the discourse of mutual aid as the ideal form for solidarity. It also shows the time perspective and an awareness that change takes time and is a slow process but nevertheless connects today's processes of dispossession with those of the future. Jacob pondered further:

in ten years, it will be like this—guaranteed. Then it will be me who fries falafel for two bucks an hour and that's why you're supposed to be loyal, and that is what solidarity is all about: it could be me.

This statement indicates activists' refusal to be caught up in the normalised structures and repetitive practices of everyday life that may be sources of injustices and wrong. By interrupting such practices—by thinking 'it could be me'—activists withdraw from the accepted givens in society (Dikeç 2017).

While the Swedish activists I met during my fieldwork were privileged compared to the migrants with precarious legal status, they still saw themselves as suffering from the same economic and political (dispossession) structures that made people flee from war or from poverty. Thus, they see a conjunction between war and capitalism, and capitalism is what they fight against (Allt åt alla does so explicitly). Also, the Swedish activists experience dispossession through gentrification, loss of work opportunities and stability, and loss of purpose in life. Hence, the activists see themselves as connected to marginalised people through the lens of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2005). The perception of 'it could be me' is central to the activists' work, commonly formulated in the slogan 'nobody is free until everybody is free'.

Activists are aware of the power imbalances involved and the risk of reproducing these power inequalities. Yet they see people's immediate needs and try to address them in horizontal ways with equality as a political aim. This dilemma is complicated and con-

stant. In order to avoid charity in the giver-receiver ‘rescue’ sense, activists attempt to recognise the dispossessed people’s agency and capacity to act and think on their own and to involve them in activism while being aware of the power relations at work.

‘It could be me’

This chapter has described how activists in Malmö mobilised in reaction to an experienced and observed inequality around racialised people and migrants with precarious legal status. It further offered insights into how the activists’ work developed into new actions and the different elements that their work consisted of (demonstrations, leafletting, awareness-raising activities, aid-work, and civil disobedience). The results of this chapter can be easily summarised. Activism contains a number of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts. These elements are found internally in the activist scene since the divergent political views and strategies are related to trajectories of political identities (‘anarchist’, ‘Marxist’, ‘autonomist’, etc.) and social movement traditions (class struggle, identities, etc.). This makes activism itself becomes a site of internal contestation (Arampatzi 2017). Challenges and conflicts are also found outside of the activist scene and appear in activists’ relations with external stakeholders (such as journalists, politicians, institutions, and the police).

Solidarity implies engaging with the world in a reflexive and critical, rather than habitual, mode by interrupting mainstream (neoliberal and state-oriented) routinised ways of engaging with and making sense of life and society (Dikeç 2017). This is revealed through activists’ attempts of conducting solidarity in defiance of, and not in accordance with, the established unjust orders. The activists featured in this thesis are thus engaged in solidarity rather than charity due to their attempts of creating horizontal relations of empathy and mutual aid and recognition rather than more organised forms with traditional leadership structures (Holloway 2010). The reflexive practices as conducted by the activists are done with the aim of equality and are always trying to avoid reproducing and working in accordance with hegemonic understandings of inequality, summarised by the idea that dispossession is an

individual problem. Practices that consistently question and criticise inequality invite a reflexive withdrawal from the accepted givens of society (Dikeç 2018, 52). Activists thus point to an ethics of care and interdependence that is beyond the welfare state and market relations. So, when activism contains the means and the ends of radical equality, activists have the potential to create more democratic and humane forms of urban life (*ibid.*).

It is precisely these dynamics of inclusion (along with their readiness to trespass laws) that have influenced newly arrived migrants (connected primarily to Kontrapunkt, Asylgruppen, and Aktion *mot* deportation) to embark on their own activist trajectories, which is examined in the following chapter.

Figure 5. Protestor wearing a mask with the face of Justice Minister Beatrice Ask, 9 March 2013. Photo by Jonathan Pye.

Figure 6. Masked protesters with cardboard signs, 9 March 2013. Photo by Jonathan Pye.

WARNING!

The police hunt undocumented migrants!

Everyone are talking about REVA these days, about how the police are using ticket- and bike checks as an excuse to check ID and permit of residence. But REVA is part of something bigger than just racial profiling. **REVA is assembly line deportations!**

We can use our courage and solidarity to stand up for everyone's rights. Question and dispute the police and refuse to show your identity card even though you have a residency permit/citizenship! **They do not have the right to demand ID if there is no suspicion of a crime!**

Help spread information about police controls, it can save lives!

Let's protest together - JOIN THE DEMONSTRATION!

Stop REVA! Stop racial profiling and the police state! Stop inhumane migration policies and deportations!

STOPPA REVA

Malmö 9 mars kl 15
Möllevångstorget

We post tips about police controls on the facebook page for **Aktion mot deportation** (action against deportations). You can also see and add information on the **REVAspotter Malmö** page on facebook.

Figure 7. Leaflet announcing the Stop REVA demonstration in Malmö.

Figure 8. Poster announcing the Solidarity Carnival Against REVA.

6 EMBODIED SOLIDARITY

In this chapter, I examine how embodied solidarity is forged in Malmö and the effects it has on the people involved in it and on the place where it is enacted. With embodied solidarity, I mean the emotional and close bonds forged between people in unequal power relations based on principles of horizontality and inclusion. Conversations and interviews together with my observations will illustrate how activists create experimental or alternative social relations in the present (Yates 2015, 1) through anti-hierarchical practices and de-centralised power structures, which shows the activists’ “commitment to democratization through local, collective structures that anticipate the future liberated society” (Boggs 1977, 5).

The chapter is divided into three sections. Each of the first two sections deals with a central prefigurative characteristic of activism in general and solidarity-making in particular: creating *friendships* and *alternative structures*. Friendships and alternative structures are strategies also used by right-wing groups with the aim of impacting society in general. But what differentiates right-wing activism from left-wing activism, and what is found at the centre of Rancière’s (1999) conceptualisation of politics, is the quest for *equality*. This specific form of understanding and practicing politics is, as I argue, *the* pathway for the emplacement of many migrants in precarious legal conditions and key for enabling the formation of a new generation of activists, which is the topic of the third and last section of this chapter.

Each of the three themes examined in this chapter—creating friendships, creating alternative structures, and migrants becoming

activists—shows how solidarity (as an embodied process of coming) is connected to inequality and dispossessive processes in material, emotional, and aspirational terms. By forging these new relations, activists resist the material, emotional, and aspirational dispossession wrought by neoliberal restructuring (Brenner et al. 2009), individualism and self-interest (T. Sager 2015; Leitner et al. 2007; Brown 2015), and the post-political condition (Rancière 1999; Mouffe 2005; Žižek 1999; Swyngedouw 2009). While resisting some migrants' material and emotional dispossession through embodied solidarity, the process likewise resists many of the activists' emotional and aspirational dispossessions under neoliberal hegemony. Hence, embodied solidarity evolves in processual and mutual ways by affecting everyone involved in different ways at different times.

The three themes will be connected in the concluding discussion, where I argue that friendships and alternative structures were decisive for enabling a new generation of (migrant) activists to enter the activist scene in Malmö.

In the following, I will first shed light on the significance of friendship in activism in general and the role of friendship for migrants in precarious legal conditions in particular. I will claim that friendship forged through activism is a distinct form of friendship commonly sustained and formed in public and created in fluid, instrumental, and politically passionate ways. Friendships created through activism have a transformative potential, taking the form of transgressive social ties that challenge common forms of affiliation. Friendship with activists has contributed to many migrants' emplacement in the city through direct access to social wealth. And those migrants with precarious legal status who experience a political socialisation are further emplaced by becoming part of the activist scene in Malmö. With the understanding that friendship, among activists as well as between activists and the people whom they assist in various ways, is a mode of relation infused with both practical and affective meaning for the people involved

(Kathiravelu and Bunnell 2018), I consider friendship as structurally significant (Eve 2002).¹⁵³

In the second part, I explore the creation of alternative structures, mainly with the unique example of the social centre Kontra-punkt, which overnight turned into a transit centre for refugees in 2015. I show how the activists' principle of self-organisation is key for enacting alternative structures. These structures are, in turn, analysed through the lens of 'safe spaces', which makes them appear as valuable sources of security and political socialisation for both Swedish activists and migrants with precarious legal status. In the last section, I examine how these friendships and alternative structures in Malmö have influenced migrants in becoming activists and forming their own organisations and political struggles.

Processes of commoning—that is, the sharing of experiences, interests, and knowledge—between two parts in unequal relationships are not easy and are filled with challenges and ambivalences, which I attempt to tease out throughout the chapter. However, despite the tensions that grow out of my material, I claim that activists' embodied solidarity creates the conditions for migrant emplacement, which include the social processes through which dispossessed individuals build or rebuild networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015; see also Nicholls and Uitermark 2016).

Creating friendships

[T]he asylum movement feels like a family. That it isn't...which I also think is nice...because it blurs the division of 'now we help and now we don't help' because so many people in the group are my...some of my best friends too. The first person for whom I became the contact person is one of my best friends today. So, I don't see that clear differences (Ingrid, 28 years old, involved in Asylgruppen and Aktion mot deportation).

¹⁵³ In contrast to the few existing sociological works on friendship that focus mainly on intimate friendship, Michael Eve (2002) argues that friendship is of structural significance. In sociology, friendship has been seen as so 'personal' as to virtually escape normal sociological concepts such as power and stratification.

Friendships often arise in social environments such as school, the workplace, or neighbourhood (Adams and Allan 1998; Allan 1998). Activism is another such social environment. It involves many hours of meetings, working groups' preparations, and actions such as blockades in close proximity with one another and in situations of turmoil, which can bring out one's inner fears and other private aspects. Some actions even concern life-and-death situations for people such as attempts to block buses carrying deportees about to be sent back to countries at war. People in such situations express feelings that bring out emotional similarities despite the differences in class, ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, etc. of the participants. Hence, friendships that come out of solidarity are, among other ways, shaped in embodied and emotional ways (Featherstone 2012, 36).

Friendships created through activism in Malmö, as I observed, are, however, not necessarily private, reciprocal, sentimental, and permanent (Phillips and Evans 2018). They do not have to imply strong ties or be intimate but can be loose and elastic and come into play and stretch or tighten with changes in circumstances, mobility, and geographical distance, similar to what Kathiravelu and Bunnell (2018, 494) show in their study. Friendships in activism range across levels of intimacy, from that of close dyadic relationships that involve parallel life experiences and shared geographies to those that evolve within a short time-space around a particular activity or area (*ibid.*), such as collective actions in the public space.

However simplified, I see primarily two 'kinds' of friendships emerging as a consequence of activism in Malmö, which are often intertwined. While both forms connect to the idea of friendship as positive affect, pleasure, satisfaction, and as a means for individuals to overcome isolation and loneliness (Horst 1978), they also differ in some regards. One form is based on the pursuit of shared political values, goals, and a shared interest in political activism. The other one is more instrumental, typically foregrounded in contexts of economic hardship and resource scarcity as in the case of asylum seekers, undocumented persons, and Roma migrants. Friendships emerging out of activism in Malmö thus entail friend-

ships created between ‘equals’ (between Swedish citizens) as well as between two unequal parts, such as between a Swedish activist and an undocumented youth, as with Ingrid’s experiences in the above quote. Ingrid’s quote confirms the ‘us-ness’ that is created among friends in unequal power relations in the activist scene in Malmö, which is linked to the principles of political solidarity. By creating friendships in unequal relations of power, activists practice and imagine equal relationships beyond the borders of the nation-state and citizenship.

For people living in a state of *deportability* (rejected asylum seekers and undocumented migrants) or *evictability* (Roma migrants) in Malmö, well-placed friends are a means for gaining access to items and services otherwise unavailable; such friendships are a practical relationship where the utility of the relationship is a significant component (Kathiravelu and Bunnell 2018). Creating friendships among activists and with the people directly affected by the immigration regime is an important part of embodied solidarity beside the immediate aim of resisting and undermining the police’s search, detention, and deportation of undocumented migrants. Hence, from the perspective of commoning and emplacement, friendship is a productive relationship.

The role of friendship in activism

For all my interviewees, activism as a social environment has had an important effect on the direction that their lives have taken, whether they are migrants or not. Research has shown that it is not people’s attitudes that make them become involved in activism but mainly the role of strong networks. Most people are recruited through personal contacts (either in private settings such as friendship circles, family, or colleagues, or in the context of other associational activities) (McAdam 1986; della Porta 1988). The biographical narratives of my interviewees confirm the important role that friends played for them in both becoming involved in activism in the first place and in enduring. The activist Emma told me about the following experience of how she became involved in Allt åt alla while sharing a flat with two friends of hers:

Then Charley and Eva became members and it turned out they [Allt åt alla] were going to have a meeting in our house, in our kitchen. I was home at that point and they were like, ‘shouldn’t you join us?’, and I was like, sure.

Friends, and in this instance also flatmates, were Emma’s entrance into the group. The quote also points at how activist groups, due to the lack of resources and venues, are forced to hold meetings at members’ homes, which in turn makes activist groups more inaccessible to ‘outsiders’.

What further became clear throughout my fieldwork was how groups of friends were a pre-condition for activist groups being established in the first place and for political actions being conducted. New groups of friends are then fostered, creating new ripples on the water. Lisa, the activist in Aktion mot deportation, explains how she sees the relationship between activism, friends, and well-being:

Most of the people I know in Malmö, I have become acquainted with through different kinds of political engagement and not only through the pro-asylum movement [...]. That is the best thing about Malmö. Here I can combine having great friends and also doing things I believe in, together with them. That’s what makes me think it’s fun and gives me good energy. [...] Then I can do things with people I dislike too, but in the long run, it is about creating some kind of meaning...and to share...to have people around yourself with whom you view existence in the same way, and the fact that you can also organise relatively easily and you don’t have to create an organisation or have endless meetings. I can just gather people who are my friends and do political actions with them. Whether it is about Åstorp [the refugee detention centre] or writing an article or doing a public action, finding accommodation or money. [...] For me, living in Malmö, I have noticed that this is a strength and brings safety, that I do not feel alone.

Having lived almost all her life in Gothenburg, Lisa perceived that it was much easier to combine politics with friends in Malmö due to the dense network of activist groups and allies in the city. She also told me that it was easy for her to access the activist scene in the city since she had friends there who were activists prior to moving to Malmö. Her quote also points to the informality commonly existing within the activist scene: without having “endless meetings” a group of friends meets and conducts political actions. Later in the interview, she also pointed at the informal channels that exist between different activist groups and, since many activists know each other privately, they are informally invited to each other’s activities. This inevitably creates an elitist and exclusionary, informal communication network outside any regular channels of such communication set up by a group (Freeman 1972).

The quote further indicates how the combination of political work with friends was a source of social well-being and consequently a resource for avoiding burnout among activists. I interpret activists’ close friendships with other activists as a kind of coping mechanism, considering the time and energy required in activism. Friendship makes activism more sustainable. When friends are involved together, it creates an emotional interdependence and a wish to care and share the workload. As the activist Nina, 36 years old, put it:

And then we have to help out because otherwise some will drown. And those are my friends, so you don’t want to watch them drown. Then you get in there and take it, and take a little too much yourself too, so everyone takes a little too much and nobody takes so much that everything falls down.

Having friends in activism thus creates the strength and energy needed to accomplish their work. While recognising the positive effects of friendship, a number of ambivalences appeared as well. Lukas, 29 years old and involved in Allt åt alla, pointed at how the making of friends through activism also meant constructing a kind of vulnerability:

It's something I've thought about lately, that it [activism] really affects one's life, how you live and...in general. And...what you haven't done because you have been politically active. Things you've forsaken.... And that the friends you have are your political comrades too. You do not have that much outside of the political life. So, in that sense, I've missed out on some...just because I have been active. And then, for example, this makes it difficult for you to scale down [on activism], because then you feel like you are leaving your friends, although you aren't. But it may feel like that.

Lukas nevertheless said to me that he doesn't regret anything since he still thinks the positive effects outweigh the negative: "I've really grown as a human being and...I wouldn't be who I am today, and I wouldn't be so driven or I'd be less politically [conscious] so...I've learnt a lot, yes..." His friends and political engagement contributed to his social well-being in Malmö: the fact that he now has a vast network of friends with whom he can do things that he cares about gives him purpose in life.

Engaging in activism provided a source of identity and commitment for all my interviewees, and friendship in particular seems to have contributed to the activists' sense of belonging and community. Lukas described his experience of when he was first drawn into activist circles:

People [the activists] were friendly, people were interesting, and I was tempted to belong to something, a group of people, a jargon, you know, all these things [...] it was very exciting. So, I guess only 50 per cent was politics and the rest were all these other things.... To belong....

Lukas perceives that a large part of his activism is about community and belonging. Since this form of friendship is, to a large extent, based on doing political actions together, it creates the kind of vulnerability addressed in the previous quote. For this reason, many activists maintained it was important to have friends outside of their activist circles as well as other hobbies besides just politics

(Haiven and Khasnabish 2013). As Nina put it, “I mean, I don’t hang out with fascists, but one or two liberal-conservatives [*moderater*] have probably slipped through the needle’s eye”, explaining that she became friends with her colleagues from work who had very different political outlooks than she did. To make friends with ‘political others’ may, however, be easier said than done for some. One activist told me she found it impossible to make friends with people other than radical leftists.

Importantly, when activist groups and the arrangement of collective actions depend on networks of friends, activism becomes an exclusionary and discriminatory practice: if you are not friends with the activists it can be difficult to enter (Freeman 1972).

Networks of connected friends

The activists live in the social media era in which the notion of ‘friend’ has changed in meaning and content. A ‘Facebook friend’, for example, can be someone whom you have never met in real life or perhaps only once, but is still considered a ‘friend’ in Facebook’s terms. Similar to this logic, there exists a kind of not-so-close friendship (in the sense of non-continuously shared experiences and mutual interests with one another) in activist circles. Activists are part of large networks of people whom they consider and call ‘friends’—similar but not exactly the same as the notion of comrade—even if no consistent contact exists between them.

The term ‘friends’ is also strategically and actively used by activists as a non-homogenising term to refer to people in precarious legal conditions connected to the activist scene: undocumented people, asylum seekers, and Roma migrants whom the activists assist in different ways and create alliances with to forge joint struggles. Updates on Facebook, such as ‘a friend needs a phone’, refer to friends in terms of the people whom the activists are in solidarity with.

Networks of connected friends are an important characteristic of the activist scene in Malmö and of the broader social movement milieu in Sweden. For example, Hakim, 20 years old, said how activism was an entry point to a vast network of friends:

Now, I have so many friends in Malmö. When I go to Kontrapunkt [for example], to some party, everyone is there. That feels really good, and it makes me want to do more [activism] in order to know more people.

The significance of this mode of social relations became crucial for understanding the social fabric and networks constituting the political space of Möllevången and for identifying pathways of emplacement.

Material and emotional effects

While friendship appeared as a central mode of social relations to all of the activists I encountered, the material effects of friendship were most noticeable for the migrants with precarious legal status. Being connected with the network of activists in Malmö was decisive for many migrants in precarious conditions in enabling the transformation of their dispossessed conditions into political, collective struggles. The network consisting of activists to which undocumented and Roma migrants were connected provided a collectivity in which the migrants could gain some of the security and emotional well-being that they were otherwise denied by their precarious legal status. Being connected with activists allowed migrants to promote their own concerns, for example to call for an urgent campaign or protest when in immediate danger of deportation or eviction, such as in the case of the Tent Action (see Glossary).

Connections with activists are instrumental not only for migrants with precarious legal status; the Swedish activists who had moved to Malmö from elsewhere also expressed how important local activist groups had been for their emplacement in the city. This was not only due to their feeling of belonging and fulfilment in the city, but also due to the role that their friends and activist connections had for their possibility of finding housing in the city.

Some of the practical consequences of friendship with activists for migrants with precarious legal status have been access to a renewed possibility of seeking for asylum and eventually legal status, work, housing, and managing labour disputes with their employ-

ers. People with precarious legal status and others with newly acquired legal status have found jobs and educational opportunities through the activist friends they have made. Indeed, it is hard for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers to find work, in particular work with formal and decent conditions. Such opportunities often demand social contacts, networks, a solid source of information, good references, and so on. The activists are important sources for countering migrants' precarious living conditions, providing local knowledge, social contacts, accredited references, experiences and, crucially, language skills gained through personal experiences of activism or through creating relationships with the activists (Nordling et al. 2017).

For example, Hussein, whom activists released from the detention centre (see Chapter 5), eventually got a job as a teacher's assistant at a community school thanks to an activist's recommendation (after acquiring permanent residency). The activist was already employed there. Hussein is appreciated at work and has had his contract renewed several times.

Moreover, as activists commonly have extensive knowledge in labour rights and react strongly when migrants are abused, there are numerous cases in which activists have helped migrants in avoiding employers' abuse. For example, Ali, a migrant in his early twenties, got a job sometime after he had received residence permit. Once he got the job, his friend and activist Emma (who had helped Ali to hide for more than a year to get the opportunity to seek asylum in Sweden) persuaded him to join a union. Ali didn't really understand the benefits of doing this, but he trusted Emma and did what she suggested despite the monthly membership fee he had to pay. His employer had promised Ali and his colleagues that they would receive shares in the company on top of their daily working hours and salary for working evening hours for three months. So, he worked from seven in the morning to ten at night for several months. Once the job was done and Ali and his colleagues demanded the shares, the employer claimed there was no such thing. Emma helped Ali to contact his union who, in turn, arranged a meeting with the employer. Ali was compensated with almost 20,000 SEK (approx. €2,000). Although this sum was not

the equivalent of the hours he had worked extra, he was happy with the deal. His nine colleagues, most of them from Afghanistan, did not get reimbursed since they did not have a union who could speak for them. Ali's story reveals that working with a formal job permit (as opposed to working as an undocumented person) is not a guarantee that abuse in the labour market will not occur. It also points at the significance of social networks, well-placed friends, and the gaining of knowledge, such as about unions and the possibility of claiming for rights and compensation. As Ali told me, "I now tell everybody I meet and work with that they should join the union!"

Gaining access to legal status also meant the possibility of engaging in activism in ways that individuals did not dare to do when they were undocumented. As Hakim put it:

I was able to engage more actively against the system, one could say. To show that I am against. Before, I couldn't show that I was against the system, so my friends [Swedish activists] arranged demonstrations and I participated, but after that [receiving legal status] it's me who organises demonstrations.

Hakim says how he now personally walks into the police office to apply for a permit to demonstrate, something he was not able to do with irregular status. He could now publicly show dissatisfaction with the system without being afraid of being arrested and deported.

In sum, by creating friendships between people of unequal social and legal status, the activists challenge various material divisions between people, such as class, citizenship, and 'race'/ethnicity and thus challenge the understanding that 'birds of a feather flock together'. The close and emotional sharing of different and unequal socio-political relations is, however, not a process without frictions, which I examine below.

The challenge of inequality in friendship

When I receive permanent residency, I want to move somewhere else, so I can have friends who are not my friends on the basis that they had to help me.

This was said by a migrant to the activist Ingrid, the female activist involved in Asylgruppen. Ingrid admits that aid-oriented solidarity can be an awkward basis for friendship, although she has seen some examples of close and enduring friendship and also love relationships between asylum seekers and Swedish activists. Another activist, Stella, 28 years old, told me about a couple of occasions within her work in Asylgruppen that she experienced as uncomfortable. She thinks that calling each other 'friends' is a little hypocritical because they are never *really* friends. It is an extremely uneven relationship, a premise on which it is very difficult to create what Stella calls 'real' friendships that would imply equal and lasting relationships.

The activist Emma shared her experience of joining a graduation party for her friend who had formerly been undocumented. There was a group of Swedish women in their thirties and a group of young males, most of them from Afghanistan, all of them around 20 years old. Beyond the Swedish (mostly female) activists that the unaccompanied minors had become acquainted with through Asylgruppen or other activist groups, these youngsters had no other Swedish friends. The young men find it difficult to make friends with Swedes of their own age. As Emma said, there are not many 'natural' places for them to meet Swedes and therefore they mostly become acquainted with national peers. At SFI (Swedish language classes for immigrants) there are no Swedes, and if they get a job (possibly in a restaurant) there are probably no Swedes working there either. Nightclubs could be such a place, but they cannot afford to frequent clubs. It is important to note, however, that parts of the migrants' new social environment are inhabited by people with whom they share a country of birth but they come from different regions and/or have urban/rural differences and they were total strangers brought together through activism, 'migranthood',

and other social environments in Malmö. Therefore, they also represent new sociabilities in the city.

According to Stella, social gatherings and parties arranged by Asylgruppen are important, but at the same time strange or even sad in a way. While exaggerating the activists' sexual orientation, she said:

All these young Afghan men who would like to, more than anything else, meet a Swedish girl, and the material security such a relationship would give them. And who does not want to love and be loved? Then there are all these Swedish female activists—and they are all gay!

While difference in age was a common aspect within these relationships, it was rarely mentioned as obstructing them. However, many new Swedish activists are also young, sometimes only few years older than the unaccompanied minors. The last time Stella had attended an Asylgruppen meeting, two weeks prior to our conversation, she told me: “And there were all these young, white Swedish females. Why are they here, I asked myself? Is it the feeling of duty?” She was wondering why young women seek this kind of sacrificial work, which is what it is, after all, according to Stella. To ‘take care’ of newcomers? She is one of these Swedish females, Stella admitted, albeit a little older than the newer activists. She believes it has something to do with getting close to the most central feelings in a person's life—sorrow, anger, love—which they do by creating close bonds to youth with precarious legal status.

As many of the Swedish activists have a middle-class background, their engagement involves experiencing, sometimes for the first time in their lives, the structural violence that people of foreign background with low levels of schooling experience in the Swedish welfare state, which is similar to what has been shown by Hamann and Karakayali (2016) in Germany. One central conclusion that can be drawn so far is that the embodied solidarity by pro-asylum groups is a gendered practice. Research has shown that female activists tend to attach more value to helping others, feel more guilty when they have not been compassionate, and believe

they are expected to care for the personal and emotional needs of others (Wilson 2000).

Eventually a 'hugs culture' arose within pro-asylum circles, despised by some, embraced by others. Something that Stella, again, said illustrates the activists' (and the migrants') need to feel close to other people. Stella, however, thought the 'hugs culture' was inconvenient. "To be hugging all the time", as she said. It became a critical issue when there was a case of an asylum seeker sexually harassing one of the female activists.

The activist Lisa told me she had also noticed the hugs culture in pro-asylum circles. She, in contrast, was not interested in becoming close friends with the young men (some of them boys). Therefore, it was important for her to make her role clear to them and not to give false expectations of an eventual close friendship. Lisa saw her work of solidarity with people in precarious legal conditions not necessarily as involving close social relationships. However, she later met her partner-to-be through activism and gained extensive experience from meeting with the authorities in their struggle for him to receive legal status in Sweden, which they succeeded in doing through marriage.

The new relationships described above represent instances of prefiguration and commoning: the sharing of particular socio-political relations and productive moments that build collective identities, create shared experiences, spaces, and understandings, as well as repertoires of action. Despite the material inequality found in these relations, they may produce a sense of mutuality, interdependence, and 'us-ness' and thus act as a source for discussions on the aspirations for a better world.

The perspectives brought up in this section raise the question of a possible arbitrariness when migrants 'are selected' to receive support from the activists. Clearly, there are more people in need of support than there are activists in Malmö. Stella said:

When you think about it, there are overall very few [undocumented] people that we support and help, considering how many there are in total in Malmö. Therefore, our help becomes quite arbitrary too. Personal chemistry, for example, made me

want to help one person that I got along with well rather than another whom I seemed to be in worse harmony with.

Despite the obvious challenges and ambivalences in creating friendships through activism, in particular in relations of unequal power, I claim friendships were crucial for the migrants to experience a process of politicisation and become activists, as analysed in the last section of this chapter. Before that, I examine activists' creation of alternative structures. Creating alternative structures can be interpreted as a strategy for avoiding 'the tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman 1972) and for moving away from depending on networks of connected friends. Instead, alternative structures make activism more accessible to people who have no prior relations to activists and make activism more durable and long-term. As will become clear, alternative structures have also played a crucial role for many migrants in precarious legal conditions to access social wealth outside neoliberal and state-based institutions in Malmö and to ultimately be emplaced in the city.

Creating alternative structures

That half year from September 2015 to the beginning of 2016 is like one single 'blur'. Many of us stayed at Kontrapunkt, slept there, and then you had night shifts, so everything is just like.... And then suddenly, when the borders closed and we [Kontrapunkt] decided in January to close the refugee reception completely, we sat there at a meeting in early January in empty venues, and it all just felt like a time machine. The last occasion we had sat down together and had a real meeting was the day before we started receiving refugees, in an empty room: 'What should we do this autumn—and then just *boom!*'—and it was just empty again and [we were like], shit what happened? (Maja, activist involved in the social centre Kontrapunkt).

On 31 August 2015, I was heading back home to Malmö by train after attending a conference in Prague. The trip was one of my worst and longest trips through Europe, first in an over-crowded

train from Prague to Berlin in 35 degrees Celsius and then, when I reached Hamburg, the night train to Copenhagen had been cancelled. I had to spend the cold night at the Hamburg train station. I remember I felt ashamed of my own perceived misery when I, the next day, saw the arrest of 15 unaccompanied youths by the border police at the ferry station in Puttgarden in Germany. I tried to imagine the kind of trip they had gone through from their countries and what they had experienced to get there.

Two days later, on 2 September, the image of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, dead on the shore, spread like wildfire in social and mainstream media.¹⁵⁴ My Facebook friends who had never before posted anything politically oriented posted the image of Kurdi, calling on authorities to act. Not only did ordinary people react to the image, powerful politicians did as well. I then understood why the train had been cancelled that night. The Danish authorities cancelled many more trains after that day to prevent refugees from travelling from Germany into Denmark. Numerous images of refugees walking along the highways in Denmark, due to the cancelled trains, were published that autumn (see, e.g., Eriksson 2015). On September 8, only a week after my previous trip, I sat on yet another train through Europe, this time from Malmö to Trento in northern Italy to attend a summer school. During that week, the number of arriving refugees, mostly from Syria, increased by hundreds every day. At München Hauptbahnhof, I saw an equal number of police as refugees. As if the people fleeing from war were criminals, I thought. There were fewer police at the same train station on my way back home a couple of weeks later. They had been replaced by hundreds of volunteers assisting the refugees in need. That was the beginning of the Refugees Welcome Movement in Europe. Those months of ‘welcome activism’¹⁵⁵ in 2015 engaged many thousands of volunteers all over Europe in the assistance of

¹⁵⁴ Kurdi and his family, from Kobani in Syria, boarded a small inflatable boat, which capsized about five minutes after leaving Bodrum in Turkey. 16 people were in the boat designed for a maximum of eight people. They were trying to reach the Greek island of Kos, about four kilometres from Bodrum. The Kurdi family had paid USD 5,860 for their four seats on the boat and had no life-vests.

¹⁵⁵ Hamann and Karakayali (2016) refer to a ‘culture of welcome’ arising in the wake of the large numbers of refugees arriving during the late summer and autumn of 2015, a culture that has an “un-prejudiced attitude towards people from another group” and involves local welcoming initiatives to new members.

the arriving refugees. Not since World War II had anything similar mobilised so many people to engage in altruistic activities (Feischmidt et al. 2018).

As critics stated, it was not a 'refugee crisis' that was taking place throughout countries in Europe, but rather an 'administrative crisis' (Sahlström 2018) or a 'crisis of the European border regime' (De Genova 2016). State authorities failed to provide refugees with the decent and legally correct reception that they were entitled to by international law.

At its peak in September 2015, the estimated arrival of people to Sweden was about 2,000 a day, of which half applied for asylum in Sweden while the rest continued to the neighbouring Nordic countries (S. Larsson and Sundahl Djerf 2015). Malmö Central Station became, for many refugees, the first stop on their journey from the south of Europe through Denmark to Sweden. Malmö, compared to the larger cities of Gothenburg and Stockholm, received the most asylum seekers per capita (Malmö stad 2018f). It took six weeks for the City of Malmö, the Traffic Department (Gatukontoret), and the Migration Office to come to terms with the situation and set up a temporary refugee reception area at Posthusplatsen, located beside Central Station. However, from the very start of the administrative crisis, the citizens' initiative Refugees Welcome Malmö (RMW) filled the gap and took responsibility for the refugee reception (Povrzanović Frykman and Mäkelä 2019). Refugees Welcome Malmö, just as elsewhere, was made up of ordinary people who felt they wanted to help the arriving refugees. In Malmö, the Refugees Welcome initiative started a collaboration with Kontrapunkt, which became one of the main shelters for transit migrants: people who did not want to stay in Sweden but aimed at seeking asylum in Norway or Finland. The Muslim Assembly (Muslimska församlingen) and volunteers connected to their organisation also received and assisted refugees in a similar way. Different churches, mosques, organisations, and political activist groups collaborated. For example, activists from Allt åt alla and Kontrapunkt collaborated closely during the most intense weeks in the autumn of 2015.

Some Malmö activists went to the Hungarian-Austrian border and others went to the Greek island of Lesbos to assist the refugees arriving by sea. For example, the activist Tariq, who had received a residence permit one year prior, went to Lesbos to volunteer. I took a leave from my studies in order to work with refugee reception at the Gothenburg train station and I later contributed to a legal counselling group at Kontrapunkt in Malmö.

Up until that autumn, Kontrapunkt had housed raves, electronic parties, and reggae and punk festivals, most of them to contribute to some kind of fundraising. Apart from that, Kontrapunkt had offered daily workshops on different subjects like bike service, computing, banner and art work, and community kitchen organisation, among others. In the autumn 2015, the whole place turned into a complex machinery of social services involving hundreds of volunteers, activists, and many more migrants (Rescala 2016). In collaboration with the Muslim Assembly, they offered shelter to 17,000 refugees during the autumn of 2015. During the first three months, 1,000 meals were handed out daily (Kontrapunkt 2017, 146). Kontrapunkt bought train tickets and arranged buses for those who wanted to travel to Norway and Finland. Parallel with their work of solidarity with refugees, Kontrapunkt also worked politically by creating campaigns, putting out statements in the mainstream media, and co-organising demonstrations in solidarity with them (Snöbohm 2015; Kontrapunkt 2015).

The following are my recollections from the first evening I did legal counselling in Kontrapunkt. The main building is a large old warehouse made of bricks. Two guards were standing outside the main entrance made up of two heavy iron doors. A small corridor leads up to the cashier, where you usually paid an entrance fee for the clubs. Now you had to 'check in'. There were hundreds of people moving in and out during the day and this was a way of keeping track of people and not letting those who were not involved roam the buildings. Before coming, I had registered through an online booking system, stating my name and undertakings for the evening. Upon arrival, I was given a tag on which 'legal advice' was written. When I stepped into the hall where the coat closet is, Rashid, a Palestinian man in his fifties responsible for storing jack-

ets and coats, stood behind the desk together with a younger female volunteer. He seemed to know everyone. With a smile he talked to every person who passed by.

In the hall, there was a shelf with flyers, booklets, and documents in several languages. Most of the information was published and printed by FARR (the Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups, an umbrella organisation for individuals and groups working to strengthen the right of asylum). The activist Lisa guided me and introduced me to the work concerning legal advice. She had been involved for over a month and had extensive knowledge and experiences in legal issues concerning asylum. Next, we stepped into the hallway where there was a side room full of donated clothes. The toilettes on the opposite side smelled of urine. The black painted walls were covered with political, cultural, and musical stickers and tags.

Newcomers, mostly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, were sitting in groups chatting in the 'living room'. There were sofas of different styles, patterns, and colours. Worn carpets lay zigzagged over a floor that was even more worn. Besides that, there were various small tables with mismatched chairs and, next to them on the other side of the room, there was the stage where artists or DJs performed during parties. Two sofas were now placed on the stage. Volunteers with tags in different colours that read 'kitchen staff', 'free shop', 'host', 'cleaner', 'driver', 'interpreter', ran around and everyone seemed to know exactly what they were doing. The volunteers were a mixed group of people of Swedish and foreign background, old and young, experienced and inexperienced. It was a truly diverse group of volunteers.

The place gave a sense of being an artistic-bohemian free space with art, banners, fabric, and paint on the walls and roof. All of the furniture had been received as gifts from second-hand shops or private people. What was usually the bar had now been turned into the counter where meals were handed out. Anyone could provide themselves with tea, coffee, juice, and some cookies. We crossed the bar and reached the corridor that led to the large kitchen and the small office where legal advice was to be imparted that evening.

The next few times I went there, we had the legal reception in the basement in a dark room with a round wooden table. In the basement, there were beds where some of the volunteers slept. They were refugees who had come for assistance themselves but had stayed and become volunteers in Kontrapunkt. One of them was Abed, an Iraqi man who spoke a little English, who had travelled to Sweden from France where his asylum application had been rejected. He was therefore told by the legal councillors at Kontrapunkt that he was unable to apply in Sweden since his fingerprints were in France. He didn't want to go back to France, even less to Iraq. So, he stayed and worked as a volunteer.

All migrants who stayed were asked to be involved in Kontrapunkt's work and to contribute. Abed liked his new responsibilities and took them seriously; he worked devotedly and learned more Swedish words each day. As of 2018, he still lived in Sweden, now with documents through his partnership with his Swedish girlfriend and was still involved in Kontrapunkt. The people who got involved in Kontrapunkt had different reasons for doing so. As Maja put it,

there were many people who wanted to get involved, some because they thought it was awesome with this kind of community, others because when they found out more, they actually shared our values and goals, and wanted to fight for the same things. But especially people who were Dublin or undocumented for other reasons, which then, for many years really had nothing to do [while hiding], actually did something meaningful [...] [and] actually had a context and a function and actually played a role.

Kontrapunkt thus offered a place for undocumented people to engage in meaningful activities in an otherwise inhospitable country (whose authorities wished them out of the country).

The purpose of the legal counselling at Kontrapunkt was to provide the asylum seekers with essential information about how to formulate one's problems: information that could help the applicants *talk in a certain way* in the interview situation with civil

servants of the Swedish Migration Agency about their conditions in their home country in order to gain the right of legal protection. My role was to explain which kinds of ‘war stories’ would, and which would not, be considered enough of an argument for legal protection. The information was based on what activists, with in-depth knowledge of the asylum process of the Swedish Migration Agency, knew were important elements and also what was commonly said by asylum seeking refugees to their own disadvantage. For those coming from Afghanistan, the legal advisors shared information such as: 1) it is not enough to say ‘there’s a war in my country and people are dying’, not even when your father or uncle has been killed; 2) you have to explain *how* this fact also constitutes a threat to *your* life; 3) why this makes it impossible for you to return; and 4) the Migration Agency will first seek the possibility of deporting you to another region in Afghanistan. For example, if Kabul constitutes a threat to the asylum seeker, the authorities will see if it is possible for the person to return to another city or area of the country. Therefore, the person applying for asylum has to *argue how* the threat that he/she experiences in, for example Kabul, also constitutes a threat in the rest of the country.

Since one’s chance of ‘deserving’ legal protection is largely based on how well one argues that one’s life is threatened—in a single interview situation with a civil servant lasting for one to three hours—this was the information that the legal counselling at Kontrapunkt focused on. However, it was difficult due to many of the refugees’ low levels of education and probably due to illusions about Sweden’s ‘goodness’ and the impression that ‘now we are safe’ and ‘now we are finally here and they will take good care of us’.¹⁵⁶ Another challenge was the scarcity of interpreters in combination with time limits. There were evenings when refugees were lining up to get legal advice.

Kontrapunkt’s work during the autumn of 2015 is described in one of the chapters (Kontrapunkt 2017, my translation) in the collaborative volume *Hör detta och lyssna till det* (Hear this and listen to it) (Sundberg and Kjellstrand 2017). The activists’ description of

¹⁵⁶ For a critical examination of the narrative of Sweden as the ‘good’ state, see Schierup and Ålund (2011).

Kontrapunkt's transit centre reflects prefigurative politics: 'to start creating the society we want to see in the future, in the here and now'.

Kontrapunkt is a place and a movement, a vision of a better society. Kontrapunkt is the place where we organise ourselves to realise our dreams of a society in which everyone can share and a society in which we decide how we live our lives. Kontrapunkt is an example showing that a better society is possible. [...] [A] place is needed in order to do activities—space is needed: a space that is collective, which does not cost, which is inclusive and which we control ourselves. Having a place is often crucial. Those who fled through Europe in the fall of 2015 had no place. [...] Quickly, we reorganised the cultural centre into what became Sweden's largest refugee reception place. In just a few days, a micro society was created at Kontrapunkt with all of the structures we consider to be human rights: a place to sleep and rest, food and hygiene supplies, clothes and necessary equipment, the ability to get and find information and keep in touch with family and friends, basic healthcare and medicine, transport within Malmö and to Stockholm, as well as counselling on legislation and asylum. In this place, we decided. We created the society we want to see, where everyone had their basic needs met and were provided with enough information to make informed decisions about their own lives (ibid., 145-146).

The activists make clear how they aspire for alternative structures that resist the neoliberal ordering of socio-spatial and economic relations: 'a space that is common and inclusive'. As one activist involved in Kontrapunkt put it, "If we want to have another society, we have to start building the alternative here and now, even if it is just on a small level. Hopefully it can become an example to learn from, get inspired from, and build on" (Backström 2018). Activists' self-organising—"made by us and for us"—is the central characteristic of this kind of prefigurative politics that attempts to resist the neoliberal organisation of society.

It is worth mentioning that the edited volume from which the quote above is extracted is from the initiative of a project conducted by Allt åt alla activists. They invited a number of activists from different groups, most of them based in Malmö, and scholars, artists, and poets to write about their experiences of the flight from war, or activists' experiences from working with migrants in precarious legal conditions (both refugees and Roma migrants). This book is a concrete example of a project in which different activists met and worked together and how Allt åt alla showed the will to contribute to pro-asylum and pro-migrant activism. The book was written and edited voluntarily, and any profit made from it was donated to pro-asylum groups.

Much of Kontrapunkt's work in Malmö during the autumn of 2015 is an example of aid-oriented work as defined as concrete help for individuals' direct and urgent problems. But Kontrapunkt also worked politically by framing the refugees' situation as a political issue in their public appeals. Also, their work with legal advice, I argue, is more political than mere charity. Its main purpose was to provide the refugees with essential information about the formulation of their problems, which could help them *talk in a certain way* in the interview situation with civil servants at the Migration Agency about their conditions in their home country (what makes it impossible for them to return) in order to receive the right of legal protection. Hence, legal advice was a sort of solidarity that aimed at making the refugees agents of change in their own lives. Likewise, the activists of Kontrapunkt involved many refugees in the social centre's daily tasks and activities and the refugees happily engaged as volunteers. In this way, it was not only "Swedes who engage in helping others", as one activist described it (interviewed in Ariadad 2016, 24), but refugees were now simultaneously volunteers. The same activist further said that "it seems difficult for people to understand that someone can be a refugee and a participant simultaneously, improving the conditions for both you and me", a thought reflecting activists' aspirations of 'mutual aid' (Kropotkin 1902).

Become volunteers or even activists meant that the migrants in precarious legal conditions gained merits and experiences that

would contribute positively to their process of seeking asylum and receiving a residence permit and eventually a job. As Tariq put it:

It definitely counts, I mean, it becomes an added value. For example, when having been involved in different things you start collecting certificates, and they [civil servants at the migration board] see you are involved somewhere. Because they are like robots, in the sense that they know nothing and are stern. They look at how you talk, and what you have done, what you are doing, and the things you are engaged in.

Tariq also explained that he is involved in activism because he wants to be, and that he rejects the discourse in Sweden that claims that ‘immigrants come to Sweden to take money and social welfare and don’t want to learn the language’. While activism comes out as an instrumental merit for the migrants seeking asylum, it reveals a possible inequality inherent to the system: those who talk in a way that satisfies the civil servants have a higher chance of receiving a permit compared to those who don’t even if the latter are in the same need of asylum and protection.

The activists of Kontrapunkt were generally critical of Refugees Welcome Malmö (RWM) and their approach to the state and its institutions, which reflects the Malmö activists’ understanding of politics. Activists strive for the kind of radical equality formulated in Rancière’s political thought and argue that the system of liberal nation-state democracies is inherently prejudicial and oppressive since it relies on hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion (citizenship). As such, citizenship, according to Rancière, is opposed to the fundamental democratic demand for equality and inclusiveness. In line with this thought, the extra-parliamentary activists in Malmö perceived RWM as taking on the role of a volunteer organisation *for* the state (filling a gap), while the activists wanted to conduct solidarity in defiance of the state. The activists thus worked to create structures in contention with the state, while the RWM volunteers took over the state’s responsibilities (although they were aware of the implications of taking over the state’s responsibilities, see Povrzanović Frykman and Mäkelä 2018). However, recent lit-

erature shows how even volunteerism has become politicised in a novel way (Fleischmann and Steinhilper 2017). While traditionally associated with charity or understood as an ‘apolitical’ practice, humanitarian volunteering in connection with refugees has transformed into a new kind of political ‘dispositif of helping’ (ibid.).

A conclusion that can be drawn from the specific example of Kontrapunkt’s transit centre is that their venue was a precondition for the events to be possible in the first place, which is illustrative of the importance of a physical space for solidarity work. Also, the years of vast experience of self-organisation gained from running the social centre, which is connected to its broad network of former and current activists and allies, was an important resource when the crises set in at Malmö Central Station. They were able to mobilise many hundreds of people through their membership lists (anyone who had attended a party there in the past years) in only one day.

The creation of alternative structures is a much slower process than the fleeting actions that are public and more ‘spectacular’ and an important complement to them. What sets alternative structures apart from the established state institutions is the activists’ desire to be self-managed by using direct forms of democracy (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010) and always keeping in mind the ultimate aim of equality.

Self-organising as key

Self-organisation, which is the term I use here, is synonymous with ‘autonomous’ and ‘self-management’. All of these terms mean organising on one’s own terms with freedom from external control or influence. This is a key principle for the activists in focus here. Activists attempt to organise and act politically without any external constraints, which in practice means acting independently of political parties, NGOs, the state, or other hegemonic groups (Day 2005, 32). They are self-governed and no one but themselves is setting their agenda, which is something that NGOs, organisations, state institutions, parties, etc. cannot do, as they are all governed

by various stakeholders.¹⁵⁷ Self-organisation within the extra-parliamentarian left further means self-organising in ways that reject authority and hierarchical power structures, as was made clear in the theoretical chapter (see Chapter 1).

Alternative structures are also created by the other activist groups in Malmö. Concrete examples include Allt åt alla's organised home-work support group for children in Sorgenfri (a neighbourhood next to Möllevången) as well as the sports venue and association Collective Effort (original in English) that is aimed at being a space where 'friends and comrades' can work out together under the principles of inclusion and free from neoliberal norms of commercialisation and profit making.¹⁵⁸ Daniel, 31 years old and a member of Allt åt alla, described the logic behind creating alternative structures:

But what's important to remember when you talk about creating alternative structures...not alternative structures perhaps, but alternative meeting places that are based on a different logic where more people can participate on their own terms... [is that] it is not so much about creating an alternative society within this society, but creating nodes or points, a network that can attack society.... It is a basic idea that these meeting spaces should create an opportunity for people to discuss their problems and discuss their...how they want to change society and what they want to change next. [...] That's the idea I guess, that, like with the homework support (*läxhjälpen*), parents can help with homework but if there is a conflict in the area, they know that 'yes, we can get help from this group [the activists] to impose these requirements on our landlord or make these requirements on the municipality'. So, it's rather a way of creating...new types of commons [*gemenskaper*] and political socialities that go beyond traditional politics, but that can still attack...the powerful [*makten*].

¹⁵⁷ NGO-based activism is an important dimension of contemporary politics and its relation to neoliberalism has been widely debated (Juris and Khasnabish 2013). For example, Hard and Negri (2000) even suggest that many NGOs are complicit in neoliberal rule.

¹⁵⁸ Their aims are stated on: <https://www.facebook.com/collectiveeffort/>

Daniel explains the value of being a political resource for people otherwise lacking channels for making their voices heard and of creating alternative political dialogical spaces beyond the traditional political ones. The activists thus not only support local children with their homework, but if their parents—within this space created by the activists—express some kind of concern of a political character occurring in their neighbourhood, the school, or in relation to public institutions, the activists can be notified and together create public opinion (whether it is writing letters to the municipality, writing debate articles for local newspapers, or organising a campaign, a demonstration, or an awareness-raising activity in the area). Thus, activists use the physical assembly of marginalised residents to discuss problems, identify grievances, and to identify commonalities across different experiences (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016). This is also what Asylgruppen has done in their achievements of involving migrants in political work and encouraging them to represent themselves and voice their concerns to the public.

The ambivalence revealed at the beginning of Daniel's quote regarding whether what they aim for should be called 'alternative structures' (a concept I did not mention in the interview) or 'alternative meeting places' is part of the discourse that rejects the idea of creating an alternative society separated from mainstream society (see Chapter 1). The activists featured in this thesis want to create alternatives in order to impact the 'mainstream' rather than with the aim of creating isolated 'islands of freedom'.

A physical place is not a requirement to enact alternative structures, however. An example of such an enactment is the individually and network-based redistribution of resources in the form of pocket-money and rent and bill payments granted freely to migrants (Roma migrants as well as asylum seekers and the undocumented) who are in need, as well as the exchange of experiences and knowledge.

While self-organisation is key to the extra-parliamentarian scene in Malmö in general, pro-asylum or pro-migrant activism in particular raises the question of whose terms determine the enactment of the structures within activism, since their work continually in-

volves relationships between two very unequal parts. The unavoidable power inequalities in pro-asylum and pro-migrant activism generate fear in activists that their work may take the shape of exercises of public authority similar to the established institutions though outside them. Seeing the vast need of many undocumented people in Swedish society forces Swedish citizens into activism, but many do it with an ambivalence towards their own position of power over another person (a process in which the migrant may grow economically, socially, and materially dependent on the activists).

Asylgruppen has made several efforts to open new spaces “to see if new things could happen”, as one activist expressed it. Traditionally, meetings conducted by Asylgruppen included only Swedish activists and not those who had reached out for their support. A longstanding debate within Asylgruppen is the division existing between activists (or so called ‘contact persons’) on the one hand and the undocumented (mostly unaccompanied youth) on the other. Activists feared they reproduced this division by not finding ways to *really* include the undocumented into their own political and organisational work (Nordling, Sager, and Söderman 2017). As a result of this discussion, the idea of a recurrent ‘social centre’ came up as an attempt to counteract this division: to open up a space in which differently positioned people could meet and come up with new projects and ideas together. “We wanted to do politics together”, as Helen, a core activist involved in planning the social centre, put it.

This idea also forms part of the never-ending internal debate of not wanting to be merely an aid organisation but also one that does politics (ibid.). Hence, the creation of a ‘social centre’ (which in practice took the form of arranging a social meeting place in a venue one evening every other week) was an attempt to transgress boundaries between citizens and non-citizens through increased inclusivity and increased democratic relations between two unequal parts. In other words, the aim was to create experimental or alternative social relations in the present (Yates 2015, 1). The social centre was thus a political project counteracting the liberal position of engaging merely in aid-oriented work.

At one point, the discussion about ways to dissolve the division between undocumented migrants and activists went so far as to propose inviting all of the undocumented migrants connected to Asylgruppen to discuss the distribution of the organisation's money (to the migrants) *together with* them based on direct democratic decision-making. This clearly shows activists' prefigurative ambitions: the desire was to create their organisation as one that takes decisions democratically *with* the people who are most affected and to involve and include them structurally. In the end, this meeting never took place—"luckily enough", as Helen put it. "You can't just do that; we would've exposed the undocumented migrants to an awful situation." I interpret the reference to the unpleasantness this would have created as pertaining to the unavoidable power inequalities that would nevertheless have existed in such a meeting (age, language, education, culture, and social and material aspects, etc.), in which Swedish activists would put an unbearable responsibility onto the vulnerable people for taking economic decisions for their own and others' precarious conditions. Frustrated, yet prefiguratively so, Helen concluded:

There won't be total equality in every situation, but we can at least approach it in certain situations. It's about practicing what one believes in: a more equal society. And we strive to do that through our social relations, but they are so...contaminated by inequalities.

Instead, the efforts of creating more horizontal and equal relationships between people in unequal power relations were realised through other strategies. The 'social centre' described above involved opening a space of dialogue and a place for common production of political ideas and practices of solidarity. Another example is Asylstafetten in which Swedish activists and migrants in precarious conditions acted as political subjects together and created an 'us'—a collective identity—among those participating in the action.

Are there 'safe spaces'?

The alternative structures examined above could be perceived as 'safe spaces', also sometimes called 'free spaces' (Polletta 1999). 'Safe spaces' are recognised in the social movement literature as a key tactic for activist groups, but the formations involved vary widely in practice (Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016). A safe space refers to a small-scale space that is removed from the direct control of dominant groups where counter-hegemonic ideas and identities can emerge to contest the dominant culture. Safe space creation can thus be used to move the dispossessed to a place separate and sheltered from oppressive structures and practices existing in mainstream society. Safe spaces allow physical and imaginative room for identity development, social support, emotional connection, and a sense of 'we' and they can facilitate the development of critical consciousness (*ibid.*). In that sense, safe spaces are crucial for building a movement and enabling mobilisation.

The activists' ideal society is one in which all people, independent of their legal, social, and ethnic background, can live and feel safe. Therefore, in the context of anti-racist and pro-asylum activism, safe spaces imply (a relative, never total) safety from: police harassment and ethnic profiling (concerning non-white people); detention and deportation (concerning undocumented migrants); racist motivated harassments; and lastly, safety in the sense of people's basic needs for food and shelter being met. Since people with precarious legal status lack this safety—including not only asylum seekers and the undocumented, but also Roma migrants—activists focus on and try to create the spaces of safety that these groups lack.

Here, I will elaborate on activists' safe space creation, defined as the 'most urgent forms of safe spaces' for those who most need them, i.e. people with precarious legal status. With the example of Stop REVA in the previous chapter, I illustrated how activists mobilised, planned, and acted as well as the reactions they encountered from the public and other challenges they met while doing their political work. Their actions intended to support people with precarious legal status in escaping detention and deportation as well as to resist police profiling of non-white bodies in the public

space, which affects non-citizen migrants as well as racialised Swedish citizens. In short, activists attempted to create urban spaces that migrants can use safely. Achieving a safe space therefore implies undermining the power of national borders and the police, whose responsibility it is to enforce the laws. By creating systems, through the Internet, that warn undocumented migrants against police surveillance (as exemplified in Chapter 5) in the public space, activists challenge the hierarchical and oppressive order of existing public spaces (Mitchell 2003). In other words, activists create safe spaces in the city and, as such, expand public space to also include non-citizens, making public space even more public. This example also shows the importance of the Internet and, more specifically, social media, and how safe spaces are not necessarily physically bounded but how virtual and urban public spaces intersect with one another in safe space creation.

Another example of safe space creation is the sanctuary movement in Malmö, initiated by Asylgruppen, with the explicit aim of creating a sanctuary for undocumented migrants in Malmö. The sanctuary initiatives seek to allow undocumented migrants access to social rights and community services without fear of detention or deportation. These rights and services include access to libraries, gyms, (pre)schools, women's shelters, and football clubs. In Sweden, membership registration requires a person's personal identity number. But through activists' advocacy, these institutions have introduced new systems by which people without a Swedish personal identity number can also gain access. By enabling access to services and social rights, activists challenge the subordination of migrants imposed by national borders (Nordling et al. 2017).

Being connected with and becoming part of the network of activists in Malmö, which in itself is a form of alternative structure, constitutes a sort of safe space as well. A contradiction that I observed concerning safe space creation is that since some people with precarious legal status become close friends with some of the activists and experience a process of political socialisation, their participation in collective actions might put them at risk through public exposure. Importantly, activists' efforts of creating safe spaces for migrants with precarious legal status does not mean that

these spaces are always completely safe.¹⁵⁹ And as safe space creation also entails mobilising public actions, they may constitute a risk for the undocumented who choose to participate. By appearing in public, demonstrators risk being photographed, arrested, and, in the case of the undocumented, even deported (Beltrán 2009, 606). In the example of Kontrapunkt's alternative structures, while their aim was to provide a safe space for everyone regardless of legal status, there was always the risk of being identified by the police who at times visited the social centre or were close by.

These risks, however, did not prevent migrants with precarious legal status in participating in public protests or engaging in the work of Kontrapunkt. On the contrary, by becoming involved in these alternative structures or by merely hanging out in these safe spaces, some migrants in precarious legal conditions became acquainted with the activists and experienced a political socialisation and, through this trajectory, found the motivation and strength to voice their own concerns and organise their own campaigns and projects.

Migrants becoming activists

During my fieldwork, some migrants became activists in Malmö through their personal struggle to receive legal status in Sweden. As noted in the previous chapter, 2013 was a particularly important year in which new (migrant) activists initiated and organised, with the help and support of Swedish activists, a number of collective actions that took place at the time and in the following years, including Asylstafetten, the Tent Action, Cykelstafetten (a bike action), and Aktion mot deportation's 24-hour sit-in outside the Swedish Migration Agency in Malmö. They also formed their own organisations, including Ensamkommandes Förbund (The Unaccompanied's Association) and Nyanländas Röster (Newcomers' Voices). Ensamkommandes Förbund is an organisation made up of young refugees for young refugees and was formed in May 2013 in

¹⁵⁹ The term 'safe space' has been criticised based on the idea that the term promises a potentially false sense of security, particularly to those who have multiple marginalised identities (Wallin-Ruschman and Patka 2016). 'Safe space' is here used as an analytical term to examine activists' actions and spaces, and it is not a term the activists use themselves.

Malmö and later grew and spread to seventeen other towns and cities in Sweden (see Glossary).

The Tent Action was arranged in the spring of 2014 (H. Larsson 2014). One of the participants was Sanad, who lived in Stockholm. Sanad and three of his friends who, like Sanad, had also had their asylum applications rejected, got in touch with Aktion mot deportation in Malmö and travelled to Malmö to protest against their own deportation (since they couldn't get the same activist support in Stockholm to conduct the protest). The Tent Action was a temporary encampment in a small green area called Jesusparken in Möllevången (see Figure 1) with a couple of tents erected with the involvement of activists from Aktion mot deportation, but also supported and encouraged through social media by Allt åt alla, Asylgruppen, and Kontrapunkt. It lasted for six weeks.¹⁶⁰

The last action from these examples, the sit-in outside the Migration Agency, was entirely initiated and organised by migrants in precarious legal conditions and features in the following vignette. With the scene depicted below, I want to illustrate how migrants in precarious legal conditions become activists and organisers of political actions and, as such, engage in 'politics of the first person' (Geronimo 2012, 173). I also intend to highlight the social dimensions of such actions in which the participants gather, spend a lot of time together, eat and sing, meet new people and connect with them through Facebook, and so on. Activism appears as an important social unit in which networks of connection and friendships are made and sustained. Lastly, the vignette also serves as an example of how actions organised by pro-asylum activists are networked with activists of class struggle-oriented groups in the city, which illustrates how activists from different activist traditions support each other's causes.

¹⁶⁰ The migrant activists from the action eventually received legal status in Sweden.

24-hour sit-in outside the Swedish Migration Agency, 14 January 2014, Malmö

3 p.m.

Some 20 people have gathered outside the Swedish Migration Agency in Malmö, a ten-minute walk from Möllevångstorget. Asylum seekers together with Swedish activists are carrying out a 24-hour sit-in, which was mobilised in the name of Aktion mot deportation to protest the planned deportation of 16 Afghan asylum seekers from Sweden today (from the detention centre in Märsta outside Stockholm). It started last night at 8 p.m. and is now in its second day.

Throughout the night, the activists, most of them asylum seekers or undocumented migrants, have posted pictures on Facebook of the event. One picture shows five people sitting close to one another—a female Swedish activist and four young male migrants—with warm jackets, hats, and blankets smiling right outside the main entrance of the closed Migration Agency.

One migrant activist also posts on Facebook: “We need more people here outside the Migration Agency. Put on some warm clothes and come!”

I arrive at three in the afternoon and the temperature is just above zero degrees Celsius. Rashid approaches and greets me. He is smiling like always. They have put up large banners on the wall and on the stairs leading up to the main entrance:

“No to deportations and racism” (*Nej till deportationer och rasism*).

“Close all detention prisons”¹⁶¹ (*Stäng alla flyktingfängelser*).

“Tear down the walls; all human beings have the right to sanctuary” (*Riv murarna; alla människor har rätt till en fristad*).

“Protect lives; not borders” (*Skydda liv; inte gränser*).

¹⁶¹ See Glossary and abbreviations.

“No human being is illegal” (*Ingen människa är illegal*).

“No borders, no nations, stop deportations” (in English).

One young migrant is holding a sign: “Stop mass deportations to Afghanistan.” Rashid offers me tea, chocolate, and biscuits. On a blanket on the ground, right by the wall, there are enormous amounts of bread, hummous, sweets, fruits, and a big pot of hot lentil stew.

I see a diverse group of people, men and women between the ages of 20 and 40, many of them with personal experiences of war. A couple of them are undocumented.

“Have you been here the whole time?” I ask Rashid. “Yes”, he nods, “nonstop”. He is wearing jeans and what looks like a thin green jacket, no knitted cap, no gloves, but his hands are warm. He moves around constantly, mingles with people, and tidies up the food on the blanket, offering chocolate to every new visitor and posing in front of cameras and smartphones. He hasn’t slept during the night.

I meet Hakim and ask him the same question. “I have been here all night since it began. At nine o’clock in the morning, I went to SFI [Swedish for Immigrants] and after that I came back.”

A young man with long blond hair is sitting on the ground playing the guitar. A girl by his side is standing and playing on a keyed fiddle;¹⁶² they are singing, “The wall must fall, fall, fall; it is rotten all the way through” (*Muren ska falla, falla, falla; den är rutten ända in*), which is a locally well-known song from the *No Border Musical* (a play made by Swedish activists from Asylgruppen and unaccompanied minors, some of them undocumented at the time of formation, rehearsals, and even performance) (Söderman 2019).

I now count around 25 to 30 people. Eventually more show up. People come and go throughout the day. People are stand-

¹⁶² The keyed fiddle (*nyckelharpa*) is a traditional Swedish musical (string) instrument.

ing in small groups, chatting, laughing.

Three guys are posing in front of the “No to deportations and racism” banner. One of them is holding a megaphone. I ask if I can take a photo. “Sure.” They line up again, smile, and give me the thumbs up. I show them the photo and one of them asks me to send it to him. We connect through Facebook. He presents himself as Abed and speaks English with me.

A reporter from the Swedish Radio has arrived. She is recording the live music and the cheerful surrounding murmur. Then she starts interviewing one of the central migrant activists from the action. He is wearing a *keffiyeh*.

The radio journalist: “Why is it important to protest against them [the deportees] being sent away in this way?”

Activist: “There must be human rights. Everyone says they exist in Sweden, but it is not so. We must fight and show solidarity with those who are deported today.”

Shortly after the interview, less than an hour after I arrived, the same activist receives a call. With tears in his eyes and a smile, he shouts: “After six years!” It was his lawyer who told him he has finally received a residence permit. His friends and the other activists present surround and hug him in congratulation and the activist wipes his eyes.

5 p.m.

I greet a key female activist of Action mot deportation, herself with experiences of migration and undocumentedness. We chat for a while. We shiver and hold our hands close to our mouths to keep warm. “You have to suffer to get attention”, she says and smiles.

The activist makes a phone call to one of her contacts in Mårsta detention centre. That is where the deportation of the 16 Afghans will take place. She hangs up.

“The police have said that the deportation is cancelled.”

“Really?” I ask surprised.

“But we cannot be certain that the police are telling the truth”, she says, and shows with her hand over her mouth not to say anything about something we cannot be 100 per cent

sure of.

“But I needed that little hope anyway,” she adds. “We can at least hope.”

I ask her if the group of organisers had talked about possible threats from any kinds of antagonists, for example neo-nazis, after what happened in Kärrtorp.¹⁶³

“Showan [famous anti-fascist activist in Malmö] said there is no such danger in Malmö”, the activist confirmed.

7 p.m.

Later in the evening when I return to the sit-in, it's pitch-dark. I see someone filming with a professional camera. A strong spotlight illuminates the faces. The activist Ingrid tells me it is a filmmaker making a documentary about Reza's journey to Sweden.

“I hope the documentary can deflate the image that ‘here they come and do nothing’, but rather show everything they do, that they are in a lively and engaging environment and do lots for their own and others' sake”, Ingrid adds enthusiastically.

Another activist, Elle, approaches us and wonders whether someone is counting how many people have come and gone during the day. “It would have been interesting to know. In total, it should be very many.”

Suddenly, a well-known anti-fascist activist and a friend of his appear around the corner. We greet. He is an unpredictable activist in the sense that he appears at actions and demonstrations that do not directly involve the class struggle-oriented groups that he normally is affiliated with.

A friend and I are chitchatting with the anti-fascist activist and his friend when someone asks to take a picture of us. We line up.

Later that evening, an activist posted the following update on Facebook: “Today's planned mass deportation was suddenly cancelled! Were there many demonstrations around the country? Critique from the EU? Today, one was cancelled, let us

¹⁶³ Referring to the neo-nazi attack on peaceful anti-racist demonstrators in December 2013 in Kärrtorp, Stockholm, addressed in Chapter 3.

now cancel all the others too.” She enclosed an image of a white dove flying through a barbed wire fence with the following words in black: ‘No more borders’.

Ensamkommandes förbund shared the following update: “After a cold day and night, we are happy about the outcome, that we struggled well, and that the deportation was cancelled and a friend got a residence permit.”

Participation in such events as depicted above can be transformative for those who participate in them (Roth 2007). The experience of entering a ‘space of appearance’ (Arendt 1998) and of acting side by side with others (from different countries, from different activist groups) generates broader identities and common experiences. The core participants and organisers in the collective action depicted above were migrants with precarious legal status, some of them already with many experiences of political mobilisations, whereas others who participated experienced a political action of this kind for the first time.

The vignette is an instance that confirms that migrants engage in assertive, highly visible political collective actions in Malmö. Rather than hiding, migrants under precarious legal conditions (some even in conditions of deportability) assert their right to have normal, visible, and equal lives in the city and in the country and demand it for others in similar situations. Such occasions serve as an example in which participants create political subjectivities and experience a transformative process of politicisation.

Involving migrants in politics is one concrete example of a pathway of emplacement opened up by activists in Malmö. Swedish activists encourage migrants with precarious legal status to identify commonalities and think about the broader structural forces (racism, capital accumulation, poor labour market protections, lack of legal status) that cause their problems. Thus, through a process of political socialisation, migrants in precarious legal conditions in Malmö have gained a language for formulating their displacement as a public problem rather than a private issue.

Migrants' political socialisation

I identified a process of politicisation (on different levels) of the people (both citizens and non-citizens) who moved to Malmö and got involved and became friends with the activists. Whatever the initial motivation to become engaged in activism was—anger, compassion, frustration, a yearning for a social network or a purpose in life—the very process of engagement was itself transformative for all of my interviewees, irrespective of social and legal status. However, for the migrants in precarious legal conditions, experiencing a political socialisation was, one can assume, more powerful and life-changing than for the Swedish middle-class activists when considering the material and social gains.

I observed how becoming an activist implied a certain intellectual trajectory—a change in the ways of perceiving the world and modes of relating to it—as revealed by their biographical narratives. The migrants who become activists in Malmö became political subjects and started to making sense of the world as political subjects in reflexive ways, in line with the process referred to by Dikeç (2017). The political consciousness gained through political socialisation, as addressed by the activist Zahra in Chapter 4, resembles the process experienced by the migrants in precarious legal conditions when they become activists.

I observed that the migrants who became activists themselves in Malmö had first become close friends with Swedish activists. Indeed, only a minority of everyone in the position of receiving assistance from the activists become activists. As one activist said, “most of them just want to live a normal life. They want a job, to get a family, own a car, and buy nice clothes. They don’t want to be activists.” But those migrants who are politicised start embracing a leftist political lens and even some lifestyle-bound characteristics of activist circles, such as wearing second-hand clothes or the Palestinian *keffiyeh*. Just as it is common among Swedish activists to wear T-shirts with the iconic sign stating ‘Refugees Welcome—Bring your families’,¹⁶⁴ wearing it is now just as common among migrants who have become activists.

¹⁶⁴ The slogan originates from a protest against the yellow road sign that can be found along the US-Mexico border depicting the silhouette of a man, woman, and female child in flight. The sign is cap-

Tariq told me: “If I compare [myself] with three and a half years ago, I’m completely a new person. I think. And I feel like I was re-born...here. I mean, [activism] has changed my life completely.” When I asked him to pinpoint what this change consisted of more specifically, he replied:

To be able to stay [legal status]. But also, nowadays I think, when I see people, I really want them to join us. That we should be one. I now struggle for people not to be divided into ‘us’ and ‘them’, but for a society with equality.

Tariq points at how activists, by helping him to hide from the authorities while undocumented, enabled him to gain a chance of seeking asylum in Sweden (instead of the country in which his fingerprints were first taken). One concrete and major change was personal and material: legal status. He then points to a change in aspirational terms: in the process of becoming an activist and supporting people who used to be in his situation he has learnt to perceive the situation of undocumented migrants with a political lens. When he became involved in politics as an activist, the ways he first perceived things changed, which indicates a political socialisation. Tariq continues:

There are many things that are considered normal in society in general, but now, through the activists, there are things that are normal for us but not for society. So, that’s why I think we always want to help each other to create the kind of society that we have through activism here. Or through Malmö, or like Möllan. For us, it doesn’t matter if a person is white or black, a person with documents or without documents, if a person is a feminist, gay or lesbian or not, if a person has nice clothes or not, a person who showers once a month or a person who showers every day. For us, all these kinds of things are normal.

tioned with text in black, stating: “CAUTION”. This sign has become an iconic symbol used by pro-asylum, pro-migrant, and pro-refugee movements across the world, but in which the text ‘CAUTION’ is replaced by ‘REGUGEES WELCOME’, sometimes with the added text in a smaller font stating, ‘Bring your families’ (see Volpp 2018).

In this quote, Tariq narrates the political space of Möllevången as tolerant and open to diversity in terms of ethnicity, class, and lifestyle, which is something he does not experience in urban spaces that he perceives as mainstream society. It shows how he started to identify with the political space of Möllevången and the political philosophy of the activists who live and act there. The quote indicates how his embraced leftist stance involves regarding diversity as common sense and natural, in contrasts to the racialised, hierarchical, homophobic, exclusionary system of mainstream commercialised (neoliberal) society.

The migrants who are activists today told me about how they started to reflect on the root causes of their own dispossessed position. Initially, the activist Hakim's line of thought was: "I am now in Sweden because there is a war in my country", as simple as that. Eventually, he understood his situation in much more complicated terms: the reasons for war in Afghanistan had to do with complex networks of capital relations between countries, especially the war trade between the Taliban and Pakistan and between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. And who sells weapons to Saudi Arabia? Sweden does, he pointed out. He pondered further:

When you have a problem, when you are in a particular [precarious] situation, you have to ask yourself: 'why do I have this problem?' Then you have to think one step further: 'this is not only my problem; who and what are creating this problem?' [...] Why do undocumented people exist? Why are we here? Why aren't you in my country?

For Hakim, becoming involved in activism thus meant relating his position and interests with the positions and interests of other people as resulting from complex systems of power and processes of dispossession.

In general, the new migrant activists conveyed a strong will to convey the experiences and the extremely vulnerable conditions of undocumented persons to the general public in Sweden, especially because of the widespread anti-immigrant discourse in Sweden along the lines of 'they come and take our social welfare and jobs',

which migrant activists reject and want to resist. This was the reason why a group of migrant activists organised Asylstafetten: to raise awareness of why undocumented people exist (the root causes) and to share knowledge about their experiences of rightlessness, which the Swedish people in general seem to know almost nothing about, they thought.

So, this new generation of migrants has entered the activist scene in Malmö. I have attended meetings with Asylgruppen in which they were facilitators and had taken on key organising roles within the activist group. They have initiated, planned, and conducted collective actions, as in the vignette above. Not only did they start engaging actively as members and doing backstage work (organising and planning activities) but they also actively engaged in contemporary Swedish politics. This awareness and interest were revealed through their comments on Facebook on the current state of affairs in Sweden, especially during the national elections in 2014, and their criticisms, for example, of right-wing parties' planned privatisations of welfare institutions in Sweden. Hakim said: "Before, I didn't know anything about what Right is and what Left is. I couldn't tell the difference between them." As an activist and leftist today, he felt devastated to see the consequences of neoliberal politics in Sweden: the privatisation of health care centres and of schools and how this entailed giving power to private investors.

The new activists were in particular concerned with the question of privately-run refugee shelters in Sweden. In the wake of the large refugee reception in 2015, it became known in the media that private investors, some of whom were currently or formerly members of anti-immigrant parties, were running refugee shelters (with state funding) and raising large amounts of private capital while the conditions under which asylum seekers lived were far below normative standards (see, e.g., Syrén 2016; Neurath and Sundkvist 2015; T. Larsson 2014).

Other political issues that the new activists became interested and involved in were feminism, anti-homophobia, and anti-fascism. Ruth Milkman's (2014) study of *The Dreamers* (migrant rights activists) in the US shows a similar pattern to what I have observed in pro-asylum activism in Malmö concerning the close

collaboration between migrants and LGBTQ activists (see Chapters 1 and 4). In the US, The Dreamers borrowed the concept of ‘coming out’: how undocumented people felt scared and unsafe but how they then felt empowered by ‘coming out’ as undocumented within an activist context and no longer felt as limited by their irregular status.

Within the political communication of pro-asylum groups in Sweden, the slogan ‘against all borders’ is commonly used not only to indicate national borders but also to include borders between different sexes, genders, abilities, and ethnicities, which is further indicated by pro-asylum groups’ use of the LGBTQ movements’ internationally known rainbow flag. The activists in pro-asylum groups in Malmö help cultivate and give meaning to these and other statements. Another example in Sweden is the common use of the slogan ‘No One Is Illegal’¹⁶⁵ (*Ingen människa är illegal*). Among migrants in precarious legal conditions (activists as well as non-activists) in Malmö today, many view these slogans and their associated discourses as normal and common-sense ways to politically talk about their subordinate positioning. ‘No One Is Illegal’ is today a rather normalised slogan. As Tariq put it: “No one is illegal. You should have rights even though you do not have some stupid papers. But today those people are called ‘illegal’, and that is just sad.” This suggests how the migrants in precarious legal conditions who enter the activist scene in Malmö learn to formulate political language and their sense of self. Swedish activists engage in intense discussions with migrants with precarious legal status on why it makes sense to assert themselves in the public sphere in spite of the risks posed by their precarious legal status (see Nicholls and Uitermark 2016, in which the ‘Undocumented and Unafraid’ emerged among undocumented youth activists in Chicago and Los Angeles).

One challenge that the migrants who became activists in Sweden told me about was that their families in their countries of citizenship had disliked knowing that they were involved in politics. The

¹⁶⁵ No One Is Illegal is the name of a transnational network that represents illegal migrants at risk of deportation and which organises rallies and campaigns to draw attention to the situation of refugees (Caraus 2018).

migrants' own political socialisation had made them feel more distant to their families and their ways of thinking about and perceiving the world. Some parents were angry knowing their children had become activists, something they perceived as dangerous and 'stupid', based on their local knowledge of what constitutes political activism (in, e.g., Iran, Afghanistan, or Eritrea).

However, the new generation of activists that formed their own organisations in Malmö may not remain a part of an expanding extra-parliamentarian scene. Ensamkommandes förbund, mentioned above as a migrants-led organisation partly formed with the help of extra-parliamentarian activists, is a typical example of an organisation that has been co-opted.¹⁶⁶ In social movement theory, co-optation means that a group no longer constitutes a threat to the established order of things, but on the contrary is lured into governance structures with tangible rewards (like subsidies) and the promise of political influence (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 31). Co-optation is the process by which an activist group can "gain power as they are recognized as legitimate voices and allowed access to resources but they can only wield the power within parameters set by the government" (ibid., 33). This is an illustration of how hegemony works. Some members of Ensamkommandes förbund later formed another organisation, Nyanländas Röster, which can be interpreted as an attempt to form a group that could keep a certain level of radicalism, continue to do activism, and promote counter-hegemonic narratives and actions. Today though, this group seems to be dormant with no new activities in the past years.

Forging new social relations

In this chapter, I have shown that activists experiment with non-hierarchical and non-normative ways of structuring social relations. Activists seek to create spaces and relations that are based on self-organisation, horizontalism and direct-democratic decision-making processes, and non-oppressive modes of social interaction.

¹⁶⁶ State actors' attempts to co-opt and include and thereby control movement organisations made up of migrants or ethnic minorities have been examined by Ålund and Schierup (1991).

The prefigurative politics analysed in this chapter overlap and bring out similar outcomes. For example, the transit centre at Kontrapunkt, which I analysed as an alternative structure or a 'safe space' for people with precarious legal status, at the same time constituted, to a large extent, a network of connected friends.

Kontrapunkt sheltered and involved people regardless of their legal status, many of whom were considered undesired in mainstream society and by the Swedish state: Roma migrants, transit refugees, as well as the rejected asylum seekers who stayed (as undocumented) to volunteer. People with precarious legal status enacted political agency in the form of contributing and working as volunteers. The actual physical infrastructure of the social centre was an essential precondition for this kind of structure to be created in the autumn of 2015. There is indeed something special about a bottom-up, voluntarily created non-profit organisational space such as Kontrapunkt, built on principles of self-organisation, equality, and mutuality, which are values and principles that are mostly absent in market and state-led institutions. Experiencing Kontrapunkt is to experience a space different from commercialised mainstream society in which individualism prospers. However, alternative structures do not need a physical place to exist but are also played out in terms of, for example, fluid inter-personal networks of solidarity-based redistribution of resources or networks of connected friends.

Most importantly, the activists' creation of networks of friends and alternative structures such as at Kontrapunkt attempt to challenge the distinctions between citizen and non-citizen and the number of different legal statuses found in-between these categories by forging horizontal social relations beyond legal statuses to create pathways of emplacement (access to shelter, legal aid, political participation in public spaces, etc.) and to enable people to stay in the city and in the country. They do this by continuously trying to involve migrants as friends, co-activists, or simply as co-human beings in horizontal ways. Hence, their practices problematise the ontological divide between different legal categories (Nyers and Rygiel 2012, 9) as well as transcend other lines of division such as class, ethnicity, and nationality. However, as revealed above, this is

not an easy process. On the contrary, it is difficult, frustrating, and most of the time impossible to create equality between people in unequal material, economic, cultural, and legal power relations. But despite the relations being “contaminated” by inequalities, as one activist put it, I observed situations and relations that approached horizontality and mutuality, not least when friendships were forged.

The activists’ creation of alternative structures and friendships constitutes the means to directly resist people’s displacement and dispossessions and to structurally have an impact on society. By opening pathways for migrants and activists to become emplaced in the city, they attempt to enable access to the city’s resources for all of the people who make up the social fabric of the place (independent of legal status). Looking at these different yet interconnected forms of making politics reveals a complex set of processes in which activists simultaneously try to create durable support structures, organise themselves as political actors, and materially resist various inequalities to actually directly improve their own lives and those of others, similar to what Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) identified when studying what they call ‘autonomous geographies’ in the UK. The analysis in this chapter has in particular focused on how these efforts have affected those migrants who live under legally precarious circumstances and how embodied solidarity has contributed to migrants’ emplacement through emotional and economic support (social networks, resources, safety), which is crucial especially in the early stages of a migration trajectory (Öberg 2015).

Yet, far from all migrants in precarious legal conditions who come into contact with activists in Malmö become activists (as in the standard definition of the term, see Chapter 1). However, those migrants who did had commonly created close friendships with Swedish activists beforehand. And in taking the steps into engaging in activism, they experienced a knowledge-gaining process by which they saw the broader picture of where they found themselves vis-à-vis others and social, political, and economic structures. Hence, they connect their own positioning in hierarchies of power with the positions of others. This political socialisation is simulta-

neously a process of emplacement through their networks of connection that they build with other activists.

I observed that friendship created through activism is a fluid connection, often created and enacted in public spaces and involving elements of instrumentality and politicisation, which is similar to what was found in the study made by Kathiravelu and Bunnell (2018). Furthermore, friendships turn into political resources that strengthen collective actions and the creation of alternative structures because they enhance loyalty and trust.

My contribution to the scarce literature on friendship in general, and specifically on activist friendship (for exceptions, see, e.g., Freeman 1972; Jasper and Poulsen 2012), is that the friendships forged through activism have a transformative potential and take the form of transgressive social ties that partly challenge norms of affiliation and contact. I see friendships emerge between people who would otherwise, outside activism, not meet at all. Hence, the activists, through their networks of connection, build instrumental yet welcoming 'safe spaces' inhabited by diverse 'friends', which constitutes a form of counter-power to the 'culturist discourses of othering' (Ghorashi 2018; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018) in that the friendships regularly transcend the lines of legal status, 'race', class, gender, and sexuality. Activists, through embodied solidarity, de-normalise the taken-for-granted taxonomies of the Self and the Other and instead create commons and a sense of commonalities. This is particularly noticeable within the pro-asylum circles in Malmö.

These politically informed friendships are prefigurative in that they are not only disruptive of common forms of affiliations, but inaugurative as they aim to create more equal orders. The experimentation with alternative structures and friendships based on the principles of solidarity implies commoning (sharing experiences, resources, and knowledge). Through the sharing of their different socio-political relations, commoning (De Angelis 2010) is achieved. Commoning makes people feel part of something and as having shared stakes in their shared urban space and hence resists emotional dispossession. For migrants with precarious legal status, to create relationships and even close friendships with local activists

means resisting the emotional distress (loneliness, poverty, fear) that their precarious lives entail. Furthermore, commoning becomes a form of direct access to material wealth, access that is not mediated by competitive market relations or state-led institutions, but by and through social networks and a ‘solidarity economy’ (Arampatzi 2017).

This commoning is a form of city-making, albeit on a small scale in ‘pockets of safe spaces’ within urban socio-spatial relations. The city-making materialises through new social relations developed through the spaces opened up by the activists. Looking into embodied solidarity within the activist scene in Malmö, new modes of affinities and connections are found. And as I see it, friendships are at the core of the process of emplacement in the city.

One of the most interesting effects of activists’ embodied solidarity is that they have created the conditions for political emplacement: not only are some migrants’ precarious conditions resisted, but some of the migrants start making sense of the world as political subjects and transform their precarity into political struggles in collaboration with other marginalised people as well as with Swedish activists. The political socialisation addressed in this chapter is experienced by all activists (independent of legal status) to different extents at different times in life. But I have focused on the migrants in precarious legal conditions who create and establish relationships with activists. It was primarily through close relationships—love relationships or friendship relations—that the migrants with precarious legal status experienced a political socialisation and became activists themselves. For them, activism constituted a self-transformative process in the sense that it affected the person’s being in the world. Once they gained this politically informed awareness of structural inequality and power relations, it could not be undone.

These new relations forged through activism in Malmö have enabled activists to assert their right to the city, but their rights claims do not end at the city borders. Having established a base of power through their networks of connections, Möllevången constitutes an institutional and relational launching pad for making broader rights claims at the national level. These new social rela-

tions have enabled migrants in precarious legal conditions to forge political struggles that have travelled beyond the borders of the city, thus enabling them to assert broad rights claims in the country (e.g., the pro-asylum march Asylstafetten).

The above notwithstanding, I found various challenges within these relations. Becoming an activist (independent of legal status) created a form of vulnerability and dependence on activism. If you are to leave the political life, you risk losing the friends you've made through activism as well as your sense of self as a political being. Also, every structure and network inevitably entails boundary-making. Who are let in and who are not? Arbitrariness and 'personal chemistry' played roles in the process of relation making. As structures solidify (through friendship), they risk making it harder for 'new' people to enter and become part of them.

Figure 9. Activists protesting their own deportation, standing by the monument the Glory of Labour on the square Möllevångstorget, 11 February 2014.

7 COLLECTIVE ACTION

Public space is a site where conflicts are expressed (Stacheli and Mitchell 2007). Recognising the role that spatialisation plays in the production and reproduction of domination and repression (Dikeç 2001), for space is unequally distributed (Rancière 1999), space can be considered a site of politics in fighting against injustice (Dikeç 2001; Arendt 1998). Space matters for establishing new relations and new connections (Dikec 2012). This chapter will show how activists use public space to perform contentious politics by means of *creating alliances* and *mass mobilisations* to make inequality and dispossessive processes visible.

Collective action, such as a protest, is always in some ways an act of making space (Routledge 2017, 40; Arendt 1998). Participants in collective actions thus engage in city-making by attaching new memories, meanings, and political subjectivities to places. By putting many people in one place, activists convert public space into a ‘truly public space’ (Arendt 1998) or a ‘political commons’ (Harvey 2013, 161): a place for open discussions and debate over what power is doing and how to best oppose its reach. As Harvey (ibid., 162) claims, the collective power of bodies in public space—squares and streets—is the most effective instrument of opposition (as opposed to the virtual opposition on Twitter and Facebook). Through such public practices, the participants achieve a sense of being in common. The collective actions presented in this chapter are ‘spaces of appearance’ in which new subjectivities and collective identities are formed or “where new beginnings are set into motion” (Arendt 1998, 177). They are temporally constructed spaces in which the participants of such actions (activists as well as

non-activists) become political agents and in which group solidarity is created between strangers.

Concretely, this chapter analyses activists' attempts of organising and protesting in inclusive and horizontal ways through the examples of the Sorgenfri settlement in solidarity with Roma migrants (2015–2016) who were denied the right to settle in the city and Kämpa Malmö, a recurrent slogan for various mobilisations against racism and neo-nazism (starting in 2014) after a nearly lethal instance of nazi violence in Malmö. Beyond being two instances of remarkable mobilisation in the history of Malmö (and Sweden), they both illuminate how activists relate to current multiscalar processes of dispossession—in material, emotional, and aspirational terms—as well as displacement and restructuring and the implications of such actions.

I will examine the role of place through which the collective actions are performed and what effects these actions have on social relations (between activists as well as between activists and non-activists). I look into the challenges, conflicts, and police brutality that the activists face in their processes of commoning, which are ways of creating common spaces and interests and the sharing of experiences and a common urban place.

Important elements in the making of a 'politicised collective identity' (Simon and Klandermans 2001), as presented in Chapter 1, are various forms of symbolic production, collective practices, and rituals (on- and off-line). In particular, within confrontational collective actions, such as the mass blockade examined at the end of this chapter, there is a clear 'us' ('the forces of good') and 'them' ('the forces of evil'), which triggers strong emotions (Peterson 2001). Collective actions always encourage certain interpretations of the world. The 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is clear in the case of Kämpa Malmö: 'them' is constituted of neo-nazis. In the case of the Sorgenfri settlement, 'them' are the representatives of the local government.

The success of any single campaign depends on activists mobilising the support of allies (Miller and Nicholls 2013). As will become clear in both cases, the use of social media is central in mobilising support and creating an 'us', which instantly connects local

street actions with multiple scales (national, regional, and even global). Importantly, activists were able to mobilise strong support thanks to the high degree of interdependency between activist groups in the city and their ability to collectivise group resources (ibid.). The examples provided show how activists use their resources (networks, knowledge, ability to identify political opportunities and targets) to construct radical yet compelling discourses to express their political grievances to multiple publics.

The chapter is divided into two sections—alliances and mass mobilisations—which are carried out based on principles of inclusivity, prefiguration, and horizontality. What connects alliances and mass mobilisations is that both represent struggles for a certain narration (or framing) of precarity and dispossession. In both instances, activists attempt to narrate the struggle as a struggle *together with agents* (i.e. with the Roma migrants or people who suffer from fascism and racism) and not as a struggle *in support of victims* of precarity and dispossession. The meaning of solidarity is nevertheless constantly negotiated between these two understandings of conducting a struggle. I address this discussion in the conclusion of the chapter.

In the first section, I explore the Sorgenfri settlement, which serves here as the ethnographic example, where an alliance was created between Swedish activists and the Roma migrants living in the settlement as well as between different activist groups in the city. This alliance entailed a process of everyone involved exploring their common ground and collaborating across differences and deep inequalities. The Sorgenfri settlement is an example of a cross-class alliance in which solidarity came out as a relation forged through political struggle that sought to challenge forms of oppression (Featherstone 2012; Scholtz 2008). This alliance can be conceived of as a temporary ‘fighting collective’ (*kämpande kollektiv*), an expression used by activists to describe a situation in which activists position themselves within the context of a particular political and material conflict taking place in the city. Initially, the Roma migrants were passive receivers of the activists’ will to help, but in the course of building a solidarity-based alliance, the Roma migrants became political agents by claiming rights and recognition

and organising and participating in demonstrations, sit-ins, and writing debate articles published in local newspapers.

The defining feature of an alliance is that the different parties are in some way interconnected with resource dependencies. Interconnectedness is a state of being connected reciprocally. The parties must share common goals while still maintaining some level of individual autonomy (Gudergan 2007). However, mutuality and interdependence can be difficult to claim in deeply unequal relations (see Chapter 1). Activists' framing of their collaboration as a form of alliance was not intended to cover up inequalities, but to approach the Roma migrants as political agents, equals, and as rightful subjects entitled to the wealth that they are part of producing in the city. Hence, the way that the alliance was formed illustrates activists' rejection of representative struggles and puts into practice their belief in collaborative egalitarianism and mutual aid through their attempt to support the dwellers in ways that enabled them to speak for and represent themselves. It also illustrates activists' wish to co-create political spaces and actions that challenge inequality in society. In fact, the activists pointed at the material basis for solidarity as the common basis for the struggle. Many of the activists in solidarity with the Roma migrants lived in or nearby the Sorgenfri settlement and thus had experiences of losing their own public spaces and access to affordable housing in the area. Hence, the activists attempted to show how they, as a 'fighting collective' in alliance with the Roma migrants, which meant the struggle consisted of differently positioned people in hierarchies of power (e.g. citizens and non-citizens), were actually confronting the same forces (the forces of capital) as the Roma, which nevertheless affect them in different ways and to different extents.

Importantly, in the process of sharing their different socio-political relations, commoning was achieved. For the Roma migrants, commoning became a form of direct access to social wealth, access that was not mediated by competitive market relation or state-led institutions but by and through social relations in which mutual aid and solidarity were practiced.

In the second and last section of the chapter, I describe mobilisations under the banner of Kämpa Malmö, which here serve as ex-

amples of how activists succeeded in mobilising large numbers of people that included non-activists from the general public. Mass mobilisations commonly bring together a variety of organisations, groups, and individuals from a broader set of affinities that frequently traverse gender, age, and class differences (Routledge 2017; Peterson, Wahlström, and Wennerhag 2018) and, as we will see, ideological differences. I suggest that these mass mobilisations are prefigurative since the activists managed to bodily involve a diverse set of people in jointly exercising politics and power in the street against authoritarian, hierarchical, dispossessive, and racist structures and ideologies. Activists thus prefigure space in the here and now and thereby foreshadow the world they want to live in by enacting diversity (of tactics and heterogeneity of people) and practicing counter-hegemonic values. A lengthier description that illustrates this diversity is provided towards the end of the chapter in the form of a vignette. Activists' prefigurative politics of inclusion and horizontality nevertheless contain challenges, which I address in each subchapter.

Both cases, the Sorgenfri settlement and Kämpa Malmö, contain examples of blockades, which are common to the contemporary repertoire of contention. Blockades commonly have two purposes: first, to stop the 'bad guys', i.e. the neo-nazis in the Kämpa Malmö blockade or the police and excavators from entering in the Sorgenfri settlement blockade. Second, blockades may be used to protect a common space, such as the Roma migrants' settlement that was threatened with eviction or to protect 'anti-racist' urban spaces such as Möllevången. Concretely, human barricades, such as forming a line and linking arms, are what constitute blockades here.¹⁶⁷

Each of the two sections explores a distinct dynamic connected to the importance of urban space in collective actions. The first example (the Roma migrant settlement) is about a specific place and its transformation in the course of urban redevelopment and regeneration and the way activists intervened in that form of capital accumulation. The second example (anti-nazi protests) concerns the dynamics of contentious politics as resulting from an instance of

¹⁶⁷ Human barricades are called soft barricades, whereas hard barricades imply using gear such as chains, U-locks, lock-boxes, or vehicles (Boyd and Mitchell 2012).

neo-nazi violence against leftist activists, an instance in which neo-nazis wanted to breach the leftist anti-racist zone of the city. This shows how people get involved in protests and the role of narratives and place making for people who come to identify with each other and a common cause.

Creating alliances

At the same time as Kontrapunkt was transformed into a refugee transit centre in 2015, another major political and social conflict was taking place in Malmö. EU citizens, mostly Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, had created a settlement in which they stayed under very poor conditions. The dwellers of the settlement had travelled to Sweden to earn money by finding day-labour and by begging. They were a heterogeneous group in terms of professional background, schooling, age, and gender. Some of them had relatives in their countries of citizenship who were sick and needed healthcare, some had houses that were falling apart and needed repairs, others wanted to be able to pay for their children's schooling.

The Sorgenfri settlement became an intensely contested place located in the northeastern industrial area of Malmö called Norra Sorgenfri. Around 150–200¹⁶⁸ Roma people, who in the media were called “EU migrants” or “vulnerable EU citizens”, stayed in self-made huts, caravans, and cars in the settlement. It was referred to as the largest shantytown in Sweden's history (J. Karlsson 2015). Sanitation became the main topic of the conflict between the dwellers and activists on the one side and the city as represented mainly by the Environmental Committee of the City of Malmö (Miljönämnden, Malmö Stad) on the other. The piece of land where the settlement was located was poisonous due to pollution from an old factory that had been there. Also, the dwellers had no ordinary toilettes, heat, or running water and garbage had accumulated in the area.

The conflict over the Sorgenfri settlement was complex and involved a wide range of actors: the settlement dwellers, activists, or-

¹⁶⁸ Other sources state a number of 400 people (Josefsson et al. 2015).

dinary residents of Malmö, local and national politicians, state institutions, the police, the private property owner of the land, the court system, the EU apparatus, the mainstream media, and scholars (for an in-depth account, see Persdotter, forthcoming). Here, I focus on how the alliance was created between those who were directly affected by the eviction and the local activists who supported their struggle to claim space and rights.

The settlement became highly politicised due to its central location in the city—a ten minutes' walk from the square Möllevångstorget—and the involvement of more than 100 local activists¹⁶⁹ who supported the dwellers. The organised opposition to the eviction from the Sorgenfri settlement is a remarkable case in Swedish history.

Importantly, the political and economic context of Malmö as described in Chapter 1 is important to keep in mind for understanding how the Sorgenfri settlement, during the course of the struggle depicted below, came to reflect various and sometimes conflicting narratives of the city: 'Malmö as the post-industrial city', 'Malmö as the leading city of neoliberal regeneration', 'Malmö as a migrant city' and/or 'Malmö as the symbol of ethnic diversity'. For a long time, the aim of the local government has been to change the demography of the city (see Chapter 1) by attracting the creative class by building luxurious housing and commercial spaces for them and replacing the (historical) image of Malmö as dirty, industrial, and poor with an image of innovative regeneration and 'successful' ethnic diversity and integration. A Roma settlement does not fit into the city's narrative.

The Sorgenfri settlement was erected on a privately-owned lot, Kvarteret Brännaren 19, which the City of Malmö had for a long time planned to redevelop. The settlement was located along Industrigatan, which, according to the City of Malmö (Malmö Stadsbyggnadskontor 2008, 28), is a street that has the potential to be transformed into a vivid walking path or street "with a strongly unique character" in line with Strøget in Copenhagen or Oxford

¹⁶⁹ These were mostly activists from Solidaritet med EU-migranter, The Network of Roma Rights, Kontrapunkt, Allt åt alla, The Centre for Social Rights, and Skåne Stadsmision. Activists from Asylgruppen and Aktion mot deportation were also involved in this struggle.

Street in London. The owner of the lot is a billionaire who bought it in 1999 for investment purposes (Satz 2016). At the time of 'the battle of the Sorgenfri settlement', plans were already being made to construct new houses on this piece of land. Only a stone's throw from the settlement built by Roma migrants, several new luxurious premises with ownership flats were being constructed. A shantytown in the vicinity would, one can assume, have a negative effect on attracting the 'new middle class' and hence on the value of the real estate and on capital accumulation in the city in general.

The mobilisation in support of the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement started one year before their eventual eviction in 2015. An activist connected to Kontrapunkt, himself a migrant to Sweden from Romania, had noticed the increase of homeless and begging Roma in Malmö in 2014. He knew they lived under poor conditions in the settlement and, since he spoke Romanian, he suggested to his co-activists at Kontrapunkt that they go there and ask them if they needed anything. So, they did. Most of all, the dwellers wanted help getting rid of all the garbage that had accumulated and to have toilettes. Kontrapunkt activists in turn put a condition on the dwellers: they wanted the dwellers to participate, work together with the activists, organise large camp meetings, and to get organised around their issues themselves, in this case garbage management at the settlement. For example, when the activists helped to buy two portable toilettes and calculated what it would cost to empty them, it was suggested by the dwellers themselves that they would internally collect 10 SEK from each family per week. The dwellers would be responsible for the weekly collection and, in combination with that, organise a collective clean-up day at the settlement.

In the process of opening up a space of dialogue between the settlement dwellers and local activists, some of whom lived in the same neighbourhood, the activist network Solidarity with EU Migrants (Solidaritet med EU-migranter) was formed in collaboration with Allt åt alla, Kontrapunkt, and the Centre for Social Rights.

The activists involved in Allt åt alla and Kontrapunkt saw the Sorgenfri settlement as a struggle against the gentrification of the neighbourhood and, at the same time, as a way of helping the

dwellers to stay in the settlement or in being provided with alternative housing by the municipality. Activists arranged large meetings at the camp site in which they talked about strategies for counter-acting the dwellers' precarious situation.

One of the many joint collective actions taking place during that year was in March 2015 when Allt åt alla made a public call to protest against the City of Malmö for not doing enough for the homeless in the city: "There is money, take from the rich; it is a question of priorities!" Together with Swedish activists, around 50 Roma dwellers from the Sorgenfri settlement walked into the City Council's meeting and sat down during the politicians' discussion of the topic 'vulnerable EU citizens'. Towards the end of the meeting, activists and the dwellers rolled out a banner saying "The right to housing should be unconditional" (Samuelson 2015). One of the activists' main slogans and ways of portraying the conflict in general was 'Fight poverty, not the poor'. The activists saw the poor EU citizens' situation as emblematic of the contemporary trend in which people are more mobile than ever (migrating for a better life) yet the welfare state is not comprised of everyone who lives within its national borders, which divides and polarises society (Kallós and Cornell 2016, 18).

The first threat of eviction in the spring of 2015 was based on the prohibition on littering and camping on private property. It was appealed against with the help of activists and the appeal was approved, and therefore the eviction was cancelled (Satz 2015). This small victory gave the activists energy to continue and to believe that change was possible.

Exploring common grounds

Allt åt alla had a slightly different approach to the dwellers than Kontrapunkt. Allt åt alla had no previous experience in creating an alliance with such an exceptionally vulnerable group as the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement, so they talked about how to approach them and concluded that they should make an in-depth examination of the situation *together with* the people living there. They did this by arranging a weekly meeting place in a venue close to the settlement to which the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement

were welcome to visit. The activists served *fika* and offered second-hand clothes for free and computers to use while visiting the venue. They also arranged language classes in which activists and dwellers read and learned Romanian and Swedish. The aim was to create a safe space where these two fundamentally differently situated groups— Malmö activists and Roma migrants under the threat of eviction—could meet and talk about how the dwellers defined their own problems and what changes they would like to see and to explore possibilities of creating a joint struggle that was also based on the activists’ stance against the gentrification of the neighbourhood populated mainly by low-income households.

Daniel, in his early thirties and engaged in Allt åt alla, was one of the activists deeply involved in this process. The widespread racism in Sweden against the Roma who beg for a living was an important reason for Daniel to engage in their struggle. Numerous times while drinking beer in pubs, Roma people came along with their cups asking for coins and Daniel overheard other customers’ racist statements, such as “disgusting Gypsies”. He confronted these kinds of situations many times. Upon moving to Malmö in 2014, he was told that the Sorgenfri settlement had been attacked by outsiders several times and therefore he felt the urge to fight their repression together with them.

The activists’ approach in this specific instance was described by Daniel as an explorative approach, which meant toning down the activists’ ideological pre-understanding of the problem. In other words, they tried to approach the problem in an open and creative way rather than in an ideologically driven way. As Daniel self-critically explained, the activists’ practices are, at their foundation, objectifying, since the activists approach social struggles with clear preconceptions of the grounds upon which the struggle ought to be fought. In line with this, the activists approached the situation by turning directly to the dwellers’ material circumstances. In terms of theory, this approach of finding commonalities was inspired by what has been termed ‘militant research’,¹⁷⁰ which is a way of in-

¹⁷⁰ ‘Militant research’, with roots in Marxist circles in Southern Europe and in Argentina, refers here to research carried out with the aim of producing knowledge useful for social and political struggles (see, e.g., Colectivo Precarias A La Deriva 2004). Militant research entails reflecting on epistemology

vestigating and communicating the activists' own needs and linking them with the Roma migrants' needs in order to act together. In Daniel's words, it is "a political tool and method of analysis that tries to understand a question by examining it together with those involved in it". Daniel elaborated on the challenges and tensions found within the Sorgenfri settlement and the activists' pre-understanding of social conflicts:

It's a difficult question to get into because you have some kind of Marx....late-Marxist analysis of things, like, 'who are these people?', 'what role do they have in the society?' and what...what, how, where can you...how to do something in order to change this situation when you have between 300 and 500 people who do not have anywhere to live and who also end up in-between the Swedish welfare state and the EU's freedom-of-mobility-rules? So, in that way, there were many paradoxes gathered in one place and also, in a way, a manifestation of how cities, and perhaps Malmö in particular, are changing. This was [seen as] a problem because they settled in an area where they [private and public construction companies] were to build, or where they are building, ownership housing and new commercial areas for some kind of urban middle class. So, there were a lot of different paradoxes gathered in this issue.

The complex character of the Sorgenfri settlement included the fact that it involved hundreds of poor dwellers, out of whom many had little or no schooling and did not speak English or Swedish. Further, they were caught in-between EU and state regulations in a location that had been planned for redevelopment by the municipality. This complexity made Daniel revise his understanding of political work. First of all, it is hard to intervene in a conflict that concerns people for whom the Swedish welfare state has little or no responsibility and, secondly, one must revise the idea that "if you just explain the situation to people and they understand how things work, they will simply join your line of thought". Daniel referred

in collective activist processes. For example, who can produce knowledge, about whom, about what, and how do they produce it, as well as the vexed question, what counts as knowledge?

here to the understanding in Marxist historical materialism of how injustices are created and how they can be challenged. He had the belief that because the Roma dwellers were poor and lived under materially precarious circumstances they would naturally have the same ideological standpoints as the activists, i.e. be engaged in some kind of Marxist class analysis. Daniel admitted his attitude at the beginning was very naïve but he subsequently abandoned such ideas. The activists realised that the traditional way of referring to a common position in a class structure was useless.

So instead, I think you have to create these meeting places or forums where you also create new understandings and new practices together [...] with the groups that are directly concerned with the political issue.

What Daniel expressed was a desire to create spaces that can be co-authored by the participants who use them rather than creating a space for political indoctrination. Activists' practices of opening up spaces of dialogue, as stated by Daniel, are an instance in which the Swedish activists and the Roma migrants got to know each other and exchanged experiences and interests. In other words, they participated in commoning. Clearly, the creation of such dialogical spaces is a complex process filled with tensions and failures, especially when keeping in mind that class struggle-oriented activists, such as those from Allt åt alla, for example, come already scripted with assumptions and values based around political '-isms'. Here, the activists proved to be self-critical of the left's traditional idea that workers' class-consciousness must be awakened in order to unite in a common struggle against capitalism. Thus, a major part of the activist group's activities involved opening up a shared safe space in order to build relationships, trust, and to identify the needs to be used as a basis for taking joint action.

At the beginning, Daniel recalled, the activists were more cautious not to intervene too much in the Roma dwellers' business and to tone down their own political viewpoints. But, as their relations matured and when they became friends, as Daniel described it, the discussions also became livelier and both parties dared to speak out

their actual political opinions. The activists met and talked to some of the dwellers almost every Wednesday for one and a half years. Long-term engagement was important for the kind of understanding that Daniel felt was created between the Malmö activists and the Roma migrants. Moreover, the activists found it necessary to be pragmatic in the sense that they reached out to mainstream institutions that they normally did not collaborate with. For example, in their work with the Roma migrants, the activists also collaborated with various congregations and church parishes, for example the Pentacostal church (Malmö pingstförsamling) and S:t Johannes Church (S:t Johannes kyrka) in Malmö.

During this explorative process, the activists had the idea of theoretically linking the poor dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement with Malmö residents in general and approaching the issue of housing and homelessness as something that affects not only the Roma migrants but also precarious citizens and non-citizens such as the undocumented. In other words, the idea was to explore the process of accumulation by dispossession that affects them all, albeit to different extents and in different ways. Daniel explained:

So, we talked about ‘inhabitants of Malmö’ (*Malmöbor*) in a broader sense that included more categories [...] including ourselves. When I came to Malmö, I lived under uncertain circumstances.

Daniel had difficulties in finding a permanent, affordable rental flat when he moved to Malmö. Daniel thus suggests a commonality with the Roma migrants in the sense that they both lived under uncertain circumstances with regards to housing upon arriving to Malmö, although the level of precarity differed between them.

The activists’ dialogue with the Roma migrants therefore revolved around the City of Malmö (the municipality) as a target for their demands and Malmö as a city of inhabitancy. From this perspective, they eventually found a commonality in issues of yearning for material security, democracy and their discontent concerning the City of Malmö’s decision-making processes, the difficulty of influencing politics, and the municipality’s inability to provide all

of the city's inhabitants (irrespective of legal status) with decent housing conditions. More concretely, the Roma migrants and activists formulated their (common) struggle in terms of being residents of Malmö and as connected to the precariousness of labour and housing (shortages). Hence, the political positioning of the self and others was formulated on the basis of material situations and struggles rather than in static political categories (Lundstedt 2016). The political positioning also reveals how the politicisation of particular issues is enabled by certain places and times.

Furthermore, with the help of activists, the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement wrote a debate article in the local newspaper *Sydsvenskan* (Alexandro et al. 2015) about their situation from their own point of view. When posting the article on Facebook, Allt åt alla stated that the problems that the dwellers described were those that both the Roma migrants and Malmö residents in general shared: the right to work and the right to housing.

Hence, the activists represented the Sorgenfri settlement in a different way than the national discourse influenced by an anti-immigrant rhetoric that has gained an audience not only in Sweden but in the whole of Europe (see Chapter 1): the Sorgenfri settlement was not 'a problem of immigration', the activists claimed, but a result of the crisis of global capitalism. This is illustrated in the following quote:

In cities, politicians do what they can to expel EU citizens [Roma migrants] who've fled the poverty that capitalism has created. Some groups are to be forced out so that other, wealthier groups can be accommodated. Cheered on by racist mobs, municipal politicians do what they can to force the poor out of the city centre. At the global level, we see the same process—here even more wound up with even more brutal expressions. With the EU as a wall and the sea as a burial, people are being murdered, the people fleeing bombs and famine created at the very centre of capitalism. [...] The EU citizens fleeing the crisis of capitalism are our allies. Their struggle for the right to housing and survival goes hand in hand with our fight for the same things. The right to housing should be unconditional and ap-

plied to both the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement [the Roma migrants] and the precarious workers [Swedish citizens] who switch between third-hand contracts, as well as everyone else in between. Since our goals and aspirations are one and same, so is our enemy in this battle. We need to defeat this enemy in order to change what is happening. The common enemy is the City of Malmö (Allt åt alla 2015).

Hence, the activists presented the problem in terms of the material and socio-economic conditions that the inhabitants of the city (migrant and non-migrants, citizens and non-citizens) share under the same forces of capital materialised through the neoliberal governance of the City of Malmö. Moreover, the activists did not present the Roma migrants as bearers of cultural difference with regard to the Swedish citizens (see Povrzanović Frykman 2016).

'Fighting collectives'

A similar political tactic as the one described above was used by Allt åt alla in Malmö when approaching the ongoing conflict at the Gynaecology department at the hospital in Malmö, which involved staff protesting against "grave shortcomings in Swedish healthcare" (Nätverket slut på rean 2016). Healthcare staff experienced a gradual deterioration in healthcare regarding the staff's working environment and conditions and severely impaired safety for patients. The activists met with the employees (mainly nurses and midwives) in order to offer their support in mobilising people to the nurses' cause. This collaboration culminated in the nationwide protests taking place under the title 'Another healthcare is possible'¹⁷¹ (ibid.). Michaela, a member of Allt åt alla, explained why this kind of alliance-building activism is the ideal:

It is also one of those things, as part of the autonomous tradition [meaning the tradition of Marxist-autonomism prevalent within parts of the extra-parliamentary left, see Chapter 1], that I think is very important. You do not fight for someone else:

¹⁷¹ Alluding to the globally known and used slogan 'Another world is possible'.

you are part of a fighting collective because you want to improve your own situation. Not like a selfish thing, but because you see everyone's enhanced by it. And it is a very important idea, I think, in this kind of political work, that you never present yourself as being a voice for 'others'. But instead you are a support. 'Support the strikers of Öresundstågen [local train company]', for example. Or you identify yourself as part of the commuters' collective. 'Commuters supporting the strike.' Then you use your voice as a commuter to put forward demands for better conditions for the workers, it should be 'cheaper tickets', it should be.... Instead of fighting *in place of* those who demand something. Rather, you are a support in that struggle. The same with the nurses' struggle. The conflict we identified then was: 'we' are the care users here, we're the ones who need to use the health care system. How does this affect us if they [the nurses] have such poor pay, that there is not enough staffing? It gives those who organise themselves the freedom to put forward their own demands, talk in their own words, have their own political orientation. While as a support movement, you talk from the perspective that you are the users of the health care.

In this way, the activists and the fighting nurses or strikers meet in a struggle by wanting the same thing: better working conditions for the nurses, for example, which, in the long run, benefits the care users (which includes the activists). This quote confirms the theories on political solidarity (Scholtz 2008) discussed in Chapter 1 in which groups do not need to promote their own direct needs or interests but can express solidarity with the groups whose unjust treatment is the reason for acting. It is about building alliances between those who suffer under some kind of oppression or under the existing system of welfare retrenchment (in this example, nurses' bad working conditions). Most activists involved in Allt åt alla describe their aim in similarly instrumental terms. By formulating their motivations in instrumental terms—in the words of Michaela: "we want to be a toolbox"—the issue of representation is solved (for a similar statement, see Lundstedt 2016, 31). Also, among the activists there were those who worked as nurses professionally, so

this kind of solidarity-activism with workers' collectives was something they personally related to.

One of the crucial points made here is that the activists' effort was to create alliances, or 'fighting collectives' as the activists called it above, between people with different yet connected interests. The 'toolbox' strategy was well established in the activist milieu in Malmö at the time of the battle of the Sorgenfri settlement. The idea of spreading and connecting different struggles as a way of raising consciousness and contributing to solidarity-making has been a central idea within the extra-parliamentary left in Malmö since the mid 2000s (see Müller 2009b).

The idea of 'fighting collectives' using a toolbox strategy confirms that the activists' engagement in political solidarity is not merely a passive feeling but understood here as embracing a practical inclination to action (Scholtz 2008, 33-34). This collective is unified by a shared commitment to a cause (sometimes formulated as a common enemy) since key to this form of (political) solidarity is jointly fighting injustices. Instead of talking about in- and outsiders with separate interests, activists frame different parties as potential co-creators (Lundstedt 2016). Narrating or 'framing' common points of interest in conflicts (e.g., housing, work), as was done in the Sorgenfri settlement, is an attempt to put activist theory into practice. When doing this, the activists emphasise *the struggle* (the process) as the 'place' for the making of collective identities (Thompson 1968) and solidarity (Featherstone 2012) instead of relying on pre-understandings of who constitutes, for example, the working class (according to their structural position in the production process) or 'rightful' subjects of solidarity. However, the fundamental inequality between the activists and the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement, which was not the case with the nurses, was at times challenging and, I claim, the issue of (non)representation was not entirely solved, which is the topic I turn to next.

Collaboration across deep inequalities

The collaboration between activists and Roma migrants was not an easy process and confusion and problems in terms of implementation and decision-making often occurred. The activists noticed that

their efforts caused conflicts internally among the dwellers. First of all, the political mobilisations made some dwellers earn less money than what they would have if their begging had continued uninterrupted in Malmö. Maja from Kontrapunkt said there were many recurrent discussions on the topic:

[some Roma migrants said] 'yes, but now we are in the media everywhere, so people give less [coins] and spit more', while others thought 'yes, but they do anyway, should we only accept that? We must raise our voices', 'we must fight'; it was those kinds of discussions all the time.

Introducing money and positions of power (with certain responsibilities) led to internal power struggles in the settlement. For example, as told by Daniel from Allt åt alla:

the smallest amount of money or the smallest thing could cause great conflicts internally in this group of people because they don't have anything. For example, we had bought spades for them to dig latrines, and so, 'who will be responsible for the spades?' Such things became a question of power [internally].

A further challenge, from the perspective of the local activists, was the dwellers' patriarchal structure of internal organisation. To tackle this, female activists invited female dwellers to separate meetings. Maja likewise experienced the dwellers' internal hierarchies and legal and cultural systems as challenging in their collaboration, considering the activists' organisation of horizontality and direct-democracy.

There wasn't really organisation [among them] but we tried at least. But on the other hand, they had an internal hierarchy with their...I mean with the whole Romani...how they make decisions and according to their entire legal system and their rules and their.... So, we tried to combine it, trying to learn and trying to combine it. It was an interesting process and not easy, but we tried at least to understand and interact with them, with

the traditions and rules they had.

The challenges that are referred to in this quote are in terms of culture, traditions, and gender norms. It was also difficult to manage the educational differences between the activists and the Roma migrants:

There are people...well, some understand more, some understand less. The majority of them have attended school for only a short period, if at all. Some are illiterate [and] cannot write in their own language, and even if you interpret and interpret, either into Romanian or Romani, they might not understand the meaning of what was said because of the lack of education. So, I mean, there are many who understand the situation based on their prior knowledge.

As pointed out, even when interpretation occurred it was difficult to assess the cultural and contextual meaning of what was said due to the lack of education. One can assume that the educational differences within the group of Roma dwellers also created a hierarchy, and that those with the most schooling and knowledge in languages acquired higher positions in their negotiation with the activists.

Despite these socio-economic and legal differences, an alliance *was* created between the two groups. Even if it was hard to find any points of compatibility at the beginning, due to the sharp differences in their life experiences and conditions, the activists nevertheless tried to approach the Roma dwellers by finding a common ground on which to create their joint struggle, as described above. Daniel was surprised that, despite everything, it was possible to, in his own words, “overcome the gigantic abyss that exists between me and a begging poor Roma from Romania”.

In order to create a functional collaboration across deep inequalities, friendship and mutual trust were necessary, Daniel argued, and he maintained that this was created between some of the political activists and the settlement dwellers.

For example, I know they had problems in other groups, like in the Red Cross where a lot of stuff was stolen, which of course you do when you have nothing so there is nothing morally wrong with that. But we never had anything disappearing in that way and it was because we had built such strong confidence in each other and they knew who we were and our intentions and so we were their allies.

Daniel suggests that the problems, such as stealing from the Red Cross, resulted from a lack of trust and the hierarchical positioning between those employed by the Red Cross on the one hand and the dwellers on the other. The Red Cross did not position itself as an ally in the political sense like Allt åt alla did, which was done while practically, bodily, and devotedly engaging in the Roma migrants' precarious living conditions. What he learnt from this experience, Daniel explained, was how much more aware the dwellers were of their own situation than the activists who, despite being self-identified as radical leftists who already had a critical outlook of the state, had a naïve attitude towards the Swedish state and the municipality in terms of the possibilities for finding solutions to the dwellers' situation. Daniel explained:

We set up several claims to the municipality, for example, to give them another place to live, and they [Roma migrants] said early that 'they will never give us that' because they 'don't give a shit about us'.

The activists, although conceiving of themselves as 'politically conscious people' and 'radically aware' of the contemporary state of affairs, believed that change was possible while "the dwellers were right from the beginning", as Daniel put it. The Roma migrants did not expect support from the political establishment and they did not get any. The Roma migrants' realistic awareness was possibly grounded in their previous and various experiences of criminalisation, racism, and of being evicted and deported from various countries in Europe. Despite a two-year long continuous struggle, the Roma migrants did not get alternative housing. What they did get

was a return trip (a bus ticket) to their countries of national citizenship and residency, which some migrants eventually did accept.

Maja, who was simultaneously working in assisting refugees at Kontrapunkt and involved in the dwellers' struggle in the autumn of 2015, perceived that it was much more difficult to be involved in the struggle against the Roma migrants' eviction than with the transit refugees. She claimed it was because the general public opinion was against Roma migrants' presence in Sweden, whereas the public opinion was supportive of the refugees' arrival, which can be confirmed by the historic Refugees Welcome movement and politicians' (at least initial) welcoming attitude towards their arrival (see Chapter 1). Research shows that even when Roma migrants are fleeing violent persecution and desperate circumstances of poverty, they are perceived as 'bogus' refugees or 'illegitimate' asylum seekers and, as such, categorised as 'mere' 'poverty migrants' associated with the 'abuse' of social welfare systems (De Genova 2019).

Changing strategy

From the activists' perspective, the conflict over the Sorgenfri settlement started out as a struggle for the right to be in the city, the right to its wealth, and the right to decent living conditions for *everyone* who wants to live in Malmö, irrespective of their legal and economic status. In short, as a fight for 'a translocal commons' (Cumber 2015) it may be an example of how the local activists had to change strategies (from their previous ways of fighting gentrification) when people from other (foreign) places, contexts, and trajectories of dispossessions end up within the activists' urban and public spheres.

When the politicians did not meet their demands, the activists looked for other forms of claim making. Thus, for strategic purposes they eventually framed the struggle within minority- and Roma-rights conventions. Maja explained the procedure as follows:

[We] put forward the suggestion [to the Roma migrants], ‘what do you say about calling for a larger network, a network for Roma people’s rights, and to focus on you being Roma and to highlight the pride of being Roma?’ Because then we could contact Roma organisations [in Malmö and Sweden] and there are other possibilities around issues of minority rights and UN committees and so on and so forth, as ‘you are in this situation because you are Roma, not because you come from Romania’. ‘You are poor because you are Roma.’

The changed strategy thus wanted to reframe the struggle in relation to the widespread anti-Roma racism existing in the whole of Europe, which partly explains why many of the Roma migrants leave their countries of citizenship in the first place (Yıldız and De Genova 2018). The majority of the Roma migrants, according to Maja, appreciated the suggestion put forward by the activists:

There were some who expressed that ‘yes, it’s nice that you bring that up, because that is something we have to hide’, and others were worried about, like, ‘yes, but they spit at me enough already, should I now also flaunt with that [Roma identity]?’ But the majority thought, like, ‘no, but why should we be ashamed?’, ‘we are already in such a shitty condition anyway, so we could just as well be proud of who we are’, ‘I am proud of who I am’ and so forth. So, they decided ‘okay, yes, let’s call it like that’ and we started to network with those in Stockholm and the Roma Culture Centre in Malmö too.

After this strategic turn, the dwellers of Sorgenfri settlement, with the support of activists, invited local politicians to a so-called citizens’ dialogue meeting (*medborgarmöte*) to talk about what to do with the settlement and how to solve the problems *together* with the dwellers. No politicians from the ruling parties in Malmö showed up, only representatives of the Left Party and Feminist Initiative (Feministiskt initiativ) and journalists who reported about the ruling politicians’ lack of interest in the Roma migrants’ fate in the local press (Ingvarson 2015a, 2015b). Hence, the activists suc-

ceeded in creating public opinion about the problems the Roma migrants were facing. Also, it became an issue brought up at the City Council meetings (*kommunfullmäktigemöten*) in which the activists and migrants participated. Activists and migrants further organised several demonstrations together when the settlement had been attacked by outsiders, and activists from Allt åt alla and Kontrapunkt stayed overnight at the settlement in case of harassments and attacks from outsiders.

Pragmatism

The process of creating an alliance with the Roma migrants reveals a general tendency observable in the extra-parliamentarian scene: giving way to more tactical pragmatism and openness at the expense of militancy and exclusivity (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Piotrowski and Wennerhag 2015; see also Jämte forthcoming). The pragmatism as seen in this specific case is connected to the concrete, material, and spatial dispossession and oppression that the Roma migrants experienced in Malmö, which, on a theoretical level, forms part of current activists' rejection of the more radical anti-state attitude and militant methods prominent during the 1990s and beginning of 2000s (see Chapter 1). However, this may also be combined with the result of the state's different ways of implementing repression against social movements. Research shows that along with the state's efforts of 'soft repression'—meaning government-led projects that attempt to prevent, control, and influence social movement protests without coercion or violence, for example through methods of stigmatisation, ridicule, or silencing—activist groups have gradually reformed in more open and inclusive ways and have increasingly reached out to organisations and institutions outside of their own movement (*ibid.*). Importantly, the activists' attempts of negotiating with official bodies and reaching out to 'other groups' are also intimately connected to the idea of enabling longer-term activism and the prevention of burnout and the promotion of a kind of activism that appeals to 'older activists' who need to combine activism with a full-time job and/or being parents to small children, as I addressed in Chapter 5.

This 'pragmatic turn', however, seems to have difficulties in efficiently addressing the underlying processes of capital, exploitation, and accumulation that are connected to broader structures of inequality beyond nation-state boundaries. Instead, pragmatic solutions have given way to the consolidation of the state's power to define the terms of the struggle, which is a discussion I elaborate on below and in Chapter 8.

Most activists I talked to expressed how they valued embracing a mixture of influences in their political work, like the mass media, institutions, and NGOs. As the activist Lisa, involved in Aktion mot deportation, put it:

Again, I am very pragmatic. I think you should use the tools that you think are best in a certain situation. And then, of course, without losing one's ground and the big picture. So, of course I have my limitations. The media is such a classic discussion: 'How and when do I want to use the media?' I think the media are really complicated, something I usually do not want to engage with. But I have now reconsidered some mainstream media as sensible to use. Then, obviously, I'll engage with them in a certain way that I believe in. In the same way that you make use of parties or other institutions. So, it's about being pragmatic here. Tools can also be churches, it may be parties, it may be a school, it may be health care centres or whatever you want. Then it is also about classic activism, conducting actions, different types of demonstrations, petitions, blockades, and different kinds of outreach.

Thus, activists act 'outside' the system and also sometimes within it. Concerning the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement, the activists felt obliged to plead with the politicians and the municipality, confirming the observed shift in Sweden concerning activists vis-à-vis the state. Whereas the former generation was theoretically and practically more anti-state oriented, the new generation is more pragmatic in the tools that they use (Piotrowski and Wennerhag 2015).

The eviction

Some months after the first threat of eviction was cancelled, the Environmental Committee of the City of Malmö made a new decision to evict the residents of the settlement and demolish all structures on the site based on the argument that their settlement was environmentally hazardous. The dwellers were encouraged to leave the settlement before Sunday, 1 November 2015 at 4 p.m. In the newspapers, it was announced that the eviction of the Sorgenfri settlement would take place with the help of hundreds of policemen (Palmkvist 2015). This attracted curious residents passing by in cars the whole morning and caused a traffic jam along the street Nobelvägen. Ordinary residents of Malmö had also arrived by foot and brought coffee to drink while witnessing the eviction, like a Sunday excursion. About 100 Malmö residents became known as ‘the ones on the other side of the road’ who were in favour of the eviction. It also attracted 100 activists who stood with the dwellers, blocking the entrance to the settlement to prevent the police from entering. Heated arguments took place between people from these two opposing groups. There was a massive media presence (see, e.g., *Svenska Dagbladet* 2015b). The activists and dwellers stood side by side creating human chains and holding banners saying, ‘Housing for everyone’, ‘Fight Poverty, not the Poor’, ‘Give us a dignified alternative’, ‘Solidarity across borders’, ‘Stop the eviction’, ‘Support the Roma’s Struggle’ (see Figure 10).

The eviction was eventually not realised that Sunday, which clearly shows the importance and efficiency of occupying place in defiance of the law in order to resist material and spatial eviction. The law professor Dennis Töllborg (interviewed in Majlard and Nyman 2015) believes that the police did not proceed with their decision due to the large inflow of activists that day. Two days later, however, early on the morning of November 3, the police arrived at the settlement and literally carried away the persons who were still staying there (P. Persson 2015), which was about 50 people out of the initial approximately 200. Many dwellers had already left Malmö for other cities in Europe or back to their countries of citizenship. The ones who stayed said they were prepared to fight together with the activists against their eviction by block-

ing the entrance and making human chains. One activist involved made an emotional update on Facebook, sharing his experiences of the eviction:

The City of Malmö [referring to the politicians], racists, police. The Parliament that politely criticised but at the same time advocated the same policy. Nothing can be said that has not already been said. I lost it when the excavators broke into the houses. The most beautiful thing in the world was to see all the people who fought together in solidarity. Everyone who kept vigil, guarded, and awoke in the midst of this two-day-long night. The dwellers who are the affected, whom we unfortunately could not help [...].

This quote conveys the general experience that the activists involved in this struggle had: the fulfilment and meaning that their joint struggle against inequalities gave, which was independent of its outcome.

In spontaneous despair right after the eviction, dwellers together with the activists marched to the City Council Hall (Stadshuset) to demonstrate the effects of the eviction and to demand alternative housing. The activist Julia, member of Allt åt alla, told me:

When we all went together to the City Council Hall after the eviction, the whole first kilometre, the Roma walked on the pavement. They were dead scared. They didn't want to walk on the street even though we showed them that the police had blocked the street for us to be there. After a while they got out in the street.

Symbolically, the image of stepping out into the street is strong, suggesting an act of politicisation and empowerment on the part of the evicted dwellers. However, the image also illuminates the inequality in this form of solidarity activism and the fact that the Swedish activists did not take the same risks as the Roma migrants in being involved in this struggle. Lastly, it also illustrates the different experiences that the Swedish activists and Roma migrants

may have had of the police in their respective countries of citizenship. For the Roma migrants, ‘the police blocking the streets’ may not equal safety for them, whereas the Swedish activists, despite having no permit, took it for granted that the police would protect their right of assembly and demonstration.

About 50 of the evicted Roma migrants initiated a sit-in on the ground outside the City Council Hall (see Figure 11), with the support of activists. Activists made an announcement on Facebook to collect mattresses, blankets, cardboard, and sleeping bags for the evicted Roma migrants. Directly after the eviction, another of the involved activists made the following update on Facebook to encourage her friends and acquaintances to join:

After the police and the municipality tore apart the settlement in Sorgenfri, about 150 people are homeless. Everything they owned was lost to the bulldozers. The municipality is contravening its housing responsibility and is directly responsible for exacerbating a racist atmosphere that divides people. Come to the City Council Hall and show your support for those who are now without home and safety! Bring warm food and beverages!

The next night, the local filmmaker collective RåFILM screened the recently launched documentary *Taikon* (Tamas and Mohtadi 2015) outside the City Council Hall. The documentary was based on activist Katarina Taikon’s (1932-1995) award-winning memoir. Taikon had a Roma background and fought for the rights of the Roma minority in Sweden. Approximately 100 people, lying and sitting on the ground, watched Taikon’s life story about her deeds (Chukri 2015).¹⁷²

According to the activists, the eviction was a consequence of the intersecting processes of gentrification, racism, and class conflict that are not specific to a certain neighbourhood or to Malmö as a city but define the current state of affairs globally. This is how the

¹⁷² A female activist who spoke Romanian did simultaneous interpretation throughout the screening.

eviction was formulated in Allt åt alla's update on Facebook (later published in *Brand*) one day after it occurred:

After days and nights of insecurity, suddenly it happened. Some are carried away so that others can take their place. We can call it gentrification, we can call it racism, we can call it class society. We have seen it before, Sorgenfri is more than just a place. Sorgenfri is everywhere (Allt åt alla Malmö 2015).

The collective action of occupying the space outside the City Council Hall resulted in a prohibition on using mattresses and blankets on the ground. When police came to confiscate them, turmoil and confrontation erupted between the police on the one hand and the Swedish activists and Roma migrants on the other. The activists and the migrants sat down linking arms, some were lying down holding on to each other, shouting in protest, while police confiscated the mattresses beneath them. Eventually, the police started carrying away some of the activists too (seen in a three-minute video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4DYvrFettM>). Due to repeated and harsh police repression, the sit-in was cancelled after 18 days. A second protest, taking place in April 2016, lasted for ten days but was also abandoned due to the police and municipality's continuous repression. Nevertheless, by occupying a symbolically loaded place, the ground and stairs leading up to the City Council Hall, the activists and evicted dwellers breached the order of things and revealed the blind spots of the local government to the public.¹⁷³

The Roma migrants had different personal reasons for participating in the political mobilisation enabled by the Swedish activists. Some believed in the struggle, "they felt triggered and empowered", as Maja described it. Some thought it was exciting, whereas others did it out of necessity for they had no place to sleep after the

¹⁷³ At the same time as Roma migrants were sleeping outside the City Hall, other EU citizens (from Denmark) were sleeping outside the clothing store H&M not far from each other. The latter group was sleeping in the street in order to buy clothes from the new French Balmain collection the following morning, due to the prices that are generally cheaper in Sweden than in Denmark. According to the Left Party member Richard Olsson (2015), this revealed the class hierarchy in Swedish society and whose interests are met and appreciated and whose are not.

eviction. Joining together with the group of activists gave them access to social wealth because the Roma migrants put their own demands on the activists. If they were to participate in the occupation outside the City Council Hall, they were to be given resources. Maja said,

They raised the question, ‘okay, we want to protest outside the City Council Hall. It’s the best option right now, but then we have some different things...what should we eat if we do not work in the streets begging during the daytime, don’t have a place to cook, what should we eat? Where should we store our stuff? Where are we going to sleep?’

The activists met their demands and provided them with food, a place to keep their few belongings, and a place to sleep (during the nights after their mattresses had been confiscated and once the occupation ended). A conclusion to be drawn from this is that the relations created through solidarity and struggle between people in unequal power relations are complicated: it is a process of give and take and constant negotiation of possible benefits for both sides involved. As the ethnographic material suggests, the Roma migrants were not helpless victims of social change or the passive recipients of other, more privileged actors’ wish to help them, but rather they seemed to have acted with a constant awareness of what they could gain from the joint struggle.

Challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts

Challenges

The activists met particular challenges in the case of the Sorgenfri settlement as they attempted to communicate and work with an extremely vulnerable group, including differences in language, gender norms, legal status, and tradition of organising. The deep inequality characterising this relationship constituted a challenge in creating inclusive and horizontal decision-making processes since the activists’ cultural, educational, social, and economic position and resources may have easily dictated the process. Such unequal relationships require that, self-critically, the privileged group (the Swe-

dish activists) constantly engages in the possible impacts of their privileged position and issues of representation.

A further challenge the activists met was the possible negative consequences of the activists' politicisation of the migrants' dispossession. By turning their precarious living conditions into a public political debate, the activists put the migrants at risk of getting even more negative public attention. The dwellers certainly did get negative attention, especially through a prime-time broadcast of the investigative journalistic programme *Mission: Investigate* (*Uppdrag granskning*) that primarily focused on the litter and garbage accumulated by the dwellers (see Josefsson, Sandstig, and Youcefi 2015). One can assume that this was a risk that the activists took knowingly and one they perceived as nevertheless being necessary in order to turn the migrants' situation into a political issue of common concern.

Despite increased street harassment against the Roma migrants in Malmö as a result of their political struggle, there are signs in the material that point at how the Roma migrants made use of the opportunity for their own ends and benefit, making sure to also put conditions on the activists (for acquiring food, shelter, etc.). The Roma migrants were aware, one can assume, of the fact that they could make use of the Swedish (activist) citizens' voice to ensure that their demands were heard at all in Swedish society.

While the activists thought change was possible, the Roma dwellers had what turned out to be a realistic expectation from the start. This may illustrate the activists' lack of local anchoring and knowledge about the migrants whose oppression the activists wanted to fight. The Swedish activists did not have the same level of experience of precarious living, racialisation, criminalisation, persecution, and oppression as the Roma migrants, which culminated in the latter believing they would not get anything. A conclusion to be drawn from this is that there was, on the activists' part, an overestimation of their own abilities and knowledge. This lack of knowledge may constitute an obstacle for finding appropriate strategies for conducting the struggle. This case, however, illustrates that crucial attempts were made by activists to achieve in-depth knowledge of the Roma migrants' situation, which was done

through their long-term establishment of meeting places for discussions and the sharing of experiences and knowledge. Long-term collaboration based on horizontality and mutuality clearly enabled trust-based relationships to be built. Furthermore, the Swedish activists' 'uninformed' hope that change was possible ultimately illustrates the necessity of a sense of confidence, agency, and faith in victory (sometimes even 'unrealistic' faith) so that political collective action can take place (Jasper 2011). Regardless of success or failure or how remote activists' goals may be, taking risks and meeting challenges generate moments of emotional intensity that gives a sense of meaning to life and group activity (Summers Effler 2010, 67).

Ambivalences

One central ambivalence identified in this process concerns activists' preconceptions of political conflicts. The activists' understandings of political struggle were constantly negotiated as they realised their engagement in prefigurative politics—'practices of concrete utopia' (Gordon 2018)—was not straight-forward but instead a process filled with challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts. It came to the point where the 'struggling collective' adhered to liberal democratic rights discourse (based on Roma identity), which many of the involved activists in principle reject, but it was seen as a pragmatic step towards some level of improvement for the dwellers' precarious lives. To raise Roma identity as a basis for rights risked contributing to the racialisation of the dwellers (as 'the Other'), an inevitable risk, however, in order to emphasise dispossession along racial and ethnic lines. The (negative) racialisation of Roma (in Sweden and the world) was taken as a key for understanding their subordinate position. Moreover, the activists' change in strategy, which saw them making claims in terms of identity politics (addressing the Roma as an ethnic group with minority rights), risked their ability to expose the underlying capital processes of the valuation and devaluation of property and people and their common material basis for the struggle.

The issue of the Roma migrants in Malmö could either be understood as being about identity politics or about how capitalism

profits by differentially valuing people (among other ways), and activists constantly negotiated between these two ways of formulating and conducting the struggle of solidarity.

Conflicts

The conflicts identified in ‘the battle of the Sorgenfri settlement’ were those between the activist-migrant alliance on the one hand and the City of Malmö, the property owner, the police, some Malmö residents, and the people who attacked the settlement on the other hand. Another conflict is revealed through the different ways that each activist group approached the dwellers, which reflects differences in their political theories and traditions. While Kontrapunkt put a condition on the dwellers (‘we will help you if you actively participate in the struggle’), Allt åt alla engaged in a long-term attempt to involve the dwellers on their own terms based on exploring their common ground and creating knowledge on the possible gains of the joint struggle. While activists had their specific ways of relating to and approaching the Roma dwellers, this did not inhibit a collaboration and alliance between the different activist groups. Connected to the settlement’s public and spatial visibility, the struggle concerning the Sorgenfri settlement forced the different activist groups to find ways of collaborating constructively to take their agenda forward.

Commoning in relations of inequality

Through the occupation of the Sorgenfri settlement and the following occupation of the public space outside the City Council Hall, the activists and dwellers together articulated the collective subject of the commons as an insurgent social formation seeking ways of being emplaced in the city. By means of collective action, activists together with the migrants used their bodies and put them “on the line” (Peterson 2001, 81) as in, for example, when they walked into the municipality’s formal meetings, made human chains during the eviction, or occupied public space outside the City Council Hall. The activists enabled a struggle that shifted bodies (the Roma migrants’) from the place assigned to them (the streets, homelessness, invisibility) (Rancière 1999) into the political meetings of the

municipality and into visibility in the public space ('here we are, and we have claims'). By doing this, the activists forced open a dialogical space with politicians for negotiating their demands and for allowing their political visions to reach out to the wider public as well as to their adversaries. The activists' disruptive politics ultimately attempted to open pathways of emplacement in the city for those who have 'no part' (ibid., 11). In this process of joint struggle, the Roma migrants became active political agents in formulating their own claims and working to achieve them in practice.

The activists also changed the place's function: the Sorgenfri settlement, located on land planned for redevelopment, turned into a platform for forging a political struggle. It became a location of the 'intersection of disparate trajectories' (Massey 2004). Any intersection of trajectories—or 'throwntogetherness'—implies a place of negotiation, most often conflictual negotiation (ibid.), of which the struggle described in this chapter is an example. The activists, in the process of creating a space for political struggle, made audible a discourse that was not meant to be heard, summarised by the slogans 'houses for everyone' and 'fight poverty, not the poor'. These narratives, as promoted by activists, question wider hegemonic framings of who has the right to urban space and national wealth as pertaining to localist or nationalist claims to place and exclusionist perceptions of belonging (citizens/non-citizens). In this space opened up by activists and migrants, imaginaries that are alternative to the hegemonic discourses were partly developed, constructed, and strengthened by activists and Roma migrants through their process of becoming acquainted with one another, sharing lived experiences, and learning together. The space enabled new relations and new openings in terms of thinking beyond accepted givens (Dikeç 2017): 'why shouldn't dispossessed Roma migrants have access to the wealth that they take part in generating in the city?' Migrants are not a surplus population in cities, but contribute in various social, cultural, political, and economic ways in city-making, for example as seen through how migrants slowed down the decay and abandonment of Möllevången, how a cheap and precarious labour force contributes to the creation of what Möllevången has become, how migrants form an important part of the

city leadership's construction of the narrative of the place, and how they participate in activism that contributes to the neighbourhood's attractivity. Migrants, in various legal and non-legal conditions, thus contribute to the restructuring of cities by working, consuming, living in the place, and through the social relations their activities generate (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018).

As I have shown, the activists recognised the dwellers' capacity to act despite their dispossessed social and legal status but only as long as the activists took care of their material needs. By recognising the migrants as political agents and allies, the activists challenged the established political orders that strictly separate citizens from non-citizens. Generally, the legitimate political act is accepted as one coming from a citizen, while the non-citizen—the refugee, asylum seeker, undocumented migrant, or Roma migrant—is understood as being excluded from such an arena (Anderson et al. 2012; Arendt 1998). The activists therefore worked to affirm the right to the commons for *all* people residing in the city, including the people with precarious legal status, to use its space and services (equal rights and access to housing, employment, and public services). Their alliance challenged state and public definitions of who has the right to be emplaced in the city.

When the Roma migrants were not allowed access to the state-defined commons, they nevertheless received direct access to social wealth outside market and state institutions through the social networks they built with the activists. Beyond access to political space, they were provided with concrete resources such as improvements to the settlement in the form of portable toilettes, shelter in Kontrapunkt after the eviction, free food, clothes, phones, Internet, etc.). As such, the activists prefigured their vision of the future in the here and now by providing the Roma with the resources (political space, access to social wealth) that they were not given by the logics of the welfare state and national citizenship. Activists promoted and practiced a vision in which all the people making up the social fabric of a place (independent of legal status) contribute to city-making and therefore should be given access to its resources. Furthermore, the activists' ethics of mutual aid and horizontality in communicating with the dwellers of the Sorgenfri

settlement are considered essential principles of any alternative future.

The activist Daniel, who has been featured in this chapter, admitted that they, the Swedish activists, had very little in common (in terms of life experiences and social position) with the dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement. This, however, did not prevent them from working together, getting to know each other, building friendly relationships, creating common experiences, and formulating common interests. Through a process of listening to and learning from each other's circumstances and wishes, it became clear that differences were both productive as well as challenging and also not insurmountable. Through their sharing of thoughts, practices, and knowledge, shared experiences and commons were created, which the activists interpret as a political act in itself (see Kallós and Cornell 2016, 19). This is the kind of commons that several contemporary scholars argue is key to achieving change under neoliberal capitalism (see, e.g., Hardt and Negri 2009).

A key lesson here is that a commitment to mutual aid and to rejecting essentialist assumptions about the 'other' can uncover surprising points of convergence between those who self-identify as activists (or 'socialists', 'communists', 'anarchists') and those who do not. Sentiments of anti-capitalism and anti-authoritarianism are generally more widespread than many people think (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010), sentiments that may, however, channel into far-right populist and fascist movements. Many of the Roma migrants had previous experiences of being evicted and their general attitude was "politicians are stupid, but the Swedish people are kind" (according to the activist Maja). To uncover these sentiments, the activists realised, it was not fruitful to adhere to political '-isms', but rather to build trustful relationships and commit oneself practically and bodily to the material struggle *with* the Roma migrants against their vulnerable and marginalised conditions.

As was illustrated in my material, the activists, most clearly those in Allt åt alla, wanted to expose the situation of the Roma in the media as well as in the local government meetings but also by making it visible in the public space. They wished to do so not

primarily as a matter of identity politics, but in terms of how capitalism profits by differentially valuing people. In other words, the activists held the Roma cause as a good way by which to make their otherwise ideological and theoretical understandings of injustices visible and engage in collective actions that made the injustices heard and seen. The activists who supported the Roma were simultaneously crossing divides—wanting to ‘work against the subalternity of the subaltern’ (Spivak 2010)—and, in fact, losing their own public spaces and the city as they knew it with affordable housing. Some of the activists even lived in this neighbourhood (Sorgenfri) slated for regeneration. Hence, the forces of capital that they both (migrants and citizens) were confronting were the same in many (but certainly not all) ways. Issues of inequality in global capitalism were materialised through the Roma migrants’ presence in Malmö, through the City of Malmö’s plans to restructure the city, and the city’s continuous efforts to evict the migrants. Hence, the activists’ interest in fighting gentrification is here intimately connected with the Roma migrants’ specific situation in the city. The Roma migrants were further dispossessed in favour of plans for accumulating capital. From that perspective, the struggle was a fight for ‘global justice’ at the local level by attempting to expose the municipality’s political and economic neoliberal project (Mayer 2007). Hence, there was a common material basis for solidarity, which the activists realised and partly used in their rhetoric. This takes us to the final important discussion of this struggle.

The ultimate challenge for activists who act in solidarity with migrants (rejected asylum seekers, the undocumented, and Roma migrants included), is that rights are primarily state-based. The ‘right to have rights’ (Arendt 1958) is limited by and conditioned upon a state acknowledging that you belong and therefore have rights. The joint struggle against the migrants’ eviction and their claim to the right to national wealth clearly illustrated the state’s ultimate power to define the terms of the struggle, which the Roma understood (‘they don’t care about us’) even as they continued to struggle.

Hence, the activists are confronted with the challenge of how to expose and challenge the underlying (global) capital processes that

have brought about the situation the activists are trying to fight via claims-making within a particular nation-state. This is connected to the challenge of going beyond the acceptance of the boundaries of the nation-state as the domain of political struggle for rights that come from the state. The assumption on which the struggle is then fought is that there is a national economy from which people should demand redistribution of their national wealth. However, to struggle for migrants' rights is to see that that wealth is produced through appropriation and exploitative labour world-wide and the people of the world should have rights to that wealth. When people migrate, they follow their right to global wealth. To struggle for a just redistributive system disassociates the struggle from a claim on a particular state and acknowledges that there is a global system of capitalist extraction and accumulation. State-based claims-making may inhibit one's ability of speaking to the larger structures of inequality and of the differing valuations of people based on nationality. Activists are thus faced with the challenge of creating a political theory that enables them to make those connections and use them in their struggle while resisting the dead end of claims-making to a state that is based and created on the basis of these people's (Roma migrants, the undocumented, etc.) exclusion.

Figure 10. Activists stand together with Roma migrants to protest their eviction from the Sorgenfri settlement, 1 November 2015. Photo by Victor Pressfeldt, first published in Brand (*Allt åt alla Malmö* 2015).

Figure 11. Evicted dwellers of the Sorgenfri settlement and Malmö activists watching the film *Taikon* during their sit-in outside the City Council Hall. Photo by Lars Brundin, first published in *Sydsvenskan* (Chukri 2015).

Creating mass mobilisations

Above, I illustrated one form of collective action that took the form of an alliance and consisted of joint actions in public space. I now turn to present and analyse ethnographic examples of the second form of collective action in this chapter, mass mobilisations, meaning collective actions that bring together a variety of organisations, groups, and individuals. Mass mobilisations are commonly powerful subjective experiences, unleashed by the emotional impact of having so many people together for a common cause. The person who enters a mass mobilisation—or a ‘space of appearance’ (Arendt 1998)—is not the same as the person who leaves (Beltrán 2009). Mass mobilisations reveal the importance of public space in various interrelated ways. Firstly, they provide a stage where issues of public concern may emerge and can be debated. Secondly, the visibility and bodily occupation of urban space enables empowerment, a sense of ‘we’, and a sense of control over space, albeit momentarily. Importantly, mass mobilisations disrupt everyday life in the streets, challenge the spatial order of the city, and make a discourse audible where before there was only noise (Rancière 1999).

I will examine activists’ understandings of current conjunctures of inequality and injustice (for example, the links between fascism, racism, and deportations) and how collective actions may impact public discourse through adopting radical political messages in inclusive mass mobilisations. An important aim of mass mobilisation organisers is precisely to radicalise the tactics and messages and to provide support for less experienced but valuable protesters (Graeber 2009, 408). The activists want to turn political protests into something attributed to the ‘ordinary citizen’ instead of something that only ‘activists’ do, yet preserve some degree of radicalism (see Chapter 1). This is a challenge that is successfully overcome in the examples featured below, illustrated by the diverse yet inclusive mass mobilisation consisting of a variety of organisations, groups, and individuals that traversed gender, age, class, and, to some extent, political differences. Activists mobilised residents from the general public who had previously not been politically active or participated in demonstrations.

‘Kämpa Showan’, 9 March 2014

Early on the morning of 9 March 2014, the news reported that four activists had been assaulted by neo-nazis in Malmö. It had happened around midnight outside Amalthea Bokkafé in Möllevången, one hour after the 8 March (International Women’s Day) ‘Take Back the Night’ demonstration (*Ta natten tillbaka*, the slogan of a radical women-only feminist march) had finished. Friends and comrades of the four injured activists sent messages immediately over their listservs and phone trees, calling for everyone to join in a public demonstration at very short notice. The official organiser was Skåne mot rasism (presented in Chapter 1) but Allt åt alla had a decisive organising role as well. Showan Shattack, the most severely injured, was an active member of Skåne mot rasism and one of the other wounded activists that night was a member of Allt åt alla.

Asylgruppen, Aktion mot deportation, Allt åt alla, Kontrapunkt, Asylstafetten, and Ensamkommandes förbund shared the event on Facebook, publicly calling everyone to join the demonstration on Möllevångstorget at 3 p.m. The slogan was Kämpa Showan (Keep fighting, Showan), an encouragement to him to endure his life-threatening injuries. Showan’s head had been repeatedly banged against the pavement, causing cracks in the skull structure. He was kept sedated for almost a week and was operated on multiple times. Showan was hospitalised for three months in total and would have physical and psychological scars for life.

After that day, Showan, a young male activist with an Iranian background living in Möllevången, became the face of the anti-fascist and anti-racist struggle in Malmö and the whole of Sweden. One of his close friends described him to me as “the perfect victim”: “Immigrant, feminist, anti-racist, and an engaged LGBTQ football supporter and activist. He is everything that nazis hate.” In this chapter, I will refer to Showan by his real (first) name because after what happened, a nationwide solidarity campaign was launched for him to show support and pray for the hospitalised activist’s survival and recovery—under the title of his first name in the slogan Kämpa Showan—as narrated below. Also, he was already a well-known figure locally due to his engagement in social

justice causes, not least being one of the founders of Football Fans Against Homophobia (Fotbollsupportrar mot homofobi) (see Rasmussen 2016 for a biographical narrative on Showan).

The altercation was a sensational situation, considering that political knife and life-threatening assault crime in Sweden is rare as are the kinds of protests that followed. The image of Showan appeared all over Malmö (see Figure 13), linking vast numbers of people in both activist and non-activist circles, including ordinary residents, members of political parties, football fans, and football players from the local team Malmö FF. Since Showan was the victim of what seemed to be politically motivated violence in Möllevången, he became the symbol of Möllevången and the values connected to the place: equality, feminism, and anti-racism. The process of Showan becoming a symbol of the *Kämpa Malmö* protests reinforced the social ties within and beyond the community of Möllevången residents. Showan embodied the neighbourhood: it was Möllevången that had been attacked.

The campaign in support of Showan, with its hashtag *#Kämpa-Showan*, was considered to be the most widespread ever in social media in Sweden (TV4 2014). Showan's name, portrait, and descriptions of his activist deeds spread among social media users throughout the country and also abroad (Aljazeera 2014). It was by then known that the knife-carrying people who had beaten Showan were linked to the neo-nazi Party of the Swedes (Svenskarnas parti, see Chapter 1). One of them was an active and well-known member of the party. During the night, they had put up political stickers around Möllevången. The mainstream media as well as the prosecutor during the court proceedings two years later questioned their intentions in visiting Möllevången, by far the most left-wing district in Malmö, during the night of International Women's Day to put up their propaganda stickers. Leftist activists and residents, as well as the prosecutor in court, interpreted this as an active will to confront local activists since they had purposefully gone to Möllevången to put up their political stickers.

The following morning, a friend and I walked towards the roundabout outside Folkets Park and I recalled what it had looked like in the dark when I passed there the night before near to where

the attacks had happened. We approached Glassfabriken (the café) where a group of activists had gathered outside. Most of them wore dark clothes including black wind jackets, the common ‘uniform’ in anti-fascist circles during demonstrations. I saw David, an active anti-fascist about 35 years old, who regularly travels to Möllevången for political events from a nearby town where he lives with his boyfriend. His eyes were red and tearful as he walked towards us. We hugged and I asked him how he was doing. He nodded. “I woke up at six in the morning and was told what had happened. I got in the car and drove here immediately”, he said. I met Jenny too, a friend and comrade of Showan’s in her late twenties. She used to live in a flat share in Möllevången but now lives with her partner and friends in a house in the countryside. She looked devastated.

“It’s about to start”, I said. My friend and I continued walking towards Möllevångstorget. The sky was blue and the air crisp. It was almost three o’clock and the square was half filled with people. There were already more than 500, which is more than what demonstrations at the square usually attract. But, of course, the reason for this one was unique.

People were sitting in the sun on the ground along the punk wall. We headed towards the centre of the square where four people held a banner saying ‘Anti-fascism is self-defence’. I climbed the two steps of Axel Ebbe’s monument, turned around and gazed over the crowd and took a few pictures with my phone (see Figure 12). The square was now crowded all the way to Asian Livs (an Asian supermarket) and Kruai Thai (a Thai restaurant). Sibylla, the kiosk in the middle of the square, was surrounded and even behind the monument there were people.

“No racists in our streets”, a red banner read in the middle of the crowd. On the right-hand side, more and more flags were raised with the black, red, and white logo of Antifascist Action. On the opposite side, light blue and white MFF (the local football team) flags waved in the wind. Since Showan was a well-known MFF supporter, football fans joined the demonstration. Bengal torches were lit and the green and red smoke blew over the assembled crowd. At the very front, a man held a homemade cardboard

sign with the anti-nazi symbol of a crossed-out swastika with the words ‘No nazis’.

The masses became quiet and I realised it was the first time I had ever seen so many people in this square and the first time I had experienced it so silent: the square is usually full of noisy activities during the day as well as at night. More than 1,000 people were estimated to have been present (Abdul Fattah 2014). I stepped down and picked up my recorder. By my side a girl was crying, her friend holding her arms around her. Behind them, a young man wiped his cheeks with his hands. At that point, many people doubted that Showan was going to survive.

Erik, a member of Allt åt alla and today the representative of Skåne mot rasism, welcomed everyone:

“It is nice to see so many people here today, although the circumstances are very sad.”

A close friend of Showan’s gave the first speech. He talked about violence against people with immigrant backgrounds with references to the convicted murderer of Peter Mangs and how ‘we’ will always defend ourselves. “Anti-fascism is self-defence. And solidarity is our weapon”, he concluded, followed by applause and affirmative whistles. A random male participant in the crowd started shouting out with a loud and angry voice.

Participant: What should we do? (*Vad ska vi göra?*)

Crowd: Smash racism! (*Krossa rasismen!*)

Participant: What should we do?

Crowd: Smash racism!

Participant: When? (*När?*)

Crowd: Now! (*Nu!*)

Participant: When?

Crowd: Now!

Participant: When, when, when? (*När när när?*)

Crowd: Now, now, now! (*Nu nu nu!*)

On the same day, solidarity demonstrations took place in several Swedish cities—Gothenburg, Stockholm, Uppsala, Jönköping, Umeå—to show support for the injured activists in

Malmö. Messages of support sent from comrades in Gothenburg and Uppsala were read aloud at Möllevångstorget. In the middle of a message, people started clapping and cheering.

“The Danes are here”, Erik said into the microphone. “Fantastic!” he continued, followed by applause. About 100 people had arrived by train from Denmark. Walking to the square, the Danes had started chanting the Spanish revolutionary slogan *Alerta, alerta, antifascista!* (Be alert, antifascist), known and used worldwide among leftist activists.

All of the speeches that followed mentioned the state of shock. Waking up that morning was surreal for many local residents; it was hard to believe something like this had happened in Möllevången: neo-nazis in Möllan was unthinkable. Moral shock, when people learn something about the world that outrages them, discovering that the world is not as they had thought (Jasper and Poulsen 2012), is one way that people are drawn into action. Three of the speakers analysed the violent entrance of neo-nazis into Möllevången as a symptom of the growth of far-right movements coupled with the increased income inequality in many European countries and Sweden is no exception. In his speech, the representative of the Left Party claimed that the far-right wished to scare people into silence and this had to be resisted. The best way to do this is to form alliances, he said:

They want leftist activists to look once more over their shoulder when they go out on their poster rounds. They want the lesbian couple not to kiss on the street, they want queer people not to break the norms and do something that these reactionary people think of as bad. They want racialised people to look an extra time over their shoulder when they go home in the evenings. They want racialised people not to gain power in the public space. And they want us to be silent. But every time they attack us, we'll come back ten times more, 100 times more. Or, as today, 1,000 times more [interrupted by applause and whistles]. And we will show that we are strong and that we are many. And we will show that we will not stop combating fascism and racism. But today is also a day to be weak. Because when I

woke up this morning, it was with feelings of sadness, of powerlessness. I was very sad that four comrades were severely injured and in hospital. But tomorrow, tomorrow is the day to organise ourselves better. We who stand here, we do not think alike in everything, and we don't have to. We can argue about politics, we can argue about strategy, we can argue about analysis. We should do that. It's healthy. But we must also form alliances. We must fight those reactionary forces [interrupted by applause and whistles]....we must fight the reactionary forces that are not only spread by neo-nazis, but also by the Sweden Democrats [the far-right party in Swedish parliament] and the right-wing politics that slaughters the welfare system that we have built here in Sweden. And we must fight for solidarity. We must fight for solidarity, and we must drum out the fear that they are trying to imprint on us. Thank you so much.

The quote acknowledges the differences existing within the political left, encompassing both parliamentary and non-parliamentary groups. The former activist Martin told me, "there is no one a leftist person [verbally] fights with more than another person within the left". Commonly, activists have a certain analysis of the current order of things and, in particular, a certain theory of how to best achieve social change. Quarrels are usually about such differences in viewpoints and theories. Their internal differences of political analysis create debates but they try to keep the debates within their circles since adversaries can use them to criticise or ridicule them. Also, in principle, activists want to create mass mobilisations that allow for diversity, of which this demonstration and the larger one the following week are examples.

The last speech, given by a priest and a close friend of Showan's, diverged from the previous ones. He talked about the same things but with a different vocabulary than the political activists. He described the circumstances with the words 'intolerance' and 'discrimination' (not racism), dark forces (not fascism), and as retrenchments of human rights and as an attack on democracy and goodness.

Erik concluded by reminding everyone to show up for the already planned demonstration against nazism one week later. “Anti-fascism is always self-defence!”, he said and turned off the microphone. The demonstration was over.

The masses on the square dispersed, except for a few small groups of people standing around chatting or sitting in the sun on the cobblestone ground eating falafel. The bars and restaurants surrounding the square were full of participants from the demonstration. In the outdoor seating area of Michelangelo’s, a pub close to the square monument, a group of people probably in their sixties were drinking beer and singing ‘No sky is as blue as mine’ (*Ingen himmel är så blå som min*), the anthem of the local football team Malmö FF. They had seen the light blue flags at the demonstration.

Sanad stopped to greet me. He was one of the asylum-seeking refugees and a central activist in the Tent Action, the protest camp that was taking place at the same time (see Glossary) in Jesusparken, the small park one block from where the assault had taken place the night before. I asked him if they had seen anything.

”We were close by but didn’t hear anything. Next time they [the neo-nazis] might come after us”, he said. When I arrived home that afternoon, I saw Sanad had changed his profile picture on Facebook into the image of Showan.

Tariq, the young activist from Asylgruppen, had attended the demonstration too and so had Ajuma, who usually participated in anti-racist collective actions such as Kämpa Showan. Ajuma is an activist and migrant to Sweden from an East African country and a member of the Afro-Swedes organisation in Sweden. He was one of the central figures within the Stop Afrophobia campaign in 2013.¹⁷⁴

All over social media, there were emotional tributes, with the hashtag #kämpashowan, to the activists who had confronted the nazis and tried to push them out of the neighbourhood, especially to Showan. Politicians and celebrities posted public messages of support to him personally. People around the world also expressed

¹⁷⁴ To learn more about the campaign, see <http://www.afrosvenskaforum.org/projektkampanj> or <https://www.facebook.com/events/522377414509518/>

their support (Aljazeera 2014). The local activist Hanna Höie, a former member of Antifascist Action (Höie 2014a), made the following Facebook update (later published in *Feministiskt perspektiv*, see Höie 2014) where she describes Möllevången as a diverse neighbourhood in terms of class, culture, ethnicity, and age. She counts herself as part of this collective of diverse people to whom the streets of Möllevången belong:

My street is mine, and everyone else's. It belongs to the Arab shops, the Romani selling flowers, the homeless people who sleep in the gates, the old ladies with walkers, the children playing, the Buddhist temple in my stairway, it belongs to me and my comrades and there are not enough fascist knives in the whole world to take my street away from us!

Another activist and writer wrote a concise comparison on Facebook: "Anti-fascism is like throwing out your garbage. It is not fun but you must do it every day. Or else your house will soon be uninhabitable." This indicated the everydayness of fighting racism and fascism and that it is something that each and every person has to engage in as it is not only the responsibility of 'activists'.

Not only did vast support for the activists circulate through mainstream and social media, but also speculations on what had actually happened that night. Was it a neo-nazi attack or was it a clash between two political adversaries? The police initially called it, to leftist activists' dismay, 'a rumble', meaning it was a confrontation between two equal ('bad') sides. It was eventually described as a fight between right- and left-wing activists. The police met critique from left-wing journalists (Wåg and Ingman 2014) for their description of the event, which the critics analysed as a symptom of the general way of framing the debate by holding leftist and rightist extremists in equally bad positions (Linderborg 2014). The fact remains that two female and two male activists were stabbed, two of them with life-threatening injuries. Two of the neo-nazis were injured but not severely. The majority of people on social and in the mainstream media took a clear stance on the leftist activists' side despite the speculations on whether they had chased the neo-

nazis out of the neighbourhood. One local resident, clearly politically affiliated with the activists although not an activist herself, wrote on Facebook:

Expressen [Swedish news journal] claims that the anti-fascists chased the neo-nazis and started the fight. Then everyone gets angry and says it's not true. I know exactly as little as anyone else, but *IF* it was our comrades who tried to chase away the *nassar* [nickname for nazis] from Möllan, then it was damn well done, right!? The fact remains that armed nazis hung out in Möllan in connection with the 8 March demo—they hardly had innocent intentions. And no matter what their intentions were—away with them from our streets!

This statement was commented on by a Facebook friend of hers who also self-identified as left-wing:

But chase away to where? To Lund? Växjö? Poland? The aim must be that people should stop being racists. And I do not think we can achieve that by chasing them and hitting their heads with bottles (if that's now what happened). Then we make ourselves guilty of what we claim to be opposing: not seeing the person behind the ideology/sex/skin colour. Even if it is hard, solidarity must be able to be extended beyond our own ranks, right? So I feel in my leftist heart.

This dialogue between two people located ideologically on the left reflects a recurrent debate within the left: whether confrontational tactics and violence can be considered legitimate for fighting fascism (see Chapter 5). The use of violent or non-violent measures in the leftist struggle has been a central conflictual theme throughout the history of the extra-parliamentarian left in Sweden (Peterson 2001, 103). Their confrontational rhetoric can be found in the main slogan of the following demonstration—'Anti-fascism is self-defence'—which took place one week later and attracted 10,000 participants.

One week later, 16 March 2014: 'Kämpa Malmö'

Kämpa Showan became Kämpa Malmö (Keep fighting, Malmö). It was an intentional and strategic change of rhetoric by the activists (Merrill and Pries 2019). The rhetorical change represents the activists' understanding that the focus on an individual is not efficient or politically relevant; the structures and the wider political-economic system should be in focus instead. Extra-parliamentarian activists generally reject personified movements or struggles and instead promote 'faceless resistance'. So, they converted what had happened to Showan into something that concerned all of Malmö, encouraging all of Malmö to stand up against racism and fascism. The mass mobilisation on 16 March gained momentum through the widespread support for Showan the week prior and the initial framing of him as a victim of nazi violence. The organisers of the demonstration on 16 March, however, attempted to reframe Showan as an activist and agent and to emphasise the wounded activist's agency and action instead of victimhood (*ibid.*).

Showan nevertheless remained the main symbol of Kämpa Malmö, something he was completely unaware of at the time in his hospital bed. On 16 March, Showan had been moved from the emergency care department to the healthcare department. The other injured activists had been sent home days earlier. Two of the right-wing activists with connections to the neo-nazi party were arrested for attempted murder. A third was released after a police hearing, but was still a suspect. 31-year-old Andreas Carlsson, an activist from the Party of the Swedes, left Sweden for Ukraine and became internationally wanted by Swedish authorities.¹⁷⁵

The main banner at the front of the demonstration read "Keep fighting, Malmö—Anti-fascism is self-defence", alluding to the entire Malmö as the 'us' in this 'fight against evil' fought together. The slogan was intensely debated in the newspapers (Fjellman Jaderup 2014) and on social media. Many people, also within the left, did not know exactly what the activists meant by this slogan, and different explanations circulated in the aftermath of the

¹⁷⁵ Andreas Carlsson had earlier visited Ukraine and participated in paramilitary groups in support of Svoboda's—a Ukrainian far-right nationalist political party—political power in Kiev (Wallén-Widung 2015). This represents an instance of multiscale fascism in the name of nationalism.

demonstration on 16 March. Some (mainly liberals) expressed the feeling that it sounded too militant (Avellan 2014), whereas others supported the message (Heberlein 2014). In relation to the slogan, the activists organising the demonstration claimed that fascism, capitalism, and patriarchy are interconnected and the system's integral violence makes some people resort to violence in self-defence and as a form of resistance against these unjust structures and oppressions (Allt åt alla 2014).

The demonstration gathered around 10,000 people (see Figure 14), which made it one of the largest demonstrations ever in the city (Anjou 2014). The protesters marched from Möllevångstorget into the heart of the city centre and then back again to where it started. When the frontline of the march arrived at Gustav Adolf Square in central Malmö, participants in the demonstration were told that the last participants had not yet left the square in Möllevången, a distance of 1.5 kilometres. In local measures, this was spectacular. After the march, which lasted for some two hours, there were speeches and concerts till late evening. Numerous activists, mainly from Skåne mot rasism and Allt åt alla, had worked day and night to put the event together. They took the opportunity to advertise the rich political scene in Malmö. Flyers were spread out in the city encouraging people to become involved in any anti-racist group or organisation. While contentiously framed, the flyer consisted of several statements that pointed at larger socio-political-economic structures, for example how increasing income gaps fuel fascism in Sweden as well as in Europe in general. It also alerted readers about how the migrant deportation machinery and the blaming of individuals for their own poverty are starting points for fascism's growth. The flyer demonstrates the activists' understanding of the current conjunctures of inequality and injustice. The flyer further narrated Möllevången as a nazi-free zone, which was nevertheless breached in the night of 8 March.

Representatives of political parties (Feminist Initiative, The Left Party, The Communist Party, The Social Democrats) joined the demonstration on 16 March together with the massive participation of non-affiliated residents, for example families walking with their children and dogs. There were also representatives of The Red

Cross, The Swedish Church, and Emmaus (a leftist second-hand store chain) and people carrying Palestinian flags. Mass mobilisations in particular tend to bring together participants (not only activists) with a wide range of attitudes and philosophies. Comrades of the activists had come from Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Finland to join the demonstration in Malmö, illuminating the interconnection of numerous places. And as with the demonstration one week prior, simultaneous demonstrations were held in a number of other cities in Sweden, including Umeå, Stockholm, Västerås, Trollhättan, and Uppsala. Demonstrations were also held in solidarity with the Malmö activists in Berlin and Hamburg. The following update on Facebook by an activist represents the sentiment of many people, both activists and non-activists, who marched against neo-nazism that day:

I have rarely seen anything so beautiful in Malmö. In the demonstration there were families with children, retirees, hipsters, hippies, liberals, and socialists. 10,000 people united under rainbow flags and self-made signs: the neo-nazis will never get away.

An activist involved in Aktion mot deportation made the following update on Facebook in a similarly emotional vein after the demonstration:

Second largest¹⁷⁶ demonstration in Malmö during the 2000s, with Sossar¹⁷⁷ and AFA side by side (well, AFA in the front and Sossarna in the back, but anyway!). Who could have thought this possible after Gothenburg 2001 (or even two weeks ago?). Beautiful!

¹⁷⁶ The largest demonstration in Malmö in the 2000s was during the European Social Forum (ESF) in Malmö in 2008. The slogan for the ESF in Malmö, which lasted five days (17–21 September 2008) was ‘Another World is Possible’. Saturday’s demonstration attracted 15,000 people who walked from Rosengård to Pildammsparken.

¹⁷⁷ Short for Social Democrats.

The activist is referring to the aftermath of the so-called ‘Gothenburg riots’ that took place during the EU Summit in June 2001 that made a deep cut between different fractions on the left.¹⁷⁸

At one point during the march, I ran into my colleague, a post-doc at the department, whom I had never seen at any political event organised by Skåne mot rasism before. She was very excited: “All different kinds of people are here. *Really* a whole lot of *different* people!” she exclaimed. She was referring to diversity in the broadest sense: political affiliation, interests (many football fans that rarely participated in demonstrations), age, gender, class, and ethnicity. Hence, apart from the large numbers, this broad mix of demonstrators gave the protest legitimacy in the eyes of non-activists. Her statement could be a comment on the existing impression of the rather homogeneous political group that usually marches, ‘always the same kind of people’, whereas now ordinary (as in non-activists) people were marching. The traditional, radical anti-fascists were less visible. Instead, the demonstration was made up of *folket*: ordinary people of all ages and ethnicities, many of whom had no obvious political affiliation. This diversity made ordinary residents of Malmö feel welcome to the event.

This diversity in terms of political outlooks was explained by the activist Jacob, member of Allt åt alla, in the following way:

We have to find common ground with other people, and one such extremely simple common ground is ‘I don’t think nazis should stab and try to kill people in the street’. 95 per cent of all people can join such a claim. This means you have a material struggle and as such I don’t care whether people are liberals or not.

Jacob emphasises the common material basis as key for any struggle. If people share an interest on a material basis, it will cross divides such as identities or political outlooks.

¹⁷⁸ After the riots during the EU summit in Gothenburg in June 2001, images of Social Democratic politicians handing out red roses to the police to thank them for their effort during the EU Summit were broadcast nationally. This was regarded as a severe betrayal by the protestors who had experienced the police repression during those days in June. No police were convicted despite a large number of complaints.

The march ended where it had started two hours earlier: Möllevångstorget. On stage, several speeches were given. A representative of the Tent Action and member of Aktion mot deportation said the following in her speech while standing together with four refugees and initiators of the tent action.

Our friends were stabbed and beaten on 8 March near the park where we have sought shelter. We who have initiated the tent action are refugees under threat of deportation who have sought refuge in Jesusparken.

We have been there for six weeks. We have lived and slept in Jesusparken and sometimes we have been worried about the risk of being exposed to racist violence but most of the time we have felt safe in the park and with the people who have given us protection and love and been with us in the struggle.

We feel strongly affected by what has happened to our friends. We know what racist violence means. We have been shot by border police, we and our little children have been close to drowning when crossing borders, we have walked for several months to save our lives, hiding in forests from guards and police, we have been distrusted and chased by police.

We are undocumented, but we refuse to hide. We want to be with you in the fight against fascism, which takes many different forms. A blow to one of us feels in a thousand bodies, and when one falls to the ground, thousands of anti-fascists rise.

We are by your side, and today we stand up together.

Smash nazism, bring down fascism, stop all deportations!

This clearly shows how refugees who have recently been involved in political actions and are connected to and becoming part of the activist scene in Malmö are politicised and create shared experiences of actions and formulate shared interests, thus creating an 'us'

across social and legal divides. This instance also demonstrates the activists' understanding of the current conjunctures of inequality and injustice.

A struggle over the truth of the event

The activists who mobilised two large demonstrations in a very short period of time in March 2014 were also able to impact the terms of the political argument with remarkable speed. They produced a discursive scale shift, transforming something that had happened to an individual into something public and collective concerning 'all of Malmö'. A radical slogan such as 'anti-fascism is self-defence' was suddenly on everyone's lips. These two different collective actions can be perceived of as 'critical events' (as defined by Espeland and Rogstad 2012, 125) since Kämpa Malmö challenged, at least temporarily, the mainstream discourse about anti-fascism and neo-nazism in Sweden.

One can assume that everyone participating in the large demonstrations would consider themselves to be 'against neo-nazism', but to call oneself anti-fascist was not as obvious for many. The term was not used much before the campaign except in some parts of the movement milieu in Sweden. However, the nation-wide campaign affected the terms of discourse as the slogan spread widely and, to some extent, became normalised, at least within the Left in the broadest sense, reaching parts of the Social Democratic membership and sympathisers; some liberal journalists even quoted the slogan. Hence, in the large mobilisations, with the majority of participants being residents from the general public, 'Anti-fascism is self-defence' created a climate in which the relevance of the slogan became a subject of negotiation. The fact that the incident that triggered the demonstrations could be presented as evidence of the existence of 'fascist violence' in Sweden gave the slogan leverage.

Adrianne Sörbom, researcher on social movements, interprets the slogan as follows: "Fascism and nazism are part of a larger societal problem, but are seen as, in everyday life, an attack on everyone who does not share the fascists' worldviews. So they [the anti-fascist activists] will not wait until someone else—the police or the state—intervenes to make the attack disappear, and so they

maintain that they have to defend themselves” (interviewed in Fjellman Jaderup 2014). Hence, when violence is directed downwards—against women, immigrants, young people, and homosexuals, etc.—it is a question of repression according to the activists, which is violence that maintains the existing (oppressive) social structures. Whereas when violence is directed upward (towards the non-political and political), the activists claim, it is a question of resistance (Peterson 2001, 46) or, as expressed here, self-defence.

The two mobilisations narrated above conform with what has been showed by Routledge (2017): the use of narratives, words, and images is an important tactic in the conflict over representations of events between activists and a range of stakeholders (the general public, governments, mass media, etc.).

The aftermath of the altercation in Möllevången consisted of a verbal fight over the representation of the event: a fight about the right to describe, interpret, and talk about what had happened. There was an urgent need to narrate the event, and the activists were first at it by making use of the already existing story of Möllevången as ‘anti-racist’ and, in this way, successfully mobilising a large number of people to march against nazism. This narrative was successful, as seen from the great numbers they successfully mobilised. What happened to Showan and the other activists illustrates an opportunity given to the activist scene to advance an agenda that had been there for a long time. Furthermore, such a large-scale mobilisation as the one that took place on 16 March 2014 may look spontaneous in the eyes of the public but is very much planned and driven by small groups of activists and involves a lot of strategy, as also noted elsewhere (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017).

What happened to Showan, along with the two subsequent mass demonstrations, acted profoundly upon people in Malmö and beyond and linked its diverse residents: people of different ethnic and national backgrounds, liberals, socialists, and the LGBTQ community. Showan became a representation of Möllevången. His image achieved, I argue, the function of a rallying cry to promote tolerance and anti-racism, which reinforced the social ties in, and identity of, Möllevången as well as Malmö. The fact that the primary

victim was of Iranian descent made it easy for the general public to see the possible racist intentions. Later on, Showan himself rejected the image of victim that had been given to him and maintained his political agency by claiming that he was an active anti-fascist activist and, as such, he was an obvious target of neo-nazi hatred and violence. One reason it became such a symbolically loaded event (apart from the fact that knife and life-threatening violence against activists is rare in Sweden) was the fact that it happened in Möllevången. This supposedly made it easier for the activists to mobilise the mass blockade against The Party of the Swedes' public gathering in Limhamn half a year later, to which I turn next.

Half a year later: 'Neo-nazis out of Malmö'

The two demonstrations described above mainly aimed at influencing the general discourse, the mainstream media and audiences, and the 'truth' about the event, which was also done via the mere number of people gathered in the streets. These demonstrations will be contrasted with another type of mass mobilisation, narrated below, that aimed at intervening in history more directly, namely to prevent a neo-nazi political party from holding their public meeting in Limhamn, an upper-middle-class neighbourhood in Malmö. And what made the event particularly sensitive among the local activist groups was that it was the same party, the Party of the Swedes, whose members and sympathiser only half a year earlier had clashed with and injured leftist activists in Möllevången. The Party of the Swedes was conducting an election campaign in the summer of 2014 and had been granted permission to hold twenty public meetings in cities throughout Sweden, with Malmö being one of them. Skåne mot rasism was again the mobilising force in Limhamn on 23 August 2014 and activists from Allt åt alla also played a major role. About 1,500 counter-demonstrators showed up that day to participate in the mass blockade.

In blockades, it is clear who is being addressed. In Limhamn, it was the members of the Party of the Swedes. The activists wanted to publicly show that 'we are many against racism and nazism'. Furthermore, such blockades aim at making it impossible for sympathisers to listen to their antagonists' public speeches, which the

activists consider to be hate-speech. Thirdly, they aim at exerting fear into the nazis so that they would stop being members of organised groups. In general, activists do not believe it is possible to change a person's worldview by protesting against their party or organisations in public spaces. But they do believe it is possible to affect their organisational commitment and, in this way, make them less of a threat to racialised and left-wing people. In short, activists want to make it hard for people to hold racist viewpoints and prevent the normalisation of racism (Jämte 2013). As the activist Michaela put it:

We don't think that we can stop nazis by mobilising against them when they have their public talks on squares. But it's about the question of what should be acceptable in a society and to keep that line so as not to make some things appear as legitimate.

According to the UN, Sweden breaches the convention against ethnic discrimination and should forbid racist organisations (Ekselius 2008). Sweden maintains, however, that it would go against the right to freedom of speech (*Expressen* 2014). The police who are present at events such as the public gatherings of the Party of the Swedes are assigned the job of making sure that the party members can exercise their constitutional right to demonstrate. The activists featured in this thesis are convinced that neo-nazis must be stopped from claiming the public space, whether or not the general public likes the activists' choice of measures or not. Before the event in Limhamn, activists had visited the neighbourhood and handed out flyers as an attempt to anchor their intentions beforehand and gain legitimacy among local residents. Shopkeepers, restaurant owners, and passers-by had received the activists well and members of the public put the activists' demo-posters up in their windows and showed gratitude for their mobilisation against the neo-nazi party.

Mobilisations like this one are carefully planned and organised and at least a dozen people worked days for it to happen. Apart from the group of core organisers, many more people with different responsibilities were involved: sound system and other techni-

cians, truck drivers, demo-guards, dialogue person (usually one activist who keeps in contact with the dialogue police officer throughout the demonstration), Black Cross nurses,¹⁷⁹ and the ‘solidarity group’ (*sol-grupp*).¹⁸⁰

One activist explained the purpose of this mobilisation as mobilising a broad popular demonstration while at the same time preserving their militancy, which reflects the principles of the ‘turn to the everyday’ in the movement milieu in Sweden. “We believe that if mobilisations are more open, they become more efficient.” Another activist commented, “There is nothing the nazis hate more than large inclusive mass mobilisations”. The following scenes are based on my fieldnotes taken in the course of the event. The vignette aims to convey what a ‘space of appearance’ (Arendt 1998) or ‘political commons’ (Harvey 2013) may look like and the diversity of tactics and people within such spaces and the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts that follow.

23 August 2014

Blockade: ‘Party of the Swedes out of Malmö!’

My friends and I meet at Möllevångstorget, we buy coffee and walk towards Pildammsparken, Malmö’s largest park. Hundreds of others are already there when we arrive. People have come here from Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Stockholm, and elsewhere. An acquaintance from Spain who lives in Malmö comes up to greet me. Then he points at some guys behind me. They are masked in balaclavas, wearing black clothes, even

¹⁷⁹ These are professional nurses within leftist activist circles who volunteer during high-risk demonstrations as street-medics for protesters. They usually wear a white band around their arms with a black cross to be easily identifiable and bring along basic nursing supplies.

¹⁸⁰ If the organisers of a demonstration think there might be a risk of police intervention and arrests, they form a so-called solidarity group (*solidaritetsgrupp*, commonly *sol-grupp*). The purpose is to take responsibility, as organisers, for those people attending the demonstration. The solidarity group has one phone number to which participants of the demonstration can call if they witness an arrest by the police. This phone number is distributed on small leaflets at the beginning of the march. Members of the solidarity group do not participate in the demonstration but stay in a more distant and safe place (Mangla 2014). The group then follows up on the cases and provides legal advice while activists are in custody. Commonly, so-called ‘bust cards’ (*haffakort*) are also handed out (made by Vänsterjuristerna, an organisation made up of leftist lawyers and law students), which consist of information on laws and rules concerning public demonstrations in case of turmoil and one’s political rights in case of custody.

their shoes are covered with black socks. “*Los black bloc; no los tenemos en España*” (The black bloc; we don’t have them in Spain).¹⁸¹ No? I ask. “Not in my town, at least”, he says and seems impressed. A person standing in the back of a small pick-up truck, holding a megaphone, starts shouting something that I can’t hear. Everyone applauds and whistles and the demonstration starts moving.

Chants shouted repeatedly:

Keep fighting, Malmö! Blow against blow. The street, the square, it’s all ours! (*Kämpa Malmö. Hårt mot hårt. Gatan, torget, allt är vårt!*)

No racists on our streets! No racists on our streets! (*Inga rasister på våra gator! Inga rasister på våra gator!*)

It is a clear and warm morning. I shove my jacket into my backpack and tie my sweater around my waist. People around me undress too. They smile and laugh. The atmosphere is filled with excitement and restlessness. This demonstration feels different than many others. We’re heading towards, for many of us, an unknown part of the city. Various people that I talk to that day say they have never been in Limhamn.

A group of young women hand out flyers with slogans and a phone number to the solidarity group.

The struggle continues, smash nazism! (*Kampen fortsätter, nazismen ska krossas!*)

What should we do? Smash racism! What should we do? Smash racism! When? Now! When? Now! When, when, when? Now, now, now! (*Vad ska vi göra? Krossa rasismen! När? Nu! När, när, när? Nu, nu, nu!*)

¹⁸¹ The so-called black bloc refers to the radical factions of the global justice movement. In the demonstration depicted here, however, there was no black bloc in its original meaning (masked protesters dressed in black forming an entire block, among other blocks, in a demonstration), only single individuals or small groups of masked people.

On the streets of Malmö. We've only started. On the streets of Limhamn. We've only started! (*På gatorna i Malmö. Det här är bara början! På gatorna i Limhamn. Det här är bara början!*)

After walking a couple of kilometres, all of the protestors join in on a song by Ebba Grön (a Swedish punk band formed in Stockholm in 1977). The song was re-popularised by the Swedish-Iranian writer and poet Athena Farrokhzad's much-debated *Sommar i P1* (Swedish Radio talk show).¹⁸²

We hate the whole bourgeoisie. Yes, we must take up arms. (*Vi hatar hela borgerligheten. Ja vi, vi ska beväpna oss.*)

Along the road, I see residents looking out of their windows, watching us from above. A black woman holding her child in her arms on the balcony dances rhythmically to the music from the loudspeakers, waving and giving us the thumbs-up. A middle-age couple smile and wave. Many more do the same, while others stand rigidly, only watching, not dancing, not waving, not smiling. We wave at them, but no response. They are fewer than the ones who join into our atmosphere.

It's about our lives, it's about our children. No nazis in our city! (*Det gäller våra liv, det gäller våra barn. Inga nazister i vår stad!*)

The entire Malmö hates nazis! The entire Malmö hates nazis! (*Hela Malmö hatar nazister! Hela Malmö hatar nazister!*)

After one hour of marching, we reach the square of Limhamn.

¹⁸² On her radio show, Farrokhzad (Farrokhzad 2014) played a troubadour cover version of the old punk song 'Beväpna er' (Take up arms), a song about taking up arms against the government, the bourgeoisie, and the Swedish royal family. Some listeners interpreted the lyrics literally and were upset (Weibull and Grönberg 2014). When the radio show was launched, the liberal-conservative politician Gunnar Axén (parliament representative of The Moderate Party) got so angry while listening that he decided to 'throw out' his TV (on which he had listened to the radio broadcast) and blamed Swedish Public Service for being left-wing. He called it a threat against democracy (Salö 2014).

The sun is shining and it's even warmer now. The paved part of the square is fenced and surrounded by riot police. There is a green area where people in groups gather on the grass. We are early. Party of the Swedes will not arrive until two o'clock and it is not yet one. My friends and I need to go to the loo so we go find a café on a corner two blocks away. It is small. We ask if it is ok. "So many?" asks the lady who works there and shows us behind the counter. "We are here to protest the presence of the Party of the Swedes", explains one of my friends. "Many people think it is scary with so many people here", replied the lady.

Once back, I walk around to make observations and take notes. A group of six policemen are closely following a group of masked protesters. They go up to each one of them to tell them individually that it is prohibited to cover one's face.¹⁸³ Some of them ignore the police and others carefully remove their masks. The masked protesters press themselves close to one another and link their arms. To make human chains is to prevent the police from splitting them up, or at least to make it harder. I stand close to hear their exchanges and to be a witness if violence erupts.

All of a sudden, the group of steadily clinched demonstrators dissolves and they walk away in different directions. The police watch them, puzzled.

I continue walking around the little park and square. The four young masked men whom I saw at the start of the demonstration, the ones with black socks over their shoes, stand by the fence. They have taken off their masks and are talking to the police about freedom of speech, democracy, anti-racism, and the role of the police as an institution in society. The young men ask the police how they can work when it comes to defending the neo-nazis, "nazis from the same party whose members stabbed comrades in Malmö six months ago?"

"We've got a directive: to ensure that the Party of the Swedes can hold its public meeting. Personally, I dislike them, I am against nazism, but I have to do my job", said one of the police

¹⁸³ This is something that the police decide to enforce or not.

officers.

I walk by a person holding a placard that reads ‘Hymns against nazism’ (*Psalmers mot nazism*). Six to seven people are standing around, all of them singing. Two of them are wearing Kämpa Malmö T-shirts¹⁸⁴ and two of them are priests as revealed by their clerical collars. It makes me think of the Christian civil-disobedience action conducted by a small group of people in the city of Jönköping 1 May that same year (2014) to protest against a neo-nazi march through their city.¹⁸⁵

I continue down the street where activists from Allt åt alla have gathered with the large Kämpa Malmö banner. They start singing the Swedish version of *Bella Ciao*¹⁸⁶ and I join in.

The world is waking outside my window
Bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao
Drags my senses into the sunlight
For there are things that I must do...¹⁸⁷

*(När jag steg upp ur min säng en morgon
O bella ciao bella ciao bella ciao ciao ciao
När jag steg upp ur min säng en morgon
Stod fienden invid min dörr...)*

I walk back to the green area and meet a priest. He is going to celebrate mass, he says, pointing at the Parish Hall next to the square. “To worship is our way to show that we are against nazism. We have no bells to ring”, he says, referring to other cities, such as in Kalmar, Helsingborg, Ystad, and Halmstad, where the Swedish Church rang the church bells against nazism¹⁸⁸ during the month Party of the Swedes’ campaigned for

¹⁸⁴ These were T-shirts that were produced to show support for the activists assaulted by the neo-nazis earlier that year.

¹⁸⁵ After the Sunday mass, some of the congregants conducted a sit-down in the street where the march was due. Five people were arrested and convicted of disobedience (Dagens Juridik 2015; Aktuellt Fokus 2015).

¹⁸⁶ ‘Bella ciao’ is an Italian partisan song that originated during the Italian civil war. It is used worldwide as a hymn of freedom and resistance.

¹⁸⁷ English lyrics by Chumbawamba released in 2005.

¹⁸⁸ On 1 May 2014 in Jönköping, the church bells rang for over an hour to warn the public against danger for the first time since 1939 (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2014).

the election.

A rainbow flag waved over the church in Limhamn that day. The multi-coloured flag represents LGBTQ pride. The theme of the day's mass was 'Don't discriminate against people' (*Gör inte skillnad på människor*).

I hear cars and sirens and see five police vans driving fast toward the square. On the sidewalk, I see Susanne, a 25-year-old activist, with her one-year-old baby in a baby carrier on her chest. She is holding up her mobile and filming the police.¹⁸⁹ I walk by four people who are sitting in the sun on the grass and playing Swedish folk music with violins and a *djembe*. I take a picture.

Suddenly, firecrackers are thrown into the police cordon and bengal torches are lit. No one from the Party of the Swedes has entered the empty and fenced area of the square yet, but the air is tense. It is almost two o'clock. Mounted police enter in a circle and dissolve the crowd on the grass next to the fence. I go closer to film the sequence with my phone. The police whip some of the demonstrators and one activist manages to take hold of the whip and yank it so that the policeman on the horse sways but he manages to pull it back. The mounted police ride out of the park and the demonstrators approach the fence again. Five people in white jackets—members of Party of the Swedes—enter the square and are met by loud booing, whistling, the rattling of the fence, and firecrackers. There are no sympathisers present in the crowd.

I walk towards the road again. Curious residents have come out to watch the show, standing along the resident buildings and the Parish Hall. Many seem to be over 50 years old. The road is narrow and there are a lot of people. Many more demonstrators have now covered their faces.

One last deportation—Stefan Jacobsson [the party's leader] over the bridge! (*En sista deportation — Stefan Jacobsson över bron!*)

¹⁸⁹ To film and photograph are central activist tactics: they are ways of being a witness and documenting police repression. The aim of filming is to make the police use less violence.

Today's police protect tomorrow's Hitler! (*Dagens polis skyddar morgondagens Hitler!*)

I find myself standing in the front row among the protesters with masked activists behind and beside me and riot police in front of me in a line along the fence towards the square where Stefan Jacobsson, the leader of the neo-nazi party, is talking into a microphone. Slogans are shouted. Demonstrators raise their arms giving him the finger. I hear Stefan Jacobsson say, "Immigration has devastating consequences..." His voice is swallowed by the protesters' cries.

The entire Malmö hates nazis!

No nazis on our streets!

Amid the protesters, who are mostly young, I see a middle-aged woman. Her dark hair is cut in a page-style haircut, she wears a flowery blouse and walks around with a cell phone in her hand. She comes up to me and asks me in English who they are. "Party of the Swedes", I say. "So, it's those who don't want me here", she says. "Exactly." We smile and roll our eyes. She told me she had heard about the counter-demonstration but wanted to be sure she was in the right place.

I ask if she is here to protest against them. "Of course", she says. We watch the disorder around us; I then ask, "What do you think about those wearing masks?" pointing to the protesters in front of us. She looks at me as if she did not quite understand the question.

"I do not mind, they are with me, we're all the same here, we are all resisting the nazis. We are against them", she says, pointing inside the cordon. "I'm not afraid, I'm from Israel so I've seen a few things."

The woman says that she has lived in Limhamn for the past ten years with her Swedish husband and two children. She has never experienced anything like this here before. She had heard

about it and thought it was important to come. The demonstrators around us are shouting slogans, booing, and whistling. They throw sound bombs that make us flinch. All of it is to drown out the voices coming from the loudspeakers within the square. “Where are the vuvuzelas when we most need them?” asks the woman and laughs.

The protesters advance closer to the fence. In turn, the police in riot gear standing in a tight line start walking towards us. They gasp and shout, pressing their shields against our bodies. The female police, right in front of me and pressing her shield into me, asks me how I am doing. I can’t move, firmly fixed between her and the other protesters behind me and on both sides. I notice anxious glances around me. Most of the protesters up front are young men and women in their early twenties. All of a sudden, the police start pushing us violently. “I am sorry, I am sorry”, I hear the female police say while pushing me, pushing us backwards. In the corner of my eye, I see her colleagues distributing violent strikes with a baton against the heads of the protesters. I lower my head, expecting a strike at any moment, imagining the pain. But it doesn’t happen. The baton strikes disperse the crowd and I can turn around and move again. I see several people around me bleeding, holding their hands to their heads, others are limping. They shout and scream, shocked and saddened by the scene.

“What the hell are you doing?!”

One person is being carried away by others towards the sidewalk. (Later that day, I read in the press that several of the protesters were so badly wounded by the police baton strikes that they needed hospital care and stitches.)

Alerta! Alerta! Antifascista!

Alerta! Alerta! Antifascista!

We are all anti-fascists! We are all anti-fascists! (*Vi är alla antifascister!*)

Eight mounted policemen come galloping towards us. “Watch

out”, someone shouts. I take a few steps back. Everyone moves to the sides. The mounted police turn around and gallop towards us again. We disperse again.

The fourth time they gallop so fast that a few people do not get out of the way in time. I see five people fall under the horses’ hooves. Everyone runs towards the injured.

“Call an ambulance!” I hear myself cry as I pick up my phone and dial 112. They tell me that ambulances are already on their way.

If the previous scene of violence shocked people, this one made them panic. Protesters shout hysterically to the police.

“Look what you have done!”

“How can you do something like that?!”

“What have we done wrong? Do you enjoy seeing us bleed?!”

“Murderers!”

“Murderers!”

I approach one of the injured men lying on the sidewalk. He was carried there by fellow protesters. Voluntary nurses from the Black Cross check him. He’s bleeding from the head (it is the severely injured man, Mehdi, 50 years old and the father of two children, whom I read about two days later in the newspaper [Grauers 2014]). On the ground, I see blood in a puddle that flows down towards the fence (see Figure 15).

The whole of Malmö hates the police!

The whole of Malmö hates the police!

The Party of the Swedes finishes its public meeting with the last words, “...a truly Swedish Sweden, thank you very much”.

It takes more than half an hour before the ambulances can attend the injured. The police wouldn’t let them through. This causes an eruption of even more angry shouts and cries.

“Murderers!”

“Murderers!”

*

I am standing on the sidewalk talking to an acquaintance, Jo-

nas. Another man in his late thirties turns up by my side and asks me what happened. He just got here and saw the police riding into the crowd of protesters.

“I work with conflict resolution and teach dialogue techniques to the police”, he tells me. “This doesn’t look very good.” He glances at Jonas who wears a bandana over his mouth and adds, “But I am not police myself”.

I see the woman with a flowery blouse again. She is now being interviewed by a journalist. She is upset and describes how she saw the policemen, unprovoked, ride into the crowd of people and how later the police did not let the ambulances through to the wounded.

A man next to me shouts: “You are a great shame for Sweden. Next time it could be your children. Gestapo *Polizei!*”

Many frustrated and angry protesters approach the police and try talking to them: “Do you enjoy hurting us?!”

Water is suddenly thrown from above. We look up to see from which window it came. My instant guess is that it was local residents (probably youth, based on my own preconceptions and previous experiences) who want us out of their neighbourhood.

The members of Party of the Swedes are escorted by the police from the square and out of Limhamn. The police dismantle and stack the barricades. Some protesters walk back towards the city centre, others take the bus.

I stay around with Jonas for a bit and see Limhamn’s square being emptied of people. A local resident, a woman in her mid or late fifties, approaches us.

“I’m curious, may I ask one thing? Why do you cover your face?” looking at Jonas. She continues: “The police are here to ensure democratic freedom. I think it sends out the wrong signals. Masks and throwing bottles. What is that?”

Jonas explains that he does not want to reveal his face to the nazis. “And did you see how the police acted? Did you see how they rode into us?” he asks her.

“If you run into the horse, it is your own fault,” says the lady.

Jonas and the woman continue talking, more heatedly, about

nazism, freedom of speech, and democracy. The woman, clearly upset, says that things have changed. That if a white person throws garbage on the street, “then I would tell him to pick up after himself. But if he has dark skin, I would get into trouble”, she explains, saying she would be considered a racist. “You can’t just pull the ‘skin-colour card’”, she said angrily. Her statement resembles the racist discourse in Sweden that claims ‘anti-racism has gone too far’.

“Why are you masked now? Are you afraid that I’m going to photograph you?” she continues. Jonas tries to explain his reasons for wearing a mask, but the woman is not listening.

“I do not buy into your violence against the police. I want the police!” she exclaims.

*

We take the bus to Möllevångstorget and walk along Bergsgatan towards a Japanese restaurant to eat. A passing cyclist looks at the red flag that Jonas is holding and stops.

“Did the pigs get what they deserve?” The cyclist had not been in Limhamn but had heard the news. “Brutishness from the police, and it is not the first time. Really brave of you to be there, well done”, he says, gives the thumbs up and rides on.

The protesters were shocked by the police brutality that day, a level of force that the activists had not seen in many years in Malmö. 50 protesters were wounded, around ten people went to the accident and emergency department to receive medical care (mostly stitches from the baton strikes), and five people were taken to hospital in ambulances that day after being run over by the mounted police or hit by a police van (one protester). To legitimise their use of force, the police claimed (*Skånska Dagbladet* 2014b) that protesters had used ammoniac and stones against them. They also claimed that protesters had attacked the ambulance personnel, but this was denied by the head of the healthcare staff soon after (*Region Skåne*) (Birgersson 2014).

All recollections are fragmented parts of the whole event. It is impossible to describe the entire sequence of such events since it was large and included hundreds of people with many things happening simultaneously. The local newspaper stated, however, that none of the 20 or so journalists who were present had seen anything of what the police described (*Skånska Dagbladet* 2014a). The commander in chief of the task force in Limhamn withdrew the police's claims, admitted they had reported an incorrect picture of the event, and filed a report on themselves (Lennander 2014).¹⁹⁰

People seeing such events only through mainstream media coverage tend to support police repression, which is usually framed as protecting and not endangering 'the public' (i.e. the counter-demonstrators in this case) (Graeber 2009, 440).¹⁹¹ The representations in the media are often in sharp contrast to what eyewitnesses have seen. In this specific event, however, activists were positively surprised about how the mainstream media covered the event, which saw journalists strongly disputing the police's initial misrepresentation of the event.

The risk of intervention by the police is higher at blockades than in common street marches. When a police line is formed in direct confrontation with activists, police officers seem more prone to using excessive violence (Wahlström 2010). Thus, being prepared for arrest or physical pain as an activist is taken for granted in these sorts of actions. Some affinity groups¹⁹² might try to break police lines and be more prepared to be beaten, arrested, and even receive prison time. Many activists present in Limhamn had previous experience of this sort of action or had gone through non-violent resistance training and practiced how to act in confrontation with the police. Three leftist activists—18, 20, and 24 years old, two

¹⁹⁰ The internal investigation was later disused. Contrary to what the police claimed, many more people witnessed how the demonstrators pleaded with the police to let the ambulances through to the wounded people and how the police had refused to let the ambulance staff attend the wounded.

¹⁹¹ See Graeber (2009, 446ff) for a discussion on the institutional constraints on reporting on 'violent police' compared to 'violent protesters'.

¹⁹² Affinity groups take their name from the *grupos de afinidad* devised by the Spanish anarchists during the 1930s. Affinity groups have subsequently formed an important component of anarchist and autonomist-inspired direct-action activism: "Numbering between 3-14 people, affinity groups [...] provide support and solidarity for one another. Small enough to enact a consensus form of decision-making, these groups are non-hierarchical and participatory, embodying flexible, fluid modes of actions" (Routledge 2017, 63).

males and one female—were eventually convicted of rioting; two of them received three months' imprisonment and the youngest received 24 hours of youth service (Backlund 2015).

Challenges, conflicts, and police brutality

The scenes from the mass blockade convey some of the spontaneity and uncertainties (and therefore challenges) of being in a collective action: the sense of exaltation and freedom that is intersected by moments of rage and despair, emotions which are frequently combined in political action (Jasper 2011). All protestors are there for the same shared aim, which gives the participants a sense of being in common and generates feelings of loyalty and that they have one another's backs. This embodied taking-up-of-space, which is intersected with strong emotions—'us' against 'them'—contributes to group solidarity (Collins 2004) and the creation of a politicised collective identity (Simon and Klandermans 2001). Such rituals of effervescence are, however, not without frictions, which I will analyse here in terms of challenges, conflicts, and police brutality. Producing space though protests is a collective effort, involving not only the protesters themselves but bystanders, antagonists, and the police. The conflictual relationships examined below have already been addressed in a previous chapter (Chapter 5), so here I will focus on the spatial aspects of such conflicts and the consequences of protests for places.

Challenges

The main challenge of this mass-blockade was to achieve its central purpose: to stop the neo-nazis from holding their speeches in the public space. The protesters were not able to stop or disrupt the public meeting held by the Party of the Sweden on the square of Limhamn, but they did nevertheless produce a new social space there in which new connections and relations were made and ideas discussed. For some participants, these new relations and experiences may have been temporary changes, while for others they may have been permanent, life-altering experiences.

Spaces are both restricting and enabling (Sewell 2011). Since Limhamn was a place that activists did not frequent, it possibly re-

stricted their ability to act efficiently. Not being acquainted with a specific place constituted a challenge for the protestors, as it made it more difficult to retreat quickly when police used shock tactics, such as batons or cavalry charges. But it may also have been the physical and material shape of the place that hindered the few activists who fell under the mounted police from escaping, since the cavalry charge passed through a rather narrow passage between the residential houses and the fenced part of the square.

What further characterised this mass direct action was the inclusion of a diverse set of people in terms of social class, political and religious affiliations, previous experiences of collective actions, ethnicities, age, gender, and more. To create such an inclusive mobilisation is a challenge that was successfully overcome.

The activists further remained flexible and open to diversity and difference (Juris 2004), meaning here diversity of tactics (being open to different activist groups regardless of their tactics), whether they adopt ‘confrontational non-violence’ (wearing masks, linking arms, and non-violently refusing to be removed) or simply non-confrontational non-violence (singing hymns or playing the *djembe*). The mass blockade in Limhamn illustrated the high tolerance and acceptance existing between different activists and their choice of tactics, which could have caused conflicts. On the contrary, I observed a consistent loyalty expressed between activists from different groups and participants from the general public, one example being the middle-aged resident of Limhamn who expressed her loyalty with the masked activists. But I observed conflictual relationships with bystanders and non-activists during the collective action as well as the days leading up to it.

Conflicts

As far as conflicts are concerned in terms of mass counter-mobilisations, they were illustrated in arguments on Facebook between ‘ordinary residents’ and activists (usually where the activists’ aim for the protest was questioned); through the encounter between Jonas and the local, senior female resident or the water being thrown on protestors from a window; between the activists and neo-nazis (their obvious positions as ideological antagonists); and

between the activists and the police. These examples illustrate how public space is a site where conflicts are expressed and includes both on- and offline spaces.

All these conflicts are manifested in space and make ‘true’ politics visible: they are eruptions of *disagreement* (Rancière 1999) with the hegemonic order. The fact that the counter-demonstration took place in a wealthy area of town caused frictions and a particular kind of ‘throwntogetherness’ and made visible that particular neighbourhood’s specific kind of spatial order as expressed by the owner of the small local café: “many think it is scary with so many people here”. The massing of bodies disrupted the spatial routines of this neighbourhood, which made some residents feel discomfort while others felt curious and came out to watch the spectacle (standing a safe distance away along the residential houses).

Activists use space to fight injustices and oppression, in this case wanting to take the space from the neo-nazis. But this tactic provokes criticism. Every time activists blockade neo-nazis’ public meetings, a large number of people from the general public argue in favour of ignoring them instead (Jämte 2013), a sentiment that is widely expressed in debate articles in the mainstream media. According to these critics, the people who protest in the streets ‘give them (neo-nazis) what they want’ (public attention). The activists think this is utterly naïve: “We do not share your opinions and we are not prepared to be put in camps because we gave you room to express them”, goes the mock paraphrase of the liberal slogan “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” (Hall 1906),¹⁹³ which sums up the activists’ stance.

As in other similar anti-racist demonstrations (see Wahlström 2010), the anti-racists in Limhamn “run the risk of both directing media attention to the neo-nazi message and harming their own moral standing in the eyes of the public by engaging in confrontations with the police” (ibid., 824). Nevertheless, the spatial proximity to their enemy groups also clearly reinforces a sense of purpose, which aids the creation of a strong collective identity (ibid.).

¹⁹³ A quote by Evelyn Beatrice Hall as a summary of Voltaire’s philosophy.

The last conflictual relationship is between activists and the police. According to the activists, the police represent the enemy: they are the state and its monopoly on violence, which they utilise to protect neo-nazis' hate speech in the public space, thus contributing to the maintenance of the status quo and the reproduction of the structural violence inherent to it. It is indeed a strong image when a firm line of fences and police in riot gear protect outspoken neo-nazis. Also, the activists were provoked by the fact that the neo-nazis were escorted away from the scene in a police van, illustrating the activists' police-shaming slogan "Today's police protect tomorrow's Hitler" (*Dagens polis skyddar morgondagens Hitler*).

Despite the activists' awareness of the police's role in maintaining order and securing people's right to demonstrate, at most counter-demonstrations I have attended (protests against Sweden Democrats, Swedish Defence League, Party of the Swedes, etc.), I witnessed many disillusioned activists attempting to reach out to individual police officers to try to reason with them and question them about "letting this happen". Among radical activists, the general code of conduct is that you do not speak to the police (unless you are appointed as the dialogue person), since it is not a dialogue between two equal parts (one is armed). Nevertheless, in occasions of confrontations and violence, even core activists shout out their frustrations to the police and some even trying to engage in discussions with them. Emotions, even anger and hate, serve the purpose of maintaining group loyalty, offering satisfaction, and to keep participants going, regardless of the likelihood of obtaining the stated goals (Jasper 2011).

Police brutality

The week following the protest in Limhamn, activists from two different strands arranged two different demonstrations against police brutality. Some activists from a third strand were critical of how the demonstrations were framed. This third group said that to protest police violence was contradictory to their very analysis of police *being* violence themselves. From their point of view, they see the police as an extension and physical manifestation of the state's monopoly on violence. One activist put it as follows: "If the po-

lice's purpose is to be violent, how can activists protest against it?" Instead, this activist and co-critics said, that the demonstration should be against the police as an institution altogether, which generally reflects the anti-authoritarian ideals among radical activists.

Police brutality may impact activists' continued commitment. I was told of activists who become traumatised and stop participating in these kinds of direct actions. But it may also reinforce the process of identification and solidarity (della Porta and Reiter 2006). I have also been told of many examples of activists who became radicalised after being exposed to police brutality. At times, people who weren't activists become activists and those who have already been engaged in some political party or organisation may choose to become active in a more radical group. According to activists, there is nothing that radicalises ordinary citizens as much as seeing and experiencing what it is like to be in the middle of an action, even more so if experiencing police repression (Drury and Reicher 2005; Drury, Reicher, and Stott 2010). Protesters commonly become disillusioned when their non-violent actions are met with harsh repression and some rethink their strategies and stop believing in non-violent methods and therefore engage in more extreme modes of tactics.

When the riot police officer repeatedly said to me that she was sorry for what she was doing, I experienced what seemed to be an instance of a police officer's internal, contradictory feelings. Similarly, in Seattle in 1999 during the summit protests, some police officers cried when given the order to attack non-violent, idealistic teenagers. They nevertheless attacked, however (Graeber 2009, 404). Violence may escalate when police encounter people who systematically refuse to recognise their authority (*ibid.*, 472). Despite the fact that activist and protestors know the risks that come with non-violent direct action, such as violent police intervention, they see the urban space as a critical site in which to exercise power and resistance to the extent of being prepared to risk getting physically harmed or even suffer judicial consequences.

Collective struggles and the meaning of space

The Kämpa Malmö actions described in this second part of the chapter revolved around strong emotions connected to Möllevången and the feeling that the neighbourhood had been attacked. Reactive emotions such as anger, fear, and shock provided the raw materials that the activists transformed into moral outrage. The potential for mobilising a large number of protesters is usually high in connection with racist, nazi-motivated violence (Jämte 2013, 462–463, 484). The second large demonstration presented above is seen by the activists as a particularly important symbolic event since it brought together 10,000 participants from all over Malmö while maintaining a radical character with the slogan ‘Antifascism is self-defence’. Importantly, the activists succeeded in presenting their cause of ‘anti-fascism is self-defence’ as a common cause for all Malmö residents. It is an instance of when Möllevången equalled Malmö. The mass mobilisation was significant for the activists to confirm and strengthen Möllevången’s identity as a ‘red zone’. It promoted and strengthened a collective sense of self, which in turn enabled the activists to be efficient political agents in the subsequent mobilisation in Limhamn. I will here say something about the impact such actions have on place and social relations and the role of space and body in city-making.

To protest is to make space (Routledge 2017, 40). Through a collective display of protest, as in the examples described above as well as in Chapters 5 and 6, protestors engage in city-making. Although the collective actions exemplified here did not leave a material imprint, they nonetheless left imprints in the history of that space in people’s minds and memories (ibid., 41) and new social meanings were attached to the places. By using notions such as *our streets* and *our city*, a we-collective was created discursively and bodily through acting together and being there, chanting, and walking. In these ‘spaces of appearance’, new political subjectivities, such as ‘Kämpa Malmö’, ‘Stop REVA’, and ‘the streets are ours’, seek to make visible the multiple multiscalar processes of dispossession and inequality, such as racism, poverty, and sexism, and reclaim power and equality from neoliberal governance and

government. Activists thus participate in changing the identity of the place and the city.

Through the collective actions and disparate trajectories—or ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005)—that are brought together, we see how Malmö is indeed a globally constructed place when considering that the relationships made within these sites stretch far beyond its geographical borders. The multiscalar character of space is illustrated through the transnational connections that are made in these collective actions, for example when the Danish activists joined the Swedish activists, the Roma EU citizens joined in alliance with the Swedish activists, and when Spanish and Israeli citizens participated in demonstrations and simultaneously projected their experiences outward through digital space, which reached people in disparate locations.

This chapter also showed how activists use space—occupying, blockading, breaching—to make evident the role of spatialisation in the production and reproduction of domination and repression, which brings up questions such as: who has the right to urban space and in what part of the city and when? Activists’ use of space becomes a means of creating space and collective identities. Although the activists did not manage to stop, nor even interrupt, the no-nazis—the Party of the Swedes successfully held their space throughout their gathering—the space nevertheless enabled new relations and new connections (Dikeç 2012). The protest was a form of commoning: creating new shared experiences of that place.

New embodied experiences of these public spaces were created and, via those embodied experiences, new conceptions of those places emerged. In the case of Limhamn, which had no particular political association for the activists at the time except for being associated with being an affluent, white, and segregated neighbourhood, certainly gained a new embodied conception in the course of the blockade. One can assume that the place was also given new meaning for its residents as a result of the concerted counter-action by the variety of actors. Through the collective and embodied taking of streets and squares, the protestors disrupted ‘normal life’ in the neighbourhood. The massing of bodies into the streets with their loudly chanted slogans created a sense of excite-

ment that attracted bystanders into the atmosphere of the march as they waved to the protestors and some local residents even directly participated in the blockade. In such a protest, non-activists from the general public turned into political subjects and strangers were turned into 'friends'. In short, the protest disrupted the spatial routines in Limhamn, leaving behind a strong symbolism of resistance and anti-nazism in the memories of the local residents (whether they supported the counter-protestors or not). For the activists, Limhamn, from that day on, became identified with the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Sweden.

I agree with Massey (2013) that collective actions, such as the ones narrated in this chapter, create space that is more meaningful than what is commonly perceived as 'public space' (see Chapter 1) in the sense of being space that people just pass through to go to work, the shops, or wherever. These activities recreate public space and make it more public. In these spaces opened up by activists, people do not just pass one another; rather, they talk, they converse, they argue. The interactions are between activists and the general public, residents and priests, hippies and radicals, activists and the police, and even racists and anti-racists. This is what makes space truly public according to Arendt (1998): a space that creates a politically engaged public. These are spaces that bring people together to talk and to argue about the kind of future world they wish for. Such actions and spaces are ultimately based on a politics of presence and the struggle over urban space, which is increasingly being privatised, policed, and controlled (Mitchell 2003): it is an embodied taking-up of public space and, as such, it creates a political commons (see Harvey 2013, 161) and challenges the hegemonic (unequal) spatial order (Rancière 1999; Dikeç 2012).

In the demonstrations that are provided in this thesis as examples, as in many other demonstrations, the atmosphere is festive rather than anger-ridden despite the seriousness of the slogans and messages, and a feeling of happiness and strength is achieved that activists and protestors seldom otherwise feel. At a small-scale level, these collective actions, except those that entail police violence, represent instant realisations of the activists' ideal society in which

not only activists but also non-activists engage in politics and act to achieve social change. In particular, the demonstrators with precarious legal status gain some of the voice and visibility that state-based politics otherwise denies non-citizens. Asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, as well as Roma migrants' participation in political protests represent the most dramatic examples of presence and appearance in their openly 'outing' themselves, placing their bodies on the line, and inviting public scrutiny precisely on the account of the status that marks them as outsiders. They present themselves as political subjects claiming the commons who deserve that commons despite their dispossessed and precarious status. In other words, they negate their dispossessed status by enacting a visibility that they lack outside of these public events (Beltrán 2009). Nevertheless, becoming a political subject cannot be separated from risk-taking. An activist may be beaten by police or arrested, jailed, or fined and, if he or she is undocumented, deported.

That having been said, I want to make one important remark on temporality. The fact that people with precarious legal status find their voice within social movements within the public space is very important. But being able to seize their rights through their actions in practice was more possible five to ten years ago than it is today when national and internal borders in Sweden as elsewhere in the world have been strengthened considerably.

In this final paragraph, I want to connect the themes of the two sections in this chapter: creating alliances and mass mobilisations. A similarity between these themes is revealed through the activists' narrations of the struggles. What kinds of representations are necessary in order to frame a struggle either as an alliance or as a case that concerns larger parts of the population (not only the 'visible' victims)? In the cases of both Showan and the Roma migrants, I see how the activists attempted to emphasise agency and action rather than victimhood; they emphasised an 'us' ('Sorgenfri is everywhere', 'Housing for everyone', or 'Kämpa Malmö' instead of 'Kämpa Showan') as a way to move away from representing 'victims of dispossession' or speaking on behalf of someone else. They created 'fighting collectives' in which (differently positioned) people joined together to fight a common enemy ('fascism' or 'capital-

ism') that affects us all (albeit to different extents and at different times).

Figure 12. The square Möllevångstorget viewed from the monument the Glory of Labour during the Kämpa Showan demonstration, 9 March 2014.

Figure 13. Portrait of Showan with the hashtag #kämpashowan painted on a parking garage (P-Huset Anna) in central Malmö, 16 March 2014.

Figure 14. Möllevångstorget 16 March 2014. People gathering to join the demonstration 'Kämpa Malmö — Antifascism is self-defence'. Photo by Jonathan Pye.

Figure 15. Blood on the asphalt. Mass blockade of the Party of the Swedes in Limhamn, 24 August 2014.

8 WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES ACTIVISM MAKE?

The image on the cover of this thesis was originally used as the poster announcing *The Möllan Anthology* (*Möllanantologin*), a collection of 11 short films about cultural expression in Malmö released in 2012. They used Möllan as the lens since many of the cultural workers who made the documentaries lived or worked there, but the depictions were from all over Malmö. The directors wanted to communicate transformative cultural activities happening in the city, the kind of activities that aimed at social and political change. The poster depicts a utopian Möllevången where the neighbourhood takes the lead at the front, showing the way for the rest of the city, which rises behind. This image portrays activists' experiential knowledge of the city as radiating from this particular neighbourhood. On top of the large Art Nouveau residential rental premise that stands along one side of the square, the 'white house' as it is popularly called, a sign reads 'Flat to be donated' (*Lägenhet bortskänkes*). On the ground floor, there is a library (instead of the restaurants found there today). The Asian grocery at the bottom right, which has an outdoor space composed of parts of the punk wall, is the only element recognisable from today's Möllevången. In the opposite corner, a sign reads 'Free childcare' (*Barn lämnas gratis här*). On the opposite side of the road we find a community kitchen. On one of the rooftops, pro-asylum activists with raised fists are sitting on a 'No Borders No Nations' banner in the queer colour purple. Below them, along the road that has been converted into a Venetian canal, there is the Office of Basic Income. On the

square, people of all colours are socialising, playing instruments, and dancing while seniors with walking frames are chitchatting and toddlers play in an inflatable pool. The only contentious part of the illustration is a female King Kong climbing Turning Torso with a pair of scissors, which I interpret as symbolising a furious feminist sieging the city by cutting down 'new Malmö's' capitalist phallus that has been placed at the heart of the city's neoliberal urban restructuring project in the Western Harbour. For activists, Turning Torso is a symbol of the tearing apart of the city in socio-spatial terms.

The film collection as well as the poster illustrate how the neighbourhood of Möllevången, through activities and narratives about the place, contributes to the identity formation of the people who are drawn to this place to make something meaningful in their lives by, for example, creating alternatives to the neoliberal socio-spatial organisation of society. In other words, they wish to create social relations that are horizontal instead of vertical, that are inclusive instead of exclusive, and that promote political agency instead of enforcing and promoting exploitation, oppression, displacement, and competition (De Angelis 2003, 14). As this thesis shows, activists produce spaces that allow for the emergence of more collaborative models of social relations and distribution. They want resources to be equally distributed among everyone who makes up the social fabric of the place, including those in precarious legal conditions, and they attempt to achieve this through commoning. In the words of Leila Dawney (2013, 35): "this draws attention to our participation in making worlds beyond our immediate desires and needs, and contributes to our sense of commonality, our feeling of being in common." The question is where, if anywhere, do the activists' commoning and solidarity lead? Is it just about a certain number of individuals' emplacement in the city or is it actually about creating the possibility for a new and more just world?

In this last chapter, I will elaborate on my fourth and last research question, which has to do with the impact of left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activism in Malmö on a larger societal scale. I will argue that what the activists have achieved through their activism, as described and analysed in this thesis, is to create spaces

from which power can be challenged and resisted for failing to deliver equality and justice (Miller and Nicholls 2013). In that process, activists and others (independent of legal status) who are connected to these spaces produce *shared perspectives and experiences that link them to a global struggle and set of practices oriented toward anti-capitalist and pro-redistribution struggles*. First, I will discuss perceptions of success and failure and whether these normative notions are at all useful when analysing the achievements of prefigurative politics. Second, I discuss activists' production of new spaces in the city and what its impacts are. Third, I offer some suggestions, as pointed out in the literature, for how the activists' agenda for more equal orders may be strengthened and how that may be taken forward. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the possible futures of Möllevången.

Perceptions of success and failure

Notions of success and failure are ambivalently addressed by activists. Their victories are mostly short-lived. For example, every deportation that is stopped or cancelled is a victory for pro-asylum activists, but it does not threaten the powerful migration regime since many deportees are simply re-deported under more costly measures. It is extremely difficult for people to achieve structural and lasting impacts on society, even for activist groups that have this as their main aim. A former activist said: "I mean, let's say that Allt åt alla had never existed in Malmö, no one would have really noticed any difference." Although the person who said this supports any instance of resistance against oppression and exploitation, he points to the fact of how hard it is to make a 'real' impact. Real, according to him, means in the political-economic structural sense and in terms of actually contesting and dismantling the hegemony of neoliberalism and structural racism. Möllevången continues on its gentrification route. Massive cuts in public expenditures continue, privatisation advances, which, it seems, will vastly increase with the new government that is constrained by the

liberal-right's conditions.¹⁹⁴ The income gap between the richest and the poor in the country grows steadily. Anti-immigrant sentiments are gaining wider support.

While not achieving their ultimate goals in relation to the power of capital, the state, and current urban and migration policies, activists have in several cases successfully brought important issues into the public political debate, especially concerning the situation of migrants with precarious legal status (Stop REVA, the Sorgenfri Settlement); the neo-nazi presence in public space (Kämpa Malmö); and gentrification and segregation in Malmö (e.g., Reclaim Västra Hamnen, Stad Solidar). Yet, the activists' anti-gentrification campaigns do not really threaten structures of domination and exploitation in the neoliberal order (Mayer 2013). On the contrary, albeit unintentionally, their presence and activities have rather boosted the gentrification of Möllevången. Activists' anti-racist narrative of Möllevången and their creative activities in the area are welcomed and embraced by the city leadership and private property investors and owners, as these activities enhance the attractiveness of the neighbourhood and thus raise real estate values in the area.

Clearly, if political success is measured in relation to its ultimate aims—non-oppression, non-exploitation, non-exclusion, non-racism, etc.—all of the activists' activities would count as failures since the unjust structures continue to exist. However, a 'failure' from one perspective may be a 'success' from another. A case in point is the Sorgenfri settlement, the encampment built by Roma migrants on private land. Despite the activists and Roma migrants' durable collaboration and contentious occupation of a small piece of land in the city, which challenged power and the idea of private property and fought for the rights of non-citizens, the dwellers were eventually evicted from the lot. Out of this 'failure' an even stronger space of solidarity was created outside the City Council Hall, and new connections were made between different activists and groups who joined into the struggle. We thus see how failures

¹⁹⁴ The new government, which took more than four months to form, consists of a new centre-left minority government led by Stefan Löfven, who received a second term in office. To be able to form a government, one of the weakest in Swedish history, Löfven had to offer major concessions: tax cuts, reform of the rental housing market, and relaxation of Sweden's strict employment laws (Henley 2019).

and successes are connected and multifaceted; a political struggle is not necessarily either one or the other.

Another case in point is when a pro-asylum activist, when reading an early draft of my thesis, pointed out the need for a more nuanced picture of activists' achievements. She meant that it is not only those in precarious legal conditions who 'are helped'. The fact that the pro-asylum movement in Malmö has successfully supported the emergence of a new generation of migrant activists gave renewed energy to the pro-asylum movement, not only in Malmö but in the whole of Sweden. Migrants' political activation gave further strength to Swedish activists' continued commitment to direct action. In fact, the pro-asylum movement in Malmö succeeded, from 2013 onward, in fulfilling what they had struggled for a long time: for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers to represent themselves in the public space through political struggles. This mutuality and emotional energy and satisfaction in struggle gets lost when activism is framed in terms of 'failure' and 'success' or when the struggle is framed locationally and loses sight of its networked composition with multiple places. My intention has been to show this mutuality and to highlight the agency of the 'helped' who enter the scene and become activists and 'helpers' themselves.

But it is safe to say that most collective actions, such as demonstrations, do not lead to (policy) change, unless they are so massive that politicians get caught off guard (like in France with the yellow vests movement starting in 2018), which rarely happens in Sweden. But this kind of change is hard to predict until it happens no matter the place. If activists show success in breaching the order in moments of disruption, what comes after that? One activist pondered as follows:

Suddenly, there are riots and protests, but then what was before comes back. It's like movements [that go] up and down. It must be constantly up in order to change something. But it is hard to find ways to keep it at that level.

The quote highlights the crucial question of how to sustain resistance or how to advance or expand the disruption of hegemony.

A massive upheaval can be seen as the culmination of all the previous organising. At that turning point, the kinds of demands, the political understanding, and whether people are prepared to try to obtain power (and power in terms of what) are products of the persistence of organisations, platforms, programmes, and how the future has been imagined. Do these activists prepare for this long-term possibility? Similar to Cumbers (2015), I have observed that the activist groups remain relatively vague in their approach to the practical issues of constructing political and economic institutions and structures that might seriously challenge existing capitalist relations. Many of their collective actions seem to be efforts of mitigation instead of pro-active and creative actions. As self-critically formulated by a female activist in her late thirties:

If you look at what we do in practice, [it's] trying to slow down what we perceive as a deterioration. Which means saving some health care centres [from shutting or cutting down on services], saving some preschools, saving a little bit of this and that, and to make sure that there will be no fascist takeover in Sweden. So that's what we are dealing with. Unfortunately.

The quote conveys a feeling of being overwhelmed by the neoliberal order in which it is hard to find time to build counter-hegemonic alternatives due to the exhaustive work of trying to prevent the deterioration of an already bad state. The quote may also reflect activists' tendency to, within their own circles, value and de-value their achievements according to normative understandings of 'success' and 'failure' in terms of policy change, which hampers them from seeing, understanding, and thus expanding on their achievements if they were measured differently.

As Trott (2016) points out, few researchers have empirically examined the impact that the kinds of processes I have illustrated in this thesis have had at the societal level. Indeed, it is not easy to measure the success or efficiency of activism (Mayer 2013). Some researchers contend that normative categories (i.e., 'success' and 'failure') are insufficient in themselves, and must be reimagined to achieve a deeper understanding of the impact and significance of

prefigurative activism (Haiven and Khasnabish 2013). If activism (or social movements more broadly) are analysed through the lens of mainstream social movement scholarship, activist groups are regarded as organisations whose principal aim is policy change within established, dominant institutions. Success and failure are then measured according to this aim. What disappears from view through this lens, as argued by Haiven and Khasnabish (2013), are the multiple effects produced by activists that are non-institutional and non-instrumental in nature and which tie into broader questions on the legitimacy of the entire system. These are the effects that I have found the most interesting to analyse, with a focus on relationality, encounter, and political socialisation through the spaces and pathways of emplacement that activists open in the city. So, despite the activists' awareness that they will not witness a post-capitalist, classless society in their lifetime, or perhaps no one else will ever, they do not feel entirely hopeless or give up activism since they have found ways to live the hoped-for liberated world in the present through the creation of small pockets of safe spaces and prefigurative politics where they practice non-hierarchical social relations and thus live more meaningful lives (Gordon 2018).

Producing new spaces

Space creates an order in things. And for space to have political import, it has to be associated in some way with change in the established order of things, leading to new distributions, relations, connections, and disconnections (which could eventually be a change for the better or the worse) (Dikec 2012). This is inevitably a contentious and conflictual process. Activists almost always confront opposition and repression from those actors whose interests are threatened or who are ideologically opposed, which is most often the state but can also include corporations and property owners, among others (Miller 2013). Activists' key assets are their experience with conflicts and not being afraid of antagonism. Through mobilising protests in public space, activists manage to capture the attention of the media and their audience and bring up issues that those in power would otherwise ignore. Activists thus use protest in public space to "bring to the surface the hidden ten-

sion that is already alive” (King, Martin Luther 1963, 10). Collective actions, like those described in this thesis, certainly bring with them tensions and frictions since they work in opposition to the established, unjust spatial orders. From a Rancierian perspective, social change towards more equal orders can only happen when risks are taken and tension and discomfort take place. Engaged in political conflicts and prepared to deal with the ambivalences, challenges, and conflicts that follow, activists challenge prevalent perspectives on reality and propose new ones (Rancière 1999; Dikeç 2007). They do this by acting in the streets collectively, mobilising through social media, and making themselves and others aware of their political positioning. By acting together, they create a new sense of their situation and thus create new political subjectivities (Arendt 1998). In the words of Paul Routledge (2017, 13): “Through practices of resistance, spaces become political because they embody (and make visible) challenges to what can be said, thought and practiced.”

This is precisely the important difference that Malmö activists make through their collective actions in the public space: making seen visions and new social relations that otherwise may have remained unseen. From a Rancierian perspective, activism in Malmö has transformed bodies, places, and minds from the status that they have been assigned by the neoliberal order. If the activists wouldn’t have created relations with migrants with precarious legal status, such as the Roma migrants of the Sorgenfri settlement, the hegemonic understanding of who has the right to the city would have gone unchallenged. Without the intense spatial struggle and the subsequent and consistent debates in the mainstream media, the general public would not have been presented with the activists’ counter-hegemonic narratives of “Let them stay” and “Give them housing”. The Roma migrants might have been evicted silently. Conversations, debates, demonstrations, and collective actions in the public space are important fundamental parts of politics and enhancing the participation of the public. Activists also include non-citizens in these processes and thus challenge the accepted givens of who constitutes the rightful subjects of political voice and action.

What the activists create through collective action is a space that is truly public in the Arendtian sense, meaning that they create a politically engaged public that takes part in meaningful discussions concerning society and the future. Such experiences are politicising and alter participants' sense of self and support their right to claim equality and justice. The example of Kämpa Malmö in its three different configurations demonstrates the activists' understanding of the current conjunctures of inequalities and injustice as expressed through the flyer claiming that increasing income gaps fuel fascism in Sweden as well as in Europe in general. The speech given by an activist of Aktion mot deportation following the large-scale Kämpa Malmö march is an example of the interconnections that activists make in different lines of injustice and struggle. The new (migrant) activists in Malmö, in turn, express solidarity with the activists who struggle against racism, fascism, sexism, and homophobia. Hence, the mobilisations depicted in this thesis created connections between different positions of dispossession and displacement.

Commoning was achieved through the 'spaces of appearance' opened up by activists in the city, which took the form of communication and the sharing of experiences between different people, thereby changing these relations. The understanding of the city, as well as of the neighbourhood of Möllevången, as sets of social relations counters the rhetoric of migrants as 'outside' of the city. These activist groups enable emplacement within their networks and, by doing so, create what the city is at a particular time.

Activists, artists, and ordinary Malmö residents form alternative conceptions and practices of ethical and political commons that bypass state-based and neoliberal frameworks in regard to Malmö's future through their participation in political marches that take over city streets, appropriation of city walls for displaying political imagery (stickers, posters, graffiti), building of social centres on former industrial grounds, and the organising of festivals. By employing the principles and practices of horizontalism, mutuality, and inclusion, the activists resist the neoliberal ordering of socio-spatial and economic relations in their everyday lives. By commoning, they resist individualism and competitiveness, which are two of the central components of neoliberal rationality. By

supporting migrants in precarious legal conditions in becoming activists themselves, activists contribute to the reconfiguration of socio-spatial and political relations in the city. And, importantly, activists try to show the general public that their ways of socio-spatial and participatory democratic organisation work, at least on a small scale. One prominent example is Kontrapunkt's transit centre for refugees, which was established instantly, while the state and municipality failed.

So, we can speak of change on a larger scale if we take seriously the relational construction of place and space—the mutual constitution of the local and the global (Massey 2005)—when looking into the relational effects of activism in Malmö in terms of the new subjectivities and new social relationships forged in the city and which stretch far beyond the city boundaries. If activism is analysed in terms of producing new spaces, they are found on multiple scales, including the local, regional, national, international, and online as well as in multiple time-spaces: short-term, middle-term, and long-term. Importantly, these multiple scales intersect and affect one another in complex ways (Leitner et al. 2008). Created counter-hegemonically, these spaces contest racism, sexism, and neoliberal forms of social life and thus “challenge the relations and ideologies sustaining these structural forms of violence at the level of everyday social reality” (Haiven and Khasnabish 2013, 479).

But can the activists' locally focused and enacted activities and struggles concerning anti-gentrification, anti-racism, and pro-asylum and pro-migrant stances have a potentially global reach? This is the discussion that I turn to next.

Connecting people, places, and struggles

Activists may seem stuck in the local since their particular political practice is characterised by a strong orientation towards bringing about social change starting at the local level. But the activists featured in this thesis also organise themselves at a national and even international scale by, for example, travelling in support of struggles located elsewhere. They follow a practice common for activists by attending national and even international meetings with their peer organisations elsewhere in order to disseminate and create

mutual learning across places, especially activists from Allt åt alla, who have annual meetings with other Allt åt alla groups from other cities as well as with a peer organisation in Hamburg. Pro-asylum activists (from Asylgruppen, Aktion mot deportation, and Kontrapunkt) attend international No Border camps (in 2012, it took place in Stockholm) or national meetings with FARR. Malmö activists have also established close connections to parts of the activist scene in Copenhagen, which constitutes an important resource for mobilisations in Malmö. These affiliations allow the Malmö groups to reach broader publics and allow local actors to gain information relevant to understanding underlying structural forces and viable mobilisation strategies (Miller and Nicholls 2013). Hence, through multiple organisational affiliations, activists bring different collectivities and places together to form new alliances and relationships.

Most activist groups, especially pro-asylum groups like Asylgruppen, Aktion mot deportation, and Kontrapunkt, bring together a diverse set of people in terms of ethnicity, culture, class, and legal status. Large mobilisations, such as those arranged by Allt åt alla and Skåne mot rasism, or cultural and social events at Kontrapunkt bring together Malmö residents who are connected to the scene and its counter-hegemonic culture. The activists are thus required to work across considerable differences in sociocultural backgrounds, political traditions, and organisational routines, which, at times, is challenging and conflictual.

Within such diversity and difficulty, commonalities are nevertheless created across differences through conjoint experiences of collective actions as highlighted in this thesis. Embodied differences of ethnicity and class in urban social relations, such as between migrants with precarious legal status and Swedish middle-class activists, which have been the focus here, are met and dealt with through a solidarity based on a politics of the commons. While the activists connect people and multiple places through their activities, Möllevången remains a node in a network in which activists can feel a little stronger and safer than in other places.

Identification with Möllevången is central for activists in Malmö. While a certain place, like Möllevången, can enhance the

power of mobilisation for activists by strengthening relations and building common mobilising narratives and identities (Nicholls et al. 2013), a place may nevertheless ensnare them in manifold local traps (Purcell 2006). For example, Peter Marcuse (2011) warns against fetishising space, which is an imminent threat in the case of Möllevången. The end cannot be to claim a place, in this case Möllevången, for the sake of claiming space in the city, but rather, as formulated by Miller and Nicholls (2013, 467), “to rectify injustices driven by systemic processes that run through the city”.

Another critique is put forward by Mark Purcell (2006), who warns activists who assume that the local scale is the most important one in terms of carrying out actions. This problem has been identified by Raymond Williams (1989) as ‘militant particularism’, which may hamper the building of connections beyond the everyday lived experiences of the city (Miller and Nicholls 2013, 461). For example, Allt åt alla argues theoretically for focusing their politics on the local neighbourhood level (see Chapter 1). While not rejecting the local scale, Purcell argues that the scale of activism (be it local, regional, or global) in itself is not what matters: “It is those actors and agendas that produce outcomes, not the scales through which the agendas were realised” (2006, 1929), that matter. In an alternative formulation, Nicholls et al. (2013, 12) claim that all spatialities, or scales, are important, but not equally important at all times and in all types of conflicts. Hence, activists must be wary of prioritising a certain scale for all their actions and rather consider carefully each particular case of collective resistance.

As argued in the literature (see, e.g., Nicholls et al. 2013; Harvey 2001), if activists are to be successful in conducting collective actions that may have an impact at the societal level, they need to conduct politics with a ‘global sense of place’ (Massey 1994), seeing as how locations are “traversed by a range of power networks, with actors in different sites engaging with one another through multiple relations” (Nicholls et al. 2013, 11). Such a globalised understanding of place counteracts localist or nationalist tendencies of place-essentialism that may feed into ideas of nostalgia rather than progressive change (Massey 1994, 2004). I see activists in

Malmö as being aware of the multiscalar character of place and as acting upon that awareness, revealed especially through their knowledge of the interconnectedness of urban restructuring in different locations in the city and the increased segregation in the city due to financial capitalism at the global level. Activists thus connect what is happening in Möllevången with multiple places and scales. With this understanding of the complex character of place, activists ought to use Möllevången as a political tool not to create a place 'for itself' but a place 'in itself' (Harvey 2001, 193), which means creating a place as a mediator between individuals and more general politics and to connect with distant others and present a unified front against global dispossessive forces. Such a strategy was visible in the struggle over the Sorgenfri settlement in which a particular place (a piece of occupied land) was used as such a mediator between people and more general politics in the country and beyond (in the realms of neoliberal politics and global capitalism).

Another way to understand place as multiscalar is through the social relations that are forged. The activists' collaborations and joint actions together with migrants, and in particular the entry of new migrant activists, have brought in new experiences, values, and tactics from other parts of the world into the activist scene in Malmö. The connections and building of social relations and alliances with migrants (Roma, refugees, and undocumented, which have been the focus in this thesis) show that their relations aren't merely 'local' but 'glocal', since these relations across citizenships, legal statuses, and experiences connect various geographically distant places and people.

The crucial question that arises is whether (or how) large-scale general movements can be built from local experiences forged in particular places.

What is to be done?

In order for their locally enacted activities to gradually co-constitute the conditions through which wider socio-economic and political change could be achieved, activists will need to find ways of connecting the plurality of grievances and struggles existing not only in Malmö but in the whole of Sweden. This is especially ur-

gent in a period of growing far-right populism and nationalism, which is especially directed at the working class as a solution to their anger over dispossession. Building a stronger and broader base, as argued by Greenberg and Lewis (2017), means extending alliances across cities and countries and recognising that the degradations wrought by increased inequality, displacement, and dispossession as well as declining environmental conditions and eroded political representation do not end at the city limits. Linking struggles between cities and smaller towns and rural areas will be vital for building power, the authors claim. It is about raising the visibility of how much is at stake for so many. Activists ought to reach out to refugees who fear being deported and, at the same time, reach out to those local residents who fear that the refugees are using up their 'scarce' resources while in fact "their pension funds are invested in companies that lobby governments for cuts in social spending" (De Angelis 2003, 959). While doing this, activists should resist the trend of depoliticisation and NGO-isation of social movements (Harvey 2006; Mayer 2013).

To link struggles requires that activists create a sense of 'we' that is politically salient and which produces a recognition of our shared stakes under global capitalism. A politics of the commons is not simply a question of self-interest versus common interest but, as many of my interviewees articulated, of how individual interests can be articulated in such a way as to constitute common interests: I care for the Other because I could be her. In the words of Butler and Athanasiou (2013, 154), I want to emphasise

the importance of alliances and cohabitation across established categorizations of identity and difference, beyond the very polarity of identity/difference. The heterogeneity of precarious bodies, actions and frameworks, and affective states invites and requires continuous political work of engagement, translation and alliance, work that veers away from essentialized understandings of identity and representation, and, of course, that effectively opposes nationalist discourses and practices.

One can assume that Allt åt alla's theoretical aim of creating a struggle based on "our own needs in our everyday lives" (Allt åt alla interviewed in Ivarsson 2009) means constructing a broad collectivity of alliances with others in other places with other needs, which constitutes the 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2004). This process entails that differently positioned people's interdependent needs are made visible and are connected and, in this way, a diverse 'us' with people of multiple backgrounds will be attracted into a joint struggle. To use Chantal Mouffe's phrase, this can also be understood as creating a 'radical democratic pluralist politics' that is expansive and inclusive (see Oppelt 2017). The interesting moment thus appears when a lot of different people who normally do not interact come together and nevertheless find a joint interest and common struggle, which will then change such struggles' premises in the future. So, it is about finding the issues that the biggest portion of people can identify with. This will require a process in which one learns to formulate the needs and wishes of the collective. Projects and actions that promote the commons and solidarity of the city's inhabitants, like those described in this thesis, will, one hopes, help to determine the course that the city will take.

The possibility of creating such alliances and making many different people come together is dependent on the different activist groups' abilities to collaborate. The different activist groups should see 'the others' struggles as different from their own, yet also structurally embedded in their struggle. This thesis has dwelled on examples of collaboration that emerged between different activist groups. Despite the divisions in ideology, the judgemental tendencies towards 'the other activist groups', and narrow perceptions of 'the ideal struggle', efforts were continuously made to sustain good relations, which were in particular visible through the various activist groups' publicly announced support for the various collective actions and issues fought for by the different groups. Research shows that creating new relations across traditional ideological and social boundaries enhances the potential reach and impact of collective action (Miller 2013). Therefore, it is crucial for the activist groups to continue to strengthen their collaboration in terms of en-

abling mass mobilisations and keeping Möllevången as a launch pad for political struggles.

Internal ideological discussions within the activist scene concerning horizontality versus representation or solidarity versus charity may be productive as long as their ultimate shared aim of equality is not lost. While all of the activist groups taken up here in principle believe in ‘politics of the first person’ (i.e. that one should not be represented but rather represent only oneself), which is intimately connected to prefigurative politics (which implies participatory and direct forms of democracy), they do conduct politics that could be regarded as representing more dispossessed subjects (undocumented or Roma migrants). While aiming at equality, activists (or anyone else, for that matter) cannot just step out of their structural positions in a stratified society. It is therefore pertinent for activists not to avoid the political questions concerning modes of representation and the impossibility of true horizontality (Teivainen 2016) while, of course, also not losing *the aim* of horizontality. As this thesis has shown, Malmö activists understand and reflect on these contradictions and ambivalences, which are the topic of discussions that need to be ever-present within activist groups that act within and against a societal order defined by deep inequalities and divisions of class, ‘race’, and gender.

The conditions of Malmö and Möllevången that today enable new connections and new relationships and struggles are, however, threatened by the gentrification of Möllevången, which is the discussion with which I conclude the chapter.

Farewell Möllevången?

Places never stand still but are always changing and people’s sense of a place also changes over time. Möllevången, as with any other place, is a work-in-progress and this ethnography is a snapshot of a place at a particular time. Möllevången’s strength as a relational and political incubator is currently formidable but this might change. As gentrification proceeds, what will happen to Malmö’s activist scene? Will gentrification indeed proceed? The characteristics, demographics, and economic values related to its urban location are always potentially subject to change (Sewell 2001, 57).

From a historical perspective, we see how Möllevången's cultural meaning has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. The cultural meaning that Möllevången has acquired today, anti-racist and left-wing, is the work of activists and their allies. These meanings can be seen as contentious in relation to the racist discourse that paints Malmö as 'burdened by immigration', often discursively related in reference to crime in the city. But from an urban restructuring perspective, these stances seem less contentious, even complicit. The activists redefine the place but then their achievements are co-opted, made marketable, and reprocessed to increase property values; this is how a hegemonic process functions over time.

Another threat is that activists increasingly don't live in Möllevången and some of their spaces have been pushed out. As one activist, a 35-year-old involved in Asylgruppen, put it: "It feels like Möllan is not as important anymore, because things are disappearing. Glassfabriken is gone, Simpan [a local café] is not what it used to be. Asylgruppen, Kontrapunkt, Allt åt alla have venues quite far out." These may be signs that indicate that Möllevången's political salience is changing. Strong ties between activists are shaped through repeated interaction and a common place facilitates this. If the activists lose a common place, their ties may weaken and so would their mobilisations. With space understood as constraining and enabling (Sewell 2001), the kinds of social action we see in Möllevången in the future will affect the kinds of spaces that are created. What happens if Möllevången stops being a space of contentious politics? Will those politics simply move to the next neighbourhood (e.g., to Seved), or dissolve somewhat or altogether because there is no longer a strong connecting place in the city? Or will activists keep Möllevången as a narrative of a better place despite it being further gentrified? For Möllevången to remain politically salient, activists need to remain present and to resist price hikes, privatisation, enclosure, and surveillance. Despite the elements of gentrification as described in this thesis, Möllevången can still be said to constitute an oasis in these terms compared to other urban areas in the city and in Sweden.

Notwithstanding the upgrading of housing, services, and shops, several residents and activists whom I talked to have witnessed a

social deterioration in this part of the city over the past few years. A female activist in her thirties, who lives in a turn-of-the-century flat with windows looking out over Möllevångstorget, told me in 2018, “It’s getting worse and worse”, referring to the state of Möllevången. In the previous two years prior to our conversation, she had seen a growing network of people selling and buying drugs. The activist now recognises the people and almost knows their daily schedules, when they appear and disappear on the square doing their drug-related business. She believed this phenomenon was the result of the displacement and dispossession of those thousands of refugees who arrived in the autumn of 2015. The displacement these migrants experience implies all kinds of disempowering affects: precarity, vulnerability, othering, unstable relationships of belonging, loneliness, disorientation, and anxiety (Cobo-Guevara et al. 2018). There are reports on how migrant youth (undocumented and those with precarious temporary permits) from Afghanistan are drawn into criminal networks in Malmö (Moreno 2018; Wirehned and Sjövall 2018), which may include selling drugs on Möllevångstorget. As shown in this thesis, Möllevången is shaped by national and international regimes of migration. The dynamics described above are part of the logic of displacement that is key to neoliberalism: precarious migrants are intimately caught up in the criminalised value chains of global capitalism (Cobo-Guevara et al. 2018). The increasing visible social precarity in Möllevången may halt or at least slow down gentrification or it may engender more police surveillance to eliminate the undesired elements in this place (to enable the continuation of gentrification).

One recent occurrence contradicts my scepticism on Möllevången’s future. As I am writing these last lines of the thesis (June 2019), Allt åt alla announced that they will found a new social centre venue in Möllevången, which they will share with NCDK (Kurdiska demokratiska samhällscentret), a leftist Kurdish organisation with whom they collaborate on various projects. It will be interesting to see what this social centre will turn out to be in terms of inclusion and political socialisation (beyond the two groups managing it) and as a space of resistance against the gentrification of the neighbourhood.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined the interactions between place, power, and resistance by describing and analysing the activism carried out by left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activists in Malmö 2013–2016. A theoretical framework of power and resistance allowed me to investigate various expressions of contentious politics and solidarity, which enabled an analysis of the empirical material that helped give new insights into how place affects activism and vice versa. My ethnographic approach made it possible to capture a set of social processes at a certain time and place and provide a specific kind of in-depth knowledge. The activism I analysed was nuanced due to the number of different collective actions (Stop REVA, Refugees Welcome, the Sorgenfri settlement, Kämpa Malmö, among others) that were understood in relation to their functions, aims, and the strategies the activists pursued. As this thesis has exemplified, activism is a complex phenomenon. It is at once an exercise of political strategy, a mobilisation of resources, an overcoming of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts, a seizing of political opportunity, and an enactment of collective narratives (Sewell 2001). I showed how the activist scene in Malmö has helped to create a counter-narrative to the anti-immigrant discourse in Sweden that, in particular, targets Malmö as being ‘burdened by immigration’. The narrative put forward by activists is welcoming, especially towards precarious migrants.

The analysis showed how activists attempt to create a sense of shared experience and agency under global capitalism without negating differences. An ethics of caring for the other, horizontalism,

mutuality, and political socialisation grew out of such processes. Activists in Malmö, some of whom were featured in this thesis, try to situate themselves, based on their own conditions under neoliberal capitalism, in the displacement of others and act across their very different albeit interconnected experiences of inhabiting the city. What I see is that activists attempt to bridge the gaps that keep people separated (Cobo-Guevara et al. 2018) by translating, befriending, lending, releasing, hiding, smuggling, sharing, and collectivising, all of which are points of commoning and solidarity. The examples in this thesis thus describe encounters and crossovers of the different regimes of displacement and dispossession. By acting together, activists create common spaces that involve and politicise non-activists.

Based on a politics of the commons, activists have created structures outside formal institutions and neoliberal orders that may not be visible to outsiders, but have a very real and material impact on those people involved in them. Commoning thus develops as a strategy for countering regimes of individualisation and neoliberalisation (ibid.) and has transformative potential for those who participate in the processes and practices of commoning involving ideas about themselves and what it is possible to reshape. As activists prefigure a new kind of society, emerging collectivities promote alternatives to neoliberal socio-spatial relations, which are new modes of being that are primarily based on caring for the other (the other activist group, the other initiative, the other who is dispossessed, and the other who also resists) (Daskalaki 2018). In particular, this thesis has shown how shared spaces, created temporarily through action or more lastingly through alternative structures and networks of social relations and friends, brought diversity together, made the mobilisation of, at times, large numbers of people possible, and facilitated the forming and maintenance of alliances across different activist groups. All these activities are attempts to build small instances of their hoped-for future in the here and now (Maeckelbergh 2011; Yates 2015), a future in which migrants have the right to settle where they want, have access to the wealth produced in that place, and where they can live in freedom from racism both structural and in terms of the everyday.

This thesis has further shown that an extra-parliamentary, leftist activist in Malmö is a person who reflects his or her own position vis-à-vis other activists and non-activists, citizens and non-citizens, political theories and society, former and current generations of activists, and engages in self-critique. This reflexivity is a knowledge production process in which activists develop a political consciousness (and possibly carve out their identifications) and engage in 'new practices of the self' (Gibson and Graham 2006, xxiii). It is a fluctuating process depending on internal and external discourses on activism and on the situations in which activist practices come about.

In the following, I will summarise the main findings of this thesis. By elaborating on each of the research questions, I will show the different and interrelated impacts this kind of activism has in Malmö and how my findings add to the research related to these topics. I then go on to present this thesis' specific contributions and suggest some directions for future research.

1) How is activism in Malmö linked to economic and urban restructuring, migration, and inequality?

I have shown that activism is connected to economic and urban restructuring, migration, and inequality in various ways. First of all, the establishment of multiple activist groups in Malmö was a direct response to the dispossession and displacement wrought by the processes outlined above. The collective actions I have presented and analysed were attempts to resist the neoliberal changes in policies that have exacerbated inequality and segregation in Malmö, increased the enforcement of Swedish national borders, and increased the right-wing populism and neo-nazi presence in Swedish society.

I approached the city as a locus of power, which was presented as taking the form of activities that account for the unequal distribution of places, people, names, functions, and so on and, importantly, the normalisation of this order (Dikeç 2007). As set out in Chapter 1, these activities involve urban policies of post-industrial restructuring as inspired by neoliberal ideology and in-

clude the state restructuring of national and internal borders, the rise of right-wing populism, and racist acts that aim at limiting the rights of migrants. The normalisation of a certain (unequal) order is characteristic of 'the hegemonic process' (Roseberry 1994). The current hegemonic order is ruled by the understanding that capitalism is the preferred form of development and neoliberal policies are the answer to social problems. I thus defined the activism in this thesis as being counter-hegemonic since it aims at contesting this ruling understanding of the contemporary world and contains attempts of disrupting the hegemony by creating alternatives. The fact that the activities that create and recreate inequality (as carried out by, e.g., politicians, state authorities, private-public partnerships, corporations, etc.) are carried out under the theoretical conviction that they are for everyone's benefit reveals the complexity of cultural hegemony and how hard it is to breach 'truths' that are, to a large degree, upheld by the consent of the great majority.

This overall tendency in Sweden and the rest of the world to implement right-wing inspired border policies and neoliberal state and urban policies has not only created dispossession and displacement in various interrelated material ways (for a large number of people irrespective of ethnicity or origin, although with racialised migrants in precarious legal conditions being the most affected) but also affected people in terms of aspirations and emotions. Emotionally, this dispossession and displacement takes the form of increased loneliness, stress, and loss of community following the promotion of competition, individualism, and freedom of choice (values deeply embedded in the organisation of a neoliberal society). This 'freedom of choice', however, does not apply to migrants in precarious legal conditions, which reveals neoliberalism as a socially and ethnically stratifying project at the local, national, as well as global levels. However, by engaging in activism, those who are involved find ways of living and acting in collective ways that resist emotional dispossession.

By aspirational dispossession, I mean the feeling and state of hopelessness in the post-political condition. Ever since the Swedish Social Democratic Party, which was historically founded on a socialist-inspired agenda (the redistribution of wealth by means of

taxation to promote a more equal society), started promoting neoliberal politics, activists and left-wing voters in general have increasingly felt disappointed and hopeless. The consensus today among parties on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum is that the neoliberal model is the best (or the only) model available, which has in turn increasingly eroded the traditionally antagonistic relationship between left-wing and right-wing parties (as understood as a representation of the conflict between labour and capital respectively). As the political spectrum on the left slowly transforms and approaches the centre, activists find it increasingly challenging to promote radical pro-distribution politics. From this perspective, activists are experiencing a negative development and today find themselves at times promoting a simple agenda that the Social Democratic Party promoted in government half a century ago: resist privatisations, expand the social welfare state, do not allow profit-making in social welfare institutions and schools, and uphold housing as a social right and international solidarity with refugees. This form of de-radicalisation of the radical, extra-parliamentarian left in Sweden is a process also observed in a recent study by Jämte, Lundstedt and Wennerhag (forthcoming). Notwithstanding the experience of the left-wing political rollback under neoliberalism and a possible de-radicalising trend as the consequence, by engaging in a form of contentious politics that is antagonistic to the system, those involved resist aspirational dispossession and may develop a particular kind of meaning for their lives.

One can assume that the neoliberal turn described above, coupled with the increased immigration to Sweden, has affected the kinds of social movements that have emerged in Malmö, including: the transformation from class-based to locational and urban collective consumption (the ‘turn to the everyday’ activism that focuses on housing, health care, education, infrastructure, and public space itself); movements based on marginalised identities (related to ‘race’/ethnicity, gender, or sexuality); and movements addressing inequalities related to forced migration. These changing conditions have both enabled and restricted the formation of anti-capitalist struggles.

Another way in which I have shown the links between activism and economic and urban restructuring, migration, and inequality was through the concepts of commoning and solidarity. These concepts helped me to illustrate activism as eruptions of disagreement with the neoliberal socio-spatial organisation of society since commoning and solidarity are conducted in disagreement with activities that create and recreate inequality and are attempts to counter their normalisation in society. The activism I analysed in this thesis was thus presented as a process and practice that changed a place's function or shifted bodies from the places that had been assigned to them, such as in the cases of undocumented people in the public space (Chapters 5 and 6); Roma migrants in city council meetings; or the transformation of streets, squares, or a shantytown into sites of political struggle, encounter, and politicisation (Chapter 7).

The battle over the Sorgenfri settlement is an excellent reminder that there are other possible ways of constructing the world we live in and that one need not take the established (unjust) norms as givens. This particular struggle revealed the connections between global capitalism, migration, segregation, racism, and the city's plans for urban gentrification. The activists tried to make visible how accumulation can be achieved by dispossessing the already dispossessed (refugees and vulnerable migrants), which in turns paves the way for the dispossession of citizens of the state.

The processes of economic and urban restructuring, migration, and inequality are not specific to Malmö and the processes do not per se generate activism and political struggles but are rather dependent on a specific time and place, which leads me to the next question.

2) How is activism facilitated by, and how does it affect, the place in which it occurs?

Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to understand how activism affects, and is affected by, place. Through ethnographic descriptions, I have shown how "space matters" (Massey 2005) in terms of how geography and time condition activists' abilities to

conduct their actions, as when activities that are perfectly normal in Möllevången felt out of place or were even met with hostility when conducted in other neighbourhoods in Malmö (Chapter 5 and 7). The other collective actions in this thesis, like Stop Reva, Kämpa Malmö, and the Sorgenfri settlement, also depended on a certain time and a certain place. The fact that Roma migrants were being evicted from *a place slated for redevelopment* mattered. The fact that Showan was attacked and injured *in Möllevången* also mattered: it meant that the ‘red zone’ of Möllan had been breached. Aided by moral outrage and strong emotions connected to Möllevången, activists successfully managed to mobilise a large number of people, linking residents from the whole of Malmö and across different political parties while maintaining their radicalism as expressed through their contentious slogan ‘Antifascism is self-defence’. The notions of place and space thus helped me to understand the outcomes of single direct actions, but primarily they helped me to understand the development and establishment of the activist scene in Malmö.

The activist scene in Malmö is intimately linked to the city’s transformation from industrialism to post-industrial neoliberalism and the ongoing gentrification of Möllevången (as explored in Chapters 1 and 3). In this thesis, Malmö served as an illuminating case of a working-class city *par excellence* in terms of history, industry, consciousness, politics, and culture, as represented through the monument The Glory of Labour on Möllevångstorget. Faced with grave economic and social problems wrought by deindustrialisation, Malmö today takes the lead in Sweden in post-industrial neoliberal urban experimentation for attracting capital investment (Holgersen 2017; Pries 2018). Hence, the positionality of Malmö in relation to other cities in Sweden—as economically and politically weaker than the two larger cities of Gothenburg and Stockholm—together with the public narratives about the city (dirty, criminal, interesting, progressive, diverse) are part of the trajectory that makes up Malmö. An examination of the urban conditions and their link to global capitalism and international migration was crucial for understanding activism in Malmö, since not all places—including those being restructured—enable strong activist scenes.

Places that incubate resistance are the result of various complex networking processes, which means that the explanations presented in this thesis cannot be seen as deterministic nor as offering definitive causes and factors for other places.

In the case of Malmö, I claim that activism has been facilitated by a common connecting place, Möllevången, an inner-city neighbourhood with affordable housing where activists have increasingly moved since the 1990s. The particular conditions that foster the politicisation and ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005) of Möllevången that I identified during the time of my fieldwork are based on the large number of activists who live there and know each other through various political groups that, in turn, form part of a larger network of groups that connect the activists to their peers in other cities and abroad. Furthermore, as migrants are concentrated in Malmö and particularly in Möllevången, the city and the Möllevången neighbourhood in particular provide a crucial site for encounters and coalitions across difference and the relational opportunities for dispossessed people to contest their dispossession.

As I have shown, Möllevången emerged as a network of multiple social connections and as a shared space of hope and aspiration. To speak of Möllevången as a network of social relations, rather than a ‘neighbourhood’, enabled me to capture the social relationality of place and the role of narratives when it comes to experiencing Möllevången and using it for political purposes.

By appropriating Möllevången through demonstrations, festivals, cafés, bookfairs, political posters, graffiti, as well as through socialisation in their everyday lives and the stories they tell and retell about the place, activists have constructed a powerful activist scene, political narrative, and collective identity as left-wing anti-racists. This anti-racist narrative has contributed to the creation of a wide network of social relations (of activists and allies), which is a particular strength of the activist scene in Sweden. Möllevången as a shared space and narrative thus enables powerful emotions that affect the success of collective actions and the mobilisation of supporters. Möllevången thus serves as an example of the significance of a place for creating political narratives to enhance and encourage local activism (Martin 2003). The power of Möllevången

as a shared space and narrative draws on its working-class history. However, I also observed a growing weakness as Möllevången transforms into a network of shared identity rather than a space (as gentrification continues and activists increasingly live elsewhere in the city).

It is important to note, however, that a large number of activists and different activist spaces in one and the same neighbourhood or city do not equal a strong political scene per se. Whether activists are able to successfully mobilise and conduct collective actions depends on their abilities to build relations and networks across different activist groups and their ability to mobilise the support of allies among the general public. I have shown how Möllevången is such a 'relational incubator' (W. J. Nicholls 2008) where activist groups are closely interconnected and able to create cross-activist relations and collectivise their resources. They have established complex networks of interaction not only across different activist groups, but also with non-activists in art, film, and journalistic collectives and with actors in social life as well as in (party) politics, which is decisive for campaigns to be successful. Irrespective of their group belonging, they share a common narrative of action—'we are all anti-racists'—that is enabled in particular through their strong emotional and ideological attachment to a place: Möllevången.

As already mentioned above, the particular positionality of Malmö in terms of power and wealth in Sweden and globally is an important explanation for the creation of a strong activist scene in the city. To regenerate in the context of intensifying inter-urban competition, Malmö authorities have created a migrant-friendly discourse to counteract the story of a dirty deindustrialised city. This city-wide narrative has in turn enabled a narrative of Möllevången as 'anti-racist'. This anti-racist narrative of Möllevången is in turn generalised by activists to apply to Malmö in general ('The Capital of Love', 'The Capital of Resistance'), which positions the city in sharp contrast to rural Scania County, where Malmö is located, that is associated with racism and anti-immigrant sentiments and has Sweden's highest percentage of Sweden Democrat voters—the far-right, anti-immigrant party in the

Swedish parliament. The activists' positive narrative of the city, and in particular of Möllevången, as an 'anti-racist place' works as a counter-narrative to the far-right's claims that the city is 'burdened by immigration'. Narratives have real, material consequences. The construction of Malmö as anti-racist has made people move, work, or become activists there and it has made people feel that they belong and have the right to be there. This thesis exemplified how this narrative works as a powerful activist tool for creating collective identities and actions. Hence, the conceptualisations of Malmö and Möllevången are constitutive of the types of relations that the activists are able to build. The place-narratives, however, are changing over time as gentrification proceeds and segregation and austerity deepen.

My study has shown that the conditions that enable activism in Möllevången *now*, at the time of concluding the writing of this thesis, are good, especially for the displaced and dispossessed who connect and build relations with the activists. Malmö brings activists and migrants with precarious legal status together in strong interdependent relations, "transforming an aggregation of people into a potent political agglomeration" (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 13) through the specific conditions of Möllevången that make people more prone to resistance than in other places.

The activists' narrative of the place simultaneously reveals another development. The positive narrative that the activists create for Malmö and of Möllevången is appreciated by the city leadership since it contributes to the leadership's promotion of the city in its competition with other cities to attract capital, investment, and prosperous residents. A key conclusion that I draw (in Chapter 3) from the analysis of Möllevången as a relational incubator is that the activists fight and contribute to its gentrification at the same time. Möllevången is thus an example of the process described by Hollander and Einwohner (2004): while resisting power, activists may simultaneously support the structures of domination that make resistance necessary in the first place. Activism in Möllevången thus constitutes resistance and compliance to power simultaneously, a frustrating contradiction to activists who want to live and act in Möllevången.

In line with the discussion above, this thesis serves as an example of how the process of gentrification is not simply about changes in the class composition of specific areas, but also about the conditions that enable a place to challenge the status quo more generally (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 232). Not every gentrifying neighbourhood takes the same route, however, and it is therefore impossible to foresee what will happen to Möllevången as a relational incubator. There is no doubt, however, that those activists and migrants who have less capital and scarcer material power will not be able to continue living in the neighbourhood if gentrification proceeds.

3) What challenges do the activists face in their attempts towards formulating common interests and creating common spaces?

As I have shown, activists face many challenges in their attempts to formulate common interests and create common spaces. The challenges I identified were of both practical and theoretical in character. The practical challenges highlighted in this thesis are a lack of resources and difficulties in gaining legitimacy among residents in neighbourhoods outside of Möllevången and in collaborating across deep inequalities and differences in culture, language, and power structures. I further identified how activists feel trapped by mainly conducting direct actions and how they yearn for long-term work and outcomes.

One theoretical challenge that I identified is related to the different understandings of how a struggle should ideally be conducted, which involves boundary-making that risks impeding efficient collaboration across activist groups. One such line of division in the activist scene in Malmö concerns conceptions of charity versus solidarity (Chapter 5): while charity is interpreted as being in ‘consensus’ with the established orders, solidarity represent *dissensus* (Rancière 2010). Despite activists holding certain views of their own and other activist groups’ work when it comes to aid work, I identified a commonality that is a crucial element of solidarity (as I have used the term in this thesis). For many activists, bodily involvement is important in terms of aid work and that those who

are involved become close to one another, potentially to the extent of creating an understanding of *each other's* needs and wishes. The examples of Allt åt alla's work with the Sorgenfri settlement (Chapter 7), Aktion mot deportation's support of rejected asylum seekers, Asylgruppen's support of undocumented minors, and Kontrapunkt's work with refugees (Chapter 6) as well as Roma migrants showed how embodied solidarity was forged across differences in legal, social, and economic terms and how mutual understandings and common experiences were created. I defined their aid-oriented work as solidarity because it consisted of experimenting with non-hierarchical and non-normative ways of structuring social relations (as examined in Chapter 6), for example between young men and considerably older women; between citizens and non-citizens; between political and non-political agents; between people with different sexual orientations and cultural backgrounds; and between working- and middle-class people. By experimenting, the activists contest the accepted givens within common forms of socialising and affiliation. Friendship in unequal power relations is a particularly significant strategy for transcending these common forms and for challenging 'culturalist discourses of othering' (Gorashi 2018).

Another challenge that activists face is revealed through their attempts of blurring the boundaries between public conceptions of 'the activist' and 'non-activist' as part of their aspiration to include, involve, and politicise 'non-standard' activists in their networks, including 'ordinary people' and, in particular, working-class residents and migrants. The attempt of blurring boundaries, as I examined in Chapter 4, is a prefigurative strategy that has also been observed elsewhere (Maeckelbergh 2011; Chatterton and Pickerill 2011; B. Trott 2005) and that can be deemed successful in light of how 'non-standard' activists have in fact entered the scene in Malmö (as described in Chapter 6), in particular through the different pro-asylum groups, and have eventually created their own groups and actions. By challenging the discursive boundaries between activists and 'society', activists contribute to making activism more inclusive and in enabling the involvement of more categories of people in their networks. Activists therefore try to create

a language and political practice that dissolve the distinctions between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the activist scene. This is difficult, however, considering the cultures that inevitably emerge internally within each activist group in terms of ‘ideal’ customs, strategies, and ways of talking about the injustices that they are trying to contest.

Another challenge that I identified, which confirms earlier studies on activism (see, e.g., Jacobsson and Sörbom 2015; Jämte 2013) is activists’ vacillation between radicalism and the yearning for recognition by the general public, which also created lines of division between different activists and activist groups in the city. If you fail to challenge the basic structures of the capitalist world order, you are not striving for fundamental change. If you challenge the structures of capitalism, meanwhile, you will meet strong opposition, repression, and most probably imprisonment or, if you are a migrant, eviction, detention, and deportation. This tension between radicalism and a yearning for legitimacy is constant within the extra-parliamentary scene: radicalism presupposes disagreement with and the disruption of hegemonic orders, but if the yearning for public recognition and legitimacy grows too strong, the risk of co-optation and mainstreaming increases. This connects with the challenge of constructing a convincing anti-capitalist narrative and articulating ‘the global’ aspect in struggles that take place ‘locally’ and vice versa (Mayer 2013). How can a narrative that demands that all residents in a city, independent of their legal status, have the right to the wealth that they have been part of producing be articulated so that it is heard by the general public? Frequently, activists are forced into the framework of struggle that has been set by the state, as in adhering to state-based rights and the liberal narrative of human rights. This obstructs activists’ radical political aim of exposing and challenging the underlying (global) capital processes of extraction and accumulation that brought about the situation the activists are trying to fight. In short, state-based claims-making may inhibit activists from speaking to the larger (global) structures of inequality and from exposing how capitalism profits by differentially valuing people on the global as well as local scales.

Notwithstanding the challenges summarised in the previous paragraphs, activism has had various effects on multiple scales, a discussion to which I turn next.

4) What are the effects of left-wing, extra-parliamentarian activism in Malmö on a larger societal scale?

My empirical material has shown how activism operates on various and different yet interconnected spatial scales, such as: in the household (sheltering people); in state institutions (visiting/releasing detained asylum seekers); the neighbourhood (anti-gentrification actions, occupying parks and squares); the city (occupying local government meetings, marches moving around the city); the state (claims to stay in the country or against welfare retrenchment); the global system of financial capitalism (summit protests); and finally, the digital space (primarily Facebook). These multiple scales, or spatialities, and relationalities, which are both constituted and constituting, intersect with one another in complex ways in activism. What impact does activism have on these different scales?

The effects of political activism on a 'larger societal scale' are difficult to assess and define. As expressed by many activists, they conceive of their work, to a large degree, as consisting of efforts to mitigate what they perceive as harms (exemplified in Chapter 8), for example by attempting to simply prevent the increase of inequality and racism in society. But there are a few examples where one can assume that the impacts and achievements were due to activists' mobilisations, such as when the shutting down of healthcare institutions and departments was prevented, neo-nazi and anti-immigrant organisations were prevented from carrying out their protests in neighbourhoods with a large population with migrant backgrounds, or when the Left Party in the city council was able to expand and implement certain social rights for undocumented children in the municipality in Malmö, which, according to Left Party politicians, was enabled by the broad-based pro-asylum mobilisations in the city (see Chapter 1).

However, the main attempt that I have made to assess the effects of activism has been done by adopting a multiscalar spatial analysis, as elaborated in Chapter 8. To understand the world relationally means seeing that what is created 'locally' connects with, and thus affects, the 'global'. So, while activists' direct actions in the public space seem to have little effect in terms of policy changes, it is possible to assume that the activists' general presence, establishment, and their creation of extensive networks of social relations in the city have had larger effects. With an understanding of place as multiscalar—the mutual constitutions of the local, regional, national, and global through time in the construction of social space—it is possible to discern the relationship between spatial activity and the translocal, social, and political networks through which people, places, and ideas are continuously connected and enacted

An important effect of activism is its creation of counter-hegemonic spaces, which I have presented in this thesis in the form of alternative structures and networks of social relations, but also in terms of the temporarily created spaces in the form of direct actions. Alternative structures and 'political friendships' are prefigurative since they are not only disruptive of the neoliberal socio-spatial organisation of society but also inaugurative: they create more equal and democratic relations in the here and now. Through creating counter-hegemonic spaces, activists enable the building, development, and continuation of ideas and imaginings of another world. These spaces also enable activists to put their ideas into practice and to experiment with, evaluate, change, and develop them. These spaces thus promote counter-hegemonic values and practices in activists' everyday lives, such as horizontal and collective ways of living and being, irrespective of legal status. In other words, activists create spaces where alternative modes of social (re)production are narrated, imagined, and experimented with through everyday practices grounded in and enabled by Möllevången and spanning across the city of Malmö and beyond. Importantly, for activists as well as for people who have not been involved in political activism previously, these spaces generate new

political subjectivities and new ways of relating to others. Activism thus reshapes identities and social relations.

Another important way of seeing the effects of activism is in terms of what it offers the public. Even in Malmö with its strong activist scene, activists are few in number and weak in front of the forces of capital and border policies that create and recreate inequality. But through their social and spatial activities in the city, activists open up alternative theoretical ways of thinking about societal development. The activists' presence through festivals, direct actions, and inscriptions on walls and lampposts in the public space offers Malmö residents another vision of the future, different than the one offered by the hegemonic discourse. So, despite the fact that activists play a role in the way capital accumulates in Malmö and the gentrification of Möllevången, it is important, from a Rancierian and antagonistic political perspective, that they continue creating counter-hegemonic activities and mobilising protests because it is in such moments that their alternative visions and ideas are heard in public.

Lastly, activism has multiple effects on the material and individual level and it is not my intention to list them all. As I stated in my research aim, I wanted in particular to study the ways in which activism opens new spaces of politics *and* pathways of emplacement, in particular migrant emplacement, which is a key question in the research being conducted in the field of international migration and ethnic relations. On a micro-material level, activists have created complex alternative structures of solidarity that have not only enabled migrants to build a less precarious life in the city, but also a new generation of migrant activists to assert their right to be in the city and to create struggles that travel beyond the borders of the city. Next, I will elaborate on these material effects through the notion of emplacement.

Creating pathways of emplacement

One effect of activism in Malmö is that it has opened pathways of emplacement: the process of re-establishing one's life in a particular locality, building networks, making friends, and developing a feeling of belonging to a new place. This process is experienced by

both internal and international migrants, although I found it most interesting to see the effects of emplacement for migrants with precarious legal status. Hence, I used the notion of emplacement to talk about the different processes and practices that enabled an individual to be established in a new place. The concept of emplacement, which in itself is a spatial concept, enabled me to capture the relationship between urban inhabitants' efforts to settle and build networks of connection in a new locality with the constraints and opportunities of a specific city at a particular time and as pertaining to the contemporary restructuring of cities and national borders (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2015).

The unique temporal constellation and 'throwntogetherness' of Möllevången that enable activism also enable emplacement. Foremost, they enable emplacement for activists. Möllevången offers a 'home-place' for other likeminded people moving into the city. However, the conditions that enable activist emplacement in Malmö in turn offer pathways of emplacement for migrants in precarious legal conditions: pathways for obtaining social wealth that are not mediated by competitive market relations (De Angelis 2003). By opening up pathways of migrant emplacement in Malmö through activism, activists made the city more liveable for those who participated and gained from the struggle despite not solving the problem in general.

My material confirms Nicholls and Uitermark's (2017) observation that migrants in precarious conditions cannot just tap into activist scenes and automatically make use of their resources, but need to *build relationships* with the activists in order to benefit. Those migrants in precarious legal conditions who have created and established friendship relations with Swedish activists got various opportunities for resisting their dispossession and displacement: the ability to hide from the authorities, cancelled deportations, postponed evictions, legal aid, access to a social network, shelter, jobs, and school opportunities, knowledge about labour rights and how to win labour disputes, political socialisation, and political agency. In the process of being emplaced in Malmö through the relations they built with activists, some migrants became activists themselves. The entry of migrant activists and the

formation of their own groups and struggles gave renewed energy and strength to the pro-asylum and pro-migrant movement in Malmö.

The emplacement that I see happening through activism is thus not emplacement entirely into mainstream society, but into these local enactments of counter-hegemonic social structures and practices, which contribute to a political socialisation and the questioning of the status quo. Since emplacement through activism is created through the principles of solidarity, it contributes to creating shared experiences out of which political struggles for social equality and justice can emerge (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2015).

Contributions and further research

As announced in the Introduction, this thesis contributes to the field of international migration and ethnic relations by engaging in an analysis that did not rely on an ethnic lens for studying migrant practices, which is a lens that is regularly produced and reproduced by scholars studying ‘migrants’ (Dahinden 2016). By putting Swedish citizens and migrants into the same analytical frame while addressing their shared experiences of co-creating the political space of Möllevången, this thesis constitutes an example of ‘methodological de-nationalism’ (Anderson 2018). The thesis showed the ability of differently positioned people to contribute to the creation of political struggles. By identifying pathways of emplacement through the activist lens, I have offered an analysis of “migrant and non-migrant displacements within globe-spanning, but locally and temporally situated, neoliberal processes of the destruction and reconstitution of capital” (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018, 21). I hope that the connections between activism and urban restructuring that have been made in this thesis will contribute to furthering the exploration of the relationship between place, power, and resistance.

I have tried to take seriously the significance of a specific urban positionality in theorising about migrants’ politicisation and pathways of emplacement. Within particular cities, these pathways may vary (Glick Schiller 2008, 23). In Malmö, as I have shown, activism plays an important role in facilitating precarious migrants’

possibilities of entering and establishing a less precarious social life in the city. Moreover, the political space of Möllevången—the density of activist groups and spaces and the political narratives of the place—enables and facilitates the transformation of people’s dispossessions into collective political struggles. But more research is needed in order to better understand the success and failures of such mobilisations, especially on the conflicts that can emerge among activist groups that may undermine pro-migrant and migrant mobilisations (Cappiali 2018). Another important subject for further investigation is mechanisms of marginalisation in these asymmetrical citizen-migrant collaborations. While having pointed out tensions in activism in terms of challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts, I have not explicitly analysed or discussed patterns of paternalism. Research that is more focused on possible paternalistic patterns could unmask postcolonial hierarchies and give insights on how forms of domination and marginalisation may emerge in migrants’ alliances (Cappiali 2017), even with radical left-wing groups like those studied here. Hence, more ethnographic work is needed to see how political initiatives, like those that I have studied in this thesis, albeit well-meaning, may develop in paternalistic ways and restrict the migrants’ own views and claims in the course of joint struggles involving relations of unequal power.

On a theoretical level, I brought together an analysis of neoliberal restructuring of urban space (devaluation and revaluation) and the emergence of a political activism that encompasses migrants and non-migrants working to build a different vision of the future, paying particular attention to the role of Möllevången and its enabling characteristics. In other words, I situated my analysis of activism within a broader political and economic context by showing how these aspects feed into activism. Such an approach not only provided insights into activism as a particular political practice, but also into the contemporary state and urban restructuring in Sweden. By looking into how place *and* activism contribute to the conditions of migrant emplacement, I explained how people’s displacements and dispossessions are resisted. This thesis thus contributes to new ways of theorising solidarities born on the ground, as reactions to, and as parts of, the constitution of global process-

es, in an urban context marked by immigration and economic restructuring. I showed how politicised friendships based on activism between middle-class citizens and migrants in precarious legal conditions pave the way for migrants' politicisation and the creation of new migrant activist groups and struggles. I linked emplacement to friendship, friendship to solidarity, and solidarity to anti-capitalist struggles.

An exploration of the differing conditions within the activist scenes in other large cities in Sweden could contribute to a deeper understanding of urban conditions that incubate resistance. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of gentrifying political hubs in other towns and countries with similar or different trajectories could reveal interesting points of similarities and differences that would further our understanding of the urban restructuring and development of neighbourhoods as connected to history, urban policies, and activism. The changing policies in the sphere of housing raise various challenges, and further research is needed to understand gentrification and its effects on activist scenes and on new 'migration societies' (Hamann and Yurdakul 2018). Although it is extremely difficult to quantify and track displacement (Paton 2014, 37), such work is necessary to fully understand the impact of the changes in Möllevången as elsewhere.

With regards to the social movement literature, I offer a novel contribution by analysing the role and specificities of friendship in activism. I claim that a friendship forged through activism is a distinct form of friendship that is commonly sustained and formed in public and created in fluid, instrumental, and politically emotional ways. I also claim that friendship created through activism has a transformative potential, taking the form of transgressive social ties that partly challenge common forms of affiliation and, importantly, paves the way for migrants to become activists (Steinhilper 2018; Cappiali 2018). This transgressive friendship is particularly noticeable within pro-asylum circles. The existent social movement literature lacks research on how politicised relationships are forged between non-citizen migrants and citizen activists and how these emerging relationships play into the formation of joint political struggles, which is a gap that this thesis contributes in filling.

Another important contribution to activism research is the revelation of the challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts within this form of political practice, since knowledge on these issues can only be reached with an in-depth local knowledge of a place and an analysis at the individual level. My ethnography shows how activists struggle and cope with these challenges and what it is that they perceive as achievements.

As mentioned early on in this thesis, it would be interesting to explore how neoliberal ideology has affected left-wing strategies and stances and what effects this may have on the development of contentious politics. Another way to study the relationship between hegemony and counter-hegemonic activism is to look into examples of when the new generation of (migrant) activists in Sweden has emerged and managed to keep their autonomy (self-organisation) and radicalism, as well as when they have been co-opted and made into subjects that help secure the social and political order (Nicholls and Uitermark 2017, 32).

An alternative way of examining the effects of activism is to shift one's focus towards the public; local residents' perceptions and experiences of activism could give further insights into the impact that contentious politics has on its social surroundings and on people's—including those with various kinds of migrant background—perceptions and their willingness to engage in political mobilisations.

Lastly, I hope that the ideas that I have shared in this thesis can inspire future ways of struggling against the processes of dispossession and displacement that harm the many and only benefit the few. I hope these ideas can inspire acts and reflections upon society and inspire people to become activists. We will need to be many to achieve the change we want to see in the world.

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Written at the intersection of migration studies, urban studies, and research on activism, this thesis contributes to the exploration of solidarities born on the ground in an urban context marked by immigration and economic restructuring. Based on ethnographic material collected 2013–2016 in Malmö, Sweden, it examines alliances and friendships generated across social, cultural, ethnic, and legal divides through a particular political practice—activism as carried out by the extra-parliamentarian left. A decisive aspect is the particularity of Malmö, a city with a high density and diversity of activist groups, and Möllevången, the neighbourhood where their actions are concentrated. Möllevången is conceptualised in this thesis as an incubator for resistance to the dispossessing effects of neoliberal economic restructuring and urban gentrification. Special attention is devoted to activist groups that, at the time of fieldwork, affected the most people through their large mobilisations and solidarity-based work. While not negating differences among activists or between activists and racialised migrants in precarious legal conditions, the thesis highlights their shared experiences of co-creating political spaces and interests—commoning. This kind of embodied solidarity requires activists to experiment with non-hierarchical and non-normative ways of structuring social relations, a process filled with challenges, ambivalences, and conflicts. The thesis shows how activists cope with challenges and what they perceive as achievements. Furthermore, it shows that—despite the ever-increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric, restrictive migration policies, and neoliberalisation of the commons—solidarity and commoning contribute to pathways of migrant emplacement: re-establishing life in a particular locality, building networks, making friends, and developing a feeling of belonging to a new place. Not only does the activists' commitment to radical equality and mutual aid create certain pathways for emplacement in the city, it also enables the political socialisation of some migrants and paves the way for a new generation of migrant activists in Malmö.