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AFFECT INTO ACTION

Feminist Movements and the Production of Safer Spaces: a Comparative Research between Rome and Madrid

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A Pat, la luna che muove le maree

To those who fight back for their willful spaces, against all odds

Abstract

The research explores the production of feminist spaces as safer spaces in urban contexts. How do feminist movements imagine, produce and preserve safer spaces? To search for an answer, I engaged with participatory action research (PAR) and constructivist grounded theory method (CGTM). In the cities of Rome and Madrid, that share general socio-economic, cultural and political features (Kantola and Lombardo 2017), feminist movements, as well, share similar frames, claims, and repertoires of actions. In each city, I selected three types of feminist spaces: women's houses and/or spaces of equality (Casa Internazionale delle donne in Rome and Espacios de Igualdad in Madrid); longstanding feminist spaces which host a multiplicity of projects and direct social action (Lucha Y Siesta in Rome and Eskalera Karakola in Madrid); radical transfeminist, lesbian, and queer occupations (the space of Cagne Sciolte in Rome and Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros in Madrid).

By searching for the meaning of safety, CGTM drove me to the work on affect and emotions that takes place within feminist spaces. Affects, as gradients of intensity and vital forces, work as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and bodies; 2) a tool for political elaboration; 3) a competence in action. The confidence with inner feelings (that is usually considered unpolitical) makes people feel comfortable and at ease. People are not trapped in rituals of interaction and the performance of social encounters. Emotions can be manifested, elaborated on, transformed into action (Gould 2009). Affects do not enrich or empower political action, but they are the very matter of it (Massumi 2015). The capacity to name, negotiate and reverberate affects has transformative effects (Ahmed 2006), both at the individual and collective level. The work on collective affects allows feminist spaces to pursue their search for social change, with continuity (Taylor 1989, Whittier 1995), contention (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), and innovation (Staggenborg 1989, 1995).

In the empirical analysis, I engage with the concept of affects at three levels. At the macro level, by investigating how spaces relate with the structure of economic models and institutions, by performing alternative models and dealing with national, local and collective actors. At the meso level, by exploring the mobilisation of affects in collective action. At the micro level of actors, by looking at how individual mobilisation process and long-term political participation are bound up with affects. By drawing on affect theory, social movement studies and feminist theory, the research argues that the work on affect and emotions within feminist spaces has transformative effects, by increasing the potential for collective action.

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relationships between women*. For teaching me to live in possibility. Per essere la mia compagna, ma prima di tutto, una compagna.

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List of Abbreviations

CGMT Constructivist Grounded Theory Method

CID   Casa Internazionale delle donne

CS   Cagne Sciolte

EDI   Espacios De Igualdad

EK   Eskalera Karakola

FS   Feminist space

FSs   Feminist spaces

LYS   Lucha Y Siesta

PAR   Participatory Action Research

POB   Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros

Prologue

This is a research about the body and cognition, on affects as gradient of intensity and forces of encounter, on the sensations that bind us to other people, to spaces, to objects, and on how these intensities contain a potential for collective action that has yet to be investigated.

It happened to be me writing, in the first person. However, the premises, the questions, the path, the methods, the sense, the orientation, the findings of this research are the result of a process with participants[1] involved in several feminist spaces in Rome and Madrid. They have generously and passionately lent their experience to this project. Although filtered through the writer, the whole process will try to convey even just an intuition of the richness that the relationship with the participants has generated. The affective grid of participants is the infrastructure and sound of this research.

Several years ago I was returning from a meeting in a feminist space in Rome. As I was leaving, sitting in the underground, I seemed to perceive an ambivalence. On the one hand, the space-time of the meeting surrounded me with a feeling of warmth. On the other hand, in the underground, once I left the space, I felt cold. The political discussion that took place in the space had, for me, connected with feelings of warmth, burst with potential. Leaving that feeling and returning to the urban space had made me perceive a discrepancy, through an indefinite, nonconscious and non-linguistic sensation. The ambivalence of these bodily and cognitive sensations, which I would later call affect, represented an initial moment of questioning. From that moment on, I began to reflect more and more insistently about the reason for that political momentum bound up with sensations. Then, that puzzle was translated into a number of research questions that formed the first step of this doctoral research. With this episode, I would like to situate the manuscript. Like any research, this one also stems from an individual situated experience, concerning my biographical trajectory, and the things that, through

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[1] Normally, in social movement studies, we are used to refer to actors as activists. Since the beginning of the fieldwork, however, the concept of "activist" has been strongly challenged by the people involved. In fact, activism seems to refer to a circumscribed activity in the day, or in life, in which one is actively committed to a cause. Instead, the people involved in the spaces claim an idea of political engagement as whole-life involvement, and interpenetration between the personal and the political. Therefore, we rather opted for the word "participants" in the manuscript as participants of feminist spaces and participants in the research.

my experience, I perceived as a puzzle to investigate. From there on, a participatory research began, that intensively involved three feminist spaces in the city of Rome, and – with many limitations related to the outbreak of the pandemic – three spaces in the city of Madrid. The whole research was constructed in a precarious balance between myself and the relationship with the participants in the research, in an attempt to make explicit a relationship – also – of power, which however stubbornly attempted to proceed through reciprocity, listening and caring.

The second element of this episode is the derivation of a cognitive process from the body and affect. The feelings of warmth/coldness were translated into research questions investigating whether and how feminist spaces imagine, produce and preserve safe spaces. As well as the trigger for the research, the research itself was shaped by a bodily and affective ethnographic approach, in which the participants' ability to tell their stories and my chance to understand them came through the decoding of the forces of encounter.

Last, but not least, the episode is telling of a close correlation between the forms of politics and those of feeling, which is typical of the feminist movement. It is not easy to go through what Grosz calls "the imperceptibility" (2004). Yet, in that opaque substance, that shadowy zone in which various intensities come alive and meet, are deposited meanings relevant to our understanding of collective action and political phenomena.

This research does not set out to succeed. More humbly, the research tries to propose some insights into the ambivalence of our feeling in relation to the political, and how feeling is the repository of much more potential than we are used to believing.

For this reason, the research does not propose a binary, stable, and finite analysis of safe spaces. Rather, what will emerge are structures of feelings, concatenations of bodies, blurred zones between inside and outside, in which the relational dimension of affect enhances the capacity for political action.

1. Introduction: Feminism, Affect and Safer Spaces

1.1 Introduction

> There's a space within the collective where each of us can say how we are... there's a space for how you're feeling, as well as being political... because we're all aware that how you're feeling affects what you say and what you do in a collective. And so it doesn't make sense not to give space to that stuff there. In any case, the consequences of that stuff are within your collective. Because each one of us can live more or less happy moments, can live more or less beautiful sensations and that stuff brings it back into our political action, puts it back into circulation with all the others. Therefore, rather than suffering it passively, we have decided to give it space in the collective because at least we choose to manage that stuff. We are aware of it and we choose to manage it together. [...] It's something that is also subject to a delicate balance. [...] Opening the door for emotionality and feeling for people to sit in meetings is a beautiful and powerful thing, giving you so much, building so much, in the same way it can be a way that stacks, blocks, and takes over from other people's feeling. (III6, CS, 35)

> It's an acquisition of... I don't know, maybe competence in being in the world. Certainly the closeness of my comrades always helps me. But I realise it's something I carry around a lot, even when I'm alone. And it's a very pacifying feeling. It pacifies me a lot. And in fact I wrote that I don't remember the last time I didn't feel safe. I think it's kind of the fruit of a journey. […] I spent many years of my life with anger, strong anxiety. Even just leaving the house. Because I had well internalised what it was like to go out and not know how you were going to get back and if you were going to get back. A little bit because you're a woman, a little bit because you're a lesbian, a little bit because people are looking at you anyway, and Rome is a strange city, and so many times it's given me proof of how violent it can be. And at a certain point it's like I've made my peace with it, it's like that anxiety and that fear has kind of disappeared. And a great dignity has arisen to live my life as it is. (Focus Group III, CS)

These two quotes are suffused with the expression of affective intensity, of sensations, of emotional states. These are just two among the many conversations, statements, and small talk in which this vocabulary emerged during the fieldwork. Slowly, the affective grid through which the participants express themselves, construct their sense of self, make meaning of the things they experience, and process political action seemed to me to be increasingly unattainable. I felt the need to be attached to their words through the mediation of the affect they used. In this way, affect and emotions began to emerge as a channel for understanding the production of feminist spaces.

As the quotes show, affect emerges as mediation between cognition and body. The need to take charge of emotions arises from perceptions experienced daily with the body, which, through sharing in a collective context, can become tools for understanding oneself, and therefore for transformation. In

this sense, affect is also an instrument of political elaboration: through the filter of affect it is possible to understand, in more general terms, the social and cultural structures that produce certain emotions and that have individual consequences on each subject. This exercise is not purely reflexive, but leads to a third function of affect, which is to become a competence for collective action. In the work of naming, giving meaning, transforming affects and making them the terrain for political elaboration, feminist spaces also construct their own strategies, repertoires of action, and interaction with the outside world. This indicates that emotions are not only used strategically, but represent a choice of mediation with the social world, a political tool that changes the filter through which to understand, and therefore transform, reality. It is not by chance that the second quotation reports this process, from a negative affective intensity born of the perception of a discrepancy between one's own existence and a social context that rejects or stigmatises that existence, to the transformation of the affect into potential. The changes of the self opens up to "a pacification," the development of positive feelings that expand the perception of the self and the ability to act in the world. This transformation is never individual, but is conveyed by collective action, and reverberates in collective action.

Yet, the research had started from the puzzling concept of safe space. The use of the term "safe space" recurs in the narrative of contemporary feminist movements. This term alludes to many meanings, which in reiteration become less clear, and more easily the object of conflict. In general terms, the need for safer spaces emerges from the understanding of social reality as ordered through gender norms that produce subalternity, inequality, and violence. The effects of this gender order influence all spheres of life: from interpersonal relations to work and public space. The perception of living in a very unsafe social context for those who are distributed along the axis of gender, race, class, age, and sexuality in a non-hegemonic position leads to the emergence of a desire to build different, safer places. These spaces can be virtual, communal, but also physical. Spaces in which a certain composition of subjectivities experiences more liveable living conditions that are supposed to be safe from misogyny, violence, abuse, mistreatment, violation of consent, racism, ableism, prevarication. This, in a nutshell, is normally what the reference to safe spaces alludes to.

With reference to the recurrent use of this concept, and the range of meanings to which it alludes, this research elaborates on a question:

If, how, and why do feminist movements imagine, produce and preserve safe spaces?

This question gave rise to a participatory research involving six feminist spaces between Rome and Madrid, and dozens of participants active in the spaces. While it is true that safe spaces refer to many possible dimensions – virtual, community, etc. – in this case the choice to explore physical spaces was consistent with the research questions and the desire to observe the material determinants to which the concept of safe space is anchored. The opening up of women's spaces in urban contexts is

a constant of the feminist movement. Examples include the gymnasium where Edith Garrud trained suffragists in ju-jitsu in the early 20th century, or the Hull-House in Chicago where Jane Addams founded the first settlement house run entirely by women. The opening up of physical spaces has historically allowed for the consolidation of the feminist movement's claims and, on the other hand, for the active production of social change, through every-day politics, direct social action, and consciousness-raising (Spain 2016). The possibility of leaving the home to take part in political space has been a vehicle of emancipation and liberation for generations of women (Rupp and Taylor 1989). For these reasons, the research question on safe spaces led me to select feminist spaces as cases from the outset. The concreteness of the spaces, with an address, four walls, and a continuity of political action, allowed for a deep and daily exploration of interactions, processes of attribution of meaning, and political elaboration. Feminist spaces also made it possible to hold together several levels of analysis related to social transformation, in relation to context, urban space, structure.

The analysis was carried out through the constructivist grounded theory method (CGTM): therefore, in the long-lasting ethnographic process of participatory and non-participatory analysis, concepts and interpretations multiplied. The topic itself seemed to change: from safe spaces to the understanding of the infrastructure of affect and emotions that stimulates, supports, feeds, and encourages the collective action of feminist spaces.

The words of the participants, their gestures, their interactions, their decision-making processes, are constantly intertwined with an affective lexicon, a nonconscious and non-linguistic intensity. The pervasiveness of affects and emotions in the participants' way of constructing their self, their interpersonal relations, political elaboration, and interaction with the outside world guided the analysis towards an increasing focus on this dimension. CGTM assumes that it is fieldwork that inductively produces new insights into social phenomena. So, I let the field guide the analysis towards what recurred most insistently.

In recounting their own lives, the participants chose the access point of emotions and body states in comparison with a social world still strongly segregated by gender. As Nancy Whittier argues, feminist movements have been historically engaged with politicking emotions: "the feminist anti-rape movement legitimized women's claims against male violence, politicized private sexual experiences, […] constructed a politicized discourse of trauma that stressed women's victimization due to violence, […] and the importance of individual and collective recovery and resistance" (2001: 238). In the everyday of spaces, interactions took place through bodies: hugs and caresses, the habit of seeking contact with other participants, the choice of communicating with the body where verbal language does not reach. Lots of tears, lots of laughter, some screaming. Through these and many other intensities, the infrastructure of affect began to emerge. From the outset, the affective dimension

emerged as being closely linked to the material dimension. On the one hand, in the sense of mediation between body and cognition. On the other, in the sense of mediation with structure: with the economic model, the institutional set-up, social norms. Why is it relevant to pay attention to affects and emotions in relation to social movements? What do emotion and affect allow to do? What do they add to our understanding of collective action?

In the next sections, I will begin to outline the concepts and reflections on which the analysis of feminist spaces was developed. First, in relation to affect, capitalism, and democracy. Second, in relation to what we mean by affect, emotions, and feelings in reference to collective action. Finally, in relation to the relationship between affect and the spatial dimension.

1.2 Affect, Capitalism and Democracy

While it is true that human beings are not always oriented by rationality or strategic action, they are constantly moved by various affective, emotional, and passionate intensities. As long as we are alive, we constantly feel, perceive. We affect and are affected by.

The history of Western thought has developed around the theorisation of a rational, strategically oriented, independent subject (Cerulo 2018, Pulcini 2020). Emotions, from Descartes and Kant onwards, have been considered an obstacle to the cognitive realisation of the subject, an irrational and unpredictable element that endangers the order of society, as theories of collective behaviour developed (Le Bon 2002, Gould 2010). Building on the sociology of emotions, feminist theory, and recent developments in the study of social movements, this research attempts to focus on the social and political function performed by affects in relation to collective action. Feminist spaces represent a privileged place in which to observe not only how affects operate, but also how affects become a political matter of collective work, elaboration, and strategic action. Emotions, in fact, have an adaptive function with respect to subjects. They develop at a biological level, but above all at a social and cultural level, assigning a certain response to certain stimuli, which often allows survival itself. However, this aspect is often relegated to the intimate sphere, dismissed in public life, and removed from the biographical construction of subjects. Subjects are required to be rational, high-performing, and productive in a neo-liberal economic and social system in which everyone is worth what they produce. The feminist movement has historically inverted this paradigm, revealing in the affects and emotions (in the personal) the deep political root (Taylor 1995, Whittier 2001). In this sense, the work on affects is a political work that requires the transformation of the individual, the transformation of social relations, and the transformation of symbols, values, and assumptions on which the system of production is based.

There is a long history of separation between the sphere of affects and passions and that of rational calculation. The genesis of the rational social actor is intertwined with the genesis of capitalism. As Albert Hirschman argues in his study of the political arguments in favour of capitalism before its triumph (1977), the history of the separation of passions and interests begins in the Renaissance period. In that phase, multiple needs emerged: the creation of norms of conduct for individuals, the need to improve the art of government, and thus the theories of the state. Trade and gain, which up until then had been regarded as a form of greed and love of profit, changed hands in history for ideas, coming to be a counterweight in the regulation of the Prince's rule. Progressively, passions such as lust for power, arrogance, haughtiness, seemed to be able to be regulated and tempered by self-interest. Encouraging individuals to cultivate their own interests allowed them, on the one hand, to escape from the dangerous drift of passions, and on the other to curb the rule of the State. In this sense, the emerging capitalist model is based on a clear separation between interest, rational calculation, and passions and affect. Cut off from both the economic model and the forms of politics, affects are dangerous aspects of the human soul that need to be kept at bay. Even as the distortions of capitalism become more apparent, the uprisings and revolts against the economic model are interpreted through the negative lens of passions, that disrupt and endanger the balance of power between the economic and political systems.

To this interpretation of the birth of capitalism, feminist theory added a relevant item. The birth of capitalism is marked by the passion/interest dualism. The construction of meanings about the world through binary categories has a long history: opposite poles always refer to dichotomous symbolic universes (Cavarero 1995, Tola 2016, Scott 2011, Spivak 1999). Passions, nature, emotions, domestic, private, vulnerability, irrationality, backwardness, body, on the one hand. Interests, culture, cognition, public, strength, rationality, courage, mind, politics, progress, and economy on the other. The first pole always relates to the production of the female gender, the second symbolic universe to the production of the male gender. Through the consolidation of these dichotomies, the social and economic structure has taken shape, and with it the reiteration of gender codes.

So what does it mean to claim the use of the affects, their political relevance, for those who have always been made subordinate through them? How can women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, who have always been relegated to the irrational sphere of passions, claim a political use for them, and through this work increase the potential for political action?

These elements make it clear to what extent the use of affects by feminist spaces produces consequences that affect the codes of the economic model on the one hand, and the codes of the democratic model on the other. If both spheres – capitalism and democracy – are the product of a history of ideas that has separated affect and emotion from the system of production and the

management of public affairs, introducing affect and emotion into the interaction with these models challenges the very codes within which the interaction is envisaged.

However, it is appropriate to remind that in the contemporary world, both capitalism and democracy have found ways to profit from emotions. As Hochschild (1979) explains by analysing flight attendants employed by an airline company, workers are demanded an emotional work that is inherently part of their work. The capture and exploitation of emotions is part of the changes in the capitalist economic model, to which social movements have reacted by changing their repertoires of action, for example through the "smile strike" (Karlsson 2012, Morini 2010).

Emotions are continuously mobilised in the construction of the idea of nationhood, citizenship, and democracy, often from the point of view of excluding those who are considered others. As Sara Ahmed explains:

> It is the emotional reading of hate that works to bind the imagined white subject and nation together. The average white man feels "fear and loathing"; the white housewife, "repulsion and anger"; the white workingman, "curses"; the white Christian farmer, "rage." The passion of these negative attachments to others is redefined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the repetition of the signifier, "white." It is the love of white, or those recognizable as white, that supposedly explains this shared "communal" visceral response of hate. Together we hate, and this hate is what makes us together. (2004: 118)

The symbolic repertoire of the right-wing and anti-gender groups makes extensive reference to the emotional dimension to mobilise consensus around their claims. Emotions, thus, are powerful tools in contemporary society to orient consensus, and to circulate power.

The choice of conscious work on affect by feminist spaces is therefore a slippery slope. On the one hand, because it draws on a repertoire of codes consubstantial to the social production of women's subalternity. On the other hand, because it is in the field of emotions that contemporary challenges to social justice are played out. Around these ambivalences, the research will try to reconstruct the processes of attribution of meaning and the uses that the participants make of affection and emotions, identifying the limits and potentials of such work.

1.3 Affect, Emotions, Passions and Feelings

> The question is not necessarily whether or not an affective movement is experienced consciously or unconsciously by the subject but how affective processes have political effects. What matters is what the emotional, however defined, *do*. (Åhäll 2018: 43)

The research began by interrogating the feeling of safety in feminist spaces, and ended up exploring the meaning of affect. This fact is less surprising than it seems, as the chapters to come will try to disentangle. I came to affects and emotions by following the vocabulary and style of interaction of

the participants. The progress of their discussions, the way they recounted and reasoned about themselves, their political elaboration, were suffused with much more than strategic-rational calculation. I ventured into the skein of intensities shaping the surfaces of bodies, spaces, objects, and even the relationship to me as a researcher. There emerged affect, emotions, passions, and feelings. Of this complex matter, it is necessary to proceed to some specifications. Although in the empirical world there is never a clearly identifiable separation, trying to delineate the differences supports a more organic account of the phenomenon.

Why is the research primarily concerned with the function of affect?

Affect as Bodily Capacity and Relational Intensity

The concept of affect has distant roots in Spinoza's thought. According to the philosopher, human beings are moved in their presence in the world by a desire, an appetite, a vital tension. This desire that drives us to action and self-preservation represents the very essence of human beings. Human beings relate to the world through this desire, which puts them in relation to other human beings, to objects, to the natural world. In this sense, affect signals the tension emanating from a body, what a body can do, but also immediately a relational dimension, a space of interaction. Affect, therefore, is not based on the individual, but is the gradient of intensity, the mode of encounter that binds us to others and to things. Affect is the life force that exposes a body to the potential for action, or being acted upon. In this sense, affect alludes to the field of power, in the sense that through affects flows the possibility of increasing the capacity for action, or decreasing it. Affects can be of a different nature: when aware of the conditions that cause them, they are actions; when unconscious, and therefore passive, they are passions. Knowledge of the causes that cause the affects, and therefore changes in intensity, produces an increase in our ability to act, and therefore in our power. Matter and thought are not separate, but belong to the same substance, to that vital force that is the potential for action of a body and of bodies in relation to each other.

This theoretical framework, that disrupts the traditional dichotomies of reason and passion, body and mind on which the social sciences were built upon, was then recovered and built on by the affective turn (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). Thanks to the insights of Deleuze and Guattari, and their translator Brian Massumi (2015), feminist neo-materialism, and interest in the field of cultural studies, the concept of affect was included the interpretation of contemporary social contexts. This turn in the social sciences allows to understand the political use of what Spinoza defined as affect. Affect, in this key, refers to the idea of having an effect on something or someone, or being affected by something or someone. It is, therefore, a concept that links what the body and the mind express to the relational

dimension, to interaction. In one of the first attempt to map out the debate on the affective turn, Gregg and Seighworth define affect as follows:

> affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1).

In the field of social movement studies Deborah B. Gould was one of the most important scholars to develop the concept, in reference to Act Up's fight against AIDS (2009, 2010).

E-motion: Moving Forwards and Towards

Social movements studies have always engaged with emotions as a source of understanding of collective action. By overcoming the interpretation of collective behaviour theorists (Le Bon 2001, Smelser 1963), and an overly structuralist approach to social movements (Tarrow 1994, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, Kriesi 1996), scholars turned their attention to the role that emotions have in strengthening, coalescing, and enhancing collective action: "emotions can be seen as an aspect of all social action and social relations" (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001: 9). On one hand, a structuralist approach heavily relies on resources, structures, and organisation; on the other hand, constructivist approaches focus on frames, meanings, and emotions. As Goodwin and Jasper (2004) argue, for much too long this has also been a gendered dividing line – with women mainly engaged in the field of culture and emotions. With an edited volume on rethinking social movements, the scholars also tried to bridge and to nuance over simplistic disputes between the two, by claiming for a reconciliation between structure and emotions. Political process theory failed in a structural biased analysis of the environment where social movements develop, by focusing on purely rational social actors. However, is this analysis of emotions enough? How does the concept of emotions differ from the concept of affect?

In her work, Gould extensively builds on these research questions. To her, emotions, when taken into account in social movement studies – and by political process theorists – risk to be taken into account solely according to their strategic use, for example through activists' attempt to mobilise people into the movement (Gould 2004). Instead, "emotions are a component of all interpretive processes, affecting, for example, how external opportunities and threats are understood and responded to, how resources are allocated, why a collective action frame succeeds or fails. Emotions are integral to a person's sense of herself and to her political subjectivity. Emotions shape people's notions of what is

politically possible and desirable" (2004: 162). Moreover, as Whittier points out with reference to movements against child sexual abuse (2001, 2009), emotions can be transformed through collective action and channeled into action.

According to these interpretations, we can see the concept of emotions emerging, breaking away from that of affect. The flourishing tradition of the sociology of emotions interpreted emotions as a product of culture and society. The rise and display of certain emotions is produced by an infrastructure of meanings, codes, and political orientation (Simmel 1994, Hochschild 1990, Collins 2004, Reddy 1997, 2000, Ahmed 2004). There is an "emotion culture" (Gordon 1989) that produces, in certain situations, the expectation of certain emotional reactions, and therefore the "rules" of expressing emotions (Hochschild 1979, 1983, 1990). However, this infrastructure is neither impermeable nor all-encompassing, and it is no coincidence that people experience "outlaw emotions" (Jaggar 1989) that are normally considered inappropriate or unacceptable.

Affect are "nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body," while emotions describe "what of affect—what of the potential of bodily intensities—gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living" (Gould 2010: 19-20). By building on Massumi's assumptions (2015), Gould conceptualises emotions as the way affect comes to be codified, named, inscripted into conventional expression. The root of the word *e-motion* alludes to moving out and towards, formalising therefore, a certain portion of meaning about what we feel. Emotions are affects filtered by culture, by our schemes of interpretation, our language, our habits. To make sense of an affect and to communicate it to the others, we build names and meanings, expressions, and codes. This meaning-making process is heavily related to our cultural context, and so we make sense of an affect according to a certain structure of available significances. "An emotion, in other words, brings a vague bodily intensity or sensation into the realm of cultural meanings and normativity, systems of signification that structure our very feelings" (Gould 2010: 21). While affect entails the enormous potential for action of a body, emotions "capture" portions of affect into cultural codified objects, through the partial inhibition of that potential. In the ongoing flow of affective intensities with regard to the surrounding, something gets actualised in the form of emotions: as such, affect produces the ground for codifying, but also to feel, emotions. In this mechanism of capture and actualisation lies the puzzle of the research questions that orient this project. While it is true that we are perpetually immersed in affecting and being affected by, and that social movements have also been studied through the strategic use of emotions, there is still a lack of adequate account of how some movements, such as the feminist movement, develop cognitive and bodily liberation, political elaboration, and capacity for action from their conscious work on affect and emotions. Awareness of the forces of the encounter, beyond the

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linguistic, conscious, and determined level, allows feminist spaces to open up a field of potential for action that would otherwise be inaccessible. In the discrepancy between the emotional coding and the intensity of affect lies the possibility of increasing the capacity for action. "There is always something more than what is actualized in social life" (Gould 2010: 21). However, as Gould alerts, the discrepancy between affect and emotions is neither temporal nor fully graspable. They are simultaneous and, in the empirical world, we rarely get a clear demarcation. Yet, these distinctions and clarifications help us in our efforts to grasp the complex matter that Grosz defines as "the imperceptibility" (2004).

Passions

A few more details concern two other fields: that of passions, and that of feelings.

The concept of passions is closely linked to what has been said so far, to the intersection of affect and emotions. Historically, interest in the emotional sphere has fallen on passions, also in linguistic terms. In the philosophical tradition there is an effort to conceptualise, and thus "rule" passions. From Aristotle, to Descartes, to Kant, passions must be subjugated, governed, enslaved, and as Caleo (2021) explains, the lexicon is not accidental. Politics, as a reflection on the disposition of the world and as an action to govern it, emerges from the outset as the government of passions. Passions are overwhelming, uncontrollable, they cloud the mind and the ability to decide rationally. Passions are the counterbalance of reason. The government of passions, as explained above, is also at the origin of capitalism as an economic model, built on the strength of interests. Passions are thus the dark side of the human soul, and although they are pervasive, or precisely because of this, they must be carefully reduced to a manageable, and above all private, dimension. As Caleo further explains (2021), the Latin etymology of *passio* is the matrix of both "passion" and "passive." In this sense, the term is not neutral but gendered. Passions, passivity, are the domain of the feminine, and so the fear of emotionality from the beginning is a fear of passivity: "to be emotional is to be more feminine, more dependent, more vulnerable – and it is a characteristic that is attributed to some bodies or subjects and not to others" (Caleo 2021: 146). The root *patio* also alludes to the terms "pathological" and "to suffer," and thus a proximity to illness. Passions thus indicate an alteration of the body, a deviation from the norm. The semantic field of passion, suffering, and passivity signals a minus, a decrease, a lack, a fallacy of the subject (Caleo 2021).

The concept of passions is taken into account in this research precisely because it is a gendered concept. Among others, and more than others, it sheds light on the historical and social dimension that underpins the production of emotions, their non-neutral nature. What we feel, how we give meaning to it, and even the meaning we give to the simple fact of feeling is the result of a gender

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regime and social norms that organise the production of subjects and their life possibilities. The production of the concept of passion also alludes to power, how it circulates, and how it defines bodies, life trajectories, and spaces of action. Passions, the way we feel, the way we express them, the way we use them, are the result of a certain organisation of power.

What, then, does putting emotions and passions at the centre of political action imply, when emotions and passions have always been an instrument of subordination? It implies focusing on the way power circulates, and acting for a different circulation of power, understood as the capacity for self-expansion and action in the social world. For women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, the work on affect, emotions, and passions is a work of unveiling social paradigms, but also of overturning them. It is precisely this dimension of subalternity that becomes a dimension of common reflection and collective action. The reversal of the stigma associated with passions opens up a field of intensity, potential, and circulation of power that was almost invisible until now, because it was disowned. As Elena Pulcini (2020) explains through feminist theories, it is possible to relocate the passions not as a field to be dominated – which would repropose the rational-utilitarian and masculine vision – but as a dimension to be taken care of, to be concerned about, to be understood. In addition to being an object of care, passions become the subject of a work of awareness that helps disentangle the social and political production around emotions. They are, in fact, more than manipulated by elites and politicians to guide common sense, distorted by the mass media, or frozen in stereotyped images. Mindfulness work allows to scratch the surface to bring out a non-judgmental self-image, an authentic understanding, leading to transformation. Understanding emotions means freeing them, it means deepening what animates us, and enhancing joyful passions to the detriment of sad passions, opening the way to a potential expansion of the self (Pulcini 2020).

In choosing to refer to passions and history of thought behind the concept lies the choice of a feminist approach to social research. "A feminist perspective on gender is always about power. To paraphrase Cynthia Enloe, any feminist perspective puts politics—and thereby power—at the core of the analysis in a way that a gender analysis does not (Enloe 2010, xi–xii). In other words, the difference between gender analysis and feminist analysis is that the latter is always about changing the status quo. What is feminist is that which concerns political and social change and transformation. Thus, a feminist approach to the politics of emotion through gender is about how we become invested in social norms, it is about the affective investments in gender as a social norm" (Åhäll 2018: 36). This research investigates feminist movements, through a feminist positioning, the involvement of participants in the research process, and with a clear orientation towards social change. The matter of passions is therefore incandescent.

Feelings

To conclude, I will try to define the concept of feelings. According to the Oxford Dictionary, it indicates what we perceive, the ability to feel a physical sensation, a physical or mental impression, feeling deeply, the awareness of a perceived emotion, the power to be able to frame it, the general state of consciousness considered independently of particular sensations. According to Gould, the term "feelings" has to be preferred "because they connote bodily, felt experience and also have been used in ways that reference the conventionality of felt experience" (2010: 22).

I refer to the concept of feelings mainly because of its connection to the work of Raymond Williams (2015). He tries to explain how social change occurs, by conceptualising the structure of feelings. Often, the perception of the need for a change emerges as an opaque and vague sensation about something wrong with regard to the established order. This affect, these unconscious and unarticulated intensities, drive us to a growing consciousness about social structures. To perceive that something is no longer working often comes with an affective state, that encourages to think that it should be different. This tension between the dominant account of the established order and the contradictions experienced at the affective level with regard to that account is often non-linguistic, latent, and detectable only at the level of perception. This uneven, unbundled way of feeling does not identify with the existing order. "Structures of feeling or affective states can shake one out of deeply grooved patterns of thinking and feeling and allow for new imaginings. A specific focus on affect, then, opens up an avenue of research into mobilization and social change that is obscured by rationalist ontologies and by renderings of feelings that downplay elements that may not be articulable but that nevertheless exert force, shaping people's experiences and knowledges of the world as well as their actions" (Gould 2010: 27). For this reason, I will refer to feminist spaces as structures of feelings that formalise a generalised feeling of discomfort, dissatisfaction, or discordance with the established order, channeling it into forms, meanings, tools, and methods of collective reworking that result in collective action.

As the quote at the beginning of the chapter made explicit, feminist spaces take on the task of channeling subjective affects in reference to a social context often experienced as violent, exclusionary, and hostile. The reworking of these vague, disjointed, and often opaque feelings takes place in concert with the other participants, through an unwritten pact to share a different perspective towards the structure. The sharing of the affective assumptions of the action, and of a common willingness to subject emotions, creates the conditions for the emergence of a structure of feelings. Sometimes disjointed, sometimes undulating and indefinite, at other times more clearly systematised in a common methodology, it represents the difference of feminist politics in its relation to structure – such as the economic model, political elites, system of government, policies. Collective action vis-

à-vis structure is in fact mediated, transformed, and enabled through the grid of affect. Through this affective-informed apparatus, feminist spaces address the confrontation with goals, counterparts, and the socio-political situation. Åhäll explains that: "feminism is often simplistically assumed to be 'only' about women's lives and experiences, about 'identity politics.' However, as Marysia Zalewski points out, it is more appropriate to think of feminism as primarily concerned with the kinds of questions that are fundamentally about how the world works (Zalewski 2015, 4). And of course, the world also works affectively and emotionally" (2018: 41). This quote helps outline the framework of feminist spaces as structures of feelings. Like any social movement, they identify their counterparts, central issues, and claims. These include every aspect of the lives of women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, and thus include the economic model, policy management, governance of life, culture. The development of collective action, however, does not occur through a purely rational and strategic calculation. Feminism, in fact, is rooted in the effort to identify the political in the personal, and therefore in the sphere of subjectivity, emotions, and affect, the roots of social structures, norms, and established orders. This effort is further codified by feminist spaces, that have the ability to act in continuity, in daily life, and through physical places as well. In this sense, they are a privileged empirical case for exploring the construction of challenging structures of feelings, through a hitherto almost entirely removed channel, which is that of affect. The following section argues in favour of this physical dimension of feminist spaces as a illustrative case in the study of affect and social movements.

The section argued about the differences among the concepts of affect, emotions, passions, and feelings. Affect signals the vital impulse of bodies, while emotions the codified, linguistic, and conscious understanding of that impulse. The work on affect involves learning to acknowledge, perceive, and define affect in the form of emotions, in order to make impulses likely to become political. The concept of passion serves as a tool to understand the historical and gendered production of our ideas about the emotional sphere, and thus how politics is always involved in the way we use or dismiss emotions. Finally, with reference to the work of Williams, the research addresses feelings as the medium between individuals, groups, and society, in the forms of structure – to target or to innovate the structures, through the work on affect and emotions.

1.4 Spatialising Feminism

> Whatever the function, Belmont House served as a female world on some occasion for all members of the Woman's Party and as a feminist space for women who identified with the women's rights movement.
> (Rupp and Taylor, 1987: 41-42)

Why Spaces?

In their 1987 work *Surviving in the Doldrums. The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s*, Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor focus on the women's rights movement in times of anti-feminism and relatively latency of large mobilisations, giving a central role to Alva Belmont House, the headquarter of the National Woman's Party. As they explain:

> The Woman's Party Community centered around Alva Belmont House, national headquarters in Washington D.C., which served not only as an office but also as a permanent residence, feminist hotel for visitors coming to Washington, and clubhouse. […] Belmont House played an important role in maintaining the women's community. […] Another member who traveled to Washington to serve as house manager emphasized the importance of the house in referring to its "big contribution to the national and world women-movement." Some of the members made their home there; one women wrote that she was "looking forward with joy to my return home, and Home to me now, means the dear Belmont House." (Rupp and Taylor, 1987: 40)

The quote is extremely useful to address why spaces and feminist communities are worth exploring. First, as the literature on free spaces shows (Evans and Boyte 1986, Polletta 1999), because the management of a space abducted from State control allows to root collective action in a physical site, that can be reached and that serves as a point of reference for the community and beyond. Second, physical spaces allow to preserve continuity, affective bonds, and in-depth political elaboration. Third, physical spaces allow to meet, to share places and moments of discussion, to host bodies and contact between them. More than with other social movements, feminist movements invested time and energy to address the bodily and affective dimension of politics. Not surprisingly, the words of one of the members of Belmont House refers to it as the true home. In this expression, the boundaries between private and public blur, shedding light on the incessant work on affect carried out within the sites of the feminist movement, which unveils different ways of developing subjectivity, experiencing relationships, and constructing forms of collective action. In the contemporary world, the question might be: given the multiplication and pervasiveness of virtual spaces, if and how do physical spaces still matter?

The focus on space might be unusual or outdated, in the time of progressively dematerialised spaces and big data, web platforms, where "enormous quantities of information can be collected in minimal spaces," and when "we are coming into contact with spaces which are no longer based on our direct physical experience" (Melucci 1989: 106). At the same time, as the global spread of the Covid-19 health emergency dramatically showed, bodies, contacts, spaces, and the politics of proximity are still at the core of our lives, far beyond virtual connections, and the lack of these spaces of proximity and physical contact has a strong impact on individuals and communities (della Porta 2020, Saladino et al. 2020).

Scholars worked on the relationship between social movements and media platforms, through media practices (Mattoni 2016, della Porta and Mattoni 2014), communication repertoires (Wright 2004), and integrated communication spaces (Hamm 2005). As Pavan and Mainardi (2020) argue, virtual spaces are often heavily interconnected with lived experiences, and this bridge informs, for instance, the development of knowledge on discriminatory workspaces. This research builds on the social movement studies' understanding of physical spaces and virtual spaces, by arguing about the mediation of affect within physical spaces, bodily and cognitive practices, and the concatenation of bodies. More than before, the pandemic sheds light on interdependency as a bodily matter. While most of our interactions and relationships in the recent years have shifted online, especially during periods of lockdown and social distancing, an awareness has emerged about the need for physical places in which to enjoy bodily encounters and relationships in presence. The link between the strategic use of media platforms and the centrality of thinking in presence is at the heart of the reflections of the contemporary feminist movement (Zamboni 2009, DiElle 2019). It is an ambivalent nexus, according to which virtual spaces can never resolve the significance of relations in presence. The feminist movement developed its reflections and claims on the body, through the body, and among bodies. Feminist spaces are therefore the natural consequence of this reflection, as embodied spaces in which the possibility of the relationship between bodies as a ground for collective action unfolds.

Gender Inequalities, Urban Spaces and Political Participation

In the last twenty years, a spatial turn occurred in social sciences. However, spatial analysis and urban studies often neglect gender division as an element that structures urban spaces and urban processes (McDowell 1983). As scholars suggest, the structure of social relations that produces female oppression and gender segregation requires an analysis of the organisation, use, and conception of urban space. With the consolidation of neoliberalism in the 1980s, the market logic, profit, and eurocentrism informed the changes of urban planning and organisation according to the leading idea of progress and development. As Peake and Rieker suggest, "the responsibility for the self (as through micro-credit) and the individual as consumer, undergird specific institutional and political urban contexts, while regulatory frameworks, distinguished by the growth of finance capital and market liberalisation, have resulted in a growing separation of societal needs and democratic politics. These processes have been actualised at the urban scale through varied and complex transformations of urbanisms, resulting in a range of new urban spatialities" (2013: 3). The reorganisation of the productive and reproductive labour market insists on certain gender logics, which have an impact on the organisation of space. Space is constructed according to a certain subject – male, white, able-

bodied, heterosexual, young, middle-class. Those who do not inhabit this category perceive the boundaries and exclusions that result from it. It is no coincidence that the study of women and urban space has largely focused on emotions – fear, discomfort, frustration – and the limitation of their ability to experience the city. In this framework, it is even more clearl why the reflection on urban space from a gendered perspective led to the use of the concept of "safety." As in the case of Toronto, Canada, that in the 1980s focused on urban safety from a gendered perspective by including the fear of sexual violence in the political agenda (Whitzman, 1992). In that case, the approach to safety included participatory planning process, transport systems, and education programmes. However, critiques to the narrative on fear, women, and urban spaces emerged, because they seemed to confirm a stereotype more than exploring the complexity of social categories (Pain 1991). Trying to avoid the reiteration of the narrative on women as weak, surveys show how women and migrants are still the most vulnerable and fearful subjects in the urban space (Listerborn 2016). These feelings shape their life and mobility according to the need to avoid risks and threats. Moreover, gender-based violence keeps taking place primarily in the domestic setting. On the individual level, fear of violence and abuse in the domestic setting reinforces fear in the public space (Pain 2001).

Still, it is important to unpack the social production of fear as a gendered emotion. "Instead of describing women as fearful, Hille Koskela (1997) pointed to the social construction of fear, with the result that the boldness of women who did walk alone at night in the city was defined as a risky behaviour" (Listerborn 2016: 253). As Listerborn further argues, "in a Western neoliberal context, safety and freedom from violence are becoming a commodity, since issues of fear and safety have been co-opted by the authorities, property companies and other stakeholders. As a result, there has been an increasing focus on control, surveillance and security within a 'safety discourse' that dominates planning and urban renewal. Women and their fear of sexual violence are used as an argument for urban renewal projects" (2016: 252).

Accounting for complexity means exploring the agency of those considered marginalised, such as women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. In a framework of welfare contraction, neoliberal reorganisation, social inequalities, and gender-based violence, looking at forms of collective action from a gendered perspective allows for a different perspective on the use, organisation, and transformation of urban space. As Melucci stresses out, "A necessary condition of democracy in this sense are public spaces independent of the institutions of government, the party system and state structures. These spaces assume the form of an articulated system of decision-making negotiation and representation, in which the signifying practices developed in everyday life can be expressed and heard independently from formal political institutions" (1989: 173). The focus on the agency and collective action of marginalised subjects allows: 1) an understanding of the conversion and use of

spaces in the city according to different gender norms; 2) an understanding of the impact on individual biographies, mobility, and life in relation to urban spaces; 3) the impact of collective action, through physical spaces in relation to the organisation and management of the city. This approach makes it possible to look at the macro level, and thus at the relationship between agency and structure; at the meso level, and thus at collective action and the construction of physical spaces and supportive communities; at the micro level, and thus at individual paths.

In the next section, I will try to look at the issue of safety and spaces through the lens of affect and emotions.

Safety, Affect and Emotions

> We need shelter because the world sucks. […] Because we are freaks to the world, unacceptable. We are people who lead dysfunctional existences for most of the functional trajectories of the capitalist system. Because we don't conform to the norm, because we are not heterosexual, because we don't have normalised relationships, because we don't want to, we tend to strive to work but we are not fulfilled by our jobs, because we don't have the money, because we are sometimes poor, because we are sometimes ugly according to the dominant aesthetic standards, because the world is a lousy place. It's a dangerous world. It's a world where a lot of us have experienced a lot of violence. On various levels. Starting from families, but also from life on the street, from life in relationships. There is a need for a place to shelter. This can be a physical place or not. You can't always be in the front line. Sometimes you need to stop and breathe. Shelter is a place where you stop for a moment and breathe. Maybe not alone. [...] Sometimes spaces are also useful to take care of our wounds without necessarily causing us new ones. Being in the front line means being face to face with the oppression that crushes you. And to suck all the consequences of this. Sometimes being in our material and non-material spaces also means allowing yourself the luxury of stopping, entrusting yourself, healing your wounds together with your sisters, together with the other people you have chosen and recovering the energy to put yourself back into the fray and put yourself back into the shit of the world. I don't have this idea of occupied spaces as places that are completely detached from society, where I create these bubbles of well-being that are completely detached from reality. Each of us goes outside of those spaces, gets away from our sisters and lives our lives in other spheres. And very often you get an avalanche of shit. Of verbal violence, of symbolic violence, of acted violence, of oppression. So sometimes you stop and you go back to your shelter, there you build your resistance, there you build your practices that strengthen you, of empowerment, of resistance, of self-defence, but then you act in the world. Even outside the four physical walls of that space. (IIIR10, CS, 31)

In this long quote, a participant of the space of Cagne Sciolte, in Rome, makes explicit the relation between safety, urban space, affect, and emotions. The relationship with urban space, for those who do not enjoy the privilege of living in a category provided for by the organisation of the city, is a relationship mediated by affects. Fear of violation and abuse, a constant feeling of being out of place, the need to transform strongly constrictive emotions into tools for acquiring strength, awareness, and the ability to act. This process takes place through the connection with other people within a physical space, and is mediated by affects. The perception of the lack of security, therefore, drives the search for a space for oneself. This security, however, is not an acquisition that is made within the space. In

fact, the intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1991, Hill Collins 1991) helps understand how power acts continuously in social interactions and arranges relationships, even in contexts that tend to subvert those power relationships. In the previous section, I started with some reflections on the issue of safety. Here, I will widen the definition of the concepts this research refers to.

This work was developed through three languages: Italian, English, and Spanish. Mindsets strongly depend on language: concepts, notions, categories, and ways of understanding realities are situated in a specific idiom, with a proper history, background, and scope of meanings. The never-ending work of translation from one language to another is an effort at the basis of this research, which leaves unsolved blind spots and contradictions. First, the effort of definition depends on a linguistic gap. "Safety" has different meanings and different semantic, political, and social backgrounds in all the three linguistic fields of the research: English (*safety*), Italian (*sicurezza*), Spanish (*seguridad*). "Safe space," in the English version, is often a conventional formula used by non-English speakers, and it helps overcome the difficulties of the concept in the native language. Yet, some issues remain.

The main trouble concerns the use of safety in mainstream neoliberal discourses. The governments, with regard to public order and urban decay, tend to enact legislation concerning "security" and "safety" (della Porta and Reiter 1998, Collins 2016). A whole field of sub-studies in International Relations interpret security as a key factor in sovereignty, the State, and international relations. Wolfers points out that security "in any objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" (1952: 150). These words are thus related to policing, order, and social control.

A harsh discussion involved media and public discourse in the post 9/11 period, when so-called terrorism emerged as the object of public policies and generalised fears (Ranstorp 2009, Jackson, Smyth and Gunning 2009, Silke 2009). The rhetoric of safety and security has often been consequent to episodes of urban gender-based violence. Frequently, after cases of rape, harassment, or injury against women in public space – especially if they are pursued by non-native men – local and national governments succeeded with new restrictive regulation and orderings "in the name of women's rights" and of women's protection (Farris 2017, Simone 2012). Feminist movements contest this instrumental use of women that blames gender-based violence on migrant people and thus implements reactionary public order policies. The same mechanism also interested LGBT and queer people, who have been involved in the production of a new image of "the nation" in return for a supposed protection and inclusion in the State, against the "barbarian others." A process called homonationalism by Jasbir Puar (2007), and femonationalism by Sara Farris (2017), where women begin to be complicit with xenophobic claims and policies.

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This neoliberal understanding of security and safety is questioned by feminist, LGBT, and queer groups. Participants struggle to find new words, because they acknowledge the slippery ground of these concepts.

As much as affect and feelings prompt the sense of insecurity, so is security a matter of affect. Questioned about the first words coming to their minds when thinking about the space, an interviewee replied: "Warm, red. Very strong feelings. [...] Because in some way it is linked to the concept of home, I think. This thing of warmth, of welcome, of embrace. In any case, even if I quickly pass by, I'm happy, I go for a walk, check that everything is alright... I also like washing dishes. So it's a place that gives you a pleasant feeling" (IIIR5, CS, 30). This quote shows a strong connection among affects, emotions, and the concept of safety. Participants refer to an affective vocabulary to describe their connection to the space and to the other participants. Together with these elements, others soon emerged in the definition of safety, proceeding through an emotional and instinctual path. The main one is that safety is a matter of community, of feminist ties. It challenges the individualism embedded in the neoliberal idea of safety – as a sense of security that concerns individuals or, at most, the family. Moreover, this way of collectively *producing* the space is the path through which the space becomes *safe*. Safety in feminist spaces is not a given, but rather an ongoing process that involves all of the participants, made up of attempts, mistakes, and successful experiments. Through the production of ties and the elaboration on affect, participants become self-conscious, and they build new tools to manage their everyday life. At the collective level, ties and elaboration on emotions are answers to fear, danger, and dispossession. By dealing with collective emotions, FS enhance strategies and tactics to face an *unsafe* world (Pain 1991, Belingardi, Castelli and Olcuire 2019).

Thus, the concept of safety relates to the outside world, but it is also a matter of self-awareness, on one side, and political organisation, on the other side. It calls into question the issue of power: power as the factor organising social structures, and power as a process of reappropriation of words, tools, networks, and spaces to deal with unequal social structures. So much of the perception of security is about power that only by subverting its distribution is it possible to build a sense of self in a world of social inequality. I clearly understood this concept talking with Sara, a five-year-old girl hosted at the House of Women Lucha Y Siesta with her mother. "At a certain point Sara drags us out because she says there is a thief. As we are talking, I ask her if she is afraid of thieves and she says: 'no, I beat them.'" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 12-07-19). Paradoxically, since all of the feminist spaces included in the research were under the threat of eviction at the time of the research, the main source of fear and unsafety for participants were institutions. More than protect them, as it would be expected, institutions are perceived as a source of menace, attack, and danger. The threat produces feelings of anger and frustration: while institutions refuse to acknowledge feminist spaces, at the same time they

lack the services and welfare toward citizens that feminist spaces are fulfilling. I opened this analysis with the conventional meaning of safety, coming from an institutional setting, and it is now reversing its sense exactly at the opposite.

Thus, the reference to safety in feminist spaces is directed, on the one hand, internally, building spaces in which to feel better, and on the other hand externally, to collective action against those social structures that produce a deep sense of insecurity for certain subjects.

Once again, affect serves as the grid to understand the relation between women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people and the urban space, as well as the grid through which forms of collective action that address safety proliferate. On the ridge of safety and affect, this research will try to develop our understanding of collective action from a gender perspective.

Thus, to conclude, the research looks at physical spaces managed by feminist movements (1.3) to understand the work on affect and emotions (1.2), and the way this work produces consequences with regard to the micro, meso and macro levels – such as on democracy and capitalism (1.1).

1.5 Research design, Orientation and Feminist Standpoint

> … the feeling of, by making a quote, putting power into circulation rather than enjoying a power.
> (IIIR7, CS, 30)

The thesis is the result of a participatory action research with participants involved in three feminist spaces in Rome and three in Madrid, through constructivist theory method (CGTM) and feminist methodologies. The process started with a research question:

How do feminist movements imagine, produce, and preserve safer spaces?

According to CGTM, I started with an intuition, a puzzle. As mentioned in the preface, I followed an embodied feeling to focus on a research question addressed to understanding a social phenomenon. The issue of safety from a feminist perspective oriented my initial approach to the fieldwork and to participants. With three feminist spaces in Rome and three spaces in Madrid, I prepared the access through several contacts, that I will better clarify in Chapter 3. To spatialise the analysis of safe spaces, I looked at feminist physical spaces. Among the variety of feminist spaces, I tried to focus on the most different cases in the spectrum of spaces that pursue political elaboration and collective action (and so avoiding those feminist spaces, like leisure places or profit-making places, such as bookshops or clubs). The cases selection involved three types of spaces: an historical house of women

relatively institutionalised (Casa Internazionale delle donne in Rome; Espacios de Igualdad in Madrid); a feminist space engaged with direct social actions (casa delle donne Lucha Y Siesta in Rome; Kasa pùblica transfeminista Eskalera Karakola in Madrid); a radical, intersectional, queer, and transfeminist group (the space of Cagne Sciolte in Rome; Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros in Madrid). With them, we negotiated further issues to address than the research question, we set up the timing and space of the research, methods of data collection, data analysis, and eventual dissemination of results. CGTM allows to conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process (Charmaz 2006). Given the participatory nature of the research, the participants were involved as much as possible in each stage of the research, from the formulation of the questions to the analysis of the data.

Through a participatory, iterative, inductive, and never-ending process I move from the concept of safe spaces to the one of affect as a guiding concept in order to frame the relation between structure and agency; how feminist communities are built and managed; how political participation occurs in feminist spaces; how they relate to the surrounding environment.

To account for the participatory, inductive, and iterative process of the research that brought to theory construction rather than description, the manuscript proceeds in two parts.

After the introduction, *Part I* aims to set the stage. In Chapter 2, I go through the literature of social movement studies, feminist theory, and affect theory to develop a theoretical framework among the three strains of the literature, and beyond some gaps. Chapter 3 addresses the ethical choices that orient the research. Then, I will explain the points of junction between the three approaches that construct the research: participatory action research, CGTM, feminist methodology. Finally, Chapter 4 introduces the Italian and Spanish contexts, and the six cases studies.

Part II of the manuscript presents the empirical analysis through CGTM. It draws from the fieldwork conducted in Rome (September 2018-February 2020) and Madrid (January 2021-May 2021). Although the fieldwork lasted approximately as long as indicated, participatory research does not allow a canonical start and end date to be identified. Contact with the participants began in the first year, and continues to this day, even during the writing of the manuscript. This open process is one of the fundamental characteristics of the research, whose findings are rooted in the relationship, confrontation, and continuous exchange with the participants. Given the inductive, participatory and iterative nature of this research, the chapters are not strictly structured in a comparative manner.

To account for the empirical process, the analysis of data, and funding, I will start from the research questions at the basis of the five chapters. These further research questions emerged during the analysis of data pursued through CGTM, and they progressively expanded and changed the initial puzzle.

Chapter 5 starts from the research question:

How does the work on affect pursued by feminist spaces interplay with the structure (economic model, institutions, laws, norms, values and beliefs)?

To answer this question, I will go through the context of a multiple crisis – political, economic, environmental, health – that feminist spaces are undergoing. The crises allow to point out those structures at work in the definition of feminist spaces' counterparts: the economic model, institutions, the structure of codes and norms. To relate with these structures, feminist spaces develop alternative models of economy and institutions grounded in the work on affect. This work also orients their interaction with players, at the local and national level, and at the level of the feminist movements. Affect, emotions, and feelings are embedded in the creation of strategies and action that allow feminist spaces to increase the capacity to relate with players and arenas on one hand, and on the other to develop agency with regard to structures.

Chapter 6 moves from the puzzle:

How do affects such as fear, anger, and discontent ground the choice of managing a physical place as a collective action?

To address the issue, the chapter explores the choice to engage with urban spaces through the creation of feminist spaces, and how this choice takes the shape of alternative structures of feelings. The second part of the chapter closely looks at how affects are mobilised in collective action: the perception of safety is the result of a process where feelings are at stake. Because of this centrality of affect and emotions, the research formulates the potential of affect for collective action, or as to take affect into account and to develop positive feelings increase the capacity for collective action both at the individual and collective level. Affects emerge as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) a competence in action. With regard to the third function, Chapter 7 asks:

How are affects made into action?

To search for an answer, the chapter looks at the recasting of time and space pursued by feminist spaces. Feminist time discloses other affective opportunities and lets people go through the comprehension of their commitment, ideas, and engagement in political participation. The work on affect spurs the perception of the feminist space as a home, with contradictions and potentials. To better understand how affects and emotions are made into action, the second part of the chapter looks at the repertoire of action, through innovation, the production of knowledge, and direct social action. Emotions do not only provide information about the starting point, but also about political orientation. They increase the capacity for individual participation, the consistency with the structure of feelings, and therefore the potential of collective action.

As well as the macro and meso level, the research explores the work on affect at the micro level. Thus, chapter 8 asks:

How does the work on affect and emotions interplay with the individual paths of participants?

Affect and emotions play a central role in becoming feminist, because they enhance the process of mobilisation, socialisation and commitment to feminist ideas. Participants learn to reflect on affect and emotions: why they take that form, how they move, what is the use that can be made of them. Emotions cannot be ignored or dribbled out. Awareness of affect and emotions, instead, produces a change in people, and increases their knowledge of themselves and their possibility to act in the world. Affect and emotions have an impact in the long run, as well, as the analysis of biographical outcomes accounts for.

Chapter 9, finally, proposes some hints for the comparison between Italy and Spain. The outbreak of the pandemic heavily impacted on feminist spaces and the fieldwork, as well. Even if constrained by the health crisis, the fieldwork in Spain put forward some challenging findings. First, the role of State feminism, almost absent in Italy and quite spread in Spain, in the creation of feminist spaces. The massive and strong presence of feminist movements within institutions enhances the proliferation of a feminist sensibility, of feminist spaces, and of affective practices. The outbreak of the pandemic allowed to look at the mechanism of the work on affect in an emergency situation, since the emotions of grief, despair, fear, and mourning were elaborated on and transformed through the tools developed by feminist spaces over time.

To conclude, Chapter 10 recalls the path and the purpose of the project, explaining the main theoretical and empirical contributions, but it also addresses the limitations and possibility for further development of the research. In the annex, I will include the anonymised list of all the interviews conducted.

This is a situated research, that I carried out through an ambivalent stance: as researcher, and as a feminist activist. As Haraway (1988), Rich (1984) and Harding (1987) write, it is time to put aside the illusion of a false neutrality in social research. Instead of ignoring the writer's positioning, the manuscript attempts to make explicit and thus account for proximity and distance to the field.

The place from which to speak and write is also a place of relationship and imagination, which I have tried to bring to the table as ethically as possible throughout the research. In this sense, the empty and full spaces of the manuscript, the potentials and limitations, are also the result of my emotional development in relation to the research work. As Åhäll explains:

> Nonfeminist scholars seem convinced that feminist knowledge does not concern them—a feeling reproduced by a common misunderstanding that feminism is only about "identity politics" or "women's stuff." This lack of engagement with feminist theory and methodologies continues

despite, or perhaps as a result of, the opening up of those spaces for feminist research. […] "emotion" is a term that has long been associated with the personal, the body, the feminine. As the constitutive other of "reason" (as well as the objective, the mind, the masculine) in Western, binary modes of thinking, "emotion" has been (and still is) a political strategy keeping women and the feminine out of politics and political spheres. As a result, much of feminist scholarship has worked to problematize binaries such as emotion/reason, mind/body, and domestic/international. All this is to say that feminist scholarship has a very long history with "the emotional" (2018: 37)

This research is part of the very long history of feminist scholarship with "the emotional." In an attempt to understand the link between awareness of affect and emotions and the potential for collective action, the research aims to, more generally, further our understanding of social movements, of the processes that implement democracy, and of people's search for happiness and social change. This situated place, from which to look at the social world, is the starting point of the following manuscript.

Let's begin the journey.

2. The Theoretical Framework: Bridging Social Movements Studies, Affect Theory and Feminist Theory

2.1 Introduction

> Feminist and queer scholars have shown us that emotions 'matter' for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well worlds. So in a way, we do 'feel our way'.
>
> (Ahmed 2014: 12)

In the age of globalisation, urbanisation, and constant re-configuration of political areas, feminist spaces (henceforth FSs) are challenging sites of analysis in order to spatialise the understanding of collective action, emotions, and the circulation of power. The relational process of *becoming safer* sheds light on the way affects and emotions shape collective action.

The empirical analysis will specifically look at 1) how the relation between agency and structure is mediated by the work on affects, 2) how affects and emotions are made into collective action, 3) how the work on affects interplays with the paths of actors.

These questions orient both the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis. In order to explore these research questions, I will engage with some heurist devices developed by three strains of the literature: social movement studies, feminist theory, and affect theory. The chapter is intended to present the theoretical framework of my research project. The research has an interdisciplinary approach. These disciplines have their own legacy, background, and concepts. Despite the differences among the three, my aim is to focus on contact zones, the intersection of which is able to explain the mechanisms occurring in the FSs.

The empirical analysis relies on a two-years ethnography performed in Rome and Madrid, by looking at three types of FSs: longstanding houses of women; feminist spaces that engage with direct social action; radical transfeminist and queer spaces. These spaces make use of different types of action: occupation, self-management, negotiation of a rent, direct control of the municipality.

In this research project, affect is taken in consideration as the core of political action. Affects do not enrich or empower political action, but they are the very matter of it. My argument is that feminist politics is based on a conscious work on affects, and the capacity to name, negotiate, and reverberate affect has transformative effects. As Gould argues, affect indicates "nonconscious and un-named, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body" (2009: 19). Emotions, instead, outline "what of affect – what of the potential of bodily intensities – gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living. […] Where affect is unfixed,

unstructured, noncoherent, and nonlinguistic, an emotion is one's personal expression of what one is feeling in a given moment, an expression that is structured by social convention, by culture" (Gould 2009: 20). The perception of affect can induce efforts to understand the feeling, to give it a name, to develop a conscious use of it. As Gould argues, through this effort a transformation occurs, "a reduction of an unstructured and unrepresentable affective state with all of its potential into an emotion or emotions whose qualities are conventionally known and fixed. […] An emotion, in other words, brings a vague bodily intensity or sensation into the realm of cultural meanings and normativity, systems of signification that structure our very feelings" (2009: 21). The concept of affect stresses the capacity of transmission – or the capacity to affect and be affected by, and thus the nexus between emotions and collective action. Affect transcends the individual and sheds light on the inter-subjective and chained dimension of bodies, or how bodies, spaces, and objects are in a constant relationship mediated by the gradient of intensity generated in the relationship (Ahmed 2004). The research therefore looks at affects as intensities generated by the relationship and taken on in the relationship, capable of constructing concatenations of bodies and, through the work of awareness, collective action. Notwithstanding this, the concepts of affect and emotion will both be used to signal the sphere of individual and collective action that transcends the limits of rational and strategic thinking, yet still includes it. Affects work as 1) a mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) competence in action. The work on affects increases the capacity for collective action, both at the individual and collective level. A vibrant comprehension of collective affects allows FSs to pursue their search for social change, with continuity (Taylor 1989), contention (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), and innovation (Staggenborg 1989, 1995). In this sense, the empirical analysis of affect makes it possible to investigate the potential for collective action (Massumi 2015).

First, I will explore the development of concepts coming from social movement studies. To understand agency and structure, collective action and paths of actors, the research engages with new social movement theory, resource mobilisation theory, and reflections on emotions. By questioning some blind spots, I will try to add some reflections coming from feminist theory that would improve the understanding of free spaces' dynamics. The literature on social movement and emotions will be explored through the lens of affect theory. This bridge, rarely drawn in the field of social movement studies, enhances the comprehension of "twilight zones" (Massumi 2015), which sometimes fall out from our understanding. Finally, I will revisit the literature on safer spaces, and the way it intersects and improves the literature on free spaces.

2.2 Bridging Social Movement Studies and Feminist Theory

The Upsurge of Social Movement Studies

In this paragraph, I will try to bridge social movement studies, gender studies and feminist theory, by highlighting some gaps in the literature which are coming either from a missed interdisciplinary link or from an unheard challenge coming from feminist movements. Social movements and collective action have long been the focus of interest for generations of scholars. The way social conflict emerges, changes over time and shapes social structures has come under the scrutiny of numerous theories and orientations of thought.

Emotions, collective action, and social structures were central concepts in the birth of the discipline. At the turn of the century, classical approaches were mainly focused on collective behaviour as a result of "dissatisfaction with the current form of life" (Blumer 1995: 60). Social mobilisations were considered "amorphous, poorly organized, and without form; collective behaviour is primitive and the mechanisms of interaction are elementary and spontaneous" (*ibidem*). Authors like Smelser (1962) and Le Bon (2002) were concerned by the emotional outburst of collective behaviour, while others, like Davies (1969) and Gurr (1970), with the relative deprivation causing people's willingness to protest. Quite generally, these authors interpret contentious politics as an unconventional type of political participation. A symptom of a distortion of democracy, as opposed to social order.

A significant turn occurs in the 1960s, when the outbreak of massive social movements required new tools for explanation. Scholars became concerned with the need to explore social movements as carriers of democratic processes, and they aimed at explaining them through political opportunity structure (Eisinger 1973, Tarrow 1998, Meyer 2004); resource mobilisation (McCarthy and Zald 1977); framing (Benford and Snow 2000); rational choice (Olson 1965). The more new social movements emerged, such as the women, environmental, and LGBT movements, beyond the labour movements, the more scholars have worked on the production of collective identity and culture as a matter (Touraine 1981, Melucci 1989). Authors like Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, by challenging the structural approaches to social movements, engage with emotions as a key factor for mobilisations (2001).

How do these different approaches inform our understanding of contemporary social movements? Which concepts are useful for the analysis of FSs and which are still missing? First of all, I will engage with some concepts, such as resources, continuity, and contention. Then, I will focus on the 1960s turn, which was focused on the social movements' shift from materialist to post-materialist

values. Finally, I will go through gender as a category of analysis (Scott 1986), which was only recently embedded in the study of social movements. Feminist theory has been developed as a discipline and quite rarely melted in a unique perspective with social movements studies, and this research attempts to partially bridge the gap.

Contention, Resource and Continuity

Feminist spaces are both nonnormative collective action (in the case of occupied centres with a consequent illegal status) and normative (in the case of municipal-assigned centres or centres with a formal negotiation with institutions to manage the space). They are created between "the structure of everyday life and the structure of protests" (Piven and Cloward 1991: 435). Although free spaces are not included in the definition of contentious politics (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), scholars improved our understanding of spatialities and contention, by the means of how "the characteristics of place and space influence the abilities of insurgents to mount collective challenges to their political opponents" (Nicholls, Miller and Beaumont 2013: 13). Della Porta, Fabbri and Piazza (2013) argue that protests against the construction of big infrastructures elaborate an alternative conception of spaces and liberated terrains. "If the sense of place influenced the protests, the protests produced new definitions of places as collective identities developed in 'liberated' as well as 'contested' spaces" (Nicholls, Miller and Beaumont 2013: 13). This research engages with FSs that make use of different type of action: occupation, self-management, negotiation of a rent, direct control of the municipality. FSs, thus, are spaces of contention, where collective actors put forward their claims against more than one claimant, through conventional and unconventional action (such as occupation, strike, protests, sit-ins), in several fields (gender regime, urban space, social norms, government of the city). Nonetheless, the production of feminist spaces is not episodic, but structurally involved in the process of urban development. McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow aim at investing only those episodes of contention that "occur in public" (2001: 5) because they are the only ones "having manifestly political ramification" (2001: 6). This definition has been questioned by feminist scholars, because it excludes women and several other subjects from the notion of politics and public space. Re-thinking the notion of politics and public from a feminist perspective means questioning the micro-practices of movements, the meso-level dynamics of urban pattern, and the broader meaning of democracy. Moreover, the notion of public excludes all of those experiences which take place in a private dimension. During the 1960s and 1970s, feminists tried to break up the traditional split between the private and public spheres, through the well-known slogan "the personal is political." The sentence calls for the political impact of what has traditionally been confined to the private dimension, like marriage, sexuality, social reproduction, childcare. The entrance of private and domestic facts in the

public sphere stimulated changes in norms, roles, reproductive choices, self-determination. Even more significantly, the slogan disrupts the hidden phenomena of domestic violence against women, calling for a public takeover of a non-private problem which affects women. Changing the common understanding of the public sphere means for Fraser (1990) elaborating "feminist subaltern counterpublics, […] parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 1990: 67).

The literature on resource mobilisation, and some scholars such as Gamson (1975), underline the role of high-structured organisations and centralised authority to grant collective action's success. The observation of many challengers showed that long-lasting activity is significantly promoted by a large number of resources. However, in my case, I am not engaging with fully formed organisations, but rather physical spaces managed by communities that rejected formalisation and bureaucratisation, by opting for non-hierarchical structure and deliberative democracy. Despite low-formalisation, the cases under investigation have existed for a minimum of 4 years, and at most since 1983. As Taylor (1989) suggests, spaces are often carriers of continuity between cycles of contention. A strand of social movements literature stressed out movements emerging in the 1960s as exceptionally new, performing a break with earlier movements that, according to Taylor's vision, are instead connected by several flows and processes. More than ruptures, this re-emergence of movements is a "turning point in movement mobilization" (1989: 761). According to resource mobilisation theory, she pinpoints political opportunities and organisational base as prominent factors in the rise and decline of movements (Taylor 1989, McAdam 1982, Jenkins 1983). Borrowed from the theory of social control (Mizruchi 1983, Taylor 1989), the term "abeyance" points out those organisations which retain dissident groups or people, potential challengers to the status quo, keeping them from putting forward too critical claims or actions. Social movements continuity is intended to be a substantial contribute to social change. It is still questionable how much "abeyance" and "latency" are proper words to depict movements phases of less visibility, as long as structures, culture, and actions keep existing. More than abeyance, movement phases can be framed on a scale of greater or lesser intensity. Following Taylor's concept of abeyance, as "a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in nonreceptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another" (1989: 761), FSs are structures of maintenance in times of abeyance.

These spaces are sites of political, cultural, and biographical outcomes (Giugni 2007, Bosi and Uba 2009). Feminist movements activities influence products and practices (Rochon 1998), impacting local and national trends in education, media, and communication. At the same time, feminist spaces keep the movements' claims and goals effective (Bosi and Uba 2009, Amenta et al. 2010). Their

long-lasting activity and the relation with institutions produce changes on the local and global scales, as the cases under investigation will show. Moreover, FSs are sites of analysis to get the long-term impact of political activism (Fillieule and Neveau 2019).

We can assume that all of these spaces are a type of long-term collective action, whose persistence requires an analysis capable of going beyond the concepts of contentious politics, resources, emotions or emotional ties alone.

New Social Movements theory and Feminist Movements

This research is based on a constructivist view, and it focuses on FSs in Italy and Spain. This would fall under the definition of new social movements given by Melucci (1980, 1989). By overcoming Marxist analysis and functionalist sociology, he tries to deal with "the necessity of a sociology of collective action which is capable of linking actors and system, class relations and incidents of conflict" (1980: 201). However, the assumption that the "defense of the identity, continuity, and predictability of personal existence is beginning to constitute the substance of the new conflicts" (1980: 2018) sometimes seems to have taken an unvoluntary turn. Far from the sociological proposal of Melucci (1980, 1989), Touraine (1975) and Pizzorno (1966), the unintended consequences of this brilliant turn in the discipline, sometimes called post-materialism (Inglehart 1977), have been the crushing of analysis on the individual dimension and identity, the relative loss of the materialist element that guides and informs the action of the new social movements, the prevalence of the symbolic and cultural element, a certain delegation of the sphere of the emotions to the domain of psychology. As Åhäll argues:

> Feminism is often simplistically assumed to be "only" about women's lives and experiences, about "identity politics." However, as Marysia Zalewski points out, it is more appropriate to think of feminism as primarily concerned with the kinds of questions that are fundamentally about how the world works (Zalewski 2015, 4). (2018: 41)

This research attempts to analyse the so-called new social movements through the case of FSs by taking into account the materialist dimension, developed by feminist theory (Dalla Costa and James 1975, Picchio 1992, Fraser and Honnet 2007, Del Re 2012, Fraser, Arruzza and Bhattacharya 2019), as well as the subversion of codes, symbols and culture (Bono and Kemp 1991, Butler 2002, Bracke 2014). Starting from the epistemological revolution proposed by the movements, i.e. the politicisation of the personal and the rupture between public and private (Melucci 1980, Bono and Kemp 1991), the analysis aims to identify how feminist movements question the system of production (Della Costa and James 1975, Walters 1995, Casalini 2017), the structure of class relations in society (MacKinnon 1982, Khun and Wolpe 2013), the social structure, institutionalised norms and social roles (Butler 1993, 2002). The search for a safer space is inquired through the relation between agency and

structures (Jasper 2004): rather than an attempt to carve out spaces of liveability in the contemporary world, I will try to analyse the production of safer spaces as a collective action aimed at dismantling the economic model and the social systems that determine differential modes of access to citizenship, urban space and public life (Prieur 2015, Roestone Collective 2015). In this sense, affect will be treated as a field of political reinvention, beyond the codes and rituals identified in the literature on social movements. Affects, as I will further explore in the next section, are analysed as a source of interpersonal relations that not only transform subjectivities, but also increase the potential for collective action, by opening up spaces for negotiation and subversion of social norms that are difficult to negotiate through other channels (Gregg and Seigworth 2010).

The Epistemological Challenge of Feminist Movements

The second gap in the literature to address is related to the relative lack of reception of the challenge that feminist movements have put forward with respect to a number of concepts developed by social movement studies. A range of scholars have brought the case of feminist movements in the literature on social movements (Melucci 1980, 1989, Taylor 1989, 1995, 2013, Taylor and Rupp 1989, 1993, Taylor and Whittier 1992, Whittier 1997, 2011, Staggenborg 1989, 1995, 2001, 1996, 1998; Marx Feree and Martin 1995, West and Blumerg 1990, Ray 1999, Pelak, Taylor and Whittier 2000, Naples 1998). Taylor (1989; 2000), Rupp and Taylor (1999), and Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke and Anderson (2009) emphasise the leading role of women's movements toward democratisation. Theorists has examined feminist movements not just as one more movement among others, but as a social phenomenon with specific concepts, models, and repertoires of action, which often challenge the concepts developed by social movement studies *tout court*. However, this literature has been mainly US-based, with a lack of understanding on European and postcolonial countries. Moreover, the literature went in depth into the so-called second wave of feminism, but it sometimes lacks a closer view on contemporary feminist movements and their challenges.

As historically excluded from the sphere of the political, the activation of women represents the unforeseen element of democracy (Loraux 1991, 1994, Spivak 1999, Scott 2011, Cavarero 1995 and Castelli 2013). The subversion proposed by feminism in the 1970s addressed social structures, conceptual elaborations, and patterns of thought considered purely masculine: "we spit on Hegel" (Lonzi 1974). With this lapidary phrase they intended to propose an epistemological reversal, which rejected male-based social paradigms. They refused to identify, think, and act through male-based concepts and interpretations (De Beauvoir 2010, Cavarero and Restaino 2002). Feminism paved the way for an epistemic field and collective action based on women's relationships and thinking (Cavarero and Restaino 2002). Through consciousness rising group, they intended to start from the

zero degree of knowledge and political practice, inventing a new social world. "Women came together in consciousness-raising groups and experienced community, discovery, exhilaration, and 'the sheer intellectual excitement of reexamining all received wisdom' (Rosen 2000: 200). Armed with a new consciousness, feminists took to the streets with all kinds of protests designed to challenge public assumptions, alter cultural institutions, and create political change" (Staggenbord and Taylor 2005: 37). Yet, if studies on social movements have not really taken up this radical challenge of feminist thought, some scholars have proposed the reworking of concepts that are insufficient to grasp the case of feminist movements.

Bridging Gender Studies and Feminist Theory to Social Movement Studies

Gender is a key factor in the organisation of the social structure. It shapes economic, political, and social spheres (Wollstonecraft 2008, Scott 1986, Piccone Stella and Saraceno 1996, Butler 2002, Firestone 2003). In 1999 Taylor, but also others before (Blee 1996, 1998, Marx Ferree and Martin 1995, Naples 1998, Ray 1999), singled out how gender has been largely ignored in the field of social movement studies and political sociology, while "a growing body of feminist research demonstrates that gender is an explanatory factor in the emergence, nature, and outcomes of all social movements" (Taylor 1999: 8). Taylor highlights the enduring gendered dimension of "the mobilization, leadership patterns, strategies, ideologies, and even the outcomes of social movement" (1999: 9). By analysing postpartum support group movement, she delineates how gender relates to political and social context, how it mobilises structures and strategies, collective frames and identities. According to a multilevel understanding, gender organises social life through socialisation and sex categorisation (interactional level) (West and Zimmerman 1987); gender hierarchies shape the socioeconomic field, the labour market and state policies (structural level) (Taylor 1999, Dalla Costa and James 1975); gender is embedded in symbolic codes, ideology, and practice of institutions (Taylor 1999, Piccone Stella and Saraceno 1996). All these aspects are involved in the emergence, organisation, frames, and action of social movements, both at actors' and structure's levels.

Nicholas and Agius (2017) recently described how masculinism still shape global articulations of discourses, culture, and politics. Male violence is embedded in the construction of gender: it produces a double socialisation between men and women, a binary production of gender and the subordination of the latter in all spheres of social life (Russo and Pirlott 2006). In this sense, feminist movements aim to attack power and its forms of expression by identifying the root, and therefore the source, of social norms and structures (Bono and Kemp 1991, Bracke 2014). "One may therefore speak of a class organizational movement when the collective action within an organization not only goes beyond the limits of the organization and contests its norms but also attacks the source itself of power"

(Melucci 1980: 204). For this reason, the production of safer spaces is a social process based on the subversion of the economic, social, and cultural power that produces women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people as subalterns, and steadily included in a differential manner in public and private life (Wolf 1993, Prieur 2015, Roestone Collective 2015).

Reflections on intersectionality opened up the scope of the analysis by stressing out the intersecting axis of power which individuals are composed of (Crenshaw 1991, Yuval-Davis 2006). Gender, age, ethnicity, class, and age define possibilities, boundaries, and frictions for subjects (Combahee River Collective 1977, Smith 1986, hooks 1991). The intersectional approach has been operationalised to grasp the way social movements mobilise, their internal structure, their organisations and tactics, composition and goals (Choo and Marx Feree 2010, Lépinard 2020). The contribution to social movement studies expands both the comprehension of political subjectivities and the field of alliances (Ciccia, della Porta and Pavan 2021).

At the identity level, scholars working on feminist movements underline the definition of politicised identities by drawing attention on "the development of a consciousness of the group's distinct" and "the politicization of everyday life, embodied in symbols and actions that connect the members of the group and link their everyday experiences to larger social injustices" (Rupp and Taylor 1999: 365). By relying on two features of the movement – self-consciousness rising and the personal as political – these scholars single out feminism as a political identity which encompass and broaden cognitive liberation (McAdam 1982) and collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992). Although these reflections have the merit of identifying the work of awareness and the construction of the political perimeter of a subaltern group, the concept of identity recalls a stable configuration that sometimes does not allow the complexity of the paths of political subjectivation to be grasped. For this reason, in the research I will refer less to the concept of identity and more to that of the acquisition of awareness, as a process that allows the construction of a dynamic and relational self in relation to certain social structures. This perspective helps better to grasp the process of construction of safer spaces, which are not places that reverse the male-based world but rather places not entirely codified that in the elaboration of alternative structures of feelings continually bring into play representations, self-narratives, memberships, visions.

An extensive literature on organisation sheds light on feminist movements as sources of innovation, on one hand through informal and decentralised structures that enhance strategic and tactical innovation, and on the other through formalised and centralised structures which favour organisational maintenance (Staggenborg 1989). These specificities occur in movements aimed at "fostering democratic and caring kinds of organizations that empower participants" (Staggenborg

1995: 339). As such, they are studied as "carriers of 'participatory democratic' mode of social movement organization since the 1960s" (*ibidem*).

The notion of repertoire of action (Tilly 1978, McAdam 1982, Tarrow 1998) refers to the limited modes of claim-making social movements engage with and the constrained range of innovation available in a pre-established set of cultural settings. By broadening the scope of analysis and claim-making performances to feminist and LGBT movements, scholars highlight an uneven wide range of repertoire of action: "social movements often adapt, create, and use culture—ritual, music, street theatre, art, the Internet, and practices of everyday life—to make collective claims" (Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke and Anderson 2009: 866). This broader scope will be crucial for the analysis of feminist spaces, which action and direct social action offer a compelling case for the developing of the notion of repertoire of action (Barone and Bonu forthcoming).

By overcoming a heavily US-based analysis, and by drawing attention on contemporary feminist movements (Casalini 2017, Cirimele and Panariello 2018, Chironi 2019, Barone and Bonu forthcoming), this research aims at questioning some blind spots of social movements literature, on contentious politics, agency and structure, emotions and affects, everyday life activism, biographical outcomes, political outcomes. Albeit partial and necessarily limited, it aims to refer to both literatures, trying to take up the challenge proposed by feminist movements to social sciences.

2.3 Emotions, Affect Theory and Social Movements

> Affect as promise: increases in capacities to act (expansions in affectability: both to affect and to be affected), the start of ''being-capable'' […], resonant affinities of body and world, being open to more life or more to life.
> (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 12)

Emotions and Social Movements

In the previous section, I went through the main traditions of thought in the study of social movements. Collective behaviour, mobilisation of resources, political opportunity structure, identities, new social movements, are just a few of the concepts elaborated in order to understand how people mobilise, participate, organise, perform action, and formulate claims, strategies and outcomes. Yet, emotions were until a certain point almost completely neglected. When taken into consideration, emotions were only regarded as frightening, incompatible with rationality or, in other cases, as falling within the competence of psychology. The innovative work of Hochschild (1983) proposed the term "emotional labour" to address the process of transforming, channelling and

managing emotions in order to improve social networks that social movements will be built upon. At the turn of the century, the work of Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) shed light on the missing link with sociology of emotions and, more generally, to the role of emotions in collective action: "Emotions are important in all phases of political action, by all types of political actors, across a variety of institutional arenas" (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 16). In 2002, the special issue on *Mobilization* edited by Aminzade and McAdam, proposed several analyses of "the role of emotions in sustaining movements over time, the complex and often contradictory nature of emotion work within movements, and the activities that produce the emotional energy needed to forge and maintain collective political identities" (107). In the attempt to clarify how different emotions work in collective action, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta suggest a classification based on "immediate reflex emotions, longer-term affective commitments, moods and emotions based on complex moral and cognitive understandings" (2004: 414). Emotions such as fear, surprise, anger, disgust, joy, and sadness can arise suddenly, and they provoke instinctive reactions. These types of emotions can constitute a trigger for participation (e.g., in the case of the victory of a movement which produces a sudden joy and a willingness to participate) (Lofland 1982). Other emotions have longer effects, such as love and hate, respect and trust (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2004). The feeling of loyalty for the nation can be a powerful source of political participation over time (Anderson 1991) and, more generally, trust is a positive affect which comes from collective identity and strengthens people's engagement (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2004, Mishra 1996). Works on the women's movement show how people are more emotionally satisfied than those participating into mainstream institutions, because of the bond of trust, love, and mutual respect (Epstein 1991, Whittier 1995). Instead, moods are modular emotions which bring people from one situation to another. Finally, moral emotions are "the largest group of emotions [that] arise out of complex cognitive understandings and moral awareness, reflecting our comprehension of the world around us and sometimes of our place in it" (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2004: 422).

Feminist organisations have been a compelling case for the analysis of the relation between emotions and collective action (Marx Ferree and Martin 1995, Taylor and Rupp 1993, Taylor 1996, 1999, Taylor and Whittier 1998). Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta observe how among sociologists, feminist theorists have been able to call into question emotions in their double potential: "women's political claims are more frequently dismissed as 'merely emotional' than men's, they have shown; at the same time, women's expression of 'outlaw emotions' can become the basis for powerful political challenges. Emotions can be strategically used by activists and be the basis for strategic thought" (2001: 9). Emotions can be the glue that connects people to each other (Polletta and Jasper 2001). They range from affective ties (as love, hate, and so on) to feelings of anger or depression. In their

work on transnational women's organisations from 1888 to 1945, Taylor and Rupp (2002) shed light on the emotion culture which allowed feminist organisations to build solidarity over time and across national borders. They use the notions of gendered emotion culture to address those emotional mechanisms that connect, from a feminist perspective, emotion to collective action. In their analysis, the production of a loving community works through "fashioning *expressive public rituals* of reconciliation; forming *intense affective ties* in the form of international friendships and family-like relationships; and drawing on the *emotional template* of mother love as a universal bond" (Taylor and Rupp 2002: 142).

According to the social-structural tradition and Kemper's (2001) arguments, emotion is also about power, and feelings depend on one's position in social hierarchies. In order to analyse FSs, it is worthwhile referring to emotions as socially and cultural constructed. More frequently, I will refer to social rules and political deviation, tension between private and public domains, collective learning processes (Jasper 1998), the "fever" of collective mobilisations (Polletta 2009), fulfilment or frustration of political engagement.

Yet, despite the great effort scholars have poured toward a convincing approach to social movements that comprises emotions, they somehow focus on emotions as something that merely enriches or empowers collective action. Through a general assessment on the study of emotions and social movements, Ruiz-Junco argues that "the contributions of this literature come mainly from theoretical crosspollination based on preexisting perspectives in the field of social movements and protest. Some of the most widespread concepts, such as emotion work, channeling, emotional framing, emotional cultures, emotional resonance and emotional opportunity structures, stand precisely as a direct outgrowth of long-standing perspectives in the field, such as framing and political process" (2013: 51). The author calls for a greater attention to the wide scope of emotions, beyond the dominant ones reported by activists (such as fear, hostility, and joy), but also beyond a purely overlap of pre-existing concepts with the field of emotions. Moreover, she calls for a critical assessment of methods of research of emotions. Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta argue that "once we see emotions as, for the most part, cultural accomplishments rather than automatic physiological responses we can treat them as normal variables or mechanisms in our models of social movements" (2004: 416). According to this view, the analysis of emotions risks falling into a purely rational and therefore disembodied view of politics, which fails to understand emotions as flows that produce concatenations of bodies, and in the transmission, greater or lesser power (Gould 2009). It is also missing the way emotions connect the micro, meso, and macro politics; the differences between affect and emotions; the role of affect between cognition and body; affect as tools and mediation to develop collective action.

A different and very convincing interpretation of emotions and collective action is given by Deborah Gould in her research work on ACT UP and the fight against AIDS. At the outset, Gould realised that political process theory was unable to explain the emergence and effectiveness of ACT UP – the political opportunity structure was, in fact, very unfavourable towards gay and lesbian subjectivities and towards the spread of the AIDS pandemic. In the search for an alternative explanation, she plunged into "the emotional saturated of lesbian and gay discourses about AIDS" (2009:12). Through the analysis of this saturation, she defined affect, emotion, and feeling in order to work on the potential for collective action. By building on Gould's remarkable findings, I will engage with the work of affects and emotions in FSs. What do emotions politically *do*? How are emotions embedded into collective action? Which concatenation of bodies and actions can emotions contribute to produce? As long as we broaden the scope of our understanding of emotions, scholars suggest the use of the concept of affect.

Spinoza and Affect Theory

In this section, I will explore the concept of affect and the difference with emotions according to 1) affect as transmission of gradient of intensities between bodies, spaces, and objects beyond an individual-based analysis of emotions; 2) affect as mediation between cognition and body; 3) affect as the increase of the potential for action. To enucleate this understanding of affect, I will build on a post-structuralist approach to the work of Spinoza (Deleuze 2010, Massumi 2015), informed, and sometimes contested, by the work of feminist theorists and their concern with subjectivities (Sedgwick 2003, Cvetkovich 2003, Berlant 1997, 2008, Ahmed 2004, 2010, Grosz 2004, Hemmings 2005).

The so-called affective turn began in 1995, when two compelling books, Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank's *Shame & Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* and Brian Massumi's *The Autonomy of Affect* were published. Affect emerges as a concept to grasp the transmission of intensities among bodies, spaces, objects, beyond the individual-based analysis of emotions: "affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1). A number of authors dissatisfied with the dominant paradigms of the social sciences and humanities began to investigate the field of affects as a source for understanding the social world. Silvan Tomkins, a psychologist, in 1962 anticipated some aspects of the theory through a quasi-Darwinian definition of affect as a biological portion of emotion. Not surprisingly, the theory is currently developed in neurosciences, neurobiology, and more generally hard sciences. However, the theory takes different meanings and applications depending on the discipline.

I refer to those streams of thought, in social sciences, philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies which detect the concept of affect from the work of Spinoza. In Parts Two and Three of his *Ethics*, Spinoza defines affects as the variation of states of mind and body produced by an interaction with another body/mind which increases or diminished, aids or restrains the body's power of activity (*potentia agendi*) (Curley 1994). As he argues, "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (1959: 87). Affects are not precisely the same as feelings and emotions. He first categorises three primary types of affects: *laetitia* (which is pleasure or joy), *tristitia* (pain or discomfort), *cupiditas* (desire). Despite affects being somehow hard to define, Spinoza pursues a further categorisation into 48 forms of affects, almost entirely included in the three main types. By joy he understands that passion by which the mind reaches a greater perfection, while sadness is a passage to a lesser state of perfection. He distinguishes between actions and passions, where the former are a type of affect located within ourselves, and the latter are a type of affect caused by something that lies outside of ourselves. Love (one of the 48 forms of affects) is joy accompanied by an awareness of the external reason that causes the passage to a greater perfection. The essence of any human being is the *conatus*, which means the strife to preserve ourselves. So, as Carlisle (2011) highlights:

> joy and sadness, and also their variations, can be either active or passive, depending on whether or not the individual is aware of them and understands them clearly. […] Understanding involves knowledge of causation: we need to figure out what gives rise to different feelings – and this might be a complex combination of external influences and things that follow from our own nature. Without such knowledge, we simply suffer our emotions, but understanding them has a transformative effect: "An emotion which is a passion, ceases to be a passion, as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it." When the mind knows thoroughly even a painful emotion such as sadness or grief, its activity of knowing signals an increase of power, which generates a feeling of joy[2].

The ethic of self-empowerment in capitalist and neoliberal systems has become often tied to individualism. Yet, Spinoza draws attention to the connection between each other, which makes us only relatively autonomous. While people tend to maximise joy, negative affects can never be eliminated. However, people can improve their awareness of external causes of affects, and this way of understanding emotions has transformative effects. Spinoza calls it virtue, which in this research will take the name of work on affect, pursued by FSs. Virtue consists in the pursuit of understanding and knowledge. Which, ultimately, leads to autonomy, freedom, and happiness. According to Gregg and Seigworth:

> Affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect […] is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside,

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[2] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/mar/14/spinoza-understanding-emotions, last visit 14 September 2021.

or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations. (2010: 1)

In their work, Deleuze and Guattari shed light on the way affects produce a concatenation of bodies and collective intelligences (Bertelsen and Murphie 2010). Two elements characterise affect: it always involves more than one body and the field of force-relations where the body lies, and what a body can do (Deleuze 2010). While in social movement studies collective identity and class composition are widespread concepts, they fail to acknowledge the way affects produce concatenations of bodies/minds, which are certainly more ineffable and difficult to measure empirically. Yet, this research aims to grasp precisely this nexus between bodies/minds and affects. The nexus is often composed of a dark side, a "twilight zone" (Massumi 2015), where some processes seem unspeakable. However, I am persuaded that these grey and unspeakable areas have relevant hints to add to our comprehension of collective action.

The reception of Spinoza's thought in the social sciences and humanities has resulted in a development of the concept of affect. In the first comprehensive reader of the application of affect theory, Gregg and Seigworth define affects as "a gradient of bodily capacity" (2010: 2), meaning an increase or decrease of force-relations, shaped by form of encounters but also sensation and sensibility. A proliferation of books, special issues, and conferences addressed the application of affect theory to the social world. In their theory reading, Gregg and Seigworth outline eight regions of investigation in the affect theory: from hard sciences to feminist theory, post-structuralism and cultural studies; from psychology and psychoanalysis, to queer and subaltern perspectives; from critical discourse to pluralist perspectives on materialism. These main regions of inquiry have been applied to several fields, such as international relations, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy. In their work on affective society, Slaby and von Scheve (2019) elaborate on affect theory in the field of social and political life, by closely looking at migration, populism, inequalities. However, apart from some enlightening work (Gould 2009), a clear link with social movements studies is still missing. In the next section, I will explore the bridge between affect theory and feminist theory. Finally, I will try to enucleate this research's proposal to fully engage with affect theory in the study of feminist collective action, and beyond.

Affect Theory and Feminist Theory

This section aims to identify the contribution of feminist theory in the field of affect studies. In their overview of feminist theory and affect turn, Pedwell and Whitehead (2012) question the link, by opening a reflection on positive consequences and risks (such as depoliticisation or an over-interpretation of individuals).

To begin with, one of the two texts which are considered the spark of the affective turn is Sedgwick and Frank's contribution in the book *Shame & Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (1995). In the text, the authors make available the work of the psychologist Tomkins, in order to build a theory of affect capable to account for power, bodies, and emotions. Kosofsky Sedgwick is one of the most influential scholars in the field of queer and feminist studies, and she keeps engaging with affect, performativity, and pedagogy in all of her theoretical work. In 2003, she clarifies her understanding of affect, as necessary "to accessing life that exceeds the social regulation of our existence" (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012: 117). In works like *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Elizabeth Grosz calls for an analysis of "imperceptibility," that goes beyond regimes of body domination, and allows feminists to develop a "politics of acts, not identities" (Grosz in Pedwell and Whitehead 2004b: 186). Another influential scholar in the field of feminism and affect theory was Lauren Berlant. In her work, she suggested the idea of an intimate public sphere, as the way the public sphere is produced by prescriptions on sexuality, intimacy, and the body (1991, 1993).

A range of scholars in the field of feminist theory pursued the bridge with affect theory (Cvetkovich 2003, Butler 1997, Berlant 1997, 2008, Ahmed 2004, 2010, Hemmings 2005, 2011). As Pedwell and Whitehead argue, "feminist scholars have been at the heart of these engagements with affect, in part, because, for some, feminism itself is a politics 'suffused with feelings, passions and emotions' (Gorton 2007: 333), but also one that has long recognised the critical links between affect and gendered, sexualised, racialised and classed relations of power" (2012: 115-116). Feminist scholars refer to the Marxist tradition, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and sociology in order to explore "the way feeling is negotiated in the public sphere and experienced through the body" (Gorton 2007: 334).

Two influential critics, coming from feminist theorists, highlight the way narratives on the newness of the affective turn can hide or remove feminist efforts in knowledge production. Hemmings (2005, 2011, 2012) argues against the misleading rhetoric of affect theory as ground-breaking, which overshadows postcolonial and feminist theories. By also arguing against those narratives of "loss" and "return" of feminism, she calls for a careful genealogy of epistemology. Cvetkovich addresses affect theory's removal of the outcomes of the feminist mantra "the personal is political," which in earlier times had led to similar findings (2012).

The knot of knowledge, power, and affect has always been the question raised by feminist movements and theory. More than claiming for a truth which can be accessed through empathy and affective ties, feminist theorists elaborate on the way the field of affect is embedded with power and knowledge, and how it can be negotiated, contested, subverted. However, emotions are a challenging field from a feminist perspective, because of the dichotomy rationality/emotion women have been trapped in. According to the classical definition of politics (Cavarero 1995) and the critical interpretation by feminist scholars, such as Loraux (1991, 1994), Spivak (1999), Scott (2011), Cavarero (1995) and Castelli (2015), the Athenian polis arose through the act of defining what is political, rational, legitimate, accountable, and what is "the other" (Loraux 1991). The other of politics are women. The body and emotions are the opposite of politics, and women are mainly bodies and emotions. Women are considered as carriers of love, care, affects, instinct, contention, disorder (Cavarero 1995; Loreaux 1994). Closer to animals than the Greek idea of mankind, women have to be controlled and repressed, in order to reduce their destabilising impact on Athenian politics. That is how dichotomic definitions emerge, as pairs of opposite: women/men, rational/passionate, politics/affections, public/private, institutions/bodies (Loraux 1994, Castelli 2015, Scott 2011). Recovering the field of affect from a feminist perspective has meant to question the field of the political and that of women's subjectivity. In 2004, Ahmed articulated a critic of the cultural politics of emotions. Affect, power, and knowledge are investigated through some events, such as the 11 September 2001 and the so-called war on terror, or the abduction of generations of indigenous children in Australia toward their "inclusion" and civilisation. She looks at affects as sticky objects that work through repetition. The affects she engages with are pain, hate, fear, disgust, shame, love, queer feelings, and feminist attachments. The movement between signs and objects produces surfaces of bodies, which perceive emotions depending on social meanings and position in the social structure. As I will further develop in the next section, Ahmed proposes a toolkit which is likely to deepen our knowledge on the way social movements work.

Authors like Audre Lorde (1984) and Marion Young (1990) contend the way oppression is shaped and carried out at the affective level. Thus, the field of affect is imbricated with gender, sex, race, age.

> Emotions involve bodily processes of affecting and being affected, but […] affect is not something prepersonal that flows between bodies in a generic sense. Rather, some bodies generate different affective responses in a particular context than others. Certain (gendered, raced, sexed) subjects therefore become the objects of others' affective responses. This is how emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others. (Ahäll 2018: 38)

Feminist studies differ from gender studies for the analysis of politics, which is always an analysis of power. "Thus, a feminist approach to the politics of emotion through gender is about how we become

invested in social norms, it is about the affective investments in gender as a social norm" (Ahäll 2018: 41). As Hemmings argues, it is the "question of affect — misery, rage, passion, pleasure — that gives feminism its life" (2012: 150). Thus, the analysis of affect from a feminist perspective requires both a change in the epistemological framework and in methodology. The claim for situated knowledge (Haraway 1988) and the politics of location is here bridged by another claim: "In order to know differently we have to feel differently" (Hemmings 2012: 150).

This research explores the way affects are embedded in, mediated, negotiated, and put into action by feminist spaces through the concept of safer spaces. I will specifically engage with the blurred distinction between emotions and affects, with the way bodies perceive and are affected by affects, and by the transformative effects consequent to a conscious work on affects. However, this research aims to avoid the risk of an individual-based analysis, by detecting the way affects relate to collective action. How do affects relate to social movements? How do they produce a concatenation of bodies? What findings do we get from a look at the work of affects, through the "twilight zone"? In the next section, I will try to further develop the fertilisation between affect theory, feminism, and social movements.

Bridging Affect Theory to the Study of Social Movements: The Formative Powers of Affect

> I want us to think about forms of politics that seek to contest social norms, in terms of emotion, understood as 'embodied thought'. My concern is not only to think about how one becomes attached to feminism, but how feminism involves an emotional response to 'the world', where the form of that response involves a reorientation of one's bodily relation to social norms
>
> (Ahmed 2004: 170-171)

This research aims to explore how emotions and affects flow between bodies, minds, and objects, and how through this circulation they produce collective action and potential for social change. The empirical cases of this research are FSs. In these cases, I try to understand which emotions and affects they are embedded in, how they circulate, and which consequences they produce. My argument is that feminist politics is based on a conscious work on affects, and the capacity of naming, negotiating, and reverberating affects has transformative effects.

Social movement theorists are used to engaging with several concepts to analyse collective action. The unintended risk of using these concepts is to refer to a disembodied view of politics, in which causal mechanisms work, but they fail to acknowledge the "imperceptibility" (Grosz 2004). The circulation of affects and passion have been taken into consideration as the processes through which a concatenation of bodies occurs (Deleuze 2010, Massumi 2015). The individual search for those things that one thinks will benefit them by increasing their power of acting is here investigated with regard to collective actors. The way affect interacts with composition is hard to acknowledge. It

requires an analysis of the "twilight areas" of individuals and collective actors. However, this field is not merely a matter of psychology. Social and political structures are imbued with affects, as well as social movements.

Historically, the feminist movements' production of knowledge was focused on "the thought of experience" (Buttarelli and Giardini 2008). 1970s feminism developed through consciousness raising groups, where women voiced their experience in a small consensus. This narrative was not a narcissistic soliloquy, but rather a common ground of reflection for the group. In this way, women developed a common consciousness of oppression, which was not about the malaise of the individual but rather about the structural and social causes that produce women as subalterns. "Women's collective action is nourished by these everyday experiences and does not express itself only through public mobilizations; it develops through the shared apprenticeship of difference and resistance in everyday times, spaces, and relationships" (Melucci 1996: 134). Through the practice of the personal as political, feminist groups have developed a capacity to make theoretical abstraction and political action out of an awareness work on emotions. Consciousness raising groups allowed women to connect cognition and body through the mediation of affects in order to explore how such emotions were embedded in structural relations of power. According to Spinoza's stance, and to the development of feminist thought, emotions and affects can be investigated as the engine of collective action, and the source of its potential. In a way, emotions and affects are the very substance of political action. Fear, hate, rage, anger, love, wonder, solidarity, empathy, disgust, desire are not just variables embedded in collective action, but processes that take place between bodies, cognition, objects, contexts. In the transition between signs and surfaces they shape the conditions of action.

In her work, Ahmed elaborates a scientific analysis of the grammar of emotions. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), she argues that "emotions are not only about impressions left by others, but that they involve investments in social norms" (196). Her compelling argument of affective economies draws on a comparison to Marxian critique of the logic of capital. In his critique, Marx shows how the movement of commodity and money works, through the formula M-C-M: money to commodity to money, that creates surplus value (Ahmed 2004). Following this logic, "the movement between signs and objects converts into affect. […] Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs (= the accumulation of affective value) signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (Ahmed 2004: 45).

By analysing the sociality of pain, Ahmed explains how people understand the pain of others because they reverberate one's own pain. However, we cannot "feel" the pain of others, but we can listen to them and feel involved with their pain. This process is particularly embedded in feminist politics

since part of the work of acknowledgment concerns the way women, lesbians, trans, and queer people are torn apart by gender-based violence and the gender regime. However, this process is not about transforming a wound into a collective identity, but rather about transforming emotions into collective action. At the same time, fear is a powerful trigger for feminist political subjectivation. As Ahmed argues, fear aligns bodies with social space and social norms (2004). Thus, body surfaces are shaped by feeling in-place/out-of-place. The choice to build FSs in an urban context is imbued with the experience of fear. As Ahmed contends, emotions are not only a matter of the present, but the way they affect bodies is a result of historical processes and social norms: "'what sticks' is bound up with the 'absent presence' of historicity" (2004: 45).

By challenging the assumption of love as the foundation for political action, Ahmed argues that we must love our visions. "In the resistance to speaking in the name of love, in the recognition that we do not simply act out of love, and in the understanding that love comes with conditions however unconditional it might feel, we can find perhaps a different kind of line of connection between the others we care for, and the world to which we want to give shape" (Ahmed 2004: 141). This definition of love in political action resonates with the concept of prefigurative politics, as the attempt to shape political spaces and action according to the world that people would aim to inhabit (Yates 2015). Nonetheless, Ahmed meets the concept of prefigurative politics with the work of affect, which sticks to political action and shapes the repertoire of action and activists' investment into it. As she argues, feminist visions are fuelled by hope, as well: "To express hope for another kind of world, one that is unimaginable in the present, is a political action, and it remains so even in the face of exhaustion and despair" (2004: 186).

Focusing on affect also changes our understanding of time and temporalities in collective action (Barassi and Zamponi 2020, Gillian and Edwards 2020). We are used to think of time in terms of cycles of protest (Tarrow 1993, della Porta 2013), eventful temporalities (Sewell 1996), and abeyance (1989). Feminist movements focus on the value of non-chronological time in leading transformative future (Barad 2017, Borghi 2020, Walker 2014). Social time was addressed as a male product, since it was always targeted on male possibilities, life course-trajectories, expectations. Male-based temporality is considered as linear, deterministic, neutral (Halberstam 2005, Dinshaw et al. 2007). Social movements, as well, tend to rely on a male interpretation of time, based on performativity, productiveness, efficiency (Scott 2011). On the contrary, for feminist movements the time to protest is rooted in situated emotions, expectations, needs (Melandri 2000). It was not public institutions, male politics, or traditional political opportunities to "mark time" of feminist politics, but feminist activists themselves that defined another temporality, based on women's needs (Lonzi 1974). Social

movements and feminist studies take into account how challenging a linear conception of time opens up new temporalities.

According to the production of knowledge by feminist movements, the comprehension of collective emotions has transformative effects.

In the last section, I will focus on the last but not least dimension of this research: that of space and social movements.

2.4 Safer Spaces

The Spatial Turn in Sociology

> Interrelations between objects occur in space and time; it is these relationships themselves which create/define space and time.
> (Massey 1992: 79)

The term "spatial turn" refers to a shift in social sciences and humanities toward a different understanding of "space." If space was first understood as a mere scenario in which human actions take place, the constructivist approach began to explore space as relationship with the social, which is imbued with power. "It is not just that the spatial is socially constructed; the social is spatially constructed, too" (Massey 1985: 6). Some social movement scholars argue that "the social constitution of space has not received the same amount of attention as the temporal order" (Knoblauch and Low 2017: 1). The issue of space as a social phenomenon has been addressed by authors like Durkheim (1965), Simmel (2021) and Lefebvre (1991). Only later the dimension of space arises as "a relational category based in social interaction and interdependency" (Knoblauch and Low 2017: 2). Nonetheless, there is still a lack of studies investigating spatiality as socially constructed, but also sociality as located in place and space (Nicholls, Miller and Beaumont 2016).

Social movement scholars explore the relation between spaces and collective action. "All spatialities, properly conceived, are relational. These relational spatialities, e.g., place, space, scale, territory, networks, mobility, play distinctive yet interlocking roles in shaping the structures, strategies, dynamics and power of social movements." (Nicholls, Miller and Beaumont 2016: 2-3). The study of contentious politics brought new light on the relevance of space. They try to answer questions related to mobilisation capacities, internal conflict, inner cohesion, and so on. Curthis and Zurcher (1973), through the concept of "multi-organisational field," shed light on the networks of organisations cooperating during episodes of protest. Staggenborg (1989), on the other hand, studied social movement communities as the sites of an area which goes beyond the constituency of the

movement, and includes the recruitment clusters. Giugni and Passy (2000) engaged with the concept of a social movement arena, a space in between political parties and citizens, that works as a claim-envoy from one arena to the other. Duyvendak and Jasper's (1995) concept of arena differs from the latter: arenas are bounded up with rules and resources where different players engage in strategic interaction in order to pursue their goals. By referring to Bourdieu's influence, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) elaborate on the strategic action field, where actors interact depending on their goals and the rules of the field. In her essay, Mathieu (2021) proposes the concept of the space of social movements, which is grounded in the abovementioned literature, although it adds some elements. By the expression "space of social movements," she means "a universe of practice and meaning that is relatively autonomous from other social microcosms […], and within which mobilizations (and the organizations and activists that lead them) are linked by various relations of interdependence" (196). If these scholars address the social, political, and economic space where social movements act and interact, others specifically focus on space as a physical matter. In the next section, I will explore the literature on free spaces, by highlighting similarities and differences with feminist spaces.

Free Spaces, Feminism and Social Movements

According to Evans and Boyte's first conceptualisation of free spaces, they are "settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence and vision" (1986:17). Evans (1979) highlighted the need for challengers to manage smaller portions of public space, called free spaces, to develop collective action frames. For these scholars, free spaces bound up resources, alternative futures, and strategies that the oppressed might always put in practice. In these spaces, new skills, relationships, networks, and solidarity are built, that prepare or keep the ground for mobilisation and movements (Evans and Boyte 1986, Polletta 1999). Polletta's well-known definition claims that "free spaces and their analogues refer to small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization" (1999: 1). Many different names refer to the same concept: free spaces, protected spaces, safe spaces, spatial preserves, havens, cultural laboratories. Usually, the notion has been applied in the study of churches, cultural groups, fraternal organisations. Scholars went forward conceptualising free spaces, and controversies emerged. Free spaces are both physical sites or spaces existing in practice, print or virtually; they are considered as sites of counter-hegemonic ideas or not; connected to the creation of collective identities (Polleta 1999). Diani (2013) calls these spaces "dense subcultural networks," a separate site of coordination of collective action. As Polletta puts it, "as 'movement communities,' free spaces are an enduring outcome of protest" (1999: 4).

These types of spaces allow social movements to preserve certain cultural frames and autonomous organisation. Scholars usually emphasise the analysis of the internal dynamics of these spaces. Others, such as Tornberg and Tornberg (2017), engage with the role of free social spaces in mass mobilisations and social movements diffusion.

While FSs comply with some of these insights, they also bring some novelties. According to the definition of free spaces, we can assume that they arise in opposition to government surveillance and dominant groups. Nonetheless, free spaces do not deal with a generic notion of dominant groups or traditional government. FSs' opponent is the male-based social structure, that ranges from the production of memory, history, and knowledge, to the reproduction of culture, to excluding institutions, to sexist education, to difference in the labour market, to family conditions and social reproduction. They are makers of claims addressed to more than one recipient: the State, the cultural setting, social norms, sexual division of labour. Moreover, it is hard to locate their temporal scan, as part of preliminary movements mobilisations or during them. According to Taylor's reflections on women's movement (1989), we call into question the movement as a continuum on an historical perspective. FSs are part of this constant, and often underground, flow of actions, relationships, networks, claims, belongings. As previously addressed, I will look at FSs by going beyond the concept of collective identity. Instead, I will explore these spaces as constantly produced and transformed through relational effort, the flow of intensities, cognitive and bodily action. FSs come to be spaces of belonging because of the effort to produce alternative structures of feelings, though this effort is never completely enclosed in the configuration of a stable identity.

The need for only-women space emerged over time within feminist movements as an answer to violence, dispossession, social inequality (Calabrò and Grasso 2004, Melandri 2000). Virginia Woolf, in the early 19th century, argued that the independence of a woman is inextricably linked to the possession of a certain amount of money and a room of one's own. Whether Woolf's room could mean an individual separate space of autonomy, within the private domain, feminist movements asked wider question about public spaces of liveability.

> The struggle to break the spatial confines of the private (i.e., domestic) sphere and to overcome restrictions on mobility experienced by women, has been crucial to the feminist cause. As feminist geographers have argued, space is constructed out of social relations which are imbued with power, so that to escape the spatial confines of the home by gaining access to the public sphere means to free oneself from the restraints of family life and social control. The city is the ultimate public sphere and although women's access to physical, public space is often hindered or socially controlled, the city – as Melandri noted with regards to Milan – also "represents a potential space for liberation." (Hajek 2017: 8)

FSs range from self-help centres, to women's shelters against gender based-violence, to feminist bookstores and libraries. All of them seem to bring a similar reflection on space and relational

dimensions. On one hand, spaces are political. They arise in opposition to a shared sense of dispossession and they aim to produce a prefigurative place of different meanings, behaviours, belongings. On the other hand, FSs are grounded in affective ties among women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. They aim to disrupt male-dominated structures, to perform feminist relationships of trust, solidarity, empathy and care. In this framework, this research project addresses the notion of safer spaces as a dynamic process where conditions of liveability, comfort, and safety are discussed and negotiated among participants.

Asking what makes a space *safer* for women, how they become "safe from" (gender-based violence, urban dimension, inequalities) through the production of spaces in which being "safer to," would mean taking into account spatiality as a socially and politically constructed subject, and the inner relational dimension of spaces. Spaces are socially constructed and embedded with power.

Engaging with geography of gender and sexuality, we might argue that FSs, according to spatial scales perspective, are constructed by sets of interrelations and always simultaneously existing on different scales, "from the most local level to the most global" (Massey 1992: 80). Focusing on space means taking into consideration all these scales at the same time, from the micro-level of individual dimension to the embeddedness with the neoliberal system, transnational governance, and economic structures (McDowell 2005).

FSs are places where it is possible to "forg[e] tight bonds in intimate settings" (Polletta and Kretchmer 2013, 2). Polletta calls these spaces "prefigurative group created in ongoing movements" (1999: 11). It is worth considering women's movement as an example of prefigurative politics (Rowbotham 1979, Day 2005, della Porta et al. 2006, Leach 2013, Williams 2016): indeed, it brings together the aim of producing counter-hegemonic institutions and "modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation" (Leach 2013: 1). The concept was developed through empirical cases such as anarchist and communist movements (Lakey 1968, Bey 1991, Boggs 1977, Day 2005, Polletta 2002) and anti-globalisation movements (della Porta et al. 2006), as a way to frame how activists and their practices are able (or not) to translate into action their ideological attempt. As such, prefiguration means fighting structures of power, dispossession, oppression, inequalities, by making visible at the same time a different way to perform social relationships, political practices and decision-making processes (Boggs 1977, Bey 1991). According to Boggs' conceptualisation, prefigurative politics refers to the embodiment of the movements' ideological aims in practice, through a specific shape of social relations, decision-making, experiences, and culture (1977). Rejecting vanguardism and centralisation of decision-making process, this notion stresses the importance of enacting the world as the movements want to change it (Bey 1991). Feminist spaces tend to put in practice what is claimed in theory: gender equality, a consensus-based authority structure, participatory democracy,

caring and empathetic activism, self-organised services (Rowbotham 1979, Taylor 1989). As Bey (1991) called it, they can be considered as "temporary autonomous zones," that challenge and subvert the structure of the city, of institutional politics, of the male-based system. These spaces are shaped by feminist reflections on body, affects, care, health, mutual understanding, conflict. Even though it is a process, and not a stable configuration, a prefigurative space produces on a smaller scale the type of desired society in opposition to the male-based society of the outside (Williams 2016). Everyday activities, such as managing the space, taking care of practical tasks, talking with people coming from the outside and welcoming them in the space, organising meetings and activities, become a way to model a feminist vision of social change. As Williams calls it (2016), prefigurative politics works on three dimensions: personal, organisational, and integrated (combining the personal and organisational levels). Indeed, she argues that most scholars have focused on the organisational level, but the feminist movement required another focus on the personal level, that is on how everyday activities, social interaction, collective activities, become the world as they claim it (2016). Polletta (1999) argues that prefigurative spaces are difficult to sustain. However, "if they can provide services […] that successfully compete with mainstream service providers, they may become enduring indigenous institutions and may supply leaders and participants for later mobilizations" (Polletta 1999: 12).

As I explored so far, physical spaces allow feminist communities to preserve a sense of belonging, cultural frames, organisation, resources and time to elaborate strategies. These spaces prepare for mobilisations to come, but they also transform the everyday life politics and biographical trajectories of activists. The way spaces are created and are given meaning depends on the communities' values and beliefs. On the other side, a space encourages or drives away people's capacity to think and act collectively. Spaces are made up of bodies, objects, affective bonds, signs. Relations and reflections depend on the location of each one within and with respect to the space. Politics is nurtured in presence, and presence is mutually built upon and with the physical space. This research engages with the notion of space as a relational field where collective actors produce their sense of belonging and their strategies for social change. Spaces are explored under the lens of affect: bodies, objects and signs exist in the repetition and change of certain meanings. The change of meanings is a result of a collective effort to name, unveil, and engage with affects. In this sense, I will look at spaces as structures of feelings where affect and emotions become the ground for individual change and collective action. As Spinoza argued, the conscious work on affects has transformative effects.

Safe, Safer, Brave

> Without objects of fear, objects to which we attach uncomfortable affects, the world itself is fearsome. We need objects to draw the tension, the affect, so that we can interact with other objects.
> (Stengel 2010:532 in The Roestone Collective 2014)

Safe space as a concept has a long history in different fields. It ranges from women's movement of the late 20th century to separatist spaces in feminist, LGBTQI and anti-racist communities, to inclusive safe spaces related to classrooms (The Roestone Collective 2015). Historically, it appeared in movements and pedagogical communities. Each experience refers to a different idea of safe space. The term is highly contested, and sharp contradictions are embedded in the very sense of the concept. "Safe spaces are inherently paradoxical. Cultivating them includes foregrounding social differences and binaries (safe–unsafe, inclusive–exclusive) as well as recognizing the porosity of such binaries. Renegotiating these binaries is necessarily incomplete; a safe space is never completely safe." (The Roestone Collective 2015: 1346).

Through a brief outline of the concept, I will set out the specific strain in the literature in which this research is grounded.

Why do some people need a safe space? What is considered unsafe? From what do some people need to be safe, and safe to do what? The need for a safe place is triggered by a context perceived as unsafe, and where certain people perceive fear, dangers, or discomfort. To feel "out of place" is a sign that a certain place is designed for certain subjects, and anyone who does not have the characteristics of the intended subjects tends to feel excluded or marginalised (Pain and Staeheli 2014). "Space […] does not simply exist as a 'given' but affects (and is affected by) things which are always *becoming*. Or, to put it another way, space is not just a passive back-drop to human behaviour and social action, but is constantly produced and remade within complex relations of culture, power and difference" (Hubbard 2001: 51). From an intersectional point of view (Crenshaw 1989, 1991), the perception depends on the axes of gender, racialisation, working condition, age, the type of place, and "sticky" emotions (Ahmed 2004) which, through the repetition of signs and objects, associate certain perceptions to certain bodies. Feminist geographers have analysed how space is always gendered and socially constructed, and how fear is an emotion that influences women's behaviours and choices in public and private spaces (Pain 1991, 2001, Valentine 1989, Bondi and Rose 2003). Fear is a consequence of structural violence, an element which produces anxiety more than constant physical threat. This anxiety influences the way certain subjects move, act, and perceive spaces (Pain 1991). Perceptions of safety/unsafety depend on individual performances and oppressions, and vary a lot across time and space. As such, safety/unsafety are not intrinsic characteristics but fluid configuration, based on power relations. In a given moment, a space may be unsafe depending on gender, race, class, age identification, but also more or less safe by day or by night. The traditional distinction between private/public spaces changes as a consequence of embodied experience. A classic example concerns the household, which was considered by (white) feminisms as the site of

gendered violence and women's oppression, while Black women considered it a site of resistance (hooks 1991). Perceptions of safety/unsafety can be questioned by the collective use of certain spaces, such as the marches Take Back the Night, where women reclaim their right to fearlessly inhabit public space (Belingardi, Bonu, Castelli and Olcuire 2020).

The perception of safety is not merely a bodily or emotional matter. Boundaries of spaces are often, as in the case of public space and the nation, political boundaries which "bound up" a certain idea of citizenship. As Hubbard puts it:

> Those whose sexual proclivities are adjudged suspect, dangerous or undesirable may find their civil and welfare rights curtailed as politicians and policymakers seek to redefine the moral boundaries of the nation. For example, discussing the shifting parameters of social policy in the United Kingdom, Carabine (1996) highlights the importance of pregnancy, AIDS/HIV, child sex abuse, promiscuity, birth control and pornography as issues used to exclude certain individuals from the rights and entitlements associated with full citizenship. More widely, debates about surrogacy, embryology and the age of consent continue to raise key questions about what is 'natural' as western politicians fall back on ideas of biological essentialism to resolve the tension between individual freedoms and collective obligations. (2001: 52)

Here, I refer to the double meaning of safety: on one side, as a bodily and emotional field, and on the other, as a political field which comprises rights, obligations, and provisions which people have/have not access to. From this twofold sphere of meanings originates the reflection of feminist movements. There, safe spaces are created as a relational work (the Roestone Collective 2014), where differences are not erased but rather prevented to produce "common problems." The concept emerged in the women's movement in the late 20th century (Kenney 2001). "In feminist, queer, and civil rights movements an understanding of safe space has developed that is associated with keeping marginalized groups free from violence and harassment. This type of safe space also encourages 'a certain license to speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance' (Kenney 2001: 24)" (The Roestone Collective 2014: 1346). Safe spaces can be an attempt to change the nature of threatening spaces, or can be created as separate, autonomous and self-managed spaces. This latter type of spaces works as a site of gathering and support among people who share social roles and discrimination, and who share similar values and understanding of reality (Day 1999). They can be both spaces to recover and spaces to organise resistance (hooks 1990). Quite commonly, lesbian communities created separate spaces, which have been also land in rural areas (Valentine 1999, Schweighofer 2015), with the aim to withdraw from a heterosexist world (Pritchard, Morgan and Sedgley 2002, Kenney 2001). On one side, these spaces can be an opportunity to strengthen collective identity, to recover and to organise and develop collective action (Duncan 1996). On the other, they can risk to reproduce dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, as in the case of trans-exclusionary feminist communities, or white communities of women that reproduce the racialisation of other women. As scholars put it, they are *safer* rather than *safe*: they are "inclusive precisely as they are

exclusive" (the Roestone Collective 2014: 1355). The creation of spaces is a never-ending process which cannot be solved once and for all. Some scholars challenge the concept of safety by using the word "brave": these are spaces where marginalised communities fiercely resist, and this effort is not defensive but rather bold (Prieur 2015, Arao and Clemens 2013, Ali 2017). Rose (1993) calls them paradoxical spaces, where traditional social norms are challenged, multiple differences come together, and identities are embraced and subverted.

Another use of the notion of safe spaces is embedded in the sector of pedagogy, classrooms and teaching activities (Barrett 2010, Hunter 2008, Holley and Steiner 2005, Kaufman 2008, Ludlow 2004), as a way to produce anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro 2000). Since the 1960s, spreading from the United States to mainly Northern European countries, the classrooms' safety has been addressed as a sort of "ethical obligation" for teachers and school administrators (Roestone Collective 2015; Barrett 2010; Ludlow 2004). The presence of racialised, religious, gender, disabled, minority groups within the classrooms became a catalyst for the production of inclusive environments aimed at reducing discrimination, exclusions, discomfort, and loneliness. "By acknowledging that 'no space is free from domination' or risk, teachers and students can constructively explore how issues of privilege, power and difference play out in the classroom and in the larger socio-political realm" (Roestone Collective 2015: 1355). The creation of a safe environment helps in sharing opinions, expressing oneself, building identities, and feeling comfortable in sharing emotions (Barrett 2010). Even though widely spread, the metaphor of the classroom as a safe space has been highly criticised. Boomstrom (1998) argues that the mission of higher education is intellectual development and critical thinking, precisely the opposite of a protected space from risks and dangers.

> When everyone's voice is accepted and no one's voice can be criticized, then no one can grow. […] We need to hear other voices to grow is certainly true, but we also need to be able to respond to those voices, to criticize them, to challenge them, to sharpen our own perspectives through the friction of dialogue. […] We have to be brave because along the way we are going to be "vulnerable and exposed"; we are going to encounter images that are "alienating and shocking." We are going to be very unsafe. (Boostrom 1998: 407)

Ludlow (2004) and Frusciante (2008) as well, stress the unrealistic and dangerous effort to produce a protected space for marginalised group, while the world outside that space remain deeply racist, sexist, ableist, classist, heteronormative.

The notion of "safe space" is too wide to use as an umbrella term. Safe spaces are always situated in a given time and space, depending on their composition and structure. That is why, at the end of this overview, it is worth underlining that this research focuses on a specific type of safe space, beyond this heterogeneous genealogy, that is feminist physical and political spaces that call themselves "safer." This research is not intended to propose a definitive reading of safer spaces, but to add a piece of interpretation based on affects. The recourse to the definition of safer spaces will in fact be

analysed as the manifestation of a deeper process concerning the emotional infrastructure at the basis of feminist spaces. Participants refer to safety and the creation of safer spaces as a consequence of the creation of structures of feelings in which emotions are named and discussed, serve as tools for political elaboration, and function as competences in collective action. Safety is thus a consequence of this familiarity with emotions, which allows access to a side often hidden or removed from public life and social interactions, which is that of feeling and acting through feeling.

As Barrett argues, the term has become "overused but undertheorized metaphor" (2010: 1). In order to contribute to the literature on safe spaces in feminist communities, I will engage with an in-depth analysis of practices, words, and emotions involved in the re-articulation of safer spaces in the urban contexts of Rome and Madrid.

2.5 Conclusion

In the previous section, I explored the literature on social movement studies, feminist theory, affect theory and free spaces. With regard to social movement studies, I went through those concepts the research is imbued with, such as collective behaviour, resources, framing, outcomes, emotions, contention. By referring to new social movement theory, I argued about the need to go back to Melucci's reflection rejecting a dichotomous opposition between materialist and post-materialist values. Although new social movements, such as the women's movement and the environmental movement, shed light on the role of culture in the call for social change, they did not dismiss the elements of class relations and capitalist system as fields of action. By building on materialist feminist literature, this research aims to give a comprehensive view on the way social movements produce free spaces, within the neoliberal setting and against it.

In order to explore feminist movements and spaces, I build on the importance of a re-evaluation of emotions, through the concept of affects. Affect theory, grounded in Spinoza's work, sheds light on the way bodies/minds perceive affects and are affected by them. Affects have the potential to increase or decrease the capacity for action and the bodily power to action. While this process is usually scouted at the individual level, I will also analyse the process at the collective level. My argument is that the conscious work on affects allows feminist spaces to increase their capacity for action, both at the individual and collective level.

Finally, I went through the literature on free spaces, by showing similarities and differences with the literature on safe spaces. While this concept risks alluding to a defensive meaning, or to purely internal dynamics, I will set out safer spaces as relational site of work on affect, which not only allows

communities to keep organising, but also transforms the communities' capacity to interact with other players and to cooperate in the movements' diffusion.

The research aims to develop our understanding of new social movement and the use of emotions by the means of affects and free spaces. It aims to integrate the literature on social movement studies by bringing in the significant contributions of feminist theory and affect theory, through the empirical case of feminist spaces.

3. Methodology, Methods and Ethics

3.1 Introduction

> Feminists are presently exploring the far-reaching implications of a new epistemological viewpoint based on the idea of knowledge as embodied, engendered and embedded in the material context of place and space. This requires not amendments or additions to allegedly universal (but in actuality masculinist and often Eurocentric) discourse, nor a reversal, but a "strategic transformation".
> (Duncan 1996: 1)

Researching feminist spaces, their political communities and the way in which activists enact political and emotional processes that transform the space as *safer* is a challenging task, both for epistemological and methodological reasons (De Molina 2004, Prieur 2015). The thick and clear description of methodological inquiry sheds light on the research process and key issues that emerged during the empirical part, and the ethical commitment in every kind of social scientific product (della Porta and Keating 2008). In this section I will set out methodological choices and fieldwork insights. Firstly (3.2), I will frame the standpoint of this research and my specific location – as a researcher and a feminist activist – with regard to the subject of this study. Only a constant self-reflexive endeavour allowed me to understand the limits, biases and viewpoints through which my research has been shaped. Secondly (3.3), I will present the supporting pillars of this project: participatory action research, feminist approach and constructivist grounded theory. These three different approaches, rarely melted in a coherent methodological perspective, present significant consistencies (and several differences) to research feminist movements and spaces, allowing a deeper understanding of the puzzle. Countries and their respective cities (Rome and Madrid) will be presented as relevant key setting for this study (3.4), according to a comparative aim that led the selection of cases and empirical subjects of my research. In order to answer my research questions, I selected three methods (3.5), which allowed me to disentangle the different aspects of the puzzle: participant observation, interviews and focus groups. Through my fieldnotes (3.6) I will then describe the process of gaining access and to perform a situated research. Finally, through constructivist grounded theory (3.7), I will stress the elements of data analysis which significantly shaped the results of this research; and I will assess the dissemination of results (and the role of researcher accountability) as a key issue (3.8) while performing participatory action research.

3.2 Feminism as a Method: Politics of Location and Self-Reflexivity

The idea of feminism as a method in social sciences arises parallel to the emergence of a second wave of feminist mobilisations, during the 1970s. Sandra Harding, in 1987, systematised those contributions coming from different disciplines – psychology, history, sociology, political theory, economics – upon the question: "is there a feminist method?" (Harding 1987: 1). The answer concerns different dimensions, constitutive of a feminist way to approach methods: the purpose, that is a production of knowledge *for women*, focused on women's experiences; methodology, or the theory that structures the way research is pursued; methods, or the different tools meant to empirically address the issues posed by the research questions (Harding 1987, Hammersley 1992, Reinharz 1992, Duncan 1996). The general assumption underlying feminist methods is a challenge to the male universal understanding of social sciences as a neutral, objective, and scientific way of conducting research (Hanson and Monk 1982, Duncan 1996, Borghi and Rondinone 2009). Research, and researchers, are always situated: their experience as bodies, identities, and education defines the location from which they look at social reality.

> The academy today continues to be dominated by this conceptualization of knowledge and reason. Knowledge requires public confirmation, universality and a demonstrable transcendence of emotion and commitment. Knowledge must be capable of being expressed as an immaterial abstraction, beyond the irreducible concreteness of the particular, and can only be achieved in the public domain, among men, primarily through the aggressive interplay of adversarial discourse. Knowledge does not occur in private, it does not occur within the context of loving relationships, and it cannot occur where research is guided by political commitments. By the early 1980s, feminist theorists thus began to recognize that they needed to develop a better account of the relationship between reason, theory and bodily, subjective experience. To paraphrase Rosi Braidotti, we need to elaborate a truth which is not removed from the body, reclaiming [our] body for [ourselves]... [We need] to develop and transmit a critique which respects and bears the trace of the intensive, libidinal force that sustains it. (Braidotti 1991:8). (Alcoff 1996: 17-18)

One of the most well-known dissertations on the false neutrality of knowledge situated is Donna Haraway's *Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* (1988), in which the author explicitly calls for an embodied research. Reflecting on the production of knowledge and the role of the researcher, Haraway attacks the supposed "objectivity" of science and knowledge, claiming for a situated path which always depends on the gaze, background, and choices of the researcher. It means challenging the male discourse on science, which is certain about the possibility to know reality "as it is," in its truth, failing the contextual and personal perspective that affect the whole discipline.

> All knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field. The strong program in the sociology of knowledge joins with semiology and deconstruction to insist on the rhetorical nature of truth, including scientific truth. History is a story Western culture buffs tell each other; science is a contestable text and a power field. (Haraway 1988: 577)

Well before the conceptualisation of Sandra Harding on the feminist standpoint theory and the fallacy of strong objectivity (1992), Adrienne Rich pointed out the puzzle in her *Notes Toward a Politics of Location*. In this paper, the author argues in favour of the materiality of the body both in politics and epistemology, also due to the contention launched by Black feminist in those years. Being female, white, and well-educated is quite different from other starting conditions and has to be spelt out by authors.

> To locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the place it has taken me, the place it has not let me go. [...] Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the condition we've taken for granted. (Rich 1984: 215-219)

Acknowledging our position as researchers in the field of the discipline, but also in the fieldwork, is a way to ethically carry out the research (Milan 2014). The way in which knowledge is produced – the selection of research questions and methods, the researcher's positionality – has an impact on results and findings, because "all research findings have political implication" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 in Milan 2014: 446). As Milan stresses (2014), this is particularly true with regard to social movement studies and grassroot political participation, for different reasons: firstly, because of the production of knowledge that the movement pursues in itself, which the researcher always needs to address, through a respectful and self-reflexive stance; secondly, because of the risk the researcher exposes activists to, since "involving activists in a research project has consequences which cannot be ignored" (Milan 2014: 446); moreover, because activists tend to expect from the researcher a sort of political alignment (since they are political actors) and "an ethically informed positioning of the researcher in relation to the values and practices of the movement then becomes crucial" (Milan 2014: 447); finally, because research is a labour for the researcher, and for activists too, since being involved in a research is time- and energy-consuming, both resources that activists could have used in a different way. Last, but not least, researching social movements – and, above all, feminisms – "is a matter of relationship building as much as it is an epistemological and ontological question" (Milan 2014: 446).

The major contribution to feminist methods draws on the issue of relationship. The relational dimension is the key element of feminist reflections on doing research, since the procedure of data gathering is a proper relational process between the researcher and the participants (Reinharz 1992). My research has been deeply built on a relational endeavour. My effort has been, on one hand, to explicitly claim my location in the field, as well as my previous networks linked to the singular cases. On the other hand, to take care of each encounter, discussion and relationship from the beginning to the very end. I have been transparent and ethically committed in exposing the design and goals of the

research, and in describing the risks involved in taking part in an academic research for activists, which are often balanced on a blurred line between legality and illegality. I negotiated ways to guarantee anonymity, but also to decide together what would have been part of the research and what would not. I always introduced myself through a hard-copy ethical declaration, where I explained my research, my purpose and the way the data would have been treated.

I entered the field with the aim to immediately position myself. Some elements were, of course, visible when I introduced myself in person: my gender, as female; my age, as young, and my ethnicity, as an Italian (even though during Lucha Y Siesta's first period of fieldwork it often occurred that women hosted at the house misinterpreted my origin, thinking I was a woman of colour, and getting even more friendly with me). Other elements were not so easily perceivable, such as my level of education, my class background, and the reasons of my presence there.

During the phase of access, when I virtually contacted participants or groups, I described my research and my position in academia, but also my involvement in feminist movements in several Italian cities (Padova, Florence and Rome) through some networks, such as local and national Non Una di Meno assemblies. This element crucially changed the participants' stance toward me, rapidly opening spaces of trust and intimacy otherwise difficult to achieve.

All these personal dimensions have been part of a constant self-reflexive part of my fieldnotes. There, I wrote down how my access in the field occurred, how the participants perceived me, and which relations we established. These notes are a constitutive part of data analysis, since the research process is built on such self-reflexive stance.

3.3 Participatory Action Research, Feminist Methods and Constructivist Grounded Theory as a Comprehensive Approach

This research project is strongly shaped by three epistemological and methodological approaches: participatory action research (PAR), feminist methods, and constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Although so far sporadic attention has been paid to the intersections among these approaches, they present challenging consistencies in order to disentangle the feminist movements' production of spaces. Greater efforts have been directed toward the analysis of the bridge between feminist methods and PAR (Gatenby and Humphries 2000, Chakma 2016, Tolhurst et al. 2012, Trimita 2016), or grounded theory and feminist methods (Allen 2011, Ford 2014, Hall and Callery 2001, Keddy, Sims and Noerager Stern 1996, Olesen 2007, Plummer and Young 2010, Wuest 1995), but rarely these three approaches have been kept together.

In this section, after an overview of the history and the applications of these methodologies, I will argue that all of them present several points of connection: the focus on research questions, research design, and data analysis as a shared result between researcher and participants; the role of the researcher and their impact in the fieldwork; the researcher/participants relation; the purpose of the research as a driving force in social change.

Action research has a longstanding tradition in social sciences, such as Alquati and workerists' 1970s "conricerca," focused on worker class conditions, or Freire's approaches toward an adult education research, and Fals Borda's efforts in researching Columbian communities and their social justice aim. All of these approaches are united by the challenge to the traditional way to produce knowledge, to change research questions and the whole research design as issues arising from social reality and direct actors, to produce results through an in-depth collaboration between the researcher and the participants. Or, as Fuster Morell stresses (2009), by five tendencies: "participative-collective method; producing alternative content; strategic thinking for political processes; building relationships and networking connections; and opening knowledge" (2009: 21). PAR is a challenging option for everyone interested in studying marginal and non-hegemonic populations, in my case women, lesbian, non-binary and queer subjects, and feminist spaces. It is, as Coghlan and Brydon-Miller call it, "a participatory and action-oriented approach to research that centres gender and women's experiences both theoretically and practically" (2014: 343). As an approach to the empirical inquiry, it allows a "democratic, equitable, liberating and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry" (MacDonald 2012, 34) that produces a shared knowledge on the topic between researcher and participants. PAR complies with "the need for researchers from across a number of disciplines to participate with people in improving and understanding the world by changing it" (McIntyre 2007: ix). Involving a cyclic process of research, PAR allows an extended focus on every part of the research, from the research questions to the dissemination of results, always shared and co-constructed with the participants. This approach stimulates a strong self-reflexivity in the researcher, confronting herself with views, meanings and actions expresses by participants, but also being aware about her position in the field. PAR is a valuable option facing social and feminist movements, as Milan singles out:

> The field of social movement studies demands a special engagement with the ethical dimensions of research for a number of reasons. First, as social movements are bearers of "new ways of seeing the world" (Cox and Flesher Forminaya 2009, 1), social movement research cannot ignore the knowledge and the political imaginaries movements themselves have produced: not only should research operate within the boundaries of said political imaginaries, it should also be respectful of the processes and reflexive practices (often participatory, horizontal, "from below") that led to the creation of said knowledge. By way of example, researchers investigating participatory social movements should ideally try to embed some of those very same participatory mechanisms in their research design. (Milan 2014, 446)

The choice of PAR in this research project immediately emerged as a key factor, because of several elements. My position (as an academic and activist), the subjects (women, lesbian, non-binary and queer people, feminist and transfeminist activists); the cases (feminist spaces and their active resistance in the urban context; the common situation of crisis and threat of eviction); data collection and data analysis (grounded in data and in the relationship with participants); the aim of the research (understanding if and how these spaces are safer, and how to make the research worthwhile for participants and feminist spaces). Moreover, I am specifically interested in understanding meanings and values produced by a given community which enacts a given collective action. To confront ourselves as researchers with marginal populations means questioning our role, our views, and our initial assumption by trying to get in touch with perspectives that can, potentially, be completely different from our beliefs. For these reasons, PAR enables the free expression of all participants, taking into account the specific purpose of social justice. PAR emerged as the most valuable option in order to investigate spaces as *safer*, that is to understand political and emotional views implied in producing a feminist space in a male-based social reality. I soon recognised that I needed to perceive what the participants perceive, to see what they see and to acknowledge how my inner self and body were feeling unsafe/safe in different spaces (public transports, urban spaces, protests, marches, political spaces, feminist communities, feminist meetings and so on). The way to understand safer spaces is to experience them, and to share this experience with the participants.

At the same time, I engage with the constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2008), as a general stance in the steps of literature review, gathering of data, and analysis: all the knowledge and theories produced during the research are grounded in data. The purpose of generating theory is grounded in the data, through a circular process where the researcher goes back and forth from data to the concept's development (Mattoni 2014). Since the method is strongly embedded in data, the research questions and literature review are not precisely defined from the beginning, but the research starts with a group of general questions that will be, from time to time, re-addressed and specified (Glauser and Strauss, 1967). The aim is to avoid initial convictions and bias as much as possible. The researcher follows the process of empirical research, led by participants and their views, words, and ideas. As an ontological, epistemological, and methodological choice, constructivism foresees a production of knowledge attached to social reality and produced by the people involved in it, which is not as a universal, absolute, and true reality that has to be discovered. Contesting Glauser and Strauss's (1967) "systematic, inductive, and comparative approach," often addressed as post-positivist (Wuest, 1995, Bryant and Charmaz 2007), Charmaz claims that:

> The constructivist approach perspective shreds notions of a neutral observer and value-free expert. Not only does that mean that researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis, but it also means that their values shape the very fact that they can identify. [...] I chose the term "constructivist" to acknowledge subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data and to signal the differences between my approach [...] (Charmaz 2006: 13-14)

The constructivist turn means a shift both in epistemology and methodology, since it changes the way in which the researcher approaches social reality, but also the tools that they use. Even though Charmaz (2006) follows the process of gathering, organising and analysing data proposed by Glaser and Strauss's (1967), she – and others (Bryant 2007, Charmaz and Bryant 2007) – argues for a theoretical rendering that gives "an interpretative portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz 2006: 17).

During my fieldwork, I soon realised how these three approaches to social inquiry (PAR, feminist methods, and CGT) were deeply interconnected, posing some key questions: the focus on research questions, research design, and data analysis as a shared result between the researcher and the participants; the role of the researcher and their impact in the fieldwork; the researcher/participants relation; the purpose of the research as a driving force in social change.

When I first introduced myself to the participants, I gave them an overview of my research project, explaining the participatory attempt, in order to involve them in the process from the very beginning. When I spoke with some of the activists for the first time, or in the case of Cagne Sciolte during the first meeting I attended, they deeply questioned all the aspects of the project, contesting or re-shaping some parts. All of them agreed on the relevance of researching feminist spaces, but they often deeply challenged the notion of "safety," especially because the term carries a dangerous ambiguity in its Italian translation. LYS's activists proposed some issues that were relevant for them, for instance what was present or lacking (services, public transports, spaces of liveability) for women in their neighbourhood; whereas CID's activists were affected by generational issues (like the scarcity of young participants), the political purpose of the space, and their role as meaningful actors in the political arena and feminist movements. During CS's meeting, they directly asked me if it would have been possible to deeply share and negotiate all passages of the research. It was the first time they accepted to be part of an academic research: before that, they had always rejected. They deeply care about anonymity, and they are inspired by libertarian values. That is why they wanted to be involved in all the processes – by deciding what would have been part of the research and what not, how to address some issues, and so on. They also asked for a clear explanation of data analysis and they wanted to be involved in the process. Finally, they wanted to produce some valuable material out of the research for themselves, such as narratives and imaginaries which tell the history of the space,

and a video explaining their experiences as a radical queer transfeminist squat. During the fieldwork, I often shared some pages of my fieldnotes regarding their space, and we discussed it together. I also shared, from time to time, papers and articles that I wrote down during these years, explaining part of the research process, in order to make them aware about the steps I took and my findings. This has been part of a continuous self-reflexive process in which I discussed and re-positioned myself depending on the participants' feedback.

I soon realised that PAR was not always suitable in its whole prescription. I also understood that PAR, more than a model, is a perspective and a ladder of intensity. In the first case, at the CID, I was struggling to become active part of the community – both for the physical limits of the space, which is a huge and dispersive building, and for relational issues, since, as old feminists, they were suspicious of me (as a young and unknown researcher), which changed a bit only when they realised that I came from a prestigious university. There, I applied only part of the PAR provisions, like the stress on the relationship with participants and the trust-building process, my disposition in taking part and helping in practical activities, the willingness to share the results with them in order to produce something worthwhile for the space itself. Thus, I realised that PAR is a flexible and modular approach, from a lesser intensity to a stronger intensity, depending on the singular cases' dispositions. With regard to the Spanish case, instead, the pandemic outbreak significantly affected the fieldwork. PAR was not fully viable because during the months of the fieldwork (January-May 2021), these spaces were partially closed to the public, and activists were overwhelmed by the consequences of the health crisis. As a perspective, there are aspects that can be used in a systematic way, and others that only apply to some cases, according to the participants' availability.

My presence was perceived as more or less intense depending on the spaces' characteristics. At the CID, which is a very large building, I was just one of the women spending their time there. In some cases, I turned out to be useful only because I was a young girl, as when the German ambassador went to visit the CID and they asked me to spend the whole afternoon with them in order to show how heterogeneous the composition of the CID was. Instead, at LYS, which is a smaller space, my presence was more visible. Every time I was there, there were women hosted at the house that came offering a coffee, some food, a chat or asking for help with their children. I tried to reduce the impact of my presence there by offering my help or skills for whatever was needed. For instance, I helped a Lebanese woman with her documents for university registration, or other women with English reading and comprehension, or a woman with health issues to schedule some medical visits. Since the beginning, LYS's activists told me that the only way to research LYS was to become a part of LYS, by giving help also in practical activities. That is why I started inserting my name in shift tables, helping during public initiatives, washing dishes and so on. Those times were precious moments in

order to transform my presence there, to gain trust and intimacy, to become part of the daily life of the house, and to become progressively accountable for activists, participants and their children. Even to face some troublesome moment, as when a little girl spilled a jar full of glitter on the keyboard of my laptop, just to get my attention.

The relational part of the research has been the most challenging and the richest. I passed through moments of frustration, loneliness, inadequacy, uncertainty, and bewilderment, but I also managed to establish durable relationships of trust and mutual understanding. I often became an accountable part of these spaces and a point of reference in case of troubles or needs. The research has been profoundly shaped by these relationships, which were the ground of empirical results.

On the contrary, due to previous networks, I was closer to CS's activists, since we already knew each other and I was, in some cases, close friends with some of them. Hence, the task has been to clearly define boundaries: which were private chats and which were part of the research, which moments I was attending as a friend and a comrade and which one as a researcher. The previous trust they felt toward me has been the reason of their acceptance to be part of the research (since they generally mistrust academic environment and research), but it was also a challenging factor defining our mutual positions in a changing relationship. We found an agreement in order to preserve the balance of our proximity: with them, I almost entirely avoided the ethnographic part. In that regard, it would have been too hard to select information and to define spaces of intimacy or research. Instead, we held long in-depth interviews and created a focus group, which was missing in the other cases.

With the Spanish feminist spaces, I was able to attend only a few moments in presence, because of the pandemic. I followed online activities, radio broadcasts and live-streaming events. However, the relationships we could establish were, for evident reasons, different than the Italian spaces, and the trust-building process was affected by the constraints of the pandemic. Nonetheless, with some of them we managed to share moments of conversation, reflection, and drinks, which developed into networks well beyond the fieldwork.

The common phase of crisis, due to the threat of eviction, made the research more appealing, since it came to be a sort of institutional acknowledgement from a prestigious university (such as Scuola Normale Superiore, one of the most historically respected and admired universities in Italy). The phase of crisis also made it important for these spaces to make whoever was attending the space useful, trying to turn people's skills, networks, and resources toward the defence and enhancement of these spaces. For instance, I was immediately involved in a cycle of meetings intended to re-define the role and aims at the CID, and several times during these meetings someone asked me to express my view, since I was "probably the most informed person in the CID, because I spent so much time there and because of my deep formation in gender studies and sociology" (Fieldnotes, CID, 16-10-

18). Or when LYS's activists decided to launch a popular purchase of the space, trying to avoid the auction, opening the "Comitato Lucha alla città," a committee composed of groups working on different issues, and they asked me to take part in the one on study since "we need people like you to study the situation and find some exit strategies" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 10-10-19). I always balanced my position in these situations, trying to give something back – since I was taking so much – but also preserving an ethical stance. I was not always able to manage it, for the emotional charge in situations of eviction is pervasive and I was not immune, because of my involvement in the fieldwork.

A lot of questions remain open for future research. For instance, the way in which to perform a systematic involvement of participants in all the research phases, sharing notions, emotions and findings. But also: how to remain open to participants' views and suggestions, keeping in mind the general framework of the research. And then, despite the inevitable phases of saturation, keeping an accountable and trustful relation with participants, re-modeling the level of intensity of relationships depending on different phases. And finally, how to be faithful to the initial purpose and to deeply engage with the dissemination of results, according to the aim of social research as a lead to social change.

3.4 Selection of Cases and Comparative Dimension

This is a case-oriented research (George and Bennett 2005, Gerring 2007, Blatter and Haverland 2012, Rohlfing 2012), based on cross-national comparative analysis. A *small-N* comparative research is here preferred in order "to go beyond descriptive statistical measures, towards an in-depth understanding of historical processes and individual motivations." (della Porta and Keating 2008: 202). Analysing feminist spaces as safe spaces requires an in-depth understanding of the context, of political engagement and collective dynamics, "grasping the relations among its constituent parts" (della Porta and Keating 2008: 205) toward a nuanced and complex knowledge about specific processes. The purpose is not oriented towards generalisations, but towards space and a temporarily limited comprehension of the cases taken into study: the results are not universally valid, but contextual to a specific time frame and social process. Findings are "dense knowledge," disentangling a complex unit of analysis. Cases are addressed as complex units, and concepts of them are constructed during the research and grounded in data. The number of cases is low in order to allow a systematic analysis and to get as many elements as possible. Cases – within the framework of a clear definition of feminist spaces – differ from each other, leading to a deep exploration of differences. I observed cases throughout their historical perspective, both in the national landscape and in the contextual political developments.

I inductively selected cases throughout the research process, following a "systematic dialogue of ideas and evidence" (Ragin 2004 in della Porta and Keating 2008: 209). I firstly defined the framework of my research and my research questions, based on the understanding of feminist spaces as safe spaces. Feminist spaces are those spaces which are explicitly addressed by their activists as political (feminist), as collective (managed by a community of activists) and meaningfully located (because of a certain political explanation of their position in that part of the city). Even though limited to these characteristics, feminist spaces include a wide range of political and social cases. In order to keep a complex understanding on a complex unit, I progressively identified three movement cultures and politics (among many): a house of women, coming from the legacy of the 1970s and inspired by a hybrid identity between institutionalisation and movement; a feminist space oriented toward direct social action and knowledge production, where women take care of other women, through a grassroot and self-managed re-configuration of services; a queer and transfeminist space, coming from different legacies (feminist, trans, LGBT and queer movements). Once these three types of spaces were identified, I then selected countries (Italy and Spain), cities (Rome and Madrid), cases – three for each city (the International House of Women, the House of Women Lucha Y Siesta, the space of Cagne Sciolte, the Espacios de Igualdad, the Eskalera Karakola, the Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros). I started forming a hypothesis: that all of these cases were producing a type of safe space. I maintained the assumption in order to contest it throughout the research process, challenging the definition (and reconsidering safe spaces not as stable dimension but as a political and emotional process), and the way in which it was detectable (or not) within different cases.

Italy immediately emerged as a meaningful country for different reasons. First, for the feasibility of the project, since I am Italian and I know the language; because I have a feminist activist background, and I already know the context, groups and spaces, as well as having previously established networks that have been crucial for the research. Then, because of the historical legacies of feminist movements in the Italian context and contemporary resurgence (Non Una di Meno movement), and the well-rooted experience of feminist spaces, especially in cities such as Rome, Milan, Bologna, Turin, Napoli and beyond. Finally, because of the contemporary economic, social and political setting: whether neoliberal policies are progressively linked to a growing consensus around populist and extreme right-wing parties, few grassroot movements are challenging this status quo, driving protests and a harsh attack to institutional agenda. Among these few, feminist movements have been one of the most vibrant, through major protest events (such as the feminist strike on 8 March or marches against gender violence and structural violence) and local political participation.

Rome, the Italian capital, represents one of the most interesting cases. The size of the city (a huge metropolis with around 3 million inhabitants) (Lelo, Monni and Tomassi 2019); the great vitality of

its social movements (engaged in environmental issues, precariat, social inequalities, migration and so on) (Mudu 2014); the historical embeddedness of feminist movements in the social and political ground of the city (Stelliferi 2015); the variety of feminist spaces: all of these elements contributed to make the city a challenging case. The increasing level of social inequalities and poverty affected the Roman population, and growing attention has been drawn to the phenomenon of gender-based violence, due to numerous cases of feminicide and the structural lack of helping services. Feminist spaces are often replacing institutional gaps, with regard to social inequalities and, more specifically, women's needs.

The cross-national comparative dimension was immediately required in order to gain a deeper understanding on the topic, by analysing different countries and political trajectories. The choice of two countries has been made in order to avoid the problem of concept-stretching (Munck 2004), "as well as the reliability and comparability of measures and indicators used to translate national experiences into comparable operational categories" (della Porta and Keating 2008: 210). Adopting the most-similar system approach (della Porta and Keating 2008), and so reducing the number of "disturbing" variables, Spain emerged as a second feasible case, due to several reasons. The two countries belong to the common geographical area (Southern Europe) and share some degrees of historical tradition, cultural traits and economic crisis impact. Since the end of Franco's dictatorship, Spain quickly developed as a democratic country, by achieving a progressive parliamentary setting and several policies improvements. Differently than Italy, from 2004 the Spanish parliament approved a specific law fully protecting women against gender violence, also called *machista* violence. From then on, the number of feminicide slowly decreased, even though the structural issue of gender violence remains unchanged, and is still expressed through inequalities in workplaces and salaries, unpaid reproductive work, constant attacks on abortion rights, daily harassment, catcalling, threats, and so on. In the last few years, a renewed feminist movement emerged, strongly influenced by women's participation in the 15-M 2011, through the creation of the Marea Violeta (Violet Tide) (Portos 2019). Collectives and feminist groups flourished across Spain, more autonomously than other social movements. In 2014, the movement "Yo Decido" strongly contested a restrictive change of abortion law, finally winning. 8 March 2019 saw a high level of participation, and the adherence to the feminist strike reached a 70% rate in public schools, and a participation of over 6 million people overall.

Madrid was the core of these processes: the dismantling of the Francoist regime and the partly unchanged presence of Francoist people in the institutional apparatus; the democratic building process (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005); the outbreak of the 15-M (Portos 2019); the diffusion of municipalism (Rubio-Pueyo 2017, Janoschka and Mota 2020); the widespread presence of the

feminist movements and the relevance of the city on the organisation of the feminist general strike on 8 March (Campillo 2019).

To me, the choice of the Spanish case also means challenging a sort of "comfort zone," and a deep knowledge of the Italian case. It opened up the possibility for new viewpoints of understanding through a different country, different language, different political background.

Even though it might be arguable that comparing similar countries does not allow one to go beyond middle-range theories, the choice is consistent with the pursuit of an in-depth understanding of a specific process. The comparison will not be 50-50, due to the longer period of fieldwork in Rome, the amount of data I collected there and the spread of the pandemic of Coronavirus. Nonetheless, the comparative stance will be a crucial framework of data analysis.

As a time-frame, I adopted the contextual time-scan of my research project (from 2017 to 2021), a period in which I conducted the fieldwork (in a circular movement between fieldwork and data-analysis). The historical perspective was not avoided, rather emerging through the participants' words and stories.

3.5 Triangulation of Methods: Participant Observation, Interviews and Focus Groups

The empirical part of the research was carried out through three techniques: participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. All these methods present limits and strengths. The triangulation of methods allows a complex collection of data, to uphold the fieldwork throughout different angles and to fill the reciprocal lacks of each method (Ayoub, Wallace and Zapeda-Milliàn 2014). The choice complies with the need of the PAR approach, based on a relational research process between the researcher and the participants. Thus, I managed to share most of the research phases with them, discussing time, space, information, and negotiating the collection of data. Participant observation was the channel of access in each space. Then, I collected the same number of interviews in each space, and I performed a focus group with CS.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was the first way to get in touch with these spaces and communities. Even though is not the most common method in social movement studies (Balsiger and Lambelet 2014), in my case it was a crucial way to understand why women spend time and effort in producing feminist spaces, and how these spaces are (or are not) safe for women.

> Indeed, the purpose (or essence) of participant observation, from Malinowski (1922) to today, is to view and to understand events through the perspective of the people one studies. Participant

observation is thus a technique of research where the incorporation of the researcher into the group he or she wants to study is a fundamental element. Researchers take part in the same situation in order to understand the contradictions, the stakes, and the social expectations that people being studied experience. (…) Participation and observation conducted with reflexivity, combined with other methods for triangulation, produce data that are confident enough for extrapolation. (Balsinger and Lambelet 2014: 146)

Driving participant observation has been a way to observe forms of collective behaviour; to understand the heterogeneity of such groups; to shed light on the non-public sides of feminist spaces and the implicit meanings that enable activists to act together; to see the nuances or discrepancies between public stance, ideology, and daily practices of the group; to understand roles and political socialisation; and to learn through an embodied research. "For some authors, like Melucci (1996), it is impossible to really understand a social situation if you only observe it: you have to act and be part of it" (Balsinger and Lambelet 2014: 151). To me, the periods of time I spent in these spaces were an enlightening phase that allowed me to grasp collective identities, strategies, internal dynamics, and processes, and to get a general overview of each space. Only through participant observation I understood names, roles, relationships, frictions, and the political but especially emotional shape of each space. These experiences served as a necessary background in order to prepare well-focused interviews, to choose the interviewees, and to plan effective focus groups. The whole process has been abductive and field-driven, since I followed step by step the insights and needs emerging from the fieldwork.

I usually introduced myself through an e-mail, and then met one or more activists of the space in order to better define my presence and participation. Sometimes, we also discussed the possibility to conduct the research in itself (as in the case of CS). In Rome, I spent one year and a half (non-consecutive) doing fieldwork. I approximately dedicated around three months of in-depth participant observation in each space, but I kept participating in events, public protests and open meetings of those spaces for the whole period of the fieldwork. I spent five months in Madrid, and due to time-constraints and the pandemic outbreak, I continued to follow the activities of the three spaces researched mostly on online platforms.

I clearly remembered the first time I entered each space. Those moments were exciting, but also awkward, and disorienting. Being a woman was an advantage, but, as a newcomer, it took a long time to pass from being seen as an "outsider" to being part of the space.

For the whole duration of the fieldwork, I wrote down fieldnotes. I used the laptop, the note or vocal records, depending on the different situations and opportunities, but I did it on a daily basis. Initially, I divided my notes into descriptive notes, methodological notes, theoretical notes and self-reflexive notes. As time passed, I ended up writing a stream of consciousness based on the information I

considered progressively more important for my work. The first time I opened my notes, I felt lost and started writing about the rain, colours, people, and smells. Taking notes has been a learning process that followed the inner shape of the research.

I slowly understood how to inhabit such spaces depending on their physical setting, their activities and the characteristics of the activists' groups. For instance, I spent the first two weeks at the CID trying to figure out where to stay: since it is a very large building, I tried to spend some time in the garden, then in different part of the corridors, then in different rooms, in order to find the right angle to observe and to participate in the CID's daily life. I ended up spending most of my time at the reception, a room with two secretaries in charge of managing the phone and all the practicalities of the House's management: I chose it because all of the women entering had to pass through that room, and stopped to talk with the secretaries, either to have a chat with them or to give them updates (both the women living daily in the House and the women looking for information). Differently, at LYS's, since it is also a proper house where women live, it was much more sensitive to organise my presence. I started attending all the events, and then slowly I went there to work at the library. Once there, though, I rarely managed to work, because there were always women asking for help, or offering food and coffee, or children taking my hand and inviting me to play together. Those were really rich and precious moments, where I slowly built trust and intimacy with the women, and I let them guide me in discovering the house, the rooms, the garden, the kitchen. The communal kitchen was a key site. It is an intimate, cosy and warm space, where women share intimate thoughts or needs, take care of each other, tell stories, tragedies, and fun facts. Indeed, that space has been crucial for my relationships with the women hosted at the house. Whereas at the CID women were quite suspicious for a long time, paradoxically at LYS women hosted in the house (women escaping male violence or serious social marginality) were welcoming and warm from the start. They were the main link to the group of activists, who, instead, tended to be a little less immediately friendly. CS's space, on the other hand, required a different process, since I already knew the space and the activists. Moreover, the space is not open on a daily basis but only for specific occasions, such as meetings, events, festivals, and so on. I attended those moments, and the main issue there was managing our proximity, due to my previous link and actual friendship with most of them. Nevertheless, it was a challenging way to shape the research, through the negotiation of our changing roles and our constant re-positioning among each other.

As already mentioned with regard to the Spanish case, the period of participant observation was highly constrained by the pandemic. During the fieldwork, I followed most of the activities on online platforms. Only near the end of the fieldwork, when spring approached, the spaces were gradually

opening and I was able to visit them, to attend some assemblies and initiatives. Alternative platforms, such as Telegram, proved useful in order to witness and take part in the daily work of groups.

The period of participant observation was highly demanding in time, from a practical and emotional point of view. During the fieldwork, I learned to be flexible and adaptive. Several situations arose in which I had to make a decision on the spot, and no methodological manual could have proved enough. Often, I felt alone in front of a crucial decision for the fieldwork: for instance, how to face provoking questions on my presence, how to take part in a meeting when I have been explicitly required to do it, how to deal with critical situations such as very intimate fighting during meetings, how to manage the women's intimate request (in sensitive cases, such as with women escaping male violence). In order to remain clearheaded and receptive I often went back and forth from fieldwork to theorisation and data analysis, according to CGT. I sometimes needed to unwind to not feel too overwhelmed.

Leaving the field, eventually, is a key part of participant observation. Unless I had time-constraints, I ended each period with a feeling of clear saturation. I felt that nothing more was emerging, and that I had my laptop and mind (too) full of information, feelings, and emotions. As PAR requires, it is strongly recommended to take care of all the research passages, and thus also of leaving. The difficulty lies in the relationship with the participants and in the inner stance of the researcher. I clearly explained to the participants when I was interrupting the fieldwork, even though we never closed our contacts, since they keep taking part in data analysis and the dissemination of results. Being clear was also necessary for myself. Especially at the end of LYS's fieldwork, I felt overwhelmed and deeply attached to the women hosted at the House and to the activists (who were dealing with a dramatic moment under the threat of eviction and were constantly overstressed and exhausted). Getting to know situations of deep personal suffering, experiences of male violence, and vulnerabilities is a hard task, and it is not always easy to draw a boundary between the researcher identity and that of a sympathetic woman and activist. I left the field with plenty of data and emotions, and it took time to smooth things over. It required a strong self-reflexivity, a clear positioning with myself and with them, and an ordered research plan.

Interviews

Interviews have had a crucial role in data collection. I prepared the interview track only after the first period of participant observation. Indeed, I started participating and observing the spaces, collecting information, insights, ideas, and only after I pursued interviews as "a fundamental tool for generating empirical knowledge through asking people to talk about certain themes" (della Porta 2014: 228). Starting with the interview phase has meant passing from my perception of spaces, dynamics, emotions to directly asking activists their personal opinions and beliefs (Blee 2013). Understanding

the dimension of safety, a specific aspect of the complexity belonging to feminist spaces, is inevitably linked to the activists' emotions and stories about their own efforts and perceptions. The interview guide, which was supposed to lead semi-structured and in-depth interviews, was based on three main trajectories: the individual process of involvement in feminist spaces (political socialisation, roles, motivations, beliefs); the (un)relevant dimensions needed to make a feminist space *safe*; the relation between the space and the neighbourhood and, more generally, the city. Bearing in mind these trajectories (then grouped in several questions), I followed the interviewee's stories and narratives, re-orienting the interview when it strayed too far from the topics, but leaving the interviewee free to express herself, take her time, jump from one thought to another. These interviews were a tool for addressing the core of my research topic with the participants, discussing more or less openly the dimension of safety. Flexibility was required in this case, too, since I was interviewing very different political generations, and activists coming from different movement cultures. Words, concepts, and understanding completely changed from one space to the other, that is why I had to be adaptable and ready to re-shape my research toolkit. The notion of safety, as such, would have been impossible to address, for instance, at the CID. But what I was interested in was the reason why women inhabit and spend an often very consistent part of their time and energies in a political space which arises in order to fight male violence and women's experiences of dispossession and mistreatments. Also, I was drawn to find out if and why these spaces are perceived as comfortable, cosy, and friendly, what triggers these emotions, and why they matter politically. Oriented toward these questions, I then changed words and frameworks in order for my aim to be understandable.

As Blee explains (2012), observation is not enough, because people tend to avoid talking about what is taken for granted. Interviews are a flexible tool for generating new hypotheses and clarifying some others (della Porta 2014, Mattoni 2014).

I collected about ten interviews for each Italian case, and about five interviews for each Spanish case. I selected the interviewees after a first period of observation, picking different roles, ages, levels of involvement, and duration of their political participation. All of the interviewees are activists (even the workers of the EDIs, who also consider themselves feminist activists), apart from a woman who was hosted at LYS: I include her here as a key informant, since in the course of eleven years she has been hosted five times at LYS. One of the interviewees involved in the Spanish case was also a key informant, since she was part of the clandestine armed groups that resisted Francisco Franco's regime, and she had an historical perspective on the emergence of women's movements and spaces in Spain. All of them are cis women, genderfluid or non-binary people, apart for a cis man, aged between 25 and 75 years old. I contacted them through face-to-face conversations, e-mails or messages on their private phone. All the people I interviewed already knew me because of the previous period of

observation. Nonetheless, I always introduced myself with a document explaining my project, my formation, and how the data I collected would have been treated. I always asked the interviewee where they preferred to be interviewed. Most of them decided to hold the interview in their respective spaces, some of them in their proper flat, and others at a bar or at the public gardens. It was interesting to notice which part of the space the interviewees would choose, because the choice complied with parts of their stories or experiences in that space. While in Italy I interviewed all of them in presence, most of the interviews carried out in Spain were conducted online, because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

I conducted interviews with full attention and reception, trying to build a comfortably relational space together. It was sometimes hard to handle, since especially old activists happened to be provocative, demanding or challenging my position and myself. One time, when I was strategically "playing dumb," an old activist reacted annoyed, saying that probably I would have needed to study a little bit more, and then suggesting me to read her books in order to fill some personal gaps. Using simple words and clear explanation was not always the best way, and I often had to be ready to discuss at the level that the interviewees were imposing during the conversation. It was also necessary to follow the interviewees' needs and requirements: during the interview, the researcher asks a lot from the interviewee, and when the interviewee inquire about something in turn, it is worthwhile to prepare an adequate answer. One time, during a very long and intimate interview, an activist that already knew my story directly asked me: "how would you act in this situation? And how was it for you the disbandment of a feminist collective? How do you deal with these emotions doing this research?" (IIR4, LYS, 53). In that moment I could not find any easy answer, and I tried to balance an honest response, while avoiding a breach in our relation of trust, and without disclosing too much of my activist identity when I felt it could overlap too much with the researcher identity.

Nonetheless, most of the interviewees were very glad to dedicate their time to the interview because, in the constant flux of activism, concerns and responsibilities, it represented a moment for themselves, in which to take time, talk about themselves and retrace their story and meanings even before their political engagement. The interviews, in a moment of crisis and threat of eviction, became a little oasis in which they had the possibility to focus on themselves and be at the centre of the discussion (a rare possibility in those moments). I took care of these feelings, trying to leave the interviewees all the time and space that was needed and without interfering with their stream of consciousness, tears or joyful memories.

Focus Group

The participants of CS and I decided together to establish a focus group in order to balance the collection of data of the other cases. As mentioned above, at CS we avoided the time allotted to participant observation because of the difficulty to manage the proximity among each other. Methods such as in-depth interviews and a focus group were preferred because they were controlled moments where the research relationship was mediated by an agreed setting, a certain time, certain tools, and an awareness on both sides of the moment dedicated to the research. Focus groups are valuable methods in order to grasp group dynamics, to observe conversations and chats among participants, to stimulate participants' reflections on some topics, and to engage them with the production of knowledge in the framework of the research project (Hennink 2013). In my case, it was also the occasion to engage with visual materials which favoured channels of communication other than the spoken word: often, people have different types of capacities and skills, which range from speech to practical activities, to song, to dance. Qualitative research is sometimes unprepared to foster these types of self-expression, because it is linked to the oral form only. This constraint limits the field of qualitative investigation and risks keeping out of the picture information that would emerge in other ways (Hilppö et al. 2017). As Doerr, Mattoni and Teune (2013) single out, the visual analysis offers great advantages for the study of social movements: "encounters with social movements have always been intrinsically tied to the visual sense. […] Social movements produce and evoke images, either as a result of a planned, explicit, and strategic effort, or accidentally, in an unintended or undesired manner" (2013: xi).

The focus group had the duration of three hours with six participants, and it was carried out at the CS space. I left them free to decide which person would be part of the group, but I asked to hold it at the space since it was necessary for the activities. Before starting, I requested them to express how they felt and how they got into the focus group. I planned this icebreaking activity in accordance with their political effort to name and engage with emotions as a common ground for political action. Then, I asked them to introduce the story of their name with an image, by giving them a selection of pictures, among which they could pick up the one they felt was the most appropriate for their name. This first activity was similar to the first trajectory of the interviews, oriented to stimulate a self-reflexive stance in the participants with regard to their own story, choices, and experience. The activity was effective because, from that moment on, the stories about their background and the reasons for engaging with a feminist space started emerging.

The second activity started with a question: if you were a part of this space, which one you would be? I gave them white papers, coloured markers, and the possibility to take pictures or move around the space. In half an hour, each of them produced an artifact that represented the part of the space they felt closer to. Then, each of them brought the group to that part, and s/he explained why it was

relevant for her/him. Some of them sang, others cried. That activity was coherent with the second trajectory of the interview, oriented to understand the participants' experience of safe spaces, and the way they need and produce those type of spaces. In the third activity, I asked them to write on a Post-it the last time they felt safe, and the last time they felt unsafe. Following that, we engaged in a discussion on safety from a feminist perspective. This activity corresponded to the third trajectory of the interview, where I tried to understand the dimension of in/out relations of feminist spaces, and the way a safe space engages with the outside. In the get out activity, they were invited to make a sound/noise or a move, with the whole group mirroring that sound or move. In this way, we tried to make collective effort out of an individual feeling, and to get out of the focus group with the impression of a communitarian process.

The focus group was greatly fruitful with the case of CS in order to overcome their mistrust, to respect the different channels of expression of the participants, and to listen to their process of reflection on the question of safety, which is a kind of political discourse particularly present in their space.

3.6 Performing Data Analysis Through Constructivist Grounded Theory and MAXQDA Software

According to the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT), the iterative process of data analysis started with the very beginning of the fieldwork (Charmaz 2006). As soon as I began collecting fieldnotes, I started with the analysis. In order to perform the analysis, I engaged with MAXQDA, a software which allows to manage very large amount of data and codes.

I began the initial coding on the first ten days of the ethnographic diary. Line-by-line coding was time consuming but fruitful in order to start engaging with the data. Through that, I created the first basket of codes and words, which then went on to form the future analysis. I clearly felt the saturation of line-by-line coding and the urge to pass to the second step of analysis. The use of the colours – made available by MAXQDA for each code inserted in the document – allowed me to proceed through nonverbal associations and junctures: step by step, I realised I was using similar colours for similar "areas" of thought, such as physical spaces, emotions, personal experiences, relation with the outside. Through focused coding, I had the chance to enucleate the first categories emerging from the analysis. On one hand, I gave an order to the already large number of codes (around three thousand); on the other, I engaged with some meaningful codes that were containing smaller codes. This process of category-building went on with the rest of the material. I went back and forth with the fieldwork, and the analysis of data progressively shaped the methodology and the methods I was engaging with. As Charmaz suggests (2006), the analysis of data led me to a theoretical sampling with regard to the

Spanish case: by following the process, I realised that the inclusion of a group which was not properly a space but rather a platform inhabiting several spaces of the city was worthwhile for the research. The constant comparative method helped me to make analytic sense of the participants' meanings and actions out of their way of making sense of their own experience. It also let similarities and differences among cases emerge, as well as the need to better define questions, issues, and topics to discuss with participants. The writing of memos allowed me to fix ideas, tips, and insights emerging during the analysis.

The last part of the analysis was oriented to theory building. I managed to work with three "circles," the one consisting of actors, the second represented by the space, and the third made of players and arenas. These circles were also leaning toward different levels: the micro, the meso, and the macro. Within these circles, I articulated the categories that were answering to my research questions. As Glaser and Strauss argue (1967), painstaking coding work can at best lead to the definition of a theory, not necessarily a new one. In my case, saturation came with the bridge between the theory building through CGT and the literature on affect theory. I realised that the key to understand safe spaces lies in the way feminist spaces engage with affections and emotions. By working on affections (how they feel it, how affections arise, how they change, how they affect the interactions with others), feminist activists learn to name and elaborate on that. This work is a transformative process which, instead of what classical theories on politics and social movements claim, increases their power and political capacity. As CGT suggests, I started the research by "forgetting" the literature I was used to referring to, only going back to the literature at the end of the research process. This allowed me to start with "blank eyes," a clean slate, and to let any kind of insights emerge from the participants' words and data analysis. At the end of the process, I realised that part of the literature I was used to engage with was useful to the topic, another part not quite so, and others were missing at the beginning but necessary in the end, such as affect theory. The use of CGT was fully coherent with PAR, and it allowed me to negotiate and discuss with participants the research process. As an example, we also pursued two moments of collective analysis of data with the participants of CS. During the pandemic, after some time passed from the last interviews, we planned two more encounters. We used a free online platform (Jitsi Meet, considered safe enough by the participants) to connect. At the beginning of the meeting, I tried to explain the process of data analysis, CGT, coding, and so on. Sharing the more technical part of the research work with the participants was a way to stay true to the ethical aspiration of the research and to involve them in every step, even those normally less negotiated with the participants. Then, I put on an online pad (Riseup Pad) some segments retrieved from their interviews. One of them read the segment, and together they reasoned about the best code to explain the segment. Even if they could not agree on a single code, they wrote under the segment various

codes that emerged from the exchange. Attending the discussion was a valuable moment for me to test the analysis process I was tackling alone, to see the data through their eyes, and to better define some categories I had inferred. For them, it was a moment to better understand the research and how it works, and also to reflect on their own collective history and the constant knowledge production that takes place in their community. Paradoxically, the online form, which is usually a limitation, was indicated by the participants as a virtue, because the distance imposed by the medium allowed them to release emotions and an affective immersion in their history that they would perhaps have struggled to do in presence.

3.7 Dissemination of Results

PAR requires attention to all research steps. The end of the fieldwork, although, as mentioned before, is a moment to be cherished, and it does not mark the end of the relationship with the participants. I engaged with the research, and with my relationship with participants, from the first contact until now. The field of the research has become an extended period of sharing and interacting well beyond the traditional collection of data.

Each form of dissemination of the results was done with respect for the type of space, its attitude, needs, and modes of collective action. Each mode was therefore different, in accordance with the type of space and the relationship established with the space. In this sense, PAR is a flexible methodology, evolving as the research progresses, and producing heterogeneous consequences depending on the case. Due to the pandemic situation, as mentioned before, the PAR process was more substantial in Italy, and so was the dissemination of the results.

The more I got to know and trust the participants, the more I made myself available to them, and the more they opened up to seek help or support. Beyond the months of intense participant observation, I have continued to follow many of each space's initiatives to date, as well as throughout the research timeframe of 2017-2021. Some moments marked the transition between the end of the fieldwork and the consolidation of these relationships. For example, after finishing the period of participant observation at LYS in August, which had been particularly intense, in September I received a call from one of the activists at LYS who wanted to know how I was doing and to update me on the life of the space, the women who are housed there and the activists. This was an emblematic moment of the formation of a research interaction that invests not only the field of data and information, but also that of affection and mutual care. Over time, I have tried to become a point of reference for the participants. Every time they asked me to participate to public meetings, book presentations, initiatives, those requests became a priority for me (even beyond academic tasks), according to the

ethical stance of the research. Not infrequently, I accompanied the activists to public meetings they had to attend just to keep them company, I made myself available for practical help, or actively supported the spaces in various ways. One of these was the participation of LYS activists as keynote speakers at the conference organised at the Scuola Normale Superiore on 21 February 2020, called "Feminist Strike: Struggles, Practices and Collective Reflections." On that occasion, there was an overlap between the spheres of academia and activism, and the wealth of knowledge produced by LYS opened the day of roundtables and panels.

In order to disseminate the results, we elaborated several strategies. First, presenting the research findings in conferences together, and writing papers together – as in the case of the conference ESPANET in 2020, when we presented and published a paper together with activists of LYS, titled "Re-inventing Autonomy: The Experience of Lucha Y Siesta and the Feminist Methodology in Combating Gender-based Violence." Then, constantly sharing pieces of the work with participants and discussing them together: papers, book chapters, articles, and so on. The collaborative retrospective meeting on the research findings with CS activists was a meaningful occasion. With them, we spent six hours discussing results and future developments. In order to avoid a traditional oral presentation, I prepared a sort of game. On pieces of coloured cards, I wrote down 38 concepts which, in the results of the research, make up the concept of a safe space, and on each card I stapled one or two excerpts from the interviews explaining the concept. At the beginning of the meeting we agreed on the rules of the game. One by one, they had to turn the card over and read the excerpts from the interview and the concept. I would briefly explain the concept as elaborated in the research, and then we would all discuss it together. In the middle of the table there were a sort of buttons (indicating *pause*, *let's go further*, *let's stop a bit more*) with which the participants could express their needs according to the progress of the discussion. At the end, after turning over all the cards, we made an overall assessment of what had emerged, and each person said what had struck them most, or what was missing. As a result of this retrospective meeting, we agreed on some artifacts we would work on in the future as a result of the research findings. First, a fanzine on the history of the space, moved by the lack of memory on the space the activists felt. Second, a photo story on what a safe space is, on the meaning of safety/unsafety from a feminist perspective, and on consensus in sexual and affective interactions. Third, a science-fiction fairy tale on specific stories that happened to them. This way of creatively mobilising findings was the result of their attitude and of our interaction during the research.

For each space, in the dissemination of results, one part was more important and others less so. In the case of LYS, a part of the results, related more to organisational forms and practices, was used in the writing of "Manifesta." The LYS building is still at auction, and the Lazio regional government seems

to be the only buyer. Over the years, the regional government has built a relationship of proximity and exchange with LYS, and in case of purchase it would grant the management of the space to the activists who have been running it for thirteen years. In order to regulate this relationship with the Region, and therefore with the institutions, LYS has started a process of reflection on feminist commons and the writing of a sort of management charter, called "Manifesta," which explains the forms, methodology, and objectives of LYS. In the writing of this charter, part of the results was mobilised, as well as the interviews and part of the research material.

The dissemination process is not over, and continues in various forms, more and less public, with the participants. In closing, an unintended consequence also concerned me. In the research process, once the fieldwork was finished, I felt the need to participate in the course as an anti-violence operator of LYS, and to carry out the planned internship in their centres (anti-violence centre, shelter, semi-autonomy house). This step was consistent with the relationship established with the participants, and allowed me and the research to develop into fields of knowledge and practice that I would never have imagined at the beginning. In this sense, PAR is a transformative and social justice-oriented methodology that not only invests the participants, their contexts and perspectives, but the researcher herself.

4. Italy and Spain: Introduction to the Case Studies

4.1 Introduction

Starting from 2015, a new cycle of protests (Tarrow 1998) has been led by feminist movements around the globe (Cirimele and Panariello 2018, Pavan and Mainardi 2018, Chironi 2019). Europe, as well, has been the stage of emerging collective action. The main claims concern gender inequalities, structural gender-based violence and male-dominated structures. Concerning Southern European countries, two of the leading contexts in feminist mobilisations are Italy and Spain. The empirical part of this research project took part in their capital cities, Rome and Madrid.

In this chapter I will introduce the political, social, and economic features of these two countries, and I will then proceed by analysing the six feminist spaces where I carried on participatory action research, data collection, and the empirical analysis. Firstly (4.2), I will outline the two dimensions of Italy and Spain: on one hand, their political landscape, social structures and economic setting. On the other hand, feminist legacies in both countries. For different reasons, feminist mobilisations have had a strong impact in the past and up until the present.

Secondly (4.3), I will explore the socio-economic context of Rome and Madrid.

Then (4.4), I will expose the first empirical case, the Casa Internazionale delle Donne – CID (International House of Women) in Rome. It is located in the city centre of Rome, and is one of the most historical feminist spaces in Italy. The second case is the Casa delle donne Lucha Y Siesta – LYS (4.5), a multi-functional squatted centre in the most populated neighbourhood in Rome. LYS hosts around 15 women survivors of male violence and their children, but it also offers cultural, social, and political activities. The third case is the space of Cagne Sciolte – CS ("maverick" or "mad dog" in English: the Italian name is declined in the feminine) (4.6), a radical queer transfeminist squat. CS is mostly devoted to internal consciousness work on sexism, violence, and homo-lesbo-transphobia, as well as organising or participating in external protests within public spaces. With regard to Spain, I will introduce the first case (4.7), the Espacios de Igualdad – EDI. They are spaces of equality, one for each neighbourhood, managed by the municipality and given to teams of women workers who are usually feminists as well. Secondly, I will present the Eskalera Karakola – EK (4.8), a public transfeminist house, which changed its legal and political status over time but still hosts several radical feminist groups and political activities. Finally, I will put forward the Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros – PEB (Platform of Lesbians' Encounters) (4.9), which is not a proper space,

but rather a platform that cyclically passes through the spaces of various districts of Madrid, trying to contaminate them with its practices and discourses.

4.2 Italy and Spain: Socio-Economic Context and Feminist Movements Trajectories

Feminist spaces, as a specific repertoire of contention enacted by feminist movements, are detectable within very different countries and local context. Libraries, social centres, health centres, and women's shelters are just few examples of collective action that allowed women to directly transform certain dimensions of society by the means of the action itself, without waiting for the state or other power holders' solution to their issues (Busi and Fiorilli 2015, Bosi and Zamponi 2015). Bosi and Zamponi call these types of collective action "direct social action," and they expand on the role of the socio-economic context in influencing the use of such repertoire of action (2015). Feminist movements' legacies, as well, have had an impact on current developments (Platero and Ortega-Arjonilla 2015, Chironi 2019, Pavan and Mainardi 2018, Barone and Bonu forthcoming). I will present Italy and Spain as meaningful countries for the analysis of feminist spaces. On one hand, because of the economic crisis that heavily hit Southern Europe, and specifically these two countries (Giorgi and Caruso 2015): the crisis shaped political opportunity structures and movements' actions (Bosi and Zamponi 2015, Giugni and Grasso 2018). On the other hand, because of the historical vitality of feminist movements (Lussana 2012, Bussoni and Perna 2014, Calabrò and Grasso 2004, Valiente 2002, 2013, Radcliff 2001) and contemporary mobilisations around Non Una di Meno and beyond.

In September 2008, Italy was hit by the international economic crisis that still affects the social, political, and economic spheres (Kriesi 2012, della Porta 2013, della Porta and Mattoni 2014, Guidi and Andreatta 2014, Kousi and Paschou 2014, Kantola and Lombardo 2017). Some consequences at the European level and in Italy as well concern public debt, recession, austerity policies, labour market, and growing levels of unemployment and precarisation, the cuts to the welfare system and public services, and a decrease of economic productivity (Bosi and Zamponi 2015, Giorgi and Caruso 2015). Spain, as well, was deeply affected by the economic crisis and austerity measures (Lombardo 2017, Morlino and Raniolo 2017, Giugni and Grasso 2018). Consequences have been particularly tough for Spain, due to a dramatic increase in unemployment, the economic downturn, and the bankruptcy of companies (Lombardo and Kantola 2017). The Great Recession triggered the emergence of growing social movements and campaigns, such as the 15-M campaign and the broader wave of protest against austerity (Tejerina and Perugorría 2017, Portos 2019).

Citizens were caught by a growing vulnerability and a self-perception of precariousness (Butler 2016, Giorgi and Caruso 2015), influencing daily life, individual choices, collective actions and mobilisations (Bosi and Zamponi 2015, Kantola and Lombardo 2017). As Chironi suggests, "neoliberal policies associated with this crisis have hit especially disadvantaged social categories (Crouch 2011, della Porta 2016, Gallino 2011, Streeck 2014, 2016), among which women, as well as gay, transgender, and intersexual people are to be included" (2019: 1).

Italy is a parliamentary republic ruled by several coalitions from the 2018 general election (Lega and Five Star Movement; Five Star Movement and Democratic Party; a large coalition with several parties held together by the Prime Minister Mario Draghi). These coalitions have been oriented to a more or less neoliberal politics, and they faced the outbreak of the pandemic crisis, which is still ongoing. Spain, instead, is a parliamentary monarchy. From 2011 to 2018, it was ruled by a right-wing government and the PP (Partido Popular) majority, while in the next elections the centre of gravity of voter consensus shifted largely towards the centre-left (PSOE - Partido Socialista Obrero Español) and left (Podemos). Despite the difficulty in finding an agreement, the left-wing parties now govern in a coalition (the first in the post-Francoist era), whose policies are inspired by left-wing values.

With respect to gender politics, the two countries present very different settings. As Rosselli argues, "according to the European Gender Equality Index, Italy ranks among the EU countries with the lowest gender equality. It outperforms the EU average in only one area, health, thanks to the longevity of Italian women. In all other fields, the situation is far from satisfactory" (2014: 5). Women's employment rates remain low, the gender gap is still wide, reproductive labour is still partly based on women's unpaid work or on "the Mediterranean model of the welfare state" (Naldini 2004), the glass ceiling prevents women from gaining real access to top positions in the world of work, the right to health, and specifically the right to abortion, is strongly circumscribed by conscientious objection. Sexual violence against women became a crime against the person only in 1996, and stalking has only been prosecuted since 2009. Victims of feminicide number over a hundred every year, and one in three women reports having experienced harassment, violence or stalking in their lives[3]. Even though the legislation has partially agreed to the demands of the feminist movement (such as with the reform of family law, divorce, and abortion law), gender policy measures often remain unimplemented due to a lack of funds and resources[4]. As Rosselli goes on arguing, Italy "lacks an adequate infrastructure to promote gender equality. There is a lack of adequate coordination and

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[3] https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/omicidi-di-donne, last visit August 2021.
[4] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/country/IT, last visit August 2021; GREVIO (2020) GREVIO (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), ITALY, 13 January 2020, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

monitoring and evaluation tools at central level are not fully and correctly properly applied due to limited resources" (2014: 8).

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 of the World Economic Forum (an Index "which benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time"[5]), Spain ranks 14th and Italy 63rd. According to the Gender Equality Index, compiled by the European Institute for Gender Equality, the balance between women and men in care activities is increasing, as well as the presence of women in positions of power (as an example, Spain introduced a gender quota of 40% in 2007). However, the gender pay gap persists and women's risk of poverty is much higher than men; moreover, they keep being relegated to feminised sectors of education and employment[6]. In 2004, Zapatero's government approved the Ley Orgánica 1/2004, 28 de dicembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género, which identifies gender-based violence as a structural phenomenon and establishes substantial funds and resources to fight it. Feminist politicians have been part of political parties since the 1970s, and their presence (both in electoral competition and in government) strongly influenced institutional policies and measures. From 1983, the Instituto de las Mujeres promotes and fosters the conditions that enable the social equality of both sexes and, on the other hand, the participation of women in political, cultural, economic and social life, in attachment to the Ministry of Equality, through the Secretary of State for Equality and against Gender Violence. However, institutions in Spain work through a strong decentralisation, thus many policies and services are ruled by local authorities and regions.

With respect to these socio-economic and political settings, feminist movements have often pursued forms of direct social action in order to go beyond the State's brokerage. As Bosi and Zamponi stress, in the last years there has been "an increase in forms of participation that ignore or circumvent the traditional state-addressing repertoires of action, and that focus instead on a 'self- changing' society as part of everyday politics, in which the distinction between the public and private spheres is blurred (Kousis and Paschou 2014). Alternative forms of resilience, mutualism and prefigurative politics are different labels that often define the same set of phenomena" (2015: 368-369). The feminist movements' repertoire of contention in the last years is often direct social actions, such as feminist spaces: beyond claiming something from the state, they transform some aspects of society through action. However, feminist movements engaged with DSA starting from the 1970s, in a phase of high mobilisation, by opening anti-violence centres and health clinics. Feminist movements in Italy have a strong and deeply-rooted tradition, going back to the 1960s. They first emerged through

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[5] http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf, last visit August 2021.
[6] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/country/ES, last visit August 2021.

consciousness rising groups or women's sections inside movements or parties (Lussana 2012, Passerini 1991, Melandri 2000, Stellifferi 2015). From the beginning, they framed gender relations, inequalities, and roles as the key factor of female subordination and subalternity (Firestone 1970, Lonzi 1974, Libreria delle donne di Milano 1987, Melandri 2000). Struggles for reproductive rights and abortion, the right to divorce, civil and political rights on one hand, and for the subversion of the entire male-based structure of society on the other, were the core claims and triggers for action (Banotti 1971, Calabrò and Grasso 2004, Bertilotti and Scattigno 2005); and they eventually produced cultural and political outcomes (Percovich 2005).

The legacies of those movements are strongly tied to contemporary upsurges, both because of their political continuity, and because of the participation of the older generation of activists. Today's feminist spaces are the result of that legacy, and they show the continuity of this type of action within feminist movements (Barone and Bonu forthcoming). After the feminicide of Sara di Pietrantonio in Rome in 2016, a new cycle of feminist mobilisations emerged, called Non Una di Meno, linked to the Argentinian women's movements against gender violence. The movement saw the convergence of historical feminists, collectives, women's shelters, queer and LGBT collectives, social centres, associations, and feminist counselling centres (Chironi 2019, Barone and Bonu forthcoming). Soon, through public protests and marches – like the march against gender violence on 25 November and the feminist strike on 8 March – and the proliferation of local assemblies beside the national one, the movement became larger, more visible and widely recognised.

With regard to Spain, the right-wing authoritarian regime ruled from the mid-1930s to 1975 and it deeply affected democratisation processes and women's struggles and rights (Valiente 2013). Depending on state re-configuration – the distribution of power from central state authority to territorial level; the delegation of authority to European Union, and the redistribution of power among governmental departments – and actual configuration (a parliamentary monarchy), feminist movements changed over the last two decades, manly addressing the regional and EU levels (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005). Strongly rooted in local contexts, feminist movements achieved growing relevance that still endures nowadays. As many other European countries, Spain has been influenced by global cycle of mobilisations around gender violence and gender inequalities, joining the transnational call on feminist strike with mass mobilisations and public protests (Portos 2019, Campillo 2019).

In the framework of the 15-M, social centres, occupations, health clinics, and self-managed spaces emerged as a form of direct social action, by targeting the crisis and the broader male-based neoliberal setting (Gámez Fuentes 2015). As rooms of active democracy, feminist spaces pursued prefigurative

politics and grassroot services, and they became key actors in recent mobilisations (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005).

4.3 Rome and Madrid

Rome and Madrid are two capital cities with several similarities and differences. Both of them have a large surface area, and a population of around 3 million with very high density.

From 2016 to 2021, Rome was ruled by the Five Star Movement with the mayor Virginia Raggi. The city is crossed by strong social inequalities, dividing one part of the city with a certain degree of wealth, and another that suffers in terms of housing, employment, income, poverty, urban transport network, health, and access to services (Lelo, Monni and Tomassi 2019). The weakening of social policies at both national and local level has severely affected this part of the city where, over time, struggles for the right to housing and grassroot social movements have tried to invent answers, more or less in conflict or collaboration with the local administration. These data have a particular impact on those sectors of the population considered fragile, such as women and LGBTQ individuals, who pay the highest price for inequalities and the economic and pandemic crisis (Zanfrini 2005, Toffanin, Pietrobelli e Misiti 2020, Demurtas, Peroni e Mauri 2020). Due to its sprawling extension, the Roman social and administrative context is strongly organised by neighbourhoods, which have their own contextual realities and identities. The municipality and the regional government manage most of the public anti-violence centres. Part of them is run by feminist-inspired cooperatives and associations. According to the Istanbul Convention, the municipality of Rome should guarantee 300 shelter places in relation to the size of the population, but at the moment it only guarantees 26. Compared to these numbers, an occupied place like LYS covers 60% of the sleeping accommodations currently available in Rome for women fleeing violence. Despite the presence of a service such as "Pari Opportunità" (equal opportunities) managed by the city council[7], great distances persist between feminist movements and the institutions: as an example, the city council was the first actor attacking FS (such as CID and LYS). Since 2019, the Lazio regional government has approved a regional law on common goods that promotes the shared administration of common goods through forms of collaboration between the regional administration, local authorities, and active citizens, aimed at the care, regeneration, and shared management of the goods themselves. The regional government generally shows a higher sensitivity than the city council with regard to the relation with associations and movements on the ground of gender violence (Pietrobelli et al. 2020).

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[7]   https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/dipartimento-partecipazione-comunicazione-e-pari-opportunita-uffici-e-contatti.page?contentId=UFF25642, last visit August 2021.

From 2015 to 2019, Madrid was ruled by a leftist mayor, Manuela Carmena, while from 2019 the election turned to right-wing governments and by now, the town council of Isabel Díaz Ayuso (PP) is supported by Vox, an extreme right party. Carmena's work was inspired by a strong reflection on municipalism, which "is based on the assumption that municipalities can be the elementary political unit of a dimension built from the bottom up. Municipalism identifies municipal democracy as a fundamental instance of a model of democracy that (tendentially) defines itself as emancipatory with respect to the monopoly of politics by the state and representation as the classic form of liberal democracy" (Rodriguez 2017).[8] Hopes for radical change in the wake of 15-M soon clashed with the reticence of the mechanisms of institutional politics, which never fully embraced the prospect of a participatory government in Madrid. Strong inequalities persist, and the organisation in 20 districts reproduces the differences between the centre and peripheries. The city council of Madrid has been strongly engaged in gender politics and gender equality provisions. The inclusion of people coming from feminist movements into the apparatus favoured a growing sensitivity of the municipality toward gender-based violence and gender inequalities. As an example, the 2018-2020 strategic plan of the city council is oriented "toward a feminist city," including four main fields of intervention: public action with a gender-integrated approach; freeing the city from male violence; the sustainability of life; employment and co-responsibility; women's participation and new forms of leadership. Moreover, the city council manages seventeen Espacios de Igualdad (spaces of equality), almost one for each district, that I will later explore. Despite the situation changing because of the right-wing attacks toward gender politics, Madrid's institutions incorporate a deep awareness of gender in public policy and an extensive commitment to services, resources, and attention to sectors of the population such as women and LGBTQ people.

4.4 The Feminist Spaces Included in the Research

4.4.1 The International House of Women: Between Movement and Institutionalisation

> "The International House of Women is not a feminist space, is THE feminist space"
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> (Fieldnotes, CID, 17-10-19)

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[8] http://www.communianet.org/rivolta-globale/madrid-un-bilancio-dopo-due-anni-di-"municipalismo," last visit August 2021.

The International House of Women is the historical space of feminist movements in Rome since the 1980s. Previously, in 1976, the Movimento di Liberazione della Donna (Movement for the liberation of woman), linked to the Partito Radicale (radical party), occupied a House of Women in Via del Governo Vecchio, in the city centre (Pomeranzi 1982, Stelliferi 2015). Slowly, all feminist groups, organisations, and collectives of Rome (such as the MFR – Movimento Femminista Romano, in Via Pompeo Magno) started to gather there, and made the place a key space for feminist organisations and coordination (Fiorensoli 1999).

After the eviction, carried out by the municipality, feminist movements kept claiming another space. In 1987, they occupied part of the old Buon Pastore building, an historical penitentiary for women charged of moral accusations, founded in the 17th century, situated in Via della Lungara, in the central neighbourhood of Trastevere. At the beginning, several feminist groups, such as Centro Femminista Separatista - CFI (Separatist Feminist centre) and Collegamento Lesbiche Italiane - CLI (Italian Lesbian Connection), gathered together in order to manage the space. In 1992, the House was listed as one of the works of Roma Capitale, and at the beginning of 2000 it was officially assigned to the women managing it by the municipality, with a deal and a rent. Formally, women are allowed to manage a portion of the building equal to 19,000 square metres. From 2002, AFFI - Associazione Federativa Femminista Internazionale (International Federative Feminist Association) and CFI manage the activities of the Consorzio Casa Internazionale delle Donne, which has economic and managerial responsibilities on the building. The Consorzio included a variable number of associations, from fifty to today's twenty-eight. These associations have their basis at the House and they take part in the daily life and activities of the space. Their interest and purpose range from reproductive rights and women's health, psychological and family assistance, gender-sensitive communication, to help in work, education to gender and differences, managing the archives of women's history, women's culture and art, legal assistance, feminist editorial products. So far, the House is the biggest experiment of women management of a space in Italy, and is still one of the most important political experiences for women in Rome and beyond.

Nowadays, beside the associations' offices, there is a conference centre, a hostel for women, a restaurant, a space for children, other spaces for gym activities, and a garden. The House hosts the daily activities of associations, but also a "sportello sociale" (social reception), events, concerts, festivals, presentations, seminars, conferences. Along these activities, the House is managed by a Direttivo (a board of several women elected by the assembly) and the general assembly of the Consorzio, with all the associations' representatives.

The 4000 square-metre Buon Pastore building, managed by feminist activists, associations and groups, changed many times the organisational and political status of the House. The building has the

typical structure of a penitentiary, with a central courtyard surrounded by the four wings of the building. Spanning three floors, it has hundreds of small rooms with one or more windows on the courtyard – these rooms used to be cells where women prisoners were trapped in. This peculiar structure also tended to shape the practical organisation and the political activities of the feminist groups crossing this space.

At the end of 2017, the municipality sent an official letter of eviction because of an unresolved debt (since women paid less than the agreed rent), and a supposed illegal occupation of the building. Since then, a large mobilisations of women, feminist movements, and citizens rose up in order to defend the House. At the moment of writing this thesis, the negotiation between the House and the municipality is still ongoing.

4.4.2 Lucha Y Siesta: Recovery and Rest against Gender-Based Violence

> Revolution needs time
> and doesn't leave anyone behind
> (Qandil's women in Lucha Y Siesta 2016: 5)

> Together is a wonderful place to shelter
> (Lucha's flyer)

The idea of a women's occupation was born within the framework of Action, a social movement based in Rome mainly focused on housing rights and occupation of houses and buildings as the main tool of contention. Women activists of the group started noticing that a lot of the women asking for help to the Action front desk were involved in cases of domestic violence or structural gender-based violence, and that a women-only occupation was necessary. They founded a women-only group, Action-A, specifically devoted to addressing the issue.

On 8 March 2008, more than forty women occupied the space in Via Lucio Sestio 10. At that time, the place was an empty warehouse, although it used to be a car deposit and offices of Atac, the company managing public transports in Rome, which is also the owner of the building. The building spans three floors, with a terrace on top, is surrounded by a garden, and is encircled by a few blocks. Built in 1920, it was abandoned since the 1970s. The place is located at the VII municipality (Tuscolano neighbourhood), one of the most populous neighbourhoods in Italy, affected by relevant social and economic issues.

On 8 March, the International Day of Women, activists entered with a banner: "Among the feast, the ritual, the silence, we choose the fight." The name is a play on the geographical location (just outside the metro station Lucio Sestio), and to the Spanish terms for the act of fighting and rest, deeply rooted

in Lucha's movement culture, also borrowed from Zapatistas' political background. Since the beginning, Lucha Y Siesta (LYS) started hosting around 20 women and their children, but the number changed over time. At the time of the fieldwork, LYS hosted fourteen women and seven children. The space is meant to be a "symbolic and material place of women's self-determination against all discrimination based on gender" (About Us, on their site).[9] They are "a model of active citizenship, an example of social solidarity and a civil and cultural proposal" (Lucha's flyer). Over the years, Lucha promoted new welfare experiments and women's rights, presenting as a hybrid project across women's shelter, semi-autonomy house, and political house of women. Among their activities, they offer information, guidance, support, listening, and reception to women in need, though the space is also a space of culture, politics, entertainment, art.

The organisation of the Houses constantly changed over time, but is now structured through the political assembly of LYS's activists, the management assembly with all the women that live at LYS, and the assembly of the "operatrici" (women operators), who follow the women hosted in the house and the women looking for help at the front desk.

Nowadays, LYS offers around fifteen accommodations for women escaping male violence, a centre of listening and hospitality, the "Lucia Perez" women's shelter (a semi-autonomous house, located outside LYS itself), a library, a project against stereotypes, a psychological supporting centre, several–courses (music, languages, gym, theatre), and a sartorial laboratory.

After Atac declared bankruptcy, most of the company's properties, among which is LYS, have been claimed to be sold in order to solve the company's debt. LYS received the official letter of eviction and detachment of utilities planned on 15 September 2019. In order to defend the space, LYS's activists called for a huge mobilisation through the citizen committee "Lucha alla Città" and the proposal of a popular participated purchase of Lucha (the building is indeed expected to be sold at auction). During the last phase of the research, the Lazio regional government put forward a proposal to buy LYS at auction and to give it to activists to manage through a commons management pact.

4.4.3 The Space of Cagne Sciolte: Building Autonomous Feminist and Queer Politics

> Cagne Sciolte at the conquest of space
> Against all types of violence
> Together with all other women
> (Cagne Sciolte's website)[10]

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[9] https://luchaysiesta.wordpress.com/chi-siamo-2/, last visit August 2021.
[10] https://cagnesciolte.noblogs.org, last visit August 2021.

The name of Cagne Sciolte ("mavericks" or "dogs without leash," in the feminine form in Italian) defines a group – or rather *a pack* – of activists, ranging from very different movement cultures – social centres, feminist collectives, anarchist assemblies, politicised art scene, or people who engaged in politics for the first time. The meaning of the name refers to different dimensions. On one hand, using the feminine form is a provocative stance against the universal male language from a feminist and transfeminist standpoint. On the other hand, the name claims a specific political behaviour and political method, carrying the meaning of being "disbanded." They do not refer to traditional forms of collective action, and they reject the male repertoire of action in social movements. Everyone is free to act and talk for his/her/themself, and the group is made up of free individuals who choose to or abstain from fighting together; they come from very different movement cultures (anarchist, libertarian, Trotskyist, communist, and so on) which co-exist in the fight against sexism, homo-lesbo-transphobia and gendered violence; finally, they have a sensitivity towards environmental and animal rights and the habit of living everyday life and activities with animals – especially dogs – held as an inner part of their political community. The group defines itself as queer and transfeminist, bridging academic reflections and movement's production of knowledge: the subjects of feminist politics are not exclusively cisgender women (individuals whose assigned sex at birth was female and who self-identify as women), but also trans women and men, lesbian women, gay men, non-binary people and so on. The composition of the group, indeed, is heterogeneous, with a majority of lesbian women at the time of the fieldwork.

The group, angry at male social movement patterns and at the urban exclusionary patterns of Rome, started meeting in the neighbourhood of San Lorenzo and decided to occupy a feminist space together on 14 December 2013. The space was a dismissed night club in the neighbourhood Ostiense, in the south of Rome: it was a proper building with a bar, a stage, poles for pole dancing, rooms, and a basement.

The space is managed by a weekly assembly of activists. From almost the beginning, the basement was used as an anti-violence front desk called "Una stanza tutta per sé" (a room of one's own), rooted in a university feminist collective called Ribellule. The front desk was meant to offer supportive talks, hospitality, and legal advice. Over the years, the space (called the space of Cagne Sciolte) became a laboratory for radical thought and practices, mainly focused on reproductive and sexual rights, trans people's struggles, self-care and body acceptance, the claim on sexual liberation and non-monogamies against romantic and heteronormative love, an anti-racist stance, the fight against prisons and repressive policies, and anti-authoritarian actions. Moreover, the space of Cagne Sciolte hosts a vegan trattoria, self-organised pole dancing courses, festivals, events, cabaret, and self-financing activities.

Their repertoire of contention is inspired by a deeply anti-authoritarian standpoint, oriented toward a radical critique of institutions, the public health system, male-dominated movements, male culture, and capitalism. Actions beyond the space have been focused on subversive urban practices – such as slut walks; night walks against violence; creative protests (like urinating together in front of the Ministry of Healthcare), often anonymously. Internally, a deep collective reflection on gender-based violence and same-sex violence has been undertaken, through the creation of cycles of workshops and practical activities.

In 2015, the ACEA company proceeded to the detachment of electricity, and the municipality always threatens the space of eviction. So far, the ambiguous legal status of the building (which was confiscated from the former owner for exploitation of illegal prostitution) guaranteed the non-compliance of that threat.

4.4.4 The Espacios de Igualdad: Top-down Houses of Women

The Espacios de Igualdad are municipal public resources of proximity, implemented in the neighbourhood and social fabric of the districts of Madrid, and whose services are aimed at all citizens. Starting from 2002, the city council of Madrid created the Consejo de las Mujeres del Municipio de Madrid. The committee was oriented to support organisations and associations of women, and to include a gendered perspective in the policies and action of the city council[11]. From then on, the city council implemented measures, resources, provisions, and interventions in the field of women's empowerment and gender equality. Within the Government Area of Families, Equality and Welfare, the Directorate General for Equality Policies and Against Gender Violence is responsible for implementing policies to promote equality and non-discrimination, as well as measures to empower women, to reduce the gender gap, and to prevent gender-based violence. The opening of the Espacios de Igualdad was part of this project, and there was supposed to be one for each district. Progressively, the municipal network of EDIs in the city of Madrid opened 17 centres (in 20 districts in total), located in the districts of Arganzuela, Barajas, Carabanchel, Chamartín, Chamberí, Ciudad Lineal, Fuencarral - El Pardo, Hortaleza, Moratalaz, Retiro, San Blas-Canillejas, Tetuán, Usera, Vicálvaro, Villa de Vallecas, and Villaverde.

In this context, the Municipal Network of Equality Spaces is the main resource for the territorial development of the policy for the promotion of equality in the city of Madrid. The EDIs' activities are oriented to several goals: raising public awareness of gender equality; facilitating individual and

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[11] https://sede.madrid.es/FrameWork/generacionPDF/ANM2002_14.pdf?idNormativa=27da7b3cb0e4f010VgnVCM100 0009b25680aRCRD&nombreFichero=ANM2002_14&cacheKey=4, last visit August 2021.

collective processes of women's empowerment and recognising their diversity; prevention, detection, and reparation of gender-based violence.

The municipality of Madrid contracts out the management of the spaces to cooperatives, associations, and private organisations. These cooperatives are usually of feminist orientation, and they manage the spaces according to explicitly feminist principles. However, the practical management takes place between the private and public, as the municipality provides the two-year programmes and the lines of intervention within which the individual EDI teams have to plan the activities of the space. For the development of these lines of action, and through their interdisciplinary professional teams, the Spaces offer individualised support services to women (psychological and social care, legal guidance, and professional development), and organise group and community activities (through the school of empowerment and the school of equality).

The EDIs are designed as spaces for the support and empowerment of women in all their diversity, in order to be able to confront the different gender-based violence and discomfort generated by a normative model of society. But they are also spaces for promoting equal opportunities and equality between men and women. Two types of activities are carried out. On the one hand, the equality school, which includes all those activities that are aimed at men and women, and with them professionals of minor resources. The aim is to raise awareness on violence and gender imperatives. Then, they elaborate actions and services to support women so that they can confront male violence, in a two-fold manner. They offer specialised care services, individual care services, a psychologist, a lawyer, and a professional development technician, available through individual appointments, in order to help women to solve, for example, a divorce process, a dismissal process, or to face difficulties in finding a job, preparing a CV, knowing how to deal with the labour market, and so on. Secondly, a part of the EDIs is dedicated to dynamising educators who generate training spaces, aimed at women to work on the different dimensions of their life (job, body, health, migration, gender, and so on).

As an activist told me, these are considered the House of women of the 21st century. This is the result of the historical balance reached between State feminism and the autonomous movements in the Spanish context, and the experience of Spanish municipalism.

4.4.5 Eskalera Karakola: Public Transfeminist House, Longstanding Occupation

> This idea is not only about denouncing an inequality relation, but rather about empowering all the possible "ways of being women" that do not exist, that are not expressed, that are not invented and are made invisible in "neutral" spaces.
> (Eskalera Karakola's website)

The Eskalera Karakola (EK) is an historical feminist space in Madrid. First squatted in 1996 in the Lavapiès neighbourhood, it changed location in 2005, moving to Calle Embajador. Now, through a legal deal, they are allowed to manage the space by paying a monthly rent.

The EK is inspired by principles of autonomy, self-management, and feminism. It was born from a "political desire" (from Eskalera Karakola's website)[12] to share spaces and lives, to better think together, to re-invent the world through a feminist view. The number of women managing the space is variable, and some of them are the same that originally squatted the space. They are all united by the will to grow together and carry on a daily feminist practice deeply rooted in the neighbourhood's life. The space is managed by a weekly assembly. Feminism is one of the main topics, but they also developed other political issues, such as precariat and work conditions, the right to the citizenship of migrant people, LGBTQ rights, and so on. The group is the co-organiser of the annual pride parade in the city.

At the beginning, the space was called "Kasa Okupada por y para Mujeres," and only later it became "Kasa Publica de Mujeres." It is open to whoever wants to join, spend some time there, or propose projects and activities. The EK is self-financed with members' quotas and individual donations. They have been involved in several projects, such as a project toward women's technological education, with relevant grants that allowed them to buy computer and audio-visual equipment.

In the former location, the space was much more centrally managed, whereas after the move they made projects and activities more independent. Management assemblies are separatist and handled only by women, but activities are usually opened to everyone.

In the spaces there are a lot of different activities and groups, such as a group on feminist economy, an agricultural cooperative, a hacklab on feminist technologies, a self-defence group for women, a group of trans people to fight sexual harassment in the neighbourhood, a group of migrant women, a transfeminist reading group. The EK has been the site where relevant groups were created, such as the group Precarias a la Deriva, that worked on women's precarisation and work conditions, and the group Territorio Domestico, composed of mainly migrant women working as domestic workers or caregivers. Because of its history and relevance in the feminist movements in Madrid, the EK brings together extensive support from the inhabitants, who, although not participating on a daily basis, are always present in the financing of the site, though emotional, material, and political support, and in public initiatives.

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[12] https://eskalerakarakola.org, last visit August 2021.

4.4.6 Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros: a multiple platform of Radical Bisexual and Lesbian People

> Back to the barricades together […] In love and with company.
> (Interviews to Tatiana and Lara, 2019)[13]

In their official page, Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros is described as "a network of dykes in which to put forward proposals and actions that position us as political subjects."[14] The Platform started to meet in 2018, because of the need to discuss and meet among lesbian, bisexual, queer, and feminist people. The need for this space arose from their dissatisfaction with the political landscape in which, on the one hand, feminist movements seemed to lack a radical perspective on sexuality and lesbianism, and, on the other hand, mainstream LGBT movements lacked an anti-capitalist and critical perspective. Outside the institutional spaces, which were not considered as trustworthy interlocutors, a platform was thus born, aimed at bringing together those who identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual, queer, and feminist.

Unlike the other cases included in the research, the Platform is not tied to a physical space. In fact, it is a political place that meets in various spaces, each time different, in several neighbourhoods of Madrid. The choice to include this case depends on several reasons. First, because of the characteristics of its political work, which is strongly focused on the creation of safe spaces. Secondly, because of its political orientation, aimed at critically questioning the field of sexuality and violence, in a manner quite similar to that of Cagne Sciolte. Thirdly, because the Platform represents the aspect of the proliferation of safe spaces – which I will elaborate on later – untying the concept from the existence of a physical space, and extending this possibility to all the spaces that the political community in question crosses. Somehow, I felt it was representative of a certain Spanish political culture, which has elaborated innovative reflections and practices in the field of safe spaces, going beyond the specific, hyper-politicised formations, and blurring the construction of safe spaces in a more extensive and molecular way wherever a reflection on the political takes place.

The Platform is intended to have several functions. Firstly, it aims to be a meeting place for lesbian, bisexual, queer, and feminist people. Secondly, it is meant to be a place of self-awareness and mutual care, where experiences can be shared and a common thread and political translation can be found. Thirdly, it calls for the elaboration of political practices and protests in public space, such as on 8 March and on 28 June, known in the space as Critical Pride Day. Sexuality is experienced as a

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[13] https://www.elsaltodiario.com/lgtbiq/encuentros-bolleros-jornadas-feministas-bolleras, last visit August 2021.
[14] https://www.facebook.com/bolleras/about/?ref=page_internal, last visit August 2021.

battlefield, and not as something "people are born with." Furthermore, the Platform means to speak out in the public debate, as in the case of the Ley Trans, and to combat some of the drifts of State feminism towards essentialist positions. The Platform is also a place of memory and preservation of an archive of lesbian actions and affects. Finally, it is a place for creating moments of leisure, fun, and encounters in which lesbian and bisexual people can feel comfortable. The most famous banner of the Platform that they always bring in public protests reads "We exist and we resist."

One of the first public initiatives of the Platform was the #Fachitour, on the occasion of 8 March 2019. On that occasion, the Platform organised a mock tour in the Salamanca neighbourhood, where several PP and Vox offices are located. The platform staged a tour passing in front of each of their headquarters with disguises, glitter, and parodic reversals of far-right discourses. The initiative, which attracted a lot of attention in Madrid, aimed to denounce, from a lesbian and critical perspective, the discourses of the extreme right, and neoliberal and capitalist drifts.

In May 2020, during the lockdown for the pandemic outbreak, the Platform organised two days of online debates on various topics, such as lesbian desire, the rationalisation of trans and queer people, and the generational experience of lesbian people. The days were attended by many people, allowing the Platform to reach a larger audience beyond the Madrid context, to spread their thoughts and to promote the very existence of the Platform.

Part II: Grounding Concepts in Data: The Empirical Analysis through CGTM

5. Agency and Structure

5.1 Introduction

The question of the political opportunity structure and movement action, or more specifically the relationship between structure and agency, has been debated for a long time in social movement studies, and it still is (Tarrow 1998, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, Meyer 2004). Critiques to political process theory have been put forward with regard to the overly-broad definition of political opportunities that do not take into consideration the differences in contexts, the lack of the cultural dimension, and the misleading idea of a (solely) rational social actor (Goodwin and Jasper 2009, Marx Ferree et al. 2002, Koopmans and Olzak 2004, Gould 2009). Scholars turned their attention to specific mechanisms that link structure and agency (Jasper 2012), and how (sometimes) social movements bring about structural change (Koopmans 2005).

In this chapter, I will begin the journey into the empirical analysis of feminist spaces (FSs), and the role of affects as a mediating mechanism between the structure and agency of spaces. The argument of this research is that conscious work on affects constitutes the political practice developed within FSs, and that this practice does not depower collective action, but, on the contrary, it increases the capacity for collective action. To explore how the increase of the potential for collective action comes to be, I will look at the structure FSs relate with, and the interaction they enact.

The research took place between 2017 and 2021: in those years, almost all FSs included in the research were undertaking a period of crisis because of the institutional, economic, and legal attacks on FSs. Moreover, changes in local and national administrations and the outbreak of the pandemic crisis heavily constrained opportunities for movement action. Differently than public protests and ephemeral collective action, FSs are interesting sites of analysis to look at the continuity of collective action (Taylor 1989) and at the development of strategies and tactics with regard to dynamic structural changes. In current unfavourable conditions, FSs developed strategies and tactics grounded in the political use of affects. This choice, that brought together the nonconscious, noncognitive, and nonlinguistic quality of affects (Gould 2009), rational calculation, and a conscious use of emotions, allowed them to develop innovative, challenging, and (sometimes) successful strategies to deal with

an unfavourable structure. Despite the historical removal of affects as pure irrational displays, the cases under investigation suggest that a recomposition in the analysis between the unpredictability of collective affects, a collective and conscious work on emotions, and rational choices can more systematically account for agency and for the mechanisms occurring between agency and structure (Gould 2009). While emotions have been taken into account at the individual level, quite influenced by psychology and its categorisation (Jasper 2018), I am here referring to the relational and social dimension of affects as a concept capable to explain the mechanisms that link structure and agency. How do the FSs' affective strategies interplay with structure? How do FSs put affects into action in relation to institutions, law, norms, values, and beliefs? Here I will explore how this process happens at the macro level. First, I will explore the structure of crisis and neoliberal changes that affects FSs, and their development of strategies that, eventually, produce slight structural change. To account for these structural changes, I will specifically investigate FSs as feminist economies and institutions from below. In the second part, I will look at the interaction between FSs and several players at the local, national, and international level, and with regard to the feminist movements. By mobilising affects, FSs engage with alliances and conflict and they strengthen their potential for collective action at several layers and with different actors.

Building Safer Spaces in Times of Crisis, Neoliberalism, and Structural Violence

The chapter aims to look at the strategies and tactics developed by FSs with regard to structure and political opportunities. But which kind of structure am I referring to? The spaces analysed by the research are physical places, located in urban contexts. They were created in response to a number of issues: male violence against women as the cornerstone of social structures; the consequences of neoliberalism on women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people; the lack of spaces and services for women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. From this first consideration we can identify elements that make up the structure with which FSs interact. First, male violence against women. Second, neoliberalism as an economic, social, cultural, and political system. Third, the local and national management of public policies, rights, governance.

According to the main institute of statistics in Italy (ISTAT), the 30% of women aged 16-70 report to have experienced episodes of gender-based violence. In the scope of gender-based violence they include physical, verbal, psychological, sexual violence[15]. In Italy, from 2017 to 2021 (the time-span of this research), over 100 women per year were killed by their partners or relatives, and the same goes for Spain[16]. As Gago, Malo and Cavallero explain, there is a close correlation between gender-

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[15] http://dati-violenzadonne.istat.it/#
[16] https://feminicidio.net/category/informes-y-cifras/

based violence and capitalism, which feminist movements have pointed to as a counterpart, even beyond the State: "the complexity of exploitation and domination is thus made visible in a way that does not result in impotence or cynicism, but rather highlights and disseminates the subjective and everyday articulations as a strategic factor in confronting the logics of violent accumulation of capital. That is: the feminist movement has actualized, in a popular feminist pedagogy, the organic relationship between violence against women and feminized bodies and the accumulation of capital, and has done so from a practice of insubordination" (2020: 18-19). On one hand, because of the way economic structures are shaped upon social structures. As a consequence, the economic and financial structures reproduce marginalisation, gender pay gap, indebtedness. On the other hand, from an historical point of view, because of the way the accumulation of capital is built upon the subalternity of women. In her inquiry on the transition from feudalism to capitalism during the 16th and 17th centuries, Federici (2004) argues that the emerging social and economic systems were grounded on the exploitation of women and on witch-hunting. The accumulation of capital was enhanced through the implementation of enclosures and through the re-collocation of women in the private space, by dispossessing them of their capacities, social skills, knowledge, and role in the community. Whoever exceeded the emerging gender norms was considered deviant and burned at the stake. Moreover, the production of the work force in the new capitalist system was to be reproduced by the invisible work of women. In *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Maria Rosa Dalla Costa (1971) sketches out a critique of Marxist orthodoxy, by proving that women's unpaid work at home was the pillar on which the exploitation of waged labour and the capitalist productivity was built upon. Since then, the exploitation of women in the capitalist setting has changed form but not nature (Cornwall, Gideon and Wilson 2008). By addressing the materialist side of women's oppression, feminist movements have targeted social reproduction, on one hand, and the gendered economic and financial exploitation, on the other.

As a matter of fact, FSs have picked up the baton of the struggle against gender-based violence and against its interplay with the neoliberal setting.

Moreover, all the spaces included in the research are dealing with a political crisis and the threat of eviction. Local administrations do strategically take advantage of FSs (e.g. when there is a lack of accommodation for women in shelters and women escaping violence are informally delegated to FSs), but they strategically attack them in other circumstances. In this context, FSs have to develop effective strategies with regard to changing political opportunities. Despite the crisis having the potential to become only a constraint, or a distorting factor in the FSs' repertoire of tactics, it is precisely in this context that FSs consolidate and innovate their strategy through the work on collective affects. Inside and outside of the spaces, strategies, networks, and goals are shaped through

the mediation of affects. The time, content, and orientation of collective action changes according to the use of affects, that often lead to innovative or unexpected solutions. Slowing down; strategically changing interlocutors; consolidating creative models of intervention; developing caring relationships with the urban context; identifying individuals within the wider governmental structure with whom to develop relationships of affection, recognition, and care, are just some of the strategies embedded in the work on collective affects.

While public protests address the issue through eventful moments (della Porta 2008), FSs elaborate strategies on a daily basis, in the continuity of movement action (Taylor 1989). As I will further develop, crisis, the neoliberal setting, and violence present a challenge to which FSs elaborate contentious politics, by means of affects. While political process theory would argue about political opportunities and rational actors, I am here taking into account also the potential of affects to increase the capacity for collective action.

Feminist Economies

In the context of crisis, the FSs' criticism to the economic and model of production is even sharper. If the occupation and re-appropriation of political spaces represented a reaction to the lack of spaces and services in the urban context, to gentrification, to social segregation, this reaction is also oriented towards the economic model that produces a certain idea of the city, a certain distribution of resources, a certain idea of value and well-being. In this sense, the economic model is also a symbolic model that gives meaning and value to the social world and its actors. What forms does the critique to the economic and symbolic model take from a feminist perspective?

The management of physical spaces makes it possible to locate (in time and space) alternative models of consumption, circulation of money and value, and production of value. It is no coincidence that the institutional attacks on the FSs and the threat of eviction were justified by the evaluation of these spaces as unproductive, illegal, and dysfunctional with respect to the dynamics of city government. Non-productivity, in the neoliberal sense, means failure to fulfil a role in the capitalist production cycle. As an economic and symbolic model, neoliberalism also shapes the institutional set-up, its orientations. Institutions, too, are evaluated in terms of what they produce and their capacity for profit in the capitalist economic and symbolic market (Dardot e Laval 2014). FSs are not spaces of profit and in most cases do not produce the value required by the economic model. Since 2010, Italy's ISTAT has promoted an annual report on fair and sustainable well-being. The report stemmed from the idea that GDP (gross domestic product) was an insufficient measure for understanding the well-being of the population. Therefore, 12 indicators were developed to expand the concept of well-being, such as health, education, life-time balance, subjective well-being, social relations, quality of

services, environment, and so on. There is no doubt that new considerations are emerging, including from institutions and civil society, on the structural shortcomings of an economic model that produces social inequalities, accumulation of wealth and growth of poverty, and social malaise. FSs are part of this rethinking process, and they put forward alternative proposals on the subject of welfare and social value. These proposals, as this section will explore, differ in ideology, framing, and repertoires of action, but they contribute to a process that, from a feminist perspective, is oriented towards questioning and transforming the economic and symbolic model.

The economic model is not neutral, but it is also a gender model. The creation of alternative models by FSs is therefore inspired by a gendered reading of the system of production and how profit is always built on a given gender division in labour and value production. As a CID interviewee explains, the reaction of the FSs reveals the non-neutrality of the domain system: "I would see them [FSs] as places where there is access to an alternative thought to the universal and neutral one, which is not neutral at all. But which is the dominant one" (IR2, CID, 70). As an activists stated during the fieldwork, talking about her experience in Rojava, "one of the strongest messages that I brought back when I crossed that border from Turkey to Syria to enter Kobane, is when the first question of a Kurdish comrades was 'what are you doing for women's freedom?' […]. And I answered 'Lucha y Siesta.' I mean I'm resisting, I'm struggling and I'm doing it by taking back a space" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 15-06-19). This notion of resistance is embedded in a gendered interpretation of the neoliberal system. Thus, collective action that addresses the liberation of women also challenges the economic model, the management of urban space, and governance.

The process of collectively designing life and spaces is a concrete way out of individualism and loneliness, which are consequences of neoliberalism (Leccardi 2009). Collective action challenges the linear understanding of life trajectory – birth, growth, work, marriage, child rearing – and the conventional understanding of urban life and public/private domains. By drawing on my fieldnotes: living in community among women allows participants to feel good. Not only in relation to the situation of violence and the outflow, but also in daily life, in household chores, in the division of tasks, in emotional management, in solidarity. This is very much at odds with the kind of individualism on which we are led to think we should live (one's own home, one's own individual autonomy, etc.). LYS shows how community ties are often the most desirable for women, beyond family and marriage (Fieldnotes, LYS, 04-05-19). While contemporary societies are based on the nuclear family and the self-made man, FSs show how community places are necessary for the well-being and development of a person's life. Compared to isolation and the consequences of existential precariousness (Butler 2016), these spaces try to experience a life in common with other rhythms and other economies than the neoliberal ones.

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What alternative models do FSs develop and how do they differ from other forms of collective action? How are they influenced by the structure? Are such models able to produce even minimal structural changes?

Feminist Counter-institutions

Sociological institutionalism (SI) reflects on the way in which those complex systems that we call institutions produce meanings for individuals (Schmidt 2010). As Taylor and Zald (2010: 305) argue, institutions are "a complex of roles, norms, and practices that form around some object, some realm of behavior in a society." Institutions prompt cultural norms (Peters 1999) and they operate through rituals (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Actors tend to adhere to models and routines proposed by institutions since they take them for granted according to "the logic of appropriateness" (March and Olsen 1998). Mackay, Monroe and Waylen (2009) argue about the potential of bridging a feminist analysis to sociological institutionalism as a way to "systematically identify and track the norms as well as the symbolic and cultural factors that play an important role in gendering institutions and their practices" (254). According to this view, institutions appear to be shaped by norms and values, and thus by a specific gender regime. The political elaboration of feminist movements has often targeted institutions in relation to both legislative changes and the management practices of public life, welfare, services, and cultural production. Feminist reflection has concerned the aspect of norms and values on the one hand, and spaces on the other. As Tola argues, the feminist perspective has helped to rethink space (public and private) in the light of breaking down the dichotomies of private/public, nature/culture, rational/emotional:

> the oikos, once a mere site of containment, is thus turned into a space of autonomy from the patriarchal order of the polis and, perhaps, a place for cultivating an alternative politics of the living. The politics of the common that I am interested in arises precisely from this space of refusal of what constitutes the good life in the tradition of Western political thought. Cavarero's "conceptual pickpocketing" of Greek myth is part of a rich feminist genealogy that dares to think together mind and bodies, concepts and matter, nature and politics. This is less an act of reparation—feminists pictured as the better half of men stitching back together that which has been separated—than it is an act of affirmation pointing toward modes of living otherwise" (Tola 2016: 24-25).

The affirmation of other ways of living has gone through behaviours, relational styles, social norms, but it has also involved the construction of structures that would last over time. These structures are feminist spaces, bookshops, libraries, services, places of political elaboration, archives that can be explored as counter-institutions. In this sense, FSs will be analysed as counter-institutions that sediment new codes, norms, values. The production of knowledge, values and styles of interaction was followed by an attempt to sediment these processes in concrete places, through counter-institutions able to function as interlocutors of mainstream institutions, trying to produce changes in

favour of social change. The continuity and depth of the work of feminist spaces has allowed them to be accredited as alternative models which, even where less visible, interact with institutions by proposing a new set of methodologies, procedures, and values. These alternative models represent a lens to understand the relationship between agency and structure, from the perspective of FSs. Institutions are in fact a fundamental part of the structure with which FSs are confronted, and the elaboration of alternative models of institution is an expression of their potential for agency. According to what this research asserts, the production of alternative models of institution is the result of affect work, and exploring it allows us to gather new information about how affect work itself works.

Dealing with Players

In the attempt to engage with strategic interactionism in social movement studies, Duyvendak and Jasper (2015) elaborated on the concepts of players and arenas. The focus of my research are "compound players," that means formal organisations: feminist spaces. These groups engage in strategic action with the goal of dismantling gender-based violence and social inequalities and of opening rooms for social change for disempowered people, such as women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. Depending on their goals, FSs interact with different players. They deal with the districts and the town hall to negotiate their legal status; or with social services, in cases they run anti-violence services that accompany women in their pathways out of gender-based violence; or they relate to the feminist movement to define claims, practices, and political priorities. As Duyvendak and Jasper claim, "players have a variety of capacities at their disposal in pursuing their goals" (2015: 11). By reflecting on these capacities, the author tries to go beyond the concept of power, which is often too vague or overloaded. He defines three mechanisms through which compound players interact with different players and arenas: by paying, coercing or persuading them. In this dissertation, I argue about the way affects increase the capacity for collective action, to pursue their goals and to mobilise. I will use the term capacity, or potential, instead of power, to avoid the risk Jasper accounted for, and to report the idea of a process where meanings, tools, and competences are developed in the interactions with the others.

In this section, I will look at players that FSs interact with. Firstly, I will explore the local, the national, and the international level. At these levels, several players interact with FSs: individuals; the neighbourhood; the city; institutions; administrations; groups and associations. Secondly, I will refer to the relation with the feminist movement and other movements in terms of interactions, alliances and ruptures.

The chapter aims at contributing to the understanding of the mechanisms linking structure and agency to political opportunities, and to a deeper comprehension – informed by affects – of the potential for collective action. Through the lens of affects, I will try to broaden rational and structuralist explanation of social movements, by looking at those relational dimensions that drive the capacity for collective action.

5.2 Dealing with Structure: Agency, Strategies and Constraints

5.2.1 Facing the Crisis: A Plural Dimension

All the FSs included in the research are currently dealing with a crisis. With regard to Italy, all of them are born as occupations, and at the time of the fieldwork they were facing attacks because of their legal status. However, the concept of crisis is much more extended. I will here address the crisis as a structure with which FSs interact, by negotiating agency, meanings and goals.

According to the etymology of the Greek term, "crisis" refers to a moment of discernment, where a momentum for change discloses. Later uses of the term turned to a negative understanding, while crisis allows for plural meanings.

Recently, the crisis has become the name for this historical phase. As a consequence of the economic crisis in 2008, social movements have been facing new challenges and constraints (Smith and Wiest 2012, Giugni and Grasso 2016, della Porta and Pavan 2018, Bosi and Zamponi 2018, della Porta 2020). A whole set of literature underlined the potential for an innovative repertoire of action and identity transitions. Carroll (2010) argues for the creation of a counter-hegemonic bloc of social movements in times of crisis, according to a Gramscian analysis of the economic and social context. He describes these times as a breakthrough for social movements that are "bringing the new into existence" (2010: 169).

Together with the financial crisis, another factor came into play: the pandemic crisis. Starting from the beginning of 2020, the spread of the virus SARS-CoV-2 radically overturned the flow of life (della Porta 2020). Several periods of lockdown heavily impacted on FSs. Because of social distancing and the lockdown, FS were forced to close or change their activities. Some of them, such as those that engage with DSA, continued their activities through constraints and emotional burden. The most difficult task was to keep the sense of community existing. The consequences on well-being and mental health are enduring. Because everyone was considered a danger to each other, meetings

and public initiatives were shut down for a long period. The fieldwork in Italy was almost over during the pandemic, but the latter heavily impacted the fieldwork in Spain.

The pandemic has also made the environmental crisis, land consumption, exploitation of natural resources, and the incompatibility of the current system of production with the survival of humanity and ecosystems all the more evident.

When we speak about crisis with regard to FSs, we refer to at least the political, economic, and pandemic crisis. Thus, crisis is a structural condition that shapes political opportunities. As one CS interviewee explains, there is a close link between the attacks on FSs, the reactionary shift in the management of urban space, and the economic model:

> We are in a political phase of very strong attack on our way of life and our freedom. Gradually over the years the State has taken everything from us. It has taken away all our room for action, in an increasingly violent way. And it has done it not only by eviction and by making it impossible to occupy, […] but it has done it through the emptying of the streets, the emptying of the squares, the repression of sociality not based on consumption, the fight against decay, the fights for decency, the fight against poverty, against marginality, […] commodification, gentrification. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

The attack is interpreted as a more general crisis of the production model, of social relations, of urban space, of the environment. The threat of eviction is just one of many steps in a process that has seen the consequences of the neoliberal economic model exacerbated. As the interviewee continues to explain, "the evictions of our physical spaces are one piece of a larger puzzle of the destruction of our existence" (IIIR10, CS, 30). Haraway suggests that we are dealing with "the trouble" of surviving on an infected planet (2016), in reference to a general crisis condition that includes land exploitation, resource extraction, the spread of viruses, risks to the survival of the Earth and species.

How does the work on affects intensify in times of crisis? What effects does the crisis have on FSs, and what strategies do they develop? Do FSs' strategies and repertoire of action produce structural changes in times of crisis?

Just above I went through the ancient Greek understanding of politics and the city. The most frightening occurrence for the Greeks was the rupture of balance and harmony. Crisis intervenes as the rupture of a certain order and the transformation into a different one. An extended literature agrees on the role of crisis as an "heterogeneous range of phenomena, [that] testifies of the need to distinguish (also in the analysis of contentious politics) between times of continuity and times of change, normal times and intense times" (della Porta 2018: 558).

What do crises do to FSs? As an interviewee of CID explains, the threat of eviction because of the amount of debt accumulated with the Municipality of Rome "broke a status quo. An equilibrium. At that point, the House had to open up to make appeals, ask for funds, support, political battles. And this has put it back into a wider, more open circuit. The House is certainly much more open now than

it was before the attack" (IR7, CID, 69). The crisis opens a rupture into established balances and it discloses the possibility to dislodge older patterns which are no longer considered effective (Collier and Collier 1991). On one hand, the crisis allows to change patterns that are no longer working. On the other, it dramatically lashes bodies and communities, and it requires innovative tools to survive. In this paragraph, I will try to go through the way in which the production of FSs allows for developing different strategies in times of crisis, by increasing the potential, and the trouble, for political action.

FSs deeply change through crisis: they have to rediscuss their positionality, their aims, their focus, their networks, their strategies. While before the crisis a certain closure could work, in times of crisis FSs need to open as much as possible. They have to improve their openness toward the outside, to work with other FSs, and to elaborate credible actions with respect to their surroundings, to the institutions, and to other movements. During crises, FSs are forced to face, more than ever, the materiality of life. Issues such as access to electricity and water, and their economic survival become salient. Economic concerns can narrow down the capacity for action, if they are not balanced with a clear political view and direction. Economic needs sometimes crush the political project, crushing the energies of the participants on finding resources, funds, and money.

The first strategic choice of FSs is to take their own time. While usually social movements, in case of eviction and repression, heavily elaborate on contentious politics, FSs are primarily concerned by the capacity of participants to deal with the issue, and their willingness to create other types of resistance. The choice to deal with time and temporalities in a different way, as I will further develop in chapter 6, is part of the FSs' work to preserve the participants' positive affects, in spite of the risk of emotional burden. FSs construct political processes by collectively reflecting on how social structures are embedded in the way we feel, perceive, and react. This cultural and social incorporation has a bodily and cognitive effect, and it reverberates in the way we experience affects and emotions, and take them on board. The emotional sphere, like the corporeal one, is normally relegated to an instinctive, irrational, non-political function. Instead, in FSs, affects become the subject of a common work that allows us to understand which social structures produce certain affects, but also, starting from awareness, what use can be made of them. By disentangling normative temporalities, FSs reflect upon a political agenda consistent with the structure of feelings they aim to preserve. In this sense, challenging the temporality imposed by the crisis – an accelerated, ephemeral temporality, steeped in fear and precariousness – means proposing a new affective structure, that questions the foundations not only of a certain temporal model, but also of a – economic and symbolic – system of production. As an interviewee of LYS argues about the auctioning of the building (that is also a women's shelter):

> Do I have to get out of this place? I give myself my own time to get out. A) to find a solution for the women who live here, because it's not fair that these women live months of precariousness and anxiety as we are doing, and it's even less fair on their skin, B) to find an alternative solution. (IIR7, LYS, 35)

Taking one's time means freeing up a cognitive, bodily, and relational space to elaborate positive affections, capable of generating innovation and not only of reacting to the context of crisis. Indeed, the temporality of crisis produces feelings of failure and frustration. Dealing with the threat of eviction is tiring, and it leads to disillusion. It makes participants more cautious and frightened, as an interviewee of LYS reports: "you come to terms with reality more. You think twice more before you do anything" (IIR8, LYS, 30). During crises, time becomes a constraint, because crises accelerate what FSs are expected to do, and participants are progressively overwhelmed by the task. Though, feminist communities face frustration and disillusion by putting participants' emotions, in this case potential negative emotions, at the core of FSs strategies of resistance. The balance between the urgency to react and the preservation of the mental and physical well-being of participants requires a path through affections and the ability to displace limits into potentials. As a LYS interviewee further explains:

> I believe that it is the greatest loss that we can suffer, hating each other, not wanting to meet again as a collective. Beyond losing these walls, which are beautiful, cool, after that our lives are not worthwhile. [...] In a mixed movement they would tell you that you are a traitor [...]. We can't say that here. [...] Because then it happens that those who hold on have the strongest nerves. And the others? You lost them along the way. (IIR7, LYS, 35)

FSs engage with resistance on a feminist basis, as a field of agency where options are not given, but they are created as long as no one is left behind. They prefer to go slow, but to keep the community together. Crises are moments in which vulnerability can be dealt with and encompassed in politics. According to this standpoint, FSs engage with networking. Moments of crisis make alliances more needed. The creation of a structure of feelings increases the FSs' potential for communication. Both LYS and the CID's risk of eviction has been curbed by a huge popular wave of citizens' indignation. With regard to CID crisis, an interviewee says: "we had such a strong collective reaction that we clearly represent something beyond ourselves. People who have never come before are coming today to say 'the House is not to be touched'. It must mean something" (IR5, CID, 73). These networks are built upon the symbolic relevance of FSs and their history. To broaden alliances and to increase stakeholders, FSs have to be understandable. The most immediate understanding is that which travels through emotional recognition, instinct, body tension. Thus, language and narratives come to the foreground. As an interviewee states, "we had more moments to reflect on this place than at the beginning, for example, even simply to have to narrate it... [...] About what this place is, what it is for us, what we want it to be, what works and what doesn't... so it gave us more reasons to elaborate than

the project itself" (IIR8, LYS, 30). Through the stimulation of affection – of indignation, love, and solidarity – FSs consolidate and expand their network. The network's reaction is first and foremost instinctive, born of affection, and travelling on a sense of communion with the FSs' cause rooted in emotion. The instinctive affective reaction, together with the FSs' political use of this collective emotion, becomes a tactic for dealing with unfavourable conditions. The crisis is an opportunity to put the structure of feelings to the test of contamination with new stakeholders and new alliances. In this hybridisation, in which the boundaries of the internal community become porous, FSs bet that they can expand their creativity and imagination.

Differently than public protests and ephemeral collective action, FSs are concerned with the issue of continuity. FSs elaborate political processes over long periods of time. They are physical spaces and their projects and activities are planned over this availability of space and time. This spatial feature comes to be a purposive commitment to the citizenship and the city. FSs aim to be a reliable place were women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people in search for help or recovery can find a shelter despite the crises FSs are dealing with. The feelings of reliability and responsibility orient the FSs' strategies. Their goals, tactics, repertoire of action, and counterparts are from time to time addressed consistently with that. For this reason, FSs are inclined to develop strategic alliances with neighbourhood associations, social workers, lawyers, and institutional representatives. These alliances arise from a strategic need, but are based on an affective sharing of the purpose and function of the spaces. For example, with reference to the institutional figures, they are involved in the process of knowledge of the affective structure built by the FSs. This model becomes an opportunity to move, through the relational channel, the protocols of the municipalities, the intervention practices of the social services, the methodology of the fight against gendered violence, and the laws on common goods. These shifts represent small but significant structural changes that, starting from an affective management of crises, open up the possibility of innovative solutions.

At the time of the fieldwork, the FSs under consideration were facing a series of crises. First of all, the economic crisis that in the last 14 years has changed welfare, the job market, the right to housing, the spread of gender-based violence, the endemic lack of public services, and healthcare. In this context, the spaces are also born as a challenge to the neoliberal economic model, which cyclically produces phases of crisis that expose the limits, vulnerabilities, and flaws of the entire system. In contrast to an economic model oriented towards the exploitation of labour, incessant productivity, the devastation of territories, and the constant extraction of value (from labour power, affections, subjectivity), the FSs tried to experiment with an alternative, physically located, in which to challenge the model and invent new forms of symbolic, economic, and value production. This alternative model is never completely external to the economic model, nor is it endowed with indiscriminate agency,

though through innovative strategies it is sometimes able (as in the case of work on affects) to produce subtle shifts in structure. The economic crisis was compounded by the threat of eviction for all, and thus it was also a political crisis. The threat of eviction came in various forms: as eviction of illegal occupations, eviction due to the accumulation of a debt to the Treasury, as an auctioning of the property. In all cases, however, it meant the FSs had to defend themselves from institutional attacks. With respect to both crises, the FSs planned their strategies in the sense of an alternative economic, social, political, and emotional model. Crises, as critical junctures, allowed for the elaboration of innovation. By opening up their structures of feelings, these spaces build alliances, enrich the narrative of their political project, and break the boundaries of the "bubble" that surrounds them. Working on affects enables them to increase their capacity for action, in terms of strategic vision, for example with respect to reaction time and community preservation. As well as the potential of affect, crises disclose its limits. The prolonged situation of crises stimulates negative passions, such as fatigue, frustration, and disillusionment. These feelings alienate people and undermine the political project. The balance between the affections that make up the structure of the FSs' feelings determines their greater or lesser effectiveness in interacting with the structure. This research explores the alternative models produced by FSs to cope with economic and institutional structure. Alternative models represent the exploration of a materialist feminism that connects the analysis of gender as a factor in the organisation and segregation of the social world to the economic structures that produce or consolidate it. Alternative models allow us to understand how FSs' agency is expressed in relation to structure, how structure constrains FSs' forms, and how movement action can produce small structural changes. For this reason, the next sections will investigate the creation of bottom-up feminist economies and feminist institutions.

5.2.2 Feminist Economies

In this section, I will look at the alternative model of feminist economies where systems of exchange and circulation of money/value are created. By referring to the three cases under investigation, I will outline institutional feminist economy; innovative feminist economy; and radical feminist economy. As mentioned in the introduction, the challenge to the economic and symbolic model is played out, on the one hand, on the idea of value, and on the other on that of well-being. What produces value and what is well-being? What alternatives are there, from a feminist perspective? How much does structure condition collective action, and how is the agency of the FSs able to produce change?

FSs seek to produce alternative spaces to the economic model and the market logic. However, they

have to face the neoliberal economic model. The issue of counter economies concerns multiple dimensions. First, it regards the management of a physical space that is located in a city, and in an institutional and administrative setting. Spaces have to face economic sustainability and, depending on their status – occupation, self-management, rented space – a sum of money has to be paid in order to keep the space existing. Money may be required to pay the rent, to renovate the space, to pay the people working there, to face utilities and costs. Sustainability pertains economics and people. The creation of alternative economies allows spaces to develop priorities, in which the well-being of participants comes first. Well-being comes from social relations, decent work, quality of services, health (in all its dimensions), economic autonomy, self-awareness and personal growth, care for oneself and for other people. Attention to a broader form of well-being makes it possible to change the social function of places such as FSs from producing profit to producing social value. Affects are at the heart of political action. Well-being, happiness, and positive passions are considered the main goals, and the circulation of money, work, services, and relational dynamics are elaborated according to this priority. The work on affects modifies strategies, forms of collective action, agency.

Three directions may be labelled: an almost company-like approach; a hybrid disposition between reasonable profit and counter economy; a radical rejection of profit and self-income.

The first model, that I address as institutional feminist economy, concerns those spaces that closely relate to institutions. Depending on this relation, they are forced to deal with a rent, a debt, a proper economic management of the space. Despite a blurred approach to compensation and income, they are willing to pay some people in order to work at the space, because of the formalisation of some activities (such as the restaurant and bar, the hostel, the reception desk, and so on). As one of the participants explains, a major shift was the change from employment and private association: "the other big step was from association to association of social promotion, because otherwise you can't participate in certain calls for proposals. Later we became a private law body, so we have private legal personality" (Fieldnotes, CID, 19-11-18). This transformation changes the inner structure of the space, forcing to face legal and economic tasks, that are close to market logics. Sometimes, the struggle to glean the expected amount of money blurs the political endeavour of the space. Retrieving from my fieldnotes, during a conversation with an activist of the House: "another of the great problems of the House is that by virtue of economic sustainability everything is paid for, and often this stretch is unquestionable, making space inaccessible to many. She tells me that this is one of the strongest elements that drives women away, because if you can't pay here you won't find space." (Fieldnotes, CID, 07-11-18). This drift makes it extremely clear how neoliberal settings keep on weighing on FSs, conditioning their political action, despite the effort to dismiss some of these mechanisms. The more FSs depend on their relationship with institutions and its logics without an

adequate relationship of strength, the more they are crushed by the weight of the structure, the less agency they are able to express.

A second model, that I address as innovative feminist economy, shows a hybrid nature. Some spaces try to work for economic autonomy, and so creating internal structures of money circulation and money management. As a general frame, these spaces aim at offering services, events and courses at popular prices. In the case of LYS, women living at the space are invited to contribute to a common fund, giving a small quote and so taking part in the common expenses – such as toilet paper, soaps, and so on (even though they do not pay rent and they can be exempted from giving their quote when they are out of money). As I remarked during the fieldwork and reported earlier in the fieldnotes: "the question of money is very sensitive because I understand that most of them, perhaps all of them, are very poor and every euro is important." (Fieldnotes, LYS, 19-09-19). Often, spaces offer a practical answer to women living processes of pauperisation and lack of minimal requirements to survive. One of them comments her entrance at Lucha thus: "I couldn't do this at home, I couldn't live in a decent way, not in luxury, in a decent way" (IIR8, LYS, 66). Despite their inner precariousness (as squatted or temporary granted spaces), spaces are considered as stable and safe also for who is living a moment of extreme precariousness and pauperisation: "This place is also beautiful because you go out through the gate and you have the underground. […] If I find myself in a moment where I've left home, I don't have a job, I don't have a house, well maybe the underground is handy for me. Instead of living where even buses don't pass" (IIR1, LYS, 37). This contribution makes explicit the link between the perception of security and the material dimension of life: the possibility of living in spaces where financial resources do not preclude the possibility of social interaction fuels the feeling of well-being and, in their words, of security.

Some tasks, such as cooking for initiatives, or reception, are remunerated. However, this is far from a solved issue, as this retrieved segment shows: "the case stems from the fact that someone used the word 'exploitation' to describe the commitment they put into cooking for LYS initiatives and the low remuneration. Laura points out that they can't talk about exploitation when all of them have a roof over their heads, they don't pay rent or anything and the house still has so many expenses to bear for the good of all. Women compare themselves in different ways: some, like Sica, say that any gain is fine, especially because she is willing to do something for the good of all. Slowly the others intervene, saying that for them the point is to help LYS too, and that maybe they can and must find a different way to share the earnings among the women who cook" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 04-07-19). Whenever money is part of the collective action, troubles emerge. The symbolic significance of money is inextricable from the neoliberal context in which its use takes place, even in places that defy the rules of the game. The management of money is always questioned, so that they collectively invest in a

large project of popular shareholdings, which is still a debated option. They develop a creative repertoire of action in terms of feminist economy, beyond the – quite typical fear – of engaging with money in social movements organisations. In order to implement their activities, these spaces try to resort to public calls (and public finances), and not simply self-financing themselves with events or fundraisings.

Regarding the third model, that I address as radical feminist economy, in accordance with a longstanding history of squats, anarchist occupation, and women's separated spaces, some spaces reject any type of relation with the economic market. In open contrast with the economic model where everything is monetised or has to make a profit, one of the CS respondents explains that: "we decided that […] money didn't count for the accessibility of the place. […] Then I wonder how much we have entered into a work mentality where in any place you do that activity you feel that it is your job and you feel that you have to be paid a lot. And you don't feel that you can do something just for the others" (IIIR3, CS, 30). As the quote shows, this approach radically challenges the economic model, by claiming the possibility to offer one's time and skills for others without being mediated by the exchange of money. They tend to not disdain forms of reappropriation, they seek to survive with as little as possible, and they define their militant choice as a purely political choice, and never as "a job" – so excluding the possibility to be paid for some skills and tasks. As one of the interviewees makes clear, in order to avoid any form of compromise with the neoliberal economic model, all forms of profit are excluded: "it is a space where no profit is made. [...] We have often talked about self-income and always decided against it" (IIIR7, CS, 30). Moreover, they report the choice never to charge the subscription within the space, as one of the interviewees explains, in the sense of a further way to escape from the model and rethink the accessibility of spaces not based on individual economic availability: "making everything fully accessible, fully passable, making a totally vegan choice. These are all strong, radical political choices and we have paid for […] but we have never questioned it." (IIIR10, CS, 30). According to this choice, they rarely or never compete in order to gain public finances, developing only self-financing types of activities.

Despite their differences, these three models represent an alternative to the neoliberal economic model, and show the agency of FSs with regard to the economic, social, and symbolic structure. The management practices of money, work, services, profit, are oriented towards the well-being of the participants and the people living in the spaces.

Well-being is an often non-existent measure in the cost-benefit calculation of the neoliberal economic model, which has only recently emerged as a significant dimension in the social health of the population. What produces value is working on affects and emotions that help people to develop themselves beyond the subjective dimension required by the economic model, which is rational,

productive, and result-oriented. The development of emotional and affective competences improves the life of participants, and in this sense is productive of a value not accounted for by the economic system. The feminist perspective challenges the rational subject and the logic of profit by bringing back the self, affects, and emotions as a field of potential social value. Subjects are not independent and driven only by the increase of individual profit, but are human beings with needs, illnesses, emotions, desires, frustrations, limits. Subjects are always interdependent, and the quality of this interdependence produces social value.

Absent its gendered function, care becomes a relational practice that allows to increase collective well-being. In this sense, FSs are spaces of care and well-being that rethink the economic model. The alternative economies of the FSs break down the dichotomy between productive/reproductive work, nature/culture, rational/emotional, to propose new models of well-being, value production, and social justice in urban contexts. Are such alternative economies able to produce structural changes, and how are they affected by the structure? As shown in the section, a total withdrawal from the economic model is not feasible, and each FSs is more or less forced to negotiate its practices and meanings with the structure (even if only with respect to basic needs, such as the cost of utilities). At the same time, the implementation of alternative models shows the limits of the economic system by developing some alternatives. The institutional attack against spaces is caused by the non-recognition of this different mode of production of social value, but also by the fear of the example that alternatives bring about.

Although apparently minor, some shifts in the structure are visible with respect to a series of alternatives proposed by the FSs, such as in the role of care (in the news during the pandemic); in health as a concept encompassing all the bodily, cognitive, and emotional spheres of the subjects; in the transformation of gender models and the distribution of the roles of social reproduction; in the problematisation of profit systems and labour conditions; in the methodology in combating gender-based violence. Although sometimes difficult to trace, and influenced by various aggregate factors, these shifts in structure are also the result of the agency of FSs.

5.2.3 Counter-institutions from Below

The chapter explores the relation between the structure and the agency of FSs. In the previous section, I tried to look at the creation of alternative economies pursued by FSs with regard to the economic structure, and how these alternative models are affected by the structure and/or affect it. Together with the economic system, FSs have to deal with norms, values, and institutions. The analysis of FSs as counter-institutions allows to explore how agency is displayed with regard to these other

dimensions. To understand FSs as counter-institutions, I will look at the meanings embedded in the definition of institution from a feminist perspective. In the current gender regime, the creation of gendered political spaces allows for debunking some elements of the structure. Then, I will trace the creation of feminist direct social action, its protocols and procedures as a form of contentious politics. The formalisation of knowledge and methodologies produced by FSs is another form of contentious politics, that takes place e.g. with the creation of archives. Finally, I will explore why some of them refer to the notion of common goods, both with regard to the economic structure and the institutional one.

Quite frequently, participants to the research – especially from the CID – refer to the FS as an institution, as this quote from a CID interviewee clarifies: "because the House embodies a point of imagination. That is, of a place made by women, for women, that women have made for themselves. It is an institution of women. In the proper sense of institution, that is, something that has been established, constructed. That we have built ourselves. We as a gender" (IR6, CID, 67). The sentence may sound quite striking, however, it is consistent with the SI understanding of institutions "as formal and informal collections of interrelated norms, rules, and routines, understandings and frames of meaning that define 'appropriate' action and roles and acceptable behavior of their members" (Mackay, Monroe and Waylen 2009: 256). The stress on the dimension of gender as a matter of organisation and day-by-day interactions is consistent with a feminist approach to SI.

In order to describe how the CID became a counter-institution, an interviewee uses the concept of "a ministry of women": "the House, such a big place almost becomes the ministry of women. [...] What does the House say? What does the house say? [...] That's a bad thing, to say ministry, because it's not producing or administering anything, but it's a place that has certainly been taken as a symbol. Because it does not have one voice, but it has many. Women do not have only one voice" (IR1, CID, 58). These places are symbols of thought, rituals and codes, they have a public voice and are taken as a point of reference by women when they need tools to understand what they are living, what is happening in the contemporary world.

Gender is a key factor in the way these relationships (between spaces and the context) are shaped. Italy is a national context where gender equality – even on a formal level – is far from being achieved (Calabrese et al. 2018). The occupations and the management of spaces by groups of women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people still appears as unconventional. As a CS interviewee argues: "If there had been a lot of males in that place [...] the attitude would have been different. Instead, we are a bunch of unreadable sluts who are not even taken very seriously, so they think: OK, we'll cut off the light" (IIIR5, CS, 30). As the quote highlights, gender influences the relationships with institutions and companies. A group of women is considered less serious, less skilled, less dangerous, less

credible. Since femininity is still built upon vulnerability, women are deemed as incapable of managing a physical space, its utilities and practical needs. Thus, FSs play with the boundaries of gender, by confusing and enlarging what women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people can do. Yet, they keep engaging with the consequences of institutional discrimination because of their gender. These spaces seek to reverse the stigma often attached to those who are still considered as deviant people. As a CS interviewee says: "there is a beautiful *tazebao* at the space, with a whole series of words including faggot, whore, gorda, bitch... they are not insults but they are our revolution." (IIIR7, CS, 30). FSs allow people to deal with affects produced by economic and social structures which heavily impact their life. By elaborating on those collective affects (that are not the result of individual failures but rather of structural conditions), FSs lay the groundwork for social change, as the following quote of CS participant shows:

> A lot of people approached us because we were talking about violence, this is objective, because it was an absolutely invisible subject. […] It is the responsibility of all those who have done politics over the years, of having fixed a super clear line of demarcation between the private and the political, and it was necessary to destroy that wall. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

Violence and gender thus become political dimensions, unrelated to the private sphere, to pure identity claims, or access to civil rights. As political dimensions, neither the experience nor the solution are individual, but concern on the one hand the identification of the social structures that reproduce them, and on the other hand the collective instruments used to transform the structure. As mentioned above, both malaise and well-being are elements that relate to the production of social value. As alternative models, FSs do not build profit-oriented institutions, but welfare-oriented institutions, where welfare becomes a goal of social change. Interviewees underline how different subjectivities feel "comfortable, welcome, protected" (IIIR7, CS, 30). Through spaces of well-being people can understand, rest, and re-shape, and this is a process through which people change their life. Although small-scale revolutions are usually misread, they are the first seed of a wider process of social change.

By challenging the criteria of isomorphism – that means the institutional tendency to homogeneity (Powell and DiMaggio 1991) – FSs counter-balance the requirement of adaptation to State norms and practices. They produce codes, structures, and cultural norms, often in opposition to mainstream paradigms and expectations. As a CID interviewee shows, while being a kind of bottom-up institution, FSs recognise the principle of reciprocity, whereby anyone approaching the space is not only given something, but is asked to contribute to its continuation: "in my opinion, this is the principle that should underlie it. That is a principle of belonging. It is that you come here and you don't find an institution, someone who gives you something from above, or beggars you. That is an equal relationship of dialogue. You can belong to this place, you can be part of this place, you can

contribute to the improvement of this place but also to the continuation of its existence" (IR3, CID, 45).

The development of anti-violence centres in Italy provides an interesting case: the protocols of the fight against gender-based violence have been established between institutions and grassroot practices. The first centre was created in a women's occupation in Rome (Baglioni and Zaremba 2003), and nowadays the system of anti-violence support in Italy is mostly managed by feminist organisations and networks, with (little) funding from public institutions (Demurtas, Peroni and Mauri 2021). The day-by-day practice of direct social action produces routines and codes. The set of skills developed through feminist direct social action (FDSA) becomes an established methodology that challenges institutional protocols in combating gender-based violence. As a LYS participant explains during a public intervention:

> These women in 11 and a half years invented practices that they were then able to teach. So the experience of the anti-violence service […] meant that at some point they were able to create a training course for anti-violence workers. A place where, whatever the city hall and the municipality say, they never listened to us, never showed up, but it is from Lucha that the social services and a number of institutions come, because there is really a lack. […] Women who are welcomed into Lucha, with respect to entering these pathways out of violence that do not have a time frame, the women stay there as long as necessary, and they take part into the management of the feminist space. (Fieldnotes, LYS, 22-06-19)

As the quote shows, three elements emerge. First, the development, through continuity, of skills, professionalism, and direct action that are passed on. Second, the ambiguous relationship with the institutions. On one hand, formal institutions take advantage of FSs' existence, because of the structural lack of services, welfare, social provisions, and state care. FDSA fulfil inadequate state intervention in the field of gender-based violence, but also poverty, marginalisation, mental and physical health. In the municipality of Rome, institutions provide 30 bed accommodations in shelters for women escaping violence (out of the 300 which the Convention of Istanbul requires for Rome's population density), while LYS provides 15 of them. This means that almost half of the accommodations available are supplied by FDSA. However, this informal delegation of social functions goes with constant micro techniques of exhaustion and devious attacks. Some interviewees describe the ambivalence of institutions as blindness with regard to gendered violence. It is considered by institutions an emergency for which emergency provisions are needed, while violence is a structural manner that FSs address in the long-term.

Other participants of CS explain the reason why FDSA are effective but frightening for institutions: this is because "in providing the service we partly activate a process of subjectivation" (IIIR6, CS, 35). In terms of subjectivation, the third element emerges. FSs are based on the creation of structures of feelings in which participants elaborate and transform collective affects through a relational

process, by overcoming the rational/emotional and body/mind divide. FSs claim for processes of social change that are grounded in the acknowledgment and work on structures of feelings that people deal with. The breakdown of the division between rationality/emotionality represents a crack in the economic, symbolic, and social model. As a CS interviewee clarifies, these are spaces "of subjectification, of politicisation […] and therefore it is a space that disrupts the order (IIIR6, CS, 35).

Knowledge production, new methodologies and procedures risk being volatile. In the continuity of FSs collective action, new codes can be sedimented. The choice to formalise new codes is made, for example, through the transformation of a collective into an association, or the opening of a formal archive of the history of the feminist movement. As a CID interviewee claims, this choice of formalisation goes in the direction of having "an institutional counterpart" (IR9, CID, 72). This is a contentious practice toward public institutions, that often dismiss, ignore, or disavow grassroot types of organisations, knowledge and methodologies. In the perception of one LYS participant, such work is not ephemeral, but has sedimented over time, giving rise to alternative models to institutions: "a whole movement of associations from below that has built, in the suburbs very often, another city. […] There is a work that has effectively replaced the institutions." (Fieldnotes, LYS, 22-06-19). The effectiveness of FSs' direct action represents an interesting case of the supposed opposition between rational actors and affects (Gould 2004). As counter-institutions, FSs engage with the production of new norms, procedures, and forms of direct action. However, this strategic evaluation is always balanced by work on how these new codes impact participants, what feelings are at stake, and how these collective affects shape and transform collective action. In this sense, we cannot speak of a rationality completely divorced from affects, nor of a pure emotional field without compromise with strategic evaluation.

In this direction lies the concept of feminist common goods. As the opposite of private property, common goods are spaces managed by the community. They aim at creating new democratic circuits that do not produce profit in the capitalist system (Bailey and Mattei 2013). FSs broaden the concept by bridging the role of affects and individual change as a proxy for social change. A CID interviewee explains the concept as follows: "it must be the place where any woman can come and find what she is looking for" (IR6, CID, 67). The idea of common goods is consistent with the creation of alternative economic models, as mentioned above. A CID interviewee argues for this relationship between common goods and the fight against the economic model, through the creation of community and other forms of social value:

> Rome is a dispersed city. […] These places represent a point of aggregation and reference. Of identity. It is not by chance that they want to close them down. […] In the city they represent the idea that you can live in a community that is not purely market-based. The real problem is the

> problem that places are only the antithesis of the individualist market vision. The commons. [...] Political in itself, alternative in itself. You say there is a possible alternative use of things. Things that are not just to be sold and bought. This is also the case for the House (IR6, CID, 67)

In this section I explored the creation of counter-institutions pursued by FSs as a lens to understand the relation between agency and structure. Social movements always interact with democratic processes and structures, by fuelling innovation (della Porta 2005, 2009). FSs open up to a questioning of democracy by claiming the role of affects (as in being affected by, and to affect) in political process. Institutions are deeply influenced by the economic model and as such are oriented towards productivity and profit, even if they reflect a certain idea of equity or social justice. FSs are physical places in which a set of norms, practices, and values settle. Thanks to the continuity of collective action, not only FDSAs but also counter-institutions from below and common goods come to life. Rather than depressing collective action, collective affects interplay with the construction of common methodologies, procedures, and practices. In this sense, in spite of the removal of emotions from the institutional structure and subjectivity to which they refer, emotions consolidate and develop collective action. These alternative models are in constant relation to the structure, they are influenced and modified by it. At the same time, precisely because of their continuity, they produce subtle changes in the structure. The diffusion of gender as a key element in policy, the influence of feminist methodologies in combating gender-based violence, the implementation of feminist knowledge in the academy are some of the shifts produced by the FSs' work of consolidating counter-institutions.

5.3 Dealing with Players

5.3.1 The Local and International Level

How is the interaction with urban space, groups and associations, institutions, international actors shaped by FSs? And how do they influence FSs? Which goals are at stake in the interaction with these actors? Do FSs produce consequences on different levels, according to their goals?

In the first part of the chapter, I began to explore the relationship between agency and structure by looking at two alternative models constructed by the FSs: that of feminist economies and that of counter-institutions. In the following sections, I will look more closely at their interactions with a range of players, and how they affect FSs and are affected by them.

By relating with their surroundings, FSs elaborate on different type of strategies. First, they aim at producing a broader acknowledgment of gender dynamics and gender-based violence, which results in social change. Thus, they aim to change people's, groups', and institutions' attitude toward these

issues. The change of everyday life and behaviours goes with the change in norms, values, and culture. To understand these strategies, I will specifically refer to FSs' interactions with several players: the locals, the urban space, associations and groups, institutions, international actors.

"Can I bring my chair?": several times, this question was addressed by people attending public initiatives for participants of LYS. It is telling about the way locals relate to the FS: when they take part in the events they can "bring their chair." In a way, it means bringing their needs, their ideas, their inner world. With this example retrieved from the fieldwork, I would like to engage with the first field of interaction between FSs and the outside: the urban space.

In order to engage with urban space and the neighbourhood, FSs adopt two strategies. They offer activities and public initiatives within the FSs, and they try to change the public space of the city, by going beyond the four walls of the FSs. Affects such as comfort and a welcoming attitude are perceived by locals, who take part in the FSs' life not as users, but as part of the social environment. As one of the LYS interviewees explains, the creation of a welcoming feeling structure, where well-being is considered an emotional condition that produces social change, is perceived by people from outside and increases their desire to participate: "Lucha has always been open to the territory. […] Not just proposals from other associations, from families who came to us and asked if they could have a children's party in the garden. […] Here it was a more intimate situation, and they felt calmer. This gives the measure of how much this space has entered into people's everyday life" (IIR6, LYS, 51). By working on affects and the role of communities, FSs challenge neoliberal individualism and the large cities' tendency to let people think only about themselves (Castells 1984). As explained above, the production of alternative economies also means to recognise the role of interdependence and care, and to build networks around this form of interaction. In this sense, a respondent in LYS explains that "here people feel that there is someone who cares" (IIR6, LYS, 51). Attention to interdependence and care facilitates people's participation, and it offers a possibility of social interaction outside the rules of neoliberalism.

The more people take part in FSs, the more they get in touch with gender-based violence: direct relationships with women escaping violence produce a process of awareness-raising. They see, they feel, they listen to women that are usually invisible or only reported as victims. Through this affective proximity, people are more willing to support FSs and to help them with different types of resources: time, energy, money, clothes, food. During public assemblies in LYS, people from the neighbourhood take part, as when a woman states: "I come because it is accessible for me here. I live here and I come here because it's the only place for women, in such a big city. [...] I agree to defend this space, which is my space" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 27-06-19). Awareness promotes political subjectivation, which not necessarily becomes political participation although it evolves into forms of social change.

The relation with the urban space and the neighbourhood depends on some features. Architectural conditions, social compositions, services, and so on. The CID is located in a quite touristic district, which decreases the possibility for strong ties with locals. LYS, instead, is part of one of the bigger and most populated districts in Europe – Tuscolano – with branching possibilities and interactions. The CS is part of a gentrified neighbourhood, with universities and shops, but few community ties. Whatever the neighbourhood is composed of, public spaces are often a source of ambivalent emotions, such as fear (Pain 1991) for women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, both because of architectural dimensions and because of the production of a series of social emotions connected to those spaces. In order to transform these emotions (Belingardi, Bonu, Castelli and Olcuire 2020), FSs promote walks at night and different kinds of actions: with performative actions they aim to change the nature of public spaces by using their bodies and their presence. As the following quote retrieved from a CS interviewee shows, FSs engage with the urban space by working on collective emotions, such as fear and discomfort, and they elaborate on collective action, that reverses them into positive feelings.

> The question of walking and taking back neighbourhoods, in a historical era of security packages, of introducing a series of super oppressive devices on urban marginality, was a political act. […] The slogan "free streets are made by the women who walk them," came from us. […] Our need was to say we don't need protectors, we stay where we want, we do what we want. And this is something that has contaminated the discourses of the campaigns in general, and […] also the imaginary. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

The sense of comfort, strength and well-being is produced out of negative affect, through collective action that works both on the setting and the structure of feelings. As the quotation explains, the creation of these new structures of feelings has the capacity to contaminate the narrative about public space, the imaginary, and the perception of people. In this sense, repertoires of action based on the use of affects increase the capacity for collective action and agency, but also the capacity to affect the structure. The performative action involving participants' bodies changes the nature of the space, as explained by a CS interviewee: "we go through them [urban spaces] and somehow just the fact that there is a sign, a thing, that tells you, that gives you strength, is positive" (IIIR9, CS, 35). This repertoire of action is also intended to map safer and unsafe places, in order to make people willing to change them. Thanks to this mapping, which is a political action per se, they also realise what is missing in terms of services and grassroot provisions, and they try to fill in.

In their strategic interaction, FSs build upon relations with local associations and groups, in order to broaden their visibility and to pursue their goals. As one episode of the fieldwork shows, the FSs build networks with a range of subjects so that they can reach all the people looking for the right information. This networking activity is a strategic resource that allows them to broaden the scope of knowledge and participation in the space, and also its impact: "at that moment Clara enters, she says

that she spent the morning in an Arci club [cultural association], because they were presenting an interactive map that they are building with all the references that can be useful to non-Italian people. […] LYS also participated in the construction and is on the map, so she was there" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 03-07-19). As much as FSs gain visibility and participation through networking, so do groups and associations broaden the scope of their interests by getting in touch with FSs' claims and struggles. As an episode retrieved from the fieldwork shows, associations located in other neighbourhoods decide to present the premiere of a show at LYS: "the first woman to speak says that it is very important for her to present the show for the first time at LYS, and that they have chosen it expressly because it is a place of women and interculturality. She says that LYS is a place of concrete utopias, and that it is a place of comrades, sisters and friends that must be defended and protected by all" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 09-06-19). The structures of feelings produced by FSs make groups and associations curious about networking with them. As the channel of affection is very often invisible in cultural and political networks, it is a source of curiosity and attraction for groups and associations. Openness to contamination with feminist work on affects allows them to experiment with new languages and new tools that often prove effective in their own field of action.

In order to network with the outside, FSs elaborate ways to interact with institutions. In the previous sections, I already address the relation between FDSA and institutions, and the process through which FSs produce counter-institutions. Here, I will address institutions as formalised players that are part of the structure of governance of the regional, national, and international structure.

Most of FSs reject the mechanism of representation and delegation, by always interacting as collective actors. This attitude, and an autonomous community of women, lesbian, trans, and non-binary people, can be disorienting, since people are quite used to hierarchies and representatives, and especially to male ones. Thus, FSs tackle gender dynamics embedded in the interactions among social movements and other actors by challenging gender norms that pre-exist the interaction. The choice to reject delegation in the strategic interaction with other players allows for a potential of freedom, innovation, but also limits.

Feminist movements have always challenged male culture, rules, and formal organisations, such as institutions (Taylor and Whittier 1991). As one LYS participant made clear during a public assembly, FSs are born out of an awareness of the gender regime and the economic model that also shape institutions, their goals and strategies: "we know how much alliances and the feminist practice of relationships are necessary because institutions are patriarchal, because institutions are liberal, and they cannot look after our interests" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 22-06-19). This statement is illustrative of the way institutions are contested as gendered and neoliberal. Despite the narrative of universal rights at the basis of contemporary democracy, institutions keep organising according to gender regimes

(Walby 2004). Male codes and norms do not only shape the representation, but also the set of rules and actions through which institutions work. Decision-making processes, the approval of legislation, the way courts function all rely on a gendered understanding of the social world (Zajicek, Calasanti 1998, Folbre 2015). The literature on state feminism analyses the way women and feminist perspectives struggle to get into sectors of public institutions, because of resistant patriarchal legacies (Bennet 1989, Halford 1991, Rhode 1994).

There are many ways in which FSs face unfavourable stakeholders, and one of them is to slowly crawl inside the apparatuses by trying to change gender paradigms through education. As a CID interviewee says:

> We have done more than one training course, and more than one social worker told us [with regard to women escaping violence that they work with]: "I can't listen to her, it bothers me" [...]. If you work on this you can get rid of this heritage. Basically, of these superstructures to which we all fall prey. (IR2, CID, 69)

The decision to relate with institutions and its bodies and to "educate" them is part of a broader analysis on the way in which institutions shape women's lives. Changing them is a way to change women's possibility for a better life, beyond the change of values and culture. FSs do not, in fact, aim to replace or completely fill the gaps in the institutional system, but by producing alternative models they also intend to change what exists and what most people interface with.

Despite the general consensus on this interpretation of institutions, FSs elaborate different strategic interactions depending on their goals, composition, and ideology. Some of them, such as the CID, directly interact with institutions, and they feel themselves as part of a terrain in-between the grassroot and the institutional. Other, such as LYS, are strategically interacting with institutions, because of the need to keep FDSA working. The CS rejects every type of interaction with institutions: they do not engage with them not even when it would strategically serve to save the shelter that they manage.

Among those who choose to interact with institutions, some differences occur. As one LYS interviewee explains, strategic interaction with institutions is the expression of a power relationship in which collective action is increasingly effective:

> At one of the many tables of negotiation with institutions, [...] I remember that [...] when they heard [that we host in the shelter] 12 women, they said: "no problem! We'll sort them out tomorrow." There, myself, [...] I understood. There was already a passage of growth of Lucha, at the table. [...] My answer was: "no maybe you didn't understand. You are arranging these 12, but so that another 12 women can come in." (IIR6, LYS, 51)

The quote is telling about a learning process through which FS increase their capacity to negotiate. They progressively become aware about their social function and the capacity to transform procedures, values, and structures, and they "play" this awareness in the relation with institutions.

The strategy through which FSs interact with institutions through a double presence within and without institutions is oriented to influence and to push institutions towards the approval of expected outcomes. As an interviewee claims about the CID's history: "the committee of women elected by the municipalities was born in the politics of places through the women's pact to create the International House of Women in Rome. And it worked. Them inside and us outside, it worked. We managed to have the International House of Women" (IR9, CID, 72).

FS modulate their relations according to the type of institution, as in the case of Lazio region, where the municipality is very hostile to FSs while the regional government tends to collaborate, also for reasons of political competition with the municipality.

The process of emptying democratic institutions of the capacity for political dialogue with citizens and movements also influences the FSs willing to collaborate. Sometimes, to avoid being trapped in an interaction that is no longer working, FSs shift to other players, such as international ones. They often host public events with women's communities from other countries. The creation of strong transnational ties is a matter of movements but also of institutions. For some of them, the European Union is an actor to strategically interact with because of its attention to gender-based violence, gender mainstreaming and women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people's rights.

As the analysis shows, through the lens of interactions at the local and international level we can closely explore the consequences of the work on affects pursued by FSs. The use of affects in the interaction with players and arenas increases the potential for collective action.

5.3.2 The Feminist Movement

Movements are born, grow, then decline and die. And we are like wine. There comes a time when it is perfect, for a certain amount of time you can drink it. Perfect, that is, it is at its peak, its apex. Then there will surely be another wine better than that, but it reaches that point and then at a certain point it decreases more or less rapidly. (IIIR7, CS, 30)

The time frame of this research goes from 2017 to 2021. In these years, in Italy and Spain, a new wave of the feminist movement occurred, triggered by a cycle of contention in Latin America called "Ni Una Menos" (Chironi 2019, Barone and Bonu forthcoming). The FSs under investigation existed before the new wave of mobilisation, but they are part of it and often prepared mobilisations to come. As Taylor explored (1989), structures of abeyance are carriers of symbols and values which are mobilised in the preparation of new phases of contention. FSs are structures of abeyance, but they are also protagonists of movements, when they emerge. How do FSs relate with contemporary feminist

movement? Are their repertoires of action increasing the capacity of the feminist movement? Is the work on affects mobilised into the movement's action and meanings?

The FSs taken into account have different type of approaches to Non Una di Meno (NUDM), that is the name of the contemporary feminist movement in Italy. Most of them were embedded in the network that prepared the first assemblies and mobilisations with the name NUDM. However, as long as the movement grew and changed, they changed their approach to it.

The two spaces that are used to strategic interactions with institutions, as addressed in the previous section, the CID and LYS, carry on the same strategic choice with the movement. Despite its limits and contradictions, the feminist movement allows claims to emerge, and it enhances the FSs' goals.

The third one, the queer and transfeminist squat of CS, even though contributing to the creation of NUDM, later withdrew from it. They highlight the critical conditions of Rome: as a large city, it does not favour a genuine development of movement dynamics. Moreover, the location in the capitol city increases the risk of geographical inequalities, since the assembly in Rome is always more powerful and voiced than other minor cities in the network at the national level. Already existing political structures tend to close spaces for innovation, and they reproduce power dynamics within the movement. By addressing the limits of NUDM, a CS interviewee argues: "It is a militant assembly. So it may happen that every now and then some girl, some woman who is not actively involved in politics comes, but it tends not to be like that. So the problem that has always existed since the beginning of NUDM is that it was a bit of a separate assembly of movement. With the same dynamics as non-separate movement assemblies" (IIIR2, CS, 37). Even other FSs highlight the risk of a militant composition and of professionalisation of activists, who learn a new grammar and replicate it without any real engagement for social and political change. As an interviewee of the CID argues: "I have been to NUDM, even there, there is a certain closure. And frankly I went more than once but it is a closed place, where there is a leadership, there are rituals, there are precise things, you who are there are looked at a bit like that because you are of the House" (IR7, CID, 69). FSs tend to recognise the internal dynamics of the movement much more clearly because of the continuity of their collective action. In everyday politics they interface with roles, affects, dynamics (as explored in previous sections), and this work represents a background with which they also participate in the movement. Recognising the limits but also the possibilities of the movement, as a sounding board for the FSs' claims, prompts FSs to make a strategic assessment of the interaction. FSs who manage services and DSAs are more likely to maintain a direct presence and interaction with the movement, even in difficulties, because of this strategic evaluation. Those more radical, in claims and actions, such as CS, are instead more reluctant to accept a mediation plan and are quicker to shy away from participation.

Despite the strategic choice to always maintain an interaction with movement, FSs managing DSA are also more attentive to recognising movement drifts. Some of them, such as LYS, contest NUDM as the fashion of the moment, attracting a lot of groups and movements that are not feminist at all and that try to get in just for the sake of visibility. Moreover, precisely because of their commitment to DSA, they criticise the tendency to focus on claims and campaigns, leaving apart the direct intervention into social reality. As a LYS interviewee argues:

> Unfortunately it has become again [...] a movement of opinion... instead a feminist movement is made on practices. It is better that it goes slowly, better that it does little, but that it does it on practices. And you can't do it all. […] That whole aesthetic stuff that mixed movements have been doing for years. Where you mime the alternative. But you don't practise it. You have to practise the alternative. Because only if you practise it will you realise where it works and where it doesn't work. Otherwise it's a nice idea of yours, but one that has little connection with reality. And above all, it must be about solidarity. But really […] you have to confront that contradiction, which is having relationships with someone who is different from you. Which is exhausting. And that it doesn't work out the way you think. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

As already mentioned, the quote contains the major elements of criticism by FSs to the contemporary feminist movement. Firstly, being focused on slogans and claims but having progressively lost a reference to practices and direct social intervention. The representation of social change, rather than the practice of social change, sheds light on the contrast between the eminently prefigurative character of FSs and the feminist movement, which is oriented towards other strategies and tactics. Secondly, there is also a critique of time, a time that is too rapid and dictated by the constant pursuit of the topical issue, the fashion of the moment, the political agenda, and less so by a feminist politics rooted in needs and affects. In this sense, the movement seems to be losing the elements that make FSs capable of maintaining the long duration of politics, namely the ability to create structures of feelings that participants choose to continue to inhabit. Finally, the main critique regards the lack of attention to FSs. Since the movement pays attention to day-by-day emergencies, it sometimes risks to leave aside the experience of FSs. Because of that, two consequences occur: on one hand that the proliferation of struggles and campaigns weaken the common frame of gender-based violence as the structure of society; on the other hand, the progressive drop out of anti-violence centres, services, and FSs from the movement's activities.

Despite this, all the FSs recognise the powerful effect that NUDM has had in terms of cultural transformation and widespread influence on education and social dynamics. Notwithstanding the impossibility to keep the long-term work of FSs into bigger processes such as the emerging feminist movement, some elements are deeply embedded. The repertoire of action of FSs, focused on community building process, affective ties, and the political work on emotions, is mobilised into the movement's action and meanings. As a LYS interviewee points out, "we have always said: male violence against women is not a fucking ghetto. It is something that everyone should be interested in.

So you come, you confront it, you see it, you talk to it... you live it... because it affects you...” (IIR3, LYS, 43). This idea of politicising gender-based violence as a social phenomenon that everyone should care about is part of the cultural outcome of NUDM. In this sense, FSs' efforts increase the capacity of the feminist movement as a whole.

While FSs have a fluctuating type of relations with the movement, they express a fully committed solidarity to one another. A CS interviewee explains that in the continuity of FSs, alliances and networks of interdependence are built beyond ideology and differences, so that in times of crisis, such as the current one, FSs immediately develop common strategies: “what makes the most sense to me is to be there and make it clear to the closest comrades with whom we have been messing around and doing politics for decades that we are there if you need us, [...] because I recognise you and I support you. I may not agree but I will continue to support you” (IIIR7, CS, 30). Despite different views and ideologies, all of them share the effort to produce structures of feelings capable to affect and change the structure, and this effort is the ground for enduring political alliances.

In this section I have tried to offer some insights into the relationship between feminist movements and FSs. Here, too, the mediation of affects as a discriminant appears clear. Feminist movements tend to have a more accelerated rhythm and repertoires of action, ones more oriented towards claims and influence in the public discourse. The time and forms of political action often do not allow, on the one hand, the work on affects as a basis for collective action and, on the other, the construction of structures of feelings. These two elements are inscribed in everyday politics and continuity, which are instead characteristic elements of SFs. thanks to everyday interactions and the continuity of collective action, SFs can elaborate the work on affects and structures of feelings. This difference represents a distance between spaces and movements, which is sometimes shortened by the strategic action of spaces, that, sensing the political opportunity of the relationship with movements, try to transform differences into channels of encounter.

5.4 Agency and Structure by Means of Affect: A Summary

In this section, I analysed the interaction between agency and structure, with regard to FSs. By taking into account political process theory and the critiques to an overly rationalist and structuralist interpretation, I brought in the concept of agency and that of players and arenas, together with affect and relational dynamics that serve as a ground for collective action. At the macro level, I tried to tackle the relation between FSs and the context of the (economic, political, and health) crisis. The analysis allows for claiming the role of affects as the driving force in the elaboration of strategies and tactics with regard to these arenas, and with regard to the slight structural changes they are able to

produce in the structure. To closely understand the interaction between agency and structure, I focused on two alternative models FSs engage with. The creation of feminist economies, based on women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people's needs; and on the challenge to negative affects coming from pauperisation and neoliberal productivity, to let other emotions emerge, such as well-being, willingness to participate, happiness, and joy. This structure of feelings works as a tool for relating with institutions and the State, both at the individual and collective level. The creation of counter-institutions allows FSs to elaborate on these structures of feelings, by developing strategies and actions to innovate democracy. The same structure of feelings works for the interaction with different players, such as local, national and international actors, as well as the feminist movement. Reflections on agency and structure, and on the relationship with other actors, highlight the contestation of the neoliberal rationality (Dardot and Laval 2013) carried out by FSs. What does this contestation imply in practice? Undoubtedly, as the chapter argues, the creation of alternative models and styles of strategic interaction. However, it also implies an expanded contestation of the concept of value. If value, in terms of productivity, profit, competition, merit, is the yardstick by which actors and institutions of the social world are evaluated, FSs enact a reversal of the way value is understood. Value becomes social value, understood as a level of well-being, self-understanding, identification of needs, elaboration of effective responses to needs, elaboration of time/space consistent with collective affect, new circuits of production, alternative approaches to money and exchange, promotion of social ties as the basis for individual and community development.

The concept of social value cannot be measured with the traditional tools of neoliberal rationality, yet it seems to shed light on what in this research is called the potential for action. The increase in the potential for action pursued in the FSs is, in fact, at the origin of the production of social value. In this dynamic, it is possible to find the trace of the work on affects, of the continuity of collective action, of the small changes produced with respect to structure. Exploring the reflection on social value allows us to develop an understanding of the forms of collective action, of the relationship between agency and structure, and of the outcomes of movements.

Affects, emotions, and feelings are embedded in the creation of strategies and action that allow FSs to, on one hand, increase the capacity to relate with players and arenas, and, on the other hand, to develop agency with regard to the structure. These insights pertain to the macro level. How does the work on affects operate at the meso level?

6. Structures of Feelings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the creation of feminist spaces as structures of feelings, where the work on collective affects and emotions is made into politics.

The initial research question of this project asked how feminist movements imagine, produce, and preserve safer spaces. In order to find an answer, it was necessary to spatialise the analysis, and thus to look at some physical places produced by feminist groups in which certain discourses and practices were sedimented in the continuity of collective action. The analysis carried out through CGTM led me to focus on affect and emotions, and on the way in which they are brought into play in the collective action of FSs. The analysis of affects allows FSs to make use of them in a way that increases their capacity for action on an individual and collective level. The frequent reference by participants to the feeling of greater safety or safer spaces is thus a consequence of a broader and deeper process that concerns the roots of collective action, and the assumptions on which collective action is built. It is precisely in the use of affects and the contestation of the rational, disembodied, and productive subject, typical of the neoliberal economic model, that lies the specificity of feminist spaces. Participants' stories about themselves, the everyday life of the FSs, the interventions during public protests always draw on an affective vocabulary. The recurrence of these expressions (i.e. the expression of feelings, emotions, perceptions to describe collective action) was a striking element from the outset. Inductively following this vocabulary of affects, I tried to understand why the reference to emotions was so recurrent, so instinctive, and so legitimate. The story FSs tell about their collective action is a story of emotions, because the difference of feminist politics relies in conceptualising and learning to use these emotions. This is why the question about safer spaces has become a question about the dynamics and mechanisms that produce feminist collective action, about the work on affects and emotions.

In this section, I will focus on the work on affects at the meso level. I will look at feminist spaces as physical spaces, communities, and political organisations, bound up with affects. How do affects such as fear, anger, and discontent ground the choice of managing a physical place as a collective action? Why do participants refer to these physical places as safer spaces, by calling into question an affective vocabulary?

To answer these questions, I will look at two aspects. First, at the process of becoming feminist spaces through the construction of structures of feelings, organisational forms, and non-ephemeral collective

action that proceed in continuity. This section looks at the literature on free spaces and occupied spaces, which has investigated the choice of social movements to open up and manage spaces (both physical and virtual), often linked to urban contexts. Second, to the way in which affects are mobilised in collective action.

Beyond Free Spaces: The Politics of Places and Structures of Feelings

Over time, the dimension of space has attracted increasing interest in social movements studies. Both ethnographic studies and critical geography have shown that space is socially constructed (Massey 1995). What role does space play in relation to social movements? Della Porta and Fabbri put forward that "social movements occur in specific spatial settings and flow out of the interplay of space, identities and resources. Their context is critical to a range of important actions. The struggle over space, the context of place and the politics of scale are constituting elements of social movements" (2016: 182). Referring to Lefebvre's work (1991), space matters for social movements in the sense of perceived space, conceived space and lived space, where the previous two interplay (della Porta and Fabbri 2016). Space is affected by and affects social movements. Space can serve as the scale of social action, as the environment where social movements take place, and as the agency of collective actors with regard to the structure (Caciagli 2021).

According to the social production of space and the agency of collective actors, other social movements scholars engaged with the concept of free spaces. Polletta and Kretschmer define free spaces as "small-scale settings within a community or a movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntary participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization, […] [where people] envision alternative futures and plot strategies to realizing them" (2013). Free spaces are alternative spaces produced within and against the neoliberal and profit-oriented urban and social structure. Although these spaces can be understood in very different ways, including virtual spaces, this research takes into account the literature that analyses free spaces as physical spaces. With regard to social movements, squatting practices have been explored as prefigurative politics (Epstein 1991, Yates 2015) or direct social action (Bosi and Zamponi 2015) that engage with social inequality and uncaring institutions Authors like Pruijit (2003, 2013) sought to explain the squatting practice according to the level of political awareness of squatters. However, the analysis of the practices of utilisation of occupied buildings (Filiieule et al. 2009) and the analysis of the creation of alternative social relations in the present do not adequately grasp neither the social actors that engage with that, nor the link between practices and political elaboration, as Caciagli aims to develop (2012).

Building on these works, this research aims to look at FSs as alternative structures of feelings with regard to the urban scale, the gender regime, and the neoliberal economic model. In the field of cultural studies, Raymond Williams (1954, 1969) coined the term "structures of feeling" to challenge the Gramscian definition of hegemony. The dominant way of thinking is always questioned by an inner dynamic, where different ways of thinking and feeling emerge. The use of feeling rather than thought alludes to a tension, an assemblage of emotions, rationality, affect, frames, bodies. By looking at the interaction between life forms, everyday practice, and institutions and power, Williams complements the analysis of material and social infrastructure with the one of affective infrastructure, as "the delicate infrastructure regulating our propensities and modes of presence and participation in social situations" (Sharma and Tygstrup 2015: 8). Building on Williams's concept of structures of feeling, I will look at feminist movements and the creation of alternative structures of feelings through the politics of places. The politics of places is a strategic choice put forward by feminist groups to root their everyday action in a physical place, that can be reached by other people, that can be crossed and can serve as a point of reference for the feminist community. The management of a physical space allows on the one hand to develop direct social action and prefigurative politics, and on the other hand to pursue forms of political elaboration. Yet, the literature fails to understand the role that collective affects and emotions play in the spatialisation of collective action. Space is in fact socially produced within a certain structure of feelings. If the subject has always been regarded as a rational and strategy-oriented actor, this view prevents us from looking at the affects that equally construct the way in which actors move, make decisions, interact, and choose. The social world is also constructed by emotions, and emotions are the product of social and power relations. The organisational forms and collective configurations are consistent with the creation of alternative structures of feelings where affects serve as the ground for action, and action produces positive affects[17]. The organisation, as well as the physical space, is affected by emotions and produces certain type of emotions. Studies on political organisation (Gamson 1975, Wher 1986, Staggenborg 1989) and deliberative democracy (della Porta 2005, 2013, della Porta and Rucht 2013) suggest that planning discussion, horizontality, timing of speeches, decision-making process, are part of how a movement defines itself, combining claims with practices. According to della Porta's work (2013), democratic boundaries can be expanded through participation and deliberation, channelled by social movement organisations. Organisation is taken into account in this research as a practice that

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[17] When I use the concept of positive affect, I am not referring to positivity per se – such as the feeling of joy, excitement, surprise, enthusiasm. Even emotions that are normally considered negative, such as anger or indignation, are in fact transformative emotions in FSs. By positive affect I refer to the taking on of affects (of various kinds) as tools that increase the potential for collective action. In this sense, both traditionally considered positive and negative affects fall under the concept of positive affects for collective action.

preserves collective action on affects, and does not overstep the emotional plane in view of the elaboration of strategies and tactics. Strategies emerge, are shaped and oriented by the work on affects.

By referring to the women's movement in the US, Staggenborg assesses that "informal, decentralized structure […] together with ideological approach, encouraged strategic and tactical innovation, but undermined organizational maintenance," while "formalized and centralized structure facilitated organizational maintenance, but led to a narrowing of strategies and tactics" (1989: 75). She concludes that a successful social movement should include both types of organisational structures. This analysis, that fits quite well with the cases under investigation, lacks an understanding of affects and their interplay with the organisational structures. Organisational choices are part of the process of production of the structure of feelings, that encourages certain emotions to emerge, and favours the conscious use of these emotions.

Starting from this different structure of feelings, the research intends to look at power, in the Spinozian sense, expressed by FSs as collective actors. In this sense, the research aims to contribute to the literature on free spaces and squatting practices, as well as direct social action and prefigurative politics, by building on the concept of affect.

Mobilising Affects between Emotions, Cognition and Body

Social movement scholars, partially responding to a resource mobilisation approach that put too much emphasis on rationality, raised the importance of cultural and ideational factors, through concepts like collective identity (Laraña et al. 1994; Melucci 1996), cognitive praxis (Eyerman and Jamison 1991) and framing (Snow et al. 1986). In spite of a progressive bridge between different approaches, differences remain for example, between the use of cognitive factors among others to explain mobilisation (McAdam et al. 1986) or the capacity of social movements to change history by introducing new conceptual tools. According to Melucci (1996), social movements provide new codes to understand reality in a new way, and they contribute to change behaviours, knowledge, and ideas of the world, thus contributing to social change. As well as cognitive practice, FSs provide attention to the bodily dimension. The creation of new codes and new ways of understanding reality takes place through the reconciliation of the body, its needs, its instincts, its perceptions. In this sense, affects, as gradients of intensity that move and influence bodies and cognition, represent a channel of mediation, a tool for political elaboration, a competence in action. Fear for the forms of violence experienced in everyday life, anger at the feeling of powerlessness often linked to these experiences, desire for other women, pleasure, are all affects and moving forces that interplay in the action of FSs. The tension that binds bodies together, bodies and objects, bodies and space, represents a source of

transformative energy on a cognitive and bodily level, which changes the potential of collective action. This potential changes when affects, as gradients of intensity, are mobilised in collective action. In this sense, a use of affect is developed, which means 1) a work of naming, decoding and understanding affects at stake; 2) a work oriented to stimulate positive affects for collective action – which does not only mean positive affects per se, such as well-being, but also anger and conflict as a generative force; 3) the conscious use of affect in the choice of goals, counterparts, strategies, and action. From this analysis it is clear how conscious work on affects does not detract from collective action but, on the contrary, enhances it.

What do participants *feel*, and how do they account for this feeling in political action? How do affects shape FSs' cognitive and bodily practices, political elaboration, internal dynamics and goals?

To search for an answer, I will go through the mobilisation of affects in collective action. To preserve this work, FSs elaborate on caring practices that allow participants to take their time to develop tools, to explore meanings, and to learn to use emotions. In order to look at this process, I will introduce the concept of caring spaces. As Radicioni and Weicht stress out, "care is traditionally provided by female family members, usually in people's private homes, sometimes institutionally supported. This traditional arrangement of care is consequentially embedded in heterosexual families, the emotional primacy of the own home and public policies oriented towards the support of families. However, the imagined patterns of people, places and times of care are themselves part of a situated narrative evolving over time and space" (2018: 369). Care has been a milestone of feminist reflections. It has been historically considered as an attribute of women, and feminists struggled at length to dismantle this supposedly feminine skill. Back to the 1970s, feminists worked on other forms of connection and support beyond the nuclear family. Still nowadays, care is a crucial issue for FSs. Caring spaces are consistent with the creation of structures of feelings: care lets affects and emotions emerge, it creates a positive environment to deal with them, as well as the condition to transform those emotions into political feelings.

This analysis aims to contribute to the literature on cognitive practices, collective identity, and repertoire of action, by developing the understanding of emotions not only at the individual level but also at the meso level of spaces and collective action.

6.2 Becoming Feminist Spaces

6.2.1 Affect and Places

In this section, I will start to outline the production of alternative structures of feelings pursued by FSs through the analysis of the interplay between affect and places. The long-term life of a physical space has an influence on the type of collective action. To start from conceptualisation, I will look at how the physical and architectural features of spaces are bound up with affects. To begin with, I will look at the practice of separate spaces (attended by women, lesbians, non-binary, and trans people) that prepares the ground for the creation of alternative structures of feelings. Then, I will look at how strategies and tactics produce different structures of feelings. Occupying, renting, or managing an institutional place produce different affective structures for participants, and participants' affects differently shape strategic choices. What does it mean to work on affects in a physical place? Which affects materially produce the space, and what does that space allow participants to do? How do different strategies produce different types of spaces?

According to the literature on free spaces (Evans and Boyte 1986, Polletta 1999, Staggenborg 2001), social movements often resort to managing a space in order to locate their political action in a site, but also to strengthen collective action. These spaces operate within the movement, as in the case of women-only spaces in the 1970s. As a CID interviewee explains, the idea of managing a physical space helps to localise collective action. Through the metaphor of the plant, she explains how a space is a concrete subject which can build collective action in continuity:

> Through a physical structure, an address, a telephone number, a P.O. box, through decent, receptive places and so on, you take place in the world. It is visible, but not because the rest of the movement is not visible, but because it has a root. You plant a seed and a tree grows. This tree is part of a forest. It does not have to be the only tree on the whole planet. But in the meantime you take care of your tree, because you have to root it. (IR9, CID, 72)

All FSs taken into account are politically separate. It is not a biological division from males, but a political choice based on feminism. As a CS participant develops, "by feminists we mean politically separated spaces, […] the backbone of their struggles are feminist and transfeminist struggles." (IIIR2, CS, 37). Some spaces coming from the 1970s also experienced separatism based on biology, and they still questioned the openness of the space to a male presence. As retrieved from my fieldnotes: "Laura says to Lisa: 'Every time I see the men at the House, I get a shock... But what are they doing there? When did they enter?' And Lisa answers: 'Look, don't tell me, I've never agreed. But at a certain point they wanted us to let them in'" (Fieldnotes, CID, 11-11-18). This exchange between two CID participants shows how the presence of men within the space is still perceived as dissonant, out of place, highlighting the marked separation, even biological, that has long been constitutive of some FSs.

Male presence is not forbidden, but is at the edges. The political irrelevance of cisgender men shapes perceptions of the space and the way of doing politics. The reference to men concerns masculinity as

a gender and as social interaction. In this sense, a CS interviewee explains that "men create very different dynamics" (IIIR5, CS, 30). The need for a political separate place often emerged for FSs' participants after periods of mixed politics, that means politics with men. Participants felt tired of that interaction which seemed to decrease their capacity for feminist collective action. In a gendered regime where masculinity is still a socially connoted gender, in the sense of role expectations, performance and power, the social production of space also depends on the gender dimension. The need to produce other spaces, out of alternative gender dynamics, stimulates the desire for FSs, as explained by a CS interviewee: "It is born from the desire to experiment in a gender field without the hetero cis male comrades. Without thinking you always have something to learn from them. Can we make it on our own? And in my opinion we can do it" (IIIR10, CS, 30). The experience of occupying a separate space, and of taking care of all the practical aspects of the occupation without the male intervention (such as electricity, plumbing, relations with neighbours, and so on) is considered as new and exciting. In addition, learning to manage those skills normally considered masculine is an empowering and consciousness-raising process for participants, that puts the body in place and at work.

This choice of political separatism often draws critiques to FSs, accusing them of being ghettos. It stems from the idea that when a space is not inclusive of everyone it produces exclusion. When I openly addressed this issue to the interviewees, they always asked: "who is moving the critique?". "For some male comrades, yes, they are ghettos. That they are exclusive for them. [...] I think that women's spaces are exclusive of a certain type of male sociality. And it's okay that they are" (IIIR3, CS, 30). As the Roestone Collective argues:

> we understand safe spaces to be inclusive precisely as they are exclusive. They foreground and challenge binaries through "messy negotiations" (Hunter 2008:17) of difference, comfort and safety. Safe space, as we interpret it, is not merely an attempt to create an abstract sense of equality, to smooth over differences, or to step outside of and ignore the dangers and injustices of the world. The work of producing safe space entails continually facing, negotiating, and embracing paradoxical binaries: safety/danger, inclusivity/exclusivity, public/private, and so forth" (Roestone 2015: 1355)

Different practices originate different types of spaces: occupying, renting a place, negotiating a usufruct with the municipality. Depending on the strategic choices, spaces present different affective structures. While two of them are occupied buildings (LYS and CS), one negotiated a low-rent with the municipality (CID). The strategy of occupying is bound up with feelings of empowerment, strength, and pride, though, on the other side, feelings of fear and insecurity coming from the illegal status somehow decrease the capacity for action. While the low-rent ensures a certain well-being and stability (never definitive, since they are spaces from below), on the other hand this stability let

negative emotions emerge, such as conflicts, the loss of solidity of the political community, and the weakening of collective identity.

A lot of interviewees underline the empowerment coming from occupying buildings. Whether all the spaces here taken into account were born as occupations, not all of them are currently valuing this practice as central to their repertoire of action. Across a generational line, one might argue that younger activists are more willing to claim it, depending on a more radical and provocative approach to politics. For some of them, occupying is considered as "a powerful experience" that gives "the sense of breathing a little bit of freedom and creating different spaces and sociality" (IIIR10, CS, 30). Occupying allows the possibility to challenge institutions and their management of the city; to independently handle a space and its functions; to shape the space according to counter-systems of values and meanings; to re-enhance unused buildings against real estate speculation and urban decay. These elements strengthen the cohesion of the community, because of the definition of common external enemies and the sense of changing the world and its worst structures.

On the other hand, strategic choices including negotiation with institutions lead to a relative degree of stability and thus to more tempered emotions. Dealing with bureaucracy, with institutions, forces a certain degree of mediation and specialisation, which dampens the overwhelming enthusiasm of occupying. This strategic choice can also result in internal conflicts, discontent, and the loss of community cohesion, also due to the disappearance of the external enemy and a conflictual confrontation with the institutions. During a chat at the CID, a participant told me the reasons why women get to the CID: "There is a complex of relationships that have the CID as their core and that could not have the same affection, effectiveness and timeliness if they were elsewhere, in another place. The CID is an environment that nurtures relationships between women" (Fieldnotes, CID, 12-11-18). The relative stability of the physical location makes it more accessible to women. This stable affective structure has an impact on the surrounding reality, and allows the CID to endure over time as a reference point.

The spaces under investigation are *places*. Places are always socially produced, and they are the result of social interactions. FSs have physical characteristics and architectural features, that shape the type of politics activists can envision. They are located in a city and a neighbourhood, with their own story of inhabitants and use. If one cannot clearly assess a causal mechanism – from one use to another – one can get how the changing nature of these places influence their inhabitants over time. The "secret life of places," the way the four walls happen to host different experiences one after the other, suggest a link to inquiry.

The CID is located in an old monastery. Fiorensoli (1999) investigated the consequent communities inhabiting the space: first, a prison for women considered deviant, and much later a FS occupied by

activists. This parable illustrates the feminist attitude to subvert the meaning of words, places, or events, toward an empowering change. The past pain and sufferings of inmate women has been transformed by the contemporary use: women are still inhabiting the place, but changing the nature of the former setting. The architectural dimension keeps shaping women's activities. The large dimension of the building, the numerous small rooms with little windows, long dark corridors, large walls that in a way separate it from the outside, are elements conditioning the type of things activists can do, and also the affective structure. The building is dispersed and sometimes makes it difficult to meet each other; the corridors encourage small talks and the passing on of negative affect.

LYS, on the other hand, used to be an old railway station where the keeper slept. The presence of a large garden and several buildings has made it possible to develop collective actions aimed at welcoming women and minors, carrying out political actions, an anti-violence desk, and some work activities (such as a psychological desk and a tailor's shop). The architectural features increase a sense of well-being for those who live there, inviting people to participate both occasionally and on a regular basis. The open-air garden, the plants, and the large space, in an extremely urbanised and populated neighbourhood, make LYS an attractive place, which stimulates feelings of pleasure and well-being. In the case of CS, the building happened to be a nightclub, with strippers, clients, and probably sex workers. Even though they did not know about the former use of the space, they immediately felt a correspondence between the space and their own identity as a political community, as a CS interviewee develops:

> When we entered in 2013 [...] I remember the power to open that door and find a former nightclub. Already that is structurally different from other occupations in Rome. […] And we kept it as a nightclub, like the glitter on the walls, the red paint, however gloomy, dark, there is no light, for years. [...] And in my opinion it's no coincidence that we decided to leave it like that. Because that stuff is a part of us. Visually disturbing those who come in and making you feel this sense of lack of air, of lack of light, is like entering a mix between a cave, a night club, a place of perdition. It is the imaginary of CS. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

Certain physical elements – such as the colour of the walls, the light of the space – are socially interpreted as expressions of the imagery and narrative of the FSs. The challenge to the gender regime and heteronormative sexuality is perceived as frightening and provocative in relation to the dominant way of thinking, and these feelings are reproduced by the physical characteristics of the space. The empathy with the girls working at the nightclub convinced the activists to contact and involve some of them in the occupation, trying to prefigure a feminist way to subvert the place. The physical features of the space shape the political activities, such as the pole dance lab, thanks to the presence of a stage and four poles, or the presence of big central spaces and a lot of small privées, encouraging big initiatives but also intimate types of encounters. This changing nature of the space has been the occasion for a political debate, since the local press immediately wrote about "the good girls"

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managing an anti-violence service that changed "a place of exploitation of women," an interpretation that the CS proudly opposed.

The section shows how certain physical characteristics of the place and the type of management (occupation, payment of rent, etc.) generate different affects. In the interaction between bodies and spaces, and between bodies and objects, affects are constantly being produced as a result of this interaction. Reflection on the physical dimension of spaces is the first step in understanding the formation of FSs as structures of feelings.

6.2.2 Organisation: A Political Matter

Organisation reflects a way of imagining and producing a feminist space. It shapes the space, and lets a certain environment, climate, and feelings emerge. According to this interpretation, I will look at how organisation is bound up with affects, and which use of affects organisation allows to perform. Organisation is oriented by strategic thinking, by the assemblages between bodies and affects that circulate and are at stake in the interaction. As a CID interviewee notices, "this place only stands for that, because beyond the structure and beyond this pyramid, there is the body, there is the earth. […] This place exists and resists because it is made of true bodies, true minds, true solidarity, true friendships, true sisterhoods, true loves, everything." (IR9, CID, 72). Bodies and affects represent places of mediation between the space and goals of collective action, and serve to calibrate the organisational style that each FS chooses to perform. In this section, I will try to analyse the way in which affects orient different organisational choices of FSs.

The CID is structured through a quite defined hierarchy and a centralised type of management, that handles power and decisions. The space preserves a feminist attitude, and this is expressed through, for instance, the role of the president, who does not manage the CID as a boss but as a feminist activist: she performs horizontal relations with everyone, she knows all the people coming and doing activities at the CID, and she cares about a collaborative way of management (Fieldnotes, CID, 20-10-18). This type of organisation is highly contested by its participants, because of several reasons. It led the CID to be tiring and stuffy. Some of them identify that process as bureaucratisation: "that is, you can't run it as if the House is a small business. The House has employees, it has a turnover, and therefore theoretically it is a business. But in the meantime it is a place for women, it is a social place, and therefore also management requires that this dimension be always taken into account. Because if you lose this dimension you lose your soul" (IR6, CID, 67). Bureaucratisation, institutionalisation and corporatisation are suggested by some elements, like the presence at the

reception of women that do not have a feminist background (sometimes they do not even solidarise), and a lack in the architectural accommodation, which continues to look like a prison or an administrative office. This physical and relational setting produces negative affects, as an interviewee argues: "relationship problems, [result] from lack of transparency, poor communication, lack of trust" (IR8, CID, 68). Contradictions, together with the moment of crisis and the threat of eviction, trigger a will to change. Negative affects counterbalance the effectiveness of the organisational structure, diminishing the political capacity of the space. For this reason, especially in view of the crisis experienced by the CID, many of the participants hope for a change oriented at combining an effective structure, the work on collective affects, and the recovery of the political role of space.

LYS shows a certain level of formalised and centralised structure, but a high level of innovation in terms of strategies and tactics. The urge to manage direct social action orients towards a structured kind of organisation (with clear roles, responsibilities, and functions), as well as an openness to innovate strategies. Practical activity, the relation with women escaping violence, and the need for accountability have led to an increased formalisation of the organisation, together with flexibility in order to keep being open to women's needs, problem-solving, and the fight against the threat of eviction. Participants manage the space depending on needs, structuring internal rules through a shared process: as an example, every two years they re-write the internal regulation together with activists and women living at LYS, with dispositions about the daily life of the space, its practical organisation, and political arrangements. These processes enabled LYS to harmonise an effective structure with constant work on collective affects, from which the choice of strategies and tactics follows. The flexible arrangements with a core structured organisation guarantee an effective management of direct social action, and on the other hand a creative attitude toward campaigns, actions, and claims.

During the fieldwork, a woman told me that "differently than the male linear management, the feminist one is a circular management" (Fieldnotes, CID, 23-10-18). I delved into the notion of circular management in order to understand how FSs are frequently considered as welcoming and cosy for people attending. In the case of CS, the management of the space creates an environment in which well-structured rituals of politics decline, as highlighted by this quote:

> We are in 2013, 2014, the first karaoke of the Cagne and you saw people on stage singing together drunk, hugging… people coming from anarchist and autonomous spaces, disobedient and blah blah blah. […] They were people with a history of conflict […], and yet they breathed a different air. And the Cagne have brought this stuff here over the years. Which is a huge strength. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

CS has a less structured and centralised management, defending deliberative democracy, participation and horizontality. The following quote from a CS interviewee summarises the choice for horizontality

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and individual autonomy: "Depending on where you go, you find a different Cagna [posto che vai, Cagna che trovi]! This is our must!" (IIIR7, CS, 30). They refuse hierarchies and representation, and find ways to name power dynamics that are always at stake in human interactions. Creative strategies allow to unveil power dynamics by preserving positive affects, as clearly assessed by this quote:

> At the beginning of our assembly [...] there were never-ending interventions… […] This stuff didn't work for us anymore […] and so somebody proposed this thing: each one took a few caps, and when they had the feeling that the intervention was taking too long, […] you threw a cap at the person who was talking (laughs). […] In the beginning they were almost a necessity, giving you time, marking the interventions, all these things... and slowly with time they disappeared. But they disappeared because we started to have shared practices, common practices. (IIIR4, CS, 30)

This political organisation develops a double structure: a great attention to internal dynamics and individual possibility to participate, and on the other hand a loose planning of tactics and goals. The group rejects hierarchies and a defined plan of activity, both inside and outside the space, and they are heavily oriented by collective affect, as the quote shows: "We only do the things we feel" (IIIR4, CS, 30). This radical approach to emotions roots organisation and strategies in a profoundly feminist but sometimes ineffective practice. As any other space, they are not free from contradictions, and hierarchies are often implicit. This management sometimes leads to frustration, as a participant outlines: "This was very difficult for me to accept, that we were a somewhat... inconsistent collective. Not coherent. […] At a certain moment I had the impression that we had all put feminism in front of the rest of our bio-political positions or facets, but that fact no longer seemed political" (IIIR6, CS, 35). The risk of disorganisation or less effective political action is the other face of the coin of a purely free and inclusive type of organisation. However, this loose structure is also a source of change and innovation in their repertoire of action, symbols, and codes.

In this section, I outlined how different organisational structures interplay with different structures of feelings (Williams 1961), producing more or less effective collective action. All of them show how affects are related to FSs, at all the levels of collective action: from micro ties among individuals to political choices of organisation.

6.3 Mobilising Affect for Collective Action

6.3.1 Safety as a Process

Retrieved from the fieldnotes: Wednesday afternoon, assembly at LYS with participants and women hosted at the space. A participant introduces some issues concerning the current threat of eviction, and some alternatives for women living at the space in order to avoid the eventual raid by police forces. Women begin to worry and to ask for clarifications. They are scared, because they don't want to go back to loneliness,

precarity and their aggressor's leash. Another participant tells them to keep calm and focus on their own path of recovery, autonomy and self-determination, because it is the only way to change their life. She says that if they need reassurances, they, as activists, are ready to talk thousands of times about the threat of eviction, their emotions and strategies to resist. At that point Alla, the Russian woman, intervenes, saying (in a sketchy Italian) that she has participated many times in demonstrations and parades – against Putin, for the environment and other things, but she has never felt like she does in feminist demonstrations. That all this gives her great strength and she feels she can change her life and fight. After her a young Arab girl intervenes, saying that she has thought about it, and in any case even if she won't live here anymore, if she has to leave, even from outside she would fight for the house because she wants such a place to exist [...]. Because when she and her mother arrived in Italy as refugees, they asked everyone for help, they knocked on a thousand doors, but nobody answered, and they were completely alone. And when they knocked on LYS's door it was immediately opened, and they were no longer alone. So they would fight in any case for there to be a place in the world where you stop being alone [...]. Next to me Sandra and Claudia, activists of Lucha y Siesta, whisper in their ear that they are moved and they want to cry. All the women seem to be moved and there are a few seconds of silence, as if the words had remained in mid-air among us (Fieldnotes, LYS, 19-06-19)

In the previous sections, I began to thematise the construction of FSs as structures of feelings according to the physical and organisational dimensions. Now, I will focus on the social production of FSs, starting from the interaction between affects, bodies and cognition. As the quote above shows, the discussion, political elaboration, and formulation of action of FSs is suffused by an affective grid that orients participants to listen, share, and negotiate. Affect mediates bodily and cognitive practices, and through affect participants formulate the name of their needs, of their willingness or not to engage with action. Affects, moreover, produce the imperceptible cloud through which participants feel their experience as a community. Affects are also limits to action: they signal a boundary, a point beyond which the emotional infrastructure does not hold and the group would be compromised. In this sense, it is clear that the reference to safety is the result of an affective process of elaboration, and that it is the process, and not the final outcome, that stimulates in the participants the sense of living in safer places. In this sense, the perception of a greater or lesser security emerges from a certain structure of feelings.

In this section, I will try to focus on the process through which the structure of feelings is created, in the interaction between emotions, cognition, and bodies. A structure of feelings that stimulates the perception of security is not in fact a stable configuration, nor a concluded affective place, but an open-ended process in which the elements are continuously negotiated and changed. That is why I do not refer to safe spaces but to safer spaces, to recall the process towards the creation of these structures of feelings, rather than a final version of them, which is never feasible. Lewis, Sharp, Remnant and Redpath write that the process goes from being "safe from (fear, misogyny, harassment, online violence, domestic violence, abuses, triggers, victimization, aggression)" to become "safe to (fully human, enabling dialogue, mediated conflict solidarity, be what they want to be)" (2014: 3-4).

In this section, I seek to explain the process of becoming safer through cognitive practices, bodily consciousness, and the mediation of affect. First, I will look at the cognitive practices through which

FSs locate idea on interpretation, and orientation. Then, I will explore how participants elaborate on the inequalities that reverberate in their own life, by transforming negative affect into positive emotions. Finally, I will look at the creation of community ties as a source of safety and well-being.

All the FSs taken into account agree on the interpretation of gender-based violence as structural to social reality. According to their framing, violence innervates all spheres of people's lives – in the family, in private life, at home, at work, in the urban space, and so on – as a form of distributing power and maintaining a certain social, political, and gender order. This understanding of violence makes people feel "lucky" if they did not incur into harassment or violence, as this quote of a LYS interviewee shows: "to me personally, which is something that sometimes seems incredible, nothing has ever happened. [...] So I live a lucky life compared to statistics." (IIR2, LYS, 37). The statistical element, i.e. the quantitative distribution of feminicides, abuse, harassment, violence, is combined with the political element, which interprets these data as the expression of a social phenomenon, a distribution of power, a certain economic, cultural, and social order.

The cognitive practice on gender-based violence and the gender regime stems from individual bodily and affective perceptions. On the one hand, there is the sharing of the sensations of the body, which is harnessed in relations of power, and on which violence produces tangible consequences. On the other hand, there are the emotions that violence produces, as a system of domination and control that limits the possibilities of agency, orients biographical expectations, and shapes cognitive codes. Affects emerge as a mediation between body sensations and social structures, helping participants to place their experience in time and space, and giving individual experience a collective and social framework. From this understanding of violence, as a system that organises social life, follows the choice to create physical and political spaces in which to challenge violence through the production of other codes. FSs represent the spatialisation of this alternative, as the following quote from CS interviewee explains further:

> We need shelter because the world sucks. […] Because for the world we are freaks, unacceptable. We are people who lead dysfunctional existences for most of the functional trajectories of the capitalist system. […] It is a dangerous world. It's a world where so many of us have experienced a lot of violence. On various levels. Starting with families but also life on the street, life in relationships. We need a place to shelter. Which can be a physical place or not. One cannot always be in the front line. Sometimes you need to stop and breathe. Shelter is a place where you stop for a moment to breathe. Maybe not alone. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

A further consequence is the question of security. If violence is systemic, those to whom it is directed – women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people – experience daily feelings of insecurity, fear, powerlessness. Violence operates through a constriction of the possibilities of the body and a limitation of cognitive abilities, of the feeling of being able to react. From this bodily and cognitive pattern comes the desire for a place to question and transform violence. The frequent reference of

participants to the need to feel safer stems from these assumptions, and therefore spaces are places where the process towards a greater sense of security is pursued. As a LYS participant explains, individual mobilisation stems from the desire to change the emotional consequences of violence:

> I felt in a protected space where the risks I perceived were no longer there, of course […]. I was no longer a frightened child but a woman who was choosing to start along a new path. So let's say that for me entering Lucha was […] the desire to put an end to this fear that I have always had of male violence. (IIR5, LYS, 30)

Cognitive and bodily liberation from violence as a pattern of thought occurs through the mediation of affects. They help to name what is experienced, to share it with other people, to find transformative solutions. Cognitive liberation is always a liberation of the body, mediated by emotions that consolidate the process. This is why in FSs there is work on negative and positive emotions, and the construction of structures of feelings that allow the subjects to feel better. A CS interviewee argues with regard to FS, "first of all it is a space where the subjectivities that transfeminism calls into question feel comfortable, welcome, protected... not so safe, because in my opinion a transfeminist space is not a space without contradictions, without bullshit, without violence, without... no... but it is a space where there is the possibility that these things can be faced." (IIIR7, CS, 30). The creation of structures of feelings is a process in which violence does not disappear, nor do hegemonic patterns of thought, but both are continuously challenged in collective practice.

Within the space, participants collectively reflect on social inequalities, by exploring how social structures are grounded in their own life, and how negative affects coming from these structures can be transformed into positive ones. The first step is the capacity to have a positive representation of the self, to understand what is good and what is bad to experience, and to be aware about their own rights. As a woman hosted at LYS says, "all these women I know from many years ago, the first thing they taught me is that we have rights, but sometimes they don't give you those rights. Sometimes you have to take them" (IIIR9, LYS, 66). Bad negatives – such as fear, anger, or loneliness – that decrease the capacity for action are transformed into bravery, trust, and confidence. The capacity to be aware of the self, with regard to women escaping violence, can mark the difference between being killed or surviving. Thus, safer spaces are not oriented toward a general comfort and well-being, but to the achievement of material tools of survival. That is why a woman hosted at LYS defines the space as "an artificial lung, an artificial heart" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 11-07-19). This definition calls into question an assemblage of bodies, spaces, technologies, tools to counter the individual experience of violence and structures of inequalities through a re-evaluation of the capacities of the self. The process of acquiring strength and autonomy is long and tough, and spaces are needed in order to have the possibility to rest. Safety is also about having at disposal time and space to recovery, out of the running requirements of neoliberal society. As a LYS interviewee claims:

> People live here who need a place where they can recover, where they can concentrate a little more on their lives without necessarily having to continue to fight for minimum rights. […] All moments of change are painful, difficult, often this space hosts people who don't even know the language we speak in this piece of land. And so you know you need time to organise your thoughts, relax for a moment, feel safe. (IIR1, LYS, 37)

In the process of achievement of the representation of the self, affects are questioned and transformed. As a CS participant recounts, acquiring self-confidence and the capacity to deal with daily situations of violence is not external, but internal to individuals. It is a process of understanding and working on the self:

> I spent many years of my life with anger, strong anxiety. […] Because I had well internalised the sensation of going out and not knowing […] if you would return. Partly because you're a woman, partly because you're a lesbian, partly because people look at you anyway and Rome is a strange city, and many times it has given me proof of how violent it can be. And at a certain point it's as if I had made peace with it, it's as if that anxiety and fear had disappeared a little bit. And a great dignity has arisen to live my life as it is. (Focus Group transcription IIIRA, Rome, 10-07-19)

This quote shows the shift from feelings of anxiety and fear, depending on inner dimensions of the self, such as being a woman and a lesbian, and reactions to it, to feelings of self-confidence and empowering. The shift implies the subversion of violence through political participation in FSs. Affects have a mediating function in understanding the structures of inequality, but they are also the material to be understood, with respect to which a different use must be learned. The subsequent goal is the achievement of "dignity" and "pride" because of one's own existence, rather than the past fears and sufferings for that same existence. Moreover, this achievement does not begin and end in the FS, but is a general takeover in the everyday life, as a CS participant clarifies: "when I didn't have a space, I also lived the places of sociality in a certain way. Now I live them as if they are my space. When I decide to cross a space it is also mine" (IIIR3, CS, 30).

The process from an external understanding of safety, as something that is offered to you, to an internal achievement is also shaping the capacity to react both in a bodily and cognitive way. Violence does not disappear, situations of discomfort, trouble, and bewilderment do not disappear, but participants learn tools to react to them. As a CS interviewee states:

> It's not that you're safe […], the harassment in the street is the same. The point is how that stuff gets to you. It's one thing when it comes to you with all the effect of harassment, because maybe you've never found yourself thinking about it, because you've never framed it in a wider frame of a system that is so and so on, and so you get that stuff in all its impact […]. Another point is when you've thought about that stuff, […] you also have strategies. […] Safety is no longer external to you […]. And so it's different […] because you've built your own [….] instrument of reaction to the world. So maybe today I'll take the harassment, today on the bus I'm letting go because I'm alone, because I know that I'll arrive home and I have my comrades. But tomorrow sooner or later we will punish an asshole like you. (Focus Group transcription IIIRA, Rome, 10-07-19)

As the quote shows, the collective elaboration of affects enables the acquisition of both cognitive and bodily strength, so that the episodes of oppression are no longer experienced as purely destructive,

but the possibility emerges of overturning the situation of power inequality by expressing a new power, the result of collective action.

This never-ending work on the self is connected to the dimension of sexism and violence. On one hand, the process enhances the capacity to see what is usually misread or ignored. In the Italian context, one woman out of three experiences situations of harassment or violence[18], quite often in a climate of generalised invisibility. People are used to ignore violence, they do not have the lens to understand the need for help. Acquiring the capacity to see and react is part of a process of becoming safer. Participants produce new tools to deal with violence, and this toolkit is the basis for personal development and collective awareness. FSs make violence a public issue, that everyone has to deal with. Thus, women are not trapped in their personal stories of violence, but can find bridges in a community to deal with violence. As the above-mentioned quote shows, violence becomes a problem that is addressed collectively.

Some participants outline how the process of naming and working on violence is something leading to a progressive closeness of the space, because of less trust and less confidence toward the outside world and people external to the intimate community. As a CS interviewee argues:

> We invested so much energy talking about violence, about violation of consent, about this kind of issues both in relationships and interactions [...] and the collective has lost some pieces. There was a level of activation on this extreme (emphatic) stuff. That pervaded everything [...]. And certainly this stuff led us to be a bit more reluctant to open up to the outside. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

The "extra-attention" on violence also emerges as a cap to innovation, experimentation, and freedom to act. The goal is to take into account at the same time an open and receptive attitude, a joyful approach to sexuality with a strong attention on violence and abuse.

The section points out the perception of safety as a process that involves three levels: the internal one, where participants work on their inner affect and emotions; the collective level, thus the elaboration of political elaboration out of the mobilisation of affect and emotions; the interaction with the outside. Safety is not a given, and the effort to produce safer spaces involves all of the people that take part in the everyday life of the space.

6.3.2 The Potential of Affects

You have to give legitimacy to a piece that this world does not recognise. In people's lives, at work, at the supermarket, in the car, on the street, you don't recognise the fact that people have an emotionality, they have feelings, they have a life, they have more or less stable well-being in their lives. This thing has no weight in

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[18] https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/violenza-dentro-e-fuori-la-famiglia/numero-delle-vittime-e-forme-di-violenza

the collective places of this society. Instead, inside the collective of Cagne I have learned to give it a weight and I have taken this stuff outside too. (IIIR6, CS, 30)

In the society of time acceleration (Leccardi 2009) and dematerialisation of spaces (Giddens 1994) affects come to be almost dismissed. Life-paths and institutions are oriented to productivity, efficiency and performativity, and any other non-functional element is considered an obstacle. The choice of re-appropriating emotions as significant variables in the construction of life paths, political strategies, and goals is a practice of resistance to the economic and social structure, as the quote of a CS interviewee in the opening of the section accounts for.

In the upcoming paragraphs, I will deepen the reflection by referring to the potential of affects, as the way in which affects intersect bodies, cognition, spaces, and objects, and generate groupings. First, I will explore the infrastructures of feelings of FSs. Then, I will go through well-being and happiness as positive affects that increase the capacity for action. The creation of community ties enhances the awareness on affects, and their transformation. The section explores the potential of affects for collective action, through the empirical examples of FSs.

At the meso level of spaces and communities, affects, as gradients of intensity and vital forces, work as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and bodies; 2) a tool for political elaboration; 3) a competence in action. The confidence in inner feelings (that is usually considered unpolitical) makes people feel comfortable and at ease. People are not trapped in rituals of interaction and in the performance of social encounters. In the rituals of interaction within FSs, emotions can be manifested, elaborated on, taken into account. While living unconventional forms of sexuality according to the dominant setting, the contact with feelings allows women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people to create a new symbolic order. As one LYS interviewee explains, the perception of greater security comes from the affective infrastructure of FSs, where emotions are considered part not only of individual lives but also of political action: "feeling a safe place does not necessarily mean a place where no one can do harm, but it is a place where I can be myself. This also makes me feel safe. A place where I can enter angry, I can enter sad, I can enter with someone next to me, […] really in any way I can enter there and feel accepted" (IIR5, LYS, 33). This perception relates to a cognitive dimension (self-representation, self-expression, social acceptance) and a bodily dimension (feelings of calm, serenity, expression of feelings, sexuality).

Very often during the fieldwork the participants reported positive feelings as part of an infrastructure of feelings created by the FSs. What does it mean to feel good? Which consequences do positive emotions, such as well-being and happiness, produce? How do positive emotions enhance collective action? What is the potential of affects for collective action?

As the following quote from the focus group to the CSs shows, the affective infrastructure enables

participants to feel better, but also to increase their self-knowledge, and thus their capacity for action: "these spaces of confrontation always give me the feeling that I live in places that make me feel good. That make me have confidence" (Focus Group transcription IIIRA, Rome, 10-07-19). We are very poorly used to consider positive affects and emotions as part of a political understanding of social movements. With regard to FSs, the element recurs into the participants' words. In his essay on happiness and the theory of affects, Natoli states that "human beings happen to feel happy when [...] they have the perception of unlimited self-expansion. […] Who is happy, when she/he is happy, does not ignore the limit but simply does not perceive it as an obstacle" (2003: 37). By drawing on Spinoza's concept of vital impulse, he deepens the reflection on positive affects as the source of power for human beings, and especially of their "expansion" in the sense of individual activation that increases the ability to be and to act in the world. The analysis of fieldnotes and words of participants allows for the interpretation of the work of/on affects in FSs as a potential for collective action. Building on Spinoza and Natoli's reflection on positive affects, this section explores the effort towards the construction of safer spaces, as a political action oriented towards expanding the potential of individuals and collective actors for social change.

As explored at the beginning of the chapter, the arrangements of physical spaces play a role in the reverberation of affects. Colours, furniture, the disposition of rooms and so on, is a source of more or less positive affect. Massey argues that we are "living in spatial times" (2005: 61). Despite the volatility of spaces in neoliberal times (Leccardi 2009), people continue to join spaces in their everyday lives, and this influences the construction of their self and their networks. Places are always gendered, in the sense that perceptions and feelings prompting from spaces depend on the social structures and the subjects' potential for agency. Perceptions related to spaces are socially produced, and people receive and re-elaborate these perceptions depending on their socialisation, tools, and interpretation (Ahmed 2004). FSs draw on this standpoint, and they seek to arrange physical spaces that enable new structures of feelings to emerge.

Carefully arranged spaces encourage pleasant emotional reactions. As the Roestone collective states, safer spaces are contextually embedded, and "we might understand them as the opposite of the etymological utopia—rather than being 'placeless', they are very much products of particular places and situations" (Roestone Collective 2014: 1349). It is not just a setting for meetings or events but also a comfort-zone, an infra-time in the metropolis's flux. The positive feelings that come from a physical space encourage self-expression and political reasoning, as one CS interviewee explains: "I feel very comfortable, […] which means that I can quietly take the floor, I can also shut up and say nothing if I don't feel like it" (IIIR7, CS, 30). As much as the setting is carefully arranged, people reverberate that care with feelings of pleasure and well-being. The physical structure also affects

people coming for events or meetings, as a LYS interviewee tells: "I think it's […] a question of the physical structure of the place. […] Having the garden... people feel that it is a beautiful place. […] The fact that there are spaces that are welcoming, […] you can smell and taste the house when you enter" (IIR5, LYS, 33). It is not by chance that the interviewee refers to bodily sensations (smelling, tasting) to express a cognitive process (feeling good in a welcoming place). This link makes explicit the function of affects as a mediation between cognition and body, and as a channel of interpretation of the stimuli coming from other people, spaces, and objects. Awareness of this nexus also helps to modulate relationships with others through the care of the physical elements of space. Since one of the goals of political action is to broaden the circle of diffusion of political claims, positive emotions coming from the physical structure play a role in attracting people and broadening the scope of collective action.

Spaces enhance positive emotions for people that are often feeling "out of place." Positive affects "expand" the self (Natoli 2003), and allow people to connect the self with the social dimension, the connection of which is often fragmented due to the gender and inequality regime. As one CS interviewee makes clear, when in the FS "I can be myself. […] I am really going to live" (IIIR9, CS, 35). Affects mediate the possibility of developing a sense of one's self and one's place in the social world. When these affects are positive, they consolidate the elaboration process and convey the feeling of "being able to really live." Participants feel like they are growing and developing their self, and this strength change their life path, as a CS participant explains: "the feelings are of well-being... of a space that really fills my life with all its difficulties... it fills my life every day but fills my character, my reasoning, it makes me grow, it allows me to do a lot of things" (IIIR7, CS, 30). This degree of intensity and vital force signals the expansion of the self, of its capacity for action, of its transformative potential towards the social world.

I mentioned earlier the fragmentation between the self and the social dimension. More or less profound obstacles stand in the way of the development of a coherent social self. These obstacles are perceived through the mediation of affects, and are processed and dealt with through affects.

A CS participant elaborates on the idea of affects as a mediation between the individual consequences and collective action as follows: "we are kept together by anger" (IIIR7, CS, 30). Anger comes from daily life, from a gendered setting where being a woman, a lesbian, a trans or non-binary person exposes them to increasing levels of violence or harassment. Affects, such as anger, allow one to develop political elaboration, and thus an understanding of the social condition and the structures that cause it. Through a synecdoche, men are considered as the expression of masculinity, as the organising principle of the social world, and therefore also of the phenomenon of violence. Men are taken into account as the symbol of a social order based on gender inequality. As a consequence, their

absence from a social, and not biological, point of view contributes to the perception of safety and well-being. As a LYS participant argues, "perhaps it is a strong word, but this hatred of men here has found not an outlet, but a rest. I didn't have men around here. [...] and so maybe in a very personal formulation for me this place was safe for that" (IIR2, LYS, 37). Often, this feeling depends on a very simple action: the possibility or not to express love or erotic attraction for another person in the public space, clothes, attitude. "[In the FS] I can kiss anyone and I certainly have a different peace of mind than I do outside. I don't necessarily have to take care of where I am" (IIIR5, CS, 30). Comfort arises from the possibility to fully express one's body, the interaction between bodies and emotions. In this sense, affects act as a mediation between the body and the social dimension, but they also change the bodies' potential for action.

Affects not only mediate the relationship between the self and the social dimension, but are also the subjects of political elaboration and the construction of collective action. The more practices of organisations are respectful of participants, the more activists will take pleasure in political action. Pleasure and well-being are taking into account in the choice of decision-making process, strategies, and tactics. The following quote by a CS interviewee shows the connection made by FSs between practices of organisation, affects, tactics and goals:

> The difference is that in our space there is no hierarchy. And if there is, or if anyone ever sees it, it could be immediately questioned. Of course you can stop everything if there is something wrong. […] If someone is not well, if someone feels uncomfortable, if something is not working or if... you stop. […] It has never happened: we must do this, we must do that. No. (IIIR4, CS, 30)

Nothing comes before the creation of consistent structures of feelings. By dismantling the neoliberal idea of time and productivity, FSs pursue the effectiveness of political action out of emotions. Goals and strategies are taken through consent. In the name of collective comfort only widely accepted purpose are pursued, and this is, in itself, a source of comfort for participants. This choice of engaging with well-being and the pursuit of collective happiness comes from the awareness that positive affects increase the potential for action. Negative emotions, such as frustration, suspicion, distrust, let people drop out or become less active in the collective action. On the contrary, well-being, transparent communication, and mutual trust prepare the ground for effective strategies, tactics, and repertoire of action. As such, we can argue about positive affect as the ground for social movements' capacity for social change. This mechanism is not without a dark side. The construction of consistent structures of feelings takes time, is slow and laborious. As much as it produces positive affects, it can degenerate into a feeling of ineffectiveness, frustration, and dissatisfaction. In this sense, the research argues that the construction of safer spaces is a process, in which affects are not positive or negative per se, but are invested with meaning by the relational dynamics and the cognitive/corporeal process of each

participant.

As Belingardi and Castelli argue, in FSs there exists "a security of closeness and relationships, […] a safety of community" (2015: 221). The creation of structures of feelings is related to the creation of community ties, where affects can circulate, can be elaborated on and changed. A conversation with a CS participant sheds light on "the circle," a geometric figure in which to place oneself, but also a political and thinking arrangement in the FSs: "she tells me that for her the difference of politics between women, is that women live the circle. Another social form, very different. Because the circle has no edges, there are no shadow zones. When women put themselves in a circle, or in an assembly, it is not only for horizontality. It is also because no one is behind, no one can attack you, they all look at each other's faces. I ask her why she thinks that men are afraid of the circle and she tells me that it is because men always move in a hierarchical manner. There are leaders, there are wingmen. We have learned this from them, they do not move in a circle. Women manage to have different dimensions of horizontality. […] She tells me that if you pay attention it always happens, even during parties, that women find themselves in a circle […]. You create a circle, because of how you deal with the elements of dissonance. This also happens to feminist marches, you feel that way, as if everything is possible. It is not necessarily a physical circle, but more a feeling, that envelops you, that you feel like in an embrace. Because it is as if something that you are used to all the time, to judge people, to judge women by the choices they make, as if the whole thing goes out. And instead other things happen, you see women, you see them shine" (Fieldnotes, CS, 24-05-19). The circle relates to physical, emotional, and political dimensions. On one hand, it is a way in which participants tend to position themselves, both during assemblies and in public protests. On the other, it is an intangible feeling, the perception of being surrounded by a circle of affect, support, and strength from the other participants. The feeling of security is produced through the practice of standing in a circle. In this physical form, affective consequences occur: one looks at each other, one perceives the others, one can see everyone. This physical and affective form is also political: decisions are made in a circle, moments of public protest call for a circle.

The figuration of the circle increases the power of the group, which is more than the sum of the individual participants. As Natoli (2003) argues the meaning of the Greek and Latin root of the word "joy" recalls that of "shine, brightness." In the following paragraphs, I will focus on the positive affects triggered by the relationship with others, on the energy that is released in the encounter. As pointed out in the quotation, interaction in the circle (often) produces joy, and in this sense, even in philological terms, one seems to see people shining. The historical "discover" of women-to-women relationships as a ground for collective action allowed marginalised subjects (such as women, trans, and non-binary people) to claim their capacity for social change. Standing one next to the other is a

channel through which fear, loneliness, and discomfort are challenged. Affective flows produce networks and the shape of spaces. Participants live day by day a FS where they find friends, comrades, and sisters. With them they talk about bad experiences, find care, support, and comprehension. This awareness of referring to a space where people care about you progressively works at the formation of an inner strength. Some participants of CS claim a provocative imaginary of "the pack." "The pack" is a conventional word for male groups acting violence against women. Through the reappropriation of this word, participants are meant to reclaim their capacity to create a group among women, that expresses strength and eventually self-defence:

> For the women, the pack is a frightening imaginary, it is a bit of a bogeyman […], against which we are not able to defend ourselves. And instead the pack... is the pack of your sisters. […] Something that makes you feel safe […]. The point is if you move together for the protection of yourself or if you move together for the aggression of another person. (IIIR6, CS, 35)

The imagery of the sisters' pack allows for a sense of heightened power, however much violence may occur in individual lives. The feeling of being surrounded by a pack becomes "a weapon [...] both defensive and attacking." The awareness of managing together problematic situations allows participants to feel safer, despite the things that can happen. Participants face violence through participation and manage physical threats or discomfort together. It is a tool that allows them not to be helpless in the face of individual experiences of inequality. Even with respect to street violence, if experienced alone, it can be addressed with a collective reaction.

According to the neoliberal order, people are used to think only about themselves, to care only about their own business, and to maximise their productivity on an individual basis. Instead, FSs claim that through emotional ties is it possible to maximise individual growth, develop tools for autonomy, and transform social structures of inequality. Everyone should look after the others, be ready to face situations of potential risk or threat, intervene when women are living discomfort or expressing a need. This is a way of managing FSs that goes from moments of assembly to playful evenings.

Hence, becoming safer is a process through which the potential for collective action increases. It depends on a capacity to react to emotional charges. As a LYS interviewee claims, "In my opinion, what I call safe is the ability to react. In front of a real physical danger, in front of a malaise, in front of the moment in which one is less visible" (IIR7, LYS, 35). This disposition is not a humanitarian love for others, but a praxis of relations which comes from responsibility. As much as care and affection are the basis for relations, so is mutual accountability. By rejoicing in the joy of others, and following each other's paths, participants engage with the collective work on emotions, and emotions become political.

In spite of this relative openness, critiques to the higher or lower degree of accessibility remain. Some of the activists acknowledge that this perception of closeness is consequent to the need to protect the

space from external threats, as CS interviewee develops: "I think this is normal, that it happens in all occupied social spaces. […] That is to have a baggage, a ballast, to have a sharing, a love, a hate, a passion... which is not easy to share right away, so in my opinion this story of welcoming you is a big bullshit" (IIIR4, CS, 30). Affects can also be boundaries, that tie a certain community together and make the space less accessible for others. Sometimes, if some specific people feel discomfort this is positively welcomed. Safety and comfort depend on power and privileges, so some people feel discomfort when their privileges are unveiled. In FSs, this discomfort is a positive part of a changing system where others, usually excluded or permanently uneasy, are aiming at producing their own space of liveability (Arao e Clemens 2013). Some participants complain about this accusation, since women are always required to be more welcoming and more caring, as a CID interviewee argues: "in the end, this is what is expected of women, that they always know how to welcome you. That they always make this presence together, of sisterhood, of maternity" (IR5, CID, 73).

The possibility to express emotions (anger, fear, passion, frustration, love, and so on) is a way to learn to manage emotions. Indeed, a safe space where nothing happens and everyone is kind to the others does not exist. On the contrary, harsh discussion, conflict, and relational fractures are always present. The difference is that most of the times these rifts can be questioned, and the community works in the direction of new tools of interaction. This section aims at addressing the functions affects play in FSs: first, as channel of mediation between cognition and bodies; second, as tool for political elaboration; third, as competence in action. As the analysis shows, positive affects enhance the potential for the self and collective actors to act, and this increase of vital forces coalesces collective action. But how to preserve the process of creating structures of feelings?

6.3.3 Caring spaces

To preserve structures of feelings, FSs elaborate on the ethics of care. The work on affects reveals the dark side of politics and of human beings, and requires an ongoing practice of preserving people and communities. According to its prefigurative aims, the ethics of care is consistent with an understanding of social ties, as a whole, even beyond FSs. No one can be a fully autonomous atom: everyone depends on the others in a mutual net. As a LYS interviewee states with regard to care: "we all need it" (IIR4, LYS, 53). How to bridge the need to give and receive care with the feminist path of self-determination and liberation? How to make the ethics of care into effective collective action? As the following quote shows, care in FSs concerns communities and collective settings, beyond family and couples. By debunking the notion of women as caregivers and care as a social obligation

taken on by women, FSs develop new understandings of care that can serve as a proxy for social interactions beyond FSs:

> Getting rid of this vector of oppression, however, does not mean eliminating any form of care. In my opinion, this element within Cagne has been an element that, […] has materialised in practice, in the sense that carrying out a space, keeping it occupied, paying attention to the dynamics that are created at the assembly level, in the management of everyday life, in the distribution of responsibility, is a work of care. It is a work of care that you direct not so much to your personal satisfaction or to your relationship as a couple, or to your nuclear family, but you extend it to a wide and common community. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

FSs develop a political understanding of care: to take care of somebody and something means questioning family, the coupledom, and the material dimension of politics. It regards organisation settings, internal dynamics, decision-making processes, and every-day life. Politics is not only about statements and discourses, but it regards everyday interactions and the emotional field. As one CS participant explains, the ethics of care broadens the very idea of politics to include the affective dimension of people, which is also part of their willingness or unwillingness for collective action: "we realised that we couldn't just talk about political practices or things we wanted to do. [...] If people fall around you, it's not that you can pass over them. So we don't only talk about big problems... because the staff is political" (IIIR4, CS, 30).

The awareness about positive affects producing expansive effects, makes FSs receptive to the emotional states of participants. The ethics of care requires taking care of people dealing with personal problems or moments of bewilderment. As a CS participant argues about herself, "there are very high standards of care practices. […] In various moments, among other things also in moments that directly affected me, that I was very sad, very weak, very borderline" (IIIR5, CS, 30). The daily life of the space and its political activity are constructed following the rhythm of the affections, through mutual attention to moods and emotional conditions. This attention is consequent to an awareness of the impact of affects on collective action, and a willingness to challenge the neoliberal laws of efficiency and productivity, as a LYS interviewee explains with regard to a comrade: "how comfortable she is, how in a period of time we feel that she has lost energy or enthusiasm, or put them aside... this is an attention that is very present between us." (IIR8, LYS, 30). Paying attention to how people feel, how they change over time, is also a way of preserving the continuity of the political space and its effectiveness. This way of taking care of each other materially changes spaces. Political spaces become more liveable. The greater or lesser availability for political participation depends on the ethics of care. For instance, sometimes people get more active in order to allow the other to take their time to rest, as a LYS interviewee explains: "you realise that you don't want them [the comrades] to do some things on their own and that's it. […]. I think it's one of the things that happens most to

me inside Lucha, to know that, okay she's sick so I want to be there, the other one is tired, so if I can I'll be there" (IIR5, LYS, 33).

To take care of physical spaces is part of the ethics of care. Cleaning, tidying up, fixing broken things, drawing materials, all these tasks are a way to express mutual responsibility, since the space is the mirror of a collective actor. A LYS interviewee clarifies: "the more we take care of all these nuances the more we feel good in here, the more people who come here feel that sense of care and serenity and respect for the place you have, and the more it all works somehow" (IIR7, LYS, 35). An ethics of care preserves the structure of feelings of FSs. People are involved in a reciprocal effort to make the FS welcoming. This attention produces the shift from an external security to an internal security built in the reciprocity of care, as a LYS interviewee shows: "make each one responsible for that space. I am not a policeman, I am not there to check the documents of those who enter, but I am careful, because I feel responsible in some way, of women and children, but also of my comrades, but also of me. And being responsible for me also means doing something for others." (IIR5, LYS, 33).

The issue is specifically relevant for those spaces that offer services and reception to women in need. Spaces try to be welcoming from a physical point of view: clear communication about location, safe environment (which often means the absence of men), accessible paths and rooms. Participants engage with the fight against gender-based violence, and they help women finding new dimension of recovery, comfort, and safety. They claim for a broader understanding of safety, that includes networking with other women, economic autonomy, a house, as the fieldnotes from LYS case show: "Moira tells me that until they are sure that [the women hosted] have a house and a job they don't let them out. She says 'we have to be sure that they are safe'" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 11-06-09).

FSs are often based on a deal, an implicit or explicit agreement among activists and women. In order to produce a safer setting, the community needs grounding rules and shared foundations. An example from LYS accounts for the need for a deal: every two years the people making up the community of the space – activists and women hosted at the centre – write together a regulation, with a series of recommendations. How to manage the space, which type of assemblies to carry out, which duties. These rules change every two years depending on the FS composition, but they are needed in order to enjoy the space. Everyone is free but has to adhere to a shared deal, and if someone transgresses the community talks about how and why. This ongoing process of working on internal dynamics is typical of all FSs, that do not defer to pre-existing models. With regard to LYS, there where thousands of moments in which women passed through offering a coffee, a chat, something to eat. This warm environment was reproduced by all the people there, and it included whoever was spending time there, despite their collocation and role.

The ethics of care is part of the management of playful events, where FSs are open to outsiders. These moments might be risky or even dangerous. Political rituals of care are translated into ways of interactions with the outside: things can happen, but they are differently managed, and this allows people to feel safer. As CS interviewee puts it:

> Another step is: I decide to make a soirée at the space. How does my political discourse and my speech of collective self-consciousness turn into a sociality? What is a safe space? A space where nothing ever happens? I don't think so. […] I think that a safe space is not a space where things don't happen, but a space where there is a collective readiness to take care of a situation that is created, of the people that are involved. And they are revolutionary processes of change at the basis of relationships. (IIIR3, CS, 30)

Guaranteeing a totally safe space is not feasible. For this reason, producing the space is a relational process involving all persons taking part in the situation within the space. If affects and emotions are not predictable and cannot be oriented in advance, the care structure within which the work on emotions takes place can be solid.

Yet, some participants complain about a too high attention regarding care, that sometimes blocks the collective process of reasoning and acting: "hyper-sensitivity and hyper-care at times, I don't know if it's a limit, but sometimes I think it paralyses us somehow" (IIIR5, CS, 30). Because people acknowledge FSs as "care-givers," sometimes the expression of individual difficulties prevails over collective goals. The neoliberal system, based on individualism, prevents people to care about the collective, and it involuntary traps FSs in the same logic, as fieldnotes from the focus group at CS show:

> The concept of care compared to a request is something that I think has plagued this place so much. Many people come in here looking for an answer […]. The welcoming dynamic is not a group that welcomes a single person but a relationship of mutual exchange [...]. But in the individualistic spirit in which we are raised in this system, where what is important is your best friend, your boyfriend, your family, it is difficult. (Focus Group transcription IIIRA, Rome, 10-07-19)

The ethics of care requires work to dismantle neoliberal individualism in favour of a sense of community. Individuals are socialised into building a certain kind of social network: their partner, the nuclear family, their parents, their children. Only the closest relationships, especially blood relations, or romantic bonds, are of value. Community, on the other hand, is a virtually non-existent concept. Learning to live in a community and to care for it, beyond the closest ties, requires a work on oneself that is also a work of contestation against the forms of socialisation that are taken for granted.

In the section, I went through the creation of an ethics of care to preserve structures of feelings. This ethics of care takes place with regard to physical arrangements, interaction among participants and

outsiders, and rules of the game. Ethics of care is a cognitive and bodily practice that materialises the FSs awareness on the role, the use, and the consequences of collective affects.

6.4 Producing Structures of Feelings: a Summary

In this section, I engaged with the work on affects and emotions within FSs at the level of community, spaces and actors. Results are built upon Williams' definition of structures of feelings (1954, 1969), as the inner dynamic that allows alternative ways of thinking to emerge, within the dominant way of thinking. With way of thinking, he takes into account an assemblage of affects, rationality, frames, and ideas. According to this interpretation, I explored the FSs' effort to build alternative structures of feelings, through several dimensions. First, through the physical dimension, and the choice to identify a place, and transform its characteristics in view of political goals. The way in which this relationship with the physical role takes place is mediated by and produces a series of affects. Within a dominant paradigm, the choice to manage a physical place represents a strategy to challenge the economic and institutional model of city management. Managing a physical place, in which affects circulate, also requires an organisational choice. Through the exploration of the organisational choices of the three spaces, I have tried to highlight how decision-making processes and organisational forms produce different structures of feelings and a different effectiveness in collective action. A certain degree of formalisation, combined with openness to innovation, allows positive feelings to be consolidated and negative ones to be limited.

But what do I mean when I refer to structures of feelings? To investigate how the analysis through CGTM led me to this concept, I went through the way in which affects are mobilised for collective action. The research began with the question: how do feminist movements imagine, produce, and preserve safer spaces? In the course of the analysis, the question of safety turned out to be the most obvious manifestation, the tip of the iceberg of a much deeper and more structural work on affects. It is precisely the taking charge of affect and emotions, their collective elaboration and transformation that construct the infrastructure of meaning within which people perceive themselves to be safer, i.e. by coming into contact with their own emotional sphere. The capitalist economic model, as Hirschman (1977) explains, was built from the Renaissance onwards through a clear division between the passions (affect, emotions, feelings) and interests. This split seemed necessary to ensure a flourishing development of trade and the emerging economic model on the one hand, and to limit the power of rulers on the other. However, this split has consolidated over time, supporting the symbolic production of a rational social actor driven by self-interest, inspired by the logic of profit, able to maximise productivity and above all to confine and manage (in private, away from the public sphere) their emotions. In this infrastructure of meaning, which as Williams (1954) explains is a dominant

way of thinking, normative models of individual behaviour have proliferated. The establishment of this normative model has produced a growing sense of disorientation, alienation (as defined by Marx (1858), anxiety, and frustration arising from economic productivity, but also from the subordinate confinement of emotions. The consequences have been exacerbated over the years by further developments in the model – such as globalisation, changes in the job market, and the gradual disappearance of welfare states. Rational social actors have become more and more precarious lives (Butler 2006), driven to be self-made men, to maximise profits even in the face of a job market and an institutional set-up that constantly produces individualism, competition, and failure. The feelings arising from the economic model concern the splitting of the emotional sphere from the development of the self in the public sphere and politics. In this sense, the intuition of 1970s feminism to investigate the political through the personal – the intimate, the private, the domestic – represented a way to reunite dichotomies, to reposition the subject in the social context, and to unveil constrictive symbolic and economic structures. The feminist political proposal intended to look at affect as a vital impulse until then silenced, misunderstood, dismissed. Women, historically associated with the emotional sphere, were the ones making this proposal. Women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people had experienced that side of the dichotomy, the association between the feminine, emotions, weakness, the private, madness, nature. Drawing on the dark side of the dichotomy, in which they had been socialised as subaltern subjects, feminists try to restore meaning to emotions as a matrix of collective action. In this sense, the response to structure – to the economic model, to institutions, to public policies – is the creation of alternative structures of feelings that make the work on affects and emotions their frame of meaning. In order to understand how the work on affects occurs, I have explored them as 1) a mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, 3) a competence in action. In this triple function, there emerged the potential of affects for individual and collective transformation. Positive affects (that are not only joy, happiness, etc., but all those affects that increase the power of life, including anger) allow the self – of the subject and the community – to expand, to experience its potential for action in the world. For this reason, FSs direct their actions to stimulate positive affects, their circulation, in order to feed this process of continuous development of potential. To preserve this process, FSs engage with an ethic of care, that creates the symbolic and material network of solidarity within which the work on affects and emotions can be carried out.

The results that emerged from the analysis seem to demonstrate, on the one hand, that the work on emotions represents a challenge to the historical process of consolidation of the neoliberal rationality, and on the other, that it opens up a field of possibilities for subjects and collective actors with respect to their own agency. In this chapter, I explored the construction of FSs as structures of feelings through potentials of affects, and thus the way emotions enter collective action modifying its margins,

its contents, and its orientation. In the next chapter, I will explore how affects and emotions are transformed into collective action.

7. Transforming Affects into Action

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at FSs as structures of feelings. Affects emerged as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) a competence in action. In this chapter, I will go through the third mechanism. How are affects made into action? How are they mobilised for collective action? To do so, I will look at affects in time and space and then at the repertoire of action developed by FSs.

Changing Temporalities
Affects, as gradients of intensities and vital forces, continuously produce meanings, spaces, networks among participants and constitute a ground for action. By working on affects, participants learn words and tools to deal with the social dimension, through cognition and body. This understanding brings them to question the use of affects. As much as they have an adaptive role (they develop to let people survive), they can have a use to target or change social dynamics. What moves and affects us provides important information about the context, about our needs, about what makes us feel good or bad. Learning to recognise the gradients of intensity that move us allows us to modify the way we act, to strengthen it.

Among the things that most influence the way we act are time and space. The social perception of time drives individuals to choose certain learning paths over others, to set their reproductive and non-reproductive choices, but it also influences everyday life. We relate to time through the mediation of affects. Since time is not natural, it is continuously produced by our way of codifying it, of giving it meaning. A perception of time informed by affects, and therefore by a cognitive and bodily "compass," allows us to construct other meanings in relation to it. The dimension of time emerged significantly from the empirical analysis as a space for transformative action.

Scholars working on sociology and time highlight changes of the understanding of time fostered by the capitalist mode of production (Durkheim 1965, Elias 1986, Giddens 1994, Leccardi 2009). The changing times of work, everyday life, and productivity have increased the tendency towards social acceleration and a de-timed present. Individuals have to negotiate with social, economic, and political time, with regard to their inner perception of time and life-course paths. FSs engage with time through the medium of affects. Time ceases to be given, and it becomes a field of resistance and reworking.

On one hand, FSs enhance counter-times at the micro-structural level of individuals. On the other, they do so at the meso-level of space and community.

Changing Spaces

Affects mediate our understanding and use of time, but also of space. Very often during the fieldwork I found the equation, reported by participants, between home and political space. Why is the association between home and political space striking?

The Western tradition of thought separates private spaces from public spaces (Fraser 1990). This separation allows to keep the division of social functions, roles, and expectations. The private home is the context of intimate relations, the family, sexuality, but also violence: elements that should be relegated away from the public eye. Private space "naturally" belongs to women, as well as the field of emotions, of care, of vulnerability (Stanko 1988). Public space, instead, is the place of deliberation, work, conflict, protests, institutions, and more generally politics. It is a male sphere. The 1970s Western feminist movements questioned the role of women in the private space. To go outside of the home was considered as a source of empowerment. Black feminists challenged this Eurocentric vision, claiming "home as site of resistance" (hooks 1991) for Black women under slavery and in contemporary times of racism and white supremacy. Home is the site of community bounds, of care, warmth, and solidarity. Women at home are the core of community structure, and they foster the dignity that is missing in the outside world. Since the period of colonial plantations in the South of the US, women were relegated to the house, and to a specific room: the kitchen. Despite the condition of exploitation and violence, in the kitchens women were also able to elaborate strategies of resistance and well-being. For instance, they fed their male companions, they took care of the whole Black community, they stayed among each other and supported each other (hooks 1991, Davis 1999). Other trajectories of life and survival were made possible because of women's interaction within the space of the kitchen. Kitchens are part of the symbolic and material place that recurs in the association with FSs. As Scicluna argues, "the home is an entanglement of powers that flow through the main spheres of life—social, cultural, economic and political. It is a place of paradoxes and negotiations. […] This polyvalent characteristic of the home makes it an ideal terrain to understand the way social and political forces are negotiated at ground level" (2017: 10).

Drawing on this theoretical framework, I will question the role of home, kitchens, and food in FSs. The mediation of affects breaks with the dichotomies of public/private, weak/strong, rational/emotional. Through the informed knowledge of the intensity gradients that move their actions, participants become able to transform the meanings attributed to spaces, and therefore the action that takes place within those spaces. It is not by chance that the association with the home is

so recurrent: the discovery of the sphere of emotions as a source of understanding and empowerment of the collective self allows political space to be experienced also as an intimate, domestic, personal space. In this way, the potential of space, no longer purely public and political, is transformed. Transformed by affects, it provides participants with the opportunity to explore new ways of developing ties, producing knowledge, and designing political action.

Transforming Affects into Action

To explore how affects are transformed into action, I will look at the repertoire of action, knowledge and codes, and direct social action.

According to Taylor and van Dyke, protests are "sites of contestation in which bodies, symbols, identities, practices, and discourses are used to pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations" (2004: 268). Women's movements have frequently been in the spotlight of research on the repertoire of actions because of their disruptive and unorthodox use of bodies and strategies in order to pursue their goals (Staggenborg 1989, Taylor and Rupp 1993, Taylor and Whittier 1995, Taylor 1996). "Researchers of the women's movement have added greatly to our understanding of the way movements combine tactics oriented to political and personal change by demonstrating how feminist movements meld mass demonstrations and other forms of direct action with consciousness-raising, self-help, and embodied forms of resistance to critique and transgress dominant conceptions of heterosexualized femininity" (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 264). In the course of the empirical analysis, I was able to observe that the understanding of affects and emotions not only created a certain structure of meaning, but that collective action was also transformed by it. Instead of taking place on a purely strategic level, political elaboration and its translation into practical action also took place on another level. Informed knowledge of the affects allows participants to assess what issues to address, how to question them, and what forms of direct intervention can be used to change them. This affect-mediated approach makes it possible to develop forms of action that broaden the conventional movement's repertoire (Tilly 1986). Here I do not intend to investigate whether this translates into a greater or lesser effectiveness. Instead, I intend to focus on how the transformation of the potential of collective action leads to innovative strategies, sometimes with unexpected results. An informed understanding of affect influences both repertoires of action and the production of codes and knowledge. As della Porta and Pavan outline, "contemporary progressive social movements form collective spaces of knowledge production that are true laboratories for innovation" (2017: 1). Movements aim at producing alternative epistemologies oriented to challenge the *status quo*. Echoing Tilly's definition of repertoire of contention (1986), della Porta and Pavan shed light on the repertoire of knowledge practices (2017).

Since the 1970s, feminist movements engaged with the production of counter-knowledge. The male-based culture and science were considered as inherently oppressive and exclusionary. At that time, women broadened the notion of health, both in terms of knowledge on their own bodies and medical knowledge; in the production of women's narratives, literature, history, science; in the opening of gender and feminist studies courses within academia. They developed a whole set of knowledge through which they negotiated the relation with institutions in order to improve legal and social conditions. Since then, the production of knowledge has taken place through a situated analysis of reality. Starting from oneself meant putting one's own personal at the service of a collective reflection on cultural paradigms of reference, on the symbolic order, on codes. The elaboration of the FSs draws on this genealogy. Why should affects lead to a different knowledge and what use is this knowledge? Still with reference to Hirschman's studies on the birth of capitalism, it is evident how much the separation of passions and interests has produced in terms of the symbolic order. This challenge of rethinking the world from the point of view of the emotions, therefore, is situated in a broader perspective of questioning the economic model, institutions and social structures.

Finally, all the spaces taken into account deal with forms of direct social action. Each of them adopts different strategies and tactics. As Melucci outlines, "non institutional practices thus contribute to changes not only or mainly by what they offer, but even more by the alternatives they help us imagine" (1989: 141). Bosi and Zamponi define direct social action as "forms of action that focus upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society by means of the very action itself, instead of claiming something from the state or other power holders." (2015: 367). Included in these forms of action are those that "ignore or circumvent the traditional state-addressing repertoires of action, and that focus instead on a 'self-changing' society as part of everyday politics, in which the distinction between the public and private spheres is blurred" (2015: 368-369), such as occupations, self-managed centres, anti-violence shelters, free legal advice, psychological support, work orientation, collective purchasing groups, crowdfunding, health clinics. From an historical point of view, the women's movement in Italy has always dealt with direct intervention in the social field. Through consciousness rising, feminist groups harvested needs and inequalities, and invented strategic action aimed at changing social inequalities. In that direction goes the opening of health clinics (*consultori autogestiti*) for women's health and illegal abortions; of women's houses; of the first anti-violence shelters (the first in Rome was created in 1977, within the feminist occupation of the Governo Vecchio building). How is direct action currently pursued by FSs? How does the work on affects shape goals and trajectories of these types of action?

In this section, I will keep the focus on affects and emotions as channels for understanding the innovation on collective action brought about by the FSs, but also for understanding their limitations and constraints.

7.2 Affect in Time and Space

7.2.1 The Feminist Time: Changing Temporalities

One of the forces that allowed Lucha to grow and become a point of reference in the city was that of not chasing others, something that came to us a lot from mixed movements. [...] But to have our own way. We set goals for ourselves, [...] and to pursue those goals, despite the things that came your way... it happens that you have to write that document within ten minutes because otherwise it won't work tomorrow... Fuck you! (emphatic). I have more to do. Because in my opinion that is an instrument of power. To make you stay in their time. So you don't have your time to reflect and put it into practice. Because you have to go after them. [...] We structured our own thinking, our own methodology, and we went on our way. This has been... and is and continues to be a great strength for Lucha. And this in my opinion is characteristic of feminism. (IIR6, LYS, 45)

Time, as well as space, is a social product. As the quote shows, FSs aim to challenge both the time of social movements and neoliberal time. To question time allows to challenge the issue of power, in order to change social structures of inequalities. The awareness of time – as a social product, as a compulsion, as an induction to action – is consequent to the mediation of affects. The feeling of frustration, of dissatisfaction, of chasing, of constriction, pushes participants to question whether the time experienced is consistent with the collective will, or rather dysfunctional. From the mediation of affects comes the identification of different needs, and therefore the choice to construct another temporality. This form of collective action on time, informed by affects, does not produce a decrease in the capacity for collective action – that is, a slowdown, an ineffectiveness, a weakening – but rather enhances the capacity for collective action. In this sense, the interviewee claims that this form of collective action on time is "a great strength."

In this section, I will take into account feminist practices of time management, oriented to challenge the conventional understanding of time. In the first part, I will go through the change of the individual perception of time thanks to participation in FSs. In the second part, I will look at the meso level of collective action, and how time changes through the mediation of affects.

At the micro-level of individuals, political participation in FSs enhances a negotiation between their inner perception of time and their life-course path. By taking part in FSs, their expected life achievements, steps, and procedures come to be challenged. Becoming feminist and engaging in a feminist space changes the time of every-day life. A LYS interviewee claims that the FS "became a

bit of a part of my life. […] I went to university and stayed here [at LYS] in the afternoon. […] So it also changed my way of managing time so much" (IIR8, LYS, 30). The choice to dedicate time to the FS puts into question the time dedicated to other interactions, such as romantic relationships and friendships external to FSs. FSs blur the boundaries between the private and public dimensions, so that many every-day and self-care actions (such as washing one's hair) happen to take place there. As another LYS interviewee argues,

> I mean, if my phone rings at six o'clock in the morning, I get a shock because I think that […] it's raining, now Lucha is flooding, we have to call the women [hosted at LYS], should we go there? In short, that's one of the first thoughts. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

Boundaries blur, and they open up a different perception of time, in which both the space-time of self-care and the priorities of life change. During the night, which is conventionally the time of rest, if the phone rings, the thought does not go first to family, but to the FS. It is "the first thought," as would be the case with a relative. Individual life "takes on other rhythms," following the space's daily life, pauses, and runs, as a LYS interviewee states: "things happen here with a chronic delay. Here things never happen at the time they should happen, they always happen at another time, and so your life takes on other rhythms" (IIR2, LYS, 37). The intensity of political participation in a FS changes the perceptions of time: "we always said that one year [at the CS] corresponded to five. It was true. It was really an eternity..." (IIIR5, CS, 30). Social perception can make time very slow or very fast. One year can be in the individual perception "an eternity," as much as twelve years can dissolve in a second. The high intensity of activities, through the mediation of affects, produces an extended perception time.

The transformation of time thus concerns the biographical dimension and everyday life. But the perception of time is also produced by the action of social movements. To take part in social movements, total commitment is often required, and the withdrawal from this commitment is perceived by other activists and by the person themself as a betrayal. Thanks to the reflection on affects, the possibility of taking time for oneself is opened up in FSs without this being a betrayal to political action. It often happens that personal conditions, life changes, emotions resulting from collective action push the participants towards the need to thin out their involvement and to devote more time to their own life, their intimate relations, their work. The possibility of being able to take one's time, in places where there is a certain normativity in the use of time (and therefore the demand for "dedication to the cause") is not taken for granted. Conscious reflection on affects allows the meaning of time and participation to be transformed, giving participants the possibility of constructing new meanings in relation to political participation. This space of possibility fosters positive affects in the participants.

Time is also a source of suffering, because despite the social perception produced within the space, activists always have to confront the outside world, where other rhythms count. Neoliberal rules require the fulfilment of tasks and duties in order to survive. Despite the choice of a great personal investment in FSs, people have to perform their job, dividing their time between the FS and personal activities. The discrepancy between neoliberal time and feminist time produces feelings of fatigue and frustration. The time of work, the time to secure resources for subsistence, clashes with the time experienced in FSs.

The mediation of affects interplays with individual perceptions of time. First, it changes the rhythm of daily life and its organisation. Secondly, it changes the perception of the intensity of time and its duration, also with regard to political participation. Thirdly, it changes the relationship between individual and social time, opening up a transformation of priorities, constantly mediated by neoliberal rules, which also produces feelings of unease.

As much as the mediation of affects within FSs boosts counter-individual time, it does so at the meso-level of collective action, too. Social movements are often trapped in the rules and constraints of the historical time they live in. In times of acceleration, they build upon a strict political agenda, an abundance of protests and productivity. How do FSs deal with time and politics?

All of them reject the idea of a structured, imposed, and undeniable time. FSs aim to challenge social movements and the neoliberal time, and they take their time to elaborate methodologies and repertoires, networks and paths. Politics follows the rhythm of participants' feelings. As a CS interviewee develops, through the work on affects participants detect their rhythm:

> The care, the fact of realising how the comrades around you are, the fact of not having a priority that is given to us from the outside. And the possibility of saying: oh girls, no problem, no hurry, let's take our time. […] You practise it because you try to experience the world as you would like to, and then you bring it back into your life outside the collective. (IIIR6, CS, 35)

As the quote shows, the way time is managed in the FSs embeds elements of prefiguration. Taking their own time is a political practice that helps to bring to life the idea of the world envisaged by FSs. Through fighting the normativity of the political agenda, FSs learn to go *slower*. A CS interviewee argues: "we can also have three or four meetings to decide whether or not to participate in a march," and "if you do not agree in an assembly, then either we do not agree or we talk about it for another twelve meetings until we find a point of agreement" (IIIR2, CS, 37). Consent is a slow process, sometimes tiring. Slowness and consent, embedded in the idea of feminist time, bring to unexpected strategies and tactics. To call it "slow" means to bring back a neoliberal understanding of time: that is why I call it "feminist time," instead. When the priority is to preserve the structures of feelings, the political agenda and the timing of protests also change, as one CS interviewee explains: "we often skip appointments that are perhaps super important for the rest of Italy because we have not found

the sense of being there as a collective" (IIIR2, CS, 37). Although decision-making processes may seem ineffective, just as the choice of conscious work on affects may seem to shift the political focus, in reality they both allow FSs to elaborate claims, strategies, and tactics consistent with their ideology, in a sort of utopian realism. As a CS interviewee argues, "the potential we have is given by the fact that we are like that. […] I like to do things the way we do because we try not to leave any piece behind. […] And this stuff here certainly slows you down, but then it characterises the product, let's call it a product, which you give to the outside" (IIIR2, CS, 37). In this way, no one is left behind, and action is strengthened by strategies consistent with the wishes, energies and availability of participants. This temporal method offers the outside world an example of affective prefigurative politics. Especially for those spaces that engage with forms of direct social action, this means proposing procedures that do not reproduce inequalities of the neoliberal system. Slower processes allow to transform social reality, as a LYS interviewee states:

> I think that this is what these places are mainly for, to maintain a healthy movement. Which perhaps doesn't exactly coincide with the visibility, the good health of the feminist movement. […] This sometimes makes you slow down, it makes you lose pieces, it makes you be less incisive on the world... even if, in short, I think there has been nothing as incisive as the feminist movement in Italy. (IIR6, LYS, 45)

As the quote shows, participants reflect on the possible ineffectiveness of slower politics. However, they recognise that, while following an unconventional timeframe, the feminist movement in the long term has managed to bring about profound social changes, probably unattainable without this kind of approach to time, too. To dismantle the social movements' agenda and their implicit rules does not diminish the capacity for political action, but gives back "so much freedom." Building on this, a CS interviewee adds: "nobody pulls us by the jacket so we can take our time. [...] Nobody expects anything from us, and this is a great victory that the Cagne have achieved over the years. That is to set expectations to zero. That gives you so much freedom" (IIIR2, CS, 37).

The situation of crisis all the FSs were dealing with challenges the feminist time. Their survival depends on the capacity to react and to promptly deal with twists and turns. Participants talk about the affects embedded in the nexus between time and crisis, which are mainly fatigue and tiredness. With regard to LYS's strategies in relation to the crisis, an interviewee explains: "I have liberated this place, I have created something different, and I surprise you by coming to a resistance that is not the one you imagine, not the violent one, […] but I give myself the dignity to make a different reasoning. To say: should I leave this place? I give myself my time to get out" (IIR7, LYS, 35). Institutional attacks produce fear, uncertainty, frustration, melancholy. The climate of precariousness demands a prompt response, always on time. Yet, participants draw on these affects to formulate another strategy for action. If their collective work in the FS was to continually produce a structure

of feelings, even in the situation of crisis and institutional threat the FS reaction is consistent with said structure. This correspondence between affective, cognitive, and bodily dimensions, this political elaboration rooted in the work on affects, helps to transform affects into collective action. Respecting the gradients of intensities that are produced during a crisis situation, processing the cognitive and bodily energies involved, transforming emotions are mechanisms that require another kind of time, and lead to other outcomes.

The crisis situation intensifies the work on affection and caring, especially for spaces that carry out direct social action. By taking care of women escaping violence, the need for another time also comes from the need to find a solution for them, and to avoid forcing them into a situation of anxiousness and precarity. FSs deal with the time of the institutions by working on the affects generated in the relation: often, affects come to be a boundary to plan strategies and tactics. "I should have the ability to respect my nerves and my life time. Because I do not think it is right to put a collective of ten activists and fourteen women in this situation of anxiety and stress. […] Which is dictated by someone else's times. On the times that someone is imposing on us by making us anxious, frightening us, terrorising us" (IIR7, LYS, 35). Emotions such as fear, dread, insecurity could lead to pure defensive strategies. Yet, the development of affect work allows participants a potential for imagination that would otherwise be precluded. Affect work does not make the negative emotions generated by the situation of crisis disappear, but it transforms them into a potential for awareness, strength, dignity, thus increasing the capacity for collective action.

This constant work requires, as explored in the previous chapter, to be preserved through the ethics of care. The choice of another time is a choice of reciprocal care, that takes into account the emotional and physical consequences of crisis. A LYS interviewee expands on this:

> What has happened is that the stresses related to this place, related to the historical phase, to the precariousness, have created strong discomfort in our group. Comrades who are sick. [...] we can't let ourselves be ruined by what we have created even humanly from the famous times that someone else says. […] And at least we give ourselves in the best possible way, with the greatest possible awareness that what you are looking for in your life is to pursue political goals but also somehow to feel good. That what you do makes you feel good. (IIR7, LYS, 35)

As the quote shows, FSs work on the way the body, emotions, blood, and sweat are part of political action. With this awareness, FSs engage with strategies and tactics oriented to social change, through "feeling good." Positive affects are deemed the precondition for political action, otherwise they lose the very sense of action. This reflection brings together affects and time: through the mediation of time, FSs are able to negotiate the social time, institutional time, and feminist time, by increasing their potential for collective action.

7.2.2 A Place Called "Home"

The occupied space for me is a home in terms that it is a place of shelter, it is my comfort zone. […] It is a re-signifying of the term "home" that desacralises the house as a place but it recovers the positive meaning of shelter. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

Asked about the first words coming to their mind when thinking about the FS, participants often reply: "first, home" (IIIR10, CS, 30). Most of the interviewees, at some point, define their FS as "home," and so I started to question participants about that. The concept of home refers to challenges to the symbolic order of the private space, the nuclear family, and intimacies. On the other hand, it allows participants to retrieve a positive meaning of home, care, and affect, by dismantling gender inequalities embedded in these concepts. This process is an expression of the way in which conscious work on affects modifies space, breaking the symbolic order of certain dichotomies – such as the private/public – that still underpin the social world. By debunking the idea of home, participants change the potential for action within the political space.

In this section, I will explore the cognitive and bodily association between FSs and home in the perception of participants as a site of social change. On one hand, the concept of home blurs the boundaries between private and public space. On the other hand, the practice of communal cooking and eating comes to enhance the community building process.

Homeliness

By calling their space "home," participants break the boundaries between private and public spaces. This in-between space hosts affective ties that challenge the obligation to the nuclear family and to social expectations. FSs are considered home because of the ties with significant others, that produce the feeling of a place to belong to. They are places of everyday rituals, where affects that are normally relegated to the private sphere and separated from social life become part of public life and social interactions. One CS interviewee tells how affections change feelings related to public and private places:

> Generally, we all live in spaces we don't live in... which can be work, university, home... and we generally live these spaces individually... […] while the [feminist] space has really questioned how you live an open, public, and free space… a bit like your home but it is not your home, […] because anyway you live it as a space of intimacy, as a space to take care of, as a space that welcomes you, and at the same time where you can bring and leave things about you... but it is also public. (IIIR7, CS, 30)

The quote allows to understand how boundaries between public and intimate life blur. Private spaces are often individually-based, or they are the site of the nuclear family. FSs are collective and public,

but participants share the same sense of intimacy. In FSs, participants take care of others and of the place, but this does not make it any less "public." Rather than the place of the nuclear family, home is the site of the community. FSs enhance the idea that home can be with other women, trans, and non-binary people. This social form has never been envisaged, because home is usually the site of the nuclear, heterosexual, and reproductive family. Whether the nuclear family has historically been a place of social reproductive work and women's subjugation (Della Costa and James 1975), FSs question blood relations by claiming "families of choice." Rather than ties based on blood, they claim new types of kinship based on affection, shared values, and everyday practices. As a CS interviewee explains:

> For me, the rejection of the familistic viewpoint and the role of the biological family in my life does not necessarily imply that I do not need a physical place or to not find shelter. […] It means building even closer relationships […]. And the family of choice is the series of people [...] with whom I have decided to share my life. In everyday life, in misfortunes, in sorrows, in joys. [...] Because I feel that in my life I need care, to give it, to receive it, to entrust myself, to trust. And I have decided to do it this way. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

Breaking the bonds of the nuclear family requires building even closer emotional ties. Just as the family is associated with the home, so the affective ties are associated with the FSs that become, therefore, homes. FSs are perceived as homes because they are sites of affects. The sphere of emotions is normally relegated to the home: there, you come to terms with your emotions, you feel alone, you sometimes discuss your feelings with your relatives. And yet, the FSs have unhinged the work on affections from the private sphere to hinge it on a collective, public, political process. Through FSs, participants elaborate on their sufferings and needs, sickness, and biographical shifts. As a LYS interviewee says "for me it is no coincidence that I faced super personal biographical events at a time when I found a space of women who welcomed me, who made a family. It was like a way of saying: I enter Lucha so I can get my wings. And I am not afraid of using them" (IIR5, LYS, 33).

The feeling of being able to work on affects in a political place invests it with a sense of homeliness. The gradient of intensity of this feeling intensifies during particular biographical shifts, such as illness, death, mourning. FSs are settings of care which people can tap into for strength and empowerment, as a LYS interviewee shows:

> I have cancer, Laura has a possibly degenerative disease, and the group has not only held on to this stuff here, it has multiplied in its care, in its attention, in keeping us all closer, more resilient, all together, because it is not your evil, it is ours. In short, it was powerful. [...] Even if in the worst period I could not come here very much. I couldn't be in contact with the children, I couldn't be in contact with women, so I couldn't come here a lot and so on, but... it continued to be my home. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

Just like homes, in FSs participants find an informal network to deal with personal troubles and

biographical transition. Many of them keep growing and changing together with the FS. "It's a bit like home now [...]. I have been here during the years when I have changed so much, I was 18 years old... and all my various transformations have found a place" (IIR8, LYS, 30). Most of them, across years, changed several houses, and the only one remaining the same is the political one.

As already mentioned, home is where everyday rituals take place: breakfast, showering, conventional celebrations like Christmas or birthday parties.

> We acted as if it were a collective house. […] There were obviously also the cool things that I think are the sharing of any aspect of everyday life. From waking up, to breakfast [...]. Assemblies at all hours of the day according to what we had to do, the rooms where we would fuck, the rooms where we would eat. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

What is involved in sharing the rituals of daily life? On the one hand, learning to know the affect and emotions of other people, and on the other, building on this grammar of daily life a collective structure of feelings.

As well as rituals, FSs allow objects of daily life to find a space. The architectural structure, the type of colours and objects, are part of a general impression people receive from FSs. Each of them stimulates to participants a sense of homeliness. A CS interviewee locates the feeling of homeliness in positive emotions, like warmth and comfort: "this thing of warmth, of welcome, of embrace. [...] It is more emotional warmth. Because there is always room for things. Like in beautiful houses you choose" (IIIR4, CS, 30). Positive feelings coming from the association with the house increase the desire to participate, to take care of the space, and to engage in collective action. The idea of home holds prefigurative elements, as one LYS interviewee explains: "If you want to fight you need a space from which to start your projects. If you want to change the world it's different if you have a home to do it from. Inside of which you can build this image of a different world. And inside of which you can experience this idea of a different world" (IIR1, LYS, 37).

While dealing with older generations of activists at the CID, I realised that together with all these factors, they express a sense of belonging coming from their biographical trajectory. Older feminists' connection with the FS reflect a path of achievement of meanings, goals, and sense of their own life. They called the persistence of a community of women "a leitmotif," which keeps working in their old age. Despite the relative rejection of a neoliberal world which does not offer dignity and recognition to elder women, through women's houses they produce their own sense of dignity, belonging, and well-being. "For me the house is my home. […] Referring to a community of women is fundamental. It is a question of meaning, political but also existential" (IR7, CID, 67).

The same process works for FSs that host women escaping violence. To share a path of common growth is considered more significant than sharing a blood tie. By finding a shelter, women find a

network of relationships and a space to question their feelings and emotions. This process increases their tools to deal with violence and inequalities.

The concept of home always has a double facet. On one hand, it is the depositary of the positive dimensions I outlined so far. On the other hand, it carries out the similar troubles of a private house. As private homes, it is ambiguous and contradictory, it is a field of protection and freedom as well as constraints and isolation, as clarified by a CS interviewee: "it is a place from which you often feel like getting out and perhaps risk locking yourself in" (IIIR2, CS, 37).

Feeding Politics: Around the Kitchen Tables
During the fieldwork, I had moments where I understood the association between home and FSs in some spaces such as the kitchen, or places connected to the fruition of food. Why are kitchens so important in FSs' life? Why does everyday life in the kitchen politically matter? How does food become an element of doing politics?

In some of the spaces I followed, the kitchen is the core room in the development of activities. With regard to LYS, at the ground floor there is a big room which used to be a guest room. At some point, participants felt the need to create a common space: a kitchen. That room became the core of the space. In the room there are always women, and whoever wants to chat always passes through that room. During winter, when the other rooms are too cold, they hold assemblies in that kitchen. During the fieldwork I noted down: "the kitchen is the place where women usually meet, drink coffee, tell each other their stories. It is a place of food and drink, where they take care of each other, fight, stay with the children. It is as if the kitchen automatically conveys a sense of intimacy, and the connection is easier and more immediate. In the kitchen we are all the same. I am no longer a researcher at Scuola Normale, but a woman who talks to Zaira and has tools to help her. And she speaks to me without reverence, horizontally […]. Paula [a newly arrived woman hosted at LYS] is also in the kitchen. Because she can get to know people and pass the time […]. The kitchen is a place to look out, through a large window, but also a place to be protected from the outside, like a nest or a cave. Anyone who enters or leaves passes through the kitchen: to take a look, say hello, have a chat, sit down and rest. The kitchen seems to be the heart of this house." (Fieldnotes, LYS, 03-07-19). This setting favours intimate sharing and the dismantling of roles and power dynamics. In the kitchen, women can share information, fears, elaborate strategies together, both for individuals and for the community.

Kitchens are rooms where women manage food and feed each other. Food is a vehicle of community building, and a tool for prefigurative politics. Many moments of conviviality, sharing, and encounters happened through the sharing of meals. Big lunches, or dinners, were organised in the occasion of public events, and were also organised in favour of the community meetings. During events, very

often spaces offer a dinner or use dinners for self-financing. Sharing food is the occasion to talk and to create a more intimate and warm environment. In moments of tension or contention, collective meals became the occasion to ease spirits. While discussing about food preparation for events during an assembly, a participant says that "cooking is also a way of sharing and being together" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 04-07-19). On the same occasion, at the beginning of the assembly a dinner was organised. Everyone was invited to prepare and share food from their own country. On that occasion, women enjoy other women's typical food, learn to know new traditions, uses, and tastes. In a way, it is learning to know and to respect each other. Sharing food is a way to take care of each other. The mediation of affects makes participants aware of the needs of the body. Through the nourishment of the body, participants nourish the emotional bond between them, and take care of themselves. In this sense, kitchens are places of political elaboration, and food becomes a tool for transforming collective affects into political practices.

In this section, I went through the association between FSs and the concept of home. By blurring the boundaries between private and public, FSs engage with collective places that challenge neoliberal individualism. They are places where affective ties become a family of choice, beyond and against the nuclear family. There, rituals of everyday life are made into politics, such as the management of food. Kitchens, both as physical and symbolic places, allow FSs to be places where affects become the ground for collective action. The instinctive association between a political space and home is the result of working on affects and creating structures of feelings. This work transforms the potential of spaces, and thus the potential for collective action.

7.3 Transforming Affects into Action

7.3.1 "Glitter, of Course!": Innovating Repertoire of Actions

G.B.R.: Why did you tell me that this space is different and acts differently?
[...]
Well, glitter, of course! (IIIR4, CS, 30)

On 14 March 2014, a post on Twitter from the channel of Cagne Sciolte spread the notice of a cemented toilet in front of the Pertini hospital, in Rome, where a few days before a woman was left alone and had had an abortion in the toilet of the hospital. The post claimed: "action at Pertini in Rome: a toilet to tell you you're shit! the objectors [*obiettori di coscienza*, doctors who refuse to

perform abortions] out of our pants #objectonthispussy"[19]. One month after, on the 12 April, with face masks and creative dresses they got in front of the Ministry of Health, they arranged in a semi-circle and they all peed together, holding the banner "We piss on your conscience" (playing with the Italian expression *obiezione di coscienza* for doctors who refuse to perform abortions). As Taylor and Van Dyke outline, "The tactics of protest used by social movements are so integral to popular views of social movements that sometimes a movement is remembered more for its tactics than for its goals" (2004: 263).

The sentence of the opening quotes of the section, "glitter, of course!," signals the disruptive, creative, and blatant hallmark of feminists actions. Scholars refer to a "repertoire of contention" in order to focus on the tactics and strategies developed by movements over time, that have direct or indirect influence on nowadays' actions (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1993). FSs refer to feminist movement's legacy: present politics comes from a historical repertoire, relationships, and affect. However, FSs' efforts are intended to broaden the boundaries of routinised practices. So far, I engaged with the role of affects in FSs. Affects work as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and bodies, 2) a tool for political elaboration, 3) a competence in action. In the previous sections, I explored how affects are transformed into action with regard to time and space. How do they come to be a competence in action with regard to the repertoire of action? Which types of collective actions are consequent to the elaboration on affects?

Collective action arises from the impulse of affects, and produces affects. The practice of collective elaboration on individual experiences enhances the participants' positive feelings. The construction of collective action is therefore based on the well-being of participants, who can channel their social emotions – such as anger, frustration, discomfort – into actions capable of transforming these emotions. As Taylor and Van Dyke underline, "radical feminists […] adopted collectivist organizational forms and emotional expressiveness as part of a larger repertoire of direct action, justifying these strategies on the basis of fundamental differences between women and men and a rejection of masculinist styles" (2004: 265). The capacity to undo routinised action fosters a creative approach to collective action, where everyone can feel comfortable and, at the same time, capable of transforming reality. One CS interviewee expresses the wonder of discovering that a number of routines of political action can be subverted and transformed through creativity developed in the FSs: "those of us who have had collective experiences before knew that going out in the street was the way to be visible... there were a series of rules, there was a pattern... that everyone and everyone

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[19] https://twitter.com/CagneSciolte/status/445515369491357696

followed in going out in the street... and when we entered the space […] we realised that we could bring out of there and out of us a whole series of ideas, practices, ways of being out that we had never tried" (IIIR7, CS, 30). FSs break away from a set of conventional rules of protest, and try to open up a space of political imagination.

In order to express the potential of political imagination through the circulation of affects, participants refer to the circle, as has already emerged in the previous sections. With the notion of the politics of the circle I refer to the practice of standing in a circle, both during assemblies and during collective action. This shape is both a symbolic glue and a political action. The position of the bodies in a circular form makes it possible, on the one hand, to always perceive another body next to one's own, and to see other bodies in all directions of gaze, and then feeds the circulation of cognitive practices through the mediation of affects. As a CS interviewee explains, "within the assemblies we give ourselves a series of practices like standing in a circle and looking at each other, like listening to each other and not talking to each other, like taking the speaking turns because there were so many of us, so we necessarily needed to make a list" (IIIR7, CS, 30). The circle is a way of undertaking decision-making processes, but also protests. The symbolic glue of the circle keeps participants together during marches, and nights out, through an affective connection which makes them feel safer and pleasant. Another CS participant explains the concept of the circle as "the ability to always have an eye out for each other, to look at situations, to stop if you see something you don't like, this is something we all do. And that makes us feel safe, all of us, when we're out and about together" (IIIR6, 35, CS). The circle represents the circularity of care, a reciprocal interaction between participants which stimulates the emergence of emotions – positive and negative – and their transformation through a collective taking charge, both during the assemblies and during the public protests.

The three types of spaces in this research elaborate different strategies and tactics, depending on their counterparts, composition, goals, and structures of feelings. All of them shared the choice to occupy in order to target the persistence of gender-based violence and social inequalities. Yet, the CID, because of its relative institutionalisation, refers to a quite conventional repertoire of action. The other two FSs adopt a creative and disruptive orientation: CS is more oriented to a provocative manner, while LYS, because of the need to manage a shelter, is working for inclusive and larger mobilisation. The CID adopts more routinised types of engagement in conventional marches and rituals. In order to pursue their goals, they work closer to institutional channels, they negotiate with the municipality, commissions, and major donors, in order to raise funds. The older age of the participants, life perspectives, and political goals lead them to adopt less disruptive forms of action. The structure of feelings is oriented towards preserving a stable place for people in their old age. Some affections often resulting from the discovery of structures of social inequality – such as anger – are mitigated

by a long process of awareness, both personal and political. As a result, collective action draws on a spectrum of affects that are less disruptive and more balance-oriented. Rational evaluations prevail on emotional flush, and they sometimes shrink the space for innovation.

A strong creative attitude, instead, orients LYS's repertoire of action. The creation of a self-managed shelter for women escaping violence, that keeps existing after fourteen years, signals their visionary approach. With regard to an institutional lack, they claim for more resources, but at the same time they engage with direct social action (Bosi and Zamponi 2020). In order to allow the shelter to keep existing, participants work on communication, on political translation (because of the relationship with migrant women hosted at the space), and on inclusive practices to broaden the scope of stakeholders. To face the threat of eviction and to negotiate with institutions, they engage in broadening the visibility of LYS through a huge committee of members that manage LYS beyond the smaller collective. The broadening of support for LYS is based on an emotional and political understanding of the issue of male violence against women. People from the outside are invited to get to know both the participants and the women living in LYS, to share with them the everyday life, the affective intensities, the circulation of emotions. Through the mobilisation of collective passions, the support base for LYS has expanded over the years, allowing for the development of innovative forms of collective action. They pursue campaigns based on visuals and comics, and a direct and sometimes assertive bargain with local governments. Among the campaigns they developed there were a call to the arts to design *luchadoras*, i.e. feminist heroines, which were then plastered all over the city of Rome; the projection of a huge sign with the LYS symbol on a series of monuments and places in the city; the creation of a mask that is worn during public protests and that makes LYS instantly recognisable. These creative and performative actions arise from the sharing of affective intensities, are aimed at producing an affective reaction in bystanders, and they convey a message that moves not only cognitively, but also emotionally.

Innovation, performativity, and playing orient the CS's repertoire of action. With "Cagna style," they outline a general attitude toward politics, as being provocative, ironic, sometimes aggressive, and they make a political use out of having fun. They often say they do politics "like the crazy ones [come le matte]." Through the collective work on anger, this emotion is transformed into an ironic and provocative charge towards the outside world. This emotional intensity characterises both the elaboration and the construction of the public protests. As an interviewee explains, "we have always been seen […] as unreliable and unpredictable. In the sense that we have always decided to occupy public space, [...] in a way that was very provocative, sometimes even situationist" (IIIR10, CS, 30). This attitude makes their activities immediately distinguishable. Actions like performing a punk concert in front of the Russian embassy claiming for the liberation of Pussy Riot activists, the "slut

walks" at night with extremely whimsical clothing and blatant slogans, a karaoke held on an entire tram line challenging the newly approved municipal law which prohibits singing on public transports, are just few example of this "Cagna style." In these actions, they make an extensive use of performativity. Performativity concerns clothes, but also the way actions are "put on the stage," the use of dirty language as a reappropriation, the creation of proper shows and performances as a vehicle for political message. Cabaret, post-porn shows, karaoke, theatre performances are integral parts of their way of producing and diffusing a political culture based on a feminist structure of feelings. These actions focus on the body as a site of experimentation and political expression. The body perceives, is in play with other bodies, and expresses something in public space. Through the mediation of affects, cognitive practices are transformed into bodily practices, which communicate in public space. Along with this, playing is an integral part of their repertoire. The self-managed pole dance lab held within the space allowed them to work on body, self-perception, stereotypes, and empowerment. They use workshops and labs in order to disentangle gender-based violence and power dynamics. Playing means also having fun: the political use of irony and having fun opens up to channels of communication and agency in the public space. As an interviewee develops, "it's like a cathartic moment of release, liberation, of doing stupid things that's good for you, it makes you laugh, it strengthens the group, because you're doing this thing together and there's always a level of […] danger. […] So there's that level of attention, of complicity, of looking at each other" (IIIR, CS, 30). Emotions related to pleasure, joy, and well-being in participating in collective action expand individual agency and the capacity for collective action. These positive affects are in fact multipliers of the affective intensity gradient and expand skills and the ability to have an impact. Irony and having fun together strengthen the group and the capacity for collective action, as well as rational strategies and tactics.

The three strategies mirror different collective identity, composition, goals, and structures of feelings. However, all of them display the role of affects as a mediation between political elaboration and collective action, and as a competence in collective action. Affects enable the recognition of targets, goals, and strategies, the construction of innovative forms of action and increase the capacity for collective action. Although affects and emotions are always present in collective action, in the case of FSs they are consciously taken into account and strategically engaged with to build collective action.

The glitter recalled in the opening quote is the symbol of this visionary political action, based on a creative impulse, on the use of the body in political action, on the transformation of social emotions into political emotions at the service of collective action. The glitter represents the desire to draw on an imagery of joy, provocative, liberating for the participants. In collective action and through the

display of positive emotions, participants get in contact with the possibility of transforming social emotions, and making them the subject of collective agency.

7.3.2 Producing Knowledge, Challenging Codes

Raffaella comes in complaining that the projector is not working, Daria gives her another one and tells her: "God help you, or the Goddess [in the feminine form], or in short, who for her." (Fieldnotes, CID, 19-11-18)

This example of everyday chats and jokes between women sheds light on the innovative repertoire of knowledge and codes developed by FSs. The creation of a gendered imaginary, of an ideal mythology of women, signals the feminist intervention on culture. Gender as social production becomes a site for the symbolic subversion of oppressive social structures. The field of gender is thus rewritten as an emotional and political place of strength, pride, solidarity, and transformation.

Some events, retrieved from the fieldnotes, show the ongoing repertoire of knowledge practices implemented by FSs. "An event, held by Lucha, is focused on cancer and integrated treatments. One of LYS's participants, who presents the event, has lived the experience of blood cancer and still does. […] She introduces the event by talking about her experience and integrated treatments, that are quite inaccessible to many women. After her, an expert talks about integrated therapies, and tells about the opening of the first integrated therapy centre in Rome. […] Afterwards Sara, another sick woman, attacks the centre and the association that promotes it – Susan Komen – to have among the sponsors of the race for cure, groups whose environmental and social misdeeds are well known. The doctor is very much affected and after a short while she leaves. The meeting is quite quarrelsome […]. Sitting together are "experts" and sick women, who are experts in their own way. This meeting proposes a different sharing of knowledge, in which each one contributes and has the right to speak about her knowledge and her body. The meeting is attended by many women with illnesses themselves or close to people with illnesses. Sara comments that this is precisely why the meeting was conceived as an opportunity that is not given anywhere to get in touch with certain knowledge and information" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 28-06-19). As the fieldwork episode shows, FSs represent places of knowledge production that challenge the codes of expert knowledge. Historically, the women's movement has challenged knowledge paradigms that did not take into account the experience, body, and thought of women, trans, and non-binary people. In physical places such as FSs, feminist movements bring forward alternative knowledges that enable participants to build a different awareness on social structures. This practice of knowledge is a material possibility to change the biographical trajectory,

as in the case of sick people who can draw from different information for their own course of treatment.

In order to produce their own repertoire of knowledge practices, FSs work on frames, ideology, and language.

The collective identity of participants is related to the FSs' story and narratives. At the CID, participants call themselves "the women of the house," referring to the notion of "women" (rather than activists), and to an identitarian connection between identity and the space. In the case of LYS, participants call themselves "the Luche," by referring to Zapatistas' struggles and to the orientation toward direct social action. CS's participants call themselves "Cagne" (female dogs), which alludes to trans and queer feminism, and challenges gender binarism, the moral approach to sexuality, and the social role of women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. As an interviewee develops, "for me Cagne keeps many things inside […] with respect to practices, experimentation... the approach to life which is often disruptive, stubborn, annoying, disarming... it can be violent, clearly contextualised... it's always... I disagree!" (IIIR7, CS, 30). The collective identity is tied to the framing process of each space (Benford and Snow 2000). It suggests their vision of the world, the tool to change it, the ideological background. The three FSs are related to different feminist ideologies (Melucci 1996). CID refers to historical feminism; they come from the 1970s and they keep that memory in the present. LYS, instead, refers to Southern popular feminism and direct social action. CS is oriented toward queer theory and transfeminism, a recent strand coming from collective action upon sexuality and gender. The language of everyday life refers to cognitive practices, to the relationship with the body, and to the mediation of affects. Starting from the sharing of a series of collective emotions, participants develop cognitive practices and a certain idea of relationship with the body, from which follows their own way of dealing with the social reality. This is why the language of everyday life, such as the way of naming oneself as a participant in a space, signals the repertoire of knowledge and the codes produced by the space itself.

Each word and notion is a field of contention, that is telling of the FSs' knowledge production. During an interview with a CS's participant, she told me that she rejects the very notion of activism. "Because activism is typical of associationism. That is, the point is not to be activists, not even to be militant, not even to be avant-garde, the point is to take on things in your life that then permeate your whole life. In other words, it's not that you are an activist. That's your life. It's not a separate stuff, so I have 4 hours that I dedicate to the association and I do activism. […] I'm trying to do it in all the manifestations of my being alive" (IIIR2, CS, 37). The refusal to refer to the symbolic universe of activism tells a lot about the ideological and cultural roots of FSs. Politics is not a separate activity from life, but every manifestation of life is an expression of political will. Similarly to environmental

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movements, feminist movements refer on the one hand to the congruence between theory and practice, and thus to prefigurative politics, and on the other hand to subjectivity as a field of political action.

FSs work for the innovation of words, language, and codes, even though sometimes they risk not being understandable. Despite the risk, some of them prefer this creative and provocative use of language instead of risking the oversimplification. Others, such as LYS, claim for the capacity to change language, one that aims at being understandable for all women, more than reproducing a hermetic language.

As well as knowledge, FSs produce cultural artefacts, that is "objects like texts or narratives employed or produced collectively during these performances" (Johnston 2009: 7). We can generally include in this definition objects like fanzines, zines, books, vademecums, posters, flyers, comics, banners, and archives. The space of CS, for instance, after several workshops on gender-based violence, produced *The Vademecum of the Good Friend*, to help friends and parents to deal with someone next to them who is living a situation of violence. As an interviewee states, FSs need "a paper, something you can go and read. A documentation, something... […] because in my opinion, when you do that job, a bit of stuff comes out" (IIIR1, CS, 37). FSs engage with the production of cultural artifacts in order to fulfill the structural lack of history, memory, and thought regarding women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. This way of producing knowledge is an inherent part of their repertoire of action, intended to pursue goals and to address their opponents.

As the section shows, the work on affects orients both repertoires of action and repertoires of knowledge. Both are vehicles of social change that FSs act upon through the mediation of affect. Emotions become tools to elaborate new codes with which to define themselves, that challenge hegemonic social languages and transform the framework to understand reality.

7.3.3 Feminist Direct Social Actions

During the fieldwork at LYS, I got to know a woman who had been living (not continuously) for almost ten years at Lucha Y Siesta. She got there after several experiences of gender-based violence, and she was taking her time to recover. During the stay, thanks to her training as a biologist, she managed to open a sort of "plant clinic." As well as taking care of the flourishing garden of LYS, she invited people of the neighbourhood to bring their sick plants, so she could take care of them and bring them back to life. Then, either people took plants back or they left them in the LYS garden. The story of the plant clinic is telling of the specificity of feminist direct social actions (FDSA). All the FSs taken into account bring about forms of direct social action, either as anti-violence centres or

feminist services and provision (gynaecological clinic, psychological support, counselling, job support, parental training, etc.). As the above-mentioned story shows, the woman was at the same time hosted at the space and taking care of the relationships with people of the neighbourhood. She was not only receiving help and support, but also offering her skills and time to improve the community and LYS's stakeholders' well-being. The ability to work on affects is a tool that transforms roles in collective action, and increases the capacity for action. The ability to listen to others, to take care as a tool of interdependence and reciprocity, are affective competences developed in the political elaboration of the FSs that become tools that transform the action itself. FDSAs, though, rely on the development of awareness of affects and emotions, and this work increases the capacity for collective action and social change.

The section is intended to outline the FDSAs' specificities according to the FSs' work on affects.

All the FSs taken in consideration engage with direct social action and point out lack of DSAs in contemporary social movements, as a LYS participant states: "there has clearly been a political crisis in the movements after Genoa. From then on there has been a descent that continues. […] And this is the aesthetics of politics. […] We need concrete actions" (IIR4, LYS, 53). Together with the lack of DSAs there emerges also a lack of prefigurative politics, as the choice to "prefigure" the kind of society social movements want to bring about (Leach 2013: 512). As a LYS interviewee claims,

> All that aesthetic stuff that mixed movements have been doing for years, where you mime the alternative, but you don't practice it… You have to practice the alternative. […] Otherwise it's a nice idea of yours, but it has little relevance to reality. [...] Instead of doing the super-fuckin' cool thing of the debate, maybe you accompany her [a woman in need] to Frosinone for her thyroid exams. Because social change is in that exchange. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

This quote shows the FSs' participants' approach to collective action, which is based on FDSA and prefigurative politics. From the analysis of collective affects and the use of emotions comes the willingness to engage with FDSAs. The mediation of affects leads to a direct intervention in the social structures, not mediated by recourse to the state and institutions. Often, the very need for space for FDSAs is a trigger for collective action, as a CS interviewee argues: "the idea of the anti-violence shelter was the only thing we had clear in our heads when we entered [in the space] about what we wanted to put in there, everything else came afterwards" (IIIR9, CS, 35).

FDSAs influence the creation of the physical and political shape of FSs. As an example, anti-violence services have to be separated spaces, without the presence of biological men. The physical space where some functions take place, such as the room for the reception of women, have to be welcoming and cosy. This requirement often shrinks with the typical setting of squatted centres, with banners, posters, and wall paintings. Affects emerge as elements that shape the space (a space that is welcoming and ready to receive women); as a matter for political action (taking charge of the

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emotions linked to violence and inequalities experienced by women); and as a tool for transformation (the work on individual emotions as a process of empowerment and autonomy).

Usually, FDSAs arise because of a lack of public services or institutional provisions, as explained by a LYS participant: "in the occupations there are often people who have been in a state of uneasiness for a long time, and that perhaps the State, the institutions do not care about all. […] We here [at LYS] have built the tools to build these processes of collective emancipation over time" (IIR3, LYS, 43). From a historical point of view, anti-violence services were created by feminist movements. At the present time, anti-violence services are partially regulated by institutions through local and national regulations, that FSs challenge. FSs question anti-violence management protocols and the provision of adequate resources. Institutional protocols lack adequate attention to the affective structures that fuel certain inequalities and which, if addressed, can also change the individual's approach to such inequalities. Public services often make use of FDSAs, because "they themselves don't know where to bang their heads" (IR7, CID, 67), or because of a concrete strength of FDSAs in designing the social intervention. Institutions perform a limping behaviour, between recognition and attack.

To transform affects into action, FSs put forward collective action, the production of knowledge, and direct action. To target gender-based violence requires both DSA and a politics of contention, otherwise "there is always a piece missing" (IIR5, LYS, 32). Differently than other public services, FDSAs aim to enhance women, lesbian, trans, and non-binary people's consciousness on social emotions and collective affects, translated into empowerment and agency. The path of recovery is built upon the improvement of the capacity to choose for themselves and to pursue one's well-being. The work on affects is intended to increase women's capacity for action and their agency with regard to life issues.

It is also part of the development of feminist methodology for FDSA. With regard to anti-violence services they do work in a team; they collectively discuss cases; they are supervised by a psychotherapist. Deliberation, as well, is a relational effort. At LYS, a weekly assembly keeps together participants and women hosted at the centre, in order to promote horizontal decisions. Affective ties are essential to the healing process, and personal developments are strengthened by the work on social emotions.

Feminist methodology concerns the relationship between participants and women that reach FDSAs. Women are not considered as users, but part of a shared effort toward individual and social change. Rather than solving women's problems, participants aim at building together tools for change. By challenging welfarism, FDSAs do not offer solutions nor fill the lack of public services, but they aim to put feminist ideology into practice. Because of this aim, participants often run into frustration.

Their ideal would be to bring women closer to feminism, and this can either happen or not. By confronting with the material life of women, participants learn to broaden the understanding of women's empowerment, as a LYS interviewee reflects upon:

> what matters most in the end? It is that a woman who didn't know it before knows that she has her own identity... that there is a world that is made in a certain way and that in some world she is positioned in a certain place. […] You are not an activist, you are not a feminist, but maybe you are able to defend yourself in life and understand that there are injustices and that you don't have to suffer them. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

The result of FDSA on women is not necessarily to turn them into feminists, but to give them the tools to understand their own emotions and to learn how to use them in a world strongly marked by structures of social inequality.

If learning that not all women who enter the service become feminists can disabuse participants of their expectations, so too do power relations sometimes produce disillusionment. The illusion of horizontality dissolves because of the different roles that participants and women play. Different roles produce different responsibilities. Women are invited to take part in the community's daily life and management, both by caring about the physical spaces and relationships, and by taking part in decision-making processes. Women are invited to raise their own voice in moments of collective discussion in order to work on power dynamics, as well as deciding a deal that everyone has to respect (timing, meeting, and so on). Women are invited to support other women that get in touch with FDSAs, such as by taking part in the reception, sharing food and information, by creating a cosy environment. As women learn from participants and grow with them, participants, too, improve their path through their relationships with women. They learn to negotiate words, languages, concepts. During the fieldwork, a participant told me an illustrative example. Some years before, a mainstream television channel filmed a documentary on women hosted at LYS, by interviewing some of them. The documentary turned out to be victimising the women, describing them as vulnerable and fragile. Women got really upset because of this narrative, and together with participants they decided to avoid any kind of relation with any media that would misread their experience. They decided to be the only ones telling their stories, as survivors and not victims.

The other side of this relational approach to FDSAs is the risk of being emotionally overwhelmed. Relational boundaries allow to negotiate closeness and distance. Sometimes, this entanglement of emotions is too demanding for people approaching the space, and so it is an obstacle to participation. FDSAs is often a high-level intensity type of collective action, which triggers a truly committed engagement to the detriment of a broader and more fluid participation.

In this section, I went through the choice of FDSA, since all the FSs under investigation engage with it. The work on affects shapes FDSAs. Affects emerge as a stimulus for choosing the type of

direct action; as an element that shapes the action and the spaces in which it takes place; as a political matter of working with people normally considered users; as a tool for individual and collective change.

7.4 Collective Action by Means of Affects: A Summary

The chapter sought to explore how affects interplay with FSs at the meso level. In the previous chapter, I looked at FSs as structures of feelings. The work on affects emerged as: 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) a competence in action. In this chapter, I have explored the third mechanism, namely the way in which affects are transformed into collective action. I first observed how affects modify collective action in relation to time and space. FSs "take their time" by challenging social time, individual expectation of life paths, the time of social movements, neoliberal time. Through the mediation of affects, FSs develop a different use of time. This skill not only transforms strategies and tactics, but also allows participants to measure their involvement according to the emotions they experience, and in this way it transforms the potential for political participation and collective action.

The mediation of affects also modifies the perception of space. Participants often reported perceiving the FS as a home. This assonance may seem striking, both with respect to the dichotomy between public and private space, and with respect to how the gender regime produced the home as a social space for women. Yet, because of a number of elements related to working on affects – the work itself, the construction of relational ties, the rituals of everyday life – participants come to perceive the political space as home. This symbolic and affective association breaks the public/private and rational/emotional dichotomy, to unlock the potential of hybrid places in which to experiment with cognitive and bodily practices. Because a structure of feelings that alludes to a sense of homeliness is produced and perceived in the FSs, participants feel a heightened potential for action. In this sense, the transformation of affects in relation to time and space not only modifies the forms of action, but also the agency of participants.

The chapter goes on to analyse in detail how affects are made into action within FSs. To better understand this, I looked at the repertoire of action, the production of codes and knowledge, and feminist direct social action. In the case of action repertoires, it was clear how, depending on the type of composition, structure of feelings and ideology, goals and strategies are set. Regardless of these differences, all FSs show a correspondence between the structure of feelings and the definition of forms of collective action. The more collective action is consistent with the work on affects, the more effective the type of collective action is. This work is combined with that on codes and knowledge. As analysed in the previous chapters, the choice to come to terms with the emotional dimension

debunks a long tradition of separation between passions and interests that is at the origin of capitalism, from the Renaissance onwards. The work on emotions is therefore a work that not only modifies the action, but also the symbolic paradigm, the horizon of meaning of reference. Such a profound change, which challenges the roots of the contemporary economic and social system, requires an equally profound work on codes, symbols, and knowledge. From a historical point of view, feminism has always referred to the symbolic challenge against a male-based world. This work is about language, imagery, memory, history. The construction of alternative archives of feelings allows historically removed subjects – women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people – to elaborate their own representation and to preserve it, thus making it concrete. FSs, being also physical spaces, allow this work of reflection and archive to consolidate, laying the foundations and the frame of reference for the daily work on affects.

Lastly, I explored feminist direct social action, which all of the spaces included in the research pursue in some form. Again, the mediation of affects allows for the construction of action, the relationships with users, and the results of action.

This chapter aimed not only at describing the mechanism of affects as a competence in action, but also to analyse what this mechanism produces. Observing the work on affects and the work *of* affects allows us to analyse the potential for collective action. The starting point is that the emotional sphere is also often removed from the action of social movements. Consciously and continuously taking it on was a choice of feminist movements, of which FSs are a contemporary manifestation. Learning to reflect on affects and emotions provides not only descriptive elements, but also tools. What are emotions good for? What do they allow to do? Emotions work as "compasses." They show the starting point, and therefore why we live certain degrees of intensity, certain affects. They help us to understand the social structures that surround us. But they also show the direction in which we can go. It is a direction that changes, that shifts, depending on our starting point and our orientation. The compass allows us to plan our journey, to organise it effectively, because it always keeps us informed of our direction and orientation. We can consider affects and emotions in the same way.

They not only tell more about us, but when understood they also help in orientation. Their use transforms the path, the strategies to face it, the medium, and long-term goals. Like the compass, emotions transform the capacities to face the journey. The latter, in the case of social movements, is collective action: the way it is negotiated, processed, put into practice. Thus, emotions not only provide information about the starting point, but also about political orientation. They increase the capacity for individual participation, the consistency with the structure of feelings, and therefore the potential of collective action.

8. Paths of Participants

8.1 Introduction

The body is the primary medium of all communication. (Melucci 1989: 115)

The ice-breaking activity of the focus group we did at CS was intended to unveil the roots of the name of participants. They were invited to choose a picture among a deck of cards and to explain their name. One of them opted for a card with a pair of shoes, since, she said, "I always thought of my name as a journey. Because my real name is Giovanna, but no one calls me like this, all the people call me Nina. And I always have to explain why my name is Nina. So Nina is my journey, it is my grievance" (Focus Group IIIRA transcription, Rome, 18-12-19).

As the participant sketched out her name as a journey, I will do so by focusing on the participants' path of engaging in FSs. It is a "journey" bound up with affects (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Massumi 2015, Deleuze 2010), where women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary subjects, in a gendered social structure (Taylor 1999, Blee 1998), change their life paths (McAdam 1999, Peltola, Milkie and Presser 2004, Masclet 2016). This chapter aims at explaining that the work on affects strengthens the individual's path and increases the potential for action through a cognitive and bodily liberation.

In their work on biographical outcomes and long-term activism, Fillieule and Niveu claim that "individual actors are largely absent from social movements research" (2019: 1) or, in Jasper's words, "the biographical dimension of protest cries out for exploration" (1997: 214). Part of the fieldwork of this research was focused upon participation in FSs, from the perspective of participants.

The Research Questions

This chapter looks at individual actors – whom I call participants (both as participants in the research and as part of the FSs) – and how their path is intertwined with the FS they belong to. What function do emotions play in their path to politicisation? How does the discovery of the collective work on emotions modify individual agency? What does the political work on emotions produce in the long term at the individual level? This chapter seeks to understand the work on the nature, effects, and intensity of affects at the micro level, and above all it aims to understand the use that individual actors make of acquired emotional awareness. What do affects allow to do, once they are named? What does the awareness of the self and of the social structures one experiences entail? How does the mobilisation of affects influence the internal dynamics among individual actors in FSs?

In order to try to answer these questions, I will follow the participants' paths from their first contact with the FS. The first part will therefore be dedicated to mobilisation at the individual level, feminist socialisation, and the performing of roles as mediations between the self and the political space. The second part, following the individual paths, will specifically look at the work on emotions and affect. Finally, I will explore the way in which in the long term the work on affects produces consequences on individual actors.

From the Mobilisation Process to Feminist Socialisation

How and why do people get involved in FSs? Social movement scholars elaborated on the role of networks (della Porta 1988, Fernandez and McAdam 1989), identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992, Polletta and Jasper 2001), demands and supply (Klandermans 2004), framing and ideology (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996, Snow 2004), and emotions (Gould 2003, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001, Taylor 2013). All these factors emerged from the participants' willingness and opportunity to engage with FSs. Yet, participants claim for an "impalpable" (Grosz 2004) factor that coalesces the other dimensions, and that was an inner part of the recruitment process: the one of affect. As Ahmed argues in her model of affect as contact, "we are affected by 'what' we come into contact with. In other words, emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us 'toward' and 'away' from those objects" (2006: 2). By referring to the Women's Studies classroom, Ahmed (2004) suggests that the politics of teaching is bound up with wonder: "a sense of surprise about how it is that the world has come to take the shape that it has. […] Wonder opens up a collective space, by allowing the surfaces of the world to make an impression, as they become see-able or feel-able as surfaces" (182). The process of bewilderment, hesitation, and undoing of what was taken for granted is part of the students' awareness raising. The classroom is a controlled example which allows for a spatialisation of the analysis. Similarly, FSs allow for a spatialisation of the mobilisation process, bound up with wonder. Women and other subjects do not become feminists out of wonder. However, this affect increases "the historicity of forms of life to emerge – in the perception of the intimacy of norms and forms" (Ahmed 2004: 183). Not surprisingly, participants mention the feeling of "hunger" as an adjunct of their choice to engage with. This urge is consequent to the surprise for a world where certain feelings (unease, exclusion, alienation, oddity) are not an individual responsibility, but rather the result of social inequalities (Piccone Stella and Saraceno 1996). Passions flow from one body to the other, and they become a capacity according to the way bodies are affected by other bodies (Deleuze 2010). When wonder, "hunger," and individual availability to political participation are consistent, the process of mobilisation begins.

Becoming feminist is a path: on one hand, it entails political socialisation; on the other, the development of certain skills, and roles. Studies on political socialisation have only recently turned their attention to adult socialisation (Sapiro 1989), by focusing on social movements as explicit and implicit socialisation agents (Fillieule 2013). I will focus on feminist political socialisation as "the gradual development of the individual's own particular and idiosyncratic views of the political world" (Filieulle 2013: 1). McAdam developed the concept of cognitive liberation (1982) in the sense of a common definition that subjects learn to give to a certain situation in terms of injustice. This step is necessary in the formation of collective subjects, but it concerns the cognitive level, ignoring the way in which emotions and the body are involved in the individual liberation process. The feminist movement has historically built on these two elements, affect and body, the attribution of new meanings to the given situation, and thus the preconditions for its transformation. In contrast to the tradition of the Western rational subject, which also inspires the concept of cognitive liberation, the feminist movement proposes a liberation that acknowledges the affects' adaptive role in enabling individuals to survive.

The conquest of self-consciousness, as a ground for political involvement, is a process through which activists re-define their approach to the body, their view of the social world, through an analysis of affect and emotions. By challenging preadult learning, activists pursue a work of self-awareness in order to name emotions – such as discomfort, pain, fear, anger – related to discrimination and gender inequality. Affects have an adaptive function: they signal a danger, a need, a malaise, an expectation. On the other hand, emotions are always culturally constructed: acting on emotions enables to modify the meanings that a certain order of discourse assigns to a certain situation, a certain life condition and role expectation. Following Fillieule's assumption that "neither childhood nor adolescence adequately prepare mature adults for all the contingencies with which they have to cope over their lifetimes" (2013: 2), we can consider FSs as fields of learning and changing of oneself's underdeveloped features, such as affect and emotions and one's transformative potential.

Mobilising Affects

For a long time, social movement studies disregarded emotions and passions as an inner part of political action (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001: 1-2). In the last two decades, a new stream of literature highlighted the sphere of emotions as a tool for understanding political action, beyond those theories that consider emotions purely connected to irrationality (Taylor 1995, Hercus 1999, Gould 2004, Goodwin and Jasper 2009). Feminist theorists, such as Sara Ahmed (2004), pursued a reflection on emotions not "as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices" (9). As reported in the literature review, further elaborations have gone beyond emotions as individual-based angles to

understand collective action. Affects have been considered as a proxy to analyse the historical background that shapes certain meanings and reactions to bodies/objects/surfaces, and to analyse the mutual process of "be[ing] affected by" and "affect[ing]" (Ahmed 2004, 2006). "I mean by affection the affections of the body by which the power of action of the body itself is increased or diminished, indulged or impeded, and at the same time the ideas of these affections" (2019: 236-7). With these words Spinoza describes the relationship between the body and affects. In his analysis, positive passions are those that increase the power of action, and negative ones those that decrease it. In his framework, the two main passions are joy (positive) and sadness (negative). From these two primary passions, he derives dozens of others, through a precise geometry of human passions. Through the work on positive and negative passions, FSs offer participants an apprenticeship that enables them to understand the nature of emotions and their use, including political use. Understanding emotional mechanisms transforms the participants' paths, their life choices, their expectations.

Among other positive emotions, the erotic has been historically explored by feminist theory for its role in feminist politics (Rubin 2007, Wittig 2019, Paoletti 2011). The discovery of the pleasure to spend time with other women, the possibility to give value to this feeling, and the act of withdrawing from male desire is considered as the basis of consciousness rising and liberation. In his work on new social movements, Melucci argues about the "change in the representation of sexuality; possibility to choose beyond expectations and traditional roles. How and where can we make room for the erotic 'creation' that replaces procreation?" (1989: 151). The erotic structure strengthens feminist bonds. Feminist spaces enhance a political understanding of sexuality, by rejecting the separation between the political and the private field. Women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people are allowed to name their feelings and unknown desires, and, potentially, their attachment to others other than men. In her work on the lesbian continuum, Rich (1980) argues about a ladder of feelings – from less intense, such as a generalised erotic, to stronger feelings, such as women-to-women lesbian love – that connects women to other women.

Socialisation and cognitive and bodily liberation occur with the others. Networks among social movements' participants are a proxy to understand the mobilisation process and long-term participation in social movements (della Porta 1988). Klandermans (1997) and others elaborate on the social psychology of mobilisations, which means the mechanisms that favoured people's participation through instrumentality, identity, and ideology. By analysing the clandestine political organisations recruitment processes, della Porta (1995) found out the relevance of personal ties, but also their intensity and high quantity. Affective ties in high-risk activism ensure a base of loyalty, friendship, and cognitive assonance that strengthen people's will to engage with clandestine organisations. Scholars working on feminist movements mention the role of ties in women's

availability to participate into groups and organisation (Taylor and Whittier 1999).

However, the literature on social movements lacks an understanding of affective ties as a core feature of social movements. Social movement scholars working on feminist movements, as well, did not fully embrace the epistemological challenge of those movements, and neither their innovation in knowledge production, rather engaging with classical concepts to understand new social movements. How do affective ties ground feminist politics? Which affects are involved in such ties?

Consciousness rising groups laid the foundations for feminist thought. Women gathered in small groups to tell their stories (Sarachild 1977). The process of telling individual stories and locating them into social inequalities produces a concatenation of bodies and minds among women (Massumi 2015). In this concatenation, affects flow. Fear, discomfort, guilt, anger, are named and transformed into collective action. "Relationships are really part of our politics. And this is the essential difference" (IIIR7, CS, 30). Beyond a strategic use of affects, they bind women to one another. For a long time, feminist theory elaborated on the concept of women-to-women relationships as the basis, the resource, the prefigurative site of politics (hooks 1991, Bono and Kempt 1991, Cavarero and Restaino 2002, Fraire 2002). It is still missing a cross-fertilisation between social movement studies and feminist theory, that would be capable to engage with epistemological innovations brought about by feminist movements, and to broaden the scope of analysis of social movements. This research aims to fill this gap.

As much as affects disclose the potential for action, they can also decrease it. The analysis of internal conflict will shed light on the dark side of affective ties, and on the consequences of openly addressing such negative emotions that bring to conflicts, or ignoring them.

Affects in the Long Run

Awareness of affects, like a stone thrown into water, produces concentric waves that go beyond the individual stone. Through the analysis of biographical outcomes, I will try to see how the work on affect modifies the relationship with the self, the biographical path, gender construction and sexuality, life and work choices, the family, emotional relationships, and life expectations.

My argument is that the work on affects increases the potential for collective action at the individual level. Affects are explored as a means of political participation, community building process, trajectories of engagement and disengagement. The conscious work on affects has transformative effects. In this section, I will look at the process at the micro level of actors and relationships among actors.

8.2 Becoming Feminist

8.2.1 Mobilising for Feminism

And so I came into Lucha and I did this [anti-violence] course of several months that… I would say that it turned me upside down. Because it was like I waited for my whole life to enter in there. (IIR5, LYS, 33)

All the participants remember the first time they stepped into the space, or that they approached other feminists, because of the feelings associated with that moment. Sensations mark the beginning of individual mobilisation, and transform the subject in relation to the FS, to herself and to the social context. I will call the beginning of feminist engagement "watershed event" (cfr 8.3.1). With some temporal shift, the engagement with FSs and the participation in feminist movement often overlap. Several factors are embedded in the individual's mobilisation, and they interplay with affects. In this section, I will explore this nexus through several factors: the socio-historical context; family; socialisation; political background.

Depending on the age-cohort, activists inhabited different socio-historical contexts (Fillieule and Niveau 2019). For women that were part of the movement in the 1970s and that are part of the CID, FSs are a generational matter. The 1970s have been suffused by an affective structure (Taylor 1995), that Bracke calls "counter-community of emotions" (2012: 223). This structure fostered women's disposition to reflect on themselves, to meet other women, and to embed feminism as an habitus (Bracke 2014). The affective structure was so powerful and diffuse that activists blurred their own birth with "the birth" of political participation. As a CID participants that has engaged in feminist networks since the 1970s recalls, "I was born there… in the feminist movement of the Seventies" (IR4, CID, 70). Even if they were not directly part of the space, they shared the generational feeling of being part of an historical moment, of a collective feeling. Another CID participant, who was not formally part of the feminist movement at that time, remembers the feeling of a generalised affective structure: "I belong to a generation that has been involved in the feminism of the Seventies. I often went to the Governo Vecchio [the first house of women in Rome in 1976] but I wasn't a proper militant in some group […]. It was my space of freedom in a way. I thought I needed it as a compensation for the strong male world that I lived in" (IR5, CID, 73). As a consequence, contemporary activism is the result of a long-term participation.

Other participants mobilised for FSs in different socio-historical contexts. When they join FSs in phases of latency of the movement, other factors are more prominent, such as family, socialisation, or political background.

Family models underwent a profound change in the 1960s, as a result of economic prosperity, the

mobilisations of 1968, and the advent of feminism. Some of the interviewees claim that they have "always been feminist" (IIR6, LYS, 35) because of their family background. Family contributes to the development of adaptive emotions, such as fear, desire, or discontent. It is a site of growth and learning, but also of wounds and discomfort. In this sense, family enhances the creation of an affective structure that the individual has to deal with, through adapting, moving away, or transforming the structure. As a LYS participant recounts, her experience with her family of origin not only shaped her socialisation, but put her through a "biographical re-evaluation" thanks to the engagement with the FS she is part of:

> I was born in one of the more sexist places on earth. I came from a space where I underwent harassment since childhood. A lot of stereotypes shaped my life as a girl. I am an orphan and I grew up with a single mother. And in [her region] a single mother surviving without a man is unthinkable. The only way to survive and raise your child is being a slut. And the consequence is that also the daughter is considered a slut. […] When I say that I always have been feminist is because in this space [LYS] I made a biographic re-evaluation. I looked back at my past enriching it with a new view. (IIR1, LYS, 37)

Political participation is the result of feelings that bound up early individual socialisation (della Porta 1995, Passy 2001). Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta call them affective bonds, that "give us our basic orientations toward the world, especially telling us what we care most deeply about" (2004: 418). Affects orient individuals' willingness to participate. Approaching a FS emerges as a way to build the inner self beyond loneliness and bewilderment, both as a woman and, often, as a lesbian woman. Women searching for friends, comrades, lovers, but also homeliness, come closer to the feminist community in order to broaden their relational field (McAdam 1988). As an interviewee of the CS develops, "I began attending a squat in Rome, because I was bored with life, and I needed to meet other women, other lesbians, other females, that in a way share my feelings" (IIIR4, CS, 31). As Passy argues, "networks play a multiple role in the process leading to participation and that they intervene at different moments along this process" (2000: 2). However, the integration of structuralist and rationalist theories often overlooks affects. Networks help to build one's own identity, but also to find a proper dimension (Polletta 2001). The new context increases strength, empowerment, autonomy, beyond the usual life where – as women, lesbians, trans people, racialised people, poor people – they frequently feel lost. It gives a meaning, a life work (Taylor and Rupp 1989), a direction in one's own life. As I previously developed, networks imbue the creation of transformative structures of feelings where new meanings are created at the individual level. An interviewee of LYS elaborates on this, saying, "some people entered in my life beyond whatever type of political questions or collective goals and practices. They are people with whom we built a real affective tie. And this has intensified everything else" (II2, LYS, 37).

As well as with networks, socialisation is bound up with violence (Pain 1991). The perception of structural violence (Barone and Bonu forthcoming) is a sticky emotion which shapes the individuals' everyday life, and paths in the urban and social space. What women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people perceive they can do is constrained by the risk of bad consequences. This feeling of fear or unease fosters the search for a shelter. Participants approach FSs in order to build skills and to achieve resources to face violence, both at the symbolic and material level, as an interviewee of LYS develops:

> And then suddenly something changed in me, […] around me a lot of women and friends undergo gender violence. […] A lot of situations that made me think: it is enough, I can no longer accept this situation, I have to do something. […] So the first thing I did was the [anti-violence] course. […] I precisely remember that I came back home and I was enthusiastic. […] It was the breather that I needed. […] And while I did the course I realised I had a mad desire to know more, to live the space [LYS] more. […] At the end of the course a girl said: "it is like I searched for my whole life for a dress and I realised that here there is this dress for me." (IIR5, LYS, 33)

The thaumaturgic work of FSs opens up new possibilities for women that saw their lives devastated by violence. They elaborate on the rebuilding of their own life on a different ground. Emotions have an adaptive role: fear, rage and discontent allow women to materially survive. In FSs, participants learn the use of emotions, not only as intuitions, but as concrete tools for survival and to engage with a good life. As a woman that survived gender-based violence recounts, she underwent many types of violence, but then when she arrived at LYS, "slowly, with the common life here [at LYS], with activities, it happened that I came back to life" (IIR9, LYS, 66).

The last factor under investigation is the political background. Some of the interviewees got involved into feminist spaces through radical leftist groups, the right to housing movement, student movements, health movements, or other social centres, searching for a different type of politics. Then, as an interviewee of the CS says, "we started to feel an urge for a space that would be feminist and nothing else" (IIIR2, CS, 36). They call "mixed spaces" political groups or spaces with both men and women, where feminism is not the priority. The opening of political opportunity (such as a new cycle of mobilisation) discloses the possibility for the creation of feminist-only spaces:

> All of us working at receptions of the right to housing movement started understanding that there was a huge number of requests from women because of a situation of violence. […] We were not feminists, […] we didn't think about it, we didn't take a path of consciousness and awareness. But then the re-emergence of the [feminist] movement […] opens a space of thought where there was none, in the mixed movement. (IIR3, LYS, 43)

Mixed movements are considered as lacking both for political reasons – hierarchies, sexism, implicit normativity, gender blindness – and for relational reasons. When feminism arises as the main source of identification, it seems incompatible with a full-covering politics. FSs are not separate for biological reasons, but for political ones: there, feminism it the priority.

8.2.2 Feminist Political Socialisation

My relation with the feminist movement has been the conquest of the consciousness's dimension as a crucial dimension of politics. (IR6, CID, 67)

What is "the conquest of the consciousness's dimension?" How does the dissection of affects transform the relation with the self, and the relation between the self and the rest? In this section, I will explore consciousness rising as a site of political socialisation, through the development of emotional capabilities, on one hand, and of practical skills, on the other.

In the previous section, I went through the way mobilisation of individuals in FSs is bound up with affects. Once the mobilisation process in the FSs has begun, participants develop emotional competences that transform their relationship with the political space, with the self (body-mind), with the social structure. As the opening quote shows, the process occurs through the acquisition of the consciousness dimension as a crucial dimension of politics. With other participants, individuals develop their understanding on the cultural and social foundations of emotions, and on the political use of emotions. Through political socialisation, participants learn to manage self-confidence and their individual potential for action that goes beyond the walls of the FSs. As an interviewee of the CS says, "when I was not there [in the space] I felt on me all the power of that experience, in another country far away from here" (IIIR7, CS, 30).

By drawing attention to perceptions, feelings, and emotions, participants elaborate new relationships with the self and the rest. The process requires to fathom what has been attached, what is taken for granted, and what we involuntarily continue to reproduce, i.e. an affective structure that socialisation has consolidated up to that point. In this sense, it requires participants "to eradicate what relies inside you" (IIR1, LYS, 37). The structure of emotions that participants have to deal with is part of the gender regime (Connell 1995). The way bodies, objects, and spaces affect participants, and the way participants affect the social world, is a field of interactions that become through FSs a field of consciousness. On one hand, participants engage with their feelings, that are not the madness of an individual, but the result of a system of unfair social norms towards women, queer, racialised, and poor people (Connell 1995). On the other hand, affects are not a result of irrationality, low intelligence, frivolity, or of the private sphere, but they are the subject of collective action. Participants elaborate on their own life and perceptions as a ground for collective action. By naming the persistence of the male-structured social world (Nicholas and Agius 2017), activists disentangle affects related to everyday life in a world that is not made for them. The threshold of tolerance of a male-based world becomes lower. As an example, with regard to the use in Italian of the universalistic

masculine gender marker in all situations, an interviewee of LYS explains that "now to me it makes a difference. […] I realise that is a removal. If I am in a space and someone includes me in this *tutti* [masculine of "all"] without saying *tutte* [feminine of "all"] I feel the removal." (IIR1, LYS, 37). Ahmed (2006) proposes a conceptualisation of orientation as a way to find one's own way in a changing world. As she argues, a phenomenology of orientation is worthwhile to grasp "the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds" (2006: 2). Participants learn the orientation of emotions imbued in a social and cultural structure, and they learn to orient their emotions toward the development of the potential for action and a good life. The "training" to become feminists in FSs is called into question by most participants, as an acquisition of knowledge, skills, capacities to deal with their own background and present time. The process allows to develop emotional, professional, and practical skills, often constrained by a gendered organisation of social roles. An interviewee of LYS explains that she became competent "on a hundred aspects. Well, I became an anti-violence operator, a certified cultural mediator, and I did it here. As well as we know how to prepare a pint of beer, repaint a wall, change the bathroom drain" (IIR3, LYS, 45). As McAdam showed (1989), social movements are spaces of professionalisation. By managing service provisions, participants become anti-violence operators, psychotherapists and psychiatrists specifically trained on gender-based violence. Participants realise their political participation strengthens their expertise, and thus their capacity in the job market: "I understood that in the job market I had a lot of competences that I didn't think would have been useful, such as managing groups, teamwork, or also technical such as writing calls or projects, interacting with institutions" (IIR8). Or, in the case of CS, the fortuitous presence of poles encouraged a self-managed course of pole dance, leading some of them to become certified teachers of the discipline. Feminist socialisation brings about professionalisation, but it also changes job professions. Direct social actions developed by FSs broaden skills and protocols of the field of anti-violence provisions. Institutional tools are not enough to cope with the needs coming from the social world, and so provisions from below develop new knowledge, protocols, and tools to deal with that.

The gender regime (Connell 1985) works through norms: the appropriate behaviours and feelings constrain what individuals can do. On one hand, it is a practical traineeship, on the other an emotional one. As Walby argues (2004), the gender regime shapes a complex matrix of spaces, institutions, relationships, by prescribing gender performances, roles, skills, and norms people should adequate to. The transgression of these norms creates rifts in the social order by introducing unforeseen behaviours and bodies. Feminist apprenticeship is a gender regime challenger. It works through the questioning of norms and appropriate behaviours, by creating alternative forms of living (Yates

2020). On one hand, it is a practical traineeship, on the other an emotional one. The two are interwoven.

From a practical point of view, activists develop skills which are usually considered as falling under the male domain, such as technical skills, plumbing, electrical, and so on. By dismantling gendered skills and the genderisation of human capacities, activists develop toolkits to survive in the physical space without male intervention. They develop skills to relate with different settings, institutions, and actors. The risk of eviction and the management of service provisions make activists aware of their multilevel skills and their ability to negotiate in different arenas, as an interviewee of LYS explains:

> Legal issues, administrative issues… we know how to write a project, how to prepare a budget, with no schooling on that. I mean, we did it through practice, slamming in our face, putting ourselves to disposition. […] The capacity to go around the world and talk in front of the commission of the European Council. I mean… a series of competences that we built in here [at LYS]. To talk with the Rando McFuckFace [Signor Stracazzo dei Tali] at the same level. Because I know as many things as you know. Despite the fact that you are a fucking manager. (IIR3, LYS, 45)

The acquisition of skills and expertise increases self-confidence, the feeling of individual power. It boosts positive emotions and the expansion of the participants' agency and confidence to act. Thus, it increases the potential for action.

The creation of new affective structures developed within FSs by participants often absorbs their whole life. Totalising militancy is a common experience for them, who can hardly balance the political engagement and their own life. As a CID interviewee argues, "it is a life that takes all your time… you have friends, politics, militancy… I would say that is my whole life" (IR1, CID, 58). Taking the time for themselves is also a process of self-consciousness that frequently comes with the experience.

8.2.3 Performing a Role, Finding a Place

The first activity of the focus group at Cagne Sciolte's space started with a question: if you were a part of this space, which part would you be? Each of the participants was invited to draw or represent that part. They had at their disposal papers, markers, colored pencils, Play-Doh, glitter, and so on. Then we went in front of each part of the space and they explained why they would be that part. The activity was intended to unveil the participants' attachment to the space and the affective roots of their individual engagement. The choice was consistent with the theoretical and epistemological approach of the research, that considers affects as a medium between bodies, spaces, and norms, as a way through which participants are affected by and affect spaces, objects and other people.

During the focus group, one of them brought us in the mezzanine, where the privé was – since the

space used to be a nightclub before the occupation – and she told her story:

> I choose to associate myself with this space because I spent plenty of hours here. I spent a lot of hours removing the moquette and tearing down the walls, and this space helped me to find a collocation. By doing this I felt I was part of this project. […] It made me feel that I had sense in this space. (Focus Group IIIRA transcription, Rome, 18-12-19)

Building on this quote, we can see how affects work in several ways. First, political participation is an affective journey where activists perceive, feel, and elaborate on their emotions. As I addressed in the former section, political socialisation through emotions changes the individuals' relation with the self and the rest. The engagement with FSs is built upon the affective work of participants with objects, spaces, other activists. Participants find their collocation through an active interaction with the space, and this interaction is mediated by affect. The collocation and role help participants to consciously elaborate on affects, by ordering positive and negative feelings related to the space. Affect draws boundaries within the space. Certain affects made participants more or less part of the space, and affects shape the individual perception about collective action. In this section, I will further elaborate on the aspects of roles and boundaries, mediated by affects.

While doing participant observation, I soon understood that "roles" and "collocation" are a matter of organisation and legitimisation in FSs. The need for a collocation arises from affects: women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people are used to feel out of place, and spaces and organisations produce an initial bewilderment in people who join. The aspiration to join feminist ideas and actions goes with individual feelings of uncertainty and disorientation. As Ahmed shows, "emotions shape what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach. […] Emotions involve such affective forms of (re)orientation. It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies" (2006: 2). Performing a role mediates these negative feelings by giving a sense, a pertinence of the presence within the FS. Whether spaces claim to be completely open – and they relatively are – there are always invisible structures that shape their social organisation. Boundaries work through affective signs (Ahmed 2004) that people instinctively perceive.

In FSs' daily life there are participants, people who join single events, women who live in the space for longer or shorter periods of time (as in anti-violence shelter), workers, curious people. All of them, depending on their intersectional positionality (Hills Collins 1991), are differently affected by objects, spaces and other people, and differently engage with the structures of feelings of FSs. As an example, women hosted at LYS are usually much more open, regardless of who you are and what you are doing there. If participants have a more structured political socialisation and way of understanding implicit rules in the space, women hosted live the space as a welcoming place, free from other types of

superstructures. Affects and responses to affects are contextual. An anti-violence operator may seek the respect of her comrades, but feel inadequate because of her age compared to older women who might ask for her help. Roles are therefore not fixed and unchangeable, but are shaped by the context and the moment.

Roles, as well, depend on the structure and type of spaces. Affects interplay with objects and spaces, and this interaction shapes the participants' availability for participation. If the CID is managed through a hierarchical structure, others, such as the CS, are managed through a weekly assembly that is supposed to be fully horizontal. Differences in the type of management define different types of implicit rules and roles. In spaces such as the CID, this feeling arises from the internal setting. Being part of an association is the link "to have a closer relation with the House" (IR, CID, 69). Other spaces present less structured organisation, but in any case the process of defining roles recurs. "Well, [becoming the secretary] it located me. At least you say: okay, I do this, this is my piece, and so my contribution located me [in the space]" (IIR1, LYS, 37). Roles are also frustrating, when they are perceived as difficult to change, as a LYS interviewee explains: "until last year I did internal managing assembly… I did them for many years […]. Then at some point I said: comrades, I don't want to do that anymore. I don't like it anymore, and the mechanisms that occurred in that assembly made me feel uncomfortable" (IIIR7, LYS, 35). Frustration is triggered by the burden of responsibility. Activists managing enormous tasks – such as helping women escaping violence, organising a shelter and so on – and often understaffed, feel overwhelmed. "There were tough moments, because we had all of this on our shoulders. We didn't handle this, all of us doing everything, it was crazy.. […] And then of course you find yourself not doing something very well, inevitably, because you cannot do everything. And so this was another work… to distribute… always based on individual desire" (IIR4, LYS, 53).

Although the analysis demonstrates the persistence of organisational structures and role definition even in spaces that elaborate alternative forms of free spaces (Polletta 2001), participants assign a fundamental role to desire in defining their role and place in the space. Even in professionalised roles, what each one can do is understood to be linked to what she feels she wants to do, to her life trajectory.

8.3 Mobilising Affect

8.3.1 Emotions and Affect into Action

The process of joining FSs is bound up with affect. Mobilisation, socialisation, and role acquisition are informed by the challenge to a certain affective structure, and by the construction of alternative

structures of feelings that increase the potential for action at the individual level. FSs elaborate their strategic action from a work on individual and collective affects. How do affects move, how are they tackled, what do they produce? What political use of affects is elaborated in the FSs? What does the processing of causes, consequences, and uses of emotions produce on an individual level?

The process of joining FSs is bound up with feelings of dissatisfaction, anger, loneliness, misunderstanding, which are consequent to the gender regime (Connel 1995, Walby 2004). Some affects, such as fear, are the result of a social background that produced women and non-conforming subjectivities as "out-of-place," as prey, as less-than-human (Butler 2016). Activism is permeated with empathy, love, frustration, the erotic. Disengagement occurs out of pain, loss, disillusion, rejection. Through emotions, FSs develop their own framing, understand social inequalities, define strategies for action. The understanding of collective affects allows FSs to increase their capacity and impact. When fear, anger, and anxiety get into collective elaboration, they change into the "dignity of living my life as it is." In the following quote, a CS's participant reports the FSs' work on emotions, and how they are made into individual change:

> It is the acquisition of a sort of expertise in staying in the world. […] I do not remember the last time I felt unsafe. I think this is the outcome of a path of acceptance of a quite extreme life compared to what is considered a right way to live. I spent so many years of my life trapped with anger, and severe anxiety. Even only to go out. Because I had internalised the feeling of going out without knowing if you would be able to go back home. Partly because you are a woman, partly because you are lesbian, partly because Rome is a weird city, and a lot of time I tested how violent it can be. And at some point I made peace with those things. Fear and anxiety disappeared. And I found a sort of dignity in living my life as it is. (Focus Group IIIRA transcription, Rome, 18-12-19)

The discovery of the dignity to live life as it is is a source of strength and self-confidence that increases the potential for action. In this section, I will tackle the micro-scale dynamics of affects, and the main emotions emerging from the participants' views. According to Spinoza's interpretation of affects, I will try to frame positive affects, which increase the capacity for action, and the negative ones, which decrease it.

Although it may seem counter-intuitive, the dissection of positive affects begins from anger. Women's anger has been historically downgraded as hysteria, madness, or fragile mental health (Hochshild 1975, Jasper 2011, Chemaly 2018). Because of their social role, women were precluded from the possibility to claim this feeling as a political matter. The 1970s feminist movements reevaluated anger as a legitimate passion, despite the male-based structure of emotions. "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change" (Lorde 1984: 181). Anger comes from the perception of unfair living conditions. As an interviewee of CS develops, anger becomes a tool to strengthen

networks and to elaborate collective action: "there was anger. A lot of anger. […] What holds us together is anger toward the outside world" (IIIR7, CS, 30).

Being angry is a source of engagement and of long-term participation. The work on anger allows participants to retain the social meaning of this emotion and to use it as a source of political activation and social change, as one LYS interviewee states: "there are still too many things that made me angry to quit feminist politics" (IIR8, LYS, 30). FSs allow to name and to transform anger. It shifts from a personal disease to a political matter. As one LYS interviewee explains, the physical place allows to spatialise an emotion with a strong social background, and to find a political use that can really bring about change, for example in the field of gender-based violence. This process is not only effective from the point of view of collective action, but it also produces positive consequences on an individual level, helping participants to transform their anger into a tool for change, even in their daily lives: "we need a place for conveying energies coming from frustration, anger for the political system. […] There is a structural lack in the fight against violence and I can't stand it anymore. I think that if Lucha weren't there anymore, allowing me to fight against this oppression, everything would be worse. I mean, dealing with it to a personal level, not to a political level" (IIR5, LYS, 33).

Hate and anger become political emotions when they are transformed and channelled through collective action. Anger can be performed through innovative types of public protests. As an interviewee explains, hate is constantly reproduced against minorities, while minorities are forbidden to feel hate as an emotion. That is why for her, "in a period in which there is a blame on hate, claiming the right to have it against who is acting violence on you is important. […] This is the aggressive style of Cagne Sciolte. Not giving up anger and hate against who oppresses you" (IIIR8, CS, 33). According to the Spinozian interpretation, anger is a positive passion as it increases the participants' capacity to act. If anger affects participants when they experience situations of injustice, it also becomes a source of power and a potential for action when it is channelled through collective action.

Together with anger, participants recurrently refer to love. Spinoza claims that when joy is an affect experienced with the awareness of the external causes that have generated it (and therefore what one is "being affected by" and what one is "affecting"), that is love. Often, participants describe their involvement in FSs as "falling in love." We can consider the process as a conscious work on the external and internal causes that transform the individuals' will into collective effort. A LYS interviewee outlines her experience within FSs through the phases of falling in love, by linking politics to the repertoire of feelings of love. The threat of eviction, and so the political crisis, triggers feelings of protection as with regard to the beloved person:

> I love these women. I am in love with them. I know I passed all the phases of falling in love in that space [LYS]. Now I am in the protective phase, where I feel that the beloved thing is in danger and I want to save it. So I want to reject everything that goes against this love, it scares

me. There are moments in which it makes me cry or makes me angry. Exactly what happens when you deeply love someone. (IIR5, LYS, 33)

What is "falling in love"? It is to progressively become fascinated by someone or something, to care for their existence, to be affected by the interaction with them. The loving bond involves the entire community, beyond the boundaries of coupledom. As an interviewee of the CS addresses, the feeling of joy and love expands the perception of the self, it allows to think that "everything is possible:" "[The occupation] was the beginning of a huge collective romance. In the first months, it seemed romantic, but we truly thought that everything was possible" (IIIR10, CS, 30). The feeling of love, unhinged by romance and partnership, increases the feeling of the action's potential, expands the self and the evaluation of its capabilities. These feelings fuel the participants, and thus their readiness for collective action.

Participants draw on the grammar of romanticism to describe their relationship with space. Their link between political participation and the affect of love sheds light on their deconstruction of the rational subject, and on the work on the affective, non-rational, potentially unpredictable side that even social movements have historically eluded. By explaining the word "romantic," an interviewee of the CS develops: "romantic because… it is beautiful, it is an utopia. A perspective, a tension, a desire, an emotion, a practice" (IIIR7, CS, 30).

As well as with positive affects, political participation in a feminist space is bound up with negative emotions. According to Spinoza, negative emotions decrease the capacity to act. Despite efforts to build feminist spaces and social change, efforts often do not pay off and this generates frustration and sadness. The fatigue of daily politics that is not reflected can produce sadness, or disengagement. In some cases, this sadness is conscious of the external cause that produces it (such as institutional failures, hostile social norms), in others less so. When awareness is lacking or negative passions prevail, the sense of attachment to the space decreases and thus also participation, as well as the trust in a possible change. As usual, participants tell the story of their strategic choice at the individual level through an affective grammar. As an interviewee of LYS explains, the acknowledgment of negative emotions allows them to opt for choices that are consistent with their willingness or availability, and to avoid to overstate their possibility:

> Doing activism generates frustration. Because that is really a lot that you have to take care of. […] Being an activist at Lucha means working at the service with women, it means cleaning the space, it means taking turns at initiatives, it means writing documents, writing articles, doing interviews, going around. […] A lot of things are so big that there are many emotions that you can get through. One can be tiredness. One frustration. And I feel anger. (IIR4, LYS, 53)

Political participation generates many feelings, which in a FS can be almost overwhelming. The emotional load, when overwhelming, becomes negative and lowers the desire to participate. In addition, the crisis situation makes the emotional burden greater and more complex. The ongoing

situation of crisis and threat of eviction worsens the feeling, as much as activists get sick or mentally destroyed. During the fieldwork at LYS, participants often reported the physical consequences of the crisis. The work on emotions always involves mind and body, and neither is ever split, as an interviewee from LYS explains: "Rita is doing chemotherapy, the radio and then at night she runs at work, Claudia and Alessia are sick again, and generally all of us are having a hard time recovering. We are losing hopes, energies and strengths" (Fieldnotes, LYS, 12-07-19). Activism has a bodily dimension, and emotions deeply impact that. Political action depends not only on ideology, frames and values, but also on the material possibility of bodies and minds. As a LYS interviewee develops:

> Stress related to this place, […] has created strong discomfort in our group. […] This is real life. […] How does *bios* get into politics? Like this. […] And at least we give ourselves in the best possible way, with the greatest possible awareness that what you are looking for in your life is to pursue political goals but also somehow to feel good. (IIR7, LYS, 35)

Activists that manage a women's shelter encounter a stronger feeling of tiredness, because of the burden of responsibility. Dealing with women escaping violence means investing time, energies, and skills, and it is hard to manage expectations and hopes when they are disregarded. Often women go back to their violent partners, or operators get too close to women, or some cases hit them too hard. Sometimes, people drop out because they are unable to sustain the weight of this task, or they get overwhelmed. Who remains, explains the sense of responsibility that sometimes goes beyond the individual desire to rest or to quit. The sense of responsibility binds the operators to women, and makes them care even beyond their energies. These feelings may infect the internal relationships among activists.

Political activities may also lead to pain. This feeling comes from the loss of comrades dropping out, the disillusion, or the change into political space trajectory. However, FSs are places of transformation of pain, where activists learn to deal with personal sufferings. Sharing sufferings helps to find new ways to face them. As an interviewee of LYS explains, learning to work on emotions allows people to deal with their own path, to elaborate social conditions of inequality, and to discover new tools to engage with a good life: "it is no coincidence that I faced super personal biographical events at a time when I found a space of women who welcomed me, who made a family. It was like a way of saying: I enter Lucha so I can get my wings. And I am not afraid of using them" (IIR5, LYS, 33).

In this section, I outlined the mechanism through which FSs take affects into account as a political matter oriented to change. By tackling some affects (anger, love, pain, disillusion), I tried to focus on the process on consciousness rising and its impact on individuals. Some affects, more than others, produce consequences. The erotic is one of them, as I will develop in the following section.

8.3.2 The Erotic: Politics and Sexuality

I started to look at women in a new way. (IIR2, LYS, 37)

In the previous section, I went through the analysis of affects as positive and negative items depending on the way they increase or decrease the bodily capacity for action. Among the positive affects, participants recurrently refer to the erotic.

The erotic dimension of activism emerged from most of the fieldwork. Some spaces consider a more explicit sexuality as a core issue of their political action and ideology. Depending on age, historical background, and political values, the politicisation of sexuality is sometimes avoided in order to prevent conflict, as in the case of the CID; less intense when other priorities are more prominent, as in the case of LYS and their direct social action; or significantly more intense, as in the case of CS. In this section, I will focus on similarities among the three spaces with regard to sexuality. First, I will look at the erotic as a networking process within FSs. Second, at the political work on sexuality. Finally, at the way sexuality affects individuals and communities.

Feminist relationships can be generically imbued with a widespread eroticism, or they can be actual sexual relations, or love affairs. The erotic works as a networking among individuals. Participants consider the erotic as an affect consistent with the practice of the personal as political, as an interviewee of the CS explains: "everything about sexuality, eroticism between women was a topic. [...] And also to experiment how then within the feminist spaces relationships are created, relationships are nurtured, sexualised or not. And how these two things feed each other. That is, as personal and political" (IIIR7, CS, 30).

The erotic is expressed in a series of actions, rituals, repetitions: a great physical proximity, activists who touch each other a lot during assemblies, the importance of non-verbal language in the political context. The bodily dimension of feminist activism opens new possibility for thinking about one's own sexuality. An interviewee of LYS outlines that attending the physical space and the feminist community allowed her to think about women in a different way: "in this context for the first time I thought I could try other things too" (IIR2, LYS, 37). Through participation in FSs they learn "to see" women, both as human beings and as subjects of desire. The mobilisation process at the individual level is bound up with a sexuality that "affects" and "is affected by" participants. Participants change their relation with the body and with others at the same pace with political participation:

> I approached feminism at the same time I was questioning my sexual orientation. For me these two things went absolutely hand in hand. The encounter with other women was a 360 degree encounter. [...] It was an encounter of discovery of sisterhood, of solidarity, of my body, of my sexuality. [...] I'm not interested in discussing and practicing a theoretical feminism. I want a place that also questions the bodies, sexuality, and feminism also understood as love relationships between women, relationships of exchange, of experimentation. (IIIR10, CS, 30)

Despite a generic recognition of the erotic as an element of feminist politics, when the lesbian component is the majority, a politics of sexuality becomes predominant. Sexuality changes internal dynamics and also the circulation of power within the assembly, as an interviewee of the CS explains: "It was the first space in which the heterosexual comrades were the minority, and this is something that shifts balances" (IIIR10, CS, 30). The lesbian connotation pertains the physical arrangement of the space, because "the walls speak" through banners, images, colors, symbols, and then "bodies speak," too. Frequently, heterosexual men encounter feelings of discomfort in the space, because of the subversion of traditional gender and sexual norms.

The second element of analysis of this section is the political work on sexuality. Sexuality does not pertain to the private, but it shapes the social and political world (Rubin 2007). As much as discourses of sexuality define appropriate behaviours, life-trajectories, and individual choices, they become part of the FSs' reflection. As an interviewee of the CS reports, "if we start from the assumption that discourses on sexuality are those that in society form roles, form genders, form dynamics, form power, form everything, […] you start by enacting them in your life and then you enact them in the space you occupy" (IIIR2, CS, 37). FSs deal with, name, and reflect on sexuality, by unveiling those dynamics involved in erotic bonds. By doing so, participants question the dark side of relationships, and that means violence, too. Violence occurs also within lesbian and non-heterosexual relations. "I think the good thing was to understand, even taking a punch in the face, […] that if you are born in this culture in some way that seed has also been planted inside you" (IIIR3, CS, 30).

The political work on sexuality impacts on individuals and communities. It changes life-trajectories in terms of family, coupledom, reproduction, and so on. Desire for other women is often not new to participants, but they find a way to express it in a context that subverts the traditional canons of the gender regime (Conell 1985) and heterosexuality as a norm (Wittig 2019). The subversion of gender and sexual norms changes the participants' life, their frames and ways of understanding reality, as much as the new paradigm seems to be a non-heterosexual world. As a CS interviewee paradoxically notes, "now for me it's obvious that all the women I meet are not straight. I'm not saying they're lesbians, but they're not straight. But I realise […] that I'm living in a slightly false reality" (IIIR4, CS, 30). This contiguity of desires and feelings has bodily consequences, for example with regard to menstruation, as an interviewee of the CS recounts: "we all had our period together. Mine had finished just before occupying, and then came back to me after two weeks" (IIIR4, CS, 30).

Often, the reflection on sexuality and gender norms produces in the participants a rejection of "mixed spaces," and of the dynamics these spaces enact. The rupture of the tie of dependence and desire from men allows for a re-consideration of political priorities. Mixed spaces are compared to families, and

so the rupture of the link with family of blood leads to questioning the link with other social movements, as well. The choice of abandoning mixed spaces also depends on sexuality. An interviewee of the CS explains the urge for a FS as consistent with the personal life, that always becomes a matter of political thinking in feminist groups:

> it's no coincidence that some 85% of the comrades who occupied the Cagne were not straight comrades. Let's say that a certain series of contradictions come more easily to the eye and are less easily tolerated when even that part of your personal life is not mixed with politics. So if you're not straight it's easier to look for a place for people like you, who think like you and don't want to be subject to any hierarchy that always sees males at the top. (IIIR2, CS, 37)

However, some of the activists consider lesbianism as a divisive issue, especially in those spaces coming from 1970s feminism. There, old conflicts influence present time, since the relation between lesbian and heterosexual feminists has been highly contentious (Biagini 2018), as I understood from a conversation at the CID: "Talking with Sandra, she says: 'let alone lesbianism, which has always been a cause of contention…' I ask her why and she tells me that when they talked about the protagonism of feminist women and lesbians in the CID, there was always someone who stood up and said 'but this divides women…'" (Fieldnotes, CID, 23-11-18).

The complexity of feminist bonds has an impact on the community, too. The erotic influences internal dynamics and participants risk reproducing what they initially rejected. For instance, as an interviwee of the CS claims, by being agreeable to a person in the assembly only by virtue of sexual attraction or relationship: "recently there was a period where sometimes I flirted with Ines. I liked her so much, I watched her, I was always next to her in the assembly, I couldn't wait to go out with her. And then she said some bullshit, but like hell I told her she was talking bullshit. You know what I'm saying?" (IIIR5, CS, 30). However, differently than other grassroots organisations, where biopolitical ties exist albeit more silently, FSs claim for politicising them, especially in those spaces that engage with them more openly, such as the CS:

> There have been a lot of relationships between us, […] and this obviously has an impact on the community, even a difficult one to manage. The difference, in my opinion, is that at least in the intentions [...] the goal was not to make this stuff invisible, not to relegate it to the private, but to try to make an effort to deal with the enormous potential of relationships between women, of relationships between comrades, of relationships within a community. [...] And obviously this has been a very strong emotional work. (IIIR10, CS, 10)

As the quote shows, participants aim to break the walls between the private and the public, and it requires a strong emotional work. If sexuality is political, the emotions connected to sexuality, which are normally relegated to the private sphere, also become the object of collective elaboration. The effort changes the boundaries of politics on the one hand, and the use of emotions on the other.

Yet, the work of deconstruction of norms and roles encounters the risk of a new normativity. FSs focus on the production of relations free from the ideal of romantic love – which is considered as

oppressive and sometimes a bearer of violence – and at the same time on the production of a counter-system of care and intimacy. This "painful path" (IIIR10, CS, 10) pushes activists to go beyond what they consider negative emotions, such as ownership, jealousy, monogamy. The work on these negative emotions produces expectations on the participants' own relationships, even in the private life, to be consistent with their political claims on sexuality. The "new queer normativity" comes from the fear of other comrades' judgment. The level of attention toward relational dynamics sometimes seems to generate a climate of control and suspicion, where each person's relations are put under scrutiny. Beyond the internal management of such work, the weight is exacerbated by external expectations that consider FSs as experts on violence and LGBTQ issues.

By going through the erotic attachment, I analysed the erotic as networking in FSs, the political work on sexuality, and its impact on individuals and communities. Controversially, the erotic can be both a positive and a negative affect: the conscious work on erotic attachment increases the individual capacity for action and for a good life, but when it goes unsaid it can be detrimental to individuals and community.

8.3.3 Affective Ties and Community Building Process

Lucha Y Siesta, afternoon, summer 2019. I am sitting in the garden with Carla. Azzurra and Leyla enter from the gate. They are in a good mood and laugh. When Leyla sees Carla she shouts: "it's Carla there!" and starts singing and beating the hand on the mouth. Carla laughs and tells me that she and Leyla have always had a special relation [...]. They immediately liked each other [...]. Carla tells me that she helped Leyla learn Italian and with a lot of other things. Leyla used to be an activist in [her native country]. For a long time, Leyla wrote articles on [her native country]'s newspapers and Carla helped her, to deal with Italian, English and Arabic language, to translate tough concepts. She tells me that Leyla is a wonderful person, with friends everywhere. [...] Leyla calls her son and Carla tells him to go and kiss her. When they arrived [at LYS] the child was very little and they attended assemblies with a walkie-talkie in order to hear if they woke up in the other room. (Fieldnotes LYS, Rome, 12-07-19)

This chapter looks at how affects are transformed into action at an individual level. Affects influence the body and they signal the ability of the body (as mind, object, space) to affect another body. In this sense, to speak of affects is to speak of an interaction – between two bodies, between body and object, between body and space. Through interactions between participants, affects move, change, are processed and transformed. On the one hand, the conscious use of affects generates affective ties[20] between participants; on the other hand, this generates community-building processes. First, I will look at how affects are made into ties among participants. Relations are something that participants *do* together. Affective ties in FSs as site of individual change. "Sisterhood" among participants is not

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[20] I will use the words ties, bonds and relationships as synonyms to point at feminist interaction.

universal (Lorde 1984, hooks 1991, Mohanty 2020) but it always signals axes of power that cut across the FSs' compositions.

Affect into Interactions

Affects move through the interactions between the participants. These interactions, repeated in daily life, produce affective ties. As an interviewee of CS argues, whoever is part of the space has "this tool at her disposition" (IIIR6, CS, 35). It is a tool in the sense of something practical that is built into the interaction, and in the sense of prefigurative politics. Ties are composed of everyday-life practices: to care for someone, to ask someone how she feels and how she is doing, to cook together, to clean the space, to plan activities, to take the time to rest and to have fun together. These micro-practices of affective politics are also related to material life. Sharing economic resources is part of the relational task. A woman hosted at LYS explains with regard to economic sharing: "if I have a piece of bread and someone that arrived [at LYS] is hungry, I share it. I give it whole-heartedly, even though I have no money" (IIR9, LYS, 66). This orientation emerges also over health issues and sickness. Affective ties give participants strength, care, and solidarity that materially enhance their survival. Feminist ties allow women to change their own life and beliefs, by, at the same pace, aiming to change the world. Feminist ties are built upon love, the erotic, desire, trust, curiosity, sadness. Affects that produce different kinds of ties, but which through political elaboration do not become points of rupture, but rather elements that increase the potential for collective action, as one CS participant explains in this quote: "we are friends, we are sisters, we are comrades, we are lovers […]. There is the awareness that all this is not hidden in the assembly, because you give it to the space, and it takes the space. […] We search for collective tools so that [ties] become a potency and not an element of rupture" (IIIR6, CS, 35). The work on affects is a relational effort, something that participants do together in FSs. While the economic and social system tends to produce individualistic, rational, self-interested, autonomous subjects, the potential and need to consciously work on emotions, to recognise interdependence, to develop forms of care that improve people's lives on a collective and not individual level is brought forward in the FSs. Rather than depowering individuals, this work on the emotional sphere, long removed, allows participants to access forms of power (over themselves and their surroundings), as one CS interviewee argues: "it was the feeling to put power into circulation more than taking advantage of power" (IIIR7, CS, 30). Collective processing practices on affects produce ties in opposition to neoliberal relational models. In this sense, they are expressions of prefigurative politics, transforming the lives of participants, as one CS interviewee explains:

> It is a complicity among women. […] It is a gender issue. They teach us that we have to be jealous of each other. That there is something we can do and something we cannot. Feminist practices subvert these types of gender constraints. […] Feminist practices are made of listening, welcoming diversity, awareness, mutual help, and sisterhood. […] It is changing. […] And finding liveable ways to live. Where we can have less fear. (IIIR3, CS, 30)

Participants use the word "sisterhood" to define affective ties among feminists, by subverting the blood-tie reference of the word. Sisterhood is defined as "power" coming from collective strength, and the capacity to act upon the surrounding world "as opposed to individual frustration and incapacity" (IIIR, CS, 35), as a CS interviewee argues. Yet, sisterhood has been historically questioned by Black feminists. More than a universalistic formula, it is a contextual effort to keep differences together toward a common goal (hooks 1991). Lines of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ability, social status, religion, and culture cut-across the relational setting. Most of the FSs are composed of women, or people identified as feminist (trans people, non-binary people). Most of them are white and well-educated women. Some of them define it as a privilege, and acknowledge that the absence of racialised women is also due to the times of politics, which are often incompatible with racialised women's life. On the contrary, spaces that are also hosting women escaping violence are less homogenous, with a migrant component. Emotions are a social product: they depend on context, biographical background, and socio-cultural conditions. For this reason, the work on affects in FSs depends on composition. Not everyone experiences the same emotions, and not everyone learns the same tools to use them. In the following episode retrieved from my fieldnotes, I report an interaction I had with a deaf-mute woman at the CID. In this interaction I realised how the practice of working on affects (the discomfort of a disability for those who live it and for those who interact with them, the inability to listen to each other, the embarrassment, the anger of those who live the disability) is able to transform negative affects into positive affects in the encounter between differences, and in this sense to increase the capacity for action even at an individual level. "I am at the cafeteria asking for a coffee. I try to order but the waitress makes a sign and opens her mouth without speaking. I get that she's not able to speak and listen. She points out a banner with a lot of pictures of the waitress showing with the sign language everything you can order (such as coffee, orange juice and so on), so everyone can order using the sign language when she is working. Finally, I manage to order. I have the impression that she understood even before I used sign language, but she wanted me to notice her disability and so pushed me to find another way to communicate, by respecting her disability. It strikes me, because we are always used to taking for granted that the person we talk to has our same abilities. I drink the cappuccino smiling at her. She smiles too. It seems she knows that I understood that this was a lesson for me, that to interact we have to establish mutual rules of interaction" (Fieldnotes CID, Rome, 25-10-18).

Community-Building Process by Means of Affects

Affective ties are embedded in the creation of a collective identity and the sense of community. Collective identity works through three processes: "the creation of boundaries that mark off a group; the development of a consciousness of the group's distinct and shared disadvantages; and the politicization of everyday life, embodied in actions that connect the members of the group and link experiences to larger social injustices" (Taylor and Whittier 1999: 367). These three dimensions miss the work of affects. According to the argument of this research, I will explore the relational use of affects in the politicisation of everyday life. Individuals develop an awareness about themselves and the social world by building a shared view of gender inequality and hints to address it. Community-building processes take place in space and time: with regard to feminist spaces, this process has a strong material dimension which I will further explore.

CS's activists slept for a long time at the space, in order to defend it from potential threats – such as an eviction or neighbours' attacks – in the first period of the occupation. While people slept, there were two people picketing outside the space. Every two hours (during the day and at night) people of the picket changed, and the former two were in charge to wake up the next two persons. At night, they wanted to do a gentle wake up, by preparing a coffee for the people to come. In order to remember the way in which all the people used to drink coffee, there was a banner with the list of individual preferences like: "Laura: a teaspoon of sugar; Serena: two teaspoons, milk; Paola: some water;" and so on. This gimmick became a ritual of community building, by bridging collective action to intimacy, affects, and care.

Affective ties and the sense of community are built upon the politicisation of everyday life. According to participants, building trust, intimacy, common frames, and ties depends on micro-practices and routines, and on what people *do* together. With regard to the space of CS, the first period of intense sharing, sleeping at the space, and doing pickets marked the starting point of community-building. In those moments, they learned to know each other, both because of assemblies and of private life, the way to drink coffee, the colour of the slippers and the type of toothbrush. The extreme incitement of that phase was a positive affect that increased the capacity for collective action at the individual level, as an interviewee of CS explains: "you really feel that everything is possible. […] Because finally you breathe the air that you desired" (IIIR10, CS, 30).

By developing collective and individual consciousness, feminist communities strengthen common frames through which they analyse, understand, and aim to change social reality. The sharing of common words to describe conditions of inequality generates communities. By sharing the same

understanding of gender norms, FSs subvert the code of a "men-made world" (Kern 2019), as this exchange with a CS interviewee shows:

- How much the absence of cis heterosexual men politically counted?
- What was the question? How much? All! [she laughs] (IIIR7, CS, 30)

The production of strong community ties is related to common frames and affective resonance. Community-building is based on a deep mutual knowledge, knowledge of the affective mechanisms that drive the individual participants and the interactions between the participants, as one of the CS interviewees explains: "you don't know other people's story and private life […] but you know how exactly that person works, which mechanisms she enacts, what she is doing… but maybe you don't know her sister's name" (IIR8, LYS, 30). Relational bonds are generated by knowing perfectly the affective mechanisms of the other participants. Collective action is thus deeply intertwined with the expression of individual affections, their reworking and the relational use of emotions.

The production of the community goes along with the production of the physical space. These two elements are deeply linked. First, because it is the site where relations take place and people have the occasion to meet and know each other. The physical space is also a source of identification. The four walls are not just walls: "they are also symbolic. They bind us together, they make us know each other, love each other, root ourselves in a place" (Focus Group IIIRA transcription, Rome, 18-12-19). Yet, the physical space might also scatter the political community, as in the case of the CID. Since the building is so large and over time has been inhabited by associations, the common bind has progressively blended.

The size of the community depends on circles: the smaller one is related to more engaged participants, but then there are wider networks of friends, comrades, and supporters that at various levels interact with the space. The level of expression and sharing of affection determines more or less close ties, and thus a community of varying intensities.

Finally, boundaries are lines of inclusion/exclusion which define communities, and affects can further foster boundaries. Strong internal ties make it difficult for people to find their collocation. The community is based upon a relational work on affects, and people can find it repulsive or hard to discern such a strong invisible structure, as a CS interviewee argue: "there are a lot of automatisms in the way people relate to each other that you have to understand, a lot of balances among people you have to get" (III8R, CS, 33). Strong ties have a positive and a negative side. On one hand, they allow to create a community of people that deeply know their affective mechanisms, that feel good, that know they can share ways of doing things. On the other hand, they make it harder to open the space to the outside world.

Boundaries are also internal to the community. Feminist communities engage in a never-ending task of unveiling, discussing, and re-elaborating roles, hierarchies, and internal dynamics. As a CS participant claims, "this is something I really like, being allowed to acknowledge power's roles, that one's word counts more than another, or that there are implicit roles and we need to pay attention. It's a meta-discussion on the collective condition that we always keep having" (IIIR2, CS, 37). This practice of naming also regards affective ties. By working on collective and individual emotions, participants try to disentangle those dynamics that negatively affect the potential for collective action. Boundaries cannot be completely deleted, and often participants deal with them through a process of going back and forth. One participant describes the process as a love relationship, by shedding light on the affective structure which gives meanings, orientation, and shape to FSs and individual participation:

> Actually I dropped out for a while. […] Then I came back. It is like in relationships. Either you take care of the collective, and so also of yourself, or it doesn't work. And sometimes you need a pause. […] And it is exactly as in relationships. […] All of us had periods in which we dropped out. […] We are really honest, saying: "I can't make it now, maybe later I will be able to." And no one says "why are you dropping out?!" or "what the fuck are you doing?" […] And so you feel free to stay as you can. (IIIR4, CS, 30)

The perception of being there as one can, with one's affect, one's emotions, and also one's inability to continue to be in a collective dynamic represents the outcome, on an individual level, of the work on affects in FSs. Rather than nourishing loneliness, inadequacy, and the society of performance, FSs try to build ties and community through the awareness that the body, as well as the mind, constantly expresses emotions whose use can transform the capacity for collective action.

8.3.4 Bonds, Negative Affects, and Internal Conflict

The collective is my point of reference in every aspect and moment of my life. [...] We are friends, sisters, lovers, we share everything. So this is a totalising element of your life, which is beautiful but also frightening. Because you do not just put into play the collective, but also the whole of yourself and of your life. And you risk losing everything. (IIIR6, CS, 35)

In the previous section, I started to outline the process of consciousness rising and the use of positive and negative affects at the individual level. FSs, like free spaces, allow collective actors to endure over time. The long duration of communities brings out a series of collective affects, which arise from daily politics, the intensity of interactions, and the sedimentation of common experiences. Some affects that arise are annoyance, grief, disillusionment, frustration. These negative affects can undermine the participants' ability to act, and can weaken the community, when the cause of these emotions is not adequately investigated or taken care of collectively. The cause or consequence of

these negative affects is a certain level of conflict between participants. Conflict may be more or less manifest, and more or less negative. When it exists but is the subject of collective reflection, it plays a positive role. When it is unspoken, it undermines the stability and effectiveness of FSs.

In this section, I will address two approaches to conflict and its consequences. On one hand, a high level of internal conflict which goes unspoken. On the other, a high level of conflict but collective work on contentious dynamics. In the analysis, I will take into consideration conflicts that originate from political reasons (ideas, visions, strategic choices) and from relational reasons. FSs are grounded in the work on affects, and this can be a slippery slope to manage. However, it is telling of an innovative way to address conflict by means of affects.

First, I will address the conflict that goes unspoken. With regard to the CID, an interviewee explains that "this is a highly conflictual place. But I would say more generally, relations among women are highly conflictual. […] We didn't solve the issue of conflict among women and the disruptiveness of this conflict. […] I would say that all the collectives in the 1970s ended because of this" (IR7, CID, 69). Throughout the fieldwork at the CID, I witnessed conflicts that ran through the space-bound community: in the corridors, in the rooms, in the assemblies. Quite frequently I stepped into women harshly debating, as much as they were used to talking behind one another's back. The high fragmentation of the community, the hierarchical organisation of internal bodies, the long-standing activism of a large part of women, the situation of crisis were all triggering factors of a constant climate of suspicion, mistrust, tension, and discord. Even though I was a newcomer, they always took the opportunity to share their discontents with me. However, they were also suspicious toward me. In my fieldnotes, I noted down a self-reflection in relation to a (quite serious) joke that was made to me by one of the participants of the CID: "one of them says 'eventually you will blackmail us, with all the things you see and hear.' The more time passes, the more the women start understanding my presence here and start to be afraid. The internal situation is tough and conflictual and I feel that there are a lot of things submerged that they would prefer remain a secret, and they don't like that I might get it. I feel a lot of invisible and un-public shadows, a mechanism moving the CID as an invisible plot" (Fieldnotes, CID, 09-11-18). Conflict can arise for political reasons: clashes over visions, organisation, ideology. Frequently conflicts come from afar, as in the case of the 1970s division between the feminism of difference – coming from Milan's feminists – and the self-consciousness rising groups (Stelliferi 2015). These tensions also made it challenging to define a common history of the CID, that always elicits "a war," as a CID participant argues: "believe me, on this issue there is a war. On the slightest hint of history you find a war" (IR1, CID, 58). Conflicts arise also on the repertoire of action and strategic choices. For instance, the CID fragmentation concerns the choice between a more institutional reply to the threat of eviction and a more radical one.

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How do FSs deal with negative affects that produce conflict? Do they reflect and use the awareness of these emotions to bring about a change? In the cases mentioned above, conflicts are more in the background than at the forefront of FSs' work. They often go unsaid with regard to the collective discussion. The unspoken conflict produces a decrease of the capacity for collective action. Yet, in a rather paradoxical way, conflicts also work as a cement of relationships. This every-day internal conflict feeds the day-by-day politics of FSs even in the absence of mobilisations.

The second way FSs relate with internal conflict is by elaborating on dynamics. The work on affects usually increases the capacity for collective action. However, the work on "the dark side" of affective bonds, which means on the negative affects that spawn from political participation, is much harder. This work puts the participants in front of limits, boundaries, and the unintended consequences of politics. As one CS interviewee explains, the awareness of reproducing dynamics of fragmentation, disillusionment, and suspicion is painful, but the responsibility to deal with it makes a difference:

> We faced the incapacity, despite all the speeches we made, that you end up doing the same things as any other collectives when you quarrel. And so you stop speaking to each other, there are subgroups, rumours, stuff not addressed in the assembly. We faced all the more boorish dynamics of politics, too. (IIIR6, CS, 35)

Negative feelings such as trauma or grief are difficult to name, despite the efforts of participants. Tensions may lead people to drop out. Often, this end of the political path occurs without an explicit statement by who is dropping out, leaving the other activists with the feeling of being abandoned or inadequate. In the case of CS, "trauma" recurs as a word which refers to individual feelings with regard to omissions in community discourses. These omissions influence new people arriving at the space, who perceive grey areas but do not have tools to understand them. "Grief," similarly, signals the loss of pieces of the group, and the incapacity to go ahead with new projects and energies.

Affective bonds expose to high levels of eventual pain and annihilation. These bonds require the involvement of the life of the participants, their emotions, thoughts, and beliefs. When conflict arises in this type of relationship, it does not only touch political-strategic issues, but also the deepest chords of the self. As one CS interviewee explains, feminist politics is not only about public protests, but it also involves the intimacy, the biographical paths, and the development of the emotional sphere of the participants, and in this sense conflicts do not only affect the public, but also the personal dimension:

> This is a specificity of feminist and transfeminist politics. […] We are not talking about organising a march for getting rid of university taxes and I think we need the banner and you think we need the sound. It is another level, because when you are doing feminist politics your entire life is on the table. Your identity, your way of living relationships, sexuality, the body, desire… so when someone is in conflict with you, there are these whole things put into questions… not only the political ideology. (IIIR6, CS, 35)

As Rupp and Taylor argue about the US women's movement, "the intensity of emotion expressed during the internal conflicts is understandable in light of the centrality of friendship and intimate relationships in the group's everyday life. […] While friendship could help to limit conflict, it could also aggravate it. The bitterness of the lawsuit was itself in part a result of the intermingling of personal and political ties for many of the members" (1989: 42).

In order to negotiate the intensity of affective bonds, FSs need to make an "informal deal" that participants have to respect. In some cases the deal is informal, in others, such as with LYS, the deal is a formal contract. Since these rules are shared and negotiated, their transgression is a severe mortgage on the collective balance. This deal helps to mediate conflicts through a practical tool, as one of the LYS participants explains: "we have to preserve ourselves as an entity, a group, a house's community. And so, on some stuff there is no compromise. It is tough because relations of trust are built… so it is not always easy to give priority to the rule rather than the relationship. But if you break the rule in a bad way my respect for you drops" (IIR6, LYS, 35).

When conflicts do not go unspoken, FSs elaborate several strategies to deal with them. Through the act of naming (Melucci 1996), participants try to put words to unspoken dynamics. Conflicts may get stuck because of people's refusal to talk. This silence transforms issues into taboos, that are much more difficult to address. A participant from LYS explains that the common purpose drives the naming of negative emotions so that they do not compromise the political goal: "we are not just a group of friends, we have a goal. On that goal we built up care, our relations, and so on. So that is part of the goal" (IIR3, LYS, 43). Naming conflicts is the way to face them. As one LYS participant explains, processing conflicts collectively is the only way to avoid the distorted consequences of groups, which naturally incur more or less open forms of conflict: "conflict is healthy, while the group is sick. […] Conflict is healthy because it should let issues and troubles emerge. But then there is another step: sharing and saying things. […] When you collectively talk about things, even if they are addressing one person, they are faced collectively" (IIR4, LYS, 53).

In this section, I have analysed how negative affects trigger or emerge from conflicts within FSs, and how they are handled or not. Conflicts may concern political, organisational, strategic issues, or relational dynamics. In some cases, the conflict goes predominantly unspoken. In part, this diminishes the capacity of FSs to act, depriving them of their transformative capacity. On the other hand, it also has the consequence of calcifying conflicts in the everyday life of the space, contributing in some way to its survival in the latent periods of mobilisations. In other cases, FSs try to elaborate a collective reflection on negative emotions. The depth and complexity of the ties makes this elaboration difficult, which takes the form of trauma or mourning. However, the practice of naming

and dealing with negative emotions that trigger or emerge from conflicts helps FSs to increase their capacity for collective action.

8.4 Affect in the Long Run

8.4.1 Different Paths, Similar Outcomes

She tells me that everyone pays high prices for her revolutions. (Fieldnotes, CID, 19-11-18)

This chapter look at the participants' paths, from the first moments of mobilisation to the learning process of becoming feminist. This process occurs by mobilising affects: positive and negative affects become the matter of awareness, development, and transformation. In this last section, I will explore how affects work in the long run, and which outcomes can be traced in the biographies of participants. "Afternoon, the kitchen room, the CID, Rome. I have just started eating when a woman comes up to me. […] She tells me that she has lived all over the place, that she lived in the Umbrian mountains for ten years but now she does not know anymore where she wants to live. She cannot calm down. She says she came back to the 'House' [the CID] because 'I needed to stay in this place again, given the misery of the society around us. I needed to know that this place exists'" (Fieldnotes, CID, 31-10-18). This episode, retrieved from my fieldnotes, among many others, connected me with the feelings of the women that were once – or still are – engaged in feminist spaces. Most of them mentioned the overwhelming impact that feminist participants had on their own lives, and the role of FSs as a source of individual change.

According to several research on biographical consequences of social movement participation on the life course, some elements recur – like the tendency to remain involved at some levels and to perform leftist political attitudes (Fendrich 1993, McAdam 1988, Taylor and Raeburn 1995, Whittier 1995). With regard to feminist spaces, the practice of "the personal as political" assumes a different meaning, relative to age, generation, and ideology, and the feminist space to which each one refers. In this section, I will look at the way biographical outcomes are bound up with affect. These groups share different times of joining the space; time in the movement (i.e., length of activism); and age-cohort. However, they show similarities in the biographical outcomes. First, I will explore the engagement in FSs as a watershed event. Second, I will look at changes in the field of gender and sexuality by means of feminism. Finally, I will go through the unravelling of life-course norms.

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For all of the interviewees, the engagement in feminist politics is a watershed event. A CID interviewee explains on one hand the engagement as a ford, and on the other the impact of such engagement, that involves the whole existential dimension: "it has become for me and for all those who have crossed it a ford, a passage from which there is no turning back. The existential dimension, I would say, is the main thing" (IR9, CID, 72). This process occurs by enhancing self-consciousness raising and collective identity, which has a deep influence on individuals. Both aspects are consistent with a progressive detachment from the male sphere, as a symbolic, cultural and political sphere, but also as a physical one, through the relative removal of the male element from the individual life.

We can consider the starting point of political engagement in a FSs as an eventful moment. Scholars who investigated protests as eventful moments describe these events as "characterized by an experience of a rupture in daily life" (Zhuravlev 2015: 69), and which "challenge existing structures" (della Porta 2018: 3). Similarly, the affective rupture produced by the engagement in FSs unravels daily life. The consequence of activism as a watershed event is similar for all the age-cohorts. However, they come to that outcome through different paths.

"I am spending the morning at the CID. At some point I meet one of the activists and we start chatting about her experience in the feminist movements and in the CID. She tells me that the only process which can change the world is the inner consciousness of women. A change in their way of being in the world. […] In their case, as 1970s feminists, self-consciousness messed everything up: relationships, family, relations with their mother, with culture, with work, because if you start changing things you acknowledge that all the awareness you must have to be socially accepted is frightening" (Fieldnotes, CID, 19-11-18). In this conversation, a CID participant sheds light on how long-term activism raised her awareness on the relation between biographies and feminist politics. She addresses the fields of intimacy and family, the one of professional career, and of culture as the spheres where political engagement had an impact. For older activists this can be a negative impact, when the changes of one's life deeply struggle with the structures of a society that has not changed at the same pace (McAdam 1988, 1989, Giugni and Grasso 2016, Fillieule and Neveau 2019). Age is a key factor in the emotional setting and in the participants' willingness to keep organising.

The impact is mediated by the length of time spent in the FS: as something occurred in the past, the boundaries are less clear, and the somehow negative perception of the present, linked to ageing and social structures, is harder.

Participants of LYS, instead, have a perception of strong impact of the engagement in the feminist space. To illustrate the jump to another stage of life, one interviewee describes it as "a small, personal Copernican revolution. This is how I catapulted myself down 'the White Rabbit Hole', and it became more and more intense" (IIR1, LYS, 37). In the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis

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Carroll, the metaphor of the White Rabbit Hole symbolises Alice's adventure along the path to adulthood, through which she builds her identity, her choices, and her life course, by increasing her self-consciousness and personal strength (Carroll 2014). The metaphor fits with the role of FSs in the participants' life paths, as long as the political engagement re-shapes their frames, identity, behaviours, values. Participants become able to get in touch with their emotions, sufferings, and needs, but also to acknowledge the social inequalities they are trapped in. "In this space [LYS] I undertook a biographic re-evaluation. I looked back at my past and enriched it with a new perspective" (C2, 1, 37). Biographical revaluation also concerns women, lesbians, and queer people's understanding of gender-based violence. As spaces that are deeply involved in the fight against gender-based violence, they enhance the participants' awareness of the multiple dimensions of violence, and the way violence shapes their lives. The deep change in participants' lives produces an emotional charge. For those activists working in direct social action (Bosi and Zamponi 2015), such as the management of anti-violence services, mental breakdown can be an outcome.

Ideology, the closeness in time to the opening of the FSs, and the age of activists make the impact of engagement stronger.

Similarly, for CS the engagement in feminist space represents a revolutionary shift in the activists' life. As the following quote shows, each experienced an important moment:

> For me "the before" of the Cagne Sciolte is like a previous life. It was a life where, first of all, I was heterosexual. In which I did not live in Rome. In which I lived in monogamous relationships, I did mixed politics. I had never wondered about my person, my body, my sexuality, the relationships I created. "The after" is only the Cagne... in the sense that for me the birth of the Cagne Sciolte is a watershed in life. […] "The after" has been another life. (C3, 10, 30)

The process of feminist political participation influences the relation with the self, leading to a deep questioning of one's gender identification and sexuality. Differences occur in age-cohort paths – depending on early socialisation, the historical context, and discussion about sexuality and gender, ideology, and repercussions in the present. Previously, I explored the legitimisation of the erotic and love as a feeling towards other women as an outcome of feminist politics.

Different backgrounds shape different political perceptions and priorities. Depending on age, historical background, and political values, the politicisation of sexuality is sometimes avoided in order to prevent conflict, as in the case of CID, less intense in the case of LYS, or significantly more intense, as in the case of CS.

Just as sexuality emerged as a site of biographical outcomes, gender matters, too. The women's movement recognised gender as a category of analysis and a social construction (Scott 1988, Butler 2006). Questioning social categorisations and gender roles became a priority for FSs (Piccone Stella and Saraceno 1996, Naldini and Saraceno 2011). Social reproduction, a typical women's task, is

constantly addressed and re-shaped. Care, as an un/natural requirement for women, is being disentangled into inter-dependency. This challenge is formulated in different ways, depending on the cohort of participants.

The older cohort related to the CID has been remarkably engaged in questioning gender socialisation, by fighting for self-determination, equal parenting rights between men and women, and so on. As such, they are an unprecedented generation. "We are still completely new elderly women in history" (C1, 7, 69). Because of this historical background, CID participants show the greater shift in terms of gender socialisation and life-course trajectories.

With regard to LYS, the management of the anti-violence shelter leads them to develop a series of capacities and skills. The fight against gender-based violence requires to deeply question what a woman is, what a woman is in relation to a man, and what are the boundaries of this relationship. This work also regards boundaries: gender is a factor organising society (Scott 1986). Participants discuss what is taken for granted in gendered relationships, and they contest the way violence is embedded and naturalised.

Both LYS and CS have developed a set of skills in order to avoid male intervention. By challenging gendered socialisation and the sexual division of labour, which orients women into, for instance, caring activities and men into technical tasks, they engage in work that involves plumbing, electricity, mechanics, carpentry, and so on. Participants wish to do everything on their own without involving men, when it is usually taken for granted that men are the ones who perform such technical tasks.

The CS, influenced by recent developments and reflections on gender, has reached a deeper questioning of gender identification. By disentangling the gender binarism (or the male/female dichotomy), they are open to the possibility of fluid gender identification, or gender transition.

Moreover, the changing relationship with the body and the self is favoured by the specificities of this particular space, which was formerly a nightclub. As a consequence, since the beginning of the occupation, they started a self-managed pole dancing course, as an interviewee recounts: "the pole dance course […] was something that changed my existence. That is the relationship with my body […]. It was very powerful" (IIIR10, CS, 30).

For all of the three age-cohorts, the questioning of gender norms produces a disentanglement from the expected life course (McAdam 1989). However, it impacts the spheres of relationships and work in different ways.

At a certain point, these women were supposed to get married, take care of their children, and eventually to find a job which would be compatible with childbearing and, more generally, with social reproduction (Naldini and Saraceno 2007). At the aggregate level, scholars emphasise a period effect due to the transition to new family patterns in the post-War era, which is related to economic growth,

changes in norms and values, and the shifts in gender roles (Saraceno and Naldini 2007). At the micro-level, women who are engaged in FSs display an ongoing influence of such activism in their own lives and relational settings.

 "Maturing feminism […] is a way of being, a thought and an ethics and it has been very painful. It meant separating, for some even in a traumatic, scientific way, like 'I cannot live in these conditions, my daughter has to grow up in other conditions'" (IR9, CID, 72). Feminist activism has effects on the life course, disrupting traditional stages and expectations. CID's participants show the most lasting effects, both in terms of loneliness and frustration related to unconventional choices in a world that has not changed at the same rate, and in terms of work, with absorption in public structures or impoverishment processes. For LYS's participants, the field of relationships is more strongly joined by the field of work: the management of services leads to professionalisation in fields related to activism. For CS's participants, the change concerns above all the sphere of relationships, oriented towards the family of choice and a relative rejection of procreation and marriage.

8.5 Mobilising by Means of Affects: A Summary

The argument of this research is 1) that within FSs a conscious, ongoing, and political work on affects takes place, 2) that this work increases the capacity for collective action. Affects are considered as processes that relate bodies, minds, objects, and spaces, as gradients of intensities and vital forces that, at a conscious level, become emotions (Ahmed 2004, Massumi 2015). In this empirical chapter, I analysed how the work on affects produce consequences on the paths of participants.

First, I explored how people get to actively participate in FSs. To do this, I looked at individual mobilisation processes, feminist political socialisation, and the way people find a place in FSs by performing a role. This path of becoming feminist is bound up with affects. Affects emerge as a stimulus for political participation, but also as an intangible cloud that strengthens the relationship with the space and the desire to be part of it.

Becoming feminist is an apprenticeship in emotions, the socio-economic conditions that determine affects, how they move between bodies, how spaces change, and what political use can be made out of them. The examination of the architecture of emotions issued by FSs sheds light on the mechanisms that make affects the engine of an increase in collective capacity. Positive affects, according to Spinoza, are those that increase the power of life, negative ones decrease it. Affects, in all their nuances, enhance the structure of meaning of FSs, their goals and their outcomes. Among these affects, the erotic emerges as an impalpable dust that innervates bonds among participants. Understanding this element, which breaks down the dichotomy between private and public, helps us

to understand how collective emotions produce life power. Affections produce ties between participants, and this affective structure generates a sense of community. The dark side of the emotional dust are conflicts among participants: when they go unspoken they decrease the capacity for action and produce fragmentation and resentment, when they are collectively elaborated can serve as a boost to action.

Finally, I looked at affect in the long run. Although from different paths, participants present similar outcomes with regard to feminism as a watershed event, to transformations in the field of gender and sexuality, to the subversion of life-course norms. Emotional learning in FSs produces concrete effects on participants' biographies, life choices, interests, professionalisation, life expectations. In a gender regime that is highly normative towards women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, the discovery of the potential of affects changes life trajectories beyond the destiny predicted by socio-economic structures.

The analysis at the micro level allows to understand the functioning of affects in relation to the paths of individuals, to the relationships between individuals, and over the long term of their life trajectories. The analysis of affect at the individual level is typical of affect theory and Spinoza's thought, but instead of being an individual process, in reference to the FSs it is the result of an ongoing collective work. Why do affects transform the potential for action on an individual level, and why is this potential relevant? The analysis shows the specificity of affect to break through the dichotomies that underlie Western thought and also the birth of capitalism (Hirschman 1977). The capitalist economic model prescribes a certain subjectivity: the rational social actor, oriented towards maximising profit, building his career, joining a nuclear family, but all the while maintaining his labour productivity. Very often, the prescription of this subjectivity results in a sense of frustration, of being inappropriate, incapable, a fraud or a failure. The construction of one's own productivist trajectory is often associated with these negative feelings, the category of rational social actor being very normative and very difficult to fulfil. Within the FSs, the production of an alternative model of subjectivity is experimented with. This subjectivity is understood to be constructed from an understanding of affects and emotions which, like a compass, indicate conditions of malaise and frustration, but also the orientation towards improving one's living conditions. Perceiving this work on affects and then learning to manage it allows participants to access a transformative practice of their self and their path. This possibility is in contradiction to the subjectivity prescribed by the economic model and as such produces a sense of liberation and empowerment on the one hand, and frustration on the other, as the hegemonic model always forces a certain degree of adjustment. It is important, however, to emphasise how the analysis of the work on affects shows how this sphere, which is often removed even by social movements, is actually capable of enhancing the sense of self,

the affirmative projection, the willful to act in the world. In this sense, the work on affects is an example of good practice that is also available to other social movements interested in transforming the potential for individual action. On the other hand, this work on affects is able to show the normativity of the model of subjectivity imposed by the neo-liberal economic model, and to propose alternatives that question the hegemonic model.

9. Spain: Insights for a Comparison

9.1 Introduction

It is like a train you can't miss. (IIIM4, PEB, 54)

In this chapter I propose some insights for a comparison between Italy and Spain, with respect to FSs in urban contexts. The exploration of the Spanish cases was highly constrained by the outbreak of the Sars-Cov-2 virus. The fieldwork was supposed to begin in March 2020, when many European countries opted for lockdown. Despite the postponement, I was able to pursue five months of fieldwork in 2021. At that time, the pandemic was still ongoing and most of the FSs spectacularly reduced their public activities. However, some of them kept proposing online activities, and in the last months I was able to attend some in-person initiatives. I am here analysing data coming from the online/offline ethnographic period and interviews (almost five for each space, plus a key informant). Regardless of the constraints, the empirical analysis stimulates some hints for a comparison, and it aims to broaden the understanding of both cases.

First, I will go through the *her*story of the feminist movement in Spain, by drawing attention on some key junctures that foster the comprehension of contemporary FSs. With regard to this, I will look at the trajectories of the movement between State feminism and autonomous organisations, and then at the similarities with frames, ideology, and practices of the feminist movements in Italy. In Spain, as well, the work on affects can be detected at the macro, meso, and micro level. First, I will look at the way FSs interact at the macro level: with the arena of the economic, political, and health crisis; with players at the local level; with the institutional setting and feminist movements. These interactions are mediated by affects and they produce consequences depending on this mediation. At the micro and meso level, I will elaborate on the production of safer spaces, by looking at the way they proliferate (depending on the context) and on the process of becoming safer through the collective work on/of affects. In order to do so, I will specifically refer to the practices of internal democracy and to the political understanding of care and vulnerability as vectors for building alliances. This process shapes individual paths and collective action, and similarities and differences occur with regard to the comparison with Italy.

The chapter aims to show how the work of affects enhances FSs capacity to produce knowledge, lets people engage with politics, and produces viable outcomes. The institutional variable, in the case of Spain, results in a double process: on one hand, the proliferation of safer spaces and of feminist

prefigurative politics; on the other hand, the higher compromises between feminist claims and institutional constrains.

9.2 Movements Trajectories between Institutionalisation and Radicalisation

9.2.1 The Herstory of the Feminist Movements

Because there is the transversality of feminism, which is to put people at the centre of life. It is to put at the centre what we have to take care of on this planet. (IIM3, EK, 54)

The feminist movement in Spain was drastically influenced by the Francoist regime, which endured from 1939 to 1975, when the dictator died. Before, starting from the 15th century, several authors with a feminist sensitivity were already active (Caballè 2013). Religious women, poets, and authors argued in favour of equal rights, rethinking the role of women in society. After the Civil War and the imposition of a dictatorship, women groups organised within the anti-Francoist groups' resistance (Valiente 2013). All of them were clandestine. The largest groups were the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres (which was part of the Communist Party) and the Unión Popular de Mujeres (UPM). The latter was created by militants of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (PCE [ml]) and it became part of the Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriótico (FRAP). Tensions flowed among women groups, such as the former group accusation of terrorism toward the latter. As a key informant tells, the conditions of the regime shaped women's life and politics on a strict interdependency between the personal and political, the private and public dimension:

> So my generation grew up politically without separating […] everyday life, [...] the body, relations between people, and relations between men and women. That is to say, sentimental relationships, with family, with friends, everything was at stake... everything had to be rebuilt, everything had to be learned, everything had to be done. We grew up like that... [...] Because it was all one. (KM1, UPM, 72)

Unlike Italy, where women experienced the resistance to the fascist regime some twenty years earlier without a strong feminist perspective, in Spain resistance was also organised through a growing awareness of women. In memory and narrative there remains a sense of the juncture between the political struggle and the subjective dimension, which would later be one of the eminent characteristics of the feminist movement. As the following quote shows, the UPM was mostly composed of proletarian women and their fight for labour rights was closely linked to liberation as women:

> These women, I remember, used to make leaflets that […] were really [...] down to earth, they were very simple. [….] It was really their life that was expressed with a desire to make a revolution to change everything. […] Then feminism made a narrative about how we had to start from ourselves. I lived a militancy that started from that. Because that was their reality and what

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> led them to want to make the revolution and it was all one... not that we wanted democracy, for fuck's sake. Everything has to be changed here. (KM1, UPM, 72)

These groups were actively part of the democratic transition, despite the almost complete failure to purge who was part of the regime (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005, Valiente 2008). The persistence of the Francoists in the State apparatus, combined with a democratic transition without any culprits, has led to a sort of "un-speakability" (IIM1, EK, 30) of the dictatorship, that persists nowadays, too.

Despite the absence of the feminist movement of the 1970s as it emerged in other countries, the Spanish feminist movement is heavily influenced by practices and reflections developed by anti-Francoist women before and after the transition. As Caballé argues, because of these reasons Spanish feminism is "more pragmatic than theoretical, more disposed to concrete action than speculation" (2013: 17). From 1975 on, the feminist movement was split by the discussion on the relation with institutions or the autonomous choice, that I will deepen in the following paragraph. As a result of this debate, two feminists were elected in the first elected parliament of 1977-79 (Threlfall 2013), and the Instituto de las Mujeres was created in 1983. On the other hand, groups, collectives, and spaces proliferated, by developing autonomous forms of reflections on feminist principles (Gill 2011). Under the first Zapatero government, in 2008, the Ministerio de Igualdad was created together with a new law against gender-based violence, which completely disrupts the legislative, political, and social setting. Feminist movements were flourishing for decades, and they found a new vitality within the 15-M mobilisations in 2011 (Gamez Fuentes 2015, Portos 2019). The so-called Comisión de Feminismos Sol (Commission of Feminisms in Sol) brought together different claims and groups, by broadening the claim on participatory democracy from a gendered perspective (Cruells and Ezquerda 2015). Later, influenced by a new wave of mobilisation from 2015, feminist movements greatly mobilised around the feminist strike of the 8 March for several years.

By now, some debates remain salient, such as the trans people movement's claims and the sex work issue. However, activists consider contemporary feminist, LGBT and queer movements (which are strongly interconnected) just as advanced in terms on reflections on sexuality, bodies, gender, health, and racialisation. As one of them comments with regard to gender questioning, "for today's generation, the non-binary is a conquest. But for me, being fifty years old, it was like a dream, wasn't it?" (IIIM4, PEB, 54).

As in Italy, feminist politics appears to be rooted in the work on the self, on emotions, on collective affects. Through this work of consciousness-raising, activists elaborate alternative structures of feelings that support, nourish, and strengthen collective action. The biggest difference concerns the areas in which this relationship between politics, conscience, and affects has developed: if in Italy

there has been a relative refusal of dialogue with the institutions, since the 1970s in Spain State feminism emerged.

9.2.2 State Feminism and Autonomous Organisations

It's true that here in Spain we breathe a different air... (IIIM1, PEB, 24)

While walking in Calle de Alcalà, I stepped into the façade of the Ministry of Equality. Three large purple banners bore the words "Feministas," "Por ser Mujeres," and "Nos Queremos Vivas." The last claim is one of the slogans of the transnational movement started by Ni Una Menos in Argentina. The institutional seat in charge of gender equality refers of the imaginary and symbolic codes of the feminist movements. I found it striking, because of the radical difference with the Italian context. Another world seemed to open up, for the research and for understanding the construction of FSs.

The trajectory of the feminist movements in Spain differs completely from Italy. As mentioned above, from 1975 differences among the feminist movements emerge. Differences exploded during the II Jornadas Feministas Estatales de la Mujer in Granada. Part of the feminist movement, such as the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres, came from a Marxist background and they identified the core of the oppression in the capitalist structure and in the sexual division of labor. In order to achieve the goal of women's empowerment through dismantling capitalist structures, they referred to the feminism of equality and pushed for the interplay with institutions (Gil 2011). Others, like the Colectivos Feministas, reflected instead upon women's sexuality and differences, and considered the patriarchy as the core of feminist reflection (Sendòn 2002). They rejected any kind of dialogue with institutions and claimed autonomy for collective action. Depending on this split, feminist groups engaged in different strategies. On one hand, they progressively entered political parties, they founded new ones such as the Partido Feminista de España, or they took part in local, regional, and national government (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005, Threlfall 2010). On the other hand, they organised in groups, collectives, feminist spaces, and social centres (Gil 2011).

The State feminism option produces several consequences. On one hand, the entrance of feminists within the State apparatus resulted in a widespread acknowledgement of the women's issue as a priority in local, regional, and national politics (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005). This achievement allowed feminist claims to be addressed in policies, public debates, culture, common sense. In this process, the double thrust of State feminism and a massive autonomous mobilisation yielded a cultural shift in terms of gender balance and roles. Albeit great issues remain unsolved, such as LGBTQ and non-binary people's full legal recognition, or the racialisation and lack of rights for non-native people, a significant change in habitus and mindset is unanimously reported by

interviewees. As an Italian interviewee that moved to Madrid argues, "if a Spanish Carlo Conti [famous Italian presenter] made a macho joke, the next day everyone would denounce him. However they underline it, at least they realise that the joke was macho. In Italy it's normal" (IIIM1, PEB, 24). Differences exist between political parties, and they open different types of political opportunity structures for feminist goals: while leftist parties tend to open up wider spaces for equality and feminist claims, right-wing parties aim at eroding them, for instance by claiming a shift in the fight against male violence from "male" to "all types of violence." However, interviewees report a perception of what feminists can claim that greatly differs from the Italian case. Often, regardless of their political affiliation in autonomous organisations, activists work in their daily life in women's spaces and services managed by institutions. As an EDI interviewee explains:

> I believe that this battle is still being fought on both fronts. There must be free and autonomous women's associations, but there must also be an institutional feminism that protects and defends women's rights above any political party. And we must continue to fight this fight from within the institutions. [...] Without an institutional framework we have nothing more than our voice in the streets. This has to be answered with public budgets, with public resources, with feminist professionals who do not question the word of women. (IM1, EDI, 44)

The subjective narrative reports the entrenchment of the belief that institutions owe feminism resources, spaces, services, and a transformation of values and norms. For them, feminism must be part of the institutions and must negotiate from within them. While in the Spanish cases the intertwining with institutions is almost a given, in the Italian case it is still an element of rejection. As a paradigmatic example, the municipality of Madrid manages seventeen Espacios de Igualdad, one for each district (even though, as an interviewee points out, "seventeen on twenty-one districts, there are still four equality spaces left to be opened" (IM1, EDI, 42). As an EDI interviewee argues, "the Espacios de Igualdad could almost be like an updated version of the women's houses of the 1980s" (IM1, EDI, 42). They have the aim to disseminate feminist principles, to enhance women's empowerment, and to offer solutions to practical problems related to gender-based violence, racialisation, and pauperisation. In the meanwhile, the municipality of Madrid currently pursues four cross-cutting programs: Madrid Zero Violence, Madrid Safe City along with Empowered Women and Girls, and Co-responsible Madrid. These programs enhance the balance of the care-work within families and partners, the creation of a city that challenges discriminations and exclusions, and the fight against gender-based violence. Spaces and municipal programs greatly contribute to the diffusion and strengthening of a gender sensitivity among the population, and they practically intervene in situations of need with resources, services, and professionality.

However, as other interviewees underline, the institutionalisation also has a dark side, since it contributes to emptying and depowering the radicality of the movement, and to accepting more and

more compromises in terms of claims. Nonetheless, some ties among autonomous groups and State feminism exist, and claims and needs flows from one arena to the other.

The entrenchment of State feminism is visible in subjective narratives, regardless of the political belonging of the activists. Strategies, forms of action, and political outcomes of the movement seem to be at the next level of effectiveness, because they do not only concern movements from below, but also the public management of affairs. It is no coincidence that, following the 2011 mobilisations, one of the consequences was the creation of movement parties that entered the institutions, bringing feminism to the forefront as a prominent issue.

9.2.3 Mediterranean Feminism: Cross-National Diffusion

So far, I highlighted the differences between the Spanish and the Italian context. On one hand, Franco's enduring regime constrained the proliferation of women's movement until the mid-1970s, and also the type of claims, practices, and organisation. On the other, the debate between the feminism of equality and the feminism of difference produced a closer approach to institutions and a peculiar context for autonomous groups.

Though, some similarities unite the feminist movement in Spain and Italy. As an EK interviewee argues, "Italy was our reference" (IIM3, EK, 54), and another interviewee adds: "we have learned a lot from the Italian tracks and we continue to learn from them. Like Silvia Federici, many feminist comrades have taught us a lot about collectives and articulation" (IM2, EDI, 44). The interviews show how cross-national diffusion is perceived at the level of subjective narrative. If on a theoretical level the contamination of movement ideas (McAdam and Rucht 1993) from the Italian feminism of the 1970s is evident in Spain, this contamination is also recognised by activists in the everyday life of political participation. Feminist movements in Spain borrow ideas and tactics from historical feminism in Italy, and this diffusion goes through relational ties among activists and nonrelational channels (McAdam and Rucht 1993). Dissemination concerns the memory of the feminist movement, the ideological references that underpin the movement, and the repertoires of action – such as the concept of social reproduction, the intertwining of capitalism and patriarchy, Marxist feminism, the importance of physical places (such as women's homes, bookshops, health clinics, and so on). The scope of 1970s feminism in Italy has transcended borders and constitutes a basis for concepts, perspectives of thought and struggle. Translations of Italian authors such as Carla Lonzi, Silvia Federici, Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, and others have shaped the path of reflection of Spanish groups.

At the same time, the diffusion concerns ideas and tactics that come from Spain to Italy, such as the intertwining of gender, sexuality, and race, as well as precarity from the point of view of women, the instrument of the strike, the strategic relationship with institutions at municipal level.

Some more elements join the Italian and Spanish contexts. An interviewee calls this assonance "Mediterranean feminism," by drawing attention on the common framework in which different feminisms in the Mediterranean areas develop. The Mediterranean area is both a geographical location and a political site (Giuliani 2016). Southern Europe has always been considered through racialising categories which regard the division between the productive, civilised, and progressive North, and a backward, lazy, and unproductive South (Ghisu and Mongili 2021). For a certain period after the explosion of the financial crisis in 2007, international commentators on the European economic situation have referred to Italy and Spain with the acronym PIGS (which also includes Portugal and Greece) (Moro 2014). This definition, afterwards addressed as racist because of the derogatory meaning of the term, sums up several stereotypes. First, the laziness, backwardness, and cultural, social, and economic underdevelopment. Then, neoliberalism and the imperative of meritocracy, which Italy and Spain seem to systematically fail. These stereotypes have social consequences on individuals, who embed and reproduce common sense on themselves and on others. An Italian migrant argues, "when I left Italy there was also the fact that nothing works in Italy, it's shit. I go there [in London] where everything works. Finally I can work, earn money, have an independent life, public transport works. Fuck no! At a certain point I realised that that system, I wasn't happy with it" (IIM1, EK, 30). The representation associated with the country has an influence at a subjective level, and influences lifestyles, expectations on oneself, and life trajectories.

Just as the representation of Southern Europe is a constraint to individual development, it also becomes an object of critical consciousness and cognitive liberation. Southern Europe becomes a site of identity, politics, and pride. This area is not only interested by racialisation processes, but is also characterised by the enhancement of social relationships, of the collective dimension, the political use of care, and interdependency as the basis of common life. The Meridian thought shapes the mindset and repertoire of collective action, and it develops into the subversion of the stigma of the South (de Sousa Santos 2014), as an EK interviewee argues:

> It doesn't mean uncritically accepting the things that don't work, the corruption, the slowness and all the defects of the Mediterranean that we know very well, but claiming the nature of sharing, of the family understood not only as a biological family but also as a social structure of care and sociality [...]. There is something there and that for me is also fundamental in my feminist ideal. It certainly has to do with sociality, sharing, care, welcoming, and a whole series of negatives that obviously exist. But to welcome these contradictions with a bit of pride... [...] The Mediterranean dimension responds to me, I feel good about it (IIM1, EK, 30)

Thus, I am here referring to Mediterranean Feminism as a geographical, political, and symbolic arena where certain values, concepts, repertoire of actions, cultural foundations are shared by different contexts and activists. The production of stigma is converted into a subjective sense of pride in what are considered negative passions, such as slowness or the role of ties. In constructing their own selves as feminists, participants elaborate a geographical and political framework that critically acknowledges limitations and contradictions, but also emphasises elements of political claim. From a feminist point of view, the role of ties, care, and interdependence become characteristic elements of collective action, and in this sense, both in relation to Italy and Spain, I speak of the construction of structures of feelings.

In the following sections, I will look at similarities and differences between Italy and Spain according to this common framework, where a cross-national assonance exists.

9.3 Comparing Feminist Spaces

I think it is essential that there be a space where women can come together and share their experiences. [...] I believe that empowerment is not about individual discourse [...], but empowerment is about becoming aware of oppression. And I believe that this involves collectivising and pooling knowledge. [...] When a woman begins to share in a group, there is an awareness [...]. A power of wanting to transform begins to emerge, because when you collectivise discomfort, that is when you realise that it is not individual, you don't have a problem, but that it is a social problem. (IM3, EDI, 37)

In the first part of the empirical analysis, I explored the production of FSs as structures of feelings in Italy, where affects work as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) a competence in action. Through constructivist grounded theory, I came to understand safer spaces as a process through which affects are made into politics, at the macro, meso, and micro level. At the macro level, I engaged with the concept of agency and structure, by looking at how the work on affects interplays with the strategic action of FSs with regard to economic models, crises, other players. At the meso level, I engaged with the concept of structure of feelings, as the process through which FSs elaborate on collective affects, by enhancing positive affects which increase the capacity for collective action. At the micro level, I looked at how individuals get to mobilisation, relational ties, and long-term activism by elaborating on their affects and emotions. Affects are both the precondition and the matter of political participation in FSs, and through the collective dimension they become a tool to target social structures of inequality.

In the following paragraph, I will look at the similarities and differences with Spanish FSs at the macro, meso, and micro level. How do individuals get into FSs? Are affects a driving force, as well?

Does the FSs' production of community, relational ties, and repertoire of action rely on structures of feelings? How do FSs relate with neoliberalism, the crisis, and other players in the Spanish context? Several layers of analysis emerged during the fieldwork. First, the pandemic and social crisis as a structure where FSs develop their meanings and action, by creating alternative models of value production and strategic interaction. Second, the processual manner, which entails the process of becoming safer, and thus able to manage and elaborate on affects; the forms of deliberative democracy and the repertoire of consensus-building process; the assonance between the symbolic field of home and the one of political spaces. Finally, I will look at the paths of participants through the proliferation of spaces and forms of political participation due to the specificities of the Spanish case and the use of affects as the basis for intersectional ties.

9.3.1 Agency and Structure

The argument of this research is that the politicisation of affects allows FSs to increase the potential for collective action. How does the development of the potential for collective action through affects work at the macro level? With regard to Italy, I delved into the capacity of FSs to interact with multiple crises by developing alternative models of value production, and with several players (local and international players, and the feminist movement). Rather than slowing down and disempowering collective action, constant attention to the structures of feelings produced in the FSs allows for the development of strategic choices, repertoires of action, and practices of democracy from below that challenge the assumptions of the economic and institutional system. With regard to the Spanish case, I will try to shed light on the similarities and differences, with a specific focus to the spread of the pandemic, and the role of institutions, which in the Spanish context, as already mentioned, are closely linked to the development of the feminist movement.

Facing the Arena of Crisis

With reference to the Italian cases, I focused on the crisis as an arena where manifold meanings are embedded. The crisis is both a condition which FSs are passing through because of their legal status, usually quite precarious and always perceived as attackable, and a condition of the setting, e.g. the economic and health crisis. The fieldwork in Spain occurred while the pandemic was unfolding, and these conditions strongly affected the type of fieldwork and the content of the interviews. I have engaged with three types of spaces: the Espacios de Igualdad (EDI), women's spaces managed by the municipality; the Eskalera Karakola (EK), a self-managed feminist space that develops direct social actions; the Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros (PEB), a transfeminist and queer platform of encounter.

Since the fieldwork in Italy occurred before the start of the pandemic, I mainly explored the political crisis, in the sense of precariousness due to the threat of eviction, or sale at auction of the FSs' buildings. Italian FSs have to interplay with this structure of meanings and opportunities by creating strategies of resistance and of change throughout tough times. In Spain, instead, the main meaning of crisis is related to the pandemic crisis. How do FSs relate with the pandemic? How do their claims, goals, and strategies change because of the health crisis? Is it possible to hold a sense of community despite the lockdown and restrictions? Are the tools elaborated by safer spaces effective in the arena of crisis? Can agency be developed with regard to an unfavourable structure?

The pandemic has strongly affected FSs. They are physical places that are open and crossed by many people in everyday life. Part of their collective action is linked to the physical space and the activities that take place in the presence of the space. The pandemic has led to phases of lockdown or social distancing, resulting in FSs being closed for longer or shorter periods of time. As one of the EK interviewees explains, "the space is a space. So, if it is not used, it does not exist" (IIM5, EK, 54). The quote shows an equation between the existence of the FS and physical space. Physical space and relationships in presence are thus conditions for collective action. The physical space allows us to meet in presence: the body, the relationship, including the body, are the foundations of feminist politics. The dematerialisation of politics during the pandemic undermines one of the cornerstones of feminist politics. As an interviewee from EK explains, "You can't see the face" (IIM2, EK, 36). The pandemic prevents from being in the same space close to each other, or requires one to wear a mask for most of the time. The empathic flow that produces the emotional bonds underlying feminist collective action is clogged by physical distancing and material barriers, such as personal protective equipment. These are the reasons why FSs struggled to find new ways to keep the spaces and collective action existing. Together with the lack of physical spaces, FSs have been prevented from public protests in the squares and streets, which have all but ceased with the pandemic.

The pandemic affected the macro and micro level, e.g. with regard to the mental health of women. An EDI's worker accounts for the consequences of the pandemic on the women followed by the space: they have been in "a greater situation of vulnerability, of emotional fragility, of depression. There have been many losses. In Madrid the pandemic swept through. In the first hour there were 23,000 people dead. […] And this has also created a climate of social mourning. […] It has led many women to ask themselves if they are living the way they want to live, if they are living the life they want to live, sometimes death" (IM2, EDI, 44). The pandemic crisis has generated a sense of "shared grief," imposing illness and death as frames of reference for the flow of daily life. Collective affects permeate this historical phase. These affects show negative consequences, as just mentioned, but also new structures of political opportunity, as the work on affects developed by the FSs shows. One PEB

participant develops the idea of shared grief as a positive possibility, which can bring to political outcomes:

> The current situation is a bit like a moment of rupture in general, like a mourning or not, that life has been transformed. It is no longer what it was before and it seems to me that we don't even know if it will ever be the same again. [...] It may seem that in this sense the collective is disarticulated and suddenly there is a greater individualism from this solitude. But at the same time, I believe that it can be something to live, something that is productive, something that is transformative, because in the end it is a feeling, an emotion, a grief shared by many people. (IIIM2, PEB, 30)

As the quotation shows, collective affections, if elaborated at the community level, are an opportunity for transformation and development. In line with the FSs' efforts to produce structures of feelings that enhance the individual and collective capacity for action, so too during the pandemic a collective emotion as powerful as grief becomes a matter of collective processing. How can grief be made into agency, and how do FSs engage with this affect?

First of all, several issues raised by FSs have become mainstream with the pandemic: as an example the cuts in healthcare budgeting and the gaps in the public health system that particularly affect women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people; the importance of care as a reciprocal task that allows people to survive; interdependence as the only way to look at community; health and the environment beyond the ruthless individualism produced by neoliberalism. The diffusion of this production of knowledge that took place within FSs spaces, and then became mainstream with the pandemic, leads one EK's participant to hope that "more people than before will become aware" (IIM1, EK, 30). The awareness mentioned in the quote concerns the gender regime, the use of the body, neoliberalism, the role of health and expert knowledge. Raising awareness on these issues, during a traumatic and mournful event such as the pandemic, means pushing people to make a change in their own lives and in the social context. Affects, such as fear, grief, and sorrow can be elaborated into new tools to understand and to change social conditions of inequality. This action, which is typical of FSs, is put forward by FSs' participants as a generalisable practice in a critical juncture.

In front of illness and death, feminists had to reflect on the meaning of space and also on their individual lives. In some ways, the pandemic has opened up space to learn technological skills and new platforms where to perform collective action, to reach more people through the Internet, to focus on what a good life looks like and what tools to develop to achieve it collectively. Despite the climate of dramatic social disarticulation, the pandemic fostered the strengthening of a sense of community, of feeling part of something, increasing the tools of FSs in terms of relationships, mutual support, and solidarity. At the neighbourhood level, small groups helped each other with practical tasks (such as finding an oxygen tank or a saturation metre for those who were ill), they maintained a daily relationship online, supporting each other and keeping each other up to date day by day, and the women followed by the EDIs were not left alone. As a PEB interviewee highlights, "affects flow

more" (IIIM2, PEB, 30). The situation of common negative affects, which weaken the mood for action, through the FSs' practices becomes an opportunity to develop the work on affects, making emotions a ground for increasing self-awareness, the identification of problems, the tools for constraining them. As an interviewee of PEB argues, during the pandemic the affective network of FSs worked as a practical tool for survival:

> And it is political because look at quarantine, for example, where there was apparently a political disarticulation towards the outside, because we couldn't move, we couldn't meet, we couldn't do anything… That was a political space of support, that was a space from which to bring food to a person who had Covid and lived alone. In other words, all that network through that.... To me, for example, I thought it was very powerful that it happened through that space. And that's where, for example, I think it's a justification for something that is also political from a personal point of view, that from that space, depending on the proximity to the neighbourhoods, people from the block were aware of people in a certain situation. And to generate a self-managed network there is political in itself. But this is also part of the affective aspect, isn't it? (IIIM2, PEB, 30)

As I already explored with regard to the Italian cases, FSs deal with a faceted concept of crisis. In the perception of FSs' participants in Spain, the contemporary health crisis is related to the economic crisis of 2007 and its consequences. The critical junction of 2011 changed people's reaction to the crisis, movements' organisation and institutions (Portos 2020). The 15-M campaign that reacted to austerity measures and neoliberalism brought people to engage with new grievances, organisations, and collective action. In times of unemployment, loss, depression, and social fragmentation, the 15-M represented an occasion to channel people's grievances and to change democracy (della Porta and Portos 2020). Relational ties, direct social action, and solidarity were stirred across social divisions. Feminist movements were part of that cycle of contention and they developed claims, discourses, and repertoires of action that resulted in political outcomes (Gámez Fuentes 2015). FSs' participants emphasise the connection between the economic crisis and the pandemic crisis in terms of the tools developed to deal with either. An EDI worker that was also part of the feminist groups involved in the 15-M campaign argues as follows: "let's say we're kind of more used to getting out of it" (IM2, EDI, 44). At that time, the elaboration on the negative affects arising from the economic crisis and austerity measures led to demands for greater political participation and involvement in governmental choices, the function of community processes in municipalities, the transformation of austerity policies that most violently affected women and disenfranchised people, the implementation of welfare and public services for all. At that critical juncture, feminist movements developed practices and actions from the collective affects. That toolbox provided the basis on which new tools were added in the pandemic crisis. The loneliness and impoverishment produced by the crisis forces people into a state of malaise, loss of hope and planning for the future. On these negative affects participants try to build awareness by widening political participation. The structure of crises does not only

produce a constriction to collective action but also a structure of affect that, on the contrary, leads FSs to develop new models and strategies of agency.

Dealing with Institutions

FSs interact with the structure of crisis. With regard to the Spanish case, I looked at how the mobilisation of affects increases the potential for collective action throughout the health emergency, too. This process allows FSs' participants to transform negative affects, such as fear, sorrow, and mourning into sources of solidarity and affective ties. If the pandemic crisis produces social fragmentation and impoverishment, caring for one's loved ones is a strategy for consolidating social ties, nurturing forms of mutualism, and helping people find collaborative solutions to material problems. In this sense, the work of affects does not depower strategy and tactics, but it increases the capacity for collective action of FSs, who can find innovative solutions to novel problems, such as the consequences of the pandemic. To deal with crises, FSs develop a series of relationships with players, such as institutions, the local context (the neighbourhood, inhabitants, other associations), and the feminist movement. Conducting the fieldwork at the height of the pandemic allowed me to understand their interactions with these players, within and beyond the health crisis.

With different nuances depending on the political culture of the movement of the spaces, all the Italian cases give an account of a historical distrust with regard to institutions, in line with the anti-institutional character that the feminist movement has had since the 1970s. As mentioned above, Spain presents relevant differences because of the historical path the feminist movement passed through. Since the 1970s, the movement has discussed the institutional option and part of the activists have been embedded in political parties and the electoral competition.

With respect to the cases involved in the research, three different approaches emerge. First, the EDIs are fully part of the municipality. They are opened and paid by institutions, and despite most of the workers self-identify as feminist, they have to negotiate the work of the space step by step with the municipality. Second, the EK is part of autonomous feminism. Despite their birth as an occupation, from 2005 they signed an agreement with the municipality and they pay a monthly rent. Third, the PEB is fully autonomous, and they reject any type of flattery by political parties (such as from Podemos during the last municipal election on 4 May 2021). However, for some events, such as festivals, they strategically negotiate resources and spaces with institutions. As we can see, a separation is never completely possible, because spaces also move in an institutional arena where part of the possibilities, resources, and goals have to be negotiated with institutions. Yet, the aim of this thesis is to show how the feminist work on affects does not lead to a lower relational capacity, but rather to an increased potential for strategic interaction and outcomes.

The history of the feminist movements in Spain is an interesting case for understanding how a double-boost strategy (from within institutions and from without) produces a higher efficacy than the choice for a complete autonomous path (Threlfall, Cousins and Valiente 2005, Valiente 2007). The thin line between institutional and autonomous FSs has led to a work of cultural and social transformation. First, this work produces a greater attention from governmental and non-governmental institutions on gender roles, gender-based violence, and equal opportunities. Second, it produces the population's awareness about these issues. In this context, FSs play a crucial role, as laboratories of democracy and places through which the work of social transformation is processed on a daily basis, and then disseminated.

The change of political opportunity structures (Tarrow 1998, Meyer 2004) influences the interaction between FSs and institutions. The change of the municipality of Madrid, from a leftist government to a right-wing one, affected the life of the EDIs. As a worker who used to be a feminist activist explains, the change of the government at the helm of the city changes the guidelines for the municipality's actions in terms of both content and resources, because the cornerstones on which the opening of the EDIs was based, such as the fight against gender-based violence, the need for women's autonomy and spaces for awareness, and the development of forms of participatory democracy, are all called into question:

> This change does not favour equality nor does it favour raising awareness among the general population. [...] But the discourse around equality is going to be very different. [...] Feminism is questioned by the extreme right. [...] They question gendered violence, question the complaints that women make. They question the rapes and they blame the immigrant and the different. These are the proposals that the Spanish extreme right-wing party has put forward. So, in that sense, we are threatened. Exactly the same as an autonomous collective. (IM2, EDI, 44)

Despite the involvement in institutions, or because of that, EDIs are highly at risk, with respect to their aims, methods, and scope. The unintended consequence is that the change of the political opportunity structure falls on the shoulders of the teams working in the EDIs, feminist workers who, in addition to receiving an income, choose that work as a space for political activity. So they are the ones who pay the hardest consequences, in terms of stress, burnout, worry, and defence of spaces (both for professional and political reasons). At the same time, EDIs' workers perceive themselves as a buffer against the neoliberal and conservative drift of the municipality. Institutionalised FSs can play a role at interfacing between social movements and institutions, even when political opportunities for action are restricted, because from within they can preserve discourses, practices, and resources:

> I feel that if those of us who are in the EDI are convinced feminists, we will be able to stop the rise of the extreme right. In other words, I still have some hope that it is necessary for the teams within the equality spaces to be feminist and not let themselves be carried away by the ups and downs of the policies of the moment. This has had a certain personal wear and tear because deep

down you are stopping with your body and your mental health the attacks of the extreme right. But it is what we have left. If we do not resist, we are going to leave these frames. [...] If you had done this interview four years ago, I would have given you a very different answer, because we were in a happy moment in which it seemed that institutional politics and social movements went hand in hand. Well, not at this moment, at this moment the policies go one way and the social movements go the other and we are in the middle of this. (IM2, EDI, 44)

This quote sheds light on the expected outcomes of FSs, which are considered as forges of democracy, dams for extremist drifts, and laboratories of innovation and social transformation. This conviction is also the push for feminists in trouble to keep spending their efforts in the struggle for the existence of FSs. An EDI worker who was a feminist activist talks about the democratic role of the EDI from her own biographical path. The transformation of social inequalities passes through public protests and autonomous spaces, but also through the capacity for strategic action within institutions, which allows access to resources and laws, in order to change them:

> I think that all generations at some point believed that we were here to change the world and that is something wonderful. […] But the reality is that machismo continues, patriarchy continues in the feminisation of poverty, violence against women continues, cities are unsafe spaces and the responsibility of care is overburdened on the shoulders of women. So, as long as this reality does not change, feminism remains necessary, vital. [...] right now, at a global level, we are once again experiencing an explosion of the feminist movement [...] but this has to go hand in hand. Institutional resources that ensure that the feminist movement and the spaces for equality continue to be places that democracy supports. (IM2, EDI, 44)

Despite this awareness of strategic interaction with institutions, which is the main difference between Italy and Spain, participants of autonomous FSs complain about State feminists, who by virtue of their hegemonic position marginalise other voices, as in the fields of trans people, sex work, and racialisation. Speaking about the 8 March 2020 demonstration, one PEB participant tells of an almost muscular confrontation with a part of institutional feminism that maintains an essentialist and biologistic view of being a woman: "there were attacks, violence, kicks, and punches between this generation of ladies, whose feminism favours more those born women, and some components of the PEB. […] We recognise that they have fought a lot for the rights of women and lesbians. But once again they have remained in the privileged position of white cis women, with documents and a wealthy economic situation" (IIIM3, PEB, 37). This quotation illustrates a fragmented landscape in which not only strategic choices but also ideologies are swirling around the institutional option, as for example in relation to the debate on the trans law or the rights of LGBTQIA+ people currently taking place in Spain. The difference lies in the different legitimacy in speaking out between autonomous and institutional feminism, which, having access to formal roles and mainstream media, risks making the claims of autonomous groups invisible. This overview makes it clear that institutions, as a structure, also play a subtly different role in Spain, in that, on the one hand, from within the institutional structure a shore is provided for the agency of the feminist movement, and on

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the other hand the institutional structure becomes a constraint to the radicality of feminist demands, and in this sense limits agency.

Dealing with "Lo Local"

Among the players involved, the closest is the one that concerns what is around the space: the neighbourhood where the building is located, the people in the neighbourhood who frequent it, other associations, groups, committees.

Lo local frequently recurs in the words of the interviewees as a field of relationship, thought, and political elaboration. What do they refer to when talking about *lo local*?

I will look at the local as an arena inhabited by a number of different, interacting players. First, "the local" is the *barrio*, the neighbourhood dimension. Madrid is a city with over three million inhabitants (not counting all undocumented or non-resident people), covering an area of over 600 square kilometres. From an urban and social point of view, the city is divided into neighbourhoods with an identity and specific characteristics associated with certain social dimensions. Belonging to a *barrio* generates certain expectations, needs, and capacity for action. Depending on the barrio, FSs develop certain activities, claims, and interactions.

The *barrio* is composed of some human and non-human parts. From the point of view of the FS, there are *las vecinas*, women who live nearby, who are of special concern to the FS. Then there are the shops, the businesses, the restaurants: some of them are friendly and collaborative, as in the case of the EK, where the bar across the street allows them to leave the keys of the space for the various people they may serve. Then a more or less developed network of public services, such as health centres, public transport, and municipal offices, which shorten or lengthen the distances between the FS and its stakeholders. Then the other social and political spaces. The urban dimension, such as the type of lighting, public transports, which also includes the more general question of gentrification, is always a structure where the agency of free spaces is put to the test (Caciagli 2021). Gentrification, which in Madrid is a huge process and specifically in neighbourhoods such as Lavapies (where the EK is located), influences the cost of rents, the type of businesses, the changing face of the neighbourhood, but also the changing social composition. Each *barrio* has a certain social composition and class stratification. With regard to all this, FSs develop their strategies and tactics.

The FS enhances the awareness on gender dynamics through publicising the space's events and meetings, meeting women in the neighbourhood, and supporting women's self-organisation. The possibility to experience a safer space becomes first a curiosity, and then a real opportunity for women to transform their lives. Working with the neighbourhood enables contact with women from different social backgrounds, who experience different levels of social status, work conditions, racialisation.

An interviewee of the EK recounts the intersectional dimension of the FS, which intercepts the racialised component of the neighbourhood, and through dialogue builds alliances and common actions: "we do a work of contact and of being, with our bodies, with women from different countries who live here in Lavapies, a multicultural work. So we are working on listening and walking together, to see what we can do with our differences, without imposing anything at all and listening that they have opinions as opposed to ours, as white Europeans, without postponing, braking, whipping. But being clear that I am not superior to others. On the contrary, to have a grassroots work that we do together" (IIM3, EK, 54). Taking care of the space also means taking care of the territory, of the neighbourhood, of *las vecinas*. To root collective action in a specific urban sector allows for developing the politics of small things, such as not making noise so as not to disturb the neighbour.

The case of the PEB, too, which is not properly a space, is useful to understand the relation with the urban dimension. Despite the lack of a physical face, or maybe thanks to this, the PEB inhabits a lot of different spaces and *barrios*, with the aim to spread the safer space to all the places they are passing through. This molecular strategy changes the idea of a stable and physical localisation, by opening the possibility for a different relation with the city and for a broadening of the spectrum of social categories a feminist group can relate with.

The three cases show that FSs have to interact with several parts of the urban context: the architectural configuration; the social composition; the other compound players. The work on collective affects allows them to develop empathy and care, as social skills that enhance the creation of networks and alliances.

The Feminist Movement

What does the awareness of affects and emotions produce? How do emotions help FSs to move in the world and act in relation to the context and a range of different actors?

In the previous sections, according to what emerged from the participants' accounts, I observed their way of acting in relation to the context of the pandemic and economic crisis, and in relation to institutional and local actors. Another significant relationship is that with the feminist movement.

FSs are part of the feminist movement: they preserve culture, practices, and claims from one phase of mobilisation to another; they act out the movement's prefigurative politics in their daily lives; and they sediment the social transformations proposed by the movement.

The timespan of the research goes from 2017 to 2021. In this period, a new cycle of feminist mobilisations spread globally (Barone and Bonu forthcoming, Gago 2021): from Argentina with the name of Ni Una Menos, to Italy with the name of Non Una di Meno, to Spain, around the feminist strike of the 8 March. The fieldwork took place during a phase of high visibility and mobilisation of

the feminist movement. What relations occur between FSs and the feminist movement? Which boundaries and which areas overlap between the two? How do they mutually strengthen each other, or not?

Drawing sharp lines between the feminist movement and FSs is never entirely possible. Activists often cross both spaces of collective action and consider themselves both as part of the feminist movement as a whole and of a specific FS. The feminist movement in Spain is organised around certain public moments, such as 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 28 June, the day of Orgullo Critico. The most important date, however, is 8 March, when the international women's strike has taken place since 2017. The #8M is organised through an assembly for each neighbourhood, and a city assembly that brings all together. Very often the #8M assemblies are held in FSs of neighbourhoods, or at least in spaces that have a strong feminist imprint. Because of this, it is difficult to untangle the boundaries between forms of participation. However, we can identify at least two processes. On the one hand, the function of FSs as vanguards of the feminist movement, and on the other FSs as chains of transmission of the demands made by the movement.

Generally, FSs work as laboratories of thoughts, ideas, and practices. Participants convey the wonder to realise how far FSs brought ideas forward, as an interviewee of the EK explains: "it was that feeling of constant surprise about what was produced there. Also all devices to think about, above all enormously novel, and then it's been like years that part of them have been more or less accepted by the feminist movement" (IIM5, EK, 54). As Taylor argues, structures of abeyance have the capacity to preserve repertoires of ideas and action and to elaborate innovations for mobilisations to come (1989). As an example, the creation of "Territorio domestico" in the EK, the collective of domestic workers and caregivers, was one of the first attempts to connect with a global dimension of activism, across borders, languages, and cultures, and also a first attempt at organising a quite unorganisable sector such as the one of reproductive labour. As an interviewee of the EK develops, the connection between the local and the global was developed within the FS and by virtue of the everyday work of alliances: "there was a global vision of militancy in the 1990s, but the fact that the workers were not a collective from Nicaragua or Brazil, but were people who were here, I think that made it very difficult to forget that the struggle was always taken to the global system. That it is not a question of alliances, it was a question of everything being connected" (IIM5, EK, 54).

Autonomous groups also work as guardians of some instances of the feminist movement, by limiting the encroachments of political parties. As an example, during 8 March 2019, there was almost a physical confrontation between trans-exclusionary feminism and the PEB, because they wanted to occupy the first part of the march with their banner. The movement, then, becomes the field of

confrontation between its cultures and ideologies. By virtue of their everyday work, FSs preserve the boundaries between the autonomous dimension of the movement and the institutional dimension, protecting its autonomy and innovation. As an interviewee of the PEB argues: "they came as very clear to sabotage the #8M demonstration and capitalise it with their proclamations in front of the official banner of the #8M and we confronted them. It was a very symbolic issue, wasn't it?" (IIIM4, PEB, 54).

Finally, FSs work as a chain of transmission of ideas, needs, and practices. The EDIs, that are managed by the municipality, cannot be directly involved in the organisation of the #8M. Because of their institutional status, they cannot formally be part of assemblies and collectives. However, an EDI worker claims that "we have a link, a kind of interlocution with the assemblies, which are the Equality Tables of each district, so the Equality Tables are autonomous people who transmit to us the specific demands that the feminist movement has for 8 March and we interface with them through the district's Equality Table" (IM2, EDI, 44). The double-boost effect allows FSs to be effective in broadening democratic margins. On one hand, they are involved in grasping and elaborating affects, emotions, troubles, and needs coming from women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. On the other hand, FSs closer to institutions receive this information and transmit it through their institutional channels in order to make it into practical applications, services, and provisions.

The Spanish cases allow to broaden the understanding of the interaction between agency and structure through the mediation of affect. Despite the apparent constraint of the opportunities provided by the structure, as in the case of the pandemic crisis, the work of the FSs on affect (which in Spain has a long genealogy also thanks to the mobilisations of 15-M) allows them to implement and transform agency. This development can also be observed in relation to the relationship with institutions, the local context, and the feminist movement. The peculiar condition of feminism in Spain, which is also implicated in institutional venues, helps to highlight different levels of formalisation of the work on affects, and different possible outcomes.

9.3.2 Transforming Affects into Action

With regard to the Italian cases I explored the work on affects pursued by FSs as 1) a channel of mediation between cognition and body, 2) a tool for political elaboration, and 3) a competence in action. The notion of safer spaces, often raised by participants, came to be the most visible manifestation of a deeper and widespread work on the emotional matter (on affects and emotions of participants, on collective affects, and on affects involved in collective action). This familiarisation with the field of affects generates a structure of feelings in which participants change their disposition

and orientation, feeling more willing to act, less exposed to the risks resulting from the gender regime, more secure. This work of approaching affects and understanding them is a process in which there is no lack of conflict, negative affect, and distancing on the part of the participants. At the same time, it is the process, and thus the feeling that things can be continually negotiated and transformed, that fuels the feeling of safety. In this sense, affects are continuously transformed through collective action and into collective action. I will look at the same relational and processual manner in the Spanish cases. While several elements recur, others emerged with more intensity in the FSs in Spain. First, I will closely look at the work of affects and emotions as a proxy to increase the capacity for collective action. *Cuidado* ("care") emerges as a framework in which a series of affects are negotiated, protected, and made productive of collective action. The processing of affect takes place through a certain form of organisation and deliberation. In this sense, practices of internal democracy are illustrative of the transformation of affects into strategies, organisation, and action. Finally, I will focus on the association between the idea of home and the FSs, which also emerged in the Italian cases, and which is telling of the spatialisation of collective affects.

Becoming Safer

I don't need to be in there to protect myself from the world. Here we create things that we couldn't do otherwise. I mean, it kind of allows ideas, practices, things to emerge (IIM2, EK, 36)

FSs stimulate the participants' perception of security through the construction structures of feelings in which emotions, organisation, and time change according to a relational effort. In this section, I will explore on one hand the work on affects, and on the other the ethics of care pursued by FSs to preserve the structures of feelings.

Affects as a Boost to the Perception of Safety

In the Spanish cases, as well, positive affects emerge as tools to increase the capacity for collective action. Wonder and joy bound up individual mobilisation paths, and the first contact with the FS. Wonder and joy strengthen the will to participate and enhance the eventful moments in the life of the FSs. These moments, bound up by positive affects, entrench collective action. As an interviewee of the PEB outlines with regard to positive affects, "I remember that it was an infinite joy because it was like putting the body in the centre. To put it with joy, to be visible and to do it well... […] to be well, to build this community together occupying the streets, raising our voices and above all putting it at the centre of the speeches or lemmas that concerned our lives" (IIM4, EK, 47). Thus, positive affects are heavily connected to the bodily dimension. They belong to the body and they allows politics to

put the body at the centre. Positive affects developed within FSs are so strongly connected with participants' paths that an interviewee accounts that, otherwise, "I would die of depression... I think that for us it is something vital" (IIIM4, PEB, 54). Positive affects emerge from affective ties: they rely on feelings of trust, care, and interdependence. Compared to the neoliberal habit of loneliness and competition, feminist bonds strengthen people's capacity to perform action together, and in this sense they increase the perception of the potential for collective action. As an interviewee of the PEB argues:

> This affective link is a driving force within the political sphere, because it also moves you to attend a space, to go to a demonstration. There is a moment when you feel even more challenged because something else is being generated, perhaps beyond the mere political slogan, which is extremely interesting. […] I do believe that in this area it has generated, or at least when I was part of it, quite solid and transformative networks, in some senses. (IIIM2, PEB, 30)

Negative emotions are part of the structures of feelings produced by FSs, where engagement and disengagement occur. Frustration, rage, and disillusion are powerful feelings that lead people to drastically change their relation with the space. Negative emotions are the material of collective work, such as that regarding fear. As an interviewee of EK develops, the emotion changes when it is shared and addressed: feminist politics transform the approach, the nature, and the reaction to those emotions that can render one powerless, "because when I am there I do not feel in danger. When we do a political action, we go together. Fear is shared" (IIM3, EK, 54).

The challenge to neoliberal time contributes to the feeling of safety. As I previously outlined with regard to the Italian cases, FSs are based on a different temporality that tries to avoid the classical social movement's agenda. The same goes for the Spanish cases, which are always balancing their collective action between traditional protest dates (such as 8 March, 25 November, and so on) and the need to take time for themselves. As an interviewee of the EDIs argues with regard to participation in their space, "when you come here, the activities you do are not something you do because you need to do it for your capitalist productive life. If you come here, you come to dance, to paint, or to learn to read and use the mobile phone, but because you want to, and in the end you are giving yourself a space for yourself. And I think that generates security, [...] I think it gives security, that the group supports the load that you bring. You are no longer alone" (IM3, EDI, 37). As the quote shows, a strict interdependency exists between FSs, affects, actions, and the challenge to neoliberalism. By taking the time to develop the self, to discuss with others, and to elaborate strategic goals, FSs build their collective action upon a political understanding of affects, which are usually foreclosed by neoliberal social structures. Emotions shore up political participation and individual resources to participate (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). Feminist contributions to affect theory highlight the

transformative potential of affect: when they are shared, named, and engaged with, they increase the power of collective action (Gregg and Seigworth 2010).

Ethics of Care to Preserve Structures of Feelings

As I previously explored, historically care has been a social function delegated to women, who were – and still are – supposed to take care of the well-being and survival of all members of their family (Friedan 1963, Rowbotham 1979). The reappropriation of care is an achievement of the feminist movement, that claims interdependency and care as a tool for survival for all. As an interviewee explains, the act of taking care in FSs is oriented to the creation of the physical and emotional space that makes participants feel good. With regard to Italian cases, I called it the ethics of care, which preserves the structures of feelings FSs draw upon. As a PEB interviewee argues, FSs are "*espacios de cuidado* [spaces of care] [...] more aimed at the inside, at the group... they aim at taking care of the space also as a political action... political action is not only going out in the street and slaughter, political action is also taking care of the space and creating a safe space where you can discuss issues" (IIIM1, PEB, 24). By broadening the repertoire of action that FSs recur to in order to pursue social change, participants add to public protest the dimension of caring for one's intimate life and community space as a political action for change. This ethics of care is so strong that people feel it from their first step into the spaces, as recounted by an interviewee of the EK: "from the very first moment, it seemed to me the most welcoming place I had ever found" (IIM5, EK, 54). People need a safer space "to breathe" and to defend themselves from a world perceived as "extremely hostile" (IIM5, EK, 54). To feel good, though, is not an individualistic exercise that is part of neoliberalism, but a political action that recasts well-being as a transformative affect that increases the individuals' capacity for action.

Caring spaces are not free from dangers: as an interviewee of the EK elaborates on, people are socialised to social structures and they keep reproducing social structures of inequalities. "I don't think it's a 100 percent safe space, because in the end we are traversed by all the things that socialise us in society" (IIM2, EK, 36). Things can happen, and no one is completely safe from everything. However, things can be constantly addressed, and this space for collective elaboration lets people feel safer. An EK interviewee calls it "a space of affinity, even if it has affinity in the margins. That there is freedom, and by freedom I mean not doing what you like, a freedom that we decide together what it is. A shared freedom" (IIM4, EK, 47). Activists share an informal agreement on some elements of respect, mutual acknowledgment, and care. In the perimeter of the agreements they interact and move, by balancing the presence in public protests and the internal work on consciousness rising.

In this paragraph, I went through the production of safer spaces as a process. First, I looked at the processual approach to emotions and affects. Then, I looked at FSs as caring spaces, based on informal political agreements, which guarantee certain feelings and tools to be addressed at the collective level. Finally, as proved by the Italian cases, this work increases the capacity for collective action both at the individual and collective levels.

Practices of Internal Democracy

Safer spaces are something that feminist communities *do*, they are collective action, relational processes. In the previous paragraph, I went through the structure of feelings that participants establish, that is the precondition, the matter, and the framework of FSs' collective action. Here, I will focus on the decision-making process. I will explore how practices of internal democracy, of deliberative process, repertoire of action, and cognitive and bodily practices generate more liveable types of collective action, where people are not overridden by predefined mechanisms but continuously negotiate the setting, goals, and methods. My argument is that this effort of elaboration on the decision-making process, informed by the work on affects, transforms the participants' disposition to take part in political action, increases their willingness to participate, and their convictions. Della Porta calls this process "meeting democracy" (2005, 2009, 2013a, 2013b) by referring to the way social movements "prefigure various models of democracy within their own organizations" (2013: 3). In the case of FSs, these practices are oriented to subvert the gender regime that interplays with structural gender-based violence, by producing social inequalities and individualism (Pain 2001, Pulcini 2001). The stress on consensus, respectful communication, care of the space and of relationships is part of a feminist reflection on decision-making processes and organisation, by means of affects.

FSs are intended to be open and welcoming. More than a slogan, this is a way to produce spaces informed by care (of the physical space and of the participants), and by the attention to people's willingness to join. All the interviewees report similar feelings when they get into the space for the first time: "they were open assemblies, you could go and it was very easy to talk to people. Very welcoming. For me it was a relief, because it was finally a space where I could participate and I didn't feel like a stranger" (IIM2, EK, 37). The tension toward the outside and the aim to reach as many participants as possible derives from an understanding of the social context in which, regardless of gender, class, racialisation, and age differences, people deserve a space for themselves.

The first step to address the issue of the decision-making process and organisation is the creation of a welcoming space. Then comes the repertoire of practices of assembly. With regard to Spain, all the autonomous spaces involved in the research show a toolbox of micro-practices to manage assemblies.

Usually, two or more persons are identified for facilitation, which consists in drawing up the agenda, managing the assembly, taking turns to speak, monitoring speaking time, writing the final report, and welcoming new people. The facilitators rotate at each assembly, so these roles are mobile and interchangeable. These practices favour the approach of outsiders and a participatory discussion of the nodes. As an interviewee of the EK claims, it is an assemblage of behaviours and bodily dispositions which changes the setting of the assembly: "the respect in the assemblies, the listening, the tone of voice, not having to ask for a voice, [...] that the comrades were always attentive to whoever wanted to speak, [everything] was given very much in contrast to the continuous struggle to take the floor in the mixed assemblies. It already seemed a revolution to me" (IIM5, EK, 54). Feminist approaches to assembly increase people's will to participate by creating positive feelings with regard to the decision-making process. Yet, the strict codification of assembly practices generates some unintended consequences. On the one hand, they sometimes risk masking rather than eliminating power dynamics and informal roles. The narrative on positive assembly practices risks constraining the openness to criticism, self-criticism, and the ability to cope with highly critical situations. On the other hand, it risks oversimplifying discussions, with one/three-minute speeches, the possibility for everyone to speak, but a less in-depth analysis of arguments and strategies. Processes of consensus-building are slow, and decisions can take a long time.

Because of their institutional status, the EDIs do not follow the same mechanisms of autonomous spaces. Hierarchies exist, as much as formal roles, tasks, and top-down trajectories of planning. As an interviewee of an EDI explains, "we are a team of feminist women who are also trying, because we all believe in self-defence within this capitalist productivist system. We take care of each other and look for ways to make decisions as a team. But we also have a boss, a manager, and a coordinator who, in the end, are the ones in charge of taking decisions, and we have clear lines of work" (IM3, EDI, 37). Because of their positionality – as workers and feminists – they often run into contradictions. Yet, they keep the idea of participatory deliberation, by educating women attending the EDIs to meet, discuss, and pursue collective decisions. Quite interestingly, one of the interviewee explains the need for both autonomous feminist places and institutional feminist places in order to achieve the goal of social change. In this sense, women are invited to participate in both, because only in the work inside/outside the institutions a widespread change of social inequalities is possible: "my aim is that women come here, but that they don't stop going to the Eskalera Karakola. […] Public resources should never replace community work and the role of associations. On the contrary. Our role is to promote associations among women and ourselves. Here we encourage women to meet and form associations among themselves" (IM3, EDI, 37).

FSs deeply engage with innovating practices. Alternative practices can serve to dismantle the boundaries that social movements typically encounter, such as accessibility, the capacity to communicate, the diffusion of claims. In the case of EDIs, they blur the boundaries between institutions and women, between feminist practices and organisational hierarchies, between sustainable economy and budgetary duty. Within the EK, participants engaged with the creation of a radio – Sangre Fucsia – as a tool to "break the barrier of the private to enter the public and break the barrier of the small to enter the large" (IIM4, EK, 47). An autonomous radio enabled them to develop knowledge production and to spread the FS's message far beyond the circles that could physically access it. The PEB, instead, created the Lineas Rojas Y Verdes, that is a group that discusses "the boundaries of the PEB's political action" (IIIM4, PEB, 54). As a PED's participant explains:

> We have formulated a kind of trust lines. We call them red lines and green lines. And those decisions […] have to be within green lines and cannot touch the red lines. So, bright green lines: we are feminist, trans, anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist. We want to be on this political line... […] like if there are any proposals or any ideas related to political party issues, we would have to consult them. The issue of sex work or prostitution is a controversial issue right now, a red line (IIIM3, PEB, 37)

The red and green lines are an example of an attempt to manage a very inclusive space and a composition crossed by differences, through a pact established from time to time on the sharing of themes. These innovative practices try to link creativity with strategic action, within a structure of feelings that enhances positive affects and limits the proliferation of negative affects.

As I have explored with regard to the Italian cases, FSs often make use of playing and performances as a tool to innovate their repertoire of action. Playing activates different channels of interaction with reality, and it increases people's willingness to participate. A striking case in point is the EK's Feminist Trivial Pursuit, a game created for fun and designed for a hundred people that has since sold to hundreds of thousands of people. An interviewee tells the story of the game, by claiming the role of playing and having fun as subversion of neoliberal temporality and individualism: "It's a wonderful thing to find oneself playing because it seems one of these dimensions that for the kind of life we live, it seems that there is no place for the game at all [...]. You see, there was a need and a desire for a game that talked about us, to be together doing something fun and learning as well" (IIM4, EK, 47). The collective action of playing disentangles the rhythm of the neoliberal production system that requires people's productivity and the compression of leisure and non-remunerative activities. Another similar example is the game Escape Room from the Patriarchy, performed at the EK during the period of easing of the pandemic measures. The game was meant to be a time for people to have fun, doing something practical together, and thinking in game form about an ideal feminist world to pursue. The story of the escape room was that participants to the game are in 2021 in the pandemic and the space of the EK is almost abandoned. Participants have received a message from the

transfeminists of the future in 2047: in the future they live in such a happy transfeminist system. So there is no need for the EK, and they have abandoned the space. But in 2047 there is a coup d'état looming, and the feminists of the future do not know what to do because they say that it will come to participants in a macho, patriarchal, military state, and they do not know how to organise themselves. And so they ask the feminists of 2021 to help them resist. An interviewee of the EK, who organised the game, explains how they challenged participants through playing together, to reflect upon feminist issues and strategic solutions: "the groups [of participants to the game] come and we do tests for them. They have to look for the feminist symbol, then they have to know how to sing slogans, then a song... […] And then at the end [...] groups have to collaborate with each other to find the key. And the key is transfeminist sisterhood. With this you can open the zoom, a kind of zoom where the transfeminists of the future are connected [...]. The answer to save the future, to save them, is to invent, to keep the transfeminist spaces active until 2047" (IIM2, EK, 37). As the quote shows, the game enhances people's awareness on feminist ties (what she calls sisterhood), and on the role of FSs. On a symbolic level, to save the world from patriarchy and the militarist state, FSs are needed in which to invent alternative worlds and prefigurative politics. The use of games serves to develop the imagination and to engage with the idea of the future. This playful, creative, innovative work on imaginaries is a way to let people participate with other capacities than the cognitive one. If the pandemic has narrowed down the horizons of the future, both as individuals and as a community, through innovative practices participants try again to confront the idea of the future, stimulating positive emotions linked to having fun, pleasure, and happiness. Here again it is clear how positive affects increase the potential for collective action, even in times of health and social crisis.

The creation of knowledge based on experience and collaboration is also part of the repertoire of FSs. Experiences like Precarias a la Deriva – one of the first groups on women and the precariat – or Territorio Domestico – a group of self-organised care givers – made the history of the Spanish (and beyond) production of knowledge on these topics, and they had the chance to happen within FSs.

The creation of tools for internal democracy is even more needed when FS stumble into the problem of gender-based violence or internal harassment. In those cases, there is a strong need for tools, which in most cases fail, and have led spaces such as the PEB to develop a kind of protocol for handling cases of internal violence. The failure to manage internal violence produces consequences on the activists' perception, as an EK interviewee reports: "we have a problem with the ideology […] especially if the name of horizontality actually hides conflicts. [...] We didn't know how to react... and in that sense when I was talking about safe spaces I would say, is it a safe space? I don't know. Probably not. Not for all" (IIM4, EK, 47).

In the section, I tried to focus on the innovative practices that come out of the creation of certain structures of feelings. First, because of the work on collective affects, FSs in Spain engage with the creation of welcoming spaces (both at the physical and actual level), where people feel free to participate. Second, they deeply engage with bodily and relational practices of decision-making processes, in order to enhance horizontal participation. This effort comes with contradictions, when it prevails over further critics to be addressed, because of the supposed innovative practices they adopt. As in the Italian cases, the role of playing and performances emerged in Spain as a tool to develop collective action beyond the cognitive level. The processual approach to the decision-making process does not make contradictions disappear. Instead, in the capacity to address contradictions, participants establish the ground for safer spaces.

It Feels Like Home

With regard to the Italian cases, an unexpected association between FSs and the idea of home emerged. Most of the interviewees, asked about their relation with the political space they belong to, ended up answering with the same sentence: "it feels like home." I found that correlation quite striking because of the entangled history and symbols that compose the idea of home in western thought.

It was even more striking to find the same correlation in the words of Spanish feminists. With reference to the EK, a participant accounts for a double reason for this association. On one hand, because of the practical expertise (familiarity with the technicians who fix any problems with the space, care in dealing with the needs and problems of the physical space), and on the other hand because of the temporal issue: the daily time of one's life is divided between the private home and the FS, so the perception of intimacy is extended to the political space, through the grafting of space, one's biographical path, and community: "I always say that it's like my second home. I live in the house and I always have the key when the person who checks the boiler comes. Can you open it? Yes, I can. [...] It's my second home. My living room is the same. I spend the same amount of time in my living room as I do here" (IIM2, EK, 36).

Referring to the quote, with respect to the Spanish cases, some insights emerge about the relationship between FSs and the idea of home: the management of physical space; the act of caring; affective relations; affect; temporality.

The relationship with the physical space is established on a bodily element: it is a material relationship, it concerns the knowledge of the space, its objects, and corners. It influences bodily sensations of participants. Participants know every part of the space, they clean the space as if it were home, they know what is missing (pens, water, toilet paper, and so on). As one of the EK interviewees recounts, the knowledge of the space produces a bodily sensation of well-being, as when the interior

elements in one's own home evoke a familiarity, and the idea of one's own place, in which to feel good: "it is a question of being comfortable somewhere you know perfectly well" (IIM4, EK, 47). Participants know every nook and corner of the FS because they take care of it. The action of cleaning, tidying up, checking that everything works, is a practical action that concerns the physical space, but also a symbolic action that concerns taking care of the collective project. Taking care of the space is also a tool to create community. Everyone can contribute, and the more people get in contact with the space, its furniture and needs, the more they get close to the FS. The opportunity to occupy a space together becomes an opportunity to meet and broaden one's political participation, and in this sense there is a connection between intimacy, affects, space, and politics. As an interviewee of the EK states:

> We call them red days, we put it on Twitter, on Facebook, and so we bring together everybody who wants to come and help. "We're going to do a big clean up because we have a lot of shit" and then so and so people come [...] It's like that collective feeling of a house, but it's like the same thing you would do at home. [...] It's like this feeling of... Like we would be in a house doing something together and chatting, but also doing something for the space. (IIM2, EK, 36)

Home is about doing something together, about spending time together and building a network of affects through practical activities (Gusmano forthcoming). In this sense, FSs are perceived as home because they subvert the idea of the nuclear family, by establishing homes where chosen emotional ties take place. As an interviewee of the EK argues, FSs give the chance "to cultivate bonds that are not... Family in the pejorative sense of the word" (IIM4, EK, 47). The private home is supposed to be the site of bonds and affects. In a broader sense, home is also the place we share with people who know ourselves, our personalities, skills, faults, and needs. In this sense, Spanish participants to FSs add a shift in understanding the correlation between FSs and home: home is where someone else recognises us, as individual, emotional, social, and political subjects. The concept of inhabiting recovers a human need, that of knowing where to place oneself, knowing what to return to, and where one's roots are, and this need is also political. As the quote further develops, "it's about knowing that it's a place where you are recognised. And that it's not univocal, it's a mutual recognition... we recognise each other as inhabitants of the EK, inhabitants of the feminist and transfeminist world or because we worked together on something specific" (IIM4, EK, 47).

In this connection of practical activities, geographies, and affects lies the mark of the reconciliation between private and public spaces. Spaces are grounded in the personal and political. So it comes that homeliness, as a structure of feelings, is telling of the collective action pursued by FSs by means of affects: "it's intimate and political at the same time [...]. Well yes, it's like a public space, but then in the end you become intimate with things" (IIM2, EK, 36). Beyond private and public, FSs are places in which boundaries are different than the private home, and the positive elements of home are

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taken up and mixed together to produce the structure of feelings where women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people increase their capacity for collective action. The role of positive affects emerges as a boost for action, as an interviewee of the EK develops: "a home that means a place of intimacy where you feel good, where you feel comfortable, welcomed. And where there are no dangers" (IIM4, EK, 47).

In these sections, I went through the process of transforming affects into action, at the micro and meso level. The creation of structures of feelings where affects act as mediation between cognition and body, as tools for political elaboration, and as competence in action allows Spanish FSs to increase their scope of participation, and also their capacity for collective action.

9.3.3 Paths of Participants

At the beginning of the chapter, I explored the herstory of the feminist movement in Spain, through Franco's regime and in the following decades of democratic building process. This herstory produces enduring effects on today's activism and partially shapes the way people mobilise for feminism. How does the work on affects interplay with people's willingness to participate in FSs? Which similarities and differences occur among paths of participation in Spain and Italy?

Proliferation of Feminist Political Participation

Compared to the Italian context, in Spain I observed a widespread politicisation over feminist claims: walls, bars, streets, offices, institutions are heavily scored by the influence of feminist discourses. Political participation is widespread and there is a sensitivity to feminism that extends to layers of the population differing in gender, age, sexuality, race, class, and so on. Even though this does not allow for a generalisation about the fall of patriarchy, it undoubtedly reveals the movement's ability to affect mass culture and common sense. While in Italy a great separation exists between small and hyper-politicised groups versus mainstream gender politics, and we cannot claim for a full entrance of feminist discourses in public debates, Spain presents quite the opposite case. These elements produce effects on political participation, because of and beyond feminist mainstreaming. I call this process proliferation, by referring to the widespread sensitivity to the existence and right to self-organise and self-determination of women and LGBTQ people. In this sense, the work on affects is part of a widespread, everyday toolbox. At the micro level, people tend to incorporate elements of FSs' practices into their daily lives. The contamination of feminism at the level of mass culture changes the forms of political participation.

In addition to this widespread politicisation, FSs enhance the individuals' paths of engagement. In Italy, FSs are ideally built for all women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, while in reality they bring together highly politicised people with access to a certain kind of symbolic and material resources. In Spain, the idea that these spaces should exist is a common notion which is also part of institutional awareness. With regard to the EDIs managed by the municipality, an interviewee comments: "women have found their safe place here, and now more and more we manage to make institutional spaces more flexible to be able to incorporate the fact that this group of women are also feeling that these spaces are theirs" (IM1, EDI, 42). The audience of safer spaces are realistically intended to be all women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. It is not by chance that the city of Madrid provides seventeen spaces for women in which: "Madrid City Council is committed to promoting equality and eliminating violence. [...] There is a sensitised technician who decides to set up spaces like these, because women, once they have received initial attention, need a space where they can be repaired, trained and, above all, the population needs to be made much more aware" (IM1, EDI, 42). Women from many different social backgrounds, not necessarily activists, get to FSs because of the need for a space for themselves: "that's the first thing they all say. I want to come here to disconnect from what I have in my life, to not think, to have some time for myself and to find a space for myself" (IM3, EDI, 37). These quotations show how it is possible to broaden the concept of political participation to include a broader willingness of groups, institutions, and parties to enhance individual awareness, and therefore social change. As the following quote shows even more clearly, institutions embed feminist claims, and their services are informed by this sensitivity: "there are some material resources and there is a feminist proposal from the team to accompany and politicise as well. [...] I think that there is something here about taking feminism to the everyday life and to the public space" (IM3, EDI, 37).

An effect of the proliferation is that in the field of autonomous organisations, while feminist collectives are present all over social centres, neighbourhood's organisations, and so on, feminist-only spaces are more rare. Feminist claims and practices are part of an everyday life pattern, and they are interconnected with other claims (e.g. on the environment, on work and pauperisation, on migration and racialisation). As an EK interviewee explains, "all the occupied spaces in Madrid are feminist because feminism has arrived so strongly that if you occupy you should have a feminist perspective" (IIM4, EK, 47).

The proliferation and multiplication of feminist perspectives depend on the organisational structures of the feminist movements in Spain, as developed by an EK interviewee: "one of the things that surprised me and that somehow makes it possible to participate here even if you are not part of any collective is that there are many dates marked so that around the marked dates which is 8 March, 25

November, 28 June, there is a collective organisation of the event and there are temporary assemblies in which whoever wants to participates can do it" (IIM4, EK, 47). More open, mobile, and fluid structures allow people to feel free to enter and participate in a variable way, regardless of their background. In this sense, the concept of feminist political participation is less tied to rigid protocols of recruitment, engagement, and continuity. Participation means incorporating feminist practices and tools into one's own life and enjoying the possibility of entering and leaving collective action according to one's availability of time and desire.

According to the molecular character of FSs in Madrid, I decided to include a case that is not a space, but an itinerant platform that aims to cross all the spaces and all the neighbourhoods of the city, the Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros. A PEB interviewee explains it as such:

> It is an itinerant space, it doesn't have a place where we always go... Well, that was precisely one of the points that was decided on purpose, that there shouldn't be a place where we would always meet to avoid a centralisation of activism. [...] So that's why it was decided we could also be in Ecoo, in Carabanchel, in Vallecas, in Arganzuela, in Tetuán [neighbourhoods of Madrid], to move around the different spaces. Is it true that the city of Madrid is still safe? What about the dykes who live in towns that are an hour away from Madrid? (IIIM2, PEB, 30)

The choice of mobility goes in the direction of allowing women and lesbians to participate regardless of their location in the city, their political background, and their possibility to come to know about the existence of this group. In response to the proliferation of feminist sensibilities, FSs are not necessarily tied to one place, but more open and flexible to include potential participants.

The dark side of proliferation of feminist political participation is the false idea of the achievement of gender equality. This idea gives the floor to right-wing and extremist discourses, as the last election of the new City Council of Madrid on 4 May 2021 shows – with Isabel Díaz Ayuso of the Partido Popular in alliances with the extreme right of Vox. The negative consequence is the narrowing down of resources and provisions by institutions, and it is part of the same process of proliferation.

Mobilising Affects

Women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people get to participate in FSs because they search for a space to change something about themselves, and then about the outside world (McAdam 1989). Participants say that the first feeling in a FS is to "stop feeling crazy" (IIM3, EK, 54). The development of one's self as subject takes place on an individual, social, and political level. These three dimensions are often separated and do not allow the elaboration of the self, and neither do they entertain the capacity to change contexts considered unjust or to make one's voice heard with regard to those in power. The male-shaped world stigmatises women for their emotions and reactions when they face situations of violence or harassment. Under the accusation of hysteria, many women have had their needs, feelings and expectations of life disavowed (Showalter 1993). The reversion of the

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stigma is part of a process of political subjectivation which takes place in FSs. FSs become places in which to recompose subjectivity on an individual, social, and political level, developing self-awareness, collective consciousness, and tools for intervention in the public sphere. In FSs, participants access change on several levels. In their private life, changes regard sexual and emotional relationships, career choices, geography. Women "learn to think" and to reflect on themselves, to critically investigate their emotions, and to reconcile them in a framework of social inequality. As an interviewee of the PEB accounts, these are "reflective space[s], which also [help] you think in a space of shared thought" (IIIM4, PEB, 54). The most important achievement is the awareness that these changes collectively occur with the complicity of other comrades. As a EK interviewee argues, through the discussion with the other individuals, feelings become the ground for rethinking social structures and the gender regime: "we become empowered when we do group work, you become empowered because you realise that you are not a crazy person and that it is a feeling in every country, in every region" (IIM3, EK, 54). The creation of communities is a source of empowerment for invisible and marginalised groups (Osaghae et al. 2010). Creating alternative structures of feelings where participants elaborate on their emotional display results from "the generation of community [...]. That of a community as invisible as ours" (IIIM4, PEB, 54).

All the cases included in the research, as for the Italian cases, opt for political separatism. Separation is not based on biology (none of them is a trans-exclusionary space), but on positionality: as women in the case of EDIs; as feminists in the case of EK; as feminists, lesbians, and bisexual people in the case of PEB. As an interviewee claims, the absence of cis heterosexual men changes the setting and the opportunity to create structures of feelings:

> And one thing that happens here [...] is that women feel comfortable and safe. They all say that because men don't come in [...]. Most of the women who come here have experienced some kind of violence, discomfort, or complex situation. [...] All of them have experienced situations of violence [...]. And in which [...] there have always been men. [...] When there is a man [...] it changes. It changes the way we relate to each other. [...] When you take men out of the equation, the body relaxes and a confidence and another type of relationship appears. Our empowerment activities are for women only. (IM3, EDI, 37)

The quote shows that the opportunity for cognitive and bodily liberation depends on the composition. The perception of spaces, the way affects circulate, and the work on them is influenced by intensities and energies coming from bodily presences. The presence of men is perceived as a trigger of negative affects, such as insecurity, fear, discomfort, competitiveness. On the contrary, when the bodies and subjectivities are not cis-males, participants can experience different affects that emerge in the relationship with the space, with the objects, with other participants.

In analysing the structures of feelings generated by FSs, the importance of self-defence groups emerged. While in Italy several groups of feminist-defence exist, although in an almost hidden way,

in Spain hundreds of feminist self-defence groups have spread in a visible way. Two of the cases under investigation include self-defence groups, and all the interviewees have referred to self-defence groups. As an EK interviewee argues, "For me the self-defence group is very much something that if something happens in your life that makes you feel vulnerable, you can come and feel that you have a very strong network" (IIM2, EK, 37). These groups hold different functions. They are training groups for women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people's physical empowerment, as the self-defense groups of the suffrages movement (Garrud 1910). They are groups of self-consciousness rising and mutualism. They are verbal self-defence and psychology gyms. They are groups for practical support and help in situations of trouble or violence. As an interviewee mentions, the group helped her when she had troubles with a bad flatmate: "I was very angry. I remember talking to my defence group and they said: this is what we are here for, let's go and scare him. So we went to the bar where he works, my friends and I. And we said, well now you pay Susi the money you owe her or else we'll make a fuss here in your bar. And he'll pay me. So, I don't know, it's an example. For me it was very concrete" (IIM2, EK, 37). As the following example shows, self-defence groups are also interplaying with anti-violence services and they fulfil some practical women's needs: "there is a girl who needs to go and get her things at home because her ex has assaulted her and she is afraid to go and get her things. Who can go with her to help get her things then? Well, there are several of us to go with her" (IIM2, EK, 37). Self-defence groups in Madrid have a formal network and they share information, chats, and practices. The night before 8 March, self-defence groups usually do a march at night, which is not authorised by the city council, and it express the grassroot work of the feminist movements in Madrid over physical and mental strength, women's empowerment and self-determination. FSs generate new structures of feelings. In Spain, the practice of self-defence adds a bodily element to the cognitive element of working on affects. The work on the body, on emotions, and reactions allows participants to develop their sense of self, their bodily, cognitive, and emotional capacities, and in this sense their agency.

Vulnerability, Care and Alliances

In the previous section, I looked at the way affects are mobilised at the micro level of political participation. The work on affects allows to locate the individual experience in the broader social structure of inequality. By questioning affects, participants learn tools to transform them. Which affects, emotions and feelings are at stake? How are these affects made into politics?

The interviewees in Spain frequently mention vulnerability, care, and interdependency. With regard to the Italian cases, I went through the notion of care and feminist reappropriation of a social function which used to be demanded from women. The creation of caring spaces allows to preserve the work

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on affects that takes place in FSs. The work on affects results in structures of feelings where participants develop their political elaboration, strategic thinking, and collective action. Affects flow within relational ties. In order to preserve this process, participants have to take care of each other.

Here I would like to focus on care and vulnerability as a point of access to get the Spanish FSs' strategies on alliances and the meaning they attach to this process. Care is a relational process mediated by reciprocal attention, understanding, and assumption of responsibility. In FSs, participants feel the opportunity to express vulnerability – physical, emotional, work-related, etc. – and make it an object of analysis. Vulnerability becomes an opportunity for healing, and creates the conditions for affective ties and alliances. The stress on vulnerability is emerging more than the literature explored so far, and it discloses promising venues for enriching the concept of feminist alliances.

The three cases under investigation show great differences in terms of composition. These spaces host several smaller communities within: groups on gender and sexuality (such as lesbian, trans, bisexual, non-binary people), physical and mental disabilities (such as Foro de Vida Independiente or Orgullo Loco), labour and exploitation (such as Territorio Domestico and Precarias a la Deriva), other economies and conscious consumption (such as solidarity purchasing groups). In these spaces, alliances occur between groups made up of people claiming social and emotional assistance (such as people with disabilities) with people who physically carry out that work and are often exploited because of it (domestic workers). An interviewee of the EK explains the role of vulnerability as an affective ground where ties can be established, despite differences: "this alliance does not arise from the precariousness of migration, of care chains, of diversity, but from our own vulnerability in understanding diversity. How adaptable am I? How secure am I in the face of this system that makes me vulnerable and in the face of my own vulnerability?" (IIM5, EK, 54). By exploring the roots of inequalities, participants elaborate on vulnerability as a result of a system of social and economic inequalities. Vulnerability is not an individual account, but rather a common affect across social divisions, and participants elaborate political ties and strategic goals based on the acknowledgment of the experience of vulnerability. Although there are different ways in which society makes us vulnerable, it is possible to build tools to transform vulnerability from a bodily, social, and economic disadvantage into a tool for resistance. Vulnerability is made into a bridge between different social conditions which can gather in common paths. Since all of the people involved perceive themselves as (also) vulnerable, they all need the others. All of them stress the importance of interdependency, because of this acknowledgment of the consequences of social inequalities on bodies and minds. As an interviewee argues, care is not only a gendered function related to women, but it can be made into a tool for ties and strategic thinking: "we put care at the centre, which I think is something a little

different from how this notion of care is understood. [...] Here "life" is at the centre, care is produced from that intersection. You always see vulnerability, dependence, precariousness, and common struggles" (IIM5, EK, 54).

This concept of vulnerability is strictly connected to the one of the social margin. A PEB interviewee elaborates on the notion of margin as a space of dissidence and of overturning of social norms: "I really believe that it is open to dissidence, to living from the margins in general" (IIIM2, PEB, 30). In her work on gender, race, and class differences, the Black feminist scholar bell hooks develops the notion of margin, as a place of radical openness and possibility inhabited by those people who are not included in the masculine, white, able, heterosexual, hegemonic centre of society. That space is a social location that comes with exclusion, exploitation, and invisibility. However, it is also a place of radical critique and resistance, where a new meaning of politics can be elaborated against and beyond the centre. The margins are places of dissent where new identities are built upon and put into correlation. From a polycentric margin, FSs enhance their idea of alliances that are not oriented to the centre, but rather transform the (social location of the) margin into a tool for social change. Alliances, in FSs, arise out of the work on affects such as vulnerability, care, and interdependency, and they are oriented to strategic goals which heavily rely on a critical understanding of social inequalities. In their special issue on feminist alliances, Ciccia, della Porta and Pavan (2021) shed light on the capacity of feminist movements to build alliances across social divisions, by re-politicising the field of inequalities from below. Moreover, they argue about intersectional solidarity as a way to overcome an exclusionary understanding of sisterhood and a concept which "constitutively integrates concerns for other social inequalities, interrogates its own privilege and biases and acknowledges as its own struggles for women's rights that take place under a different name" (2021: 1). The cases under investigation broaden the scope of our understanding of alliances by accounting for the role of affects and emotions in the creation of political ties across social divisions.

9.4 Feminist Spaces by Means of Affects Between Italy and Spain: A Summary

In this chapter, I went through the comparative analysis of Italian and Spanish FSs by drawing attention to some features. On one hand, I compared the historical path of the feminist movements in Italy and Spain: because of their different story – which in Spain has been marked by Franco's regime and the autonomous and institutional development of feminists groups and activists – they display different types of FSs, but through a work on affects similar to the cases in Italy. In order to understand this work on emotions, I looked at three dimensions: the macro, meso and micro level. I analysed

how FSs develop agency by means of affects, with respect to the structure of the health and economic crisis, and to a series of actors: local and national institutions, the urban context, the feminist movement. At the meso level, I followed the process of becoming safer through the conscious elaboration on collective affects, which also impacts on the decision-making process and organisation. By producing alternative structures of feelings, FSs disentangle the notion of the private home, by creating public, collective, and mutualistic homes. I looked at the work on vulnerability as a tool to establish alliances, in the framework of interdependency and care. At the micro level, I looked at the proliferation of feminist political participation, that extends the scope of efficacy of safer spaces beyond the four walls of physical spaces.

The analysis shows evidence of the consequences of the work on affects done by FSs. FSs profuse efforts in grasping, naming, and elaborating affects. Despite the minority status to which affects are normally relegated in the neoliberal setting and often in politics, FSs elaborate on affects as the matter on which to build discourse, action, and conflict. This is evident more than ever in the outbreak of the pandemic which is still ongoing.

Italy and Spain show a similar display of the economic model and its related cultural and social meanings. The political order conditioned a different development of parties and movements, with reference to Franco's authoritarian regime and the transition to democracy, so that elements of ambivalence remain: on the one hand, a strong progressivism, on the other hand, pockets of preservation of the memory and legacies of the regime. It was interesting to note how the unveiling of the emotional dimension is part of a more general legacy of the feminist movement. This element that emerges from the cross-national comparison leads us to infer that the work on affections is, on the one hand, a specificity developed by feminist movements, and on the other hand the instrument of challenge to the capitalist economic model. As explored in previous chapters, emotions are socially produced, and therefore change according to context and reference codes. What emerges, however, is not an examination of the type of emotions, but rather of the mechanism of emotion processing. This mechanism helps to combine the individual dimension with the social dimension, and to develop repertoires of action consistent with the structure of the feelings in which they are developed.

The finding that emerges from the cross-national analysis is even more interesting with regard to phases. Both countries have experienced the heavy consequences of the economic crisis in the last decade. Since 2020, they have experienced the explosion of the pandemic crisis. Conducting the camp during the pandemic provided an opportunity for the in-the-making analysis of a historical moment strongly marked by collective affections. The pervasive element of mourning, grief, and loss constituted the structure of meaning in which the FSs included in the research in Spain related to. This strongly suffering emotional structure represented the terrain on which the FSs deployed their

expertise in affective work: in this way, even very invalidating feelings, such as mourning, were transformed into individual and collective tools for increasing agency. This mechanism sheds light on the link between affect and FSs. Affections, in fact, according to Spinoza's elaboration, represent the vital tension of the bodies, their affirmation of life. The taking charge of affects and the work of awareness allow FSs to work on that potential for action rooted in affects, and that is therefore nourished by them. The investigation of power and agency through the lens of affects thus allows new insights into the relationship with the structure, with the construction of collective action, with individual paths. Also, and above all, from the point of view of a cross-national comparison.

10. The Potential of Affect: Concluding Remarks

10.1 Introduction

On 25 August 2021, the Lazio regional government, which includes the city of Rome, auctioned off the building of the House of Women Lucha Y Siesta. The building was owned by ATAC, the public transport company of Rome, which was at risk of bankruptcy. Thus, ATAC had auctioned off from 2019 a number of properties in its possession, including that of Lucha Y Siesta, to recover resources with which to pay off the debt to creditors. In September of the same year a committee called Lucha alla Città (Lucha to the city) was created in support of the building, through which the FS had established and expanded relationships with the neighbourhood, with people in solidarity, with some institutional representatives, including councillors of the regional government. Thanks to these relationships, in December 2020 the Region allocated with a resolution one and a half million euros,[21] intended for the attempted purchase at auction, then formalised it in August 2021. After the purchase, Regional President Nicola Zingaretti commented: "We saved Lucha y Siesta, a great experience of women's protagonism and fight against gendered violence. A heritage of all of Rome and our community. We did it […] because it is hypocritical to fill our mouths with the words 'rights' and 'solidarity' and then watch without doing anything to the closure of services."[22] In the process of negotiating with the Region, the Lucha alla Città committee conducted a participatory design workshop, which later resulted in a statement of self-governance.

Shortly thereafter, in September 2021, the International House of Women of Rome obtained the free loan for twelve years thanks to the rule "Urgent measures for the protection of the Association Consortium International House of Women of Rome and Budget Law,"[23] approved by the Parliament. This ruling closed a long dispute with the City Council of Rome, led by the Mayor of the 5 Star Movement Virginia Raggi, who had defined them as "tenants in arrears" because of a debt of 800,000 euros due to the non-payment of part of the rent accumulated from 2001.

Moreover, Michela Cicculli, participant of Lucha Y Siesta, became Councillor for Gender, Youth, Budget and Memory Policies in the VIII Municipality, and in October 2021 she was elected to the City Council with Sinistra Civica Ecologista, in support of the Mayor Roberto Gualtieri. Along with the position, she became president of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

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[21] https://www.romatoday.it/politica/regione-lazio-stanzia-fondi-asta-lucha-siesta.html, last visit 28 April 2022.

[22] https://www.romatoday.it/politica/lucha-y-siesta-salva-regione-vince-asta-immobile.html, last visit 28 April 2022.

[23] https://www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org/comunicati/**CASA-INTERNAZIONA**/, last visit 28 April 2022.

These developments occurred over a year after the end of this research's fieldwork and are therefore purposefully not included in the analysis. Yet, coming to the conclusion of this journey, they represent an important suggestion regarding the topic of the manuscript.

It is appropriate to consider these passages as political outcomes of the collective action of feminist spaces. What do they add to our understanding of the work on affect? How do they fit, affect and emotions, into successful experiences of collective action? What do they suggest, more generally, to our understanding of social movements?

In the following chapter, I will try to articulate some final conclusions. I will try to add a piece which, also given the latest developments of the cases, tries to go one step further and sideways from the findings. For this purpose, the chapter explores (10.1) the potential academic achievements of this research project, then (10.2) the methodological contribution. The last section will account for limits and future research opportunities (1.3). Finally, the manuscript ends with an epilogue that will try to claim for the relevance of this project for the public debate on affect and emotions, democracy, gender-based violence, and political participation (10.4).

10.2 Eventful Affect

We are usually very poorly equipped to deal with emotions, in our existence and in empirical analysis. The case of feminist spaces suggests some substantial contributions to our understanding of collective action, of the relationship between agency and structure, and of the biographical trajectories of participants.

In the following section, I will try to enucleate the main theoretical contributions that have emerged from the participatory research, looking specifically at the intersections between social movement studies, feminist theory, and affect theory. The section aims to present in a schematic way the main takeovers for the reader at the end of this ethnographic journey. I will try to relate the findings to a series of units of analysis of the three literatures, building on, and/or proposing, oblique perspectives.

- A sociological understanding of affect in social movement studies

Apart from a few examples (see Gould 2001, 2002, 2009, 2010), studies on social movements have so far been little influenced by the affective turn. The concern has always been with emotions. Emotions have been a cause for concern for theories of collective behaviour (Smelser 1962, Gurr 1970); an element of temporary oblivion for resource mobilisation theory and political opportunity structure (Tarrow 1994); core features in the in the study of social movements (Aminzade and

McAdam 2001, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001, Whittier 2001, 2009), albeit sometimes through the reiteration of an instrumental, and therefore rational, interpretation.

Yet, this research tries to claim something different. By building on della Porta and Giugni's (2013) invitation to deepen our understanding of emotional labour within social movements (Whittier 2001), the role of friendships ties, and the atmosphere produced in the day-by-day interactions, the manuscript tries to detail some dynamics of the shadowy substance of affect and emotions.

First, the literature on social movements has often looked at emotions, but rarely at affect. Affect signals the vital impulse, the intensity, and strength of the encounter of a body with another body, with an object, with a space. Affect, as Gould (2009) suggests, is a non-linguistic, non-rational, and undefined impulse. It represents the vital expression of a body, but above all the relational aspect. We are always in relationship – with other bodies, with objects, with spaces – and this relationship is signalled by an intensity, which is an ongoing source of information. Affect provides information about our surroundings, but also about our bodily, social, and cultural location. This source of information may remain unexpressed, and therefore "silent," or it may be translated into words, and therefore made available for action. When put into words, it takes the form of emotions and feelings. Emotions, once given a name, a meaning, become codified objects – with a relative degree of opacity, which is never quite resolvable. These emotional codes have an adaptive function, they allow us to orient ourselves in the world, and once understood, they allow us to experience an emotion to its fullest and with awareness, but also to make a certain conscious use of it. The disclosure of the affective, and then emotional, sphere is a dynamic rarely taken into account in the study of social movements. Reluctant approaches tend to look at emotions as a field of interest for psychology or biology. As della Porta and Giugni point out, "Beyond theoretical concerns, there are also empirical difficulties inherent in investigating an impalpable dimension such as emotions, especially when researchers are sociologists or political scientists, rather than psychologists" (2013: 124). The sociology of emotions has long worked at providing an understanding of the social nature of emotions. A sociological approach to affect and emotion has rarely been incorporated into the analysis of social movements. As this project argues, for more than one reason.

Denying the emotional dimension is as much a feature of literature as of social movements themselves. Although elements such as political passion, belief in an idea, solidarity, or an instrumental use of emotions in political communication (as in the case of climate activism) can be found, a conscious, systematic, and political approach to the affective and emotional dimension is much rarer. Emotions are still too often, even in social movements, considered a matter for psychology, an element of disorder to the detriment of political strategy and effectiveness, a cause of slowing down. This normative position is not a fault of the movements, but a reflection of a long

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history of ideas which, since the birth of capitalism, has separated the sphere of politics, economics, and the rational subject from that of the passions (Hirschman 1977). As della Porta and Giugni stress, movements engage with emotional labour (Whittier 2001), with transforming certain bad emotions into positive ones (Whittier 2001, Gould 2004), or in transforming the everyday relations to which previous emotions were attached (Calhoun 2001: 55). However, emotions are assumed to be only strategic, or related to affective ties or solidarity. Rarely, affect and emotions are recomposed into an organic understanding, that takes into account both cognition and body, rational and nonrational boost to action.

On the contrary, the recent history of the feminist movement brought back emotions at the centre of collective action (Whittier 2001). The regime of social, political, and economic subordination to which women have historically been relegated is in fact based on the association between the female nature and the sphere of the emotions, the private, the irrational. Feminist movements worked on the intuition that by strategically leveraging that dimension, which was also the dimension of their subalternity, it was possible to unhinge the history of ideas and therefore the male paradigm at the basis of social structures.

Through the strategic reversion of the personal as political, feminist movements have developed a competence of analysis with respect to affect, emotions, feelings. This competence is at the heart of the manuscript and aims at suggesting some perspectives beyond the case studies. The work on affect carried out in feminist spaces brings us to think about how and why other social movements have not invested in this kind of work. Feminist theory on emotions makes a substantial contribution to studies of social movements. In addition, it invites to look at the dark sides of democracy, which lie behind and to the side of the rational conception of political action.

The sociological understanding of affects and emotions, in conclusion, allows to recompose the understanding of social movements. The understanding of that impulse opens up promising trajectories to broaden our view, which so far seems to have missed a piece.

In this sense, I refer, on the one hand, to eventful affect in order to focus on collective action as motion, orientation, capacity for action. On the other hand, to the way in which affect and emotions influence not only our idea of democracy, but also what we can see of how democracy takes shape, is nurtured.

- Affect as mediation and compass

The first theoretical contribution concerns the sociological understanding of affect in social movement studies. In addition, this project attempts to deepen our understanding of affect as a

mediation and compass. We are used to thinking of context (political process theory) and culture (constructivism) as separate and non-communicating elements. The concept of affect allows to shed light on the connective tissue, on the intensities that move between agency and structure, between activists and other actors.

Feminist theory develops the meaning of the personal as political and contributes to the literature on social movements. The choice of developing the political from the personal means, on the one hand, understanding the connections, the mediations that link our personal experience to social structures. On the other hand, it means understanding that those connections are the repository of many meanings, both with respect to social (and cultural, economic, political) structures and to the self. Feeling a non-rational, non-linguistic, non-cognitive affect signals a certain disposition. For example, a woman walking alone in the street at night, upon hearing a noise, might feel an impulse, as yet undefined, that puts her on the alert. That impulse is the deposit of a series of meanings: for example, it may have happened to her that in the past a noise at night was matched by an unpleasant or dangerous consequence. Or, because everyone – from her family, to the news, to her friends – repeats that the night is dangerous for women, and therefore she associates the noise with a socially produced sensation attached to that space. Whatever the reason, that sensation puts the woman in relation to a context, a space, a structure of meaning. It allows her to mediate what she feels with her body into a cognitive idea, a choice, an awareness. These sensations are the means to understand the world around her, to understand herself, and to ground her action, or transform it. The more the sensation passes from a nonconscious level to a defined and recognisable one (and therefore to a codified emotion), the more the function of orientation consolidates. Yet another situation, retrieved from the fieldwork in Lucha Y Siesta and reported in Chapter 7, sheds light on this dynamic at a collective level. During an assembly between the participants of the collective and the women guests at Lucha, a discussion took place about the situation of imminent eviction. The participants tried to explain that, despite the fear and uncertainty, the only way to cope with the situation was to react, to participate in demonstrations, to make their voices heard. Women were scared, suspicious, felt angry and basically powerless, and tended to only plan for the possibility of leaving the space. At one point a Russian woman intervened, saying that she had participated in many demonstrations in her life but had never felt like she did in Lucha and during feminist demonstrations. Those feelings had supported her in a difficult moment of life, had made her grow and change, had allowed her to acquire tools to feel better and face life, as well as to change the mechanisms that trap one in a situation of violence. Through the narration of her sensations, she reported a certain disposition of the body, translated into cognition. The mediation of affects allowed her to engage with the situation of crisis, the fear in the assembly, the projection in the future, and the possible actions to be taken. She said that because of those feelings

she would do anything to defend Lucha, and that they all together had to protect the possibility to grow and change – by expressing them forcefully through forms of collective action. This speech opened up a channel that allowed other women to rethink their own situation with new tools, and then to work out forms of action together for the following weeks. In this account, affects open up a circularity of thought between people and function as a channel of mediation. As explained in the empirical analysis, affect is also a mediation between cognition and body, it allows to reconnect the pieces and access an organic and therefore informed understanding of the self.

As reported earlier, affect is in fact an impulse that puts us in contact with the outside, but it also signals the future of a relationship. In this sense we can think of social reality as a network of affects constantly at work, an invisible plot that connects, disjoins, and feeds a structure of meanings between bodies, objects, and spaces. This theoretical concept provides the analysis of empirical reality through a new look. Often it has been a cone of shadow, or a purely instrumental form of expression, in the sense of strategic use. Affect, instead, unlocks a source of information the moment we understand it as mediation. It fills the relationship with meaning and signals, it is the result of a series of cultural and social presuppositions, but somehow it opens the space for displacement. It is not by chance that Raymond Williams theorises the structures of feelings in the sense of tools to challenge the hegemony of the dominant order thanks to the signal launched by affect. We become aware of the dominant order, of how it acts on us, of what subjects we are in relation to the context, of how much this relationship is harmonious, or instead goes to our detriment, thanks to affect. This impulse signals the injustice of a social structure, makes it visible, and also beckons us to elaborate a shift when this order is detrimental. Through the construction of new meanings and ways of feeling, a possibility opens up to challenge the dominant order, or at least to show what is taken for granted and therefore invisible.

Affect provides as much mediation as orientation. In this sense, I refer to affect as a compass. In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed argues about orientation:

> emotions shape what bodies do in present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach. The attribution of feeling toward an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) moves the subject away from the object, creating distance through the registering of proximity as a threat. Emotions involve such affective forms of (re)orientation. It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies. (2006: 2-3)

Orientation, thus, concerns the impulses that bind us to other bodies, spaces, objects. In this project, I argue about affect as a compass that orients collective action, by making meanings, words, tools, available for action. Affects inform people about the starting point and the structure, and they suggest an orientation toward, eventually, the better. Among others, they suggest that positive emotions – such as love and joy, but also rage – expand the capacity for action, while others – such as resentment,

frustration, unease, competition, distrust – decrease the willingness to engage. They are a compass in the sense that they do not normatively impose a path. Rather, they hint at an orientation, suggest a path, a certain disposition of emotion and action to turn towards. In this sense, feminist theory and affect theory contribute to the understanding of political mobilisation.

- The potential of affect

The manuscript argues in favour of the potential of affect. Feminist spaces, in fact, engage with what affect and emotions enable one to do. This potential, in the Spinozian terms of what a body can do, in the expression of its vital impulse, is sometimes addressed in studies of social movements, for example by della Porta and Giugni (2013) with reference to the global justice movement. They note that "good vibes" and a good frame of mind favour harmonious discussion and conflict management. Yet, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the potential of affect.

During the fieldwork, CGTM brought me to enucleate a reflection on potential and power in reference to what emotions allow one to do. Once the fieldwork was over, the series of events reported in the opening of the chapter testified the achievement of political outcomes by feminist spaces.

In the context of ambivalent political opportunities – the political crisis and the threat of eviction dictated by the municipal government, collaboration by the regional and national government – feminist spaces developed an effective method of relationship and collective action. The achievement of political outcomes depends not only on allies, state structures, and public opinion (Giugni 1998), but also on another dynamic. Indeed, the research reports work on affect as a source of interaction with the outside world. The public, and therefore political, expression of a series of claims that had long been considered the domain of the private sphere –- as in the case of gendered violence – shifted the axis of institutional interest and also of the public opinion in the direction of taking charge of these issues. The challenge to a series of dichotomies that underlie democracy as well as the economic system, like the rational versus the emotional, opens up innovative channels. The mediation of affect represents an experiment in reformulating the relationship between grassroot organisations and institutions, between political participation and elites.

Yet, the concept of the potential of affect is not only related to successes or outcomes. It refers to a broader dynamic, one that concerns the development of the individual and collective potential to expand the capacity to understand and therefore act in the world. It does not necessarily translate into units of analysis detectable by the disciplinary tools available so far, but it is nevertheless active and transformative in feminist spaces.

An example of this potential emerged from the Spanish case, in reference to the pandemic phase in which the prevailing emotions were those of pain, suffering, fear, and disorientation. These emotions, as is rarely the case, concerned a common feeling for the entire population. Feminist spaces in this situation of emergency and extremely unfavourable conditions found themselves better equipped to react. In fact, they had developed for years a practice of processing affect and emotions and their transformation. Thus, in that case, the general feelings of mourning and grief were taken up and transformed collectively, improving not only the quality of life, but also the ability to act in a very unfavourable historical phase.

Included in the reflection on the potential of affect is the examination of positive and negative affect. The acknowledgment of the role of positive affects allows feminist spaces to move in the direction of those affects that expand the self, the feeling of knowing, and being able to do both in public and private space. The politicisation of affects, both negative and positive, expands the tools available to collective action.

These considerations of what affect and emotions allow implements the understanding of a number of units of analysis. First, in reference to movement agency and how movements develop their capacity to act even in situations of ambivalent political opportunity. Second, in reference to continuity, and thus what factors fuel a movement's development over the long term. Third, to our understanding of participatory democracy. Debunking the rational/emotional dichotomy expands our understanding of the roots of modern democracies, institutions, and their representative bodies. On the other hand, affectively informed collective action proposes models that are certainly not universal or generalisable, but that aim at improving the quality of democratic processes, the search for a good life, and social justice.

In conclusion, the potential of affect and emotion should be understood in both positive and negative ways. Understanding what affects allow to do does not linearly orient toward the pursuit of positive affects, and the increase of the capacity for action. Affect is an opaque, turbulent, obscure, and sometimes dangerous matter. If some feminist spaces taken into consideration between Italy and Spain have reached successful outcomes, others have experienced phases in which they were seriously compromised by internal dynamics. The opening up of the emotional sphere and its entry into the political sphere complicate the matter of collective action, cheating the cards of interpersonal dynamics. When the delicate mechanism of the acquisition of collective awareness, of the orientation towards positive affects is jammed, negative emotions proliferate. Suspicion, mistrust, resentment, disillusionment, anger, judgement, discouragement. These passions proliferate in collective dynamics and corrode the quality of political action, interpersonal relations, the formulation of repertoires of action and claims.

These conflicts occur when the emotional dimension is on the table. People are therefore exposed, vulnerable, and bring into play a part of themselves that is systematically excluded in other areas of life (at work, in education, in social relationships). This exposure of the self produces conflicts with even more devastating consequences. Conflict, in fact, does not only concern an idea or a theoretical perspective, but the depth of the self, one's emotions, affective ties, life prospects, and emotional investment in a collective project. The spiral of negative affects thus becomes increasingly painful, tearing, and deep, opening up personal and collective wounds that the participants often named as trauma or mourning.

These considerations are intended to contribute to an understanding of the factors of disengagement and the decline of collective action. At the same time, they represent sketchy considerations, not definitive, because they refer to a subject that is by nature opaque and difficult to grasp. Conflict within spaces that engage with emotions is therefore a field of research that has yet to be fully explored. It remains to be understood why at a certain point the mechanism jams, what factors lead to the proliferation of certain affects to the detriment of others that are more positive, what causes and what effects this type of conflict produces in collective action.

- Material girls

This project addresses a debate in social movement studies between old and new social movements, or materialist and postmaterialist values. Feminist and environmental movements, among others, are considered new social movements (Melucci 1980), inspired by postmaterialist values and concerned by culture and identity. The unintended consequence of this interpretation was the removal of the material dimension from the analysis of these movements. Unlike the workers' movements, which had built their collective action around class and the conflict between capital and labour, the new social movements seemed to have abandoned the analysis of the economic model in favour of a focus on identity, culture, and civil rights. Even gender, as an analytical concept, seemed to be reduced to a purely cultural dimension.

This approach ignores the contribution of feminist theory and materialist feminism, which focus on the intertwining of the production of the economic model and the production of the gender regime (Dalla Costa and James 1975, Delphy and Leonard 1980, Ingraham 1997, Guillaumin 2002, Federici 2012). The materialist analysis focuses, on the one hand, on the identification of the links between primitive accumulation and the production of gender as a criterion of social organisation. On the other hand, it focuses on the unveiling of the work of social reproduction as the other side of the coin of production work, but excluded from the receipt of wages. The condition sine qua non of production

is the reproduction of the conditions of production and thus that a system, in order to function, must maintain the structures and structural relations that enable it to function (Halberstam 2011). The analysis sinks into a historical perspective, with the development of women's movements through the 19th century, within and beyond socialist circles. The call for civil and political rights quite often intertwined with an analysis of the material dimensions underlying certain social inequalities. An example of this is the debate on abortion, in which the class dimension has been the subject of the demand for the right from the outset (Banotti 1971).

The legacy of materialist feminism influences contemporary feminist spaces. Three points emerged in the course of the research, which it is fair to mention in the conclusions as a theoretical contribution to the debate. First, the material dimension of direct social action. Second, feminist spaces as alternative economies and a challenge to the system of production. Third, social value as opposed to market value.

Feminist spaces often aim to fulfil a need to which welfare and institutions do not respond. This need concerns spaces, services, and social networks. Direct social action, such as anti-violence centres and shelters, arises from an intersectional approach to social inequalities. Very often, the categories excluded from services and welfare are those trapped in a crossroads of racialisation, class, age, physical and mental health. Feminist direct action takes on board what remains outside the institutional criteria. In this sense, the material dimension occupies a central place both in the construction of the service and in the ideas and meanings of the framework. The pathways out of violence, in fact, are based on the acquisition of awareness and emotional tools, as well as on economic autonomy, work, and access to housing. Reconstructing forms of subjectivity outside violence is therefore a material path, that brings into play the subversion of gender as a normative prescription that assigns women to subordinate roles, underpaid, completely unpaid, dependent on their partner or husband. Economic autonomy is intertwined with emotional awareness in the construction of an increasingly oriented, centred, and empowered capacity to act.

Secondly, the spaces challenge the model of production and circulation of goods and money through alternative economies. Women are not relegated to the work of social reproduction, but equally contribute to feminist space's life and its durability. They take on all necessary tasks, from manual to intellectual. Moreover, money and profit are not the parameters that guide the life of the spaces. Thanks to a reflection on money, forms of self-income, gifts, or gratuitousness are elaborated, which make access more feasible regardless of the economic availability. Moreover, spaces do not aim to be productive from a capitalist point of view, but to nurture a structure of feelings that improves the capacity for collective action and, at the same time, is oriented towards a good life. These experiments give rise to alternative models of economies that are not intended to be generalisable or paradigmatic,

but rather serve as material instruments for improving living conditions, and thereby producing changes in structure. In this sense, they challenge the capitalist economic model by prefiguring the activation of behaviours towards the desired world, including the material world.

Finally, connected to this, what inspires these spaces is the concept of social value, as opposed to market value. Institutions, services, as well as individual lives, are evaluated on the parameter of productivity, profit, competition, and market value. Individuals are required to be rational subjects oriented towards the pursuit of profit maximisation. By challenging the criteria that underlie our understanding of the social, feminist spaces elaborate new criterions of strategic representation, which is that of social value. In negotiating with institutions and in representing collective action to the outside world, they propose the parameter of social value, in the sense of maximising well-being, quality of life, self-awareness, and the capacity to act in relation to social structures. This parameter is not purely philosophical as much as it is a concrete tool to relate with counterparts. To cite an example, Lucha y Siesta's negotiation with the Lazio regional government was also based on the claim of social value as opposed to profit. The government considered it worth it to save the fate of the women's house because of its social value, without changing the methodology and composition of the space as it has been so far.

The ironic title of this section refers to the scandalous song by Madonna, who claimed in the lyrics that girls love diamonds, too. Then as now, it seems important to – scandalously – recall that the material dimension of social life is an integral part of the reflection and practice of feminist movements.

- Debunking safety: structures of feelings and affective resonance

Whenever we talk about safety, something much deeper lurks beneath the surface.

The perception of safety normally seems to be linked to the presence or absence of concrete risks. An assailant, a violent person, a harasser, someone who makes one feel uncomfortable, an unwelcoming place, a place that exposes one to danger. Very often, neoliberal policies have fostered an association between the perception of insecurity and racialised people, poor people, sex workers, or in general those who are considered to be on the margins. Vice versa, feeling safe seems to depend on the absence of these elements of risk. With reference to women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people, feeling safe is closely linked to gender, as a social product that exposes a person to certain risks in a greater way. Safe spaces seem to be spaces constructed in opposition to and outside of unsafe places, and that therefore, in a dichotomous way, subvert what is outside, producing another dimension of life inside.

During the research, I soon realised that this dichotomous vision did not respond to reality. The major takeaway with regard to the concept of safe space is that there are no settled, defined, stable places in which there is a model of safety, a paradigm, as opposed to the insecurity of the outside. When we speak of security, it is always a process through which places are made safer, more liveable. It is a negotiation, a process made of attempts and mistakes, a new awareness and failures. It is an unfinished path that includes all the people who enjoy the space. It is not a finished product, already given, that is provided, available to people. In this sense, from a certain point I stopped referring to safe spaces and started referring to *safer* spaces. That is to say safer, but potentially, in the process, and always open to modification, revision, failures.

The second takeaway is that the perception or absence of safety is only the tip of the iceberg, the most visible manifestation of a much deeper dynamic involving affect, as a vital impulse; emotions, as formulas codified by culture and social interaction; and feelings, as the interweaving and sedimentation of emotions. During the fieldwork, it started to become more and more apparent that safety was not simply the absence of harassment during an evening of partying, or lack of physical aggression. The perception of safety signals a much deeper feeling involving, on the one hand, the actors' relationship with themselves, and on the other hand the relationships between people. The dimension of affect and emotions, what people can feel, what they can communicate, and what they can transform through interaction are the sites of an increased or decreased perception of safety.

Sociologists of emotions, like Hochschild (1979, 1983, 1990), formulate the idea of expression "rules" and "emotion culture" (Gordon 1989) to suggest the cultural and social components of emotions and their expression. "Part of socialization includes informal instruction about which emotions are appropriate to feel and to express, for how long and how intensely, by whom and in what contexts. […] Communities or social groups have 'emotion cultures,' understood as both the emotions that are prevalent within the group and the set of tacit or explicit rules and norms that demarcate 'how [members of the group] should attend to, codify, appraise, manage, and express feelings' (Hochschild, 1990:124)" (Gould 2004: 162). Culture is a powerful structure that influences what we think we should feel, how we should feel, and if and how we should express it. The term "emotion culture" does not refer to a monolithic and static structure, but rather to a prevailing system of instruction about how to move and feel in the social world. This is a field of adherence, dissonance, open contestation. As Gould explains, "every emotional utterance, gesture, or evocation, particularly those that are public and that are repeated over time, has the potential to alter a prevailing emotion culture" (2004: 163). Building on Gould's assumption, the research explores the construction of structures of feelings by feminist spaces, which challenge not only the emotion culture but also the meanings that produce it. This challenge allows participants to experiment with new ways of feeling,

expressing, circulating, and transforming emotions. Opening up this space of possibility increases the perception of a new relationship with the self and with other people. The rules of expression are put to the test, and actors can investigate new perspectives of affectivity. Feeling free to try, and at the same time listening and feeling other people's effort of expression, establishes an environment in which affect and emotions flow. It involves the capacity to see the others, to perceive their "vibes," to see in their vibes something about yourself, to search for a negotiated temperature among different impulses. Challenging a certain neoliberal model, a model of normative relationships, of emotional culture, of rules of expression, increases the perception of safety. In the potential for action opened up by reflection on what emotions can do lies the possibility for actors to feel better. Safer, therefore, with respect to a world that produces insecurity, not so much and not only in material terms, but also in emotional terms, in terms of biographical aspirations.

Becoming safer is therefore an entirely political process that calls into question the challenge to economic, social, and cultural codes.

These considerations have two consequences. On the one hand, the reference to safety in feminist spaces signals a profound work on affect; on the other hand, this perception of increased safety is open, unfinished, in the making, always exposed to new negotiations, bound to the willingness of the actors to continue working together, to the preservation of an emotional atmosphere, to mutual care. Safer spaces can, therefore, also be spaces in which actors feel very unsafe, in which one feels questioned, vulnerable, exposed to interdependence, and therefore less barricaded inside the fortress of the ideal of a rational, independent, self-made subject. Exposing oneself to the relationship with other people by opening the communication channel of affect and emotions can produce as much a feeling of greater safety as, conversely, a feeling of total insecurity when, for example, as elaborated in the previous section, negative affects and destructive consequences of conflict prevail. If we replace the concept of structures of feelings with that of emotion culture, referring to the internal culture of feminist space, Gould observes that "a given 'emotion culture,' then, should be understood as prevalent but also as unsettled and mutable, open to challenge and revision and thus always at risk" (2004: 163). It is no coincidence that the idea of safe spaces stirs up resentment, grievances, mutual accusations of not having made a space safe enough or not safe at all, of having failed to meet someone's expectation of safety, or of having betrayed a series of assumptions, often unspoken. Negative passions surrounding the concept of safe spaces mirror the dynamics just described, whereby safety actually alludes to a much deeper process, and that always and in any case remains a process in the making, which does not allow for a stable, finite, monolithic, definitive, non-contradictory configuration of safe space.

So, in conclusion, are safe spaces a unit of analysis that is still conceptually useful? What does the concept of safe spaces allow us to see, or not? Undoubtedly, the concept of safe space has a historical relevance: it allowed women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people to unveil the violent consequences of an economic, social, cultural, and gendered order that exposes some people to high material and immaterial situations of risk. Like any concept, in repetition and use it risks losing its complexity, taking for granted something that is not, feeding distortions instead of increasing the possibility of action. For this reason, trying to debunk safety, unravelling its complexity, helps to recompose a more organic, more multifaceted, more contradictory idea of safe spaces. The political appropriateness of using the concept, instead, is an internal discussion within feminist movements on which this manuscript has neither the ambition nor the will to intervene.

- Exploding spaces through the breaking of the public-private dichotomy

The last takeaway I would like to address concerns the dimension of space. Space has been a central dimension of the research. In fact, the ethnography took place in physical places, located in specific cities and neighbourhoods, with an address, four walls, and a set of architectural features. The feminist spaces included in the research are what Polletta (1999) calls free spaces, that is, spaces taken away from the direct control of institutional bodies and the State, in which forms of collective action that precede or prepare for mobilisation are elaborated. This definition in the field of social movement studies was a starting point, by building on it new developments of the concept. First, feminist spaces broaden our understanding of free spaces, offering some outcomes to reflect upon. Second, they shed light on contentious politics against gender-based violence by engaging with urban spaces. Third, through the creation of structures of feelings, feminist spaces develop prefigurative politics grounded in the transformative potential of emotions. Finally, by breaking the dichotomy of private and public space, they disclose promising venues to grasp the intersection between affect, emotions, and spaces. As Polletta and Kretchmer argue, "we know little about the free spaces that are created by movements. Collectivist organizations, cultural festivals, and cooperative institutions are intended to prefigure alternative ways of acting and interacting. Do they? What effects do free spaces have on behaviors and institutions outside the free space?" (2013: 3). In a sense, this manuscript attempts to argue about these questions through the concept of structures of feelings. Spaces, in fact, emerged as condensations of vital impulses, gradients of intensity, and concatenations of bodies. In this dense affective matter, the collective action tries to find the coordinates, the words, and the tools to unravel the skein in the paths of expansion of the capacity to act. This process is configured as an alternative way of acting and interacting, which also innervates the relationships with behaviours and

institutions. This alternative way is not only about the preparation of mobilisations, or the preservation of symbols, ideas, and networks in anticipation of mobilisations to come. The process concerns the everyday, and is oriented to produce effects on the paths of actors, and more generally on the context. The spaces are therefore bearers of collective action, beyond being functional or not for the mobilisations. They carry out forms of contentious politics, and the political outcomes, as explained above, seem to confirm the transformative potential of working on emotions.

Feminist spaces therefore carry out contentious politics. The issue they address is gender-based violence. Against this form of social inequality, feminist movements sometimes develop forms of contentious politics in the sense of opening feminist spaces within the city. The city is the setting where the understanding of gender-based violence is developed – both in public and especially in the private space – and through the conversion of city spaces, violence is tackled. Spaces are often opened through occupation, or forms of self-management in opposition or antithesis to institutions. Yet, institutions and the State are not the only counterparts. Denouncing gender-based violence means identifying as counterpart the social, and economic, cultural, and political structures founded on a gender regime that is also a regime of organising violence. The choice to open feminist spaces against violence intends to make violence a public and political fact. If most of gender-based violence takes place in the domestic spaces, the choice to expose the phenomenon through a collective action in the urban space means to call the citizenship for a general taking charge of the phenomenon. It does not only concern women victims of violence, professionals, or services, but it is a phenomenon that affects everyone, and that requires an understanding and a responsibility shouldered by all to be changed. To produce social change, feminist spaces do not put forward a request, but a contentious action. The self-management of spaces by feminist groups intends, on the one hand, to provide concrete solutions to a material problem, and on the other to produce a fracture, a conflict with the surrounding urban and institutional environment.

In doing so, feminist spaces implement forms of prefiguration, that is, they give life to experiments of the world as they would like to change it (Boggs 1977, Williams 2016), by building tomorrow today (Raekstad and Gradin 2020). This research brought out another element with respect to the unity of analysis of prefigurative politics. Prefigurative politics also requires nurturing positive affects, and thus the capacity for action. Feminist movements are, in fact, rooted in the rupture of the rational/emotional, body/cognition dichotomies. This subversion is not only theoretical, but it translates into concrete practices, and in this sense it prefigures an alternative model of actions and interactions. Prefigurative politics is thus the construction of structures of feelings, the process through which affect is named and put into circulation, the understanding of what affect and emotions

allow to do. Constructing tomorrow today, therefore, means investing in the matter of emotions in the face of a social world in total dissonance with this approach to emotions and affect.

Finally, the research provides an in-depth understanding of the breakdown between private and public space. This rupture is at the heart of feminist theory but less so of studies of social movements. The reference to feminist spaces as homes by the participants prompted me to explore this striking association. Spaces, which are public, political, are also homes because they allow emotional development. Affects are, therefore, a lens that allows to modify our perception of space, but also to socially produce different spaces that put us in different emotional conditions, allowing us to do different things. Feminist spaces are neither entirely public nor entirely private, but they are intimate as well as political spaces in which there is room for an elaboration of the self and collective action. This is also a spatial dimension in the sense that it modifies the relationship with space and modifies space itself. In her work, Rachel Scicluna makes a masterful argument about kitchen tables in the lesbian movement in the UK, arriving at similar considerations:

> the kitchen stood for, in a metaphorical and practical sense, all that they were fighting for—that is, to create a sense of belonging through political activism based on sexuality. This was a rather alternative worldview at the time. The communal kitchen in squats and collectives offered the right kind of domestic place to fulfil their political agenda. On the one hand, living communally challenged the patriarchal oppression, which was read as politically constructing women as 'self-perpetuating subordinate persons' (Green 2002:183). On the other, through the 'kitchen as place,' these women formed personal bonds and relationships which produced different kinds of persons and counter-acted the sense of fragmentation and disconnection that some experienced in their homes and public lives. In lesbian squats, they formed alternative families bound through friendship and ideology. Additionally, it offered them the space to sit around the kitchen table to discuss their political agenda. In this context, the kitchen embodies those 'interpersonal' relations (Green 2002) which they strongly fought to deconstruct, reproduce and maintain through a different way of doing things and thinking about them. Hence, the domestic kitchen becomes a political, contested and subversive place which needs to be contextualised within the discourses or structures of inequality that represent asymmetric gender, sexual, and class relations (amongst others)" (Scicluna 2017: 7)

The explosion of space as classically understood by social movement studies, through the breakdown of the dichotomy between public and private, allows us to expand our understanding of free spaces, contentious politics, and prefiguration. However, it also allows us to look at the social production of space through the lens of affect, which has a transformative potential that has yet to be investigated. In fact, the research started with an emphasis on urban space, but constructivist grounded theory led me to focus more and more on the role of affect. Space is, therefore, a dimension that has provoked some important considerations, but these deserve to be explored further and more systematically.

10.3 A Methodological Contribution

These concluding remarks are also intended to testify to the methodological contribution of the project. The research was, in fact, a field of experimentation from the methodological point of view. It aimed at integrating participatory action research, constructivist grounded theory method, and feminist approaches. For this reason, I report here the main takeaways.

- Bridging ethics, participatory action method, and feminist approaches

Action research has often been combined with feminist approaches to social research. There are indeed many points of connection, which lead people with a feminist approach to involve participatory methods in their research, and vice versa. This project confirms the consistency between the two approaches. I approached the research design as a researcher, but also from my own feminist experience. The questions, the gaze, the style of relationship were impregnated by a cultural, political, and ideal perspective. This consistency brings substantial benefits to research and some limitations. Feminist approaches to social research stress the importance of self-reflexivity, the social value of research, the relationship with the participants, ethics in the management of information, the process of developing findings, and the display of findings (Reinharz 1992). In my case, the feminist approach essentially made the research possible. The feminist spaces included in the research accepted my presence and made bonds of trust possible only thanks to my positioning. In some cases, such as the space of the Cagne Sciolte in Rome, this was made explicitly clear. Moreover, the quality of the bonds, and therefore of the disclosure of their experiences towards me, was conditioned by the perception of a common belonging. As the self-reflexive quote retrieved from the fieldnotes addresses: "this has changed the state of relations between us a little: the fact that they have seen, and not just known in a general way, that I am a feminist activist in a movement of which they are also part, and that I hold positions very similar to theirs, I think, has changed their perspective and their approach towards me. Sara, in fact, is very affable with me, much more intimate, and tells me right away how things are going" (Fieldnotes LYS, 04-06-19). The relaxation of relationships and the opening up of spaces of depth in the research relationship is evidenced by episodes like this one, on which I reflected in the fieldnotes: "A young Black girl also comes in and greets them affectionately. She is one of the women of the House. At that point Mina says: "Meet Giada, she is one of us. From now on you will see her here very often." At that point they broke into a big smile and introduced themselves warmly, saying they didn't know. [...] I go home full of joy, I can feel it palpably as I drive. Mina's sentence is an important one, which she said without hesitation: "she is Giada, one of us." It makes me think a lot. It took a long time to get into a form of relationship. The first email I sent them was at the beginning of March, and now it's mid-June. In that time we have met and talked,

but so far it has been a phase of negotiating access. And yet it's as if they, as a space, have exactly that attitude towards people who do research, who either become part of the space or can't do it. It is in itself an embodied example of participatory research, in the sense that so far those who have done extensive research at Lucha have actually entered into the management and inhabitation of the place, never as external users coming to collect data. Even in my case, they agreed to open the space to research when I became 'one of them,' that is, when they were able to see unequivocally that I was a feminist comrade beyond research, and that I had every intention of helping the space in any way I could. What happened tonight puts me very much into question, both about my research and in general about the way we understand participatory research. It makes me think that participatory research is in fact feminist research, or that feminist research is in itself participatory research, and on this axis is constituted the channel of entry to the communities and spaces to be studied. There is no other way in which I could have entered Lucha than to become part of it. Both in terms of trust and activism. It scares me and it excites me. It gives me back the sense of my research. Its true meaning" (Fieldnotes LYS, 04-06-19). As I reflect in the notes, this proximity is both a source of value for research and a risk. In fact, as close as the participants and I were, we had different roles, and so confusing the plans too much risked exposing them in a way that was not entirely conscious, and me betraying, at times, a pact of distance necessary for the research. Distance is always necessary in order to keep a clear eye on the fieldwork, to agree on boundaries, and also to select the information that will later be included in the research. Distance is also a form of responsibility towards the participants, in order to protect them.

In line with the argument brought forward in this manuscript, the intersection of PAR and feminist approaches also concerned affect. The understanding, processing, and sharing of affect and emotions were for me a mediation with the participants and the fieldwork. My fieldnotes are full of reflections filtered through the matter of affect. It allowed me to understand with my body, and to bring into play various channels of understanding. As this example retrieved from the fieldnotes, among many others, shows: "The atmosphere is very affectionate and intimate, I realise that barriers of mistrust have fallen and they are talking to me as if I were their comrade. It is an enveloping sensation and I realise that my involvement in Lucha is already of a different kind. I feel that my willingness to participate is not so much driven by the goal of research as by a form of feminist solidarity, so I feel I want to help them in a moment of great uncertainty and fatigue. We say goodbye with a hug, saying that we will see each other again very soon. I leave Lucha with a hint of sorrow, as when you leave a place of warmth and return to the tepid world outside" (Fieldnotes LYS, 17-06-19). The mediation of affect, like a compass, provided me with important information on how to orient, modify, or revise the interaction with the participants and the methodology, but it also gave me the tools to clarify the

theoretical contributions. On a methodological level and in cross-fertilisation with feminist approaches, the research proposes a reflection on affect as a channel of mediation during the fieldwork and in the elaboration of findings.

- PAR as a scale of intensity

The second takeaway of a methodological nature concerns PAR as a scale of intensity. In carrying out the fieldwork, I realised that it is not possible to carry out the PAR approach in the same way in all the cases included in the research. The research included six cases between Rome and Madrid, distinguished by profound differences. First of all, the contexts and conjunctures were different. The city of Rome is in Italy, in my native country, where I could benefit from previous networks, knowledge of the language, and a common socio-cultural background. Moreover, between the fieldwork in Italy and in Spain there was the pandemic, which substantially influenced the level of participation in the research. Even among the Italian cases there were profound differences. The PAR is always the result of a relationship between the researcher and participants. This relationship fluctuates according to the composition of the spaces, the age, the political culture of reference, and the political phase experienced by the spaces.

Participatory research was not fully possible with the International House of Women in Rome. The size of the space, the composition, the age, the availability of the participants did not allow that style of research to be effective, neither was it practicable. With them I could not help but be considered a young girl, and therefore less credible as a researcher. Moreover, it was not always clear to everyone what I was doing there, due to the large size of the space and the varying intensity with which people experienced its everyday life. With Lucha Y Siesta, on the other hand, we developed the deepest and most systematic application of PAR, which continues to this day. Most of the previous relationships existed with the space of the Cagne Sciolte, and this conditioned the choice of methods, for example avoiding participant observation, which would have exposed them more than they would have liked. PAR as a scale of different intensities has both positive and negative aspects. First, in handling many cases it is inevitable not to carry out the same in-depth research reports with all of them. PAR is a very time- and energy-consuming methodology, both for the researcher and the participants, and requires a number of pre-conditions. In this sense, the scale of different intensities makes PAR and research feasible, and allows to grasp what is possible from each case. The very level of involvement of each case is useful information in the analysis, because it signals the characteristics, interaction styles, and orientations of the cases. On the negative side, this intensity scale represents a limitation in that it does not allow access to valuable information from some cases. Boundaries in research, with

a PAR approach, require from the researcher an even firmer ethics. Negotiation can therefore be downward for the researcher, precluding the possibility of gathering important information.

The relationship with spaces varies in intensity. However, PAR involves the posture of the researcher. Thus, I always maintained a participatory posture, and in every case this influenced every interaction, observation, and consideration during the fieldwork. Just as an example, I noted down the following during the fieldwork at the International House of Women, despite the relatively less intense feature of our research interaction: "the House becomes more and more familiar. As I walk around the building I seem to begin to catch its movement, the rhythm with which it moves, the noises and silences. Today, I happened to walk through the corridors and found myself in front of archive photographs. The corridors are full of photographs: marches, posters, close-ups. [...] I felt a strong and immediate principle of recognition, a red thread linking my experience as a young woman, researcher, and feminist activist with generations of women and activists who have passed through the House and are still living it. This profound emotion represents one of the constitutive features of my experience of the House, the recognition of a non-neutral position whose limits I need to name. What speaks to me, what reconnects me, is a principle of identification and disidentification. Something of my presence here concerns me as an external subject, as a 'foreign' researcher who observes the dynamics and the actresses as a mystery, a tangle to be unravelled. Another part of me recognises the deep roots of my presence here, the threads that connect me to this place not only as a researcher but also as a woman, an activist, a feminist" (Fieldnotes CID, 23-10-18).

The variation in intensity also concerns the researcher. In the field, as explained in the previous section, the mediation of affect is a compass. It is very frequent to feel loneliness, frustration, fatigue, bewilderment, anger, guilt. These feelings direct the involvement of the fieldwork and impose on the researcher the rhythm, the pauses, the interruptions. The mediation of affects allows PAR to be oriented in a sustainable way, which also means with a scale of different intensities.

- Bridging participatory action research and constructivist grounded theory

In recent years, experiments in the intertwining of participatory action research and grounded theory were developed (Teram et al. 2005, Redman-MacLaren and Mills 2015, Raekstad and Gradin 2020). Both of them should be considered as a group of "family resemblances" (Charmaz and Bryant 2007, Bryant 2007) rather than a monolithic approach. This manuscript highlights a number of points of convergence between the two approaches: research as the opening of an inductive and iterative process in the making; the back-and-forth movement from the fieldwork, interweaving data collection with data analysis; the continuous re-orientation of the field simultaneously and depending on the

results emerging from the analysis. In this section, I would like to emphasise above all the elements of the participatory approach that influenced the CGTM.

In fact, PAR requires the involvement of participants at all stages of the research process. As suggested by the CGTM, this allows for starting without precise literature, but negotiating the research questions and orientation together. Negotiating the questions was followed by the beginning of the field, negotiating time and space, and building trust. Thanks to the process of going back and forth from the field, the elements that emerged from data analysis could become the object of reflection in the fieldwork, whether in participant observation, interviews, or focus groups. This formulation of early findings from the beginning of the fieldwork, prescribed by the CGTM, improved the quality and refinement of the collection of items of interest during the fieldwork. In fact, the participants' gaze and mine was increasingly refined, more oriented toward the most significant elements, leaving aside the things that were instead progressively moving into the background. Slight changes in questions during interviews, in the way I took fieldnotes, occurred in the process. The more the code system grew and was defined, the more the field would change as well.

From the first contacts I also found myself having to explain what CGTM was. The access to feminist spaces in fact, especially in cases where the PAR was more intense, required several initial moments that took the form of email exchanges, discussions in two, or assembly discussions. In the case of the space of the Cagne Sciolte, the possibility of the research was discussed in an assembly form with all the participants. CGTM is a complex research method that requires specific training and the acquisition of a range of both theoretical and practical skills for the researcher. Explaining the methodology was thus a challenge. This effort, however, made it possible to make the instrument accessible, and therefore to shorten the distance between the technical part of the research work and the participation through which the research came to life. Only in the case of the Cagne Sciolte, they formulated the desire to participate in the analysis of the data. The request was formalised in two moments of shared data analysis, carried out on the Jitsi Meet platform, sharing a Riseup pad (all non-proprietary and open source platforms that did not involve excessive risk), in which I had inserted anonymised excerpts of the interviews. These moments represented the height of convergence between the two methodological approaches. It allowed me to test the scheme of codes developed up to that point, materially working out with the participants the understandings, meanings, and concepts that explained their words. For them, it allowed a moment of self-reflexivity, of listening to each other, and increasing understanding about the processes of collective action, which sometimes in the flow of political action is not available.

Reflections from this research experience are intended to contribute to the development and application of these methodologies. On the one hand, it is important to combine PAR with a systematic, reliable, rigorous, organic, verifiable approach to analysing empirical material. In fact, data analysis is a rigorous step of inquiry, requiring an inductive but codified process, whose steps can negotiate – certainly not make disappear – the subjectivity of the researcher and their filter, with the production of a theoretical framework anchored to the material dimension. It is not a matter of bringing out the truth, but of elaborating in an ethical, systematic, and rigorous form the portion of empirical reality studied. The empirical reality, its complexity, deserve in fact the maximum of ethics and rigour on the part of the researcher, even and especially because of the non-neutrality of research. On the other hand, it is worth combining CGTM with an approach that holds action and participation together. At some level, CGTM includes a form of negotiation with participants. Indeed, the cyclical process of analysis forces the researcher to continually go back and forth, where in fact the sifting of research materials occurs through the relationship with participants. PAR makes it possible to formalise this participatory aspect by providing a systematic, rigorous and demonstrable codification of the participatory process.

Social research in general, and qualitative research in particular, involve relating to human beings, and therefore a margin of flexibility and unexpectedness given by the relationship. Yet, trying to codify this research relationship roots the process, provides for steps, an orientation. It allows for the formalisation of ethical assumptions and a commitment to mutual responsibility. In this, the analysis of data does not remain a solitary activity of the researcher, who negotiates only with herself the doubts, errors, and successes, but opens up to a collaborative journey in which the findings result from the multiplicity of perspectives of the people involved. After all, what are findings? They are conceptual tools, heuristic devices that allow to approximate the understanding of a given social phenomenon. In the case of these approaches, this understanding cannot be separated from those who live the phenomenon, and therefore have an embodied experience of it, in conjunction with the expertise of the researcher, who therefore has academic knowledge of it. Findings, however, are not only concepts of understanding, but also tools that, through understanding, can produce change. This is discussed in the next and final section of methodological takeaways.

- Dissemination of results

PAR, as a methodological approach, prescribes a participatory relationship from the formulation of the research design to the dissemination of results. What is meant by dissemination? It means a formulation and dissemination of research findings through tools and channels that produce

transformative or social change-oriented consequences for the participants as well as the academic context. It is one of the strongest elements of the empirical translation of academic knowledge, and a point of convergence between the production of knowledge carried out by social movements themselves and that produced by academic research.

From the beginning, with all of the spaces, there was an explicit request from the participants to also use the results for feminist spaces purposes. With them, we collected a series of experiments, some already carried out and some reserved for the future.

Before beginning with the overview, a clarification is needed. Reflection on dissemination allows PAR to be highlighted as an open-ended process that has a beginning point but hardly a formal end point. Just as the fieldwork did not formally end but one part of the research relationship did, over time the relationships with the participants developed and transformed, and persist to this day.

First, I made myself available for any requests from participants. This meant sometimes just accompanying them to events, in other cases direct participation in events organised by them, such as book presentations, discussions on topics, organising workshops, writing projects. In all of these venues, my participation has been through sharing direct or indirect outputs of participatory research. The form of collaboration in the activities they proposed allowed the outputs to become a ground for concrete use, writing, reflection, further design. In some cases, part of the results flowed, for example, in the participatory design workshops of Lucha Y Siesta, towards the writing of a statement of self-government with which to negotiate the management of the space with the Lazio regional government. In another case, the skills developed in participatory research flowed into the writing of a project presented by Lucha Y Siesta (GIOIA - Generate feminist cities through participation and inclusion) submitted for a call of the Department of Equal Opportunity on the theme of combating gendered violence. My inclusion in the team that should carry out the project if awarded is the result of both the relationships developed in the research and the dissemination of the results.

With participants in some cases we attended conferences together, sharing the writing of the abstract, the presentation to the panel, and the ensuing discussion. As a result of this experience, we wrote a paper together, later published on a platform of relevance to the movement.[24]

In addition, in the coming months the research will take the form of a popular text to be published by Armillaria, a publishing house run by one of the Lucha Y Siesta participants, which would like to convey the significant elements of the research to a non-academic audience.

Part of the dissemination of the results also concerned the design of future tools such as, in the case of the Cagne Sciolte space, a fanzine on safer spaces, a photo-story on the history of the space, a

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[24] https://www.intersezionale.com/2020/10/13/re-inventare-autonomia-esperienza-di-lucha-y-siesta/#comments, last visit 2 May 2022.

science-fiction tale on a series of difficult stories lived inside the space and addressed by the collective action. We also discussed the possibility of producing a video in which we could visually give an account of the history of the space, drawing on the many archives of photos and videos of the participants that have never been used before, and combining them with excerpts from the interviews. In other cases, such as in the Spanish cases, because participation was relatively difficult due to the pandemic, dissemination is translated into connections between the spaces in Italy and the spaces in Spain towards future opportunities for encounter and collaboration.

Quite naturally, the dissemination of results was more effective with those spaces where participation was most intense.

PAR has affected the research and spaces as much as it has me. Understanding a series of dynamics, through the mediation of affect, has led me to a process of self-reflexivity and changes that have influenced my own life. In fieldnotes during ethnography at Lucha I wrote: "on the way home in the car I cry. I cannot find any other way to express the complexity of what I have experienced. I still cannot fully name the feelings I have experienced, but I feel that I am completely full, disoriented, confused. A great pain and a great fullness. The encounter with these women left me disarmed and I realised the poverty of tools I have to deal with this encounter. The relationship with women who have experienced violence is a field whose vocabulary I do not know. I think maybe I would like to do a course for an anti-violence desk operator. That this would be an integral part of my way of doing research, and that it seems necessary to me to hold and understand the relationships with people in the field" (Fieldnotes LYS, 19-06-19). Following those reflections, some time later, once the fieldwork was finished, I participated in an anti-violence course organised by Lucha Y Siesta and I did an internship as an anti-violence worker in one of the centres run by them. At the moment, we are negotiating the possibility of joining the team of the anti-violence service, on a part-time basis. This experience has confronted me with a number of considerations. In the face of gender-based violence and feminist direct action, I felt that the academic research path could not fully solve my puzzle. Part of the understanding of that phenomenon could not come through academic formulation, but required for me another channel. The topic implicated me as well, and pushed me to want to relate in a different way as well. So my role in the relationships with the participants transited from researcher, to student, to collaborator. In this sense, the dissemination of the results took place, even on an individual level, in a way that was transformative for my life.

This overview aims to contribute to experimentation in the field of PAR and social research as a tool for social change. The product of academic research, in fact, thanks to the relationships with the participants, can be translated into many forms that go beyond the boundaries of the academy and that can find a feedback and an effect in the social reality.

10.4 Limitations and Future Research

The previous sections reported theoretical and methodological contributions of this research project. In this section, I would like to outline the limitations and future trajectories of the research.

On a theoretical level, the research draws on three strains of literature. This multidisciplinary approach has been both a virtue and a limitation of the research. Indeed, the various literatures have their own set of concepts, heritage, languages. Even if one wants to know all disciplines thoroughly, handling many literatures sometimes does not allow the level of depth and citation quality of the theoretical material. Moreover, working with CGTM allows to follow the literature that emerges from the analysis of the data. This process risks being dispersive, bringing to many directions and sometimes compromising the orientation, coherence, and compactness of the theoretical framework. Following the CGTM thread led me to focus on the theme of affect. It was the one that seemed to me to emerge prominently. This choice came at the expense of an equally in-depth theoretical examination of other themes, such as urban space and urban movements, which had seemed central to me at the beginning of the research.

In some cases, the manuscript presents theoretical contributions that may seem too generalised. In fact, ethnographic research considers specific cases, of which it advances an in depth understanding. The resulting theoretical findings are relative to that portion of social reality and as much as they may suggest trajectories for understanding more general reality, they cannot overinterpret their scope and agency. If this has happened, it is to be attributed to the limitations of the researcher's understanding and exposure of the results, and not to an over-stated self-representation of the participants.

Moreover, the CGTM led me to consider the theoretical contribution as the most relevant output of the research. This theoretical aspiration was at times difficult to reconcile with the ethnographic and empirical character of the research. It was often difficult or ineffective to combine the expressiveness of the empirical material, the fieldnotes, the interviews, with the formulation of analytical categories sometimes very much linked to theoretical abstractions. This difficulty sometimes made the presentation of the results intermittent, disjointed, and ineffective.

Many limitations, as already mentioned, affect the application of PAR and CGTM. The ambitious attempt to combine these two approaches has often clashed with empirical reality. The application of PAR with different intensities can be contested as a lack of reliability of the empirical material, or an excessive variance in the application of the methodology. Furthermore, I was able to proceed with the creation of the code system by referring only to the Italian case. The fieldwork in Spain was postponed from March 2020 to January 2021 due to the outbreak of the pandemic. This shift made it

impossible to build the code system for both cases. The doctorate has time constraints, and it would have been impossible to proceed in the same way with the Spanish cases and submit the research on time. For this reason, the analysis of the Spanish cases consisted in applying the code system previously developed on the Italian cases. This process, which partly responds to the theoretical saturation foreseen by CGTM, produced the inevitable loss of richness in the analysis of the Spanish cases, and a greater focus on aspects of similarity, rather than on any theoretical novelties brought by those cases.

Moreover, the density of the ethnographic work has sometimes clouded the quality of the academic work. PAR is an immersive methodology that brings the researcher's work into play in a profound and sometimes difficult way. In this sense, involvement in participant relations has sometimes precluded the necessary distance for the formulation of quality theoretical work. The comparison with the Spanish case promised to mediate, open and modify this limitation, thanks to the intervention of a context less known to me, but this comparison took place under the condition of the limits posed by the pandemic.

The eminently participatory nature of the research led me to report more on the innovation and effectiveness of the spaces, rather than the boundaries and limits of that type of collective action. This limitation responds, on the one hand, to my inability, while building relationships of intimacy and collaboration, to fully see contradictions, and on the other to a sense of responsibility towards the representation of feminist spaces, in a world in which feminist spaces and the lives of women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people are exposed to high levels of social inequality and attack.

Research has met the human limit. Very often fatigue, exhaustion, saturation were a boundary in pursuing the research. Emotional, physical, or material limitations did not allow me to collect as many interviews as I would have liked, to persevere in the search for a contact, to be always present at the activities of the spaces when it would have been necessary. The flow of life, which goes beyond the research, with its sorrows and mourning, sometimes caused setbacks or drops in research performance. Sometimes it was impossible for me to continue writing, to tap into a source of creativity that seemed to me to have dried up, or to deal with the emotions that the field, but above all beyond the field, lapped up. In some ways, the research tries to recompose this split between reason and passions. It attempts to look at passions also as a boundary to self-expectations, and that this may not be a failure, but a possibility to be authentic in the research process.

These limitations open up future venues for research. On the one hand, in the deepening of the theoretical contribution that research so far has proposed. On the other hand, in the development of a more effective joining of techniques between PAR and CGTM. Moreover, future research could more systematically address the relationship between feminist spaces and the political, economic, and

social structure, improving our understanding of a social phenomenon that, while limited in empirical data, may be capable of generating transformative consequences at a more general level.

10.5 Epilogue

This research focused on feminist spaces as safer spaces in urban contexts for women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people. Why is feeling safe still a political claim, in a world where gender mainstreaming has made its way into European policies, gender equality plans are mandatory for research bodies, and there seems to be some general awareness of social inequalities?

In Italy, male violence against women affects 31.5% of women between the ages of 16 and 70. These data, reported by the ISTAT (National Institute of Statistical Research) survey hide a submerged part of the phenomenon, because violence is still considered a private matter, or a responsibility of women. The latest ISTAT report (*L'effetto della pandemia sulla violenza di genere*, 2021), dedicated to the effects of the pandemic on gendered violence, denounces the increase of the phenomenon in 2020 and 2021. Lockdowns and forced cohabitation situations in the domestic space have increased partner and cohabitant violence. Although it is still difficult to capture the long-term aspects, anti-violence centres report a marked increase in women's requests for help.

Violence against women is a widespread phenomenon that takes many forms: from physical to sexual violence, from psychological to economic violence, from persecutory acts such as stalking to feminicide. In addition to direct violence, women are also victims of structural violence, that is, violence that makes them invisible or diminishes their needs in many fields, from medical to urban. At the international level, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has taken a political stance against all forms of gender-based violence, adopting over the years a series of resolutions and recommendations calling for legally binding rules on preventing, protecting from, and combating the most widespread forms of gender-based violence, such as the Istanbul Convention (2011).

Cities are often precluding personal and collective safety, the possibility of reconciling life and work. They expose women, lesbians, trans, and non-binary people to violence and inequalities with highly relevant consequences for the full realisation of a good life and the achievement of full rights (Oberhauser et al. 2017). As shown by several studies at national and international level, data disaggregated by gender are very often lacking on many issues: starting from access to mobility, access to services, and the usability of public spaces (schoolyards, playgrounds, the walkability of squares and streets, other public places), housing and housing hardship. This lack of data and attention means that in urban design and planning the needs of this part of the population are not taken into

account. Thus, public spaces are inadequate and poorly usable, and they generate structural violence (Oberhauser et al. 2018).

During the 66th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, on 18 March 2022, the international network of local authorities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), organised an event on feminist municipalism as an empowerment pathway for women towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cities like Madrid, Paris, and Vienna developed innovative strategies toward a gendered understanding of the urban space, and some of them collaborate in international networks, such as Gender Equal Cities and Gendered Landscape (URBACT).

These elements are too little present in the public debate, and make the reaction to the phenomenon of gendered violence and gender inequalities disjointed, aphasic, or ineffective. Violence seems to be an emergency, a surprise, the result of a sudden burst, when in fact it is the mirror of a social structure. Feminist movements sensed that in the general silence, a response from below was necessary, and that the opening of spaces in the urban context would allow, on the one hand, to make violence a public and political issue, taken in charge by institutions and population, and on the other hand to change the fabric of the urban space itself. In this sense, feminist spaces represent a case for capturing collective action that address gender-based violence and produce social change. The change is not limited to the terrain of violence, but questions the economic model, the institutional set-up, the cultural paradigm. Breaking down the opposition between reason and emotion allows us to glimpse new spaces for collective action. The example of feminist spaces therefore refers not only to feminist movements, but more generally to a new relationship between social movements, affect, agency, and structure. The exploration of these spaces thus provides significant information about the quality of democracy and the forms of ongoing collective action that push to change its patterns in everyday life.

> At the end of the evening, when everyone has gone away, we go out into the garden. Someone comments that there is an eclipse and we all turn our eyes to the sky to look at the moon. Lena says that there is a very famous Italian singer in Romania, who did a song about the moon. Claudia comments that Lucha is one of the few places where boys and girls can see the moon in the neighbourhood, and also in the city. They often discover here what the moon looks like. Because the city is made of tall, attached buildings, from which you can't see the sky. Whereas here there is a large garden, an open space, and you just have to look up to see the stars and the moon. And the planes too. So children learn two things in Lucha: what the moon is and what planes are.
> When we go away, Lena looks out of the kitchen window, and starts the song about the moon by the Italian singer she likes so much. As we close the gate, we hear her humming to the rhythm of music. (Fieldnotes, LYS, 16-07-19)

This episode, retrieved from the fieldwork in Lucha Y Siesta, tells of the aspiration of feminist spaces. Places of creation, where women, lesbians, trans and non-binary people learn to see the moon again.

The moon as the hidden side, often dismissed, of affect and emotions, and the comprehension of what that side allows to do.

With eyes turned to the moon, to the rhythm of the song sung by Lena, this journey comes to an end.

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Annex A: List of Interviews

	Nickname	Feminist Space	Age	Gender	Date of the Interview	Place of the interview	Role
1	IR1	Casa Internazionale delle donne	58	F	08-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, common space, third floor	Activist, communications manager
2	IR2	Casa Internazionale delle donne	70	F	09-05-19	Personal office, Pigneto	Activist, founder of the House, ex part of the board
3	IR3	Casa Internazionale delle donne	45	F	20-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Caminetto Room	Receptionist
4	IR4	Casa Internazionale delle donne	70	F	27-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Caminetto Room	Activist, founder of the House, member of the board
5	IR5	Casa Internazionale delle donne	73	F	27-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Caminetto Room	Activist, member of the board
6	IR6	Casa internazionale delle donne	67	F	28-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Board's office	Activist, member of the board
7	IR7	Casa Internazionale delle donne	69	F	30-05-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Caminetto Room	Activist
8	IR8	Casa Internazionale delle donne	68	F	05-06-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, giardino	Activist, candidate for House's presidency
9	IR9	Casa Internazionale delle donne	72	F	09-06-19	Casa Internazionale delle donne, Board's Office	Activist, founder of the House
10	IIR1	Lucha Y Siesta	37	F	17-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, common living room/garden	Activist, receptionist
11	IIR3	Lucha Y Siesta	43	F	22-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, garden	Activist, anti-violence operator
12	IIR4	Lucha Y Siesta	53	F	23-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, garden	Activist, anti-violence operator
13	IIR2	Lucha Y Siesta	37	F	23-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, library	Activist, librarian
14	IIR5	Lucha Y Siesta	33	F	24-07-19	Private house	Activist, anti-violence operator
15	IIR7	Lucha Y Siesta	35	F	25-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, library	Activist, anti-violence operator
16	IIR6	Lucha Y Siesta	51	F	25-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta	Activist, anti-violence operator
17	IIR8	Lucha Y Siesta	30	F	26-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, common living room	Activist

18	IIR9	Lucha Y Siesta	66	F	26-07-19	Lucha Y Siesta, garden	Woman living at the Lucha
19	IIIR1	Cagne Sciolte	32	F	08-11-19	Casa Zaro, Kitchen	Activist
20	IIIR2	Cagne Sciolte	37	F	09-11-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
21	IIIR3	Cagne Sciolte	30	F	12-11-19	Casa Zero, kitchen	Activist, founder of the space
22	IIIR4	Cagne Sciolte	30	F	14-11-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
23	IIIR5	Cagne Sciolte	30	F	21-11-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
24	IIIR6	Cagne Sciolte	35	F	25-11-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
25	IIIR7	Cagne Sciolte	30	F	26-11-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
26	IIIR8	Cagne Sciolte	33	M	03-12-19	His office	Activist
27	IIIR9	Cagne Sciolte	35	F	10-12-19	Casa Zero, my room	Activist, founder of the space
28	IIIR10	Cagne Sciolte	31	F	12-12-19	Her apartment	Activist, founder of the space
29	IIM1	Eskalera Karakola	31	F	26-06-20	Her apartment	Activist
30	KM1	Upm	72	F	13-08-20	B&B Alghero	Key Informant
31	IIIM1	Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros	24	Gender Fluid	21-08-20	Online Interviews	Activist
32	IIM2	Eskalera Karakola	37	F	21-03-21	House of a friend	Activist
33	IM1	Espacios de igualdad Elena Arnedo	42	F	24-03-21	Espacios Elena Arnedo	Coordinator of the space
34	IM2	Espacios de Igualdad Juana Dona	44	F	28-04-21	Online	Coordinator of the space
35	IIIM2	Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros	30	F	28-04-21	Online	Activist
36	IIM3	Eskalera Karakola	54	F	23-05-21	Bar Pramya	Activist
37	IIM4	Eskalera Karakola	47	F	24-05-21	Her house	Activist
38	IIM5	Eskalera Karakola	54	F	14-06-21	Online	Activist
39	IIIM3	Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros	37	F	01-06-21	Online	Activist
40	IIIM4	Plataforma Encuentros Bolleros	54	Non binary	02-06-21	Online	Activist
41	IM3	Espacios de Igualdad	37	F	16-07-21	Online	Dinamizadora