We Make Effort

Reflections on feminism, togetherness and practicing in the context of design

Master’s Thesis for Master of Arts
30 credits
Contemporary Design Programme
Department of Design
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2019
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Abstract

This master’s thesis is a practice-based design research on personal experiences of practicing feminism collectively in the context of design. It stems from a place in time colored by a societal sense of urgency, value contradictions with practicing as a designer, and not knowing how to negotiate them in practice. The object of study is the practice of a group of five called Designer as Feminist (DaF), which the author herself is part of. The research material consists of the engaged practitioner’s reflections on practicing within a two-year time period in 2017-2018.

This thesis is a theoretical work that seeks understanding about the relevance of a personal, politically and researcherly oriented collective practice in design. The research question is two-fold: How can I understand 1) experiences of Designer as Feminist practice and 2) collectivity with a feminist orientation in the context of design? Thus the thesis contemplates on the personal and general meanings and potentials of a collective practice in design. Another objective is to contribute to a general discourse on alignment of values in professional design practice, as well as feminism and collectivity in the field of design. The work also aims to illustrate a contemporary example of a collaborative, socially engaged practice in design.

The work consists of introduction, presentation of research tools, three chapters of discussion, and conclusion. Chapter one introduces the background, practical research context, aims, as well as research questions and structure of the work. Chapter two presents the research approach, theory
and methodology, as well as methods applied in the work. In chapters three to five, answers to the research questions are sought through analyzing experiences of practice. In these chapters reflections on practice are described, juxtaposed with feminist theory from design, architecture, arts and cultural studies, and finally interpreted through the chosen theoretical lenses. Chapter three discusses motivations for Designer as Feminist practice, chapter four explicates collectivity as a form of practice, and chapter five interprets DaF practice in the context of design. Chapter six entails concluding insights, personal thoughts, critical reflection on the process and future directions.

The work suggests that experiences of DaF practice indicate a variety of personal, and general meanings for collectivity with a feminist orientation in design. The practice itself is interpreted as feminist efforts, togetherness and practicing. Personally, the practice provides recognition, release and mental resilience, as well as challenges and growth to the practitioners. As activity, it entails relational practice, meaning intentional making of relationships. In general, framing a creative practice this way opens into a discourse about values, norms and practices in design. This prompts contemplation on what processes in design produce: attention to making of relationships renders it as action that not only complements politically oriented collaboration in design, but is a transformative practice in its own right. The outcomes of this practice are relationships.
Tiivistelmä


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Prologue

If you cannot get out of something, get into it.

How do you find your way into it?

Find people who think.

Make friends.

!?

There are no histories of collectivity in design...
... or rather, those are not the histories we know of.

Fig. 1: Discussion between a first-year master’s student and three professors in Critical Design Practices course, in October 2018.
1. Introduction

This is a master’s thesis about understanding a personal practice, whose relevance I can sense, but cannot explain. The work stems from a specific experience: a sense of urgency. The experience is personal in coloring my view of my studies thus far, and the profession I am graduating into. It amplifies a dissonance between practicing professional design, and the politics of it. The sense of urgency is present in my everyday. It is a shared experience, as the dissonance is audible in student cafeteria lunch conversations. It echoes in friends’ stories of colleagues that ”gave up on design”. It rings in university classrooms. It is emphasized in conferences, and articulated in diverse design publications. The sense of urgency has pushed me to search for ways to practice design with political intent, and with other people. Thus this is a master’s thesis about feminism, collectivity and related efforts in design.
In the background a sense of urgency

My sense of urgency stems from an awareness of the contemporary social, political and ecological turmoil. During and around my master’s degree studies the war in Syria and people seeking refugee revealed a prevailing xenophobia and racism in Europe. The United Kingdom voted for leaving the European Union and became a signifier of growing disintegration and nationalism. Donald Trump was elected as the president of the United States, which rendered sexism and racism socially accepted. And throughout my years in the university, diverse climate disasters, as future potentials and lived realities, have become evident. These events, among others, seem to manifest in and around me as growing anxiety. It’s a mixture of an urge to do something and a paralyzing uncertainty.

These experiences are not only in the back of my head, but also patterns in the backdrop for practicing my profession as a designer. In a professional context, my sense of urgency culminates into a dissonance between what I’ve learned provides a livelihood for designers and what I believe should be cut down for social and environmental reasons: the nonchalant creation of consumables contributing to excessive production and consumption, as well as to reproduction of unequal social structures. This dissonance embodies in and around me as feelings of pressure and not knowing what to do. It produces a sense of precarity: Can I handle these contradictions? What could I do otherwise? What flows in if I rip this part of my practice out? My abilities to attend these feelings, alongside figuring out ways to make a living in design, are severely restricted by competition and individualism characteristic to cultures of practicing design. They amplify the dissonances, which further fuels my sense of urgency.

The sense of urgency is personal, but political in its prevalence. The origins of the dissonances and uncertainties reach wide and far, and I can try to unravel it from where I am. That is, from the abstract but immanent experiences in my everyday, as a part of practicing in the field of design. After seven years of studying, these are components that I’ve become entangled with, and feel committed to work on. In my pursuit, I am encouraged by the political geographer Tuomo Alhojärvi, who has argued that in the times
of such upheavals, a situation we’ve never been in before, it is relevant to start transformative thinking from anywhere and everywhere.

These are my reasonings to start my thinking from very close by. I discuss links between practicing design, personal societal senses of urgency as well as feminism and collectivity, by analyzing a practice I am part of: Designer as Feminist. I enter this inquiry through experiences of practice, which I see as a way to grasp macro scale phenomena in human scale. I proceed from uncertainty to asking: What can we learn about practicing design “at the end of the world” from our own experiences? What can I learn about my own practice in design against this background? In the light of this, what should we focus on in our current practices, and what might it require from us?

Dissonance and uncertainty are evident in the analyzed experiences of Designer as Feminist practitioners. They are not something I aim to solve, rather to negotiate with. In this attempt, feminist thinkers back me up: they show me ways to attend to senses of urgency and uncertainty with criticality and responsibility, appreciation and hope. They help me see and name what is already felt, by acknowledging factors in lived realities overlooked by other critical thinkers, such as gender. They point out to me that what I do might matter too by depicting contradictions as a mesh of personal and political processes. They encourage me to attend to dissonances through reflective analysis of my surroundings. They also show me ways to question bothersome givens through active de/construction of my self and surroundings. With these thoughts I begin my inquiry.

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1.2 Designer as Feminist

This thesis is anchored in a collective practice I am part of: Designer as Feminist (DaF). It is a socially and politically oriented initiative in design, practicing awareness raising through research, design and action in Helsinki, Finland. The project emerged from the architecture student Marja Rautaharju’s idea to plan and organize a workshop on design, architecture and feminism in late 2016 and is on-going. In this thesis I discuss experiences of Designer as Feminist practice over a limited two-year time period: from the beginning of 2017 to the end of 2018. During that time five people from different areas of, and with differing relationship to, design were engaged in the project: Henna Herranen, Eevi Saarikoski, Pauliina Nykänen, Marja Rautaharju, and me, the author of this thesis.

During its operation in 2017-2018 the definition of Designer as Feminist varied between a workshop, a project, a working group, and a collective. This fluidity of definitions represents its loose organizational structure; the goals, intensity, methods and outcomes of practice have altered. We haven’t had an explicit code of conduct in our practice. At most, we have worked on a project multiple days a week, multiple hours at a time. At its least, there have been months with nothing else than sharing thoughts and links on a digital chat platform. Even during these times we’ve seen each other in non-work mode (Fig. 2). Thus the project is maintained through formal gatherings, through personal reflections in between them, and through sustaining our relationships to one another. In addition an archive of meeting minutes, readings, and project documentation has been gathered online. These files and bytes on a server are kind of a signifier of the otherwise wavering practice.
Fig. 2: DaF practice is supported by our mutual recreational activities. Kivinokka is a place in east Helsinki that functioned as a setting for an informal get-together in July 2018. It represents the kind of contexts, which facilitate the formation of our relationships.
DaF runs in parallel to studies and paid work. We come together mostly evenings after other obligations, or weekends on our leisure time. Sometimes it’s been just two, other times all of us—the relevance of attendance has depended on the agenda of the meeting. This fluidity requires constant negotiation between how much space is left over from other things in life, and how much space from other things in life we wish DaF to occupy. We have had no common, physical place of our own, which makes DaF a ‘nomad’ practice. When we convene, we meet in the kitchen, living room or studio of one of us (Fig. 3&4). We take turns in hosting and visiting. All in all, the extent of the project depends primarily on each of our personal resources. This makes DaF a vulnerable practice.

Designer as Feminist is self-initiated and independent from institutions. It stems from personal senses of urgency reflected upon first-hand experiences and observations of studying and practicing design in Finland. At the time of starting the project, we found contents in design and architecture curriculums uncritical of societal structures that we strove to be critical of. Moreover, in our experience both disciplines entail conventions that might duplicate inequality and reinforce gender-related power structures in society. We found it dissatisfying and alarming that this link between design, politics and societal issues seemed weak, or non-existent in Finnish design discourse. Relating to each other through this criticality of institutionalized design, and will to emancipate, we came together. Thus Designer as Feminist emerged, and still does, as reflexive, explicitly political practice that has a feminist agenda.

3 For a more detailed description of ambitions, see Mission statement in Appendix.
Fig. 3: DaF in brunch working mode in a living room in spring 2017.

Fig. 4: DaF in laptop working mode in a studio apartment in spring 2017.
SUMMARY OF DESIGNER AS FEMINIST (Fig. 5)

WHEN?
2017-2018

WHO?
Five practitioners in different branches of design. We have in common: age (within 5 years range), gender (cis), mother tongue, nationality, ethnicity, higher education in design, intersectional feminist vantage point, sense of urgency over societal issues, criticality of conventions and cultures of design...

HOW?
Not-for-profit, self-initiated practice running in parallel with studies and paid work.
Self-financed and voluntary work: 21/24 months
Grant-funded work: 3/24 months

WHERE?
No DaF space exists. We have taken turns with hosting meetings at each of our homes. Additional working sessions have been taken place in city libraries, university libraries, private studios and cafés.

WHAT?
Researching: Reading feminist theory, design theory, critical essays and writings; attending events; benchmarking related practices and projects
Reflecting: Individually and collectively; on how to practice well; on what to produce; in, on and for action; on emotions; on personal desires and intentions; on communication and relationships; on societal phenomena
Conversing: Sharing; listening; commenting; asking
Producing: Visual identity; mission statement; curated set of readings; workshop (Fig. 6); Tactics Needed publication including workshop exercises and a collection of feminist tactics for designers (Fig. 7); a website
Mediating and disseminating: Readings; findings; tactics; definitions; reflections
Resting: leisure time together and apart; taking a break
OCT-DEC
New routine:
Bi-weekly meetings
on Wed 6-8 pm.

JAN-JUN
Planning grant work:
2-4 meetings/month
+ 1 weekend “camp”.

2018

JUL-SEP
Grant work 1-2 days /week:
making a two-year plan,
writing a grant application
& composing a publication.

(*)
Exercise 6 OUTCOMES

Simple and important
The most Important things to share
• common experience
• trust, honesty
• personal values

The very basics
- asking help
  • being on time as demonstrating respect
  • bringing humor into workplace
  • taking stress
  • it is ok to be weak or vulnerable
  • displaying empathy
  • transparency
  • colleagues also as friends
  - getting out of the office

How to arrange work
Power, rules and hierarchies at work
- not totally specified professional roles
- being critical of organically emerging power roles
- flat hierarchy
- rotating coordinator role
- credibility towards democratic decision making
- everyone knows what others are doing

Getting paid
- 40hr day
- working extra = getting paid extra

Feedback is important
- making feedback part of the work
- “yes, and...” instead of “no, but...”
- weekly feedback dinners
- feedback in all stages of project

Flexible working
- Orange communication channels
  - skype
  - flexible working hours but some common fixed hours too

I, we or a broader we
Common and personal
- no one owns the work, it is collectively owned
- we instead of you /I
- building work process together
- clear roles, visible responsibilities
- mutual project sharing platform (socialisation, website)
- possibly letting go of authorship
- also possibility for own projects
- choices for shared mental breaks
- also personal interests present and visible

Sharing with someone outside the office
- flexible workplaces that can be shared also with visitors
- sharing resources / links / research
- different / changing “we”s)
- local community engagement
- a broader “we”
- open source
- creating spaces and events to share good agenda

Nice but sometimes difficult
Making things nice
- shared drinks
- shared meals with collaborators
- bring parents to work
- cooking and eating together
- Monday lunch / Friday beer, everyone present
- cleaning together
- random new shared experiences
- a common hobby in which everyone is bad at
- collective diary
- flax 4ever (having coffee)
- meetings that are not about work
- post-it confusion wall
- common few time without alcohol
- breaking the social norm

Critical social sustainability
- not spending all the time together
- phone shows
- a silent room for silent work
- “three things that irritate me”-sharing
- weekly meetings / group therapy
- caring for yourself and others
- respecting others’ limits (how much work)
- give post mortem / worst case scenario
- making rules for communication (for example online work)
- limits for working – forced chilling
- sharing experiences of past conflicts
Aims and contributions

The initial aim of this thesis is to better understand a practice I am part of personally, professionally and politically. Personally, I seek awareness of intentions, events and impacts of practice in order to better understand its relevance for me and my peers. I also aim to clarify the disciplinary relevance of practice; how the experiences, motives and events within it position it in the field of design. I also attempt to understand the political relevance of collective, explicitly feminist efforts in design.

A further objective, and a theoretical contribution of this work, is to highlight the meaning of designers’ subjectivities in the critical discourse on practicing design. This entails acknowledgement of personal histories, experiences, and senses that underpin and motivate practice. It also emphasizes critical reflection on perceptions, beliefs and expectations related to being a designer as a central method in practice.

In parallel with increasing my own understanding, I aim to produce knowledge that consolidates discourse on collectivity and feminism in the context of design. My objective is to critically discuss motives, forms and outcomes of practicing design, and draft new framings rooted in feminist theory. I seek to emphasise the interdependence between designing subjects, practices, professional fields and broader societal contexts, which expresses the relational implications of practicing design. This is my contribution to critical discourse on design practice.

Finally, this thesis bears political and pedagogical aims. I want to tell a story about a practice of a kind that is underrepresented in the design canon. It is a contemporary design practice that values contemplation, collectivity and political awareness. The described experiences of DaF practice are not only research material, but also examples of working together with contradictions. Through them I wish to encourage others to seek for connection with others, to find their own ways of organising practices, and to negotiate complex experiences through practices in design.

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1.4 Research questions & structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first one is a general introduction and the second presents the research framework. The following three chapters answer my research questions, and the final one concludes insights from this discussion. My research question is:

How can I understand... 
experiences of Designer as Feminist practice... 
&
collectivity with a feminist orientation...
in the context of design?

The discussion of these questions extends to chapters 3-5. Together they form the substance of this work. In the middle, in chapter four, is my topic: feminist collectivity. In order to understand it in relation to time and place, my inquiry begins from what led to it in DaF, and continues with speculation on the influence it might have: What was it a reaction to? What has followed from it? In other words, the proceeding is somewhat linear: I begin chapter three from describing what underpins feminist collectivity, continue in chapter four to cover experiences of it, and finally in chapter five interpret the practice it has led to.

Chapters 3-5: 
3. Motives
4. Resulting Events
5. Emergent Practice

Subchapters:
n.1 Naming Experiences: I feel...
n.2 Gaining Lenses: I look through...
n.3 Sharpening Views: I see...

The discussion within chapters 3-5 consists of three parts. First I reflect on experiences with/in DaF to provide a relatable starting point for discussion. This sub-chapter is called Naming Experiences. It entails descriptions of what is felt in Designer as Feminist practice. Second, I introduce and interpret
theories I've picked up to sharpen my understanding of the described experiences. This sub-chapter is called *Gaining Lenses*. Third, I analyze how I perceive experiences through the lenses I've picked up. This sub-chapter is called *Sharpening Views*.

The third sub-chapter presents a two-way relationship between practice and theory: I don't only gain a sharper view to my experiences through theory, but also a clearer understanding of theory *through experiences*. This structure manifests the methodology and methods deployed in this thesis: Reflection on action, on theory, and making discoveries alternate. Practice is a relay to theory; theory is a relay to practice, and so on. Both increase my understanding of the other.

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This thesis is not meant to be conclusive, but contemplative. The three main chapters (3-5) are stories; of getting into feminism because of something we cannot find our way out of; of finding people who think to think with, and of making of relationships, friendships. They are personal experiences of feminism and collectivity intertwined with my interpretation of them in the context of design. I weave together many voices to compose a narrative that depicts my findings about practicing togetherness through feminist efforts in design. Though in a linear format, I promise this simultaneous uncoiling of many stories, thoughts and questions, and weaving them together won't result to a smooth fabric. There will rather be many threads sticking up, tickling, waiting for being pulled and tied somewhere.

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2. Research tools

This chapter introduces the research framework of this thesis; the approach, theory and methodology applied. In addition it sketches out my research process through describing methods and how they were used.
2.1 Practice-based design research

The main material discussed in this thesis consists of reflections on DaF practice. Thus my research approach is practice-based design research. Definitions of practice-based research are vague and dispersed as most research is somehow based in practice. Still, the most encompassing definition of this research approach seems to be “original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice.” Thus ‘practice’ is the word I use when I discuss my object of study, Designer as Feminist in general. In my use it means “a body of knowledge that is in constant flux, responding to new material conditions and ways of thinking.” It is what I inquire into by analyzing and interpreting experiences of practitioners.

Framings of practice-based research emphasize the meaning of subjective interpretation and experiential knowledge over abstract theory and

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objective knowledge. Moreover, when the person conducting the research is a practitioner themself, in-depth knowledge related to practice may be gained. In the context of design, practice-based research is also reasoned through conceiving designing as a unique way of knowledge production; instead of solving problems, it may generate new questions. This not only destabilizes the intellectual base of knowledge production, but also meshes theory and practice with one another.

In this thesis my own and other practitioners’ experiences of practicing are treated as a source of knowledge about feminist and collective perspectives of practicing design. Researching theories and practices of design this way also frames my work as research into design. Related to research into design, but clarifying my research approach even further, is the idea of a view from outside in. Though I am situated within the field of design, I bounce my questions about experiences of practice and collectivity on theories outside of design. The views I gain through these lenses from other disciplines sharpen very specific components of my object of study.


15 Mazé and Redström “Difficult Forms.”
Feminist, critical and post-structuralist theory

Theories exploited in this thesis represent feminist perspectives in the fields of design and architecture, art and philosophy, and cultural studies. By feminism, I mean a political interest in relation to the ‘bodies, spaces and histories ‘women’ assume and occupy’ 16. In the society local to me, what a woman may look like, which mental and physical spaces she has access to and influence in, and which experiences constitute her may be diverse—but they are still restricted. This goes for other genders17 too, and the mental and physical structures that assign which bodies, spaces and histories are for whom, are subtle but strong. Thus feminism is a movement to end sexism—the restrictive use of power in relation any sex or gender—in general 18. The need for it manifests in our bodies, environments and narratives, which makes it a relevant vantage point for researching design.

Critical theory and post-structuralist philosophy inform this thesis. Critical theory is a tradition in social sciences, and a school of political philosophy characterized by an interpretative approach and an aim to dispute actual social realities 19. It highlights reflexive and emancipatory use of theory 20, which manifests in the chosen methodology. Post-structuralism is a branch of postmodern philosophy that calls attention to relationships between knowledge, discourse and power 21. In post-structuralist view, all


17 Not only gender, but also other (chosen or externally given) attributes, such as ethnicity, nationality, ability, class, worldview and so on, in combination with gender or each other, determine bodies, spaces and histories, persons may occupy.

18 In feminist theory this framing is called intersectionality. It is a conceptual tool for understanding how multiple intersecting attributes within a person influence their position in the complex, social hierarchies of different bodies in a society.


21 Fletcher, “Relational Practice,” 164-165.
knowledge is a historical and contextual composition of meanings that is produced and reproduced over time. No knowledge is absolute, but our understanding of relations and meanings of things is socially constructed in specific conditions with specific power relations. Thus what is ‘known’ may also be deconstructed through critical analysis.

Finally, this work is also informed by the established combination of the theoretical perspectives introduced above, known as feminist post-structuralism. This refers to the work of feminists who have exploited post-structuralist philosophy in deconstructing systems of sexist discrimination and oppression, through language or otherwise. Furthermore, feminist post-structuralist projects do not simply dismantle existing discourses, but actively construct new ones. The influence of feminist post-structuralism manifests in the following chapters as I exploit deconstruction as a tactic for (1) problematizing the production of knowledge about design by applying feminist theory, (2) de-stabilizing definitions of practicing in design by articulating new intentions and tactics and (3) creating a space to discuss normalized definitions and conventions. These tactics are applied particularly in chapter three, as I discuss deconstruction as a way of resistant knowledge production, in practice and theory, in design.

2.3 Reflexive methodology

This thesis is based on reflexive methodology. Reflection means consideration of a unique situation, which seems both similar to and different from a familiar situation, in order to gain more nuanced understanding about it. Using reflection in research implies to both understanding what has happened, and finding ways to look forward. The empirical material for

22 Alvesson and Sköldberg, Reflexive Methodology, 213.
25 Crouch and Pearce, Doing Research in Design, 45.
26 Ibid., 47.
this thesis consists of my and four other DaF practitioners’ reflections on experiences of a collective practice. This is reflection on action, which means reflection that includes analysis of thinking, actions and feelings of professional practice in retrospect. Finally, as DaF practice is ongoing, some realizations about my topic result from reflections in action, meaning insights gotten during conversation, collective brainstorming or writing as it happens.

To be precise, I make a distinction between reflection, critical reflection and reflexivity. Reflection refers to simply acknowledging what is happening or has happened and staying within the confines of a system of practice. Critical reflection questions the observations raising from the research and provides them a potential to facilitate change. Then again reflexivity refers to seeking awareness of the social context that forms the practitioner themself, their practice and their agency. It entails an intention to emancipate, and thus instigate a change in perception of self, in action or in positioning within a context. In the thesis, I use all these concepts respectively.

Reflection is central in feminist methodology. It highlights the importance of personal experience and feelings as a source of knowledge. In my work I inquire into my topic through reflecting on reactions to events—senses. I analyze them reflexively to understand the experience of practitioners in relation to practices and contexts of practicing. They provide me information not only about individual mental states, but also about broader mentalities. In other words, I use relatable micro scale views and feels to make sense of abstract theories.

The pattern of reflection repeated in this study resembles a hermeneutic circle: a repetitive alteration between a pre-understanding and (new) understanding of the object of study. I repeated this kind of pattern in

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28 Ibid.
29 Crouch and Pearce, Doing Research in Design, 47.
30 Ibid., 46.
31 Ibid., 49.
32 Alvesson and Sköldberg, Reflexive Methodology, 217.
33 Ibid., 81.
my process: I started with personal reflection on practice to gain a pre-understanding of events with/in DaF. I then navigated towards readings that resonated and clarified that pre-understanding. This selection process was reflexive, as I engaged with texts with an intention to gain new understanding of experiences and agency of DaF practitioners. Finding theories to relate to affirmed or refined my pre-understandings and gave me a push to proceed; zoom in or out, apply methods, and make discoveries. These, in turn, led me to new questions and the circle started again.

Finally, some methods of reflection applied in this thesis are inspired by disengaged organizational ethnography. It is a theoretical framework for researching a context that is well known to the researcher. Disengaged organizational ethnography calls for a curiosity towards a normalized context of study, sought of paradoxes and incoherencies in it, and openness to be surprised by it. It emphasizes ‘distancing’ as an overarching principle in its strategies of theoretically informed interpretation. This methodology has inspired me to (1) actively engage with theory and analysis during empirical research to maintain a look from the outside in, (2) juxtapose theoretical propositions to my empirical findings, to perceive irrationalities present in practice but absent from theory, and (3) use figurative language in my writing, to make the ordinary seem exceptional.

2.4 Methods for making sense

The main methods applied in the making of this thesis include mapping concepts, drawing and categorizing timelines, literature review, and writing. In the course of the thesis these methods have repeated in slightly different forms; in structured and less structured ways, individually and collectively. At each turn they have been used as methods for reflection: both on experi-

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36 Ibid., 110.
37 Ibid., 107
38 Ibid., 109.
ences, and on theory that has been read in parallel.

My sense making process began from mapping. I identified components of DaF practice in general, and then named and categorized specific events from 2017-2018. This process was semi-structured, and aimed for comprehending the object of my research. In addition it was a base for my material collection.

To collect material for my research, I facilitated a structured, reflective workshop\textsuperscript{39} to my colleagues. Based on my mappings, I had produced a timeline of 2017-2018 depicting all DaF meetings, readings and other related events (Fig. 8). First in the workshop Eevi, Henna, Marja, Pauliina and me annotated that timeline together, and simply “documented” our collective practice (Fig. 9). Then, we drew personal interpretations of that timeline individually. This time the focus was on emotions evoked by events on it. Finally each of us individually typed detailed, figurative descriptions of three to five personally influential events on the timeline. In choosing these events, I asked to reflect particularly on confusions and paradoxes in order to bring forth particular parts of practice that feel puzzling. Altogether, the material I collected from the workshop consisted of one collective timeline, three personal ‘emotional timelines’, and five written descriptions of three to five influential events.

In analyzing the research material I developed visualization and mapping methods. I ran a series of experiments of re-drawing the DaF timeline and events on it based on different categorizations (Fig. 10). This way I tried to comprehend the two years’ time entailing an incomprehensible amount of overlapping processes. First and foremost, the visualizations and post-it maps were a sense-making tool—something to grasp the complexity of my research material with. They reflect on my education as a designer, and represent use of artistic methods in the work. These compositions supported me in analyzing experiences of DaF practice, and in categorizing them according to events, components and senses.

Alongside making sense of my material I searched for readings that would resonate with my findings from it, and on the other hand help me further in analyzing the events and experiences on the timeline. I browsed texts that had provided me insights to feminism in design and architecture earlier in my studies, and searched for literature that would land on the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{39} For workshop outline, see Appendix.}
Fig. 9: Research methods: material collection in a facilitated workshop.
Evolve, color coding participant personas, personal picks, and use of different icons for categorization.

Fig. 10: Research methods: Visual analytics. Three remakes of the collective timeline from left to right: Hierarchizing memorable.
intersection of feminism, creative practice and collectivity—or at least on
two of the three categories. Thus I searched databases and bibliographies of
inspiring works for texts that would discuss the complexity and ambivalence
of collaboration; the labor and dynamic of practicing collectively, not just
the form, or pleasure of it. I found what I was looking for not quite from the
field of design, but from architecture (Jane Rendell and Doina Petrescu), arts
(April Durham), cultural studies (Sara Ahmed) and organizational studies
(Joyce K. Fletcher). As described above, the choice of key texts was eventu-
ally reflective and intuitive; I included literature that provided me words to
describe my peers’ and my own experiences.

The last of the four main methods mentioned is writing. I choose to
highlight it explicitly, because in this work it had three functions: 1) a way
to describe experiences of DaF practice in the workshop, 2) a way for me
to process the theory I was reading, and 3) a way to weave together these
two kinds of knowledges, and thus a way to understand design\(^{40}\) in this final
written work. In other words it was my conscious choice to make text the
core of the final outcome of this thesis, and thus writing the means to create
it.

The method of writing highlights the collective and dialogical nature
of the project I write about. Firstly, the thoughts I express about practicing in
this thesis are inherently informed by my peers, or even collectively formed.
Secondly, the practice of DaF is multivoiced. Therefore I make space for all
of our experiences without me interpreting them on the way by using direct
quotes or translations of quotes of my peers. This way the voices of my peers
also disrupt my narration and the reader has an opportunity to make their
own interpretations of the reflections. Still, it is important to keep in mind
that in this work the quotes are framed explicitly by me. They are taken out
of the original context, the mental landscape of the writers, and interpreted
and recontextualised by me. They represent my interpretation as much, or
maybe even more, than they express the initial meaning of the writers.

In the writing, the choice of words reflects my research process. I
began with a vague understanding of the nature of Designer as Feminist;
of what it is we do in design, and of how that relates to feminism. In the
course of the work definitions of DaF, of our actions, and of their relation
to feminism vary. As the discussion proceeds, I present new terms. The

defining experience evolves from collaboration, to collectivity, to togetherness; the form morphs from a working group, to a project, to practicing; and the orientation turns from feminist theory, to feminist practice, to feminist efforts. This evolution of definitions manifests my gradually increasing understanding through writing.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the variety of communication methods used in this written work. Manifesting my methodology, senses (emotions, sounds, visions, and feels) are present in the language and other communication mediums used. The anecdotes, translated quotations, direct quotations, and references to places, moments and situations through pieces of music or food are here to tie this work into time and place. This underlines knowledge as tied to specific experiences in a specific body in place and time—knowledge as situated. This way of communication is my way to add a material, relatable layer into this work that otherwise runs the risk of being very abstract. It is also a conscious tactic to include our social and material environments into a discussion on togetherness, and acknowledge their agency in it.

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41 Visually, these contextual cues and different text (and sometimes non-text) types are distinguishable from the main body of text through layout, and through coding that refers to the source of the material. Quotes from written reflections (WR) and personal timelines (PTL) collected in the workshop are under quotation marks. The reflections translated from original linguistic form (from Finnish to English) are marked with (transl. AT). Other text types include anecdotes written from memory and song lyrics—both laid out in italics. They are handled as figures, and include a respective caption.


3. Getting into feminist theory

In this chapter I write about addressing knowledge—both theoretical and experiential—in practice. I pore over Designer as Feminist as a working group that initiated collaboration as a response to their personal experiences. In addition I explicate what inquiring into feminist theory might do, personally and in design.
3.1 Senses of urgency

The senses I begin my inquiry from are those of urgency. They seem to underpin Designer as Feminist practice. I acknowledge urgencies, which means mindfully attending to the emotions practicing design evokes. In this process complex, and in my case compromising, feelings in relation to practicing design unravel: they entail concern, awareness of dissonance and precarity. Acknowledging these feelings has called for rethinking motives for practicing design with/in Designer as Feminist.

3.1.1 Concerned

Before Designer as Feminist was initiated, general experiences of concern over environmental, and political issues locally and globally had been occupying our minds (Fig. 11). Consequently, pondering on the possibilities to make an impact as a designer became acute. On one hand these reflections highlighted the disconnect between what we were doing in our studies and profession, and what happened in the world we were part of. On the other hand, examples of grasping the issues with simple, designerly means such as a rescue boat design competition, seemed reductive, simplifying and potentially even harmful. The concerns seemed to compromise practicing design: they caused inconvenience in projects and difficulties to imagine a future for ourselves as a designer.

"... I’ve been living in a state of crisis for so long..." WR

"... a feeling that something needs to be done. Concern over economic policy, environment, minorities...” PTL
I hope I'm right when I'm speaking my mind
I hope I'm right when I'm speaking my mind
I hope my life is no sign of the times
I hope my life is no sign of the times

I've been looking for the golden trees
I don't wanna see the killing of those leaves
Maybe I'll just press my hands on it

Haven't we all?
Haven't we all?
Haven't we all?

It's a lot for me to take
Where do we...
Where do we...
Where do we...

I hope I'm right when I'm speaking my mind
Where do we...
Where do we...
Where do we...

I hope I'm right when I'm speaking my mind
Where do we...
Where do we...
Where do we...

I hope my life is no sign of the times
Where do we...
Where do we...
Where do we...

I hope my life is no sign of the times
Where do we...
Where do we...
Where do we...

I've been looking for the golden trees
I don't wanna see the killing of those leaves
Maybe I'll just press my hands on it

Where do we...
Where do we...

Fig. 11: James Blake's I Hope My Life released in 2016 represents a contemporary sense of urgency.
3.1.2 Dissonant
In parallel to diverse political crises around 2016, my feminist consciousness started to strengthen. I learned about intersectional feminism, a concept in feminist theory, which highlights the stratification and co-existence of multiple discriminatory systems such as sexism, racism, classism and capitalism, and their differing impacts on diverse bodies in the society. One of us took a step further: In late 2016 Marja, a friend and a colleague, reached out to me and three others to plan and organize a workshop on design and intersectional feminism. Though approaching both design and feminism from different directions, all of us were motivated to learn more about intersectional feminism. We found it a promising critical tool for working with our dissonances with design, and for gaining understanding to frame alternatives.

“Frustration: feminist analysis of the field of design depicts it unequal, discriminatory and exclusive. Realisation: this is upheld by practice” PTL (transl. AT)

“...inclusivity and commons are my rational values, but still I feel the urge for ownership of ideas and initiatives.” WR

“[there’s a] belief in the worth of everyone’s contribution no matter how big or small, but paradoxical difficulty in acting accordingly in practice...” WR

“there’s a difference in thinking through personal precarity, and potential profit from this action, and thinking through the issues we advance...” WR

3.1.3 Precarious
Simply recognizing what in our personal practicing might be problematic has not provided us alternative models per se. Rather, rejecting dissonant motives, forms and practices has left behind uncertainty of what to do instead. Though analysis and problematization of mentalities and practices in design has evoked ideas about what might need to be unlearnt, we are unsure about what to learn instead. Examples of alternative paradigms and ways to practice design are in no way obvious, taught to us or visible. We find ourselves in a place of uncertainty. Despite our criticality and having found feminist motives for practicing, we don’t know what design that would feel less dissonant would be like. This makes our professional identities dissolve,
because it’s no more clear in which forms and practices we should professionalize.

”... how to be an anticapitalist designer?” WR

“Uncertainty about our direction... I don’t know what others wish. What do I wish? Does it match with others too? There’s a paradox in having to take others into consideration in the expense of “loosing my momentum”, expressing myself, and being productive...” WR

“What would a critical, constructive design practice be like?” PTL

3.2. Feminist criticality and design

3.2.1 Personal and political movements
The dynamic of the feminist movement may be understood through experiences of personal movements. ‘Movement’ may express a motion, a change of position, both physically and mentally. In feminism, it may refer to beginning to feel differently or sense wrongs in the everyday. Thus movements represent a risen awareness of subtle but strong everyday inequalities in the society we live in. We begin to sense the world we live in. The cultural theorist, feminist and activist Sara Ahmed claims that one needs to be moved this way to become a feminist: moved to reflect on what’s wrong, and moved to act.

Feeling differently may lead to knowing differently: a sense of urgency may enable becoming aware of what’s wrong. When attended to, feelings become signals of specific events that strike dissonant chords. They point out things to look deeper into. Momentarily this attention given to concerns might amplify the sense of wrong. But when reflected on, a sense

46 Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 3. See also Hemmings “Affective Solidarity,” 151.
of urgency provides information about specific mental and physical structures that underpin social inequalities. A clearer string between our emotions and what in the world evokes them, emerges. Thus an experience forms into knowing something new about the world. And that knowledge might be so loud that it cannot be ignored.

A feminist awareness may inspire to make moves in the form of political actions, acquiring knowledge and forming relationships. A need to solve the trigger of concern can inspire activism for desired political ends. An urge to understand the experiences can motivate taking steps towards understanding better, and even towards producing new knowledges. And a need for allies and support can provoke reaching out to others. Thus a dissonance may establish a desire for transformation, which when shared, may connect us to others, and become a movement.

These kinds of movements also happen in design. The architectural theorist and activist Jane Rendell has discussed them through her framing of feminist modes of critical spatial practice. Despite her stance in architecture, with critical spatial practice she seeks to encompass a diversity of practices in design that cross over its historical, cultural, theoretical and methodological disciplinary borders. They are characterized by reflection on structuredness and relational politicality of subjects, selves and spaces. This critical reflection may induce an awareness that connects to perceiving and practicing design otherwise. Thus feminist modes in design entail work, which may be considered to offer a critical feminist alternative to conventional design practice. They propose new methods, methodologies and motivations for design.

Attending to dissonances in relation to practicing design may motivate criticality of design practices, theories and histories. Sensing wrongs and searching for clarity from feminism may lead to developing a structural understanding of design. This reflection bridges a gap between personal experiences and specific societal structures that design practices and disciplinary conventions reproduce. It may create an awareness that motivates rethinking ways of practicing. For example, sensing wrongs in the prevailing

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49 Ibid., 31, 60.
52 Crouch and Pearce, Doing Research in Design, 46.
53 Ibid., 17.
economic system might evoke criticality of the economic frame of professional practice. This dissonance has induced creative practices and everyday activities, which seek to resist global corporate capitalism as a dominant social order. In other words, creative practice is a way to seek release to societal concern, and gain political agency.

3.2.2 Compasses
Perceiving this impact feminism may have on design highlights the meaning of interplay between theory and practice. Theory might sensitize us to reflect further on our field. Rendell underscores the nature of practice and theory as relays from one to another: the theoretical knowledge may evoke changes in how we think and practice and the transformed practice may change what we know, e.g. about design. The role of theory, then, is to be directive.

Especially reflection on theory from outside design and architecture may be used to challenge methodologies and terminologies within these fields. Feminist theory may sharpen a view into design as an action and discipline that reproduces—maintains or duplicates—certain societal structures. Perceiving the link between practice and theory, personal and structural, may motivate an interest towards the process of design: what does design do and how? In particular, Rendell highlights the use of theory in connecting design to reproduction, meaning activity that maintains or duplicates a prevailing system. Turning into observing the field of design with tools from outside of it may provide us a clearer view, and vision of what to let go of in our own practicing.

Observing design profession through feminism includes a reflective, political and dynamic understanding of the designer’s subjectivity—the perceptions, beliefs and expectations related to being a designer. A political understanding of subjectivity of the designer establishes an interest in the position and agency of the design practitioner. Who practices design, where and when makes a difference in all the contexts a designer operates in. This is reflection on the structuredness of the design practitioner themself. It establishes a critical awareness of one’s perceptions, positioning, actions in

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54 Ibid., 24.
55 Ibid., 23.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 18.
58 Ibid.
relation to it, and their impacts – on one’s relational and contextual subjec-
tivity. In other words, this is reflection on not only practice, but on the
practicing self, and their relations to others.

3.2.3 Not knowing
Attending to societal concerns and becoming critical of the field, practice
and subjectivity may lead to not knowing what to do. Rendell underlines the
importance of this, as it motivates reaching out to theory. Our curiosity for
alternatives guides us to new domains which may “generate new resistant
forms and modes of knowledge and understanding” that challenge domi-
nance and control over ways of knowing and doing.

Practice and theory are closely interdependent in feminist critical
spatial practice. Dissonances sensed by a practitioner lead to becoming
critical of conventions and practices. Abandoning them leaves behind a
space of not knowing. Thus feeling confused with what used to be familiar
is a motivation to know otherwise; to fill that space with feminist modes of
critical spatial practice.

A feminist project does not simply critique, but also transforms—it
combines critique and production. It is not being content with just pointing
out what’s wrong, but seeks to find other ways. Altogether, feminist modes
of critical spatial practice build on attending to issues, raising awareness—and
constructing alternatives. They call for giving up our previous designer selves
who knew how to practice design, to find new ways to organize them.

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59 Shana Agid, “What Do We Want?: Designing Cultures of Care in Conditions of
Precarity,” in Designing Cultures of Care, ed. Laurene Vaughan, (US: Bloomsbury,
2018), 58, ProQuest Ebook Central.
61 Ibid., 22.
62 Ibid.
3.3 Moving motives in design

3.3.1 Being moved
Concern pushes us to act. Personally, I have experienced that attending to how I feel put me in connection with the world. I discovered that my concerns evoke a need to act politically but considerately. It was a response to a lack of political agency and of means to influence as a designer. Professionally, I felt detached from critical issues in the society I am part of. I felt clueless about what I could have done, but irresponsible for not doing anything, and sensed an urgency to do something.

I wasn’t the only one that urged to negotiate contradictions in practice. In DaF, we found alignment with each other from societal concerns that had been stewing and growing. These feelings, experiences of living in this context and in this body, prompted action: we were moved to come together (Fig. 12). We shared a need to investigate design discipline and practices from alternative vantage points. We had a mutual urge to discuss and search ways of making design from contextually specific, power-sensitive perspectives.

It is central, that instead of concerns turning us away from the field, we turned into it. We addressed senses that signaled needs to map ways of practicing design in ways that would align with our values and worldview, and to proceed towards these ways. This manifests how reflection on personal experiences pushed us to bridge gaps between individuals and realms.

3.3.2 New directions
Dissonances point out directions to look deeper into, and to look into design from. In DaF, we took a look deeper into the festering structures in society from feminist theory. We reflected on how these structures manifest in design, and potentially precondition our personal practices. The dissonance between what we had learned to do in our profession, and the impact we would have wanted to make, became more and more evident. Together, we were prompted to search for clearer understanding and critical feminist alternatives for conventional design practice. We attended to where the frictions are the strongest, and found new vantage points.

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"...I am swimming breaststroke in Yrjönkatu swimming pool when an idea of a workshop takes shape in my mind... Some specific parts of my life—what I have experienced, read and discussed—suddenly condense into a clear form..." WR (Transl. AT)

Fig. 12: Attending to personal experiences can take place in a place of self-care, relaxation and cleansing. Yrjönkadun uimahalli, a public swimming pool in Helsinki.
Our relationship to the field of design has been influenced by picking up and sanding our own feminist lenses, and examining our field and professional practices through them (Fig. 13). We have gained new views, which reveal complex relations. This is a shift to understand our profession in a systemic and structural, in addition to a practical and personal, scale. We have aimed to perceive and critically evaluate design's entanglement to the surrounding society and environment. We have come to detect insensitivity and duplication of inequality between different bodies within the design profession and through practicing the profession of design. We have acknowledged the inner contradictions this evokes.

"[Donna] Haraway's painterly and playful style irked me at first, but it was at the core of what I needed; somebody to push me to value not knowing and not fully understanding - of being playful and hopeful... [Tuomo] Alhojärvi exposed modes of thinking that I've had no name for before. I felt relieved and excited... These texts in themselves were just milestones that marked how far we've come in our thinking. They didn't revolutionize anything by themselves, but signposted learning processes that are ongoing." WR

In addition, we have learned to move between general and specific analysis to gain understanding on how we are part of sustaining problematic structures. This has raised an awareness of relational subjectivity, and motivated a critical awareness of our selves as designers. We have reflected on economy, competition and individualism, working conditions and patterns and forms of production within the field. Our reflections concern not only what we do, but also how who we are influences what we do: our backgrounds, privileges, and working motives influence which impacts we might make. Through our work we duplicate our beliefs and worldviews, which are in no way universal and neutral, but partial and biased.

"...discriminatory acts don't often repeat intentionally or out of bad will. It has helped me to see myself as a part of a system, which always has some impacts, independent of intentions. It has changed my thinking and understanding of the meaning of self-reflection and questioning: I believe it is essential for making structural changes." WR (Transl. AT)

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64 Jo Freeman's article "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" written in 1973.
These learnings from Designer as Feminist practice manifest the dynamic of attending to dissonances: it has provided, and keeps providing us new perspectives on design. Analyzing design through feminist theory has lead to problematizing conventions in design and questioned learnt motives for designing. During our collective learning process we have one by one shaken thought structures of practicing design: i.e. universality and neutrality of design, the taken-for-granted problem-solving mindset, design as material production and design as apolitical self-expression. In the process we have also understood that feminist theory or agenda cannot be simply applied onto design as a field, and our practice as we had learned it. Rather the more we learn, the more it seems the fundamentals of thinking design will have to change for practice to align with feminist ideals.

"I do not believe that I’ll find a silver bullet for feminist design - something I’ve been subconsciously hoping for." WR (Transl. AT)

3.3.3 At the fringe of what we know
Uncertainty signals we’re on the verge of new domains. Uncertainties with our dissonances made us ask questions and look for ways from feminist theory, and from coming together. Right before making those moves, in the moment of uncertainty we experienced the imbalance of being on the verge. Despite, or maybe because, of the time we’ve spent together, we keep having questions we have no answers for. This has laid the ground to making use of theory to “find new resistant forms and modes of knowing and understanding” 65. The not knowing has become a reason to act, and redefine motives, forms and practices of design—at least those of our own.

The uncertainty springs partly from becoming to understand the complex networks in which practicing design takes place. We no longer know what design even should be like. We have discovered feminist ideals, but admitted that we don’t know what feminist design is, or would be like. As Rendell puts it, we have exchanged what we know about design to what we don’t (yet) know 66. But it has also highlighted the meaning of our own

66 Ibid.
maailmankatsomuksen taipumus jaksaa maailmaa homonointiteollisten toistojen ja
hamonointiteollisen poliittisuuden kategorioihin (Kattee 2015). Millaisia epäonnistuneita
epokaliisihopea ja globaalia sdesta kertovan, vaihehetemattoman realistiseksi? Oletut
iedon avulla?

Sedgwickin (2003) nostaa paranoidon tietämisen piireenä esiin myös negatiivisten
afektiivien keskeytyvien. Lähkökohtena on se, että paranoida ja repressiivinen ajattelu sopi
ovat molemmat tapojen reagooida maailman muuttumiseen ja aihdistukseen (ks. myös
Hanson 2011). Jos repressiiviselle otteelle keskeistä positiivista afektiivectoa voi kuvata
nauhoitettua, epäonnistunut ja negatiivista tuskani ehtoisenmenta, niin kumpikaan näistä
eli lahtioikohtaisesti muodosta toisista oikeampaa tai realistisempaa suhtautumistapaa koettuaan
keskeyttää (Sedgwick 2003, 138). Mutta näiden erot ovat Sedgwickin mukaan siinä, että
etuisen motiivin ovat teoreosilla erilaiset, ja siinä, että negatiivinen afektiivien kustant
afektiivisen motiivinsa ja voimansa ja naamioitu toimii (mt., 138). Negatiivisten
afektiivien vanhiksi käännöksiä tulee sitä ymmärtääkä realsmin siinä mielessä, että
sillä on suurin, tai vähemmän ”värityksellisiä” suhde todellisuuteen ja tosiaan.

Ennakoinen tietämisen tapana paranoida suhtautuu tuohon todellisuuteen uhanlaisen
ja näiden ennalta tietämisen avulla, uusintaen ja matkien koettiota uhka omissa
käytännöissä.

Antroposkeenaan heijastettuna kiinnostavaa tässä on erityinen se, että koossa
ymmärtämme olevamme antroposeenin sisällä (alajassa ja tilassa), niin on aina
lahjtoikohtaisesti parempia/suurempia syitä epätoivoon ja aihdistukseen kuin toivoon.
Antroposkeen rakentuu erityisesti hätättilä ja Suotta kihvyttää (Great Acceleration; ks. Teivanen
ja Peltari, tässä numerossa) korostaviat visuaalisten ja diskuutivistten käyttöönoton vastaan.
Cookin ja Balayaminsa (2015) tavoitteen tätä pelon ja häärden afektiivisen rekisterin
vaaran rakentamista ongelmanaisyneen, mutta on syntvyt yksi he: he rakentavat pelkkokiristetyn
argumenttiosa sen vaaran, että pelko on luonnon toiminnan motivaatiosta, jossa
en muuteta pelon ja häärden afektiivista rekisteriä tykkäinä, sillä mielen negatiivistien tunteiden
kanssa kulkevien ja työskentelevät välittömästi edellytyksen radikaalimallelle
kääntää huomiota näiden voimakkaiden negatiivisten afektiivien tseisin rookkivaan
toimintaan ja erityisesti siitä, millä tavoin ne saattavat ennalla rajalla maailmollsussa
rakentaa elämisen arvoja, haluttavia todellisuutta (v. Alamo 2016).

tien sulke todellisuuten

Se
spoit
haon
vant
ovat
kol

50

Fig. 13: We find people to think with across physical and social distance, and engage in thinking with them. This thinking with a
agency in making a change. By surrendering to not knowing we may know otherwise. This is a reason to act despite the uncertainty evoked by new domains.

“We are designing a workshop with two out of five us having previous experience in giving one. We are designing a workshop on feminism in design without knowing what it means. We don’t know if there are others interested in finding it out. But we are, and we are learning as we are designing.” WR

Feminism encourages us to consider concerns and to seek knowledge from and through dissonances. It teaches us to pay attention to what to be critical of and what to construct instead. The criticality makes us resent some learnt conventions. The urge to construct makes us seek for alternatives from new places: feminist theory and collaborative practice. Experiences of looking for answers to our questions together show that we have been moved, we are moving something in design, and we are moving towards feminism. Our critical, feminist motives to practice design produce specific arrangements, which I will next look closer into.

“What I’m still very much looking forward to is the connection between these new modes of thinking and my everyday practice. It obviously already exists; I’m a changed person in how I view the world...” WR
4. Finding people to think with

Here I lay out some meanings of being many. I discuss Designer as Feminist as a deliberate project forming around collectivity. I also frame it as feminist theory manifesting itself in practice.
4.1 Oscillation

In DaF, we gather together to talk feminism. In our interactions we experience alignments and fissures with one another. We feel both understood and misunderstood, safe and exposed, belonging and distanced. The following descriptions of connection, relief and disconnection present events in arranging a collective practice. As oscillation hints, it is not a straightforward process of building symbiotic collectivity. Rather, feminism and collectivity expose us to unpredictable influences, to both stability and ambivalence, in our practicing. These fluctuations between fluency and friction in interactions are characteristic to our practice. Their impacts on us and on our ways of practicing might lead to understanding some potentials of feminism and collectivity in design.

4.1.1 Connected

Initiating collaboration for planning and organizing a workshop together was an intentional move. It appeared as a possibility to increase understanding of feminism and design through discussion, bring together knowledge and experience of many, and extend the range of the project. Collaboration was familiar to all of us from our studies; we had been involved in group projects before. In comparison to these previous experiences, creative collaboration in DaF was exceptional. It created a temporary space for gaining knowledge together, and from each other. It felt smooth, energizing and evoked a sense of belonging (Fig. 14). These experiences have motivated us to figure out collectivity as way of working with feminist theory in design.

“...our reactions to one another especially in brainstorming sessions. Magic!” WR

“... Exchanging energies. The flame of other’s motivation is infectious.” WR (Transl. AT)

“... She said she had thought about the exact same thing. I was so excited... We were all talking a lot and very excitedly and were having fun.” WR
Future of DAF: We were having fun.

Fig. 14: In summer 2018, three DAF practitioners were eating ice cream on a sunny porch in east Helsinki, and speculating on the
4.1.2 Relieved
Collectivity has become a form of practicing that supports us personally and professionally. Professionally, it allows us to act upon redefined motives for practicing design: to negotiate senses of urgency, further feminist movement and not only rethink, but remake disciplinary conventions and practices. On a personal level it is a space to acknowledge and process feelings that may have been experienced as compromising professional practice as a designer. As we consider these feelings in searching for future design practices in dialogue and collaboration with others, we sustain one another.

"...this project and collective is a kind of inner armor or spine. In any event the everyday brings with it inequality, neoliberal values and acquaintance’s condescending blurs, which are not to be undermined." WR (Transl. AT)

“I have done group work throughout my studies. What is different this time? How could group work extend to collectivity or even into a sense of community in more occasions?” WR

4.1.3 Disconnected
Practicing together exposes us to challenges of collectivity. We need to deal with each other’s differing needs, desires and capacities that evoke contradictions. Having close peers is not only a support. Time to time our interactions are frictious, and evoke experiences of confusion and detachment. We encounter unexpected fissures, which break the connections in collectivity. They feel disappointing and wearing. Attending to them takes time and resources. It requires ability to consider others, question oneself and make personal adjustments. Uncomfortable, frictious interactions seem to be an integral component in collectivity as a form of practice.

“Our differences, different ambitions and resources, make me feel lonely in my pursues. I’m sad to think having to find others to do things with.” WR

“Crisis... Or should it be called this way?” PTL (Transl. AT)

“I was really angry. I’d been dealing with [their] feelings for a long time, and felt I had to support them in every turn, but that they were still over-committing and then feeling cold feet.” WR
Trying to imagine and translate our learnings from feminist theory into practices in design is a process of trial and error. In our attempts we sometimes make misjudgments and insensitive moves which disrupt our motivations to explore feminisms in design. They feel like failures in a project that is framed as explicitly feminist.

"Believing an experience contradictory to mine. Trying to understand... " WR

"I experience a distance between what I’ve thought is a feminist practice (open communication and caring for others) and the reality.” WR

"For a long time I’ve been frustrated with not being able to find a way to work, which would surely be “right”, “mindful”, “feminist” or something like that...” WR (Transl. AT)

4.2 Dynamic collectivity

4.2.1 Methodology in spatial practice
In design and architecture, collectivity is a customary form of organizing creative practice. As design and architecture are always produced somewhat collaboratively, collective practice is often not perceived to have political intentions 67. Rather, in disciplinary discourse depictions of collectivity are often centered on collaborative production, its benefits as more efficient, and the results of it being more creative or innovative 68. I do not question these visions of collectivity—as a matter of fact descriptions of DaF practice align with them. But I urge to take on another perspective; one that highlights the intentionality and politics of collectivity as a social and relational form of practicing.

Critically oriented descriptions of collectivity depict it as an influential form of practicing. Collectivity is one of five thematics distinctive to Rendell’s feminist modes of critical spatial practice 69. This framing depicts coming together as a political, feminist and anticapitalist, move. It foregrounds

68 Durham, “Slips, breaks and tangles,” 35.
collaboration with all that it entails, and is a way to recognize the value of historically ‘feminine’ reproductive practice. Reproductive practice refers to social reproduction, care and nurture—the maintenance of relationships necessary in collaboration. On the other hand, collaboration with all the difficulty and chaotic complexity it entails may be a tool to emancipate from the imperative of productivity. Valuing the social interactions apparent in collectivity may provide another reasoning to a collaborative practice altogether; one that is detached from measuring its products.

Collectivity is methodical. It enables forming connections between multiple subjectivities, rather than simply existing in them. Referring to Doina Petrescu, a scholar of architecture, gender studies and urban planning, this making might mean being, thinking and acting together. Despite being many, central in it is the conservation of singular positions. Thus collectivity in creative practice does not aim for fading out the multiplicity of subjectivities, but ideally allows for different personalities and disciplines. It accommodates diverse individuals and centralizes interaction. It produces relationships, which are both a frame, and an outcome of the common practice.

4.2.2 Supportive affinity
The quality of relationships in collectivity varies. Within the feminist movement, collectivity refers to specific kinds of relationships. As a tactic of political activism, it describes the making of relationships between indi-

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73 Ibid., 26.


viduals who have been moved towards mutual political aims. In the sought of release, we share our concerns, and move towards each other, towards collectivity. Framed this way a collective practice manifests a belief in eman-
cipation through what people are able to provide to one another: support, encouragement, and shelter. Thus creating connections is not simply a source of efficiency or creativity by being many. It is a means to bring about a particular change through forming strong affinity.

Feminism as a collective movement may function as an external support; a safety net to fall into when one has been radically moved. This safety net of collectivity might “pick up (or more hopefully pick us up) from the experiences that leave us vulnerable and exposed.” 76 It manifests itself through the support provided by dialogue with allies who too, have been moved, and experienced falls. These dialogues might happen in our heads, if the other party is a voice on a recording or text on a page. They might also happen face-to-face with those around us. Either or, these pick-ups are marked by discovering affinities and gaining insight. Feminism as collective knowledge offers us new ways of understanding what we come up against 77. It picks up our bafflement.

Having been picked up might feel like finding a shelter. A collective movement may also be a space like this 78; one that provides a sense of safety. It affords protection from something unpleasant or threatening, like an external projection, or internal expectation. It allows for rest and recovery. Recurring gatherings under feminisms can become spaces for collectively recognizing—sharing and hearing—experiences and thoughts that manifest what still hasn’t ended 79. These can be conventions that convince us that the wrongs we are sensing are not just in our heads 80. In collectivity we may be able to slacken in the midst of personal struggles, and trust that those we gather with understand us, or at least are willing to try. We may feel radically cared for.

In addition to giving each other a break, in a collective movement the individuals may also give each other a push; move each other further to

76 Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 22.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 3.
79 Ibid., 5.
80 Ibid., 3 and 6.
desired, or just more tolerable destinations. I believe a collective movement does not simply pick and hold us up, but lifts us up too through mutual recognition, affirmation of experiences, and encouragement to keep going. Sara Ahmed describes this as a clearing of a path; as more people move to the same direction, even a bumpy path like a feminist project, may be made easier to travel. Those bumps might be uncertainties, blind spots, prejudices and defenses. They make proceeding slow. But others around us may help us in attending the bumps, and show where and how to continue.

4.2.3. Growth from ruptures
Bumps on a feminist path may appear in a collective practice as disagreement and struggle. Collaboration may unintentionally repeat some power structures it seeks to deconstruct. These observations may be interpreted as failure of collaborative efforts, and even instrumentalized for questioning the value of collaboration altogether. But only if they are evaluated by balancing failure and breakdown against specific impressions of success and coherence. In other words, we tend to condemn failures in reaching our collaborative ideals, and loose sight of other impacts of those processes.

The artist and art scholar April Durham has researched strives and failures in creative collaboration. She proposes that the intention of collaborative processes could be reframed; not as goal-oriented action primarily tending to the individual’s sense of cohesion, but as transformative exchange between diverse, interrelated individuals. Discords in collaboration are moments of crossing individual, and collective boundaries. They are "troubling" in evoking questions and experiences of uncertainty. But they reveal previously unknown complexities, which may be framed as potential ways to be and do differently. Thus in addition to the influence of collaboration in general, the slips, breaks and tangles between practitioners may be a particular affordance in creative collaboration, rather than a baggage. The interactions are intense, and as such, influential.

Making of relationships between individuals in a collective is transformative. In a collective project multiple subjects are connected to, and

81 Ibid., 3.
82 Ibid., 46.
83 Durham, "Slips Breaks and Tangles," 35.
84 Ibid., 36.
85 Ibid., 36-38.
impact one another. It may change practitioners’ motivation and engagement, as they may take on new practices, new roles and act upon new potentials. What strives in collaboration add to this, is intensity; the exchanges are extreme. They may shift the subjectivities of the collaborators more radically: their perceptions, beliefs and expectations of themselves may open up and become ambivalent. In conflicts, the movements of subjectivity are rapid and unexpected. These processes of re-constructing subjectivity and trans-subjectivity highlight that practitioners in a project may be a site of change.

Collectivity as a form of practice is dynamic. Forming or acting in collectivity is making, those processes are altering, even and especially when they are troubling. Collectivity may transform the subjects themselves. It may provide practitioners support, push and shelter, or on the other hand throw them off balance in inspiring ways. In collectivity the practitioner becomes a central site of transformation. These vantage points represent a set of values and beliefs beyond conventional understanding of benefits of collaboration. They make relating to others and attending to intense interactions in collectivity manifestations of feminist theory in the form of practicing design.

### 4.3 Transformative arrangements

#### 4.3.1 Collectivity as configuration

Feeling connected signifies the dynamic of collectivity. It draws attention to the significance of interactions and relationships, often perceived as mundane.
and self-evident. Feeling connected has been a change of experience from being alone to being together. This experience is so strong it has motivated new practices: intentional making of relationships between individuals who seek to advance feminism.

"... being many creates a critical energy for something to happen despite uncertainty. We get courage to act in uncertainty...” WR

In DaF we became to experience collectivity by gathering around a shared project and starting to be, think and act together. This exchange of thoughts turned into making of relationships, which has been influential personally and politically. Personally, we discover connections through which we may exceed our individuality without loosing it. We discovered affinity and courage to act. Politically, maintaining these connections manifests feminism and anticapitalism in practice. Through committing to collectivity we reject values embedded in work in isolation: the efficiency, originality and competitiveness. This arrangement is a political statement, and an act of resistance.

Collectivity changes motives of practicing as the relationships become one outcome of practice. Since we first began collaborating, attending to the form of practicing has become a central part of Designer as Feminist. After the workshop we have been committed to processes of collective self-organizing. This appears as on-going trials of collective, feminist organizing, which reflects on the point that has been reached in practicing: laying an equal, or momentarily even bigger, importance to how to work well as what that work will produce.

"A lot of effort and learning has to go into using methods and tactics for enforcing feminist practices in teams that have some methods and a semblance of "shared" culture, but that are malleable.” WR

4.3.2 Affirmative potentials
Feeling relieved manifests the affirmative potentials of feminist collectivity in design. These include possibility for a practice to be supporting, encouraging and nurturing. They are realized in DaF practice. It has become a space to attend to feelings of uncertainty. Collectivity has provided a sense of safety through practice—something I had not experienced before. I feel relieved
when my peers in DaF share my concerns. I feel guided when a feminist in a book provides me words to describe a contradictory experience of mine, or explains why it might have happened. I feel safe when I know my peers have seen what I see. I feel picked up when a mistake I did is analyzed with me in conversation.

"This was a highly needed experience in my life. That someone invites me along based on the questions I’ve been working on. I feel myself a relevant debater.” WR (Transl. AT)

"... there is a power that is deeply essential, wonderful and repeating in this action... Often before predetermined planning and other meetings I have felt somewhat tense. Challenges are enormous and there’s a lot to do and simultaneously one should be able to take care - of oneself, and others. Still I feel that often things resolve somewhat like this: after a half-an-hour discussion we get into a flow and we are very excited about the issues we are discussing. This way we get close to topics and get a hold of them. This kind of reminds me of why Designer as Feminist is so amazing and important project, and why we, particularly, do this work together.” WR (transl. AT)

As in feminist movements, affinity in collectivity is a potential means, form and aim in politically oriented design practice. We pay specific attention to the kind of relationships we make. We aim to try out and develop collectivity that would accommodate emotionally, socially and economically sustainable individual and collaborative practices in the context of design (Fig. 15). We have become committed to being connected to each other this way, as a form of practice.

"I am honest about my capacities. I try not to perform strong out of wish for social acceptance...this collectivity has always considered emotions. It is part of the femininity of collectivity. That one doesn’t need to force oneself to be of a sort, or of a certain sort...” WR (Transl. AT)

Collectivity has shifted from a mere form that emerged as a means to execute a project, into a resource and a project as such. This way, we are intentionally making caring relations to make an impact in our lives, in design and in our surroundings. Rather than being simply a means to an end, feminist collectivity is experienced as a promising, and supportive arrangement in design as such. It can configure political practices and potentials in design.
“Reactions to questions, interactions, and consequential rewarding experiences function as motivators to practice design in a way none of us is an expert at.” WR

4.3.3 Challenging potentials
Feeling disconnected manifests the challenging potentials of feminist collectivity in design. They include the slips, breaks and tangles\(^\text{94}\) of collectivity and the possibility of being in the wrong\(^\text{95}\) despite one’s feminist intentions. Feminist efforts and creative collaboration don’t simply smoothen our way out of urgency, but expose us to knowledge that might put us off balance, or point to a direction we never considered existing. Thus DaF practice appears as of border-crossing that opens up unexpected potentials. It is troubling, and therefore it is generative.

“Although I did the right thing in apologizing for the inconsiderate exercise, this was an experience I would not have wanted to confront... This event pointed out to me that I need to take better care of myself... What is my way to be a part of organizing feminist activities?” WR (Transl. AT)

“Mistakes are valuable as moments of learning, but how to deal with the pain of making a mistake and potentially hurting someone?” WR

Experiences that have followed complex and affective events in DaF reframe failures and frustrations as openings. Although frictions have been experienced the most painful and threatening part of DaF practice, they have generated transformations with consequences that are unraveling slowly in practice. We may be curious of these yet unknown ways to be and do as our selves, feminists and designers. The idea of transforming subjectivities in collaboration\(^\text{96}\) highlights a very relatable, constant in-betweenness and uncertainty that being and doing considerately in relation to others entails (Fig. 16). Seeing collaboration in collectives not as a limiting load, but as a generative troubling is reaffirming.

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\(^{94}\) Durham, “Slips, Breaks and Tangles.”

\(^{95}\) Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 6.

\(^{96}\) Durham, “Slips, Breaks and Tangles.” See also Petrescu, “Being-in-Relation.”
Fig. 16 Representation of our ambivalent subjectivities in making feminist moves together.
“This conflict made me realize that although we have differing resources, capacities and desires to test our potentials, we are all mutually responsible for the project. Everyone is responsible for their personal wellbeing, so we may participate with differing intensity. But in relation to that we are responsible for each other of the continuation of the collective project in satisfying measure.” WR

The experiences of collectivity in DaF render it a project of making of relationships. These processes are transformative in being both affirmative, and challenging for practitioners. They hint towards potentials that forming intentional relationships may have in a creative politically oriented practice. Next I will discuss how to interpret these transformations and the opening potentials in the context of design.

“I learn to open up to other’s ideas... Experiences form into thoughts that form into ideas that come out of our mouths as words and enter each other’s awareness, moving something, prompting reaction, creating a response that is rooted in the original experience but has morphed through an other’s interpretation.” WR

“I am slowly starting to comprehend the contradiction of trying to be in the right, which essentially seems to be a problematic structure...” WR (Transl. AT)
5. Making of relationships

In this chapter I interpret addressing experiential and theoretical knowledge, and committing to collectivity. I depict Designer as Feminist practice as a process of practicing that enables experiences of togetherness. I frame this process as making feminist efforts in design, and speculate on their influence on design practically, theoretically and politically.
5.1 Estrangements

Designer as Feminist practice evokes experiences of not belonging: invisibility, misplacement and overwhelm. Taking on feminist perspectives and collective practice makes us distanced from some conventions in design, and drafts other imaginaries. They depart from what we used not know practicing design is. This process appears to me as movement from design as I knew it, towards what we believe it could be. We are figuring out potential personal and collaborative, feminist destinations, but they keep moving as we keep learning. Often this constant operating at the fringes of what I already know, and of definitions of design, makes me feel misplaced. It is an ambivalent state.

5.1.1 Invisible
DeaF practice deviates from our pre-understanding of design work. We mainly don’t do what we have been educated to do as designers. Rather, in our practice we seem to think and talk much more than design. We interact with one another rather than with clients, users or stakeholders. We reflect on our relational processes more than on our creative ones. We make continuous efforts to be attentive, sensitive and accepting. In the lack of precise definitions, we have referred to these reflective, social and organizational practices in DaF as ’meta-work’.

"... a large part of our time goes into reading, discussing and discussing readings... We reflect, reflect, reflect...” WR

This focus on relations has reserved majority of our capacity, and made production of public outcomes with/in DaF rare and slow. Despite finding many kinds of new connections personally, our practices have been experienced unproductive and even futile. The effectivity and ”products” of our practice are difficult to demonstrate to others, and challenging for us to perceive. We loose sight of our work contributions and impacts.
"... in 2018 our activity hasn’t had an explicit impact outside the working group... Realizing this opens a window to my own emotions [of detachment]... I realize I’m not in this primarily because the topics and content and activity as such interests me, but because I want to impact the world around me, and change it.” WR (Transl. AT)

5.1.2 Overwhelmed
Commitment and efforts without clear results feels sometimes overwhelming. We are constantly in a state of anticipation as we try to make changes in design according to feminist and collective ideals. We anticipate what could be: becoming different, knowing and acting differently, and making the world somehow different. Instead of perceiving these transformations, in DaF practice I more often discover how little I know about feminism, and about collectivity. In addition the link to design I am trying to weave feels like constantly being in a breaking point. We keep trying to practice well, but the efforts are wearing and reaching a final feminist destination in design does not happen. We keep being on the move.

“It felt from the start of DaF like we’d each been tugging a corner of a sheet in our own direction, things kept falling out of our sheet and somehow there wasn’t room for everything... I’d been afraid that we would start focusing on things, which felt unimportant... Then I was afraid we’d exclude things that were too difficult...” WR

“I don’t know what others wish. What do I wish? Does it match with others too? There’s a paradox in having to take others into consideration in the expense of “loosing my momentum”, expressing myself, and being productive...” WR

“I’ve found it both safe and exhausting to try to constantly do the “right” thing... to try to be a good feminist.” WR (Transl. AT)

5.1.3 Misplaced
Feeling misplaced in design means that some familiar definitions—motives, forms and expressions—of design no more accurately describe our practice. We experience a mismatch between our practice and the frame of design. DaF practice has become something that exists outside of, or in parallel to conventional design practices, and personal, paid work. Conceptually, this detaches what we do in DaF from what we do when we 'design'. In our thoughts our work has become an alternative to design work, or somethign that takes place in parallel. Time and time again we find ourselves having
to reason to ourselves, and to others what our motives, forms and practices have to do with design, as we know it. Being misplaced makes DaF situated somewhere in between, or on the fringe of familiar definitions.

"Essentially, I cannot think of practicing with DaF as 'design'. But in a way I can still think of this as an alternative to practicing design work for salary." PTL (Transl. AT)

"I have had very hard time feeling a link between our practice and the practice of a designer. For a long time I thought that nothing has changed in my personal practice: I do the same things on my laptop, and the results look relatively similar." WR (Transl. AT)

5.2 Committed practices

5.2.1 Relational practice: actions, abilities, beliefs
The organizational theorist Joyce Fletcher frames efforts to build and maintain relationships as an intentional, alternative way of working. Her concept of relational practice summarizes specific beliefs, actions and abilities that depict a particular ethic and a rationale for making of relationships in collective practices. Relational practice is motivated by beliefs in relationships being important for the overall project, mutual recognition in interactions fostering mutual growth, and intangible outcomes being valuable. Moreover, the frame of relational practice lays emphasis on particular actions: reflection on emotions, attending to breaks in relations, and non-verbal affirmation. Developing relationally also requires abilities such as resilience with contradictory information, vulnerability, curiosity and commitment to others, as well ability to express & experience emotion. In the context of work, this framing makes unrecognized practices appear. 97

The concept of relational practice provides nuances to practicing design. In this context, emphasis on relational beliefs, abilities and actions brings forward new kinds of values, skills and practices. It highlights the particularity of projects that create connections between subjectivities 98. This

97 Fletcher, “Relational Practice.”
also happens in collectivity as active ‘making of relationships’ 99.

Design as relational practice may be used to form structures for transformative intentional interactions 100 in projects and in the form of a collective practice. This kind of relational practicing provides circumstances for growth-in-connection. Design projects like this reinforce reproductive work and capacity to be-in-relation as means for personal and structural transformation and reinvention 101. As such, they create a discursive space that does not look for material value or profit 102, but is based on other values.

Framing collectivity in design through relational practice lays new kind of value onto all kinds of interactions in creative collective practice. It renders visible design and planning work that foregrounds change through knowledge production, which happens in time-consuming, intentional social interactions. These interactions may be reflected through, and made a central part of a dynamic relational methodology in critical practice 103. The being- and acting- and growing-in-relation might not only the transform the practitioners’ subjectivities, but also their practices and the respective social contexts 104. This way the labor of forming close relations may be acknowledged, and intentionally deployed as part of practice in design 105. Or it may become a feminist practice as such, like making of a collective is.

5.2.2 Feminism is practicing
If collectivity is what’s in the making—the practice—it’s not ready yet. This departs crucially from perceiving collectivity as a foundation for a feminist movement, a given of a sort. For many reasons discussed above, collectivity may be a goal that is being worked toward; a direction sought through active proceedings 106. In this process we engage in dialogue to work out what we—I, you, they—in the search of feminist futures are for and against. For Sara Ahmed, speaking of ‘we’ as such is a hopeful signifier of feminist collectivity

101 Ibid., 107.
102 Ibid., 108.
103 Agid, “Worldmaking,” 47.
106 Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 46.

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an inkling that collectivity in the form of solidarity over diversity may be built.

To see collectivity as a direction and an aim, a critical component of a movement, makes building it part of what Ahmed calls practicing feminisms. ‘Practicing’ refers to action. It has meanings as simply carrying something out, as well as doing something often and customarily. In the context of design it is normally used this way, with a specific emphasis on being proficient, and carrying out this proficiency by pursuing a profession actively. Although the repetition might also describe practicing feminisms, what I read central in Ahmed’s phrasing, is the idea of it as an activity of continuous training by repeated exercises. In comparison to practicing design, this view puts emphasis on performing repeated exercises and working at something to become proficient. We don’t know how to make moves together in diversity yet. We need to practice feminism.

Practicing takes place in many levels. Acting as a part of the feminist movement to instigate large-scale socio-political changes is practicing. Learning to sense personal dissonances, and reflecting on them in person is practicing. Letting oneself transform in intense interaction is practicing. Building collectivity through “articulating differences, confronting our investments and positioning, listening, learning and struggling” is practicing. Despite the diversity of forms, practicing always takes an effort.

Momentarily, it might feel too demanding. It might awaken uncertainties that require giving up on many ideas that we are familiar with, and that provide safety: relationships, dreams, who we are or who we can be. A practice that is ought to be transformative at large calls for an ability to let go of these investments in certain categories and versions of oneself. Thus practicing feminism is not simply about practicing political activism and transforming the world out there. It includes practicing to be, think and behave differently altogether.

Practicing feminism is a process. It begins with the acknowledgment

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107 Ibid., 2-5
of being in need of practice. It manifests as willingness to exceed oneself, to continue despite or even because of obstacles and required efforts. It is motivated by a belief in gradual transformation through patient repetition. It requires commitment to the labor of making of relationships and perseverance of uncertainty in personal growth. It calls for curiosity of what we want the world to become, and what we want to become through practicing. Committing to these processes in design is practicing feminism in design.

5.2.3 Deconstructing narrow structures
Framing relational practice as work results from a deconstructive analysis of work. This theoretical deconstruction problematizes knowledge production about work thus far, de-stabilizes set definitions and opens a space for a new discourse. This deconstruction is feminist as it critically analyses and attends to societal structures that produce sexist discrimination and oppression. It aims to dismantle them and produce new potentially emancipatory knowledge. It is a tactic used in feminist projects to bring forward i.e. experiences, actions and knowledges that disappear in the gaps of an established discourse.

As a framing, relational practice breaks open narrow definitions of work and highlights types of labor that are not recognized in the prevailing discourse on work. The deconstruction happens through discussing gendered nature of organization, and through critically analyzing beliefs built into language when defining work. The discourse that emerges from her discussion challenges assumptions about competence, questions hierarchies and opens a space in which new work practices, structures and norms might evolve. It is a tactic of making work contributions perceivable, known, and thus making them real.

This deconstructive project is demonstrative: it seeks to understand experiences of marginalization and give voice to undertheorized aspects of

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113 Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 6.
116 Fletcher “Relational Practice,” 164-165.
117 Ibid., 163.
nature of work. It includes attending to experiences of mismatch and confusion, and acknowledging a gap between experiences of working, and intellectual knowledge about working. The project detects practices that disappear into this gap: socially connective actions are not recognized as work, but are constructed as something other than work. It analyses a split to public and private spheres of life, and highlights that as tending for connections is historically and culturally perceived as something “feminine”, it is “natural” for women and therefore not seen as laborious. Consequently an organizationally strong language to describe this kind of behavior as work does not seem to exist. Through this deconstruction it becomes clearer why it might be difficult to recognize certain kind of activities as signs of competence, as valuable, and as work. This is influential knowledge about work.

Applying deconstruction to understand a practice in design reveals the diverse forms of knowledge design deals with. Typically in deconstructive analysis the knowledge that gets problematized, the definitions that are destabilized and the new discourse that results, are in linguistic form. Instead, in the context of design knowledge is not only theoretical, meaning words and concepts, but very much embodied and practical. Definitions are not only words, but also actions. Thus the new discourse that emerges is more than written or spoken: it also exists in the form of practices that create a silent dialogue of their own amongst one another.

Framing feminist modes of critical spatial practices deconstructs the theoretical discourse in design. It establishes a parallel discourse, in which uncanonized, non-normative and potentially unrecognized practices are defined as design. It de-stabilizes definitions of practicing design by including into it ones that deviate from the norm.

Practices of these feminist modes, and the formations they result from or lead to, may also be deconstructive as such. They depict deconstruction in practice, as they “thwart, interrupt continuity and make room within the dominating rules in academia, professional practices and public life.” If the format of knowledge produced through design is practice and form, then

118 Ibid., 178.
119 Ibid., 166.
120 Ibid., 181.
121 Ibid., 179.
122 Rendell, “Critical Spatial Practice.”
123 Description of politics of altering practices in Petrescu “Altering Practices,” 12.
that knowledge may be deconstructed through creating other practices and forms. This is a way to problematize “natural” and “neutral” forms and practices in design. Applying the concept of deconstruction into the context of design thus depicts alternative practices as transformative, not only of definitions and discourses, but also of practices and cultures.

5.3 Willful togetherness

5.3.1 Making of togetherness
Feeling invisible signals that we struggle to recognize our work in the context of design. As Joyce Fletcher detects the disappearing of relational practice in her research context, I detect our relational practicing getting lost in ours. We are five women, doing a lot of reproductive work\textsuperscript{124} in our attempts to practice together. We are doubtful about these skills as competence. Rather, we easily revert to normative juxtaposing of relational practice with production work, and what’s worse, the former being an obstacle for the latter. In calling the reproductive practices as ‘meta-work’, we too are lacking language to frame what we do. The reflections on definitions of DaF practice reveal how our efforts to form and maintain relationships seem extra-professional in our internalized framework of practicing design. This makes work disappear, competences disappear, efforts disappear, and knowledge disappear.

"Isn’t this just life, and not design?" WR

Engaging in feminist theory and collectivity has shifted the focus of practice in DaF. Instead of committing to designing as ‘primary’ action in professional design practice, we carefully consider factors that accommodate it: the beliefs, relationships, and arrangements. These factors, previously considered as ‘secondary’ to form giving, self-evident or coincidental, also form the practice – and us practitioners in parallel. Thus what happens around designing, the relationships that create it, is central in our work. We are making of relationships, and therefore engaged in a relational practice that tends to

\textsuperscript{124} See ‘reproductive practice’ p. 59.
connectedness and mutual growth over individuation. Experiences of DaF practice manifest that actions, abilities and beliefs essential in relational practices may also be central in design.

"Me and her were doing the emotional labor of facilitating activity that would be suitable for everybody..." WR

"Maybe there will be new forms of production on their way, but it has required this period of reflection..." WR

In Designer as Feminist relational practice is part of forming relationships that evoke a sense of togetherness. They are close and caring; they hold a promise of feminist collectivity. They contain slips, breaks, and tangles, which open up our unpredictable, personal and collective potentials. Doina Petrescu claims that “A relational and co-operative practice... creates the conditions for a liberating experience that changes both the space and the subjects.” Our experience of togetherness exemplifies this kind of liberating transformation through being and doing in relation to one another. We grow in connections that shift our motivations, form of practice, and practices as such. Our relational practices are part of responding to our senses of societal urgency, and of making change.

"If we are open and honest about our intentions, resources and needs, we can accommodate each other’s different abilities and modes of working. If we don’t communicate these things, we rely on assumptions..., which leads to frustrations and hurt..." WR

"Belief in the worth of everyone’s contribution no matter how big or small... Slowing down in order to support one another.” WR

Actions, abilities and beliefs characteristic to relational practice are historically and culturally associated with relationships in a private sphere of life: family relations, romantic relations and friendship. In case of Designer as Feminist, it is descriptive of the practice that in the course of action existing friendships have strengthened and new friendships have formed. This diffuses the historical and cultural split to public and private (Fig.

125 Fletcher, “Relational Practice.”
127 Fletcher, “Relational Practice,” 166 and 182.
“... asking “How are you doing?” in a situation where there’s time to listen to the answer. It means being quiet and listening. It means accepting that your business is my business. It is our business.” WR

Fig. 17: We let each other into our personal spaces, literally and metaphorically in our relational practice. We diffuse the split to public and private. Photo from one of DaF practitioner’s studio apartment.
17). Though Designer as Feminist is a public and professional initiative, it produces an experience of togetherness that is associated with private relationships. Our friendships construct structures of our work 128. Some practitioners in DaF were friends to begin with, some of us had barely met. I believe the existing friendships surely play a role in our practice, but that they do not guarantee automatically considering each other like friends in the context of working. Rather, intentionally aiming for that is exactly what relational practice means—also in the case of Designer as Feminist. Moreover, the emerging sense of togetherness, and relationships defined as friendships, redeem the beliefs central in relational practice: importance of relationships in a project, mutual growth-in-connection and value of intangible outcomes 129. Friendships make me trust on conflicts, and on the sensibility to explore unknowns (Fig. 18). They are constantly in the making, and they are transformative personally and politically. They emerge in DaF practice, and demonstrate relationships as influential outcomes of design practice in general.

“I had been troubled by facilitating in advance, but I tried to take it easy. Yet, I froze. ... Still, in retrospect I am glad for the moment we shared together around the kitchen table when it was all over. Dusk, a beautiful milieu and my content friends.” WR (Transl. AT)

5.3.2 Making efforts
Feeling overwhelmed signals radical openness to unfamiliar domains. When engaging with feminist theory and putting it into practice in collectivity, we are at the fringe of our knowledge, our discipline, and our skills. We are exposed to unpredictable potentials. This might feel like being all over the place. But actually, it might be that we are simply in between—different versions of knowledges, disciplines, realities, and ourselves.

“It’s a matter of values, like a personal ethical push-up practice, to be part of DaF.” WR (Transl. AT)

128 Friendship as a structure of work is introduced by a curatorial duo ‘nynnyt’ (transl. ‘sissies’) in Louna-Tuuli Luukka, “Hahmotelmia ystävyydestä työskentelyyn rakenteena.” [Sketches of friendship as a structure for working.] Uniarts Helsinki Blog, June 19th 2018. https://www.uniarts.fi/blogit/keskustelua-dramaturgiasta/hahmotelmia-yst%C3%A4vyyst%C3%A4-ty%C3%B6skentelyyn-rakenteena

129 Fletcher, ”Relational Practice.”
Gon' pull me up, pull me up, pull me up
And never let me down (they never let me down)
Gon' pull me up, pull me up, pull me up
And never let me drown (never let me drown)
Gon' pull me up, pull me up, pull me up
And never let me drown (never let me drown)
Gon' pull me up, pull me up, pull me up
I'll never hit the ground (never let me drown, never let me drown)

Fig. 18: I listened to The Carters, FRIENDS (rel. 2018) after a wearing conflict with/in DaF. It was a lucid moment filled with gratitude and trust on the relationships we are consciously attending to.
"The most amazing thing that came out of this crisis was an acceptance and understanding that the most important thing was my inner motivation to this project." WR

The potentials we encounter on our ways to feminist practice and togetherness are abundant and hopeful. Practicing feminism makes us question both what we desire to become, and what we desire the world to become. These questionings also hint towards what we might want design to become in relation to the world, and to us alone and together. It motivates us to give up what we know, and curious of what we could know about design and practicing design. As Sara Ahmed puts it, "Being estranged from one's own life might be how a world reappears...". She reminds me that being estranged from the field of design might be another, more feminist world of design reappearing. Thus not knowing is not a lack of knowing; it is a space to know otherwise.

"It is rewarding and in my opinion important, to handle thoughts and terms, but ON THE OTHER HAND then the sought transformation remains maybe necessarily small." WR (Transl. AT)

"I ponder that in activity like this, which is sort of activism, there must be a balance between the interior and exterior, so that the activity is sustainable. Having written this I realize this is a topic that we've been handling all along: questions of organization, sustainability, and working together." WR (Transl. AT)

Proceeding from sometimes overwhelming uncertainty towards new knowledge makes DaF practice a kin to practicing feminism. There is no way to wipe out the troubling histories and presents that make us, design, and the society we live in. We can't claim to have established a feminist practice, but we may make feminist efforts. In our case it means engaging with feminist theory and constructing a practice that reaches out to dreams or utopias from an awareness of wrongs. This is a willful practicing: we are willing to balance a sense of precarity with curiosity and exchange practice—as-usual to transformative togetherness. We do feel vulnerable, as we choose to reach

132 Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life, 47.
133 Ibid., 6.
134 Ibid., 82-84.
out to what we could know. I perceive this as the opposite of incompetence. I perceive it as strength.

"Nowadays I believe firmly that all knowledge and all meaningful conversations guide me to see or be more receptive to different things than before, and thus act somehow differently..." WR (Transl. AT)

5.3.3 Deconstructive practicing
Feeling misplaced can be an opening to new discourses in design. Acknowledging that DaF practice does not seem to fit into definitions of design practices motivates a deconstructive analysis of existing design discourse and conscious initiation of an alternative. The new interpretations of our practice as making of togetherness, feminist efforts, and practicing inspire theoretical deconstructions. In practice Designer as Feminist deconstructs practical knowledge and does collective re-construction work by acting out alternative values and conventions. Together the theoretical and practical deconstruction make definitions of design ajar, and complement what we know about practicing design with new concepts (Fig. 19).

Interpreting DaF practice as making of togetherness, feminist efforts, and practicing opens up a discourse in which new design values, norms and practices emerge. Togetherness presumes the value of time spent together; the influence we may have on our surroundings and diverse others when we come together. It renders collectivity as a dynamic form of practice, and makes growth-in-connection a norm. Making of togetherness frames relational practices as practices in design. It introduces reflection not only on practice, and on subjectivity, but also on relationships. It makes verbal and non-verbal mutual affirmation a part of practicing design. These practices depend on information acquired through emotions. They teach us to attend to how practicing design feels and embed reflexivity into practice.

Finally, togetherness deconstructs experiences of practicing design; those of our own in practice, and anticipated ones in general. Experiences of relief in negotiating precarity and dealing with a sense of urgency, as well as that of personal growth manifest this deconstruction. They hold a promise of practicing design making us feel different than before.

136 Fletcher, "Relational Practice." See also Petrescu, "Altering Practices," 5.
137 Fletcher, "Relational practice."
Depicting DaF as making feminist efforts frames a context for practicing design that is closer to political activism, than business; we are political allies, not business partners. This shifts the conception of a creative process even further from straightforward production towards wavering training. Belief in our feminist efforts defies the overpowering value of profit, and the consequent efficiency, competition and individualism in design. In DaF this has even generated a new motive for practicing design: negotiation of dissonances through advancing feminist, anticapitalist politics. It anchors awareness-raising practices into practice and moves design practice away from commercial contexts.

Interpreting DaF as practicing, as in practicing feminism, de-stabilizes set definitions related to practicing design. Within these frames we may define competence through ability to be-in-relation, and growth through the increase of that ability. We may define creativity through the capacity to see affirmative and challenging potentials opened up by senses of urgency, feminist theory and collectivity. We may define productivity of practice through making of transformative relationships and personal growth. And we may define success through the number of epiphanies that lead to transformations, no matter how modest.

These redefinitions shift my understanding of an outcome from tangible to intangible. They question design process as problem solving, and depict it as gradual, ongoing and unraveling being- and emerging-with instead. These definitions form a frame for a discourse that is centered on subjectivities, relations, and longitudinal processes as sites and means of transformation in design. This discourse appears through the collective re-construction taking place in DaF (Fig. 20).

"...the essence of our work is understanding and sharing, not the speed, how perfect the execution and how intelligent we become..." WR

"... my [personal] practice has changed. Slowness, finding connections and emancipation are parts of it. This may seem unproductive. This is radical!" WR
“Through analyzing and filtering knowledge, and practicing feminist knowing, we as a working group had succeeded in creating a new, alternative to hegemony, critical, needed, very very real conversation and communal space for over twenty people... This experience left me with a feeling that change is possible.” WR (Transl. AT)

Fig.20: For one weekend in May 2017 the facilities of HIAP in Suomenlinna, Helsinki functioned as a space for a transformative discourse. This space opened up through collective re-construction and theoretical deconstruction of design.
6. Bundling up

This work began from a sense of urgency, and from place of being able to sense, but not explain the relevance of Designer as Feminist practice. I inquired into it to increase my understanding personally, professionally and politically, and discussed feminism, collectivity and related practices and theories in design in parallel. I learned that it takes attending to experiences of urgency to begin to work with dissonances. I perceived that feminist theory, putting it into practice and forming collectivity may provide resilience to practice design with contradictions. And I got convinced that relationships matter, and may be tended to in practicing design.
Concluding thoughts
At the end of this research, Designer as Feminist practice—and feminist collectivity in design in general—appears to me as transformative personally, politically, and professionally. Personally, the practice is a reaction to sensing wrongs, and a sought of release. It consists of engagement in reflection and interactions, which are feminist efforts that provide growth and resilience to senses of urgency and precarity. Politically, Designer as Feminist appears as a form of resistance to neo-liberal policies. As a parallel practice not conditioned to making a living or tied to institutions, it demonstrates the possibility of creating reviving pockets within a profit, competition and efficiency driven culture. In addition, by claiming historically gendered relational practice, DaF acts out feminist politics of work.

Professionally, I now position Designer as Feminist within feminist modes of critical spatial practice. It is also an altering practice that impacts the practitioners, their field, and their social context more broadly. DaF exemplifies making of relationships that prioritize reflection and interactions, and produce new subjectivities. It also highlights the relevance of subjectivities: how we practitioners feel in relation to our context of operation, and who we think we could become, transform what we make of our profession, design. Through taking on unconventional forms of practice unpredictable potentials open up. Thus Designer as Feminist is also a deconstructive practice. It makes the definition of design ajar, and allows new values, motives, forms, and practices to flow into the field of design.

Through this work, I have gained clarity and nuances to feminism, collectivity and DaF practice. Feminist movements generate theory we may inquire into. It may inform new practices, but in the sought of change we still need to make constant efforts. I now understand collectivity as the will and ability to make these efforts through collaboration; as a way to commit to one another; and as a possibility to experience togetherness. Finally, I perceive the evolution of Designer as Feminist from a working group, set out to execute one workshop together, into a project seeking some sort of resolution. Furthermore, it is practicing that strives to acknowledge the processes it engages in as an outcome as such.

I began this work by asking: How can I understand experiences of Designer as Feminist practice, and collectivity with a feminist orientation in design? Now, at the end of the work, my thoughts are already drifting towards what I can do with these insights.
Personal insights & ponderings

This contemplation provided me four personally significant insights. First, naming components in personal practice was affirming and made me appreciate Designers as Feminist in a new way. Secondly, the relationships we make are at least as, if not more, influential than a workshop, a publication, or any other conventional outcome we produce. Their impacts may be unpredictable but vast. This increased my awareness of the relevance of relations that our practices in DaF, and in design in general, produce.

Thirdly, I began to see the power of parallel practices in coping with the contradictory structures within the field of design, and society at large. No practice is problemless, but by aiming to stick to our values in one, we may be able to cope with contradictions better. Finally, I found the interconnectedness of theory and practice both in DaF, and in the making of this thesis, somewhat revolutionary. When I make sense of actions and events, I theorize. When I act according to what I hear or read, I establish practices. Thus a division between the two is more difficult for me to draw than before.

In addition my research process provided me new thoughts. The images—photographs, scans, and lyrics—were originally a method to comprehend and express the contextuality of a relational practice. In the end these illustrations also became a representation of the material with which we make our relationships. If our relations to one another are a major outcome of our practice, then the spaces we occupy, and the varied the resources we utilize are our materials.

When conducting my literature review, I was surprised to discover the scarcity of theory about relationships between practitioners in collectivity in design. Relations between designers and other collaborators were brought up. So were practices of designers facilitating formation and maintenance of relationships of others. But descriptions of how design collectives maintain themselves were slim. Collective practices were discussed mostly in regard to collaborative creative production of some kind. If there were references to relational practices, they did not dig much deeper than acknowledging the importance of thinking and discussing together. Additionally, coverage of relationality of practice, and re-construction of subjectivities, concerned designers’ agency to facilitate those processes for others. In contrast, the dynamic of transforming subjectivities of designers themselves remained unaddressed in the design theory I reviewed.

Finally, I ponder that not all practicing all the time can be like what
I've described in this thesis. Thus I don't see what DaF is doing as a new norm for a design practice in general. Rather, it is something that enriches knowledge about practicing design; it is one way to try out alternatives. Referring to the parallelism of diverse practices, I think the kind of practicing with/in DaF requires an ability to alterate between many modes of practicing design.

From an economic point of view, time and slowness appear to me as characteristics of a privileged state. It takes certain financial circumstances to be able to attend such practice. Or is it a matter of priorities? I am confused about how specific economies orchestrate our lives, and wonder if there are no alternatives, or if we just tend to loose sight of them. This research provided me perspectives to these ponderings, as DaF appeared to me as an anti-capitalist pocket existing within a capitalist system. Not getting income from this practice fundamentally changes the mentality of us practitioners, and expectations of practicing. I wonder what kind of compositions of working life, and financial arrangements would it require to afford these kind of parallel practices in general.

Critical considerations
I found it challenging to find a research framing and maintain it. In my process I experienced an infinite urge to learn, to understand better and to wander further and further. It took perseverance, self-discipline and external input from my advisors to ensure I did not wander too far from the centre of my research area. I was cautious of excessive breadth and lacking depth of the work, but still I feel I ended up touching upon many things, instead of digging very deep into one. In the work this might appear as excessive abstraction. It might have been alleviated by sticking to a tighter framing in the very beginning. Indeed, in many stages of my process I did wish for having been able to do that.

In regard to research ethics, I learned one central lesson about confidentiality. I had not thoroughly considered the responsibility related to publishing my peers' personal reflections. When conducting my research, I did not realize what it might mean for the writers themselves and for others that I de-contextualize these personal, sensitive meditations, even though anonymized. More planning, better communication and vigilance with working with the material would have been beneficial in order to feel more
trustworthy in handling these confidential reflections. With no previous experience of such a research process I feel I was not able to take confidentiality issues into account as well as I would have wanted, when designing the research.

I also find it important to comment on the subjectivity of discussion in this thesis. My work could be seen as self-affirming and as difficult to draw any general conclusions from. These critical considerations make me wonder the value of this research to anyone else than the practitioners in Designer as Feminist, and to me as a reflective practitioner-researcher. I see these as potential weaknesses of this work as a research.

Still, I perceive subjectivity and situatedness also as strengths of my thesis. Though particular and personal, I think experiences of DaF practitioners, and my contemplation on them, provide information about specific ruptures in specific place in time. I perceive myself as one representative of a generation that is expected to make radical shifts in all areas of life within our own lifetime. This responsibility becomes even more evident on the threshold of graduation. As this work negotiates these particular pressures, it is a window into the here-and-now. I hope the described experiences are relatable to my peers, and that the discussion moves others like writing it moved me. I also wish these experiences are insightful to designers and design educators with other kinds of experiential backgrounds.

Research contributions & further inquiries
I see this work as a contribution to methodological discourse on reflection on action and reflexivity in design. This is solely due to getting a permission to use my peers’ reflections as my research material, and moreover as direct quotes. I think they represent vividly what reflection on action, and reflexivity as awareness of ones situatedness and subjectivity, can mean in practicing design. This way I find meaning in this work, not only for myself for making sense of a practice I am part of, but even in the context of design research more broadly. Referring to the aims of this thesis, I also hope I was able to provide some feminist contributions to an existing, critical discourse on design as change making, and on the sense of precarity of practicing design.

In the light of this thesis’ contributions to design research, I see some further directions to continue to, and questions to ask. These are some of the threads I see sticking out from this weave of thoughts. Firstly, I would find it
important to dig deeper into the contextuality of design practices. What kind of material arrangements allow for the kind of relationality practitioners in DaF are committing to? What kind of aspects in the design of the circumstances of our interactions enable that? And from a broader perspective, what kind of economies this kind of mode of practices requires, supports or generates? I wonder, if analysis like this would enable creating socially and financially more sustainable, collective practices that foster growth and resilience through togetherness.

Furthermore, this thesis highlights relations as an outcome of design practice. I find this relational perspective a fascinating premise to base analysis of design practices in general on. It would be interesting to research what kind of relationships different kinds of design practices produce as a "side product", and frame them as equal outcomes. On the other hand, I would find it interesting to speculate on, and try out in practice, what kind of design practices emerge, if relationships were made the main focus.

Finally, I recognize a strong personal interest in these questions from a pedagogical point of view. I would like to ponder on what kind of contents, methods and facilitation could be included in design education to (1) foster reflection on action, and on subjectivity in action, (2) attend to senses of urgency and precarity in practice, and (3) reinforce skills of being-in-relation. I believe this is central know-how for designers practicing their profession 'at the end of the world'.

***

Designer as Feminist keeps practicing feminism collectively in design. We are now more, and we are different, than we used to be. Thus we also have a new name: Effort. It signifies that we are willing to be moved, to explore feminism, and to reframe design. Together we make Effort.
If you cannot get out of something, get into it: Attend to urgencies.

Find people who think, and form collectivities.

Make friends; establish relational practices.
References
Images

Fig. 1 Anecdote from class, October 2018. Written from memory based on lecture notes by author.

Fig. 2 Kivinokka, Helsinki.

Fig. 3 Designer as Feminist brunch. Photograph by Pauliina Nykänen 2017.

Fig. 4 Designer as Feminist working weekend. Photograph by Aliisa Talja 2017.

Fig. 5 Designer as Feminist timeline 2017-2018. Image by Aliisa Talja 2019.

Fig. 6 Designer as Feminist workshop. Photograph by Henna Herranen 2017.

Fig. 7 Tactics Needed Publication. Layout by Pauliina Nykänen 2018.

Fig. 8 Research material: Collectively annotated DaF timeline. Photograph by Aliisa Talja.

Fig. 9 Material collection in a reflective workshop. Photograph by Aliisa Talja 2019.

Fig. 10 Examples of visual analysis. Image by Aliisa Talja 2019.

Fig. 11 Snippet of lyrics of James Blake: I hope my life.

Fig. 12 Yrjönkatu public swimming pool, Helsinki.

Fig. 13 Scan of a text read in DaF reading circle. Image by Aliisa Talja 2019.

Fig. 14 Scan of ice cream wrappings. Image by Aliisa Talja 2019.

Fig. 15 DaF working group. Photograph by Eevi Saarikoski 2017.

Fig. 16 DaF collective. Photograph by Marja Rautaharju 2018.

Fig. 17 Working collectively in a personal space. Photograph by Pauliina Nykänen 2017.

Fig. 18 Snippet of lyrics of The Carters: FRIENDS.
Beyoncé; Carter; Samuels, Matthew; Sweet, Jahaan; Andrews, Denisia; Coney, Brittany; Hollins, Tavor Javon; Esmailian, Amir; Goraya, Navraj and Thomas, Jr. Rupert. FRIENDS. New York: Parkwood. Sony. Roc Nation, 2018. https://www.google.com/search?q=the+carters+friends+lyrics&oq=the+carters+&aq=chrome.2.69157|0j5.5350|0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 (accessed 15.9.2019)

Fig. 19 Designer as Feminist workshop visual identity. Image by Pauliina Nykänen 2017.

Fig. 20 HIAP facilities in Suomenlinna, Helsinki. Photograph by Henna Herranen 2017.

Fig. 21 Anecdote from class, October 2018. Written from memory based on lecture notes by author. Complemented by author.
Bibliography

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Appendix
DaF mission statement

We believe that a strive for egalitarian design goes in parallel with the strive for an egalitarian society. Sustainability of design practice is not self-evident, but requires identification of systemic inequalities and reflection on how design supports them. We are hopeful that intersectional feminism will offer powerful tools to critically assess the societal significance of design and architecture. Therefore, we wish to contribute in the discourse on design for social justice by taking an intersectional feminist stance and exploring its potential.

Dismissing the politcality of design and undermining the responsibility of the designer have a huge impact on design as discipline, the environment and the society at large. This makes us concerned. In addition, from the individual designer’s point of view, the practices and structures within the field of design are often unjust, unsustainable and exclusive. There is no rule of equal pay for equal work for a freelancer, and operating as a professional requires both mental and physical resilience.

The relation of design, unequally distributed power and consequent oppression are overlooked in Finnish design and architecture education. Concepts like classism, colonialism, racism, sexism and ableism are ignored in the curriculum. Thus both the disciplines and the practices of individual designers are rendered apolitical by default. We think that it is necessary to consider these aspects in order to constitute a sustainable design practice.

We want to encourage our peer designers and architects to observe the potential of intersectional feminism in their personal design practice. This means, for example, practicing self-reflection, discerning privilege, questioning authorship and being critical of norms. In addition, the multiple uneven social, environmental and economic influences of design projects must be acknowledged.

Striving for creating inclusive, culture sensitive design is a critical and dynamic position. It is a process which calls for constantly analysing past and present narratives, speculating about futures, and learning capabilities to deal with the inevitable controversies. We believe this is best done together.

Sincerely,

Aliisa, Eevi, Henna, Marja & Pauliina

April 2017
Workshop outline

CHARTING BECOMING WITH/IN DaF
Aliisan gradu-workshop

“The desire for transformation animates feminist praxis.”
Ahmed et al

WORKSHOP OUTLINE
we are all researchers
we share a will to emancipate
we are researching our intertwined personal and mutual becoming
we are zooming into experiences in practice
we are looking for transformations; events that redirected action
we try to connect with these events through memories of affective experiences
we are searching for experiences of surprise
we reflect
we draw
we talk
we chart
we draw connections
we write

“In order to know differently, we have to feel differently.”
Hemmings

KYSYMYSKSET
Millainen kehkeytymisem/muutoksen kokemus minulla on Designer as Feministissä mukana olemisesta?
Miten Designer as Feminist -suunnittelupraaktiikan osana oleminen on vaikuttanut kokemukseni ja ajatukseni suunnittelun harjoittamisesta?
Miten muutokset kokemuksissa ja ajatuksissa ovat vaikuttaneen suunnitteluumme käytännössä?
What kind of experience of becoming/change do I have from practicing with/in Designer as Feminist?
How has practicing with/in Designer as Feminist influenced my experience and thoughts of practicing design?
How have the changes in experience and thoughts influenced our designing in practice?
WARM UP
YHDESSÄ

MUTUAL TIMELINE
Work with paper and pen.
Annotating what’s there from personal point of view

WORKSHOP
YKSIN

1. AFFECTIVE TIMELINE
Work with paper and pen.
Reflect on your emotions & thoughts in relation practicing design with/in DaF during the past two years.
To connect with your memories you can browse some documents: notes, calendars, texts, definitions...
Chart affects onto your personal DaF timeline. You can e.g. use different colours, and write the affect next to it.

YKSIN

2. TRANSFORMATIVE EVENTS
– knowing something new, knowing differently, or knowing a difference.

Work with paper and pen/laptop.
Where have there been transformations in how you’re feeling and thinking?
List & chart specific events in your affective timeline.
The transformation could have been of any kind and it might have happened abruptly or over a longer period of time.
As a tool to think of what was transformative, you can think of experiences of surprise/epiphany/paradox/accident, i.e. when you became aware of something you weren’t aware of.
If you wish, you can move on to making notes on your laptop if you wish.

YHDESSÄ

3. SHARING
Choose 1-5 most influential events.
(Write them onto post-its and place on the mutual timeline.)
(Draw connections/arrows/comments between events if there are some.)

---------TAUKO---------
4. THICK DESCRIPTIONS
Work on your laptop.
Write about the 1-5 most influential events for you.
Try to describe the event (what happened), how you felt and what resulted as vividly as possible.
Where were you?
Who/what was there?
What did you feel?
What did you know?
What kind of re/action (decision, creation, contemplation & realisation...) resulted from knowing?

To cover the last question you can relate the event to other events on the mutual timeline.
Note that the re/action might have happened directly or after a longer time!

TOOL: Ways of feminist knowing
Can you grasp specific events through detecting events, which caused a change through being:
relational
in relation to someone/thing. Knowledge from the interaction.
situated
reflection on one’s own whereabouts. How did I end up here? What has impacted me?
subjective
different bodies know different things
feminist reflexivity
realising a dissonance between one’s ideals and the reality
attentive
slowness, seeing what’s here
divergence (=eroavaisuus)
friction and distance. understanding we are different.
care
we connect through support and solidarity. understanding through caring.
reparative
curiosity, openness, not anticipating worst case scenarios. what we don’t know yet can be something wonderful we can’t yet imagine

WRAP-UP

Workshop outcomes:
mutual annotated timeline
personal affective timelines with events
thick descriptions (digital format)
Kiitos

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Designer as Feminist:
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Henna Herranen
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