

MAIJA JOKELA

# Performing Civic Action

Networked activism and its use of urban space



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Networked activism and its use of urban space

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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<i>Responsible supervisor</i>	Professor Eeva Luhtakallio University of Helsinki Finland	
<i>Pre-examiners</i>	Senior Scientist Luca Pattaroni École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne Switzerland	Docent Tapio Nykänen University of Jyväskylä Finland
<i>Opponent</i>	Senior Researcher Laura Centemeri French National Centre for Scientific Research France	
<i>Custos</i>	Professor Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen Tampere University Finland	

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PunaMusta Oy – Yliopistopaino  
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To my parents and grandparents.



# ABSTRACT

Social media has changed the way people come together to try to make a change, be it in institutional politics or their living environment. In Finland, this new form of civic action has challenged especially the tradition of registered associations. This ethnographic dissertation offers a snapshot of networked civic action in the social media era, investigating civic groups' cultures and their public performances on the one hand and the negotiations between the movements' and local public authorities on the use of urban space on the other. The research cases are the Kallio movement the Kallio Block Party organized by the movement, and the asylum seekers' protest camp Right to Live, in which I have focused on the role of its Finnish supporters. The data was gathered in 2017–2019 mainly by ethnographic participant observation and interviews to activists as well as to the City officials and the police. The dataset is complemented by a survey to Kallio Block Party attendees and other data sources such as newspaper articles. In my analyses, I have used pragmatic sociology, more specifically justification theory and sociology of engagements, and the concept of scene style, which I have applied to the analysis of the movements' performances. I have also paid attention to embodiment, materiality, and affects, which I perceive as essential elements in the movements' public performances.

Especially compared to the Finnish political tradition of associations, which emphasizes collectivity, what surfaced in the analysis of my research cases was individualism, for instance in the forms of short-term commitment to the movements as well as an emphasis on individual creativity and, especially in the case of Kallio movement, of individual freedom. Kallio movement wanted to stress that its members were free to do whatever they wanted, as long as they followed the movement's principles, and that they didn't have to commit to the movement. On the other hand, the supporters of the Right to Live protest were extremely committed to the protest, but many of them only for a short time – some of the supporters continued with asylum activism after the protest while some did not. Therefore, one of the most important contributions of this work is related to discussions on individualism especially in the field of civic action. With increasing individualism, there have been concerns in Finnish discussions concerning the dismantling of the associational tradition and international discussions concerning

for instance "DIY urbanism" about the subsequent pursuit of individual interests or lack of ideologies or politics. I argue, first, that increasing individualism does not necessarily mean increasing selfishness, but a new kind of articulation of individualism and collectivism.

Second, contrary to the literature, I argue that individualism in civic action does not automatically mean a lack of political aspirations, but that it may change how we understand "ideologies" or "political". The two civic groups in this research differed in how they perceived what is usually considered "politics" or "political", as institutional politics. Right to Live pursued a change specifically in institutional (asylum) politics, whereas the Kallio movement shied away from ideas about political representation and institutional politics in an ideological manner. Instead, the Kallio movement tried to mediate its values through its actions, which can be characterized as prefigurative politics. In prefigurative politics, the means of action are as important as the goals, and the underlying idea is to produce alternative futures through one's actions. In addition, even though Right to Live primarily advocated a change in institutional politics, its prefigurative dimension was also crucial to the protest, namely creating relationships between asylum seekers and citizens and altering the asylum seekers' stigmatized media image into a positive one.

Thus, my research also takes part in discussions concerning immigrant solidarity movements that have emphasized the importance of the (political) significance of social relations between immigrants and citizens. I argue that, depending on the situation at hand, these relations had political meanings of varying scales in Right to Live. In the protest, the asylum seekers were considered to be the primary protesters and the role of the Finns was to support the protest, in multiple ways. During the public protest, it was necessary for the maintenance of the protest that it received local support, and for the public image of the protest it mattered that the supporters were recognized as Finnish citizens and that the protest was called "Right to Live family". The visible presence of Finnish citizens and the emphasis on the familiar-like nature of the protest showed that asylum seekers were just like "us" and that it was possible to create relationships across citizenship statuses. However, after the protest, with increasing pressure from forced return flights of those asylum seekers with a negative decision to asylum application, it was more important to help them with their asylum applications than to merely reminisce about the "Right to Live family". Therefore, in some situations the creation of social relations between citizens and non-citizens does not suffice to be considered as a political act if. In other words, whether an act is political or not is always context specific.

The public performances of both the Right to Live and Kallio movements were central in their prefigurative politics. It is noteworthy that both of these performances emphasized peacefulness and avoided conflicts as well as conventional ideologies such as anticapitalism. To the Kallio movement, this neutrality was (paradoxically) ideological whereas to Right to Live, it was more a necessity since asylum seekers were in a vulnerable position in several ways. However, it is reasonable to ask whether there are in civic groups characteristics that have been considered typical of the post-political era, such as avoiding explicit political ideologies.

Two very different pictures can be drawn out of the relationship between the activists in the two civic groups and local public officials, and the control of the use of urban space. On the one hand, there was the explicitly political Right to Live protest by racialized non-citizens that the police actively controlled and that was eventually evicted, questionably, based on safety reasons. On the other hand, there was the Kallio Block Party, organized mainly by white citizens, that looked like a non-political event and that had gained the public officials' and the police's trust and that had the freedom to act rather freely. One of the arguments in this research regarding the use of urban space is therefore that trust, or the lack thereof, was a relevant factor in the relationship between the activists and the public officials. Another reason to why the City of Helsinki was favorable to Kallio Block Party was that the event was perceived to enhance Helsinki's reputation. This dissertation therefore also takes part in discussions concerning the use of urban space, emblematic to practicing democracy, arguing that while the action by white Finns that enhances the markets has gained more freedom, the action by those who are racialized on the one hand, or that politicizes the urban space on the other, is likely to face security measures by the police.

*Keywords:* civic action, activism, pragmatic sociology, cultural sociology, political culture, ethnography

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Sosiaalinen media on muuttanut sitä, miten ihmiset tulevat yhteen muuttaakseen asioita yhteiskunnassa, niin institutionaalisessa politiikassa kuin omassa elinympäristössään. Suomessa tämä uudenlainen kansalaistoiminta haastaa etenkin järjestöperinnettä. Etnografinen väitöskirjani porautuu sosiaalisen median ajan verkostomaiseen kansalaistoimintaan: yhtäältä liikkeiden sisäiseen elämään ja julkiseen performanssiin, toisaalta liikkeiden ja viranomaisten välisiin neuvotteluihin kaupunkitilan käytöstä. Tapaustutkimuksinani on Kallio-liike ja sen järjestämä Kallio Block Party sekä kevään 2017 turvapaikanhakijoiden pitkäkestoinen mielenosoitus Right to Live, jossa olen keskittynyt erityisesti sen suomalaisiin tukijoihin. Aineisto on kerätty vuosina 2017–2019 pääosin hyödyntäen havainnoivaa osallistumista ja puolistrukturoituja aktivistien ja kaupungin viranomaisten sekä poliisin haastatteluja. Aineistoa täydentävät Kallio Block Partyn kävijöille tehty kysely ja muut tietolähteet kuten sanomalehtiartikkelit. Olen hyödyntänyt työssäni erityisesti pragmatistisen sosiologian oikeuttamisteoriaa ja sitoumusten sosiologiaa sekä tyylin käsitettä, soveltaen sitä liikkeiden performatiivisuuden analyysiin. Olen kiinnittänyt tarkastelussani huomiota myös kehollisuuteen, materiaalisuuteen ja affekteihin, jotka käsitan osaksi liikkeiden julkista esittämistä.

Verrattuna etenkin suomalaiseen, kollektiivisuutta korostavaan järjestöperinteeseen, tutkimissani liikkeissä painottui individualismi, joka näkyi esimerkiksi lyhytkestoisessa sitoutumisessa liikkeisiin sekä yksilöllisen luovuuden, ja etenkin Kallio-liikkeessä myös yksilön vapauden voimakkaassa korostamisessa. Kallio-liikkeessä haluttiin painottaa, että kaikki liikkeessä ovat vapaita tekemään, Kallio-liikkeen arvojen mukaisesti, mitä haluavat ja ettei toimintaan ole pakko sitoutua. Right to Live -protestissa suomalaisten tukijoiden sitoutuminen toimintaan oli puolestaan voimakasta, mutta monien kohdalla lyhytkestoista – osa tukijoista jatkoi turvapaikka-aktivismia protestin jälkeenkin, osa ei. Eräs työni keskeisistä tutkimustuloksista liittyy juuri individualismia erityisesti kansalaistoiminnassa koskeviin keskusteluihin. Niin suomalaisissa keskusteluissa järjestötoiminnan rapautumisesta kuin kansainvälisissä keskusteluissa esimerkiksi nykyisestä ”DIY-kaupunkiaktivismista” on herännyt huoli poliittisuuden tai ideologioiden puuttumisesta ja yksilöllisten etujen ajamisesta. Esitän ensinnäkin, että lisääntyvä

individualismi ei välttämättä tarkoita itsekkäiden etujen ajamista, vaan yksilöllisyyden ja kollektiivisuuden uudenlaista niveltymistä.

Toiseksi esitän, toisin kuin kirjallisuudessa on esitetty, että individualismi kansalaistoiminnassa ei automaattisesti tarkoita poliittisen ulottuvuuden puuttumista, vaan että uudenlainen kansalaistoiminta saattaa muuttaa sitä, miten ymmärrämme ”poliittisen” tai ”ideologian”. Tutkimani liikkeet erosivat siinä, miten ne suhtautuivat siihen, miten ”poliittinen” perinteisesti ymmärretään, institutionaalisena politiikkana. Right to Live ajoi muutosta nimenomaan institutionaalisessa (turvapaikka)politiikassa, kun taas Kallio-liike kaihtoi, jopa ideologisesti, ajatuksia poliittisesta edustamisesta ja institutionaalisesta politiikasta. Kallio-liike pyrki sen sijaan, prefiguratiivisen politiikan tavoin, välittämään liikkeen arvoja toiminnallaan. Prefiguratiivisessa politiikassa keinot ovat yhtä tärkeitä kuin päämäärät ja omalla toiminnalla pyritään elämään toiseksi toisenlaista todellisuutta. Vaikka Right to Live ajoi ensisijaisesti muutosta institutionaalisen politiikan piirissä, lähes yhtä keskeistä protestissa oli sen prefiguratiivinen ulottuvuus: suhteiden luominen turvapaikanhakijoiden ja kansalaisten välille ja turvapaikanhakijoiden stigmatisoidun mediakuvan muuttaminen positiiviseksi.

Tutkimukseni osallistuu siten myös siirtolaisten kamppailuja tukevia solidaarisuusliikkeitä koskeviin kansainvälisiin keskusteluihin, joissa on korostettu siirtolaisten ja kansalaisten välillä syntyvien sosiaalisten suhteiden (poliittista) merkitystä. Esitän omaan aineistooni nojaten, että kyseisillä suhteilla oli eriasteisesti poliittisia merkityksiä. Right to Live -protestissa mielenosoittajiksi määriteltiin turvapaikanhakijat, ja suomalaisten rooli oli tukea mielenosoittajia ja protestia monin eri tavoin, niin poliittisten tavoitteiden saavuttamisessa kuin affektiivisesti ja käytännönläheisesti. Protestin ollessa käynnissä oli tärkeää sekä mielenosoittajien jaksamisen, ja siten protestin jatkumisen, että protestin julkisen kuvan kannalta, että paikalla oli suomalaisiksi tunnistettuja tukijoita, ja että protestista alettiin käyttää nimitystä ”Right to Live -perhe”. Suomalaisten näkyvä läsnäolo ja protestin perhemäisyyden korostaminen osoittivat, että turvapaikanhakijat ovat kuin keitä tahansa ”meistä”, ja että oli mahdollista rakentaa kansalaisuusstatuksen ylittäviä ihmissuhteita. Protestin jälkeen, negatiivisen turvapaikkapäätöksen saaneiden turvapaikanhakijoiden palautuslentojen luodessa aktivismiin painetta, aktivistit katsoivat, että ”Right to Live -perheen” nostalgisoinnin sijaan oli tärkeämpää auttaa turvapaikanhakijoita oikeusprosessissa. Pelkkien sosiaalisten suhteiden luomista, ilman muuta turvapaikka-aktivismia tai -työtä, ei koettu riittäväksi. Toisin sanoen, toiminnan poliittinen luonne riippuu aina toiminnan kontekstista.

Right to Live ja Kallio-liikkeen prefiguratiivisessa politiikassa liikkeiden performanssi eli julkinen esittäminen oli keskeisellä sijalla. On huomionarvoista, että molempien liikkeiden performanssit olivat korostetun rauhanomaisia sekä konflikteja ja perinteisiä ideologioita kuten kapitalismin vastaisuutta kaihtavia. Kallio-liikkeelle tällainen neutraalius oli (paradoksaalisesti) ideologista, kun taas Right to Live:lle rauhanomaisuudessa oli kyse pikemminkin välttämättömyydestä, sillä turvapaikanhakijat olivat monella tapaa haavoittuvaisessa asemassa. On kuitenkin aiheellista kysyä, onko myös kansalaisliikkeissä havaittavissa piirteitä, joita on pidetty tyypillisinä politiikan jälkeiselle ajalle, kuten julkilausuttujen ideologioiden välttäminen.

Aktivistien ja julkisen tahon toimijoiden välisistä suhteista ja kaupunkitilan kontrollista päättyi puolestaan esiin kaksi hyvin erilaista kuvaa. Yhtäällä oli ei-kansalaisten julkilausutun poliittinen Right to Live -protesti, jota poliisi kontrolloi aktiivisesti ja joka lopulta hädettiin kyseenalaisin perustein turvallisuuteen vedoten. Toisaalla on pääosin suomalaisten järjestämä, epäpoliittiselta näyttävä Kallio Block Party, joka on saavuttanut luottamuksen kaupungin viranomaisten ja poliisin taholta ja saa toimia melko itsenäisesti. Esitän, että luottamus, tai sen puute, oli siten keskeinen välittävä tekijä aktivistien ja viranomaisten suhteissa. Toinen tekijä Helsingin kaupungin Kallio Block Partylle osoittamalle suosiolle oli se, että kaupunki katsoi tapahtuman edistävän Helsingin mainetta. Tutkimus osallistuu näin myös demokratian harjoittamiselle keskeisestä kaupunkitilan käytöstä käytäviin keskusteluihin, esittäen että yhtäällä valkoisten suomalaisten markkinoita hyödyttävä toiminta on saanut yhä enemmän vapauksia, kun taas yhtäältä rodullistetut, ja toisaalta kaupunkitilan politisoiva toiminta, kohtaa usein poliisin turvallistamistoimia.

*Asiasanat:* kansalaistoiminta, aktivismi, pragmatismi, kulttuurisosiologia, poliittinen kulttuuri, etnografia



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Maija

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Helsinki in spring 2017. The Railway Square is occupied by two protest camps, one protesting against asylum politics and deportations, the other against the first one. The square is occupied by tents, with activists in yellow vests and Finnish flags on both sides of the square, a place that came to be defined in the media as a manifestation of “the two extremes”. Fast-forward to a Saturday in August and to the Helsinki district of Kallio, where tens of thousands of young people are enjoying the last summer days by walking and dancing on streets usually occupied by cars, by listening to music or sitting on the pavement or standing on top of a tram stop, perhaps having a drink or two (or more) at Kallio Block Party.

This research offers a snapshot of local activism in Helsinki in 2017-2019, after a wave of anti-capitalist activism in the 2010s and before the full-blown wave of climate activism in 2019 and the turn of 2020s. The two civic groups studied – Right to Live protest and especially the group of mainly Finnish supporters of the protest, and an urban neighbourhood movement, Kallio movement – were the most visible activist action that took place on the streets of Helsinki during those years, providing an opportunity to observe activism as it happened. The house-squatting movement had recently quietened down and new urban activism had passed its peak, having given birth to a new civic style in the Finnish activist repertoire, one that did not seek confrontations with the authorities but believed in “positive disobedience” (Santala 2013) instead. On the other hand, Finland, like rest of Europe, was affected by “the long summer of migration” in 2015, the ramifications of which were seen in 2017 as, after the tightening of asylum politics, masses of asylum seekers began to receive second negative decisions to their asylum applications and were thrown out of reception centres, and some were even forcibly returned to their countries of origin. One could not escape discussions about asylum politics, immigration and racism, and even the new urban activists in Kallio movement took a stand on the issue, for instance by hanging a banner that stated “No one is illegal” at Kallio Block Party, an event that was supposed to be non-political.

My research interests in this thesis have been twofold, the first one focused on the internal culture of the activist groups and the second on their use of urban space.

What is activism that is initiated in social media (Facebook) like – activism that is loose, informal and to a degree unorganized, and thus different from traditional Finnish associations? And how do local public authorities deal with this kind of networked activism in practice, especially in situations when activists have to negotiate the use of urban space?

The two movements in this research are very different from the outset, especially in regards to their (political) goals and duration. Right to Live had explicit political goals whereas Kallio movement is an example of prefigurative politics or a movement driving cultural change. Right to Live lasted for three and a half months in Spring 2017, Kallio movement was founded in 2011 and still continues to exist. The main event of Kallio movement, Kallio Block Party, is an annual one-day celebration of urbanity and a sense of community, as well as a critical practice against urban space dedicated to car use. However, there were many similarities between the movements, too. They were cases of movements that were initiated and mobilized on Facebook after which they created face-to-face groups. They rely heavily on social media for their mobilization, organization and communication, and instead of neat organizations they form loose, messy, somewhat sporadic and, in principle, non-hierarchical networks that rely on individual initiative and responsibility. Both groups practiced personalized politics (Lichterman 1996), where commitment to civic action is sporadic and short-term. This personalized politics manifested in several ways, for instance in a reliance on “self-starters” (Lichterman 1996), active people who can “stand on their own two feet”. Both groups focused on the practical and material arrangements of events, a 24-hour protest and a block party, leading, despite an alignment to leave politics out of the meetings, to a kind of politics that inevitably leaks into the practical issues. In both groups, some discussions and decisions took place on Facebook – something that is not explicitly analyzed in this research but which inevitably had an impact on the said discussions and the nature of the activism in general. Activism in this research was not an endless meeting (Polletta 2002) but an endless to-do list. Activists were committed 24/7 since they did not only attend face-to-face meetings but were also on-call in chats and Facebook groups.

The public performances of both groups were non-confrontational, even if this was for different reasons. However, despite this similarity, the two events (Kallio Block Party and Right to Live protest) were policed very differently. Right to Live was a double contestation since it was a (long-lasting) political protest and organized by racialized non-citizens and was ultimately framed through security. Kallio Block Party was a non-political event organized by mainly white citizens, in cooperation with the City of Helsinki, had gained the public officials’ trust and did not have to



deal with the police. These two examples illustrate how urban space is increasingly full of possibilities for some, while others are subjected to securitization.

Next, I will introduce my two case studies, followed by the overall research design and the structure of this book.

## 1.1 Kallio movement

Kallio movement was established in 2011. It was first a Facebook group that was established as a protest against the City of Helsinki's plan to not renew a rental contract with an organization "Hursti's Help" (Hurstin apu), which distributes free food to people in need. Within five days, there were over 5 000 members in the group (Turunen 2016, 4), in a district with about 20 000 residents in a city of 630 000. The pressure forced the city to rent another space to the organization (Turunen 2016, 4). After this success, the movement discussed in Facebook what else they could do and set up a meeting that gathered about 50 people. In the first meeting, the rules of the movement and its organizational character (Blee 2013) were established: no hierarchies or representatives, the movement will not be an official association and it will remain independent from religion and party politics. After the meeting, the movements' goals were published on its Facebook page:

### *The Kallio Initiative*

#### *About*

*A politically nonaligned community of people living, working and hanging out in and around the district of Kallio, Helsinki. The Initiative endeavours to influence the City's decision-making and policy-building, and to organize block parties.*

#### *Description*

*Kallio is the throbbing urban heart of Helsinki, a romanticized old working-class district not only known for its population of students, bohemians and beer-fond denizens, but also increasingly identified as an abode of families with young children at home and middle-class IT workers. There's room for everyone in Kallio!*

*A vocal number of Nimbys also call Kallio home. These are individuals who have trouble abiding anything even slightly controversial in their immediate vicinity. A Nimby audibly complains about bread lines, noisy terraces, refugee reception centres, bar culture, boarding houses for the homeless, street festivals, graffiti and other so-called "disruptions" in Kallio.*

*Kallio and its surrounding areas are inhabited by an enormous number of people who live and breathe this neighbourhood. People who actually like bars, terraces and lively street festivals, and who understand that bread lines, reception centres, boarding houses etc. are natural aspects of city life. Are you one of us?*

*Helsinki's official decision-making concerning Kallio is influenced by Kallio-seura (i.e. the Kallio Society), which has opposed such initiatives as the Hursti bread line and the reception centre on Kaarlenkatu. It goes without saying that everyone, including Nimbys, have the right to live and be heard in Kallio. But to balance out the gallery of voices, emphasis must also be placed on values that others do not advocate. Voices that emphasize tolerance of so-called "disruptions" and that want to see music, dance and street art flourishing in their neighbourhood.*

*The city's bread lines have to be abolished not by relocating them out of sight and mind, but through improving social welfare.*

*How about we form a kind of Kallio Initiative? It would be a loosely structured, politically nonaligned community of people living, working and hanging out in Kallio, and it would endeavour to influence the city's decision-making — and crucially, to arouse public discourse on matters concerning this neighbourhood. The Initiative could also put together some Kallio block parties, build on an already strong bedrock of solidarity and above all avoid congealing into a district society per se.*

*Join this group, and let's get all sorts of things done together!*

(Kallio movement's Facebook page. Original language is English.)

Kallio is one of the oldest districts in Helsinki and the most densely-inhabited district in Finland. During the latter half of the 19th century, the area became populated by working class people who had moved from the countryside to work in factories and the nearby harbour. It is located close to the city centre but divided from it by a bridge, making the historic distinction between the bourgeoisie and the working-class tangible. There has been talk about Kallio being gentrified since the 1980s and this is still discussed today. Despite the fact that there are still cheap beer joints in Kallio, it is no longer uncommon to find a fancy restaurant that serves natural wines or a café that specializes in trendy sourdough bread. However, despite its gentrifying trajectory, Kallio still treasures its romanticized working-class history and is considered to have a distinct character, where a certain amount of restlessness is part of the district (Mäenpää 1991, 59; 78–9). Especially in relation to the racist and/or populist right that has risen since the 2010s, Kallio has become a symbol of green-left “tolerants” (see also Junnilainen 2019). Kallio's working-class history is also institutionalized in the area in buildings such as the headquarters of the Finnish workers' unions. As Eeva Luhtakallio (2012) has noted, Kallio is thus perhaps the place for activism in Helsinki (and Finland) as it's the most densely-populated area in Helsinki and Finland and is especially frequented and known for its bars (which

are still usually cheaper than in more central Helsinki), and nowadays also its cafés and restaurants, some of which are known as hotbeds of cultural elites and activists alike. Moreover, apartments in Kallio are generally small (Karhula 2015), calling for an extension of private homes into public and semi-public places, and attracting young people who do not have families of their own and can settle with fewer square metres. In fact, the biggest shift in residents took place before the 1990s when the area experienced a generational shift and became a district of young adults as families with children moved out to bigger apartments in the suburbs (Mäenpää 1991). In the 2010s, Kallio and especially one of its most bar-dense streets, Vaasankatu, became the birthplace of a new wave of Finnish punk music that eventually gained national popularity. This layered history of Kallio provides it with a certain feel and image as a rough yet hip area, a place where things happen and as the place to be, especially if you are “an urbanist” and love cities such as New York and Berlin (see Palttala 2014). There are, for instance, a disproportionately large number of journalists and artists living in Kallio (Karhula 2015).

Kallio movement is a local movement that is mainly concerned about local issues and building a local community and thus a descendent of neighbourhood associations, established and active in Helsinki since 1940's (see e.g. Bäcklund 2004). On the other hand, however, the movement is a protest against traditional neighbourhood associations, and their accused Nimbyism and parochialism, which intentionally expands the limits of a neighbourhood association. Although the majority of those involved in Kallio movement or Kallio Block Party live in Kallio, not everyone does. Kallio movement is seen by the participants to represent the “Left Green” values that are connected to Kallio. Kallio movement can be seen as part of the Left Green movement family (della Porta & Rucht, 1991), which shares a similar political culture and concerns such as human rights, minorities, democracy, environmental protection and human rights (Kuukkanen 2018, 58). More importantly, however, as I will present in the next chapter, Kallio movement is part of new urban activism in Helsinki and can be characterized as “DIY urbanism”. Instead of explicit political goals, this kind of activism aims for a *cultural change* through prefigurative action such as organizing events. Kallio movement wanted to build a local community spirit, a kind of community that was, according to their values, “the spirit of Kallio movement”.

The first years of Kallio movement were also its most active years. There were several sub-groups under Kallio movement's main Facebook group page. Besides specific organizing groups for events, they included topics such as social responsibility, politics and elections, democracy and advocacy work. As a new form

of influencing local issues, Kallio movement inspired residents of other areas in metropolitan Helsinki to establish their own movements and, for instance, Roihuvuori movement and Myyrmäki movement were established in subsequent years, though they remain smaller in terms of size and impact (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 63-4).

Influencing the City decision-making had, at the time of my fieldwork, pretty much dropped out of the agenda – if it ever really was on it. Occasionally, a member of Kallio movement posted on the movement’s Facebook page that the City or some other public authority wanted to include local actors or representatives of civic actors in this or that, and asked if someone wanted to take part or write a statement. Although sometimes someone would ask in Facebook what the movement’s standpoint is or should be, it hardly raised any comments and thus, if a statement was written, it was not a collective but an individual effort. Instead of for instance statements, Kallio movement focused on arranging events. During my fieldwork, the biggest and almost the only event was Kallio Block Party. Kallio movement organized its first Kallio Block Party the year it was established, in 2011. It was then one of several other activities and events the movement organized, such as support concerts for different causes like asylum seekers, multicultural hockey nights, an initiative to have more chairs on the street for elderly people to sit on, and monthly soup kitchens. However, the Block Party, initially “small and home-spun”, soon became a popular event, and it now attracts approximately 20 000 people to a free, one-day festival on the first Saturday in August. The party is mostly focused on music with several different stages, ranging from techno to indie rock to punk. The festival takes place in a selected part of Kallio, which changes each year. For a day, all traffic is closed, in good understanding and cooperation with the City, while people take over the streets to enjoy the drinks and food that is sold in food trucks and a programme that, in addition to music, has included for instance a children’s area, a roller derby disco, a photo exhibition, skateboard ramps, spoken word stories about Kallio, poetry, short films, walls to paint graffiti on....

## **Crisis: forming an association**

I caught Kallio movement and its main project, Kallio Block Party (KBP), at a transition or even a crisis phase as I began conducting my fieldwork in spring 2017. This turning point was not only my own evaluation but it came up in interviews as well. As Blee (2012, 36–37) describes, movements’ trajectories are always unexpected and contingent due to external and internal events and the group’s supra-individual

logic pushing it towards a chain of path-dependencies. The group logic, or culture, creates collective blind-spots, making it difficult to change how things are.

In 2017, many of the original members had dropped out, due, I was told, to changes in their life situation such as having children. Moreover, the ones who had dropped out were the people who had primarily been responsible for, for instance, the regular soup kitchen. During the two years of my fieldwork the movement organized only a few soup kitchens. There were plenty of people interested in organizing the block party but they were not necessarily interested in becoming active in the overall Kallio movement, and some of them hadn't even heard about the movement and didn't know the values behind it or Kallio Block Party. This created the need to explicate its values, which was eventually done in spring 2019. As I will explain in chapter eight, this was done by voting on Facebook for five values from an initial list of suggestions made by Block Party association, which comprised the most experienced movement members. Some of the active members of Kallio movement felt that the block party and Kallio movement were in a state of stagnation where organizing the ever-growing event took up all the movement's energy while all other activities were neglected, and there was a feeling that the event had become too predictable. While it was never the intention, the block party had taken over the movement. It was in fact a much-cherished idea among the old-timers that organizing KBP in the same format or, in fact, at all, was never self-evident. However, that was precisely how things had turned out. This "narrowing of imaginations over time" (Blee 2012, 107) is a common tendency for activist groups. The fact that Kallio Block Party had grown in size had brought up several issues that ultimately had to do with the fact that Kallio movement was not an association since, as I show in chapter three, Finnish civic action is designed to take the form of a registered association. First, there was more pressure to use money to buy things that had previously been done voluntarily or received either for free or with subtle sponsorship deals. Balancing between the practical solution of commerciality and the principle of non-commerciality was a constant effort. Second, a growing festival meant growing monetary and safety risks. Since the movement was not a registered association, and thus not a legal person, each year someone had to sign several documents under their own name. I was told that it had always been difficult to agree who signs the necessary documents the City requires when organizing an event but now, with thousands of people crowding the streets, the risk was even bigger. To avoid the responsibility and risks falling on one individual, the movement finally caved in and established a registered Block Party association in the beginning of

2018. In the context of arranging the block party, the association was meant only as a rubber stamp, to ease the bureaucracy and financial side of things.

It is relevant to clarify here that there was Kallio movement and there was the Kallio Block Party organizing team, which was more-or-less different each year. While there was a significant overlap – key people from the movement usually took part in the organizing team, and some of the active KBP organizers became a part of the movement – they were two different entities. Becoming a member of the movement was more or less a matter of self-definition and attending the movement’s meetings, to which everyone was welcome. During the time of my fieldwork, Kallio movement meetings gathered 3 – 11 people, and in November 2019 there were 173 members on the movement’s Facebook page. Compared to Kallio Block Party meetings, participants in Kallio movement meetings knew each other better and could rely more on shared meanings. There was a lot of fluctuation among Kallio Block Party organizers from meeting to meeting and year to year. Thus, when referring to a “group” in the context of Kallio Block Party, I mean an “aggregate of temporary comrades” (Lichterman 2005, 88) bound by a common goal in the near future, arranging the block party, and by certain “minimum common denominators” (Milan 2019, 123). The number of attendees in Kallio Block Party meetings varied from about ten to twenty, and there were 84 – 142 people in each year’s Facebook group (a new Facebook group was set up each year). Both the movement and the block party consisted of mostly white, approximately middle-class people aged roughly between 20–50, with more young people in Kallio Block Party than in the movement. The block party was arranged by task groups, such as “environment”, who arranged for instance portable toilets and trash cans; “finances”, who made the budget and had the responsibility of keeping track of the flow of money; “permits”, who made sure the City had been notified about the event, negotiated the cutting off of traffic and made sure safety issues were taken care of; “communications”, who promoted the event; and “programme”, who produced the content to the festival. In addition to task group meetings, roughly every two or three weeks there would be a Kallio Block Party general meeting where important, collective decisions were made. The program was not curated by the movement and basically anyone was welcome to arrange something. The several stages were organized independently, usually by a group already familiar with each other, consisting mainly of bands, DJ’s and semi-professional producers. It was expected that at least one member of each group and each stage would come to the general meeting, but this didn’t always happen, leaving the more active attendees annoyed.

## 1.2 Right to Live

### Background

In the 2000s, there has been an increasing amount of people seeking asylum in Europe and in Finland, mainly due to the war in Syria, the unstable situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and conflicts in African countries (see Obeng-Odoom 2018 for a critical overview of root causes). The peak in the amount of asylum seekers was reached in the summer and autumn of 2015, forcing more people to travel across Europe as the Mediterranean countries' refugee centres reached their limits (UNHCR 2016). The increase in the number of refugees has been met with increasing fortification of state borders, especially since the peak in 2015 (Jones et al. 2017, 4–6). It was this culmination point that triggered many Europeans to act (e.g. della Porta 2018; Jones et al. 2017; Lampinen 2017, 6; Niemi 2017), including “ordinary people” who had not previously been engaged in activism (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017; Jones et al. 2017, 16; Kleres 2018; Milan 2018). In fact, the discourse about the “refugee crisis” and the “overwhelming” desire to help refugees “appears to be importantly connected and co-produced” (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19). There are also implications that the tightening EU-level immigration policies and especially the “refugee crisis” of 2015 have changed the nature and membership base of anti-racist movements in Europe (Lloyd 2002; Jones et al. 2017). For instance, in France, “new immigrants” such as asylum seekers have mobilized new actors and alliances developing “modes of solidarity more akin to welfare, social work or humanitarian aid” than more overtly political actions (Lloyd 2002) and in Germany the “refugee crisis” mobilized people from outside the established leftist anti-racist action groups who “shied away from clear political positions” (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19). The “ordinary people” organized in social media and signed petitions, housed refugees, visited refugee camps and joined protests (Kleres 2018; Milan 2018), creating a welcome culture (Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017). Media reports of the plight of asylum seekers played a crucial role in this mobilization, culminating in a widely publicized press photo of the corpse of a three-year-old Syrian, Alan Kurdi, washed up on the Turkish shore after his family's attempt to reach a Greek island failed (Jones et al. 2017, 5–7; Kleres 2018; Milan 2018).

Autumn 2015 saw the rise of an unprecedented mobilization in Finland too as people wanted to do their part in helping refugees. The Finnish media, echoing EU-wide political discourse (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018), described the increase in

applications as a “crisis” that demanded swift political action. People donated clothes and other supplies, volunteered in reception and accommodated asylum seekers in their homes. The help was organized partly through existing organizations, such as the Finnish Red Cross, parishes and refugee aid organizations, but a significant part of this volunteering happened, as elsewhere in Europe, ad hoc in social media where new groups were established almost immediately during the highest peak of arrivals (Lampinen 2017, 6). For instance, the home accommodation network, Refugees Welcome Finland, was initiated in Facebook following a German example. During its first week there were already a thousand members and by the end of 2016 over four thousand, in a country of five million people. (Lampinen 2017, 6). Another significant Facebook group, Refugee Hospitality Club (RHC), which was founded already in 2009, has especially since the refugee-peak in 2015 become an important platform for discussing asylum-related issues. It currently has approximately 15 000 members.

In Finland there were roughly 32 500 applications for asylum in 2015, mainly from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, compared to slightly over 3 500 in 2014 (Migri 2015; 2016). In summer 2015, state-financed reception centres where asylum seekers were accommodated during their asylum-seeking process were full and emergency accommodation centres had to be quickly set up around the country. This seemingly sudden influx of asylum seekers was the hot topic in the media, and they pushed a discourse of crisis and a “flood of refugees”<sup>1</sup>. Racist discourses of Muslim asylum seekers, most of them young men, became more prevalent, and there were demonstrations for and against welcoming the refugees.

The conservative government, consisting of the prime minister’s Centre party, the National Coalition party and the populist Finns Party, implemented new restrictions on immigration and asylum legislation and processes in 2016 that were similar to those elsewhere in Europe (see e.g. Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017). Humanitarian protection as grounds for asylum was removed from legislation, the time to appeal after the asylum decision was shortened, and family unification was made nearly impossible by raising the required income of the family member living

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<sup>1</sup> It is typical that migration is metaphorically compared to uncontrollable forces of nature such as floods or diseases (Laine et al 2021, 16-17). The discourse about “crisis” is “ideologically charged” and has been used in the media and politics to legitimize urgent changes and “special measures” in asylum policies on the one hand (Krzyżanowski et al. 2018, 2-3), and to depoliticize and decontextualize migration and asylum on the other (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19). The discourse about a “European refugee crisis” implies that European countries were the ones who suffered most, not the people who had to leave their countries. Instead, one could argue that what was in crisis was the European asylum system and the ability to provide asylum and defend “European values” (Laine et al 2021, 22).



in Finland. Also, according to the new country assessments made by the Finnish Immigration Service, Iraq and Somalia were now seen as safe enough countries to enable the return of refugees. Before these restrictions, two out of three were granted asylum, while after them, the ratio dropped to one out of three. Moreover, there have reportedly been problems in the asylum process such as unprofessional interviewers and translators in the asylum interviews (see e.g. Bodström 2022).

During spring 2017, the media reported that the government was investigating the possibility of criminalizing hiding those who had been denied asylum or who obstructed the police during a forced deportation. This discussion took place after a big protest at Helsinki airport against the forced deportation of asylum-seekers back to Afghanistan (see chapter eight). It proved too difficult to define what kind of help would be deemed criminal and this criminalization didn't take place. However, the fact that it was even considered is telling about the government's take on the issue.

## Right to Live protest

Right to Live was an example of what has been called a “new era of protest”, meaning the migrants’ mobilization for their citizenship rights (Ataç et al 2016). In Europe, there have been migrant protests since the 1990s (e.g. Isin 2009; Lloyd 2003; Johnson 2016; Tarkawi 2017) but this was unprecedented in Finland. The protest took place in the very heart of central Helsinki, at the Railway Square, in the spring of 2017, from February 10 until June 30, when the issue of asylum seekers was still debated, and when the tightened immigration laws and processes were already in place and many asylum seekers began to receive negative decisions to their applications. The political demands were drafted during the protest spring and stated that the legal rights of asylum seekers must be guaranteed (legal aid had been reduced by change of law); faulty asylum decisions must be reviewed; that there should be no deportations until faulty asylum decisions had been reviewed, and that no one must be removed from the reception centres (as had been done after the second negative decision to the asylum application) until proper shelter and necessary income support has been arranged for the asylum seeker.

The protest originated in a Facebook group where refugees from Iraq with “a negative” (a negative decision to the asylum application) discussed their situation. The protesters wanted to demonstrate that they would rather sleep outside in tents, in the cold Finnish winter, than be sent back to their home countries. The tents were at least initially meant as props and the protest was meant to continue only over a weekend. However, Right to Live raised interest in the media from the beginning and the protest continued for months, gaining more and more support and

momentum. The protest was soon joined by Afghan asylum seekers. During the first week of the protest, Right to Live was located outside the contemporary museum Kiasma, within visual range of Parliament House. However, due to complaints about noise and smoke, the police ordered the protest to be moved to another place. (Initially, the protesters used wood for fuel but, after the eviction, this was replaced by coal.) After negotiations between the police, the protesters and a Finnish supporter, the protest was moved to the Railway square, where it stood for three and a half months, until the end of June.

Right to Live was a 24hour protest, a protest camp, but since camping is forbidden in the city, the police created a rule that sleeping in tents is forbidden. For the same reason, the protesters and supporters were strict in not referring to the protest as a camp. The media, however, frequently used the word “camp” when referring to Right to Live and its counter-protest (see below). The protesters wanted to continue for as long as possible and the continuation of the protest was negotiated several times with the police and City officials. The protest grew to three tents and became an important meeting place for asylum seekers, some of whom came from outside the metropolitan area.

The protest was able to raise the media’s interest in the politicized issues, and problems related to the asylum process were now discussed on prime-time talk-shows. Right to Live also sparked other protests around Finland, although they remained much smaller in size and shorter in duration. Right to Live also gained acts of support such as a petition for the rights of asylum seekers that was signed by over 10 000 art and cultural professionals; another petition signed by several thousand academics; and a support statement for the protest from City of Helsinki representatives.

The protest was in a pressing and volatile situation for several reasons. Firstly, a group of far-right activists set up a counter-protest called Finland First or Finland Maidan, on the other side of the Railway Square (see Laaksonen et al 2000, 175-6).<sup>2</sup> They posed a threat of violence to the Right to Live protest as they consistently tried to visit the protest, despite a police ban on both parties visiting the opposite side. The threat was also actualized in a petrol bomb attack, in which one demonstrator was mildly injured. Especially during the night there was an increased risk of racist attacks from the counter-protesters or drunken passers-by. For this reason, there were usually always Finnish supporters present in the protest at night if the protesters, only a few of whom spoke Finnish and not all of them English, needed

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<sup>2</sup> There were internal conflicts within the nationalist far-right groups, making it “difficult to know who represents who”, as a police officer said in Helsingin Sanomat (Kuokkanen 2017).

translators or mediators in case of threatening visitors. Finland First protesters also recorded and photographed Right to Live protesters and their supporters and uploaded them to racist websites, targeted them with hate mail, and some protesters and supporters were also followed during the night, supposedly by the opposing protesters. According to police statements in the media as well as my interviews with police officers, the police claimed that they tried to treat both parties equally in the name of free speech and assembly, to keep both parties calm, and to avoid confrontations between the opposing camps.

The Finland First protesters' aggressive behaviour eventually led to the police evicting them at the end of June. Five days after the eviction, after 140 days of demonstrating, the police also decided to remove the Right to Live protest for "safety reasons". According to the police's official reasoning, there was a fear of a racist retaliation if one protest was evicted and the other was allowed to stay. After the (second) eviction, the protest was set up again in front of Kiasma until the end of August, but this time the police restricted the protest to a day-time event only; tents were no longer allowed and only a canopy could remain. By this time, many of the protesters and supporters were extremely tired and the feeling of momentum had passed. An interviewee felt that the protest could not have continued any longer. It was also discussed whether the protest was any longer the best way to use resources or to politicize asylum issues.

The mainstream media followed the protest closely and the Finnish protesters were not always happy with the way it was reported as something potentially threatening. The two protests were seen as equal parallels, despite the fact that the Right to Live protest had declared, and proved, itself peaceful and non-violent. This dichotomy followed the discourse of two extremes established during the "long summer of migration", the racists, the "tolerants" (*suvait*) and the "reasonable people" (*tolkun ihmiset*) somewhere in the middle.

Right to Live protesters had help from Finnish people from the beginning. The first Finns involved had a background in migrant activism and the Free Movement network in particular. Soon, however, the protest began mobilizing people from various other groups and networks, such as the Red Cross, Evangelical and Orthodox churches and Facebook groups. The vast majority of the supporters were women of all ages. Many of the supporters had engaged in the welcome culture by, for instance, volunteering in reception centres or providing home accommodation to asylum seekers. For some who had been in a volunteering Facebook group, such as Refugee Hospitality Club or Home Accommodation Network, it was the first time they met other members of the group face-to-face. It was an important distinction

within Right to Live to call asylum seekers “protesters” and others, mostly Finnish citizens, “supporters” or “volunteers”. This distinction was intended to emphasize the fact that the protest was initiated by the asylum seekers and that they had ownership of it. For this reason, I will also use the same terminology.

All major decisions regarding the protest were made in “demo-meetings”, general meetings that were held somewhere outside the protest, usually at least once a week, among the Finnish supporters and between the protesters and Finns. Each nationality, Iraqis, Afghans and Finns, were expected to discuss an issue among themselves before a decision was made. For Finns, these discussions took place very much online, in closed Facebook pages. In practice, smaller and urgent decisions were made ad hoc at the protest and in the Facebook pages.

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Both Kallio movement and Right to Live are examples of a fast-paced era that perceives civic action in increasingly individualistic terms of (practical) projects and that take place offline as well as online. With an emphasis on practical issues, where was the place for politics or politicizations – for opening up new alternatives (Palonen 2003, 182-183)? And with an increasing emphasis on the individual doing of politics (Eranti 2018), how was individualism and collectivism negotiated within these groups and what happened to “the political” and to ideas of collective representation?

I have approached these questions with the help of French pragmatic sociology and American cultural sociology. More precisely, I have relied on theories of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006) and sociology of engagements (Thévenot 2007; 2014; 2015), and the concept of (scene) styles (Lichterhan & Eliasoph 2014). These theories have enabled me to paint a nuanced picture of the two civic groups and their sometimes contradictory logics of action. I have also paid attention to non-discursive elements of civic action, such as materialities, affects and embodiment, especially in the two groups’ representative performances. Using participant observation as (one of the) method(s) has enabled this performative viewpoint. I have discussed my findings with literatures on Finnish political culture, DIY urbanism as well as migrant solidarity action and protest camps.

This book unfolds as follows. Next, in the second chapter, I will introduce the contexts of these two research cases. What was the historical background of Kallio movement and new urban activism, and Right to Live and migrant solidarity action? What kind of questions has previous literature on “DIY urbanism” and migrant protests, migrant solidarity movement and protest camps pointed out, and how does

my study relate to these discussions? The chapter also works as an introduction to the Finnish political culture. The third chapter provides the reader with an introduction to the theoretical toolkit used in this research and chapter four introduces the data and methods. Chapter five presents the first analysis chapter, delving into the group cultures in Right to Live and Kallio movement, focusing especially on the emerging ideal figures of civic actors. Chapter six continues to explore these cultures, looking more closely into the groups' different commitment cultures. Chapter seven asks what the two groups thought about collective representation and chapter eight continues by asking how what was represented was performed in public. In chapter nine, I present how public authorities valued the two civic groups and, vice versa, how the groups approached the authorities. The tenth and final chapter zooms into how Right to Live and Kallio movement put the use of urban space to the test, and what were the results of these tests.

## 2 SETTING THE CONTEXT: URBAN ACTIVISM AND MIGRANT SOLIDARITY ACTIVISM IN LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will introduce historical overviews of urban activism in Helsinki and anti-racist activism in Finland as well as the main questions in literatures concerning urban activism (or DIY urbanism), migrant solidarity activism and protest camps. In the last part of this chapter, I will also briefly summarize the historical background of the Finnish political culture.

Both Right to Live and Kallio movement are civic groups whose politicizations take place in and through urban space. Right to Live was spatial claim making (Tilly 2000, 146) without explicitly politicizing urban space itself, whereas the politicization of urban space has been one of the main driving forces in Kallio movement. However, as one of my interviewees also pointed out, Right to Live had an impact on urban culture in Helsinki, even though affecting urban space was not its main goal. Both groups studied have introduced a novel repertoire of civic action and a way of utilizing urban space through a block party by Kallio movement and a protest camp by Right to Live. The history of urban culture and activism in Helsinki that is introduced in this chapter is also to some degree relevant in the case of Right to Live. The governmental discourse and practice of active citizenship has had ramifications on urban planning and the governance of urban space, and citizens (and as in the case of Right to Live, also non-citizens) seemingly have more autonomy over the use of urban space. The history of urban culture and action in Helsinki has seen a diversification of the urban sphere as well as a commodification of this diversity. However, urban space is also racialized (Picker 2017) and increasingly subjected to securitization (Koskela 2009), and these two are also connected since it is often those who are racialized that are perceived as security threats.

Questions concerning the use of urban space are significant as public space can be considered a materialized public sphere, where ideals and justifications are cemented and re-produced in the urban landscape. However, as Judith Butler (2015) notes, public space proper is constructed in public action, in the performative act of assemblage. Public spaces are thus not only the material surroundings but also visceral spaces of appearances: embodied representation, performativity and visibility (Adut 2018; Butler 2015; Arendt 1958). Through action, such as events, it

becomes possible to test the limits of the legitimate use of urban space and to try and create, if only momentarily, alternative realities within it (Miller & Nicholls 2013, 453). Activism within urban space is thus also place-making, where spaces are imbued with new meanings (e.g. Jacobs 1961; see also Näre & Jokela 2023)<sup>3</sup>.

Another discussion relevant to both cases is the evaluation of the movements' political nature. In the case of Right to Live, literature on migrant solidarity movements teaches us that there are differences between universal and particular solidarity, as well as whether solidarity actors have a critical approach to the status of national citizenship or not. With Kallio movement, there is discussion in "DIY urbanism" literature about whether this type of civic action can be regarded as political or not. I will introduce these questions in this chapter.

Both research cases have their own contextualizing research literatures, introduced below, that make the cases more comprehensible and ground the research questions in this dissertation concerning the styles and political natures of Kallio movement and Right to Live. In the case of Right to Live, this literature consists of research on protest camps and migrant solidarity movements, especially research conducted in Europe after the 2015 "long summer of migration". I will also briefly reflect Right to Live against previous Finnish anti-racist movements, even though Finnish anti-racism literature is rather scarce. In the case of Kallio movement, I will discuss the movement in relation to Finnish urban activism on the one hand and international literature on "DIY urbanism" on the other.

## 2.1 New urban activism

In this chapter, I will summarize the history of urban culture and activism in Helsinki, merged with discussions on "DIY urbanism" (Douglas 2014; Finn 2014; Iveson 2013). These discussions concern the nature of DIY urbanism: its political character and the questions it raises about urban governance.

The initiation of Kallio movement was a part of a larger boom that took place in Helsinki at the beginning of 2010s, which I call new urban activism, and which created a rupture in urban activism for at least two reasons. First, the style of activism changed significantly at the turn of 2010 into a less critical and confrontational one, and second, the activists and the media began using the term "urban activism" only

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<sup>3</sup> This dissertation does not explicitly engage with urban or spatial sociology or discussions over the concepts of "space" and "place" (Gieryn 2000; Massey 2008; Low 2017). It is, however, self-evidently clear that I perceive spaces and the making of places as political – this is the starting point of my analysis of the two groups' use of urban space.

after this rupture, whereas previously the concepts used were for instance “movement”, “civic activism” or “urban culture” (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 34).

In the Finnish public and academic discussions, “urban activism” has come to equal what I call new urban activism that arose in the 2010s (see e.g. Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021; Monti & Purokuru 2018, 284-287). In Finland, urban activism has been academically defined by Pasi Mäenpää and Maija Faehnle (2021, 35-36) in the following way: urban activism is collective action organized by citizens, usually outside associations; critical towards bureaucracy, yet proactive and constructive in nature; oriented primarily towards action and not political participation; relies on a mindset based on DIY and “commons” (shared resources); utilizes social media in its actions and organization; and either takes place in or is related to the city and its conditions. This definition describes, for instance, Kallio movement rather well. However, the fact that the entire concept of “urban activism” was coined to describe this very specific style of civic action is problematic. First, it hides the history of Finnish urban activism from sight and makes it more difficult to see the continuities and ruptures within it. Second, in international (academic) discussions, “urban activism” has different meanings from the Finnish one, as also Mäenpää and Faehnle (*ibid.*, 33; 39) note. The authors (*ibid.*, 33) note that in international literature, urban activism usually refers to “reactionary” movements and acts such as protests that aim for political change<sup>4</sup>. Using a limited definition of urban activism conceals what it could be, what it is like elsewhere, and what it has been before, even in Helsinki. For these reasons, and to avoid conceptual confusion, I have chosen to refer to the urban activism born in the 2010’s as “new urban activism”, as distinct from “urban activism”, the latter which I use to refer to either Finnish urban activism before the 2010s or to urban activism in general and as it appears in international literature. Even if the media or the activists themselves didn’t use the concept of urban activism before the 2010s, it is obvious based on literature on the topic that, for instance, a house squatting movement can be conceptualized as one. In the following section, I will first briefly describe the history of urban activism in Helsinki and then move on to discussions in international literature.

## Urban culture and activism in Helsinki 1980-2010

Helsinki was founded in 1550, under Swedish rule, to compete with Hanseatic League towns, but it remained a small and insignificant fishing port until Finland

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<sup>4</sup> For this reason, they state than when talking about this topic in English, they use the terms “urban civic activism” or “civic activism” in distinction to “urban activism”.



became a Grand Duchy of Russia in 1809. Helsinki was “constructed artificially” to become the gateway and a façade from Western Europe to Russia, showcasing and representing Russia to foreigners, although it was paradoxically planned to resemble a Western European city (Cantell 1999, 59-73). Helsinki’s modernization came from above, and its public square was “monumental not for the people but for the control of them” (ibid, 73). While these historical characterizations may be exaggerations, they are still able to capture something of the city’s nature that has been until recently, and to a degree still is, at pains with its identity as a lively and urban European city (see also Jokela 2012, 42): “Helsinki’s history is that of the official sphere and not of a social, cultural and economic life, the development of which took only gradual steps” (Cantell 1999, 75).

Finland remained a “distinctively non-urban society” for a long time (Cantell 1999,77). Since free peasantry had power and connections to elites, there was no urban emphasis in the construction of the Finnish nation or state (ibid., 77-78; Alapuro 1988, 231). “The Finns identified with forests and the countryside rather than with the urban culture” and the canonized visual arts displayed “rural, pastoral works of the countryside” and Finnish landscapes (Cantell 1999, 78). The country urbanized and became a consumption society as late as in the 1960s, presenting a faster and more profound structural change than elsewhere in Western Europe. However, up until the 1980s, the prevailing idea in cultural products such as movies seemed to suggest that life in the countryside was better and more real, while urban life was treated with suspicion (Mäenpää et al 2004, 295). Urbanism was, and to a degree perhaps still is, seen as lacking, something that “we” in Finland don’t have (Mäenpää 2009.)

According to Cantell (1999, 88), in the 1970s and 1980s, “Helsinki’s “structure of feeling” featured a rather dull, uninspiring, even severe urban appearance, a city that could not be described as an exciting urban hub” and there was hardly any “urbanism as a way of life”<sup>5</sup>. Urban life was characterized by control, especially in alcohol licensing, and a mindset according to which, “if something is not specifically allowed it is forbidden” (Cantell 1999, 160). “So, by and large, researchers and artists viewed Helsinki’s public urban spaces as a hollow core waiting to be re-appropriated, reused, reinvigorated” (Lehtovuori 2005, 176). This “reinvigoration” began with grassroots action in the 1980s and the City of Helsinki in the 1990s.

Before the 1980s, the main form of civic action that provided an avenue for impacting local matters were neighbourhood associations, which are still an essential part of collective civic action in Helsinki. Since the 1980s, however, there has been

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<sup>5</sup> Cantell notes that the Finnish climate with its long and cold winters are difficult to surpass (ibid 88).

an upsurge of urban activism that has assumed different shapes and been expressed through different ideological frames, opposing e.g. conservative culture, bureaucracy and capitalism. A common denominator of all these different activisms has been a prefigurative carving out of spaces for individual expression and freedom. Likewise, what is considered legitimate (or profitable) urban culture by the City of Helsinki has changed over the past forty decades.

A “remarkable urban cultural change” (Lehtovuori 2005, 17) in Helsinki during the 1980s and 1990s was described as a “second wave of urbanization” (Cantell 1999). The changes were due to initiatives by both grassroots actors as well as conscious efforts by City of Helsinki officials (ibids.). On a grassroots level, Live Music Association (Elävän musiikin yhdistys Elmu ry)<sup>6</sup> squatted a former paint storage and homeless shelter, Lepakkoluola (“Bat cave”), in 1979 on the (then) outskirts of Helsinki. The squat sparked off a movement and became the headquarters of several urban and underground cultures, minorities and marginal actors. New mediums such as a radio station Radio City and two magazines, City and Image were established to contest and make fun of the stale Leftist culture with its statist politics and to embrace the newly-discovered urban culture and consumption. Performative, playful urban culture and events were established, such as the still on-going annual Night of the Arts, where cultural institutions stay open late and the streets are filled with performances. In fact, Cantell (1999, 90) argues that events played a key role in creating a more vibrant urban culture in Helsinki (see also Mäenpää 2004, 141-175).

According to Cantell (1999, 91), Helsinki City officials became more open to urban grassroots action at the turn of 1990s. A more favourable stance to (urban) culture is part of a larger trend in European development strategies as the economic benefits of an active culture sector were recognized within the emerging symbolic economy (ibid 92; 139; Zukin 1995). As part of this cultural trend, and as an effort to reach west after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>7</sup>, Helsinki started to actively “polish its image” (Lehtovuori 2005, 178). As part of this image construction, there has been an effort to get people on the streets to increase commerce and to create

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<sup>6</sup> “ELMU, Helsinki’s Live Music Association, was established in 1978 with the goal of establishing a vivid live music scene in the Finnish capital. At that time, rehearsal space for local bands was scarce and opportunities to perform live were very limited.”( <https://se.linkedin.com/company/elmury>).

<sup>7</sup> (Urban) culture had a specific role in this Europeanization (see also Jokela 2012, 42), meaning “an increasingly adventurous approach to urban life and urban management instead of emphasizing routine and control” and “allowing for and creating more freedoms in streetscape, in night life and urban density” (Cantell 1999, 90).

crowds and an urban feel (Lehtovuori 2005, 178-9). However, as the cases of Makasiinit and Stop töhrylle below demonstrate, it was not until the 2010's that the city really began to appreciate grassroots urban culture and activism as something that could be appropriated as well as accepted from the point of view of a new governance logic of active citizenship.

In the 1990s, urban activism overlapped with movements such as environmental and animal rights activism, the peace movement, anarchism and anti-fascism, which altogether formed an activist scene in Helsinki. Towards the turn of the millennium, anti-globalism became the dominant frame in activism in Finland. Events such as Reclaim the Streets and Critical Mass politicized the use of urban space but also functioned as social events within the activist scene. (Juppi et al 2003, 6). Reclaim the Streets, or Street Party, originated in London in 1995 and was organized in Helsinki for the first time in 1997. Critical Mass originated in San Francisco in 1992 and was organized in Helsinki for the first time in 1997 by Friends of the Earth to reclaim the streets for bikers and pedestrians. If the hub for urban grassroots action in the 1980s was Lepakko, in the 1990s it was Makasiinit ("Stockhouse"), a former State Railway warehouse next to the main Helsinki railway station close to Töölönlahti Bay, opposite Parliament House with the main city centre thoroughfare, Mannerheimintie, running in between. Makasiinit hosted, for instance, alternative arts, the first ecological shop in Helsinki, a flea market, bike repair shop and different events such as raves and cultural festivals. At the turn of the millennium, a protest movement arose to defend Makasiinit against plans to demolish the building to make way for the new Music House. The most significant planning conflict of the time culminated in 2000 in the gathering of up to 8 000 people in defence of the building, but the protest had no direct impact as the plans continued unchanged. As Lehtovuori (2005, 222) writes, in the early 2000s, the city was still unable to recognize the value in undefined and temporary grassroots spaces. However, the conflict over Makasiinit became a – still recognized – symbol of a new kind of protest about claiming urban space: "It was about new, public caring about Helsinki and the way it is developed" (ibid.). Most importantly, Makasiinit and the conflict over its future demonstrated that "new urban culture is not only about leisure, self-presentation and personal enjoyment through consumption (...), but also about politically challenging urban agenda setting", as Lehtovuori has phrased it (2005, 203).

After the anti-globalization movement peaked at the turn of the 21st century, activists in Helsinki began to focus on local issues and "localize" anti-globalism (Monti & Purokuru 2018). This was a period when questions concerning urban space were most explicitly politicized and clearly framed as anti-capitalism. There was a

rise in the anarchist/autonomous Left that supported, for instance, universal basic income and were engaging in movements such as house squatting, the Precarity Movement and the Free Movement Network. A “squatting wave” peaked in Helsinki during the first decade of the 2000s with dozens of squats established within the decade, some only for a day and others for a few years. There had been house squatting in Helsinki before, but not so clearly as a political project, and this new wave included ideas of autonomy and autonomous social centres and close connections to squats elsewhere in Europe. (See Jokela 2017; Luhtakallio 2012; Mikola 2008). Despite the squatters’ militant rhetoric, and tougher policing against civil disobedience such as squatting (see below and Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023), the squatting movement also had support from city politicians, especially from the Left and the Green parties, and it had a long-lasting relationship with the Helsinki City Youth department and – illustratively of Finnish political culture – on the Youth department’s initiative, the City subsidized the squatting of several vacant buildings over the years (ibids.)<sup>8</sup>. Another question that mobilized urban activism was street art. In 1998, the City of Helsinki began a project called “Stop the Stains” (Stop töhryille), which meant zero tolerance towards graffiti and eventually all kinds of street art and posters, turning street art into a political act and making street artists more militant (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 135; 163; 203). According to some activists of the time, the conflict over city space was even the main contributor in demonstrations becoming more radical and violent, especially in 2005–6 (ibid., 163) in the overlapping activist scene in Helsinki, with an ensuing rise in confrontations with the police. Still in the 1980s, relations between activists such as house squatters and the police had been largely peaceful, even friendly (Luhtakallio 2012), but since the 1990s the Finnish police has been training special crowd control units (Saari 2009) with heavy armament, mounted police officers and a readiness to control riots and combat terrorism (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). Especially following anti-globalization protests at the turn of the millennium in, for instance, Seattle and Gothenburg, that were heavily policed, the Finnish police followed suit in their increasing securitization of protests (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). A final turning point in the relations between activists and police was Smash ASEM in 2006, where the police used excessive force to restrict the peaceful demonstration (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 178–183).

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<sup>8</sup> The justifications for a subsidized squat included pacification of “the squatting wave”; participatory democracy and active citizenship; and, interestingly, making Helsinki a more “European” city (Jokela 2012; 2017).

## New urban activism in Helsinki 2010-

Monti and Purokuru (2018, 203; 284) describe how, at the beginning of 2000s, activists in Helsinki discussed the dullness of the post-recession city with no places to go to and how all street art was forbidden. A decade later, the situation and atmosphere was completely different, with an abundance of independent places and events, from a guerrilla sauna, unlicensed gardening, bike activism (see Luhtakallio 2018), neighbourhood movements such as Kallio movement and the legal temporary use of vacant areas and legal graffiti walls to events such as Cleaning day, Restaurant day and flash mob street dances organized by “We Love Helsinki”<sup>9</sup>. Some of these actions were due to the new organizational possibilities afforded by social media, while some were enabled by the City. However, while gains were made with the sheer volume of this new urban activism, a lot of its critical potential and the larger anti-capitalist framing that had coloured urban activism during the previous decade was lost. Instead of perceiving activism as having intrinsic value because of the ruptures it creates in the workings of society, activism was now perceived as a practice of “active citizenship” and “positive civil disobedience”<sup>10</sup> (Santala 2013), and instead of larger political change, new urban activism pushed for the creation of an urban feel and a “breaking free” from unnecessary bureaucratic regulations that restrict the creativity of individuals – a “new we-spirit” and a sense of community based on individuals and voluntary belonging – with openness, surprise, enthusiasm and intrigue as the affectual register (Hernberg 2013).

These characteristics are common in a style of activism that has been labelled “DIY urbanism” (Douglas 2014; Finn 2014; Iveson 2013): “any action taken by citizens that impacts urban space without government involvement or in opposition to government policies and regulations” (Finn 2014, 331). DIY urbanists’ actions are, above all, “embedded in a politics of localism and a frustration with the formal process” (Douglas 2014). DIY urbanism includes various, heterogenous urban practices that often have a playful tone, such as graffiti painting, guerrilla gardening, the occupation of empty spaces, and even skateboarding and parkour. DIY urbanism can be individual or collective, temporary or permanent and legal or illegal (Iveson

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<sup>9</sup> The idea of Restaurant Day is to enable pop-up restaurants by anyone for one day free from bureaucratic control (see Weijo et al 2018) and Cleaning day likewise enables anyone to set up a flea market in city parks and streets.

<sup>10</sup> The concept of “positive civil disobedience” is used by Timo Santala (2013), one of the key figures in new urban activism, and is not defined more specifically. It seems to refer to activism that is perhaps done without permits but not with the intention to obstruct any function of the society (compare to for instance Extinction Rebellion’s roadblocks) but to prefigure a city where citizens have more freedom to use urban space creatively for different events and activities.

2013, 943). This type of action is typically local with a global consciousness (Sawhney et al 2015, 339)<sup>11</sup>. DIY urbanism (and how it has been framed in literature) has two historical roots, anti-capitalism and the freedom and rights of individuals. In the 1970s, Manuel Castells introduced the concept of urban social movements and framed them from a Marxist perspective as struggles over structural inequality and, later in the 1980s, as grassroots organizing for increased citizen rights and cultural identities (Pickvance 2003, 103-104). On the other hand, DIY urbanism echoes the ideas of 1960s French Situationists who commented on experienced conservatism and modern architecture through street art (Finn 2014, 385), as well as Lefebvre's (1991) ideas about the right to the city, according to which residency in a city provides authority. Currently, only a few scholars perceive DIY urbanism as activism against capitalism and the commodification of urban space (St. John 2004), and it is primarily perceived as activism for more freedom within the city space.

Interestingly, new urban activism was on one hand a continuation of previous local urban activism in Helsinki – while on the other hand it represented a clear rupture. According to Monti and Purokuru (2018, 7), the central figures in new urban activism were part of the activist scene in the 1990s and 2000s and, for instance, one of the founders of Restaurant Day recognized the significance of previous activism such as social centres, street occupations, bike activism and illegal parties to new urban activism (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 286). However, there was something in this figure of an activist, established during the previous wave of urban activism, that did not resonate among the new activists. For instance, the founder of Restaurant Day has stated that the best way to change things is not through conflict but through experiencing alternatives (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 286). Another key figure in new urban activism, one of the founders of the “We Love Helsinki” group, doesn't perceive “the 2010s urban culture” as activism in the first place: “What's emphasized in this action is positivity, openness, sense of community, doing things together and, above all, having fun, monkeying around and acting silly and enjoying oneself as opposed to serious-minded activism, demonstrating and protesting” (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 286, translation by Jokela; see also Mäenpää & Fachnle 2021, 38).

There was clearly a break from the style of the previous wave of urban activism in Helsinki, which (in the Finnish moderate context) strove to create an aura of radical action and was framed as anti-capitalism. Many DIY urbanists do not identify themselves or their actions as radical and many DIY urbanists are happy doing things

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<sup>11</sup> However, I have chosen to refer to Kallio movement as “new urban activism” instead of “DIY urbanism”. By doing so, I have wanted to place Kallio movement to the local history of urban activism in Helsinki.

legally and with authorization (Douglas 2014, 11; 13). Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021, 169-170) ask whether new urban activism is the bourgeoisie version of “youth rebellion” such as Reclaim the Streets and house squatting, and ponder the reasons behind this change where “criticism of precarity and Molotov cocktails” was replaced by fun and innovation. Their question is whether the change in style of urban activism is due to social media and its publicity. Monti and Purokuru (2018, 284) critically review new urban activism as “middle-class fun”, and not without reason. A typical participant in new urban activism is in their thirties or forties and is highly educated (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 85). Some scholars are critical of the “hipness” of DIY urbanism that takes place in gentrifying neighbourhoods, further advancing the gentrification process (Douglas 2014, 19). New urban activists didn’t look like the crust punks of the house-squatting movement but were presentable (an article about the founder of Kallio movement, later a city councillor in the Green Party, was titled “Cocktail activist”), had connections to the elites, and wanted to stay on good terms with the city officials and politicians. In Kallio movement, it was decided from the start that everything would be done by the book, through all the necessary bureaucratic applications – while simultaneously hoping that by showing the movement to be trustworthy, they, and citizens in general, would become more free of regulations. New urban activism tends not to challenge the City as a political structure but rather as a bureaucratic structure, aiming the challenge at its bureaucrats instead of its politicians (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 160; 186).

If the political goals or values were loose in the 2000s house-squatting movement (Jokela 2012; 2017), this was even more true in new urban activism as it didn’t have a clear political ideology such as anti-capitalism, making it a case in point of prefigurative politics, or nowtopianism (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2015), where the means become the end and people “rely on building solidarity through hands-on, sensual action” (ibid, 846). Ephemerality, emotions, experiences and a sense of community are valued intrinsically and as vehicles of social change (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021), as the above quote from the one of the founders of We Love Helsinki also illustrates. In new urban activism, doing was prioritized over talking and meetings (see Lichterman 2005, 68-9). DIY urbanism often operates through examples such as installations or sporadic action in urban space in order to comment on urban planning, provide “light nudges” to municipal officers, or create local common benefits such as DIY park benches (Sawhney et al 2015, 338; Finn 2014, 383-4; Douglas 2014). They are thus symbolic action per excellence. The purpose of it is often to demonstrate and declare another possible city within the existing one (Iveson 2013) and inject spaces with new functions and meanings (Hou 2010, 2).

New urban activism is a prime example of a form of civic action, dubbed “do-ocracy”, that “refers to active citizens who wish to contribute to the public domain by simply doing things instead of voting, deliberating or negotiating”, often on a local scale (Verhoeven et al 2014; see also Chen 2009). This discussion about the prefigurative nature of new urban activism brings forth its contradictory views about political action. The political nature of DIY urbanism is in fact a debated question within the literature: on the one hand, people involved in new urban activism did not identify as activists because activism was associated with “serious-mindedness”, political goals, radicalism and conflict, but on the other hand, many of those engaging in new urban activism, such as Kallio movement members in this research, do believe that their actions have a political or societal impact, but that this impact take place prefiguratively through action and experience, rather than vocalized demands or representative organs. As Douglas (2014) notes, while “few could claim to be wholly apolitical” within the loose definition of DIY urbanism, this type of activism often lacks political communication – or rather, its political communication does not take an explicit form<sup>12</sup>.

The roots of new urban activism have been traced to the same time period when movements motivated by anarchism and autonomy were in crisis (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 210-12; 278; Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021; 170). An initiative “Free Helsinki” in 2008 gathered activists from the anarchist/autonomous Left as well as people who would soon become key figures in new urban activism, such as the founders of Restaurant Day. The initiative focused on what basic income would mean in the context of the City, for instance free public transportation, free spaces and no regulation of street art. Free Helsinki can be seen as a forerunner to new urban activism for two reasons. First, the initiative began to systematically pay attention and politicize urban space by acting differently, prefiguring another kind of city and second, it partly relied on independent action by individuals instead of organized action or associations. For instance, free-riding on public transportation was seen as a political act (ibid, 212). However, Free Helsinki was still engaging in a more confrontational style of political activism than its successors by organizing demonstrations and petitions, publicizing their claims in e.g. their own magazine, lobbying city politicians, and framing these acts as acting against capitalism and the commercialization of urban infrastructure. The initiative fell apart the same year due to ruptures in internal organizing (ibid).

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<sup>12</sup> It seems that the umbrella concept of DIY urbanism is too broad a definition to give any definite answers about its political nature since it covers everything from squatting to bringing benches on to the streets.



This new urban activism didn't pose a threat to the established political order but instead fulfilled the plan that the City of Helsinki had had since the 1990s to fill the streets with people and create a lively culture, largely through grassroots action, in other words, for free. DIY urbanism is seen as a flagship of democracy (Iveson 2013), and popular commentaries perceive urban activism to be the remedy for the slow, bureaucratic planning process or for its end product, "dead urban spaces" that "lack human scale" (Finn 2014, 391). It is thus no wonder that new urban activism was not only tolerated but even celebrated. For instance, Restaurant day<sup>13</sup> was given several awards, including a Finland-award by the Ministry of Education and Culture during its founding year (Monti & Purokuru 2018, 285-6; Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 51), and Kallio movement was awarded in 2017, together with Kallio neighbourhood association and Kallio Cultural Network, by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council as the Neighbourhood of the Year. Kallio movement members were also asked to attend seminars and workshops in Finland and even abroad as ambassadors of this new kind of citizenship. The City has also actively made an effort in advancing this new kind of "positive" urban activism. In 2014, a guidebook for urban activism was published online, written by urban activists but with a foreword by the deputy mayor of the time, Pekka Sauri. He writes that "[o]ur Helsinki is built on the ideas, initiatives, hopes and dreams of its citizens" and that it is "for the good of everyone" that they can be realized or at least experimented with as effortlessly as possible, and that clashes with the city regulations may be avoided with dialogue and negotiations. "I believe and hope that with the help of this guide, urban culture in Helsinki will become even more interesting and lively". One of the themes of the Helsinki City strategy 2013-2016 was "lively Helsinki" and one of its goals is an eventful Helsinki that is a "fun city". This goal was meant to be reached by streamlining the process of applying for the required permits, by producing a map of places suitable for arranging events in the city and, in general, by "enabling a broad spectrum of events" and urban culture in the city. The strategy also aligned with the strengthening of "city residents'" responsibility for their living environment by increasing opportunities to take care of the common city and by utilizing urban space for temporary uses such as organizing events and urban farming". (The City of Helsinki 2013). The Helsinki City Participation and Interaction Model from 2017 has named "activism and forms

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<sup>13</sup> Restaurant Day is one of the best-known examples of new urban activism. It was initiated in 2011, inspired by urban culture in Berlin and Copenhagen and, as a protest against bureaucracy, it was originally supposed to be called "civil disobedience day". Restaurant day gained popularity around the globe with almost three thousand DIY restaurants in thirty-five countries. Despite disputes with officials over sufficient level of hygiene and the serving of alcohol during the first events, Restaurant day was quickly approved, even by the Finnish Food Safety Authority (Evira).

of independent action” as one of its themes, and as something the city wants to enable and support in the form of applicable funds and the use of city-owned premises.

DIY urbanism’s position as the pet civic action has also raised concern among scholars. For instance, municipalities might take advantage of DIY urbanism and the goods it provides (Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021, 260). On the other hand, municipalities, as representatives of the public, need to assure public safety and equity in distributing resources, as well as transparent and participatory processes (Finn 2014, 390). Both of these concerns were realised in Kallio movement as some of its members thought that the City of Helsinki benefitted from the free work Kallio movement did in organizing Kallio Block Party and tried to negotiate concrete assistance from the City. In these negotiations, the City officials drew on the equal treatment of all citizens and civic organizations, stating that they could not favour one group over others. In general, Kallio movement was, however, celebrated as a flagship of active citizenship since they were not “troublesome urban citizens” like activists a decade earlier, but rather they were “manageable and resourceful”, “creative urban user[s] (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, *ibid* 33-4).

## 2.2 Migrant protests, protest camps and migrant solidarity movements

I will first briefly introduce the history of Finnish racism and anti-racism, and then move on to discuss relevant topics in literature concerning migrant solidarity movements and protest camps, relating them to Right to Live. These topics include discussions, first, on the specificities of protest camps and migrant solidarity movements that both emphasize the meaning of affective relations; second, the performance (materiality, embodiment, visibility) and the significance of place in migrant protest camps; and third, the differences between universal and particular solidarity in migrant solidarity movements on the one hand and humanitarian and critical approaches on the other, which together constitute the political and apolitical stances of the movement.

### Finnish racism and antiracism

Until recent years, there has generally been a lack of discussion and research on racism and anti-racism in Finland (Seikkula 2020, 14). As is common in Europe in general (Fassin 2017, x), “race” as a concept is often replaced with “ethnicity” in

academic discussions and with “culture” in public discussion (Tuori 2009, 72; 75). The popular and, until recently, also the academic historical narrative of Finnish racism and anti-racism is entangled with the conception of Finland as a country that was ethnically homogenous until the 1990s. According to this narrative, since there were no minorities prior to the 1990s, there was no racism and thus no need for anti-racism. It is true that the past thirty years have seen a significant increase in migration, but the conception of a historically monoethnic country is not accurate as Finland has been home to ethnic minorities such as Roma, Sámi, Jews and Tatars. The idea of Finland as home for one (race and) ethnicity is no coincidence but is rather the result of 19th and 20th century nationalism promoted especially by the Fennomans. The myth of an ethnically homogenous nation has had real-life consequences in the processes of nationalizing the country, which have indeed made the country more homogenous<sup>14</sup> (Tervonen 2014.) During the Second World War, people of foreign backgrounds were evicted and there was less migration to Finland than before the wars, and a (racist) conception was born according to which there had “never been a history of immigration or [multi-]ethnicity in Finland in the first place” (ibid, 154, translation by Jokela). Likewise, Finland fosters ideas of “white innocence” and “exceptionalism” that neglect its beneficiary role in overseas colonialism and the fact that Finland colonized the Sámi lands within its borders<sup>15</sup>. (Keskinen 2019; Seikkula 2022.) The lack of discussion on racism in Finland does not mean that there is no racism. There is racist discrimination against ethnic minorities, for instance in public places and in hiring practices (Seikkula 2020, 13), and in general whiteness is the grounds for national belonging (Mulinari et al 2009, 21), meaning that those who are coded non-White are simultaneously coded as non-Finnish (Seikkula 2019, 67; Rossi 2009).

Since racism has been a taboo topic in Finland, the country has lacked significant anti-racist traditions. Explicit anti-racist action was scarce before the 1990s. Since the 1960s, there has, however, been anti-racist or decolonization action among Sámi people and Finnish Roma, as well as anti-apartheid solidarity action in the 1960s and ‘80s (see Seikkula 2020, 17-18). Finnish anti-racism and anti-fascism as a movement have been connected to radical counterculture since the 1990s, together with anarchism, punk-subculture, animal rights and environmentalism (Konttinen &

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, thousands of people of Russian descent were evicted to Russia after the Finnish Civil War in 1918 and tens of thousands of Finns translated surnames from a foreign background to Finnish language versions at the beginning of the 20th century, some motivated by nationalist ideals, others by fear of discrimination.

<sup>15</sup> However, in relation to Europe, Finns have also been marginalized and seen as an inferior race. (Keskinen 2019.)

Peltokoski 2004, 6–9; Monti & Purokuru 2018). The first anti-racist organization, Antifa, was established in 1992 as a response to neo-Nazi skinheads and racist politicians, and it shared a lot of its member base with the Finnish Anarchist Union (Konttinen & Peltokoski 2004, 9). According to a then-member of Antifa, there were regular “tradition-fights” between anti-fascist punks and neo-Nazis (Rautiainen 2016; see also Seikkula 2020, 18). However, Antifa’s significance faded during the 1990’s.

In 2006, the Free Movement Network was established in Finland. Its membership consists of e.g. researchers and legal scholars and it is critical towards EU policies that promote the free movement of only some whilst increasing the control of movement of others. It has been active in legal assistance and promoting the rights of immigrants, especially asylum seekers and East-European street-workers. The Free Movement Network can be seen as part of a social movement family consisting of anarchist and left-wing activism, and it has overlapped and cooperated with for instance a house-squatting movement in Helsinki (Jokela 2017).

During the past few years, there has been an increase in public discussion about racism, especially by people of colour and from an intersectionalist perspective, for instance in media platforms such as *Ruskeat tytöt* [brown girls]. The rise of the populist Finns Party, especially after their electoral victory in 2011, hate speech, far-right movements and a more openly racist discourse have also forced white Finns to take a stand (see Rastas and Seye 2019, 593), broadening the field of anti-racist action from anarchists to less radical actors. In the 2010s there were two major anti-racist demonstrations of over 15 000 attendees in Helsinki, *Meillä on unelma* (“We Have a Dream”) in 2015, and *Peli poikki – rikotaan hiljaisuus* (“Stop Racism – Let’s Break the Silence”, translation in Rastas & Seye 2019) in 2016. Both were reactions to racist hate speech, which increased especially after the long summer of migration, and *Peli poikki* also to a lethal attack by a neo-Nazi towards a native Finn who had expressed contempt for the Finnish Defence League. (Rastas & Seye 2019.) However, racism is still often seen as an exception, with racists often portrayed in classist terms and as marginalized far-right supporters (Seikkula 2020, 64; 2019). This kind of simplistic conception of racism reduces anti-racist action to opposing the racists, often with the consequence of portraying anti-racists as heroes and leaving aside those who are frequently subjected to racism (*ibid*).

Right to Live was something clearly different from 1990s anti-racist activism. First, the protesters were now those who were themselves subjected to institutional and everyday racism. Second, the Finnish supporters of the protest were not (only) anarchists and seasoned activists but came from a diverse background, many from

volunteering through organizations such as the Red Cross and church groups, resembling the shift in the nature and membership base of anti-racist movements documented elsewhere in Europe (Lloyd 2002; Jones et al. 2017; Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19). However, as becomes apparent in this dissertation, the history of Finnish (anti-racist) activism was something that played a role in the dynamics of Right to Live, especially in the performative style of the protest.

Next, I will recap what we already know about migrant protests, migrant solidarity movements and protest camps. I will discuss the questions posed in these literatures in light of Right to Live and briefly introduce the new knowledge produced in this research. This knowledge has been produced with the help of my theoretical toolkit of pragmatic sociology and the concept of performative styles, which are introduced in the next chapter.

## The meaning of place in Right to Live and the visibility of asylum seekers

*Occupying space is a powerful and highly visible strategy, which can be performed by people with virtually no power. It forces people to recognize one's existence, or at the very least, one's physical presence. (Hajer & Bröer 2020, 14.)*

Occupying public space for a long period of time is a new tool in the Finnish repertoire of political action. The first protest camp in Helsinki was an Occupy camp that took place in Helsinki for eight months in 2011-12. While the location of Occupy Helsinki, Kansalaistori [Civic square], was central, it is not as visible or central as the location of Right to Live in the Railway Square. Occupy Helsinki did not grow into a significant movement – it raised little media attention and this new form of protesting was not widely discussed in public. Right to Live, however, could hardly be ignored as it was set up next to the main railway station in Helsinki and Finland with thousands of people passing by daily. Railway Square is one of the most central places in Helsinki, challenging the marginality of the protesters/asylum seekers and emphasizing their political agency through a “spectacle of inclusion” (Falkentoft et al 2014, 48). The square is surrounded by nationally significant places, built during the height of romantic nationalism, including the National Theatre (1902) and the National Gallery Ateneum (1887). There is also a statue of the national author Aleksis Kivi (1834 –1872). The railway station, built in 1904, is a nationally and internationally celebrated piece of art nouveau architecture, and as the main railway station in Helsinki it is the last stop for many who arrive from Helsinki international airport, from across the country, as well as from the city's suburbs. Several tram lines stop in front of the station, one side of Railway Square is an active hub for local buses and the railway station has the busiest metro station in Helsinki. In 2017, 375 million rides were carried out on public transportation vehicles in a city

of just a little over half a million residents (<https://vuosikertomus.hsl.fi>). This means that thousands of people were walking past Right to Live every day. It was no coincidence this location was chosen by the protesters and supporters as the next place for the protest after Kiasma:

*I mean the Railway Square is the ultimate place. You're there for everyone to see and we could arrange events and play football, it's such a visible place.* (Interview with a supporter, Kaisa.)

While the Railway square is not the most frequented location for protests, it has witnessed, for instance, mass rallies against the war in Iraq in 2003 and against government cutbacks in 2016. The square is also frequented by festivals such as World Village Festival and a craft beer festival. For about a decade, there has been an ice-skating rink with a café on the square during the winter. Besides these special events and activities, the everyday rhythm is constructed by people passing by rather than spending time on the cobble-stone square, except perhaps if one is resting one's feet on one of the few benches by the Aleksis Kivi statue.

Place has significant meaning for all “politics of the street” (Butler 2015), where the “changing locations, activities and spatial configurations of people themselves constitute a significant part of contention” (Tilly 2000, 146; see also Sewell 2001, 64-6). This is especially true for protest camps (Brown et al., 2017; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013; Burgum, 2018; Frenzel et al., 2014) as well as for (undocumented) migrant protests (e.g. Ataç 2016; Hajer & Bröer 2020). A semi-permanent occupation of space holds a radical potential (Burgum, 2018, p. 4). The significance of occupying public space and turning it into a place of resistance, reconfiguring the meanings of the place, is especially key in literature on protest camps, the ideal type of which were the Occupy camps in several cities around the world in 2011-2012 (Burgum, 2018; Butler 2015). This refiguration of meanings happens through an assemblage of bodies, affects and the material environment (Lilja, 2017). For migrant protests, place matters especially because the protesters lack formal citizenship rights to claim rights. They thus need to assert their claims through visibility in a place. (Hajer & Bröer 2020.) Here, the space is not just the backdrop of action, but claims are indeed made ‘through the city’ (Isin 2002; cited in Hajer & Bröer 2000, 4, *italics in original*). As Hajer and Bröer (2020, 4) write, especially “highly visible and meaningful political places can be used as a claim to citizenship”. Näre (2018) argues that Right to Live made the plight of asylum seekers visible as well as their struggle over borders by bringing them to the centre of Helsinki and showing that they are “humans like everyone else”. Visibility was important, especially since many of the asylum seekers lived in reception centres, many of which were located in remote

areas in Finland (see also *ibid*). The national – understood in many meanings of the word – significance of the Railway Square added another layer to the political significance of Right to Live, a protest of non-citizens, and further raised aggression in online discussions concerning the protest (Vikman 2020). It was thus especially important that the National Theatre and the National Gallery Ateneum both displayed signs of support for Right to Live. Ateneum hung a large banner on its main façade, an art piece called “Europe’s Greatest Shame #11” (displaying a map of Europe and referring to Europe’s closed borders) made by Eggs, one of the most well-known Finnish graffiti artists, and the National Theatre displayed the text “Right to Live” on its billboard.

Butler claims (2015) that the assemblage of bodies always predates and exceeds what is vocalized. This assemblage already constructs a “we” before any claims have been made. I argue that this “we”, and its visibility, were the most crucial aspects of Right to Live. In fact, the explicit political demands of the protest were drafted only after the protest had continued for several weeks. The visibility and political agency of asylum seekers in public space was at least as important as its vocalized political demands. As Butler notes, public space as a space of politics is created in the performative act of assemblage. Thus, while Railway Square was by definition a public space, Right to Live reaffirmed it as such in the actual meaning of “public”.

In migrant protest camps, occupation is not only about reconfiguring the public space but also the public image of migrants and the visibility of hitherto invisible asylum seekers. One of the key strategies of humanitarian organizations in support of immigrants is in fact to alter the stigmatized and xenophobic public figure of the immigrant (Marciniak 2013). Typically, migration has been metaphorically compared to uncontrollable forces of nature such as floods or diseases, or in military terms such as an invasion. It is also common to de-personify people on the move by describing groups of people as anonymous masses or by using statistics. (Laine et al 2021, 16-17.) In Finland, the overall discourse during the long summer of migration and thereafter was that of a threat and a crisis situation, which meant that the issue of migration was framed as a security issue that enabled policies that were stricter than normal (*ibid*, 15). The fears associated with asylum seekers in the media were related to terrorism, sexual violence and other criminal activity (Kotilainen 2021, 114). During the “crisis”, one of the dominant visual images in the Finnish media was to use pictures of politicians while immigrants were often illustrated as faceless masses (*ibid*). This pattern of visualization portrays a picture of asylum seekers as “voiceless and incredible” objects of policies, incapable of giving accounts of their own situations (*ibid*, 118). Much of the Right to Live protest and its affective

infrastructure (Näre & Jokela 2023) was indeed focused on transforming asylum seekers from invisible and faceless numbers into visible subjects and individuals, and from something that is threatening into something that is friendly and non-threatening. I will return to this question in chapter eight.

## Practices of solidarity

Place is not only important in creating visibility, for transforming refugees into political subjects and for building alliances and solidarity as Ataç (2016) argues, it is a place that is affectively loaded. As Street (2012, 46) argues, “[s]pace is a particularly important vehicle for and transmitter of affect”. Emotions have been recognized as being central to all political movements (Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 1998). Social ties and emotions such as compassion have been recognized as crucial triggers in recent solidarity movements that act with or on behalf of refugees (Kleres, 2018; Milan 2018; Rosenberger & Winkler, 2014). However, Hinger et al. (2018, 173) argue that encounters and friendships between people with, and people without, a secure residence status may not only be a precondition for or a result of protest actions, but they can also be considered part of the protest. Likewise, according to Feigenbaum et al (2013), what distinguishes protest camps from other social movement gatherings and actions is “the sustained physical and emotional labour that goes into building and maintaining the site as simultaneously a base for political action and a space for daily life”. It is “affective, everyday encounters” that construct its micropolitics, or practices of solidarity (Brown & Yaffe 2014), and these must be taken into account. Strong affectual ties between protesters and supporters can also lengthen the duration of a protest camp, which is a very demanding form of protest (Mokre, 2018, 216).

Asylum seekers under threat of deportation are living under conditions of “sustained precarity” (McNevin 2020), thus anti-deportation activism not only tries to prevent actual deportations but also mitigates the harmful (mental) effects of deportability, such as isolation and insecurity (Hinger et al. 2018). Building relations between citizens and non-citizens is in fact seen as a crucial factor in solidarity movements (e.g. Darling 2010) and a form of enacting a “radical political imaginary” that prefigures another kind of society and that acts against “racist social formations” (Hage 2012). Practices of migrant solidarity can give birth to “creative new spaces” (Nyers and Rygiel 2012, 12), counter-spaces and spaces of visibility and recognition (e.g. Synnøve et al 2020a). Migrant protests and protest camps are those spaces concretely, a “microcosm of the new order” (Sewell 2001, 66). Frenzel et al. (2014, 465) also discuss autonomy in relation to protest camps, describing it as an attempt



to create “an exceptional space that explicitly stands against the surrounding status quo”.

Right to Live mobilized hundreds of people to engage in the practices of solidarity that developed during the protest. Two interviewees both described the group of supporters forming three nested layers, hang-arounds, somewhat active supporters and very active supporters. The supporters in Right to Live were engaged in several different tasks, from drafting political claims to practical tasks such as cleaning and bringing food and coal to the protest, and providing emotional support to the protesters as well as other supporters. The political tasks included for instance formulating a clear set of demands for the demonstration with the protesters, and lobbying them to the state and Helsinki City politicians and bureaucrats. Social science researchers, journalists and people from organizations experienced in migrant issues were involved with these tasks. Some of them were also involved in the daily, practical and emotional life of the protest, while others limited their participation to the political process. There was a specific lobby group for this that consisted of Iraqis, Afghans and Finns. Other political tasks were to run a publicity campaign: writing press releases, leaflets and updates to social media (to Right to Live -blog and Right to Live -Facebook page as well as one's own Facebook profile) and giving interviews to the media. The ones responsible for this PR campaign were mainly people who were an integral part of the protest.

In this research, I have been more interested in the mundane and affective practices that are crucial for the up-keep of a protest camp and its affective infrastructure but that often remain invisible (Näre & Jokela 2023). These practical tasks included bringing supplies to the protest such as food, coal, matches or disposable dishes, and many bought these supplies with their own money. Any bigger purchases, such as banners, were bought with money donated by people in the inner layers of support group. Also, the protest site had to be maintained clean as it was important to keep it tidy for the media, the police and passers-by, as the protest was located centrally with hundreds of people passing by every day. Some supporters were engaged in a form of support akin to volunteer work, for instance teaching Finnish, finding accommodation for asylum seekers and helping with bureaucratic documents and the asylum process. Supporters of migrant protests often also provide “bureaucratic capital”, such as help with asylum applications (Hajer & Bröer 2020 12-13).

Refugee Hospitality Club was an important platform in mobilizing people. During the protest spring practical issues related to the protest were discussed in the group and there was a “needs”-thread where protesters and their supporters listed

what is needed in the protest, usually on a daily basis. A few Finnish supporters told me they joined the protest by walking past it and staying for a cup of tea, which was offered to everyone visiting, as well as cookies or other snacks and sometimes also warm food. Some bringing supplies stayed for a chat and became more active supporters while others brought supplies occasionally, remaining on the outer layers of supporters. Their role was seen as crucial for the maintenance of the protest infrastructure. Jaana described these “common-sensical”, “normal, middle-aged women” as “action-oriented support” and the “backbone in many situations”:

*So even though they never read any handouts or posted on Facebook or anything but spent their nights sitting there, then that's terribly important so everyone had their own role in some way.*

Suvi described how “even those people who [--] had been involved in some other type of situations than this kind of political struggle with asylum seekers [--] committed really well and took care of the demonstration”:

*[T]his has already become a bit of a cliché, but there were so many different opportunities for taking part, so for people who own a car it was possible to deliver things and then to skilled media people communications and people who had some kind of contacts to politicians either on the municipal or city level or then on a national level --- and then the delivery of those charcoal grills around the clock, and tea and other stuff, and [finding places] where people can sleep if they had come from a distance, so there was a lot of that kind of, to show a kind of solidarity according to your own resources, in a way that suits yourself.*

One of the core supporters, Mikko, described the “endless” list of tasks the supporters were dealing with:

*It was the Finnish support group that tried to run the...be there with [the protesters] overnight. Get food and get anything. And deal with the authorities and deal with f\*n everyone. I mean it was endless.*

There was even a smaller core group of some twenty people who were involved, without much exaggeration, 24/7, who put the rest of their lives on hold for the time of the protest. One had a background in LGBTQ+ activism, another in house squatting, a third was a frequent protester in peace marches since the 1980s. A few were long-term migrant activists. There were for instance journalists, artists, academics, translators and students – people who were educated, who had knowledge, skills and networks to local elites as well as the possibility to use their time in the protest. This small group of core supporters were involved in nearly all of the tasks. Many of them did everything from giving or arranging legal assistance in asylum cases, negotiating with the police about issues relating to the protest,

writing press releases, flyers and social media posts, arranging supplies such as tents, charcoal grills, coals and kitchen supplies, and places to have meetings indoors. They were the ones who best knew from the group of supporters what was happening on the political, practical and mental sides of the demonstration. Many of the core supporters were also assisting one or more of the asylum seekers legally in their asylum processes and they would go through their applications, accompany them in meetings with bureaucrats and contact lawyers.

In this dissertation, I have wanted to make visible this kind of infrastructural work that takes place in the background of the protest and that often remains invisible to the public and in academic research. I have also wanted to point out the political implications of this practical and affective work. As we know from literature on migrant solidarity activism as well as on protest camps, it is these practices that form the protest's micropolitics and prefigure another kind of society. However, by using analytical tools from pragmatic sociology, I have taken a step further into this micropolitics and been able to pinpoint when exactly the affective practices, such as calling the protest "Right to Live family", or "demo-family", carried political meanings and when they did not.

When one describes affective practices that are seemingly selfless, there is a risk of valorising those practices and the people engaging in them. It is thus important to also look at the power indifferences in these affective relations. The power imbalance in Right to Live between citizens and asylum seekers was acknowledged, thanks especially to the more experienced migrant activists. The fact that the asylum seekers had ownership of the protest and thus political agency was emphasized for instance in referring to asylum seekers as protesters and Finns as supporters or volunteers. However, Finnish activists had knowledge about activist practices such as legislation concerning demonstrations and how to deal with the police or how to politicize issues in a way that resonated in the local context, and the size of role the supporters ought to have in the protest was a constant topic of discussion. These discussions and acknowledgement of the power imbalance did not erase the imbalance altogether, but they will not be the focus of this dissertation.

It is also important to take a closer look at the civic imaginations (Baiocchi et al 2014) – people's individual and collective visions for alternative futures – of the volunteers engaging in these practices of solidarity, which is something I will turn to next.

## Political or apolitical solidarity?

A prevalent discussion in the literature on migrant solidarity movements, especially those after the 2015 “long summer of migration”, concerns the motivations and political goals of the activists. Especially the fact that many of the actors in the post-2015 “welcome culture” had no prior experience in activism but got involved through volunteering or by knowing refugees for instance as neighbours has been connected to the fact that the protests they mobilize or are a relevant part of (dellaPorta 2018, 14) do not demand universal changes in migrant policies, but only concentrate on protesting or helping particular cases, especially those migrants who are perceived as well integrated (Ruedin et al 2018; Probst & Bader 2018) – or in other words, deserving migrants. This type of solidarity is obviously problematic and the tension between universalism and particularism can cause friction within solidarity movements (Mokre 2018; Zamponi 2018, 114; 118). However, not every type of particularism is as harmful as one based on deserving individuals. The distinction could also be made between practical “doing” (helping individual migrants in practical things such as legal issues) and political claims-making (political protesting against legal and political structures) (Zamponi 2018, 108-9, Passy 2001, 2011). However, as Odugbesan and Schwiertz (2018) note, the criticism towards helping particular migrants does not always take into account the vulnerable position a precarious migrant is in, where they might be unable to afford to make universal claims or wait for long-term structural changes in legislation (see also Zamponi 2018, 114; Milan 2018, 198). Often, due to migration policies, activism is inevitably particularistic and practical instead of, or in addition to, universalist and political.

Another similar distinction in solidarity movements has been made between humanitarianism and an approach that could be called critical or autonomous, which can usually be found from radical-left anti-racism (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017), and “no-borders” activism (see e.g. Anderson et al 2012; Hansen 2019, 297-300). There are differences between these two logics, or languages, in the role and agency of refugees in their precarious situation; the role of the state in migration; and more broadly, the civic imagination in terms of politics and favoured modes of civic action. The humanitarian approach, in short, aims for the integration of immigrants into the host state (Tyler & Marciniak 2013, 154), whereas leftist activists have a more critical stance towards nation states to begin with. The critical or autonomous approach contests state sovereignty and the category of citizenship, arguing it is a “category of control and resistance” (Tyler and Marciniak 2013, 154). These activists embed their action “in a wider context of structural criticism of neo-liberal, post-colonial or

capitalist structures” (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19) and are often connected to notions of autonomy (Kleres 2018, 211).

Humanitarian logic is claimed to disregard the structural reasons behind migration and the acclaimed refugee crisis (Zamponi 2018, 116). This humanitarian logic has been identified for instance among the “ordinary people” mobilized during and after the long summer of migration. Due to their apolitical stance, these “ordinary people” are claimed to be unable to “voice dissent, to take a stand, or to propose alternatives leading to formal political developments” (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 20). Those engaging in humanitarian action are said to perceive their action as impartial and neutral in opposition to political action. However, Fleischmann and Steinhilper (2017, 20) argue that since the “universal category of “humanity” is always embedded in a political context that is determined by sovereign power and the stratification of rights”, apolitical humanitarianism is even claimed to reinforce the established order. In addition, “the language of humanitarianism and human rights” has been criticized for reproducing paternalism (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 21) and for not giving room to migrants’ political agency as it perceives migrants to be in need of either rescue or control (Anderson et al 2012, 78). This critique of humanitarianism resembles the critique towards the kind of approach to anti-racism that portrays anti-racist action as heroic and bypasses those who are racialized (Seikkula 2020). In some situations, however, volunteer-based humanitarianism is the only option if state actors or international NGO’s are absent (Callen Dunn & Kaliszewska 2023). In the generous Nordic welfare states the distinction between citizens and non-citizens is especially relevant in deciding who “deserves” welfare and who does not (Synnøve et al 2020a). From this point of view, hospitality culture with its practices of solidarity can be seen as safeguards of the universality of a welfare state that excludes certain categories of people from its welfare (Synnøve et al 2020b, 189). At the same time, patching universal welfare with humanitarianism does not confront state practices that exclude, for instance, asylum seekers, and can even be seen to reinforce these exclusive policies. Neo-liberal states are keen to outsource their responsibilities to NGOs (Callen Dunn & Kaliszewska 2023).

As in the dichotomy between universal and particular solidarity, also the distinction between humanitarian and critical logics has been challenged. Fleischmann and Steinhilper (2017) argue that the “humanitarian dispositive” can act as a vehicle of political change in three ways. First, “spaces of encounter” between refugees and citizens may reduce racist perceptions among volunteers, reveal structural contradictions in the European migration regime and enable the

learning of, for instance, self-reflexivity or contextualizing migration from more experienced migrant activists. As Zamponi (2018, 116-7) has noticed in his analysis of the Italian antiracist/solidarity movement, many people who begin with practical tasks such as bringing refugee children toothbrushes shift into a more political mode of action and “take to the streets” as they learn (or are taught by other activists) about the structural reasons behind the refugees’ situation (see also Kleres 2018, 231). This is also what happened in Right to Live. One of the core volunteers, Pia, first visited the protest because she knew another supporter. She became more involved in Right to Live through delivering gas bottles to the protest:

*I went to pick up and borrow a car [from my parents] at some point and this was in the middle of the winter so, those gas bottles needed to be filled for heating, once or twice a day, so a crazy amount, so that was how I somehow got involved so that the first time was already a day or two after that [the first visit] and I was already taking those gas bottles, then I got added to [the secret Facebook group] and that’s how it took off.*

She had experience in organized action such as student organizations as well as LGBTQ+ and feminist activism but “not in direct action” or migrant/asylum issues. As she started taking the gas bottles to the protest, she became more aware of the asylum seekers’ problems and soon became one of the most active supporters:

*In the beginning I don’t know, probably just the fact that if I can somehow do something little that was the first... And then when you heard and saw, learned especially from the problems and challenges and also, or I don’t know the whole situation but like some situations, then like, [I thought that] I can’t not do [something].*

Some of the supporters had an a “humanitarian” background and others a background in migrant and “no-borders” activism. Jaakko, who was active in the No Borders Network, told me how “the opinions have been divided” with regards to the humanitarian supporters, but that ultimately it was a good thing to have them onboard as long as it politicizes people:

*[S]ome have been more sceptical and others think that it’s only a good thing as long as people start understanding the process, so it also politicizes people, which I think has indeed happened in this case.*

In addition to starting to understand the complexity of the asylum process, many Finns who had not been activists before the protest and had no experience with dealing with the police changed their perception about the police and Finnish society more broadly. Anderson et al (2018, 79) note that anti-deportation campaigns that do not challenge the idea of national borders, “are only a first step, one whose potential can only be realized once it moves beyond the legitimisation of national states as “neutral” bodies seeking the “common good””.

The second way that, according to Fleischmann and Steinhilper (2017), humanitarianism can lead to a political change, as also Hinger et al. (2018) argue, is in the spaces of encounter between migrants and citizens, which allow refugees to break out of isolation and provide “access points” to the host society as well as the material and emotional resources necessary for refugees’ self-organization. Supporters of migrant protests often provide a “politically meaningful infrastructure” that helps the migrants act in a legitimate way in the protest (Hajer & Bröer 2020 12-13). This is important since claims to citizenship must resonate in the country’s legal-cultural context. As noted above, Finns had an important role in Right to Live from the beginning, and the supporters provided the protesters with material, bureaucratic/political and emotional resources. As I will describe in chapter eight, they also translated their ideas of the Finnish political culture, especially in the performance of the protest. This translation was not entirely unproblematic since there were differences among the supporters regarding the performative style of the protest, and because of a power imbalance between the Finnish supporters and non-citizen protesters. Third, “welcome initiatives” become part of public discourse countering racist discourses (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017).

Often the two approaches, whether universal versus particular or critical versus humanitarian, are also intertwined and present within the same movement (Mokre 2018; Zamponi 2018, 107-8), and they can be conceptualized as different scene styles (Eliasoph & Lichterman 2014, see below). In Right to Live, particular solidarity was at times used strategically in the effort to make asylum issues public. In their publicity campaign, the protest at times used particular asylum seekers, with their faces and stories, to illuminate the wider struggle asylum seekers were facing. It can also be argued that this struggle to make asylum seekers visible as individuals was a means of combating the media images of asylum seekers as faceless masses (Kotilainen 2021). However, as I present in chapters seven and eight, the main strategy was to keep the focus on the asylum issues facing asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghan in general.

Choosing between particularism and universalism, as well as between humanitarian and critical approaches, is always a context-specific trade-off. While there are differences between individual people and groups in terms of which of these approaches they prefer, I suggest a more fruitful (and often more accurate) way to analyze these differences is to perceive them as different styles or logics of action (see next chapter).

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The above section introduced relevant discussions concerning the place and nature of politics in new urban activism, migrant solidarity action and protest camps. Next, I will move on to discuss the history of Finnish political culture and the central place of associations thereof. The historical overview is meant to portray how strongly the common good has been associated with the cultural form of registered associations that have had a connection to institutionalized politics, and the concerns of a shattering of this common good as civic action is increasingly taking place in loose networks.

## 2.3 Associations and the “Finnish political culture”

I perceive political culture as a set of conventional forms, such as classifications, standards, rules, styles and repertoires that ease our lives in human communities: “shaping people and things in conventional form produces capacities – or powers – to communicate and coordinate” (Thévenot 2014, 10). This understanding of culture has been shaped by French pragmatic sociology, which perceives culture as conventions and forms (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; Thévenot 2007) and (American) culture sociology that perceives culture not as a monolith but as a set of repertoires or styles with certain meanings and practices (Swidler 1986; Eliasoph & Lichterman 2014; see next chapter). However, it is difficult to avoid methodological nationalism when writing about political culture. Political cultures, understood as forms, have been built simultaneously with nation states and are thus intertwined. These forms have been created in a certain historical context and, even as these contexts change, the forms remain. There was especially one historical form that echoed in my fieldwork – the form of registered associations. Finland has a peculiar tradition of a national register of associations to which most associations apply once founded. Established in 1919, following (Finnish independence in 1917 and) the Law on Associations, registration was, according to Stenius (2010), paradoxically meant to safeguard people’s freedom of association. This register still exists and there are currently over 100 000 associations registered in the Finnish Patent and Registration office, including voluntary organizations, sports clubs, trade associations and political parties. The association must be non-profit and its “purpose may not be contrary to law or proper behaviour” ([www.prh.fi](http://www.prh.fi))<sup>16</sup>. Being a registered association means that the organization obtains a status as a juridical person. It also means bureaucracy. For instance, there needs to be a named chairperson who can represent

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, a neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement was banned in 2018.



the association, rules that are sent to the registration office and annual associational meetings, where the annual report and financial statement are checked, among other things. It was especially this bureaucracy, and the stiffness and slow pace of action that comes with it, that Kallio movement and Right to Live were critical of.

Finland is characterized as an “organization society” and from an international perspective, the field of associations in Finland is “exceptionally broad and diverse” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 122), and the political and societal role of associations has been greater than anywhere else (*ibid*, 91). In 2005, only one in five Finns did not belong to an association (*ibid*, 107). Similarly as with other Nordic countries, Finland has a “broad civil society”, meaning that whilst voluntary associations have a large membership, the number of active members is lower than in “parochial” countries such as Italy and France (Dekker & van den Broek 1998). Due to the (historically) strong welfare state in Finland, associations play a role as the “expression of political, social or even recreational interests”, rather than as service providers (Salamon & Anheier 1998, 229).

The way associations are “embedded in social, political and economic structures” (Alapuro 2010a, 16) differs in each country. This embeddedness reflects state-society relations at the historical point in time when modern associations were established in each country (*ibid*; Salamon & Anheier 1998). In Finland, the establishment of associations went hand in hand with the building of the state and nation in the late 19th century and the turn of the 20th century. According to Alapuro (2005), associations took on the role of representing people in Finland whereas in France, for instance, associations were met with suspicion, and it is primarily demonstrations that are thought to embody the people. In Finland, associations have historically been closely linked to the state. Late 19th and early 20th century popular movements, such as the temperance movement, youth organizations and agrarian associations, were “key players” in the formation of the Finnish state (Alapuro 2010a, 18; Stenius 2010, 45; 56) and can be seen as formative in the Finnish political culture (Stenius 2010, 29) since their mobilization was in fact part of the state and nation building projects (Alapuro 2010a, 20; Nieminen 2006, 150-60; Stenius 2010, 53-4). “[A] high degree of responsiveness by the state and the incorporation of different demands into state structures through citizen organizations were two sides of the same coin in a kind of state-society alliance” (Alapuro 2010a, 18). Joining a movement such as the temperance movement, a significant popular movement in Finland at the turn of the last century, was a way to express “belonging and unity” to the Finnish nation (Stenius 2010, 56). These early movements were not ideal-type critical, oppositional movements, but had a paternalist character. The elite attempted to educate and guide

the peasantry as well as use popular movements to legitimise their politics by claiming to represent the people and the common good, especially when Finland was still under Tsarist Russia (Nieminen 2006; Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 94). There was no room for particularistic interests during these years of state and nation building; the only acceptable common good was the good of the nation (and later, the state) (ibid, 75)<sup>17</sup>. This unity was built upon plurality, represented by associations (Alapuro 2010b). Another factor linking associations to the state was (and is) the fact that local associations were part of national umbrella organizations in order to prevent internal fractions (ibid 72; Nieminen 2006, 150-1) and to act as intermediaries between local and national levels (Sivesind & Selle 2010, 95; Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 94). These central organizations were again in connection to the “statist planning and implementation machinery” (Nieminen 2006, 150-1)<sup>18</sup>, which had the effect of taming grievances by incorporating them into the societal system (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 100). Many associations still get annual funding from the state and are generally recognized as representatives of different civic groups by local and state authorities.

Associations were, and still are, considered to have a mandate in representing (mirroring) different groups of people who together comprise(d) the will of the people, the nation and the state/society. (It is illustrative here to note that the words “state” and “society” are often used interchangeably in the everyday use of Finnish language, and the concepts “state”, “nation” and “civil society” do not have clear boundaries (Alapuro 2010b, 271; 2005, 383)). It is through this mediating role that associations gained their legitimacy, paving the way for a relatively smooth transfer to modernity (ibid.) The close relations between civil society and the state authorities has had a pacifying effect on Finnish political culture that has been characterized as consensus-seeking and valuing lawfulness, peacefulness and discipline (Konttinen 1999; Luhtakallio 2012; Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010)<sup>19</sup>. For instance, the majority

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<sup>17</sup> Here Finland differs from its neighboring Nordic countries. Whereas the common good in other Nordic countries is defined from the point of view of society, in Finland it is done so from the point of view of the state (Stenius 2010, 76).

<sup>18</sup> While national umbrella organizations are not unique to Finland or the Nordic countries (see e.g. Skockpol & Ganz 1996, cited in Skockpol 1997), the local-national model of organizing has been especially prevalent in these places. In the 1990s, half of Nordic associations were affiliated with national organizations. (Wollebæk, Ibsen & Siisiäinen 2010, 144.)

<sup>19</sup> These characterizations should not be read as characterizations of some mystical Finnish nature but as the favoured *valuations* within historical boundary conditions. (However, romantic nationalist ideas were strongly tied to the building of the state and thus it is difficult to historically separate these nationalist ideas from descriptions of Finnish political culture. This persistent idea of cultural homogeneity was discussed in the previous chapter under the subtitle “Finnish racism and anti-racism”.) These conditions included, for instance, a fragile autonomous position under Tsarist Russia,

of Finns still feel uncomfortable taking part in civil disobedience and even in “regular”, lawful demonstrations (Luhtakallio & Wass, 2023). Even movements that radically challenged the repertoire of political action and that engaged in civil disobedience – new social movements such as animal rights organizations in the 1990s and the house-squatting movement in Helsinki in the 2000s – mostly, no matter how reluctantly, formed registered associations (e.g. Siisiäinen 1998; Jokela 2017). At the same time, there is a new generation of activists who have attended demonstrations as a child with their parents and who feel at home in activist settings (Jokela et al, forthcoming).

*“[T]he Finnish term for an association, ‘yhdistys’, means ‘a uniting’, and has a sense of joining together entities that then become one. It stresses more the collectivity resulting from joining together than the individuality of those who join together to form an ‘association’”.* (Alapuro 2005, 382).

In other words, according to Alapuro (ibid.), the cultural form of registered associations is the highest form of common good, the ideal-typical civic order of worth (see below), where collectivity is practiced in the spirit of Rousseau, looking for a collective good – not a sum of individual interests (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006). This idealized characterization of the meaning of associations in Finland is illustrative of how important position association have held in collective action – and in sociological writing about that position. Indeed, according to political and sociological scientists, one of the most significant recent changes within Finnish and other Nordic countries has been the changing organizational form of civic action. In the 2000s, new initiatives do not necessarily form registered associations but unofficial groups, networks, events and projects; remain smaller in size and budget; are more project-oriented; take place in the field of culture, recreation and sports; no longer act under a central organization; and have less contacts to governmental organizations and formal politics (Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010; Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009; Sivesind & Selle 2010). This change is of course not only a Finnish phenomenon, since across Western world “collectivistic collective action is replaced by individual collective action” and “the spread of networked individualism is accompanied by the shift from general organizations to single-issue movements and finally to single-event mobilization” (Alteri et al, 718).

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at the time when Finnish political culture was formed since they were the years during which the first popular movements were established and the first demonstrations were held. This fragile position led to self-censorship and, for instance, extremely orderly and peaceful demonstrations: order in protest has been considered “sacred” (Alapuro 1997, 52). These formative years have had a long shadow since anything resembling radicalism is still flinched at (see e.g. Lindström 2012; Stenius 2010, 76).

Perceived from the canon that emphasizes the thoroughly collective (and selfless) nature of associations, the crumbling of this associational tradition has raised confusion and concern. First, this breaking down of associational form can be seen as increasing individualism. Joining associations is challenged by a wide range of other, more individualistic, options for practicing citizenship non-collectively such as individual consumer choices or discussing politics online – both of which were more popular forms of political practices than joining associations among 15–29-year-olds in Finland in 2018 (Youth barometer 2018). Another challenge to the associational form has been the kind of loose, unorganized and non-registered civic groups that are studied in this dissertation and the number of which has increased along with social media<sup>20</sup>. These new civic groups are less formally organized, have a shorter lifespan and the bond between the groups and their members is looser, meaning that they must use more time and effort to craft collectivity (Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 9; 98; Sivesind & Selle 2010, 97). A second concern in the Nordic and Finnish studies of civic action is that there are organizations that do not see representation as their main function but rather highlight an “expressive character” (Alapuro 19 vai Tranvik & Selle 2007 vai Sivesind & Selle). In other words, in these “expressive” organizations there is a (dis)connection to formal politics (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 98; 100-1; 122; Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010). The new movements are more about everyday life than formal politics and favour performativity and one-off events over long-term commitment (Stranius 2009; Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 14; 18). Especially the new movements’ emphasis on expression has shifted the need for organizing to events (Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 8). Since the 1990s, new organizations have been less connected to the national (and party-political) level (Sivesind & Selle 2010, 97-8), and movements no longer automatically pursue the takeover of political power or drive the interests of a specific group, but promote justice, “defence of the good life” and cultural emancipation (Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 7). Since the 1960s, the fastest growing associations in the Nordic countries have in fact been in the field of recreation, sports and culture. While on the one hand these new, often smaller organizations are able to produce more active members, on the other hand their political and societal impact has been questioned as they lack the connection to formal politics that national organizations associations used to have, and due to their operation in seemingly non-political fields they can be seen as “ego projects” instead of “places of the production of the collective good” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101) because they lack a “deeper ideological foundation and change orientation” (Sivesind & Selle 2010, 98). This critique echoes the Finnish (and Nordic) associational tradition and its canonization and valorisation in academic literature. As Dag Wollebæk, Bjarne Ibsen and Martti Siisiäinen (2010, 146) phrase it, “the mainstream

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<sup>20</sup> These new groups have also challenged the legislation concerning civic action in Finland. A task group by the Ministry of Justice proposed in 2021 a new law that would create a new category of “action groups”, a lighter version of registered associations.

of associational development seems to follow the lines of bourgeois, seemingly non-political, non-commitment". They continue: "the new form of associations catering to individual interests and neighbourhood concerns are clearly compatible with increasing individualism" (ibid, 147). One of the features of new urban activism is indeed individualism. It wants to "encourage people to spread their wings and realize their dreams" (Santala 2013, 23). There are also fears within literature on DIY urbanism and "networked individualism" (Alteri et al 2016) that activism is being pierced by individualism and neo-liberalism, leading to the "erosion of the public" and a "retreat into everyday practices and personal lifeworlds" (Finn 2014, 391; Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021, 260). As Alteri et al (2016, 719) phrase these questions:

*"Is participation suffering a "neoliberal" transformation, merely becoming an individual tool to express individual concerns and to pursue individual interest? Or does networked individualism, challenging old structures and interaction modalities, allow people's uniqueness to converge in building a collective long-term project of political and social change?"*

In other words, registered associations that have had a connection to institutionalized politics and that defend collective interests, pursue a political change or political power, are challenged by networked activism that is not based on collective interests or a political ideology and that is not connected to institutionalized politics. The fears of this change can be broken down to a fear of losing statist connection to civic action; of losing "the political"; and of losing an idea of common good. But does non-political equal non-commitment? And does individuality automatically mean individual interests? I will return to these question at the end of the next chapter. It is also important to note that associations are still far from being a dead form in Finland since the number of associations has increased during the past five years with two thousand new registered associations ([www.prh.fi](http://www.prh.fi)). The non-registered, loose forms of civic action can be seen as a new layer of civic action. What makes the understanding of this new layer important is the fact that these new forms are appealing especially to social media savvy young people, meaning that it is likely that collective civic action will increasingly take place in these loose forms rather, or in addition, to registered associations.

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This chapter has laid out questions that revolve around different meanings of "the political" and of collectivity, or common good. Next, I will show how I have approached these questions, with the help of scene styles and pragmatic sociology.

### 3 THEORETICAL TOOLKIT

In this chapter I will introduce my main theoretical approaches and concepts. I will explain what I mean by “civic” and “civic action”, introduce my application of the concept of “scene styles” and present an overview of French pragmatic sociology as well as applications of the theory in discussion concerning individualism and politics, respectfully. These concepts and theories have directed my gaze in my fieldwork, guided me in asking questions, and helped me make sense of the answers. Finally, I will end this chapter by presenting my research questions.

#### 3.1 “Civic action”

As I began writing my dissertation, I was faced with a dilemma of language and concepts with regards to what to call the action and the actors in the civic groups I studied – or what to call the groups in the first place. I could call the actors “activists” and their action “activism” – and in some parts of the research where it is suitable, I do – but I felt uncomfortable using these words throughout the research since many of these “activists” didn’t in fact identify as such: they thought they weren’t active, political or radical enough. “Activism” is a loaded word, at least in the Finnish political context. When I do use the words “activist/activism”, it is when I’m talking about those who did identify as activists or when I am comparing Kallio movement’s and Right to Live’s action to activism in general. (I, myself, do perceive the groups’ action as activism in the sense that it creates ruptures in ready-made citizenship scripts, see Isin 2008.) I wanted to keep the definition as open and wide as possible because the two cases were so different, especially in relation to the “political”, but also because I wanted to be able to compare Kallio movement and Right to Live to other types of action than “activism” too, most importantly to being a member and acting in an association – something that cannot always be characterized as activism. In Finnish, it is easier to circumvent the problem of definition as one can use the word “*kansalaistoiminta*”, directly translated as “citizens’ action”: the action citizens engage in as citizens. (This concept would, however, be problematic in the case of Right to Live where the protesters were not citizens.) *Kansalaistoiminta* covers everything from voting and being a member in an association to taking part in

demonstrations. The concept closest to “*kansalaistoiminta*” in English, and the concept I have chosen to use, is civic action. It is a way of first, studying civic groups with very different goals under the same concept, and second, of avoiding a priori (normative) categorizations whether action is, for instance, “activism” or “political” or not, or contentious or non-contentious (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014; Egholm and Kaspersen 2020). In civic action, “participants are coordinating action to improve some aspect of common life in society, as they imagine society” (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014, 809). In other words, civic action is collective action for some form of common good. The concept also places emphasis on the active doing (or performing) of citizenship (Dahlgren 2006; Isin 2008; Luhtakallio 2012; Butler 2015)<sup>21</sup>, instead of looking at, for instance, ready categories such as social movements or voluntary organizations (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014). For these reasons, I have chosen to refer to Kallio movement and Right to Live as civic groups. According to Doyle and McEachern (1998, 62-5), a “group” is in-between the levels of network and organization. A group and its social relations are more stable than a network and, unlike in an organization, a group does not have clearly defined or explicit hierarchies. Movements, again, consist of networks, groups and organizations, as well as individuals. (See also Eliasoph & Lichterman 2003; Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014; Blee 2012; Luhtakallio 2018).

Civic action comes close to the concept of civic order of worth, or civic world, in justification theory. Civic order of worth can be understood as the logic of action in collective action that strives for some form of collective good. This order of worth is based on Rousseau’s book the Social Contract. There are no individuals in the civic order of worth – or when there are, they are not acting based on their own self-interest but on some form of common good. (This is different from the sum of individual wants.) However, as I present in chapter five, civic order of worth is problematic in its abstract nature, neglecting the affective and particular side of things – things that were pivotal in the political action in Right to Live. Thus, while it was not the task I set out to accomplish at the beginning of this research, the concepts of “civic” has ended up looking slightly altered in the research process.

Another problem the concept of “civic” is faced with is the question of non-citizens’ political action. For instance, in justification theory, civic world is explicitly a realm of citizens. This became evident in the policing of Right to Live, as chapters nine and ten illustrate.

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<sup>21</sup> This is also one of the reasonings in the title of this work, “Performing civic action”. The aim is to look at the active doing and performing of – not citizenship but – civic action.

### 3.2 “Politics”, “political” and “politicization”

One of the common threads in this research has been the question of what kind of politics are performed, can be performed, and how they are performed within these informal civic groups. I approach politics as active political doing that can take place, in principle, anywhere, not only within institutionalized politics<sup>22</sup>. What makes this action “political” is its plural and conflictual nature (Mouffe 1997). In other words, I understand “political” as “politicization”: an act or a process that opens a previously unproblematic thing for scrutiny and makes it “playable”, thus admitting its controversial nature (Palonen 2003, 182-183).

However, in addition to my definition of political, my informants’ conceptions also surface in this research. Kallio movement informants in particular reveal two common ways of understanding politics: institutionalized and the everyday politics which can be understood as the acting out of a set of values. It was institutionalized politics that members of Kallio movement denounced. For instance, as chapter seven illustrates, the participants of Kallio movement shied away from the idea of political representation. In addition, it was not uncommon for a member to say in a group situation, Facebook discussion, or in an interview that Kallio movement was not political – and then quickly clarify that it was not party political. Many members assigned political meanings and most of my informants were rather active in institutionalized politics: all but one usually voted in elections, and a few had even been active in a political candidate’s campaign. Still, even these politically active participants wanted to keep Kallio movement clear from institutionalized politics – while, at the same time, maintaining certain “Left-Green” values and principles. However, not everyone in Kallio movement or Kallio Block Party was equally interested in politics in the first place or attached political meanings to the movement or the festival. While these politically inactive members seemed to be in the minority, it was still possible for them to be part of the action since politics was not discussed and the political meanings attached to the block party were not vocalized<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, literature on “post-political” argues that institutionalized politics has largely undergone a process of *depoliticization* with new public management and its focus on efficiency, low rates of voter turnouts, the power of economic elites and seemingly neutral economic justifications (see e.g. Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021; Dean 2008; Wilson & Swyngedouw 2015).

<sup>23</sup> In 2023, I held a presentation to Kallio movement about my key findings. During a lively discussion concerning the tricky status of “the political” in Kallio movement, one of the original members of the movement said that in their desire to distance themselves from institutional politics, they repeated that “Kallio movement is not political” so rigorously that it eventually came true in the sense that there are many new-comers who are not aware of the history or values of the movement.



One of my informants, Heta, said she was “politically pretty inactive” and that, despite the fact that she thought that, in principle, everyone should vote, she hadn’t always voted in elections because she hadn’t found the perfect candidate. However, she didn’t see her non-voting as an issue since she could have an impact through what she called “quiet activism”. This quiet activism meant that she didn’t preach anything to anyone but used her own lifestyle, such as veganism, as an example to others. Heta said she might click “attend” to a protest event, for instance against climate change, in Facebook so that her opinion became visible to others, even if she rarely actually attended the physical protest as she said she didn’t have the need to go and “shout about things”. While Heta seemed to be a minority in Kallio movement in her hesitant approach to politics in general, her “quiet activism” is able to capture the type of politics that was practiced within Kallio movement. Kallio movement members wanted to channel certain values to Kallio Block party, but this channelling was done in a non-preaching and non-vocal manner. This kind of politics can be conceptualized as prefigurative politics, the acting out of political values (Yates 2015) or “producing alternative futures ‘in the shell of the old’” (Luchies 2015), common especially within anarchist movements. (However, Kallio movement is a peculiar case of prefiguration since the movement is not anarchistic and, as this research shows, the movement’s values and the collective process “behind” prefiguration are vague.) I will return to the question of political nature of action, in light of pragmatic sociology, later in this chapter.

### 3.3 Commitment culture and performative styles of civic action

In their article “Civic action” (2014), Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman introduce an analytic framework for studying civic action – that of scene styles. This is a 2.0 version of their previous concept of “group styles” (Eliasoph & Lichterman 2003). The difference between the two is the emphasis placed on the role of settings and situations in scene styles, since group styles were criticized as giving an overly static image of the groups.

Scene style points us towards taking notice of the cultures of civic groups, not only their values. As Lichterman (1996, 34-35) argues, activists’ togetherness, and the way to relate to and practice common values, mattered to the activists at least as much as the groups’ values. A scene style “draws attention to different, patterned ways in which actors coordinate civic action in a setting” (ibid, 800) “that arise from members’ shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the [--] setting” (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 737). Eliasoph and Clément

(2019, 254) further elaborate that “style is about imaginations, shared expectations, and hopes, around which activists coordinate action”. Civic actors do not invent the styles from scratch but are part of cultural repertoires that are usually recognized by actors<sup>24</sup> (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014, 814; 839). Styles consist of speech norms (what is talked about and what kind of role talk has in the setting in general, what kind of emotional expressions are expected)<sup>25</sup>, commitment culture (what kind of obligations members of the setting, or group, have towards each other); and a shared social map (reference points and the relations to the outside world) (ibids). Lichterman and Eliasoph (ibid, 840) have identified that groups differ, first, in terms of their social map in how they deal with conflicts; is their action guided by a vision of social transformation or not; and do they try to build universalist claims or rather a distinct community (of identity or interest). Second, groups vary in terms of their group bonds, or as Lichterman (1996) phrases it, commitment cultures. Some may expect to “cohere as one body” while others cherish the diversity of their members; and some groups assume a long-lasting engagement while others do not.

I have utilized the theory of scene styles in analyzing the two groups’ commitment cultures in chapter six and extended the theory by looking into the performative styles of Right to Live and Kallio movement within the urban space in chapter eight. This extension of the theory of scene styles pays attention to non-discursive elements of civic action, such as materialities, embodiment and affects, and is in line with how the theory has been interpreted by others. For instance, Mische (2015, 61) describes style as a “performative dimension of political practice” and as different modes of communication, and Eliasoph and Clément note (2019, 253) that style is also about the different ways of using urban space.

Right to Live is a good example of performative styles and of the fruitfulness of the concept of scene styles in general, since the protest was a bricolage of critical and humanitarian approaches that can be conceptualized as different performative styles. The performative style of the protest resembled the humanitarian approach in emphasizing peacefulness and avoiding aggression, such as shouting, and in not being too critical towards, for instance, the police. A more critical style of action, with shouting, was reserved for demonstrations against deportations that took place

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<sup>24</sup> There are, of course, also idiosyncratic group cultures that are implicitly understandable only to the members of that group (or, some aspects of the group culture might not be understandable to all), but in general, there is a set of recognizable styles within a culture. These styles are implicit and may take slightly different forms in different contexts, but they are however similar enough to be recognized. (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014, 839.)

<sup>25</sup> Group customs are not the same as beliefs or ideologies, but they guide the limits of discussion within the group (Lichterman 2005, 16-7).

far away from the protest site at the Railway Square. Some of the activists took part in both protests, adjusting their style accordingly. This confirms that, in analyzing the differences between these different approaches, such as critical and humanitarian, the unit of analysis should be styles and logics of action in situations, rather than specific individuals or groups.

Group style matters for its outcomes (e.g. *ibid*; Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014, 847; Blee 2012; Luhtakallio 2018.) While it is difficult to determine whether a group is successful or not (Luhtakallio 2018), and it has indeed not been a question I have posed in this research, the concept of style is able to describe what is in the scope of the civic group in question. I will revisit this question in the next part of this chapter.

### 3.4 Pragmatic sociology as a theory and analytic framework

As Tavory et al (2022, 23) eloquently express it, pragmatic sociology looks at “the way people reach out for different goods as a practical activity that is mediated by the objects and tasks actors are confronted with” (Tavory et al 2022, 23). In terms of pragmatic sociology, my theoretical and analytical toolkit consists of justification theory (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006) and the sociology of engagements and grammars (Thévenot 2007; 2014; 2015). Pragmatic sociology has a formalized set of worlds or regimes that guide our actions and interpretations, enabling comparisons across different cases. Cultural analysis, seeking meanings rooted in local historical meanings, has been the first and crucial step in my analysis, after which I have been able to generalize my findings to the language of pragmatic theorizing. Next, I will present the outlines of these theories.

**Justification theory** presumes (as a methodological gimmick) a symmetrical situation (epistemology of symmetry<sup>26</sup>) where we all possess critical capacity. The moment, or a possibility, of critique emerges among participants in a situation who form different interpretations of the situation and “the world” to which it belongs (Blokker 2013, 255). These situations are called conflicts, even if they are not as dramatic or heated as the word might suggest. According to Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye (2000, 230), conflicts are windows into political cultures and practices, to the historical “cultural repertoires of evaluation and the rules that people follow in justifying them” (Lamont & Thévenot 2000, 1; 8). According to Boltanski & Thévenot (2006), these repertoires are built on orders of worth. Orders of worth are

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<sup>26</sup> “This doesn’t mean that pragmatic sociologists imagine the world symmetrical by default, but simply that, to correctly describe asymmetries, the latter shouldn’t be prejudged and the possibility of their reversibility shouldn’t be excluded *a priori*, even when it is the least probable” (Barthe et al 2013, 196).

worlds, or polities, drawing from different conceptions of what constitutes common good. “[E]ach regime of worth includes assumptions about what its states of worthiness and unworthiness are, what ideal objects and subjects populate the world, what evidence counts, and what tests would allow actors to justify their actions as legitimate” (Tavory et al 2022, 23). Justification theory limits its scope in the worlds that are deemed the most legitimate: market worth, where evaluations are based on monetary value; industrial worth, in which measurability and efficiency are currency; civic worth, which emphasizes lawfulness, collectives and solidarity; the order of fame, that values renown and fame; the order of inspiration, in which evaluation is based on individual creativity, passion and uniqueness; and domestic worth, which places high regard on tradition, honour and hierarchies.

When routine-like everyday action comes – or is intentionally brought – to a halt, as happens in a conflict, there is the need for an evaluation of the situation and tools to solve it. People in the situation might want to avoid a conflict and put off the disagreement by means of a compromise. What this actually means is that the dispute is not really resolved, but rather that concessions are made (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 128). Instead, disputes are resolved when people “rise above the contingencies while taking the circumstances into account, [leading] them to make the relevance of the beings involved apparent in relation to a single general principle of equivalence. The question of what is just, the question of the justice or justness of the situation, can then be raised. It becomes possible to justify certain associations while others can be deemed unjustifiable” (128-9). That is, the participants in a quarrel must draw on the most legitimate justifications that are part of their cultural repertoires (Swidler 1986). This means that particular situations and their justness can be brought to trial, put to a “test of reality” (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 127–9; Blokker 2011, 255)<sup>27</sup>. “A test in this sense is a creative and dynamic process of demonstrating what is relevant in a particular situation (and de-emphasizing or ignoring what is not relevant), and attributing “worth” to the relevant entities” (Thévenot et al 2000, 267).

Orders of worth are not only verbal but include material elements. Each polity, or common world, has its own set of objects: washing machines and beds in the domestic world, manufacturing machines and calculators in the industrial world and angels and demons in the inspired world (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 131). Objects reaffirm an argument and offer proof for the claims made (Thévenot, Moody &

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<sup>27</sup> These tests are so pivotal in the sociology of critique that the theory is also known as the sociology of *épreuves*, the sociology of tests or trials (Barthe et al 2013, 175). According to Potthast (2017, 345), this part of the theory, emphasizing the crucial role of materiality of the “external scaffolding” of cultural repertoires (Swidler 1986), is also what distinguishes pragmatic theory from the cultural theory of meaning-making, linking it more closely to practice theory.

Lafaye 2000, 237), and are thus crucial for testing. Without proof, one can be suspected of engaging in a “merely rhetorical strategy” (Luhtakallio & Thévenot 2011, 5). “Persons confront uncertainty by making use of objects to establish orders and, conversely, [--] they consolidate objects by attaching them to the orders constructed” (Boltanski & Thévenot 1990, 17). For instance, in a dispute over a road construction, some might claim the road is “an international highway” and others that it is a “local access road” (Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye 2000, 237). As Thévenot et al (ibid) point out, these evaluations have material consequences, such as the number of lanes on the road. Despite the fact that disputes and the subsequent tests have material consequences that consolidate a certain order, possibly for decades or centuries to come, a final order of things is never reached as there is always the possibility for critique and thus for a new test.

However, in our everyday life we do not always “rise above” a situation to invoke a higher principle of common good. Laurent Thévenot (2007) has theorised these moments in his **sociology of engagements** as different regimes, or modes, from that of publicly justifiable engagement<sup>28</sup>. These regimes are the regime of engagement in a plan and the regime of familiar engagements.<sup>29</sup> These regimes come with their own sets of evaluations and the kinds of “goods they foster”. In the regime of public justification, the good is that of the common good. When we are engaging in a plan, we are oriented towards the future in a functionalist manner. This regime highlights notions such as projects, autonomy, individual responsibility and choice. In the regime of familiar engagements, we are engaged with our personal belongings in a familiar and personalized environment, most typically that of the home, acting based on learned behaviour in the past, this regime thus providing ease and comfort.

Engagements describe the different ways that individuals engage with their surroundings (and themselves) in different settings and situations, thus enabling “composite personalities” (Thévenot 2014). I engage differently with the people present as well as with the material surroundings when I am at home with my family or close friends than I do when I am in a demonstration among other protesters, or in a bank negotiating a mortgage with a bank official, and I need to be able to separate these different modes of engagements in order to act accordingly in each situation. In other words, engagements describe coordination with oneself. To capture the

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<sup>28</sup> Regimes of engagements are different cognitive formats and different ways of experiencing the world (Thévenot 2007). According to my interpretation, a regime can be understood as an orientation in a situation. Engagement can be understood as dependency (Thévenot 2007, 411; 415) or commitment (Thévenot 2014, 11).

<sup>29</sup> Later, other regimes have been distinguished (see e.g. Thévenot 2019) but will not be used in this research.

different ways coordination is done with others, Thévenot (2014; 2015) has further developed grammars of commonality in the plural based on the three regimes introduced above: the grammar of orders of worth; liberal grammar of individuals in a liberal public; and grammar of close affinities<sup>30</sup>. Thévenot (2014, 9) justifies this two-part theory by arguing that “[s]uch a dual view is needed if we want to account for the interrelated metamorphoses of modes of government and of selves that we observe nowadays”, nodding towards the Foucauldian theory on neoliberal governmentality and “techniques of the self” (Foucault 1991). He adds that, in order to form expectations about others’ course of action in a situation of coordination with others, one draws upon one’s own self-coordination (ibid, 11; 13).

Grammars are ways to solve a fundamental tension between differing individuals and the composition of commonality (Thévenot 2014). Composition refers to the work, or “art”, of combining different aspects of the three regimes of engagement in one whole, a commonality (ibid, 14). For instance, political projects may include individual empowerment (engaging in a plan); care (familiar attachments) as well as deliberation on the common good (public justification). As the word “grammar” suggests, they are forms of communication<sup>31</sup> and of expressing concerns and differing. Each grammar enables certain modes of differing as well as certain ways of integrating that difference into the commonality. The communication in grammar of orders of worth is straightforward as it is based on discursive language<sup>32</sup>, and on most conventional forms of communication (Thévenot 2007, 418), and as explained above, differing is based on criticism that derives from different conceptions of common good. An agreement is reached through compromise (Thévenot 2015, 6). Liberal grammar is likewise based on discursive language but disputes and differences (that are not as critical as they are in the grammar of orders of worth since, in this grammar, differences are essentially a matter of personal choices) are settled through negotiations and bargaining and formed into contracts. Grammar of close affinities is based on very personal, often emotional attachments, and is thus more difficult to translate to others verbally. (Thévenot 2014.) Instead, body language is more appropriate in this grammar (Thévenot 2007, 416). (Formatted) communication takes place through personal affinities to common-places that are

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<sup>30</sup> According to Thévenot (2007), the three grammars differ according to their legitimacy, the grammar of orders of worth being the most and common-places the least legitimate forms of communication. However, as I present in the concluding chapter, this kind of ordering a-priori is problematic.

<sup>31</sup> Understood as “taking part in a common matter” (Thévenot 2007, 411).

<sup>32</sup> However, each grammar still has its set of intermediary objects of communication (Thévenot 2014, 17-8). In the grammar of plural orders of worth these objects might be “tariff equalization” (civic worth) or “services” (market).

known to others in the same commonality, the size of which varies from two lovers to a nation and beyond (Thévenot 2014). They are material or non-material “cultural artefacts” (Ylä-Anttila 2017, 43), such as proverbs, national symbols such as flags, or songs assumed to be known by all in the commonality (see Ylä-Anttila 2016). Difference in a common-place is enabled by the different expressions of personal attachments to the same common-place. For instance, two people might be emotionally invested in the same local park but for one it is a tranquil place of reconnecting with the nature and for another it is a place for meeting other locals. This “plasticity” of common-places can also account for very surprising coalitions between, for instance, right-wing and left-wing activists. (Thévenot 2014, 21-24)<sup>33</sup>.

Pragmatic sociology is able to capture how things, such as civic groups, are simultaneously assemblages of several regimes, with some of the regimes being more dominant in certain situations – for instance, demonstration signs that display arguments based on public justification and general meetings that begin in the regime of public justification but gradually slide into familiar attachments. While some situations are more clearly dominated by one regime or order of worth, others are more blurry (Tavory et al 2022). Even more importantly, the tools of pragmatic sociology are able to depict the relations and the inherent tensions between the regimes in practice. These tensions might be invisible in some situations but become apparent in others. One of the ways to resolve a tension between regimes is by making an effort to “purify goods”, introduced by Tavory et al (2022). As the authors (ibid., 26; emphasis added) note, paraphrasing Zelizer (1997), “we tend to live in a tangled world, where different notions of worth and different spheres constantly bundle and unbundle as people actors engage in activity and interact with their fellows”. This “bundling” and “unbundling” of different regimes refers to the different combinations regimes appear in and to the practical work that all of us have to do in our everyday life to either blur a combination of two regimes to appear as one, or “purify” a combination of two regimes into only one regime. “We need to understand how different notions of the good come together and fall apart, blur and clarify; how, at different moments, different narratives of the good may come to the

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<sup>33</sup> Here we find another explanation for the title of this work, “Performing civic action”. In a pragmatist sense, civic action is always about making something common, be it values, interests, emotions or political goals, and about making that common somehow observable to others in the commonality – in other words, communication (see Thévenot 2014). For instance, nationalist emotions can be expressed by singing a hymn “everyone” in the familiar common-place of a nation are (supposed to be) familiar with (Ylä-Anttila 2017), thereby (re-)creating, expressing, and strengthening the commonality. Thus, this forming of commonality resembles performativity, which is also the act of making something observable.

fore.” I will look at this kind of working with inherent tensions within bundles of different goods, tensions that remain invisible in most situations but become visible in others, in chapter five, where I show Kallio movement tackling tension between the ideas of a common good in the word of inspiration and the individual interests in the regime of engaging in a plan; and Right to Live balancing between the affective inside of the protest and the civic order of worth.

Grammars are also different types of formats of coordination of actions. Formatting, or investing in forms, is a way to support a particular regime of action in the present moment as well as in the future. It can be understood as institutionalization, providing external scaffolding for cultural repertoires (Swidler 1986) and cognition (Lizardo & Strand 2010, 206-8), with a material dimension: it is “equipped humanity” (Thévenot 2014, 12)<sup>34</sup>. Parts of a given regime (and their logic of action) are externalized, invested in certain forms such as certifications – or in the Finnish context, registered associations. These investments are thus also the keys for a sociologist to unlock the underlying relations and mechanisms of power and domination. Inherent in sociology of engagements is the idea that, when investing in one format, others are sacrificed or suppressed. For instance, the ease and emotional attachment related to familiar engagements is lost when one has to either rise above the situation to use the grammar of orders of worth or present these engagements as individual preferences, according to the logic of the liberal grammar.

Next, I will present two examples of how pragmatic sociology has been used to study civic and political action, and how I have utilized the theory to dissect different meanings of “individualism”.

## Using pragmatic sociology to study civic action and “the political”

Pragmatic sociology is an apt tool for studying (political and civic) collective action since it provides analytical tools for investigating the moral and political grounds of different groups. In justification theory, the connection to studying political action

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<sup>34</sup> “[M]aterial arrangements in equivalence-making [--] are what spare actors the work of crafting equivalences in each situation” (Thévenot 2007, 413). This idea comes close to the one in Actor Network Theory: “in order to stabilize society, everyone [--] need to bring into play associations that last longer than the interactions that formed them [by] replacing unsettled alliances as much as you can with walls and written contracts, the ranks with uniforms and tattoos and reversible friendships with names and signs” (Callon & Latour 1981, 283-4). One of the differences between the American strand of cultural sociology and the French pragmatic sociology is in fact the stronger emphasis placed on engagement with the (non-discursive) embodied and material environment in the first (see e.g. Lizardo & Strand 2010, 211; Potthast 2017, 345). For a comparison of pragmatic sociology and science and technology studies, see Potthast 2017.



is more obvious since “the act of politics” can be understood as “an act of critique” (Pattaroni 2015, 144; see also Eranti 2018, 2). This concept portrays “political” in the sense of “politicization” introduced above.

The analytic tools of pragmatic sociology enable comparisons between different cases, as in this study, and across countries (Luhtakallio 2012; Lamont & Thévenot 2000) and time (Centemeri 2017; Lehtimäki 2021; Pattaroni 2018). Pragmatic sociology has been used as a framework, for instance, to analyze the historically changing justifications of organic farming (Lehtimäki 2021) and climate politics (Kukkonen 2018); populism and the politicization of an issue from the regime of familiar engagements (Ylä-Anttila 2017); or the different ways people form common ground in social movements (Luhtakallio 2018; Luhtakallio & Tavory 2018; Albert 2018), which have been identified as being more based on personal and local attachments than before, (Thévenot 2014, 14; Pattaroni 2015) and the mobilization of which have been found to be heavily based on familiar attachments (Thévenot 2015, 16). Pragmatic theory has also been applied specifically to politics concerning urban planning, urban activism and spatiality (Eranti 2018; Salminen 2018; Thévenot, Moody and Lafaye 2000; Leth Meilvang et al 2018; Pattaroni 2015). Pattaroni (2015, 144; 142) argues that “urban struggles have been the arena for a profound disruption of the established order” and “the history of urban struggles and their institutionalization in the renewed order of the city is [--] an ideal standpoint from which to consider the question of politics of difference and their transformations”. In this urban context, struggle and critique against the established order (understood as the institutionalized form of achieved commonality) allows us to see that this disruption concerns not only discourses but also materiality (ibid 144).

Especially relevant references for this research are studies, conducted with a pragmatic framework, concerning the changing forms of urban activism and urban governance – which have been proven to be intertwined – (Pattaroni 2015; Leth Meilvang et al 2018) and the legitimacy of protest camps. In his historical overview of urban struggles in the Swiss city Geneva, drawing from pragmatic sociology, Luca Pattaroni (2015) distinguishes periods in time when different engagements have been most dominant. The class struggles of the early 20th century were very much based on public justification while the 1970s saw an emergence of a new kind of urban activism that combined a Marxist critique of capitalism with a marginal way of living (for instance in squats) that criticized the experience of living in a functionalist city in an expressive and not always discursive format – that is, through the grammar of common-places. The latter was thus a combination of public justification and (literally) a common-place based on close affinities. Pattaroni argues that this critique

was institutionalized into participatory formats of urban governance that solved the problem of differing voices by constructing formats based on liberal grammar<sup>35</sup>.

Similar findings have been made in the Nordic countries Denmark and Finland, according to which formats designed for citizen participation in the planning process (e.g. workshops, dialogue meetings and comment letters to the planning office) afford, or even assume and favour, liberal grammar instead of public justification or grammar of close affinities (Eranti 2018; Leth Meilvang et al 2018). The participatory formats are thus about involving “users and stakeholders into negotiations over urban interests and opinions” (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, 31, emphasis added) rather than deliberation over common good among citizens. Being in a setting that is dominated by liberal grammar makes it more difficult to make radical, or meta-, critique,<sup>36</sup> as liberal grammar tames conflicts into interests or personal preferences, turning “troublesome urban citizens” into “manageable and resourceful”, “creative urban user[s] and interested stakeholder[s]” (ibid 33-4). This is the kind of civic action that new urban activism, such as Kallio movement, was engaging in. Pragmatic sociology is thus able to grasp the shift from anti-capitalist activism in Helsinki in the 2000s to new urban activism in 2010s and place it within a larger change in the forms of urban politics, as well as describe the trade-off this liberal form comes with: more participation, less room for conflict. In other words, new urban activism, with its “positive civic disobedience”, can be seen as a result of certain historical and transnational developments.

While urban struggles are always somewhat based on close affinities such as the familiar neighbourhood and its particular meanings and places, to be legitimate in the participatory formats or in the public eye they need to be translated into liberal grammar or public justification (Meilvang et al 2018; Pattaroni 2015). This conclusion was also reached by Dekker and Duyvendak (2020) in their research on the justifications and legitimacy of Occupy movements in New York and Utrecht. These movements faced criticism from the press and passers-by for blurring the line between the private (regime of familiar attachments) and public (public justification) by sleeping and partying in a public protest in a public space. Protest camps, such as Occupy and Right to Live, are always a composition of the civic world and the

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<sup>35</sup> A similar claim about a shift in the logic of organization and governance into the new spirit of capitalism is made in Boltanski and Chiapello 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Radical critique is when a certain order of worth that dominates the situation is questioned (see e.g. Blokker 2011, 255). It is thus external critique, as opposed to internal, reformist critique “in which the impure application of conventionalized or agreed-upon regimes of justification is denounced” (ibid). Meta-critique is again critique towards the entire rules of game, “the very framework of the production of experience” (Pattaroni 2015, 165).

familiar regime since they include civic protesting as well as the daily life of the protest with all its practicalities and social and affective maintenance work (Feigenbaum et al 2013; Näre & Jokela 2023). It is the affective infrastructure of a protest camp that enables the protest to continue (Näre & Jokela 2023) and, as the literature on protest camps suggest, the practices of solidarity that construct its micropolitics, inevitably blurring the civic world its familiar regime. Translating this “micropolitics” in pragmatic sociology brings to light the tension between the civic world and the familiar regime and the work, including the material arrangements, that balancing between these regimes requires, and the threat that the familiar regime poses to the civic order of worth. In Right to Live, this threat was very concrete: if the protest did not look like a protest, because it did not possess enough signs of civic order of worth, it was in danger of being evicted. Therefore, the performance of Right to Live was a balancing act between different boundary conditions: it had to look like a protest but also maintain its familiar regime in the background.

What made this assemblage of the civic world and the familiar regime even more complex were the political connotations the familiar regime carried – at least in some situations (“political” in the sense of “politicization”, see above). During the protest, the protesters and supporters began calling each other brothers and sisters and the protest “demo family” or “Right to Live family”, also on public Facebook posts. This could be seen as a political act of recognizing asylum seekers as individuals and family-members to whom the supporters had personal and affective relationships, in a situation where asylum seekers were portrayed in the media as faceless masses and as a threat. Moreover, familiar regime proved to be more universal since it surpasses civic world, which is based on citizenship. However, some supporters and protesters criticized practices that emphasized the social aspects of Right to Live, such as calling the protest “demo family” or “tea-drinking” at the expense of its (more explicit) “political” aspects or the concrete work of helping asylum seekers with their asylum cases. Especially after the physical protest, as asylum activism was even more focused on assisting asylum seekers legally, the nostalgic memories of some Right to Live activists and their plans for reunion parties were condemned by some other activists. This intrinsic tension between the civic world and the familiar regime is able to illuminate the trade-off between emphasizing different regimes in different situations.

## Dissecting “individualism” with pragmatic sociology

Individualism is a cultural trend that has shaped civic action since new social movement of the 1960’s and especially during the social-media era in the 2000’s.

Social media affords a new type of grassroots civic engagement that has been coined as connective action, as distinct from collective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013). In connective action, people engage in movements as individuals, through personal and not collective interpretations and meaning-making (ibid; Milan 2019, 122). As presented in the previous chapter, this cultural trend has raised concerns about increasing selfishness and a loss of collectivity and an idea of the common good. However, individualism can mean several things (Lichterman 1996, 5-6; Thévenot 2007, 416). In the following, I will explore the different meanings of individualism with the help of French pragmatism and Paul Lichterman's (1996) theory on personalized politics.

The kind of individualism Kallio movement and Right to Live were engaging in was personalism (Lichterman 1996): "it is the individualism women and men practice when they seek self-fulfillment and individualized expression, growth in personal development rather than growth in purely material well-being" (ibid, 6). In other words, personalism is not motivated by self-interest but self-expression. Lichterman (1996, 5-6) differentiates personalism from instrumental or utilitarian individualism, that guide us to rationalize and optimize our life choices on the bases of self-interest. When individuals practicing personalism unite to form a collective, they are likely to engage in "personalized politics" which Lichterman (1996) identifies prevalent in (US white, middle class) grassroots activism since the 1960's and 70's. "[P]ersonalized commitments [...] both create and are sustained by a form of political community that emphasizes individual voice without sacrificing the common good for private needs" (Lichterman 1996, 4). This is precisely the kind of individualism that was not only tolerated but encouraged and indeed needed both in Kallio movement and in Right to Live. In both cases, the orientation to arranging things – setting up and maintaining infrastructure – and the lack of recruitment practices combined with a project-type of temporality required and nurtured the kinds of goods found in this world of personalized politics.

One of the main contributions in this dissertation is to dissect personalism, and individualism in general, with the analytic framework of sociology of engagements. I argue that even though individualism is a logic according to which activism was practiced in the civic groups studied, it didn't primarily mean individual interests but inspired worth that strives for some form of common good while relying on "inspired self-starters" doing "solo gigs" within the framework of collective action. Individualism also meant a lot of individual responsibility and individual commitment to action. (See Appendix V.)

Literature on the changing forms of (Finnish and Nordic) civic action has raised concern that we might lose ideas of collective good with increasing individualism. I argue that this is not the case but that, in line with pragmatic sociology, ideas of collective good may gain new forms. As Lichterman and Cefai 2006 note, “[c]ivil society creates and recreates itself as people continue enacting different customary forms of membership in those settings” (Lichterman & Cefai 2006).

### 3.5 Research questions

After introducing the theoretical toolkit, it is possible to formulate more precise research questions of this study:

1. What kinds of engagements and justifications emerged within the loosely organized and informal civic groups of the 2010’s?
2. How did the two civic groups studied build a culture of commitment?
3. How was “political” understood in Kallio movement and Right to Live, and how did participants of these two civic groups perceive the idea of political representation?
4. Based on the previous question, how (with what kind of civic style) did the two civic groups perform their (political) message in public?
5. How (through which engagements and justifications) did the local public authorities value the two civic groups?
6. What kind of tests did the two civic groups pose for the use of urban space?

Next, I will introduce the data and methods with which I have investigated these questions.

## 4 DATA AND METHODS

My methodological approach can be characterized as ethnographic case study. Both ethnography and the case study method make use of multiple sources of information based on what is relevant for solving given questions. Case studies are characterised by a detailed, thick description of a phenomena, the use of multiple methods and data sets and a holistic approach to the phenomena (Klandermans & Staggenborg 2002; Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007). These characterizations could also apply to ethnography, a method that is often a combination of data gathering through, for instance, participant observation and (often) open-ended interviews and other data sets (e.g. Juris & Khasnabish 2014;).

In this research, I have used participant observation, interviews, social media discussions, a questionnaire and newspaper articles. I have analyzed this data holistically, meaning that there are several datasets in each chapter. Obviously, however, I treat the information according to the differences between these different sources. For instance, newspaper articles have been formatted according to specific media knowledge production practices; and social media affords certain kinds of discussions that, for instance, lack facial expressions.

In this chapter (and the related appendixes) I will take a closer look at the practices I have used for knowledge production. What are the ethical, sociological and epistemological (and political?) underpinnings and ramifications of this study?

### 4.1 Participant observation

Ethnography, understood here as participant observation, was chosen as the primary method of data collection since it is by far the best method to observe civic action in action. This method of inquiry is able to dig deep into the cultural foundations of civic action and observe and richly describe cultural meanings as they unfold in real-life situations with all of life's materialities, particularities, spatiality and affective moods and tones (Juris & Khasnabish 2014; see also Law 2006). As Juris and Khasnabish (2014) argue, ethnography is an especially well-equipped method to grasp the "logic of activist practice": its "everyday lived experience, the production of meaning and subjectivity, the embodied dimension of protest" as well as the

external and “internal power differences” and “cultural-political struggles” that activist groups face. I find that ethnography inevitably shows how messy “culture” and “political”, the key concepts in this research, are, as they are in continuous state of forming and re-forming, always subject to negotiations and re-negotiations (see also Polletta 1997)<sup>37</sup>. By this I mean that the way “political” got to be defined, either by myself or by the informants, was dependent on the context and situation (see Lichterman and Eliasoph 2014). For instance, calling Right to Live as “family” can be seen both as a politicizing and depoliticizing act, depending on the situation (during the protest “family” had a politicizing effect which it did not have after the physical protest was over). “Group culture” was all but a stable monolith in both cases but for different reasons. Right to Live was an ad hoc assemblage of networks and the core group of supporters formed their (temporary) group culture during the protest spring. Kallio movement was almost a decade old movement but, due to its emphasis on individualism, it was difficult to grasp what its commonalities were. The broader Finnish political culture displayed itself in both groups as a set of mental images, rooted in local histories of civic action, that were distilled into action: what is good civic action like; who is an activist; what are associations like; and how should we perform or not perform our civic action? Ethnography brought the concepts of political, culture, and political culture to life.

My dataset from Right to Live is more versatile than that of Kallio movement, including hundreds of discussion threads on Refugee Hospitality Club and newspaper articles, for three reasons. First, there was much more buzz around Right to Live than there was around Kallio movement, making a large dataset both possible and relevant. Second, Right to Live as a one-off event placed time limits on the possibilities for conducting participant observation. Right to Live lasted for four and a half months in spring 2017, beginning in February and ending on June 30. After this, the protest continued in a much smaller form throughout the summer, but I was not able to participate in this part of the protest. During the spring, I participated

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<sup>37</sup> Law (2006), following Latour and Woolgar (1986), argues that social science methods do not only capture but also produce social reality, one that by is by nature messy and not always “patterned”. I agree with this argument, but I also argue that the degree to which the investigated reality is patterned varies. In my research, Kallio movement as an established group of actors was more patterned than Right to Live that, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork, in a stage of forming. Either way, my account of the social reality is always an interpretation of interpretations (Reed 2011) formatted by “hinterland” (Law 2006): by sociological knowledge practices and social scientific community (ibids.). However, especially in ethnographic research of civic groups, one way to reflect whether a researcher has *forced* a pattern onto a messy reality (in other words, seen patterns where there are none) is to feed one’s findings back to the group, or some of its members, and hear what they have to say about these findings.

most actively at the beginning and end of the protest, leaving the period in March largely unattended. Third, using participant observation posed complex ethical questions I have detailed in Appendix I. For these reasons, I rely less on data gathered only through participant observation in Right to Live, compared to my analysis on Kallio movement, which leans more heavily towards participant observation.

I began my fieldwork with Kallio movement in the same spring as Right to Live, 2017, but this proved too difficult, both mentally and in practice: both groups often held meetings at the same time. As Right to Live was a one-time event, I had to drop Kallio movement that spring and continue the next spring when it got active again arranging Kallio Block Party. However, since the movement was still active (and still is), it is difficult to say exactly when I stopped my fieldwork with Kallio movement. The last meeting I took part in was in autumn 2019. After this, I continued following the movement's online discussions, but these are not strictly speaking part of my dataset since I didn't take notes about them. They did not introduce me to new topics or characteristics of the movement, but rather reinforced my initial analysis.

In both groups, my participant observation meant that I needed to participate in the groups' actions, in other words, do something. Mainly, I was a secretary in the movements' meetings. This is a task that must be done and often nobody wants to do it. For me, it was useful since it meant that I could take detailed notes on what was discussed – and it was also useful for the movements. However, my doing was not limited to taking notes. I have, for instance, cleaned the block party site the morning after (everything from toilet paper, cigarette butts, whole and broken bottles and cans, take-out food boxes to random pieces of clothing) together with other volunteers; taken a Right to Live tent cloth to my home to be washed; gathered replies from a Right to Live volunteer questionnaire; asked my friends to take professional photographs at Right to Live and perform at the Right to Live support concert; worked “back stage” during Kallio Block Party running errands; looked for affordable accommodation from Airbnb for the protesters in Right to Live... Doing things in and for the movements, especially Kallio movement, has been a way to make myself useful in exchange for doing my research. However, in Right to Live, especially at the beginning of the protest, when my role as a civic actor/researcher was not entirely clear to myself, I noticed that for instance taking candles to the protest for a candlelight vigil was not any kind of strategic exchange but rather I felt morally and affectively compelled to do so. I had been spellbound by the protest. Most of all, however, doing things was simply “natural”: these were groups that were based on doing things and doing nothing but taking notes would have made me an



alien creature. By doing things I would also learn first-hand what it meant to be a member in these groups. I never, however, took a leading role in these groups as that would have interfered with the dynamics of the movement (even more so than my presence already did) (see Lichterman 1996, 234).

Both movements took place as much online, in Facebook, as they did offline. For this reason, following and taking part in discussions in Facebook groups was inevitably part of my fieldwork. I have left out sensitive topics and made sure no one can be recognized from the discussions (I refer to the discussants as “discussants”, not with their pseudonyms) and have included only a few direct quotes from these discussions.

## 4.2 Interviews

I interviewed ten members (four men and six women) from Kallio movement, ten Finnish Right to Live supporters (two men and eight women) and three protesters (all men). The protesters’ interviews were conducted in English and the interviewees were chosen based on their ability to speak English and their central role in the protest (see Appendix I for a more detailed description). These thematic interviews lasted for about an hour, the shortest being 42 minutes and the longest 103 minutes. In addition, we conducted two interviews with Right to Live supporters together with Lena Näre for our article (2022), one lasting approximately 90 minutes and the other two hours. Most of the interviewees in both of these groups were chosen to represent the core members of the two groups, and apart from just once, I contacted all of these members directly to ask for an interview. However, I was also interested in hearing about the motivations and experiences of those who were either new to the action (in Kallio movement) or on the verges of both groups’ core participants. A few of the interviewees were chosen based on this. Most of the interviews were conducted in cafés, bars, restaurants and, in the summertime, parks, some also at my place or in the informants’ home, and the interviews with Näre were conducted in her office. I had a list of questions for members of both groups (see Appendix I), but most interviews expanded beyond these lists and, with some of the informants, I had specific and individual questions based on their specific knowledge or role in the group.

In addition, I interviewed three public officials from the city of Helsinki, the deputy mayor and chief of preparedness, and two (dialogue) police officers who were closely involved with Right to Live. I got the tip to interview these police officers from a few of the Right to Live supporters who had been in contact with them and

could give me their contact details. The two public officials were contacted by email. I wanted to interview the officials and police officers to have a more holistic understanding of the cases and to hear how they perceived their role in these cases: what kind of engagements and justifications they might draw on.

At the beginning of each interview, I would give out a printed briefing about the aim of the study and that stated that it is voluntary to take part in the research; that the informant could delete parts of the interview if they so wished; and that one could also cancel one's participation in the research by informing me. The briefing included contact details for me and my supervisor.

Most times, the interview data merely made explicit what I had already observed in the field. And, since I conducted most of my interviews in both cases after I had already done several months of fieldwork, my interview questions were heavily influenced by knowledge from this fieldwork. I could not have conducted the kinds of interviews I did had I not already spent some time in the groups. However, interviews differ from participant observation in being able to tap into the actors' own accounts of their action, which is something that is not always observable. For instance, a few times, what my interviewees told me and what I witnessed in action, differed. Most often the two differing accounts had to do with how the interviewees thought they should organize the groups' action. In interview talk, members of especially Kallio movement, who's action was still on-going during the interviews unlike in Right to Live, would draw on big concepts like democracy, freedom and equality when describing the ethos of Kallio movement. Needless to say, these ideals were not always lived up to in practice. Neither interviews nor ethnography gave a more 'accurate' or "real" picture, but the two methods were able to capture different sides of the groups and their cultures (see Lamont & Swidler 2014)<sup>38</sup>.

Bellah et al (1986, 305-6) describe the interview method as a form of "conversation with fellow citizens" or "public talk", since it takes place between the researcher and the informant. I think this description is quite accurate. An interview is public in the pragmatist meaning of the word, where a public can be formed even among two people if those engaging in a situation strive to give some kind of justification for their actions. However, an interview is also very private, especially compared to situations in my ethnographic fieldwork such as a group meeting. In the interviews, I noticed the members of the group could speak more freely and touch on sensitive issues concerning for instance an unequal distribution of power. In this sense, an interview resembles religious confession or therapeutic talk. I

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<sup>38</sup> I do not treat the data gathered with participant observation in "realist" terms. The actors' action and talk, and my interpretations of them, are both culturally filtered. (See Lamont & Swidler 2014.)

learned that the interviewees often felt the need to “purify goods”, as Tavory et al (2022) call it: to make their actions seem like they are motivated by some idea of collective good instead of individual interest. This, I think, is interesting in itself: it tells us that we still cherish ideas of a common good. Bellah et al (1986, 306) eloquently describe how they discovered not only “voices present but voices past”, for instance those of Jefferson, Whitman and Locke, in the language of their informants. This is of course also the idea in justification theory: what we express in our talk (and action) is not individual but deeply (historical and) cultural. These ideals, “imagined meanings of their activities, their self-concepts, their fantasies about themselves” is what interview talk is able to capture (Lamont & Swidler 2014, emphasis in the original). People may not always act according to their ideals, but they are able to express these ideals in their speech. I also often noticed, and was sometimes told, that I asked questions the informants had never thought about, things that were taken for granted. For instance, I asked members of Kallio movement what they meant by “sense of community”. The replies were all but coherent and revealed to me and perhaps to the informant that the concept was an empty signifier to be filled with all kinds of nice things. This way, interviews are never innocent, nor should they be taken lightly, since they can have an impact on the informants’ lives, for good or bad.

### 4.3 Other data: Refugee Hospitality Club, archives and a survey in Kallio Block Party

Ethnography is an open-ended inquiry that almost inevitably changes the researcher and the research (Juris & Khasnabish 2014; Junnilainen 2017, 290). Doing ethnography leads one to pose new questions, which again might require gathering new data (Junnilainen 2017, 290). My ethnographic work lead me to find answers to my newly-emerged questions from a Facebook group Refugee Hospitality Club, newspaper articles and documents, and by conducting a survey among participants in Kallio Block Party.

Soon after I started following and visiting Right to Live, I noticed that a Facebook group, Refugee Hospitality Club (RHC), founded in 2009, was an important platform for mobilizing support for the protest. With 50,000 members, the RHC was a part of the affectual infrastructure of the protest, forming its outer layer and providing affectual and material support and constructing a (counter) public of its own. Protesters or supporters posted almost daily updates on the group about Right to Live, often followed by a long thread of supportive messages from people all over

Finland, rich in emojis such as hearts, flowers and smileys. There was also a constantly up-dated “needs thread” (with designated people responsible for the updates) about the current need for supplies at the protest: usually tea, coffee, sugar, snacks and disposable dishes. Bringing supplies was a way to show one’s support in a concrete way and some of the supporters got even more involved in the protest this way. Liban Sheikh, an intern in the project Citizens in the Making, kindly gathered all of the posts concerning the protest (approximately 500 individual posts) from Refugee Hospitality Club (RHC). I then qualitatively analyzed one-third of the posts via random selection. Research ethics concerning social media data have few strict guidelines (Markham & Buchanan, 2012), and usually there is no need to ask for permission to use public social media data for research (Wilkinson & Thelwall, 2011). Despite the RHC group’s public status on Facebook, I asked the group’s administrators for permission to use posts related to Right to Live for research purposes because the group is closed, the topic is a sensitive one, and some of the participants (particularly the asylum seekers) are in vulnerable positions (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). I have ensured that all the posts used in this article do not contain any personal information and that the participants remain anonymous.

Media can be seen as one player in the case of Right to Live (see Luke et al 2021). I collected every newspaper article about Right to Live from Helsingin Sanomat, the largest daily newspaper in Finland (and the Nordic countries). There were sixteen news articles concerning Right to Live and/or Finland First protests (if there was a news article about Finland First, it was also directly or indirectly about Right to Live), and one column and three articles about activists or other refugee initiatives where Right to Live was mentioned. I have used this dataset to gain knowledge of the case and justifications of the City of Helsinki and especially the police, representatives of which were interviewed in most articles; to see what was made public within Right to Live – what kind of public justifications were used – and what was not; and what kind of discourses the newspaper created about the (two) protests. My most important finding was the fact that Right to Live and Finland First were always treated together as symmetrical parallels to each other, reflecting and further strengthening a discourse of two opposites, as I will describe in chapters nine and ten.

Kallio movement or Kallio Block Party were not topical in the daily media during my fieldwork – news media was not an active party in this case so it had no relevance to my analysis, and there was less media data to be analyzed. During 2017-2019 there were only two articles related to Kallio movement, both from 2017: a column about the dying buzz in Kallio and a short news article about an artwork that was going to

be painted on Vaasanaukio square, unofficially (and, as the article points out, sometimes even officially in the City's communications) referred to as Piritori "Speed square" because of the visible drug abuse and trade on the square. The article refers to a "Citizen pavilion", a temporary canopy that had recently been removed from Piritori against Kallio movement's wishes.

I have had a holistic, case study approach to civic action, which means that I have wanted to take into account the action and reasoning of not only the civic actors themselves but also those of public officials. These two are not separate entities but affect each other: civic action is governed by public officials and the police, but these public institutions are also affected by civic action, pressuring changes in legislation and governance. This is why I conducted interviews with public officials and the police, and it is also why I looked into public documents when I felt it was necessary or useful.

As my research advanced, I began thinking of the Right to Live protest and Kallio movement's Kallio Block Party as a form of (political) communication. In Right to Live, the "success" and reception could be more easily read: the protest had been able to politicize asylum issues in the public discussion in different media outlets even if no changes in asylum politics took place. How Kallio movement's main event, Kallio Block Party, was "read" and interpreted was more difficult to fathom so, with help from six Tampere university sociology students, I conducted a survey of Kallio Block Party attendees (n=327). I wanted to know whether the visitors had heard about Kallio movement, its values or the fact the event was organized by the movement. The survey results can be found in chapter eight and Appendix III.

## 4.4 A few words on data analysis

Ethnography is not only a method of gathering data but also of analyzing and writing about this data (Juris & Khasnabish 2014). What this means is that it is difficult to disentangle the data-gathering phase from its analysis, and that the two form iterative cycles of gathering data, reading literature and writing analyses. I have often known in certain situations in the field that this situation is relevant for my analysis – something crystallizes in these moments. These often intuitive insights have guided further data gathering and literature reviews, feeding back into my analysis. What has guided my way in this cyclical search for new questions and answers to them has been my theoretical toolkit. From the very beginning, ideas about different group and scene styles, engagements and justifications have attuned my ethnographic gaze and made it possible for me to pay attention to these specific

moments. These theoretical tools have therefore been also my analytical tools when I write about my findings.

I began my fieldwork by asking what civic action is like outside established associations; how and over what kind of issues do civic actors and public authorities negotiate the use of urban space; and what is the place of politics in these civic groups – or, what does “political” mean in these civic groups. As my analysis developed through my fieldwork and interviews, these very broad questions developed into more finely-tuned questions introduced in the previous chapter.

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The next chapters present my research results. I will begin by describing the group cultures of Kallio movement and Right to Live (chapters five and six), move on to look at ideas of representation in the two groups (chapter seven) and how these ideas were performed (chapter eight) and, finally, study the kind of relations they had with the City of Helsinki and the police (chapter nine) and what kinds of test moments they posed to the use of urban space and to ideas of civic action in general (chapter ten).

## 5 GROUP CULTURES: IDEAL CIVIC ACTION

This chapter delves into Kallio movement and Right to Live and draws out a picture of two ideal types of civic action. What did it mean to be a member of these groups? What was expected of members of Kallio movement and the group of Finnish supporters of Right to Live? What kind of politics was practiced, or were possible to practice, within these groups? These ideal types of civic actors are not born in a vacuum. Kallio movement was born of a long line of development that has emphasized citizen participation while simultaneously reducing this participation to voicing personal opinions and the creative use of urban spaces (see Leth Meilvang et al 2018; Pattaroni 2015), leading to concerns about the selfishness of this kind of local civic action. Right to Live and its culture of care was emphasized at a period of time when racist discourses had begun to be legitimate, and thus also acquired political meanings of care. This kind of micropolitics is typical to both protest camps and migrant solidarity movements.

I have approached the questions above with analytical tools from pragmatic sociology. These tools have enabled me to not only describe which regimes of orders of worth (which I will refer to as “worlds” or “regimes” in this chapter) were dominant in the two groups in most situations, and also the key tensions and balancing acts between different regimes the groups were tackling, and the practical means of solving these tensions. The tensions introduced in this chapter will appear and evolve throughout the subsequent chapters.

In Kallio movement, the key tension was between individualism and collectivism, which translates as a tension between the world of inspiration and the regime of engaging in a plan. One way to solve this tension was to “purify goods” (Tavory et al 2022): to remind newcomers and plug-in volunteers in Kallio Block Party that despite it being acceptable to be motivated by building one’s CV, it was still important to know the values of Kallio movement and commit to the collective organizing process of the block party.

In Right to Live, slipping into individual interests was not the most potent threat. Rather, the balancing act the supporters of the protest had to manage was between the civic world and the familiar regime. The supporters of Right to Live attached political meanings to the affective and social (in)sides of the protest, “the Right to

Live family”, seamlessly bundling up the protest’s civic and familiar sides. However, the seams between these tenuous regimes became apparent especially after the protest, when some were seen to be only nostalgizing the Right to Live family without doing the practical (and political) asylum work.

## 5.1 Kallio movement: free and creative individuals

As introduced in chapter two, there is a concern that civic action focused on seemingly non-political action such one’s own neighbourhood would turn that action into “ego-projects” instead of “places of the production of the collective good” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101), and DIY urbanism is seen as being infected by “individualism and neoliberalism”, leading to the “erosion of the public” (Finn 2014, 391). This kind of urban activism has been seen to follow the logic of participatory urban governance, which reduces urban citizens to “manageable and resourceful, “creative urban user[s] and interested stakeholder[s]” (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, 33-4). This logic stems from the regime of engaging in a plan (Eranti 2018; Leth Meilvang et al 2018; Pattaroni 2015), a regime that prizes action that benefits one’s own life-project. However, as noted in chapter three, both Kallio movement and Right to Live practiced personalized politics (Lichterhan 1996), which could be translated as the world of inspiration in pragmatic sociology: a world that values creative individuals who use their creativity for the good of others (see Appendix II for more). What is important to note here is that within this world, individual creativity is used for collective purposes, in other words, for some idea of a common good and not for individual interests as with the regime of engaging in a plan. Translated into pragmatic sociology, which of these regimes or worlds was the dominant one in Kallio movement? This chapter shows that a case of (new) urban activism, Kallio movement, was not dominated by only, or even primarily, the regime of engaging in a plan, but rather the world of inspiration, according to the logic of personalized politics.

But this was not the full picture. The movement displayed a tenuous composition of the regime of engaging in a plan and the world of inspiration. The world of inspiration and the regime of engaging in a plan are close to each other since both rely on “individual liberation” and both prize autonomy, initiative and responsibility. They are, however, in a tenuous relationship with each other since the world of inspiration values serving the common good and the regime of engaging in a plan is motivated by individual interests. This tension could be seen especially in Kallio movement, which allowed its members more individual freedom, at least in part



because its actions were not guided by an urgent political issue as was the case in Right to Live. The case of Kallio movement illustrates how easy it is to slip from serving the common good to primarily serving one's own interests in a group that places high value on creative individuals. It was only during moments when it became necessary to clarify what the movement was about that there was a need to purify inspired worth from the regime of engaging in a plan.

In Kallio movement, individualism in its many forms was visible in several ways. First, the project form of civic action implies and places emphasis on practical action and arranging things, which again prizes inspired and skilled individuals, or "self-starters". Second, the non-organized nature of Kallio movement was seen as important in safeguarding the freedom of creative individuals. Third, the kind of motivations for taking part in civic action could just as well stem from one's own life projects, such as building one's CV as from more collective reasons – as long as civic action "felt right". However, what was not accepted in Kallio movement was the pursuit of purely individual interests, which would come at the cost of losing sight of collective responsibility and common values. I will first explore Kallio movement's world of projects that places emphasis on doing and on creative individuals, and then describe the situations where the tension between individual interests (liberal grammar) and common good (world of inspiration) came to light, and how this tension was resolved.

## Kallio movement and the world of projects

Younger generations already expect their work-life to take the form of projects (see Eliasoph 2011, 6-7), making it no wonder that this is the form that civic action is increasingly taking place in. Like in the personalized politics Lichterman (1996) describes, activists carry their "portable political commitments" from one project to another. "Project" was the way many Kallio movement members were engaged in and committed to the movement, or Kallio Block Party. To them, in other words, civic engagement meant projects. "I really believe in this project-type of influencing", Alex told me. A project implies a certain kind of temporality with a beginning and an end and, as "the regime of engagement in a plan" already suggests, an orientation towards the future. It is the same kind of orientation Nina Eliasoph discovered in her research on empowerment projects. These projects are short-term and need to focus on the future instead of discussing (and politicizing) things that have happened in the past. Perceived from this point of view of short-term projects, Kallio movement was in fact almost an anomaly, as Janne noted in an interview: "Not many volunteer projects live longer than [a few years]". Projects imply an efficient time-

period that is filled with active doing. This kind of orientation to civic action was not unfamiliar among Right to Live activists, either. Mikko, one of the Finnish volunteers, told me:

*I have all sorts of projects going on all the time. To every direction, you know, anything one can imagine...*

Civic action in the form of projects enabled activists to blend several causes, forming a mosaic of sporadic action. For instance, Elina told me she was or had recently been involved in several projects besides Kallio movement, a municipal election campaign and organizing the Right to Live support concert. Seeing the world through projects also meant that a paid job might have blended with a volunteer project, or that (often temporary) work and civic action took turns in the members' lives. Work and volunteer projects both served the same purpose of building one's CV on the one hand and being an outlet for creative expression on the other, perhaps also serving the common good. Civic action was a kind of a hobby. "I don't know, it's just a combination of people, like friends, it's a kind of a hobby", as Julia told me. Maria, too, described her participation in the organizing of Kallio Block Party as a hobby, and she was a volunteer in many other festivals too. During the time of my interview with her, she was involved in the block party for the third time. Her paid jobs and volunteering projects were intertwined, and when she was employed, she was too busy to be involved in Kallio movement; when she was unemployed, she put all her energy into the block party. She explained how she got involved in Kallio Block Party for the first time:

*For me it's like I need to have a project on. And I didn't have one. I had a project vacuum, and I was annoyed, I had applied for a job that I really wanted and just heard that I didn't get it and I was just somehow really annoyed. So I just released aggression, I need something to do so I went [to a block party meeting] pretty spontaneously and started doing everything.*

She added: "I don't know how to explain it better than that. It's just fun." Besides being a fun hobby, another way to describe the motivation to take part in Kallio movement and civic action in general was an internal drive, much in the spirit of the world of inspiration. "For me it's an inner force that gets this thing rolling, it's a kind of conviction and duty, it's kind of a personal passion", Alex told me. The discourse and requirement, for having a passion for one's (paid or unpaid) work, is a recent development that has replaced the concept of vocation: "The turn to passion both widened the scope of the vocation to any career and turned it into a highly individual, emotional attitude" (Tavory et al 2022, 168, emphasis added). Janne had recently become more interested in having an impact on a global, or at least on an

international scale, but was struggling with finding the right avenue since he thought that being in an international NGO would require a more long-term commitment. He said that his “life is really perfect at the moment”, and thus:

*An internal push towards something is lacking right now. Perhaps it will come back at some point but there's no rush at the moment. Perhaps awaiting that there would be a project, a thing, probably on an international scale that would feel like it's my thing, but since there's no hurry and I'm not holding on to a utopia that I would be able to change the world on a big scale during one lifetime, I can just take it easy and see if I would come across some interesting thing.*

Even if Janne wanted to be involved in an international project for the good of the world, this involvement was dependent on timing and it “feeling like it's [his] thing”. In the world of inspiration, lacking an “internal push towards something” is a sufficient explanation for non-participation. The ideal of dutiful citizenship has no currency in this world unless the sense of duty is seen as coming with the right kind of feeling, one of internal conviction. Whatever (project) one is engaging in should “resonate on a personal level” (Tavory et al 2022, 184). This goes to prove how well the regime of engaging in a plan and the world of inspiration work together and how they complement each other: short-term projects cater to individual life-plans but require some personal motivation, be it a hobby-type of fun that emphasizes freedom and creativity (see below), or a deep, emotional conviction.

Every year, there were new faces coming to arrange the block party, some of which turned out to be plug-in volunteers who arranged the festival perhaps once and then disappeared. This was an acceptable thing to do. Their way of participating was a form of short-term, “plug-in style volunteering” typical to loosely connected networks that do not require (or build) long-term binding commitments (Lichterhan 2005, 61; 67). For them, Kallio Block Party can be described as a platform for individual activism (Blee 2013, 30; Milan 2019; Bennett & Segerberg 2013). A project form of civic action places more emphasis on doing things than to belonging. Markku, a man in his fifties, who was an active organizer of Kallio Block Party during my fieldwork, said:

*If we're in a movement it doesn't mean anything to me, what matters is what it does. And Block Party is doing, Kallio movement is not doing. I mean it's more like, it's ok all the drafting visions and missions but what we bring to the table is our dinner.*

Besides organizing Block Party, Markku told me he had previously been involved in a few other social movements. Yet he assigned no meaning to belonging to any movement. He simply carried his political commitments within himself from one movement to another, looking for opportunities to do things. It is possible to be a

member in an association by doing nothing more than perhaps paying an annual fee. This kind of (passive) membership has in fact been seen as one characteristic of Finnish civil society that has been based on associations, but that is not possible in civic action that is channelled through projects<sup>39</sup>. Being involved in a project means doing. As the founder of Kallio movement stated in a magazine interview (Vihreä lanka 27.4.2012): “Younger generations no longer want to commit themselves to parties or organizations but want to do concrete things.”

## Doing things and being creative: amateurism and “säätö”

Next, we will delve deeper into the world of inspiration. The emphasis placed on creative doing became apparent in surprising details; for instance, being amateurs at organizing a festival seemed to carry a special meaning for the people involved in Kallio Block Party. They were “proud amateurs”, or “amateurs organizing a way too big a festival”. Amateurism meant, first, that no one was paid, and everything was done as a volunteer effort. However, there was more to amateurism than this. People were excited and proud of the fact that just anyone could do anything, so I was told. This was especially interesting since, strictly speaking, they were not all that amateur. There were people actively involved in organizing Kallio Block Party who had a degree in, or were working in, cultural production and community work, and one was currently studying service design, and many of those involved in organizing individual music stages had experience in similar tasks. Another word to describe amateurism was “*säätö*”, a colloquial word which could be translated as hustle and bustle, or as something that is done in a non-professional, messy and non-organized way<sup>40</sup>. Several interviewers described the organizing of Kallio Block Party as *säätö*, always mentioned with warmth and laughter in their voice, never used as a critical remark. Both amateurism and *säätö* were valued because they placed emphasis on practical doing and the freedom of creative individuals.

I asked Julia how she had initially got involved in Kallio Block Party or Kallio movement and she told me how she had heard from her friend, who’s four(!) bands had played at the previous block party, that the organizing process of the festival is chaotic *säätö* or messing about (“*sekoilu*”), and this is why she thought it might be something she could be involved in as the threshold would be low. *Säätö* also had to do with the non-hierarchical and non-organized nature of the process. Lilli told me

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<sup>39</sup> Whilst voluntary associations have a large membership, the number of active members is lower than in “parochial” countries such as Italy and France (Dekker & van den Broek 1998).

<sup>40</sup> *Säätö* has several meanings and can also be used to refer to fixing drugs and to a one-night stand.

that the previous year she had considered not being part of the organizing team because the planning process was “too divided”:

*They told me to be there [at KBP at the day of the event] at quarter to one, when previously I had always gone there at nine or ten to carry fences or something else, but when the task had been assigned to other people, there was no... the responsibility doesn't reach you, the [thought/feeling] that this belongs to all of us and one does everything and everyone does what they can and has the energy to do.*

Amateurish doing and the *säättö* of KBP, the feeling that “this belongs to all of us” and everything is done together was central to the organizing of Kallio Block Party. For Lilli, this way of doing was threatened by dividing tasks too neatly.

In the world of inspiration, conventions and pre-defined forms, such as registered associations, meeting agendas and professionalism, is something that gets in the way of creativity and is why amateurism and messy *säättö* are positive things. This is also the reason why there was no manual for organizing the Block Party, even though the process and timetable was roughly the same each year. Susanna explained to me in an interview that even though it's good that the more experienced organizers share their knowledge,

*there is the risk that... there should be no code of conduct, like “this is how you organize Kallio Block Party”. It should be left really open and free, so that this can be anything.*

Similarly, Chen (2009) describes how the organizing of Burning man festival, a week-long festival in a desert in Nevada, US and a celebration of individual expression and creativity, needs to balance between having enough structure to ensure safety and prevent chaos but not too much to suffocate creativity and freedom. At least partly for this reason, it was important that the block party was arranged in a different area of Kallio each year. Organizing the event in the same place each year would mean stabilizing, and that would be too easy, as Julia told me. In peoples' minds, Kallio Block Party was a play field for the realization of peoples' true selves and wildest dreams. In this world, anyone can be anything they wish in an almost utopian egalitarian way. As Susanna phrased the idea of the block party:

*[A]nyone can come and do despite their background, or their skills from their education, so in a way everyone has the chance to take part in anything.*

Some of my interviewees, who saw themselves as part of Kallio movement, were not content with the block party at that moment and wanted it to be more than just a free music festival, or they wanted Kallio movement to do more than arrange the block party. Especially to some original members of Kallio movement, arranging the

festival had become too self-evident and predictable. Alex had not been involved in organizing Kallio Block Party in a while since it no longer provided challenges: “There has to be an ambition to push and break boundaries and stuff”. To many of the interviewees, the organizing process was the reason they wanted to be involved. As Susanna said:

*I think, for me it's specifically maybe more about the doing and planning. I mean the day itself is always great, but I think what is interesting is what happens before.*

The interviewees described themselves as “doers” or as creative people. I asked Maria why she wanted to be involved in organizing KBP and she replied:

*I have an intrinsic interest in organizing all kinds of things. [--] I like [producing events], I'm a creative type, a person who has ideas and I like... [the event] is something that I've made myself.*

In fact, *säättö* had to do with doing things as opposed to being a (passive) member in an organization. I asked my interviewees whether they belonged to a political party. One of them, Sanna, replied that they were part of the Left Youth but would be kicked out soon as they would turn 30. Sanna continued her reply, saying that maybe she will join the (Left) party but since she was a person who does *säättö* in organizations, and since she was not going to do anything in the party, she was not sure.

## Doing good while being creative: the need to purify inspirational worth from the regime of engaging in a plan

The above section demonstrated how dominant the world of inspiration was in Kallio movement with its emphasis on creative doing, and how this doing was well suited with a project form of civic action and the regime of engaging in a plan. In this section, I will first further illustrate how these two regimes worked together and then turn to look at the moments when the two were in tension with each other.

Kallio Block Party meetings would sometimes begin with a round of introductions such as in this task group meeting in 2018:

*Mika was 40 years old, a former resident of Kallio but has since suburbanized. He told us he had “a strong desire to do something for broader communities” and that he has been involved in Kallio Block Party since 2011 when he was a roadie and was in charge of measuring the noise levels (as they have to be kept within certain parameters by order of the City.)*

*Irina is new to the block party but has been involved in arranging another urban grassroots festival. She has a small business in Kallio, which is why she wants to be active in the area.*

*Sara, a young woman in her twenties, has studied fashion marketing. She says that arranging Kallio Block Party would be a good opportunity to learn, meet people and network, especially since she has always lived outside Finland. She says she likes “everything communal and wants to cherish it” (leading Mika to make a joke: “Alright Eetu [who is the secretary in the meeting], put Sara down for the beer division!”). Tuuli asks Sara whether she would like to do communications in Kallio Block Party, to which she replies that she is open to everything as long as she has the opportunity to learn.*

*Tuuli introduces herself. She works in Kallio and last year she was involved in Kallio Block Party for the first time. She said it had left her with a “good feeling”, and that she had “liked the way things were done, together”. She then added, looking at Sara who had said she wanted to meet new people, that last year she had met Susanna with whom she had recently travelled to Asia for a holiday. “You meet people who become good friends, there’s like-minded people”.*

*It was then Susanna’s turn, and she told us it was also the second time she had been involved in the block party, and that she had lived in Kallio for fourteen years. She said she had studied urban geography and, nodding in my direction, that she was interested in the use of urban space.*

Different people had diverse motives for joining Kallio Block Party, and they assigned different meanings to them. Some assigned more collective meanings to the festival, such as Mika’s “desire to do something for broader communities”. Some of these collective meanings had also a sense of political or societal meaning, such as Susanna’s interest in the use of urban space. And to some, like Sara and Irina, it was a chance to gain experience and networks and be active in the area. According to the logic of the world of inspiration, Kallio Block Party was simultaneously a medium for learning and creative doing, even for advancing one’s business, and doing something meaningful for the good of others and being an agent of social change, and there was no tension between these individualistic and collectivist efforts. Later, as I interviewed Tuuli, she described her reasons for taking part in Kallio Block Party through the pursuit of social change by “taking over the streets” and “affecting the spirit of the area” on the one hand, and “getting to know likeminded people” and “learning things” on the other:

*Obviously to take over the streets. And I mean, from the point of view from organizing, I’m interested in getting to know likeminded people. And then the fact that one can learn things and affect the kind of spirit of this area.*

The kind of individualism that was supported in Kallio movement was able to combine individual aspirations with the common goal – personal life goals and contributing “dreams” to the shared vision of Kallio movement. In fact, as is common in personalized politics, Kallio Block Party needed aspiring individuals, “self-starters” (Lichterman 1996, 50) to come up with new ideas for the programme

since there was no producer and the programme was not curated collectively by the movement.

The following excerpt is from the meeting where Block Party association was founded. The meeting attendees are discussing how the association should be introduced to the Kallio Block Party organizing team, leading to discussions about what the Block Party is about, what is expected of people coming to organize it, and how it should be organized:

*Alex: There should be three questions over a [local bar's] pint of beer and people would think them through in small groups: Why is Kallio Block Party organized? Why are you organizing it? Attaching it to your biggest dream, what is it?*

*Elina: 'Which dream would you like to realize through Kallio Block Party?' We should raise the spirit that you can aim for big things.*

Kallio movement was the flagship of new urban activism that wants to “encourage people to spread their wings and realize their dreams” (Santala 2013, 26). It was acceptable and even favourable to pursue individual dreams, as long as it was possible to harness and attach them to the overall framework and values of the block party and Kallio movement. Typically for personalized politics (Lichterhan, 1996), the only thing frowned upon in Kallio movement was the pursuit of self-interest, or the regime of engaging in a plan. Most times this tension between collective and (only) individual aspirations was not visible, but there were moments that brought this tension to light, especially when collective responsibility and common values were threatened and had to be discussed.

One of the continuous struggles in organizing Kallio Block Party was to get enough people to do the more tedious tasks. The more obvious target and source of passion, and an outlet for the required dreams, was to organize a stage or some other programme for the festival, such as spoken word, stories from Kallio or perhaps a karaoke of famous movie citations (all of these have been part of Kallio Block Party programme in 2019). It was never a problem to get enough people to organize the stages, but there was a constant worry about getting enough people to take care of the less visible and glamorous infrastructure such as communications, arranging portable toilets and trash cans for the festival area, contacting sponsors, arranging the necessary permits from the City, contacting the City public transportation office, and so on. Especially in private interviews, many brought up how some, especially semi-professional and aspiring producers or musicians, only came to “strum the guitar” or produce a stage without attending the general meetings or taking collective responsibility for common tasks such as cleaning the site after the party:



*[The people who produce a stage] have to understand -- the processes behind the event that take up more work. And it does cause irritation that there is supposed to be someone present from each stage in the general meeting [and there aren't]. It does annoy the people [who go to the meetings] that [some people say that] "I want to set up a stage" and then you don't attend the meetings. Because everything is tied up to everything, then if you're not involved and don't know anything that's going on, you can't just come and build the stage.*

As the above excerpt succinctly illustrates, selfish interests – the regime of engaging in a plan – was used especially when there was a need to denounce others (see Moody & Thévenot 2000, 285). Individual pursuit of self-interest was juxtaposed, first, with collective responsibility as in the quote above: setting up a stage of one's own without taking part in the larger collective effort was not considered good behaviour. Individual interests were also contrasted with the values of Kallio movement. Elina told me why she had been involved in Kallio movement and organizing Kallio Block Party for such a long time, six years at the time of the interview:

*Somehow it becomes such a close and important thing, and you also want to maintain the original values and principles, to see that they're still there. No matter how much pressure there is because Kallio Block Party attracts a lot of commercial actors and the kind of people who want to prove themselves, then, somehow it's ok, it's fine, but it's still a part of Kallio movement and it... you can't... I mean there's sometimes the need to really have a conversation but, I'm not alone in defending it, it really is an important value.*

It was “somehow ok” to have plug-in volunteers who “want to prove themselves” and commercial actors, whose main logic of action is to make profit, but not at the cost of losing sight of the fact that block party was a part of Kallio movement that has certain values and principles. In other words, individual interests were tolerated because there was a need for creatives and doers, but only up to the point of losing sight of the common good. Tavory et al (2022) describe how advertisers doing pro bono projects for NGO's were compelled to “purify goods”, to emphasize that they were not motivated by the fame and career benefits they received from their successful pro bono projects. Likewise, in Kallio movement, when the tension between individuality and collectivity became visible and individuality, now interpreted as self-interest instead of self-expression, seemed to threaten the organizing process or the underlying values, there was an effort to purify goods. As Elina says, at times in meetings there was a “need to really have a conversation”. It became necessary to state out loud that one can come to organize the block party to gain experience and improve one's CV, but not at the price of neglecting collective duties or forgetting what the event was really about and that it was a part of Kallio movement.

In sum, in Kallio movement, a good civic actor is someone who is creative and may use this creativity to promote one's career but never at the expense of the common good. Meetings, bureaucracy and formality are considered not only boring but also threatening to the freedom of individuals, as well as the group itself. One is a doer, not a talker, and takes individual responsibility while cherishing a sense of community. However, especially if one wants to be in Kallio movement, not just a plug-in Kallio Block Party volunteer, in addition to being a doer, one is also a dreamer and a visionary: even if one focuses on the practical side of arranging events, one is expected to be guided by a vision of what Kallio movement, the Kallio area or the world in large should be like.

While Kallio movement catered to members and plug-in volunteers who were motivated by self-interest such as advancing one's career, as a movement, it had a (vague) idea of common good and it denounced action that was unable to combine this common good with one's own interests. In other words, neighbourhood action and DIY urbanism does not automatically mean "ego projects" (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101) and an erosion of the public (Finn 2014, 391), since there was a sense of common good within the movement.

## 5.2 Right to Live: practices of solidarity

As literature on protest camps and migrant solidarity movements suggest, both of these forms of civic action are most often compositions of the civic world and the familiar regimes<sup>41</sup>. Civic order of worth is one of the worlds of public justification whereas familiar regime is based on attachments to, for instance, familiar and particular places and people (see chapter three). Protest camps include political protesting (civic) as well as maintaining the daily life of the protest with all its practicalities and social and affective maintenance work (familiar) (Feigenbaum et al 2013; Näre & Jokela 2023). "Critical" migrant solidarity movements make universal claims about migrant politics (civic), but they often also help migrants on a personal, affective level (familiar) (Hage 2012; Hinger et al 2018). In both of these forms of civic action, these affective relations are seen as constructing the action's micropolitics. Translating this "micropolitics" into pragmatic sociology brings to light the tenuous relationship between the civic world and the familiar regime.

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<sup>41</sup> Civic order of worth is one world of justification within the regime of public justifications whereas familiar regime is one of the regimes of engagements (see chapter 3.2).

I argue that the dominant world in Right to Live was civic as it was built on equality and universality and values solidarity and collective, altruistic action, not precisely as it is described in *On Justification* but rather with inevitable particularities of the familiar regime. Civic world, based on Rousseau's Social contract, is formed when people enter, from the state of particular personalities or individual interests, into a state of citizenship "in which each person leaves their own cares and interests aside and focuses on the common good". Solidarity and altruistic action are of high value in the civic world. "The rejection of the particular makes it possible to transcend the divisions that separate, in order to act collectively. This is the condition of solidarity." (Ibid, 190.) This kind of universal solidarity was the driving force in Right to Live. However, the civic world is based on citizenship, and citizenship regime is problematic to begin with in migration issues as the regime is based on the control and unequal treatment of people according to their citizenship statuses. In Right to Live, the familiar regime ("the Right to Live family") was in fact more universal than the civic one since it transcended the category of citizenship. Acts of solidarity on behalf of migrants challenge citizenship regimes (dellaPorta 2018, 5), making this affective solidarity, often practiced in the form of personal relationships, political. More importantly, while the reasoning in Right to Live was universal and civic, the practices of solidarity were inevitably based on particularities found in the familiar regime. In addition, in the civic world, passions are not legitimate, but in a migrant solidarity camp such as Right to Live the expression of emotions was legitimate and even expected of its members. In fact, passion was seen as a driving force within Right to Live, as long as it served civic purposes. Familiar regime was thus inseparably nested within civic world – as well as in a tenuous relationship with it.

The temporal orientation had a greater significance in the physical Right to Live protest than it did in Kallio movement for several reasons. First, there was no end-date to the protest. The protesters said they would continue for as long as they would be allowed to, making it difficult to orient oneself to the protest. However, the protest was not likely to last more than some months, especially as the protesters and supporters started to experience burn-out during the spring. Second, many of the supporters felt that momentum was at hand. The protest had gained the attention of the media and politicians and the asylum situation was discussed more widely than before, while more space was given to critical voices of asylum policies. Third, there was a constant fear of deportations making it feel like there was no time to lose. These reasons, together with the tangible 24-hour protest life, had the impact of making the protest something that the supporters committed themselves to

wholeheartedly. Some of the supporters extended this commitment after the physical protest ended and continued helping asylum seekers with their asylum cases, while to others the protest was a “once in a lifetime” experience.

However, as with Kallio movement, there was also a focus on practical tasks. Because the protest infrastructure required maintenance, as well as because of the chaotic situation and the unclarity of the timespan of the protest, Right to Live needed inspired individuals and self-starters who could use their creative wits. As with Kallio movement, this element of practicality assigned worth to goods in the world of inspiration: responsible individuals who can “stand on their own two feet”. As in Kallio movement, individualism did not mean individual interests but capacities for initiative and autonomy. I will begin by describing this emphasis on self-starters, and then move on to analyze the different combinations the civic world and the familiar regime formed in Right to Live.

### **“We want people who can stand on their own two feet”**

As in Kallio movement, inspired worth was also found in Right to Live in descriptions of passionate, skilled civic actors working for the good of others. The fuel for civic action was not duty but an inner motivation, empathy and (com)passion. As in Kallio movement, the best way to act was not through established organizations such as the Red Cross but through “free civic action”.

Since much of the support of the protest was about the practical maintenance of its infrastructure, worthy activists were those who were able to use their time and energy to keep track of the needs of the protest and coordinate or arrange them to the protest site, and who were motivated enough to do this. Sometimes this motivation was articulated as “passion” or “empathy”. Jenni described the protest as a place where she met

*incredible people, there was many kinds of know-how there and... excitement and passion and empathy and personalities and so on, so I was left with a really positive feeling.*

Excitement, passion, empathy and incredible people, “personalities”, were valued positively, as they are in the world of inspiration. Different tasks required different kinds of know-how from dealing with the police to teaching Finnish to the asylum seekers or having experience in asylum cases or knowing where to get gas to the protest site for cooking. This form of participation, following the logic of personalized politics, meant that the supporters could take on or be assigned tasks according to their abilities and “gifts”:

*[E]ach could use their gifts they had. There was this kind of organizational bunch of people, and then there were those who were roadies and those who kept social media alive, there were so many ways to act. (Mira)*

As in Kallio movement, “there was a lot of creativity” involved in Right to Live, like Mira said, and this creativity was highly valued.

However, if *säättö* had intrinsic value in Kallio movement, this was not the case in Right to Live. Everything was more or less chaos, but it was not the preferred state of things. Ultimately, the protest was not about individual expression – it was about the political rights of asylum seekers and the protest, and the maintenance of the protest was merely the instrument in this pursuit. In Right to Live, better organization was something that was strived for, and this is why organizational skills were in fact valued:

*[There were] a lot of active people who were aware of things and who could do this kind of organizing pretty well. There was a lot of logistic wisdom involved, even more so than in for instance in the Red Cross. (Mira)*

To Mira, Right to Live was more valuable than established organizations such as the Red Cross since there was “more logistic wisdom involved”. She praised the “dynamic” and “creative” networks of caring individuals that had been initiated during the long summer of migration.

What kind of people a group wants to recruit as its members is telling about the nature of the group (Blee 2014). During the protest spring, there was an ongoing discussion and effort to get new supporters involved as the core group was getting more and more tired and taking up more and more tasks. The recruitment effort proved difficult. Throughout the spring there was a sense of urgency, and the core group was involved in dealing with practical issues. There was hardly any organizational structure, and it was difficult to find the right person to ask what one could do to help. As someone mentioned in one of the Finns’ meetings, there was a need for people who are active and can “stand on their own two feet”. Supporters were getting tired during the protest, and Jenni explained that

*to have the energy to, I don’t know, recruit people and ask what they are interested in [doing] and explain all the things and be some kind of a mentor and hold their hands as they start doing, that’s a big task so maybe... mostly the kinds of people coped who could come independently and be like ‘a-ha, ok, this is what is needed, so I’ll do this’ and look for help themselves, so there were no resources to offer the kind of support and induction that would have been needed.*

Compared to Kallio movement, circumstances played a bigger role in making inspired worth one of the primary regimes of action. Had there been more time to

“induct” newcomers, perhaps it would not have been a requirement to be able to “come independently” and realize what needed to be done. However, what is also noteworthy here is that the recruitment of new people should be about “what they are interested in doing”. As in Kallio movement, civic action was not seen to be only about fulfilling duties of (active) citizenship, but also pursuing one’s interests.

Being a self-starter was not the only trait that was regarded positively in Right to Live. Expressing emotions and compassion, forming friendships with asylum seekers and providing care were also valued, which is something I will turn to next.

## Affective solidarity

Right to Live was “filled with emotions”, as Mira described:

*A kind of warmth of a community and such it was so terribly strong and the kind of sense of commitment to other people and to the common goal but then there was also frustration and, grief when you heard about the [negative asylum] decisions some people received there so it was, yeah it was very much filled with emotions in many ways.*

In Right to Live, solidarity was not empty of emotions but affectively loaded. As Kleres suggests (2018, 220), there was a sense of emergency during the long summer of migration, which called for immediate and direct help and configured a feeling rule of compassion. He also proposes that the realities of the asylum regime “on the ground” came as a moral shock to the volunteers involved in asylum work, triggering an urge to help, with fellow humanness as the key driving force. The expression of emotions was legitimate, almost expected, of the supporters. A good example of this affective solidarity are Refugee Hospitality Club (RHC) discussion threads around the protest:

*This contradiction is almost too much. Pure joy and deep sorrow at same moment, unbearable. The simultaneous presence of terror and hope every day. These guys just keep on rocking. They hang on, smile, love and live. So proud of each and every one of those yellow vests and others in the demo <3. Stay strong, we are with you.*

In general, emojis such as hearts and flowers were used a lot especially in RHC. One’s emotions, such as joy, sorrow, hope and pride, were seen as vessels of solidarity and compassion.

A personal and an affectual relationship to the asylum issue and the asylum seekers played a crucial role in mobilizing support and in getting people to commit to the protest. For instance, Lotta, a university student and an active part of the protest, told me that she had not been active in organizations or social movements before the demonstration and didn’t identify as an activist. She said how she had

always tried to get more involved and “change things” and didn’t really know why she hadn’t. She didn’t find “writing postcards or collecting names for a campaign” satisfying and felt like she didn’t have enough expertise to do anything more meaningful. Lotta had become friends with some people from Syria during the “refugee crisis” when she had been an exchange student in another European country. “That’s when I realized, heck, these are real people”, she said. She told me that she had at that time felt that she wanted to do something but didn’t know what. She had participated in sorting out clothes that were donated to the asylum seekers but clearly didn’t think she was doing much:

*There’s no human interaction and you don’t really see... [what good it does]. I’m sure it was useful but it didn’t give you the feeling.*

She had also volunteered for the Red Cross during her exchange year, but “they also made me sort out clothes and so I kind of dropped out”. As Lotta came back to Finland, she said that she hadn’t been active with asylum issues because it “didn’t come so close” as she “didn’t know the people”. She had then just walked past the protest one day, stayed for a chat and returned almost every day for many months having responsible tasks assigned to her. For Lotta, becoming active in asylum issues had required her to get “close” to the issue by getting to know the asylum seekers and that she found a way to act where there is “human interaction” and that “gives you the feeling”<sup>42</sup>. As in Kallio movement, having the right feeling was what was needed to become active in a civic group or a political project.

Social ties and emotions such as compassion have been recognized as crucial triggers in the recent solidarity movements that act with or on behalf of refugees (Kleres, 2018; Milan 2018; Rosenberger & Winkler, 2014). Personal relationships with asylum seekers, formed before or during the protest, played a crucial role in the mobilization of people in Right to Live and especially in how committed they became, as Mira explained:

*It had a huge transformative force, the human relation, so that you feel like taking part in something and then you get a feeling that this is related to me... | –] the personal encounters have been important, maybe not to all but for a big part [of people]. So that it’s got very close, that what’s happening to people.*

Since emotions were the fuel for political action, taking care of not only the protesters but oneself and other supporters was considered important. From early

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<sup>42</sup> This resonates with what Nina Eliasoph (2012) writes how “political activism” such as writing petitions can sometimes feel “dry and abstract” or create a sense of powerlessness and that connecting volunteering to activism can make action more “emotionally real” and tangible.

on there were professional guidance sessions, provided pro-bono by members or organizations within the support network, where one could de-brief and talk about one's emotions with other supporters and a psychologist.

*I mean that's just it that when you see another person's suffering that's so much worse [--]. [Supporters were] relieved that there is a place where one can talk about your own emotions, because going in front of Iraqis or Afghans to talk about how tired you are or how awful it is that you heard about a thing, that just doesn't do, you just can't do that. (Ronja)*

The supporters were also experiencing emotions of powerlessness and inadequacy because nothing seemed to change. "An important part of coping was to remind [oneself and others, especially the protesters] just how much we have, after all, achieved", an interviewee told me. In order to do this, they set up an exhibition in one of the protest tents of all the newspaper coverage of Right to Live. The supporters would also constantly remind the protesters and each other to take care of their selves by eating, sleeping and for instance doing yoga, and that it was ok to take time off for a while or feel tired and frustrated. In the Facebook groups, someone would occasionally start a thread such as "What motivates you", "What gives you energy and hope" or "What wears you out, what confuses you, what do you want to get off your heart". This kind of focus on coping with difficult emotions, stress and burnout that can result from demanding activism has become more commonplace in social movement and has been documented from for instance Extinction Rebellion (Jokela et al forthcoming; Sauerborn 2021).

In sum, expressing emotions was a legitimate and even expected part of the protest. In line with this emphasis on emotions, solidarity was not abstract in Right to Live but entangled with emotions and particularities such as friendships with the protesters. This affective and familiar nature of solidarity became apparent especially in calling the protest "demo family". I will next zoom in to the civic and familiar meanings of the "demo family" and show where the composition of these two regimes was unnoticed and "natural", and where the tension between the two became visible.

## Demo family: civic and familiar enmeshed

For the asylum seekers, their protest was unique among other human rights protests since for them, the protest was not about abstract issues as they were themselves the targets of the asylum policies they were protesting against:

*[A]ll the other demonstrations I have been participating you were not close to the victims. For instance, solidarity with the Palestinians. [--] I was very far from the victims but here I was in*



*the same space. I was one of the victims. It was a totally different thing. That's why it went on for three months because it was very personal to me and personal to people who were involved in it. (Fahim)*

According to Fahim, the reason that the protest went on as long as it did was that it was so personal. However, the protest was not personal only to the protesters themselves, but also to the supporters, since they either already knew the protesters or got to know them during the protest:

*Of course, people had a thirst for justice but then there were also the human relationships that had been born. (Mira.)*

In other words, Right to Live was inevitably a composition of the civic world and the familiar regime. There were, however, several different compositions of the familiar and civic in Right to Live. *First*, knowing asylum seekers personally (familiar regime) might have led some supporters to take part in the political protest (civic world). As Jaakko told me:

*I have met some people [in asylum activism] who don't have any kind of activist background, they've simply taken a minor [asylum seeker] into their family. And that way taken part in some collective thing.*

These personal connections also mobilized unexperienced activists:

*Well, I mean so many people highlighted the fact that they had never done anything political, not necessarily, many said they've never even been to a normal demonstration where you walk on the street, that this was the first time. So I guess to many people, I mean what many people shared was that, that of course the fact that the asylum seekers came [to the country around 2015–6] meant that many had already been in some contact with asylum seekers after that.*

Some of the supporters in Right to Live became involved in the protest through the practice of serving tea to people who would stop by at the protest site. This *second* composition is the reversal of the first one: universal solidarity (civic) towards asylum seekers might have led to some people taking part in supporting the protest in the first place, but as they get to know asylum seekers personally at the protest site, asylum politics became a personal and affective issue, leading to them engaging in the practical and affective practices of solidarity (familiar). For instance, Jenni told me that she initially got involved in Right to Live because she had “become more aware of power structures and institutional racism and privileges”, and had become interested in “refugee politics”, and ended up taking responsibility for some of the practical tasks in Right to Live and housing asylum seekers in her home.

In the *third* type of composition, the civic world and the familiar regime are firmly nested in a way that makes the separation of the two nonsensical. This kind of

seamless composition was the most common one in the interviews with the supporters. Jaakko, one of the founders of Free Movement Network, said he had initially involved himself in migration activism because of his interest in human rights issues (civic). However, he continued his reply by saying that:

*The reason I got stuck with immigrant problematics was that one could see concrete breaches of rights of foreigners in Finland. At that time there was a lot of talk about globalization and you got the feeling that ok these global borders between the rich and the poor are here in Helsinki and they're being sustained by Finnish authorities, so maybe there's a chance here to affect these things immediately with the people who are most affected, so immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees. And then you kind of get stuck because it's really about support on a personal level. So it's in that way motivating.*

For Jaakko, civic reasons (“human rights”, “breaches of rights of foreigners”) had led him to migration activism which in practice entailed familiar regime: “support on a personal level”. This personal level support in the familiar regime was what the activism was “really about” and what made it motivating for him.

In what follows, I will focus on this last type of composition. The nestedness of this composition is apparent in the (affective) practices of solidarity as well as in the practice of calling protesters and supporters brothers and sisters and the protest “Right to Live family” or “demo family”. In these cases, it was impossible, or nonsensical to distinguish the two regimes. One could say that the “art of composition” was so seamless (see Thévenot 2014, 14), and politically meaningful as I will later explain, that the seams between these regimes were not visible, at least in most situations. In other words, the composition between these two regimes did not seem tenuous in most situations and the tension between the two regimes became visible only after the protest as the familiar engagements lost some of their civic meanings.

Mikko described how he got involved in migrant activism. He said that he had always believed in solidarity and “this kind of no-borders way of thinking”. By 2015, he had “been actively hanging around in reception centres”. I asked him whether he meant he was a volunteer and he replied: “Weell, I don’t know about this volunteering<sup>43</sup>...It’s pretty difficult for me to act in these associational things.” What he wanted to make clear was not only that he did not feel comfortable in associations but also that he perceived refugees not through the framework of volunteering but as friends and equals, fellow human beings. Also another supporter of the protest, Lotta, said that she went to the protest “to hang around”. Hanging around seemed to mean action that is non-instrumental, outside volunteering work, and that has

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<sup>43</sup> As if he was saying, “volunteering schmollunteering”.

intrinsic value. It was socializing. Institutionalized associations such as the Red Cross were considered problematic among some of the supporters of the protest since the rules and practices in these associations categorized people into non-citizens and citizens, asylum seekers and volunteers – those who help and those who are helped (see also Merikoski 2021, 97). The Red Cross has an institutionalized role in asylum practices in Finland and they, for instance, run some of the reception centres (Kumpula 2021). One of the protesters Bodström et al (2022, 45) interviewed said that when he talks to people at the reception centre, he feels like he's “not even a human being, like [he's] an animal”. In contrast, free networks and friendships between asylum seekers and Finnish citizens taking place outside associations were seen to be based on common humanity and equality as these social relations beyond citizenship regimes disrupt host-guest relations (Dadusc et al 2019, 521). For instance, some Finnish hosts housing asylum seekers in their homes even refuse to call it helping since it would mean an unequal power relation (Merikoski 2019). These kinds of friendships, in the familiar regime, are thus more universal than one based on a regime of citizenship, the civic world.

In addition to the universal and particular, another way to conceptualize the difference between civic worth and familiar grammar is that of the public and private. By definition, civic world is public (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006) and familiar regime is the most private regime. The way that Merja describes her life after Right to Live is thus illustrative of the inseparable entwinement of the two. We asked her how her life had changed, and she replied:

*Entirely. Former friends are former friends because no one puts up with me as I never have time for anything. I have two friends left, from my previous life. [--] [A]nd then there's my family and so on but...because I also have an asylum seeker in home accommodation [--] nowadays asylum seekers are part of my family, always depending on who lives there, because they do become a family member.*

Merja's life revolved around asylum issues and she made no distinction between her civic action and her private life, especially since she lived with asylum seeker(s) who become “family members”. Calling asylum seekers family members is common in home accommodation in general (Merikoski 2021, 98).

The blurring of civic and familiar, public and private, are not only characteristics of solidarity movements but also of protest camps. Frenzel et al (2014) discuss how in protest camps the domestic and public spheres turn upside down since protesters need to create a home and run all of its practical chores in a public (often as visible as possible) place, as well as maintain its internal, affectual coherence. I repeatedly heard and read comments about how there is such a strong sense of community at

the protest, lost from the rest of the society, and how the sit-in feels like a “village” or a “living-room”. In a magazine interview, Merja tells how the demonstration became a second home to her and how she only stopped by in her “real” home, where there was no one there to wait for her arrival. The comparison of the protest to the sphere of the home was emphasized even further by comparing it to a family. The protest was more familiarly called “demo”, and the active members consisting of it started calling each other “demo family”, or “Right to Live family”, and to refer to each other as brothers and sisters, something that is unconventional in Finland outside biological family or perhaps a religious community. One of the protesters, Amal, described how the protest was “much more than just a demo”:

*We basically had a much tighter relation than just being part of a demo. [--] We became good friends. I have met a lot of people there. Now [they are] still my friends. I can actually consider them as a family even.*

In this home-like environment, emotions were allowed, even expected, to be expressed. As noted above, the blurring of the civic world and the familiar regime in Right to Live can be traced to the specificities of migrant solidarity action as well as to the characteristics of protest camps and especially to the long duration of the protest. Next, I will describe how this composition of the two regimes was concretized in practices of solidarity.

## Practices of solidarity

Practices of solidarity in Right to Live included becoming friends with the asylum seekers, expressing emotions and showing support. As Merja said:

*It's a part of solidarity action to be a friend. A lot of people longed for friendship and of course through that friendship one could also help people. So one could be a part of community and feel like one can help.*

Strong affectual ties between protesters and supporters can lengthen the duration of a protest camp, which is a very demanding form of protest (Mokre, 2018, 216). Right to Live protesters were under a lot of strain from their life situation and in maintaining the protest in the cold Finnish winter and were experiencing fatigue, hopelessness and anger:

*Each of us were angry [--], everyone had the same struggle and same trouble. Same thoughts. Mental breakdown [--]. (Amal)*

However, the kindness and solidarity of passers-by and the supporters helped the protesters carry on (see Bodström et al 2022). As Fahim said, he thought that the biggest role of a Finnish supporter was being a “mental support”.

Personal support was important in asylum activism in general. Amal told me how he had received support from a few Finnish people and how significant it had been for him:

*I remember when I got my negative. Went to prison. Came back. They were there before us in our home. Think about it. They came there to help you from the beginning to the end.*

This kind of practice of care and affective labour was part of the affective infrastructure of the protest (Näre & Jokela 2023). During an evening at the protest, there was a special celebration with Arab music and dancing, and the atmosphere was lifted and happy. I was talking with Farman, a protester I had met a few times before, when Ronja joined us. She was in a happy party mood. Ronja seemed to know Farman well and asked him how he was. Farman replied that his uncle had been killed in a bombing and showed her a video of the incident with his phone. Ronja’s appearance changed from a happy party mood to expressing sadness. She told Farman she was sorry about what had happened and gave Farman a long hug. This hug was “an emotional bodily gesture” and an expression of care, common in the familiar regime (Thévenot 2011, 54; 58).

Some supporters, like Lotta, consciously took on tasks of affective labour and care. She told me that when she first began to visit Right to Live, she didn’t know what she could do at the protest since she didn’t have any expertise in relevant matters. However, she had soon realized that what she could do was to listen and empathize. Lotta said that even though she felt tired, she would psych herself up to be able to create positive energy in the protest. Energy was also needed to answer questions from passers-by. Lotta told me that when she goes to the demo, she makes an effort to be friendly and answer all the questions they have: “What they always ask, why are there only young men and why won’t you fight back [in their country of origin]” and “No, they [asylum seekers] aren’t all dangerous”.

The practice of care and affective labour were so central in the role of a supporter that the interviewees brought it up without asking. Elis mentioned the fact that they had chosen not to take on that role, contrasting themselves to the ones who did:

*What I did was this kind of light version of demonstrating, if you compare it to the real activists, because I didn’t do nights or anything like that [--] but I’ve been acting according to a logic that... Maybe it’s about self-preservation, that if you get in too deep, then how are you going to cope with it.*

The fact that Elis said that he did not “get in too deep” meant that he was aware that this was, indirectly, expected of supporters.

Most times, the civic world and the familiar regime formed such a tight composition that made it seem as if there was no tension between the two. However, as the next section illustrates, especially after the physical protest had ended, the tension became visible. Some of the activists had been sceptical towards the “demo family” to begin with.

## A political movement instead of “a family”: familiar regime and civic worth in tension

The critical voices towards “demo family” brought to light the tension between the civic world and the familiar regime. I asked Fahim in an interview, a year after the protest, what he thought about the talk about a demo family and he replied:

*I feel very uncomfortable about it. For me it was more of a political stance and it was a political movement. For me it was, I was, I didn't share a lot of things with people there. I would not on a normal day with some people I would not be able to hold a conversation with them 'cause we have different lifestyles. Different political views. So I was not very active with that.*

Fahim was one of the few who, in my interview with him, criticized the “demo family” to begin with. In his reply, Fahim contrasted the talk about demo family to a political stance and a political movement, the familiar regime to the civic world. However, he also criticized talk about a demo family as being exclusive: “[I]t was very exclusive. It was exclusive to the people who took part in the demonstration.” He talked about people who came from “Lapland and Lahti” and didn’t know anyone and stayed “the whole night there and without showers for three full days”, and who were excluded from the demo family “because they were not from Helsinki”. Exclusiveness is in fact an inherent part of the familiar regime (Thévenot 2015; see also Ylä-Anttila 2016).

Others who critiqued the “demo family” saw its value during the protest but were critical towards nostalgizing it or remaining in demo chats without contributing to the on-going asylum activism. The emphasis of activism changed once the protest ended. Supporters were expected to take on asylum cases or perhaps carry on with the political work and therefore socializing with asylum seekers no longer had the political value it had had during the protest, if it was not accompanied with asylum activism. In other words, after the protest, the role of Finnish supporters was re-evaluated. While the focus of my analysis is on the physical protest, what happened after the protest and how the protest was reflected upon in hindsight brings to light

the tension between the familiar regime and the civic world in a way that was not as clear during the protest.

As explained above, during the physical protest the familiar regime was emphasized due to characteristics related to solidarity action and protest camps. Moreover, during the protest spring there was a sense of urgency because of deportations and momentum because of the media's interest in the protest, creating a (com)passionate affective atmosphere. Amal estimated in an interview, two years after the protest:

*I really don't see much people anymore passionate about these things anymore because I think it's laid off and forgotten.*

The asylum activism was no longer visible as it was mainly about helping individual asylum seekers in their legal cases.

In 2018 as the protest was over, I conducted an interview with Merja<sup>44</sup>. She insisted that people should realize the “demo” and “demo family” was now over:

*[The demo] needs to be buried, now there's a whole new kind of movement, I mean the people who have actually stayed to do asylum work. A whole lot of people from the demo stayed in all kinds of chats and don't do anything, sorry. They talk a lot about demo family but don't come [involved]. [--] Mikko doesn't even want to hear the word “demo family” because it's such a romantic... [--]<sup>45</sup>If you care about these refugees, then you start doing the cases. [--] It's easy to stand at the square and drink tea and socialize, be present and help in that way [--], now the next step is tough work where one must take responsibility, not everyone is up for that. And that is really understandable. I don't want to look down on the tea-drinkers, I was a tea-drinker too, but I mean the people who don't continue their activism in other forms. Then it remains inside the demo.*

During the protest, it was a political act to “stand at the square”, drink tea and socialize. One was taking part in the maintenance of the (affective) protest infrastructure as well as showing solidarity and being a moral support to the protesters. After the protest, as Merja said, socializing in chats and nostalgizing the protest was no longer enough as it had no political, civic value. If one didn't continue their activism in other forms after the protest, if they didn't capitalize the tea drinking, their activism “remained inside the demo”, as Merja said. Therefore, Merja's comment does not contest the argument made in protest camp literature about the importance of affective labour and everyday encounters (Feigenbaum et al 2013; Brown & Yaffe 2014; Mokre, 2018, 216), almost the contrary, since she said

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<sup>44</sup> This interview was conducted together with Lena Näre.

<sup>45</sup> In my interview with Mikko, he said that some Finns “glorified” the demo, while he saw the protest only as one part of a larger struggle against asylum policies.

she “was a tea-drinker too”. However, the comment does challenge the notion of the civic and political nature of social relations between migrants and citizens in migrant solidarity movements literature (e.g. Hinger et al. 2018, 173; Darling 2010; Hage 2012) and highlight the fact that context is essential in defining whether, or when, these relations are political acts or activism. In the dire situation of increasing negative asylum decisions and deportation flights, more action was required of activists than socializing or even moral support.

Merja didn’t miss the demo chats but hoped that the networks around asylum cases would remain active, but not because of the friendship they (may) provide but because of the expertise on asylum issues:

*[I]t’s not based on friendship, the fact that we had fun together, but it’s based purely, I mean people don’t even know each other, it’s based on expertise.*

These networks were not based on the familiar regime but a composition of civic and industrial worths since expertise on asylum issues was now important. The industrial world prizes efficiency and “investment in functional and even standardized forms” (Thévenot 2007, 419). Merja described how she moved on from talking to people and building trust to helping with the asylum cases and what taking on a case requires in the jungle of ever-changing asylum, legislation, policies and practices:

*You start talking about those cases, then you start listening to what [the more experienced activists] say, at first it’s complete jibberish, it all seems too difficult, then you start to understand the logic and then you begin to search information. [--] It was pretty self-made [--] it was really confusing at first when you don’t understand the whole system. [--] The way to learn things is that you read the Migri interview and realize things, you start to question why this person didn’t get asylum. Then you start reading the negative decision from Migri and then you read complaints, I mean you will learn if you have any analytic sense, and I have journalist background, I’ve read a lot of texts and analyzed them, you start realizing that “a-ha, ok, this is the mistake”. [--] Every day there are challenges when you think you know this is how it works and then someone says that no, today this is not the way it goes.*

According to Merja, an activist working with asylum cases needed courage to take on a case and the responsibility that comes with it, and analytic skills and the ability to learn quickly. She told us how she had to write her asylum cases in an excel file in order to keep track of all of them. This kind of asylum work required efficiency and punctuality; goods found in the world of industry. If familiar grammar was used for civic purposes in the physical protest, especially after the protest, it was industrial/inspired worth that served civic purposes best.



## Atomized political action: working individually with asylum cases

After the Right to Live protest, the physical community dispersed but the network remained active in “several dozen social media chats” that revolved around individual asylum and deportation cases, but also around reminiscing about the protest and organizing reunions. “The physical community” was now “dispersed”, as Merja said, and added that it was now “completely different”, and the emphasis of asylum activism tilted from explicitly politic activism to practical legal and bureaucratic help. In fact, Merja said that she thought that the Right to Live protest lasted too long, since it drained peoples’ energy that was needed in the asylum work. There were protests each time a forced deportation was to take place, but in much smaller size than before. Merja said she had tried occasionally to arrange a demonstration in a chat, but had received no replies:

*There’s no buzz anymore as there was at the time of demo. First of all, there’s no time for buzz and it’s been compartmentalized, everyone is just doing their own [asylum] work and then we chat. There’s not a lot of time to meet or have retreats to unload emotions, which would be really important. [--] And then they have their schedules and someone is in Migri and someone’s at the police, so you won’t come to a demo when things are like this.*

The “buzz”, that had run out after the protest, could be understood as the overall affective atmosphere (Kolehmainen & Mäkinen 2019) around asylum issues in which the affective ties and emotions as fuel played a significant role.

Going through the Migri documents required and increased knowledge, know-how and the ability to learn how to analyze asylum cases. After the protest, it was clear that the asylum policies were not changing and helping individuals with their cases and making complaints about the asylum process were considered the only, or the best, ways to affect the asylum situation. Some of the supporters remained a part of the asylum solidarity network(s), whose main focus was now on legal assistance in asylum cases. As Mira told me, it made sense in the political situation to concentrate on individual asylum cases instead of the political process:

*[N]ow all the energy goes into going through individual cases. Once we noticed that we’re not going to achieve a political change, that the government isn’t going to change anything, now we have to put all of our energy to helping individual cases. Which is really frustrating but it’s the only way forward right now.*

“If we can’t change the government or affect government politics”, Merja said, all hope was now placed in for instance raising money for The Finnish Refugee Advice

Centre through crowdfunding ”and acts like this”, ”even though it’s a little desperate at times”.

The lack of time and a limited number of volunteers in this asylum activism was one of the reasons why there was less political campaigning than some would perhaps have liked to see, as Jaakko explained to me (see also Hansen 2019, 298):

*In these things, people just don’t have enough time. [--] It takes a tremendous amount of time to go to the police or Migri and read people’s papers and so on. And then we have all other stuff in our lives, so if you don’t have a meeting with an asylum seeker that you’re supposed to help, then you’re doing your own [paid] work, but building this kind of organized political action, that’s the first thing that drops out. And I think you could see it at the Railway Square thing, [--] when there’s a bigger event, people just snatched time from somewhere to write that manifesto. But when the most active part was over, after that people started to like “I have to do this, write this article” or “do this work”.*

Especially the urgency of deportations was a reason for why the emphasis was no longer in the political process, as Mira explained, and described the temporality of asylum activism:

*[T]he system is constantly two steps ahead and for instance detainments take place on Fridays and deportations on Mondays so it’s really devilish cause you can’t get hold of an attorney [during the weekend].*

Despite the fact that the focus was now on providing practical help to asylum seekers instead of a political protest, some nevertheless perceived that the most important contribution of the network was still “having an impact” in asylum issues. Taina told me this could be done through legal complaints against lawyers, who do their work with asylum seekers poorly, or the police, or “any[where] where mistakes and unethical decisions are made”:

*[I] see it as a bigger picture that we need to have an impact and we have to...even if it’s just [legal] complaints, they take a long time, but they affect certain things.*

Making complaints about individual cases and “going to Migri to show that hey, these are the kinds of decisions you’re making” was a way to affect the general state of asylum policies. This, again, goes to prove how the definition of what is civic political is always contextual.

The focus of asylum activism on helping with individual cases atomized political action into “solo gigs” (Lichterman 1996, 55)<sup>46</sup>. This atomization was not due to any kind of glorification of individualized action, as in liberal grammar or inspired worth,

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<sup>46</sup> This was regarded as (political) activism also by the actors themselves: “*The activism* is now primarily, or practically entirely this kind of asylum work”, as Merja said.

but because of circumstances surrounding the asylum situation and their urgency. There were collective structures such as (social media) networks and Free Movement Network held a café once a week where asylum seekers and activists could meet and more experienced activists could assist with the cases. but in the end, “people still do [cases/activism] pretty much alone”, as Merja said. Merja, who was critical towards those supporters who came to the demo only to socialize and didn’t do asylum cases, said she, too, missed the community. However, she prioritized the asylum work (that now had political significance) over socializing in demo chats.

What happened after the protest brought to light the exceptionality of Right to Live: the effort of building and maintaining a 24-hour protest in an urgent asylum situation (“organized political action” is “the first thing that drops out” when time is scarce, as Jaakko pointed out) and its ability to mobilize people for support. As Frenzel et al (2014, 465) argue, protest camps are exceptional spaces. What this meant in Right to Live was that it was able to construct an alternative reality where non-citizens were political actors and, instead of racist categories, citizenship statuses or host-guest relations, the relationship between citizens and non-citizens took the form of family or friends (Dadusc et al 2019, 521; Merikoski 2019), making familiar regime and civic world inseparable and assigning political meanings to the familiar regime. However, what is perhaps not given enough attention in protest camp literature is the inherent tension between these regimes, a tension that will almost inevitably surface in some situations. As Thévenot (2011, 58) argues, there is an inherent tension between (private) “care” and the more public and legitimate forms of action, and the demand for recognition of care “carries the risk of disregarding” this tension. In Right to Live, this tension was most apparent after the physical protest had ended.

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To sum up, among the Finnish supporters of Right to Live, a good civic actor is above all someone who is compassionate to the suffering of others and engages in practices of solidarity out of this compassion. Even if one is involved in a political project with the goal of changing policies or legislation, writing petitions is not enough: one is expected to get their hands dirty in practical tasks and help the people, here and now, who suffer from the policies. Sitting in meetings does not have intrinsic value but is considered necessary. People are passionate about what they do and sacrifice their own life projects for the good of others. However, a good civic actor also engages in therapeutic emotional work, both for the good of others as well as oneself.

## 5.3 Conclusions

Right to Live was a political protest that fostered strong, affective commitment while Kallio movement's political dimensions are up to each member (or visitor of Kallio Block Party) to grasp. However, what Right to Live and Kallio movement had in common was a focus on practical issues: organizing a block party, maintaining the protest infrastructure or going through asylum cases. Civic action also had to feel right or "give you the feeling". In both groups, there were committed members who assigned civic values to the groups' actions and to whom the groups were a means of serving the common good, to some also in the long-term. However, these civic groups could also serve as pitstops in their life trajectories, projects and not sites of belonging or identity-work. Next, I will look into how this kind of activism, pierced by personalized politics, is able to construct and maintain commitment.

## 6 COMMITMENT CULTURE

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, both Kallio movement and Right to Live were civic groups that practiced personalized politics where members do not necessarily commit to civic groups in the long term and both were, in different ways, infused especially with inspirational worth that values creative individuals. In both Kallio movement and Right to Live, the focus was on doing and not belonging. In addition, neither of these groups could rely on their organizational or institutional continuity since neither was a (registered) association. The crumbling of the associational form has led some social scientists in the Nordic countries to assume that with no associations, there is no commitment either (Wollebæk et al 2010; see chapter two). With these parameters, I echo Lichterman's (1996, 34) question about how a group of activists, who act as "individual political agents" instead of members of established organizations, is able to function and build solidarity? He notes that "people acting as citizens or community members would assign each other different sorts of responsibilities, and create different bonds of obligation, than those that are available when people assume political agency resides in a personal self without strong institutional grounding" (ibid, 35). For instance, the form of registered associations ensures that key responsibilities are named, as usually there is at least a chair, secretary and treasurer. However, as also Lichterman (ibid.) points out, if there are no commitment structures, groups need to build them. These cultures were built on different grounds in Kallio movement and Right to Live. Kallio movement lured new members by promising freedom and fun action that will also boost one's CV, but when there was a need to get these new people committed, they were reminded of their (individual) responsibilities as well as common effort by talking about *talkoot*, a Finnish tradition of working parties. Right to Live didn't have to lure new members nor make the effort to commit these members to action – the problem was the opposite, how get people to take time off and take care of themselves.

## 6.1 Commitment culture in Kallio movement: no boundaries, no commitments

As the previous chapter illustrated, Kallio movement was cherished by its members as a group of free and creative individuals, and Kallio movement engages in a tenuous composition of liberal grammar and inspired worth. Especially when my interviewees talked about how Kallio movement differed from a registered association, they emphasized the freedom of the movement itself and its members in a way that resonates with liberal grammar. Kallio movement members did not want to sit in meetings but be creative and do things. To Kallio movement members, democracy was not (supposed to be) an endless meeting (Polletta 2002). However, despite the fact that talking and meetings were devalued in Kallio movement, it was what their action mainly comprised of. The question then arises about what makes people come to the meetings? How does a collective that emphasizes individual freedom function in practice, at least well enough to be able to organize a festival with tens of thousands of attendees? I will explore this question in this chapter and suggest three main methods through which collectivity was built: the importance of fun; an emphasis on individual responsibility; and summoning to *talkoot*. However, it is important to note that, despite these methods, the “organizational stability” based on personalism *is* more fragile and a “tenuous accomplishment” compared to established organizations (Lichterman 1996, 35). Similarly, as noted in the previous chapter, in the world of inspiration, what is worthy cannot be measured or controlled, making this world more unstable than other worlds of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 159). This instability was ever-present in the dynamics of Kallio movement.

I will first describe how important it was to its members that Kallio movement was not an association but a community for “free civic action”, and then move on to explaining the three motivational factors that were used to commit people to the movement’s actions.

### “Free civic action”: “Kallio movement is not an association but a community of people”

It was easier to say what Kallio movement did not want to be rather than what it did, and what it did not want to be was a registered association. The kind of bonds and commitment culture that were nurtured were opposite to those of an association and the difference was often made explicitly clear. As a member of Kallio movement

declared at the beginning of one of the Kallio Block Party meetings to some newcomers:

*Kallio movement is a mixed bunch of people that arranges things but is not an association but rather a community of people.*

Similarly, Alex, one of the original members of Kallio movement and organizers of Kallio Block Party, explained to me that “Kallio movement is just the group of people who comes to the meetings”. The distinction from traditional Finnish associations was a crucial pillar in the movement’s self-understanding and the decision not to form a registered association was made in the movement’s first meeting. Instead, they aimed to build a community of individuals and be examples of “free civil society”, as one participant phrased it to me. “This is supposed to be free civic action and not this kind of association thing”, Tuuli explained. Or as Janne said, Kallio movement participants didn’t want “associational activities for associational activities’ sake”. Not being an association was meant to safeguard equal treatment of members on the one hand and the freedom of Kallio movement and its members on the other – and these two ideals were intertwined. Kallio movement members cherished the freedom to decide whether they want to do anything at all:

*We can actually agree that right now no one wants to arrange anything and we’ll call it quits. That people aren’t committed to absolutely anything. (Susanna.)*

Lilli told me that Kallio movement is great because if she joined an association, she would just be made the secretary because no one else would want to take up the position. In Kallio movement, instead, there was an ideal that no one has to do anything they don’t want to do, no one has to be the secretary or the chair. Lilli defined Kallio movement in the following way:

*Anyone, anything, anywhere as long as it’s done in the right spirit, so we don’t do any damage (--) and maybe Kallio movement enables [people] to join in once they see that we do everything, we’re all on the same level and my know-how can be, I can give it to this or my own time to that, but I don’t have to commit to anything, I’m in no hierarchies, so maybe that’s the Kallio movement.*

This was the ideal Kallio movement members had in mind, that there should be no hierarchies, everyone should be “on the same level”, and there should be no binding ties. Freedom and equality of individuals went hand in hand.

During the second year of my fieldwork, there was a fear of there not being enough people organizing the festival and those involved were afraid the entire festival was at stake. The people present in a general meeting in June were thinking

how to get more people involved and someone said they should emphasize the freedom involved in the organizing: "Don't be afraid, you don't have to tie yourself up. You're not gonna have to sell your granny!" With busy people and a buffet of grassroots projects to choose from it was an asset to keep participation light and the binding ties loose (Lichterman 1996; 2005, 68).

Freedom of Kallio movement and its members was not only present in talk but was also realized in practice. My first Kallio movement meeting was one that was held in 2017 to plan a 6th anniversary celebration of the movement. The celebration was to take place as a part of a larger annual cultural event, *Kallio kukkii* ("Kallio blossoms"), organized by Kallio's culture network association. Since there were only three other attendees besides myself and a short agenda, we ended up talking about the movement in general since they knew I was beginning my research on it. Katri said that the way of organizing in Kallio movement was wonderful: they could just organize something if they felt like it, like the anniversary party that was going to be organized even though it was just a random anniversary – not, for instance, the 5th or the 10th. As the meeting dissolved, no plans were made for the next steps, nor was the time for the next meeting decided, but the conversation continued in a Facebook group made especially for organizing the event. Eventually, in the Facebook group, the party was decided to be cancelled nine days before the event because of a lack of organizers. Unfortunately, the event had already been listed in the printed programme of *Kallio kukkii*, but this was not something that would have been dwelled on as a failure. "I really do feel bad about this not happening, but of course, no can do", as someone phrased in the Facebook group<sup>47</sup>. Cancellations like this was the price of maintaining the freedom of the movement and its members.

One way to look at Kallio movement is in fact to see how it served people as a platform for individual activism (Blee 2013, 30). For instance, one could come to organize Kallio Block Party for one year and then disappear. One of the original members, Alex, had recently been inactive in Kallio movement and KBP and put his creative energies elsewhere, to other collective as well as individual projects:

*There's plenty of other contexts through which one can pursue other ambitious projects. But it's always a kind of a tool that exists.*

The discourse of platform emphasizes individual orientations over collectivist ones and is inarguably able to capture a part of what Kallio movement is about. However,

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<sup>47</sup> However, the occasion was eventually celebrated unofficially, and on short notice, in a park by suggestion of one of the members on Facebook.



the metaphor of Kallio movement as a platform has its limits. “Platform” does not capture the committed group of people who kept the movement alive and develop “supra-individual” qualities with a logic of their own (Blee 2012, 30). A platform does not give any guidelines for what is good and moral as there is no collective aspect to platforms. A better way to understand Kallio movement is to perceive it as a platform for projects where once one gets involved in a project, one is assumed to be committed.

The freedom that was valued in Kallio movement was in contradiction with wanting to pull through with the organizing of Kallio Block Party and avoid cancelling it, as happened with the anniversary celebration. There had to be some mechanisms for committing people to the project. I have distinguished three such mechanisms in Kallio movement. First, there was a need for the action to be fun; second, there was an emphasis on individual responsibility; and third, members of Kallio movement were summoned to take part in collective *talkoot*.

## The need to have fun

As introduced in the previous chapter, many of my interviewees described their participation in KBP as a *hobby*. There was no difference whether the person was an original member of Kallio movement to whom the values of the movement were a significant part of Kallio Block Party, or whether someone was relatively new to the event and was more motivated by the chance to organize the festival. For instance, one of the core members since the first Kallio movement meeting, Elina, told me that “it’s like a nice hobby and since I live here, it’s easy to do *sääliö*”. What the word hobby seemed to mean in this context was that the action was, and was supposed to be, fun. As Maria said (see previous chapter): “I don’t know how to explain it better than that. *It’s just fun*.” Or as Janne told me: “It’s a nice summer hobby to help out for one day in August, to support a good cause”. Previously, he had been more involved in the organizing process of the block party but was now only volunteering on the day of the festival. As already noted in the previous chapter, Janne continued by explaining how this kind of local grassroots activism requires “a personal motivation” that he was struggling with at that moment. Janne also said that he didn’t have a utopia about being able to change the world. In Kallio movement, while people’s actions were oftentimes guided by global thinking with regards to, for instance, environmental and humanitarian responsibility, the scope of the actions in Kallio movement reached only to Kallio, or perhaps Helsinki. It was local activism par excellence. Having an internal push, a passion, towards something that feels right and like its one’s own thing was crucial in the world of Kallio movement. A part of

this motivation was the requirement that civic action is fun. It is a different motivation from the idea of a dutiful and committed citizen who belongs to the same association their entire lives. Janne also said that it would be important that the City would make the organizing easy in order to motivate the organizers, or at least not make it more difficult. This kind of motivating is important in action that does not involve "revolutions or really political things":

*The doing of this kind of light action is not such a strong motivation, this kind of non-political action is rarely a thing like "I'm going to do this at any cost". In some cases, a political revolution might be a thing people are ready to sacrifice their entire lives for, but street parties, not so often.*

In other words, "this kind of light action" had to be fun in order to be rewarding. As Alex said, the projects needed to be "exciting enough":

*Since it's free, voluntary action, there has to be the time and a project that is exciting enough to get people aboard. I mean no one is getting paid.*

As Lichterman points out, civic groups whose group bonds are defined by individualized commitment express a need to stress the "fun-ness" of the action in order to attract and keep members in the group among the buffet of different civic groups and networks. This kind of thinking was especially prominent in Kallio movement, but was not entirely absent in Right to Live, either. Perhaps one of the reasons fun was emphasised as much as it was the fact that Kallio movement members did clearly not enjoy sitting in meetings, even though meetings were inevitable. Janne told me that he was involved in associations, and arranging Kallio Block Party was a much-needed balance and opposite to them:

*I had a personal need to have a counterbalance to a "meeting-life". I mean if my professional life as well as civic activities seemed to be about meeting after meeting, then Kallio movement was a really refreshing exception to this rule, so it was part of the motivation to do anything. Instead of having a hundred thousand meetings, Kallio movement was more like "hey, should we do this, well let's do it" and moved straight to implementation.*

Clearly, meetings were not considered motivating but rather a necessary evil. (Meetings and meeting bureaucracy were also associated with the movement's main target of aversion, associations.) Perhaps because of this distaste for "meeting life", there was an effort to make the meetings more fun by choosing a nice place to hold them in. Kallio movement doesn't have an office, which means that it has to organize its meetings wherever it can: a place that is free of charge, is in Kallio, and can hold enough people. During my fieldwork, meetings were arranged mainly in bars or a local settlement house (see below), sometimes also in parks during the summer, and once even in a clubroom of the local church as a priest was at that time involved in

the movement. In Kallio area, where people tend to live in small studios and apartments, bars and cafes are considered as extensions and substitutes for living rooms and, in general, bars are considered a vital part of the area's lifestyle and material and cultural landscape, thus making them a good fit as meeting places for Kallio movement. Another purpose for holding the meetings in a bar was clearly to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere – in other words, to make the meetings more fun and less official. In the world of inspiration, people feel at ease in informal situations (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 160).

One of the regular meeting places during my fieldwork was the local Kalliola settlement house<sup>48</sup>. The settlement house rents out meeting spaces and, as one of the active organizers worked there, meetings could be arranged there free of charge. It seemed that Kalliola was more of a practical rather than preferred option. Other regular meeting places were a few landmark bars in Kallio, places that everyone knew and that were conveniently located close to those living in Kallio. Usually the bar was Oiva, located in the heart of Kallio, a bar that was founded in its original location in 1940 and that is part of the cultural history of the area<sup>49</sup>. The meetings were usually in some corner of the regular, “public” areas of the bar, or in a slightly more private cabinet area. There were also other bars where meetings were held, ones that were conveniently located in the area where the festival was planned to be arranged that year. There was no major difference in the atmosphere depending on whether the meeting was held in a bar or Kalliola, but the bars, especially if noisy and busy, gave the meetings a more relaxed undertone. Sometimes the bars were too noisy, though, and as we would usually sit by a long table, it could be difficult to hear what people were saying. The chance to have a beer or a cider framed the situation in a more casual and relaxed manner. (Not everyone enjoyed alcoholic beverage, though, some might have ordered a cup of coffee or tea or perhaps a coke.)

The first Kallio movement meeting I attended, held for the organizing of the 6th anniversary party, introduced me to the problem the movement members were struggling with at the time of my fieldwork: how to get people to participate in Kallio movement. I arrived at the meeting place, Kalliola settlement house, on time at six

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<sup>48</sup> Kalliola is a part of Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses that has roots in a religious organization in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century London to provide housing as well as social and educational work to the poor. Kalliola was established right after the civil war in 1919. Although initially religious, currently the organization is religiously and politically non-aligned. Kalliola has a picture of Kallio Block Party on its website, in the section where the organization is introduced (<https://kalliola.fi/tarinamme/>).

<sup>49</sup> The bar is even mentioned in a popular Finnish song from 1968 that takes place in a nostalgized Kallio. In 2013, the song was performed by the original performer of the song and one of the most popular Finnish singers, Fredi, in the opening of Kallio Block Party.

but there were no one else present. Ten minutes later, the first attendee, Julia, arrived and we started talking. She said that many of those who were supposed to come had just posted on Facebook that they can't make it after all but that there were still a few people coming. Julia suggested that we wait for them at the settlement house, but since there weren't going to be many attendees, we could just go for beers straight away and do the planning in a bar. I had just posted on the movement's Facebook page about my research so I introduced myself as the researcher and Julia made a joke: "Well, now you can begin your research by saying that the first meeting you attended was cancelled". We then started talking why Kallio movement in general no longer attracts new members. Julia said that even people who are involved in the movement only tend to come to the meetings if they are specifically asked to come. It was not uncommon that if, for instance, Kallio Block kitchen was planning to arrange cooking for an event, people who had been involved in the block kitchen before were invited to take part by tagging them individually. Two other attendees, Tuukka and Katri, showed up. Julia again suggested that we go somewhere "nicer", where one could have something to eat and drink and we ended up in a popular, relaxed bar with a pizza menu.

The agenda of the evening was to fill out a formal application to the City of Helsinki, which is required if one organizes an event, and the application was already late. Julia had a laptop with her, and we filled in the form as best we could as none of us had ever done that before. This evening was an exceptional one, more like a friends' evening out than a meeting, perhaps because there was not much to decide and there were so few people present and they all knew each other rather well. We sat at the bar until nine after which Tuukka and Julia continued to a near-by music venue for a gig. The evening was so casual, more about chatting than any meeting agenda, that I forgot to hand out the printed information leaflets about my research.

It turned out that most of the meetings during my fieldwork were not as chatty. The second general meeting of Kallio Block Party 2018 in March was held at Kalliola. As I arrived, there were only three people present and no one was talking to each other. Later on, five more people joined the meeting, leaving the number of attendees at a worrisomely low level. People were saying that it should be pointed out in the KBP Facebook group that organizers were expected to attend the general meetings. There were few people present, especially compared to the fact that the meeting was rather important since the newly-founded Block Party association was introduced to the organizers for the first time and there was a vote on whether the association would be used as a legal person in this year's block party.

Towards the end of the meeting, some people expressed their concern over the low turnout in the meeting. Tuuli said: “How could we make these meetings more fun, I’m worried whether we’ll have enough people”. The low number of meeting attendees, and the fear of there not being enough volunteers to organize Kallio Block Party, was automatically connected to the idea that perhaps the meetings weren’t fun enough. In the meeting, Irina raised a question of how to make the fifty people in the KBP Facebook group come to the meetings. Several people agreed that the place of the meeting should be attractive to new people. Clearly, Kalliola wasn’t seen as a sufficiently attractive place. Since the party would most likely be arranged in the Kallio area of Merihaka that year (the final decision hadn’t been made yet), people decided on a popular karaoke bar in the area. Julia, who had been actively involved in the block party for several years, called for some beer drinking after the meeting. She was making the Facebook event for the next meeting and said she’d write in the invitation that there would be karaoke and drinking afterwards. She repeated the need to stay for beers after the meetings on a few other occasions, too.

A similar exchange took place in a mid-June general meeting in 2018. I have written in my fieldnotes that the meeting had been chaotic; there had been no chair or agenda. Usually in meetings someone would eventually step up and take the lead but this time no one volunteered and, perhaps because of this, the atmosphere had been awkward. The meeting was scheduled to start at six and at ten past, someone asked, “Are we still waiting for someone?”. The meeting then started to unfold organically as task groups began telling others what they had accomplished since the last meeting. The atmosphere could not be described as enthusiastic. All of the sudden, Tuuli cried out: “Come on, let’s have some enthusiasm here! Everyone is acting like they’re in a funeral.” Juha, who had often taken up the role as a chair in general meetings, said in his defence that he had just returned from a trip and was tired. Tuuli toned down her voice and said in a more friendly tone: “Well, at least things are progressing”. No one else commented anything and the meeting continued as if nothing had happened.

It was considered necessary to make the meetings fun to make people come to them and commit to the organizing process. There was a worry that new people would not come or commit themselves if they were not fun. It is difficult to imagine a similar kind of scenario in Right to Live, where no one really gave any thought to whether the meetings were fun or not; they were simply necessary. In an interview with Julia, I asked her what she thought about internal organizing such as communications and decision-making and whether it made a difference who was (unofficially) in charge of them. She immediately connected the question to the fun-

ness of the action and how it's connected to getting people involved and committed, without me asking:

*It does have an impact who leads the meeting [--], if it's someone really dry and dreary, could be that people won't come to meetings anymore. But if it's nice and such, or I think it should all be since it's voluntary, it should be fun and compelling and nice. Even though there's some unpleasant organizing, then for even greater reason. So maybe it should be mentioned in our communications that it should be fun. Perhaps our communications should entail that... And then, well, the communications should work so that everyone knows what we're doing.*

In other words, I asked a question about internal organizing and Julia responded by talking about how the meetings should be “fun and compelling and nice”. She feared that if the one who leads the meeting is “really dry and dreary”, people might not come again to another meeting. Only after this did she mention that “communications should work so that everyone knows what we’re doing”. It became clear that in principle, meetings were not considered to be fun, and, at the same time, they should be fun since the motivation for sitting in meetings didn’t come from engaging in a political revolution, as Janne said. The fun and motivation were found in doing, no matter what the doing was, from managing ad hoc situations backstage to traffic controlling or helping people in the information point and cleaning the site after the party. To Kallio movement members, democracy was not (supposed to be) an endless meeting but endless *säättö*.

## Separating the wheat from the chaff: Individual responsibility in Kallio movement

Despite the best efforts, collective civic action is not always fun, and somehow, a sense of commitment and responsibility need to be evoked. In Kallio movement, individual responsibility was especially emphasized.

Paradoxically, the binding ties of responsibility were stronger when taking part in organizing Kallio Block Party than in Kallio movement. In the movement, one was free, for instance, to skip a meeting or arranging the block party, but once one got involved in the organizing of the festival, which always meant one had at least some individual responsibility for a given task, it was considered a faux pas to drop the ball. More specifically, taking part in organizing the festival meant taking up individual responsibility. Although often I would hear the phrase “doing together” that was at the core of Kallio Block Party “way of doing”, in practice it was often individuals who did the doing (see Lichterman 1996, 55; 2005, 82): they contacted sponsors, recruited volunteers from their networks, and worked on the Kallio Block

Party website. This kind of ability for initiative and taking responsibility is especially emphasized in the regime of engaging in a plan.

In a general meeting in early June, two months prior to the festival, Alex, who had taken the lead in the overall organizing of Kallio Block Party in spring 2018, asked the meeting attendees to raise their hands if they were going to be in town in July – the most popular month to go on holiday, often away from the city, and also the month when the organizing of the block party was most intense as it was only a month or less away from the festival. About half of the people present raised their hands, some of them hesitatingly, to which Alex commented: “Some of the hands are half-way up”. He said:

*Take a good look at this bunch, the party is done in July when there will be half the amount of people [from the meeting] around. Everyone has to take care of their slot. That’s when you separate the wheat from the chaff.*

During the meeting, he had emphasized several times that this is a chance to do a big event and the most important thing is to take responsibility and carry it. In a hierarchical association, responsibilities are visible as each position is appointed and the tasks and responsibilities of each position are listed and known to all. In a seemingly non-hierarchical organization, responsibility does not disappear, it is just hazier and less visible – although it is at times made visible in occasions such as the one above where those who had their hands up proved themselves the responsible and committed ones.

In the next general meeting ten days later, Alex repeated that the people who want to take part in organizing the festival, must “catch the ball” and that responsibilities were now being carried by too few shoulders: “The party isn’t done just by going to meetings.” Belonging to the movement was not enough, not even going to meetings: one had to be ready to take on practical tasks. Tuuli told me how she was annoyed when there were new people coming to organize the festival who didn’t know the organizing principles of the event: that there was (in principle) no money involved, that nothing came for free:

*I was annoyed by those who asked, “what’s the budget for our stage”. [--] And I was just like, well come to the group and make that money [--] and if you’re not up to doing the work, then you don’t need to come at all.*

The regime of engaging in a plan requires and nurtures responsible individuals. In this sense, Kallio movement followed the logic of this regime. However, the next section shows that a sense of collective responsibility was not absent even in the flagship of free and individualized civic action.

## “Talkoot” as the form of collective responsibility

While there was a strong ethos on individual responsibility in Kallio movement, the idea of collective responsibility was not completely absent, either. In this section, I will explain that one of the means of summoning members to collective action in Kallio movement was by appealing to a traditional collective form of action, *talkoot*. *Talkoot* is historically rooted in Finnish (and Nordic) peasant society:

*“Talkoot” is a traditional rural community action, a form of volunteer work based on norms of solidarity and communality. Common action usually focuses on concrete, short-period work performed for one family or for the community as whole. In agriculture, it was the norm that at least one member of every family would participate in talkoot. Typical works were, for instance, haymaking and roofing. As a return gift, food and drink were served to participants. (Tedre and Pehkonen 2014.)*

*Talkoot* is a “form of socializing and reproducing the social cohesion of community” as well as “rational, goal-oriented action” (ibid). *Talkoot* thus suits Kallio movement well as both emphasize a sense of community and practical tasks done in short-term projects where no money should be involved. In addition, *talkoot* is practical work for the community by the community, not “associational activity for associational activity’s sake”. *Talkoot* is by no means a practice from a bygone era or only in rural villages, but is a regular practice in, for instance, urban housing cooperatives, taking place usually once or twice a year. *Talkoot* connotes to being a good citizen. In the micro scale of a housing cooperative, one can prove that one is a respectable citizen and neighbour by actively taking part in *talkoot* (Haapajärvi et al 2020, 22), and in the macro scale of the nation, the concept of *talkoot* is evoked at times when citizens are expected to work selflessly for the good of the nation, such as during a war (see Kirves & Näre 2008). By calling for participation in one, it is possible to arouse cultural meanings related to collective work done out of self-disinterested reasons, especially since *talkoot* is such a widely recognized form of action in Finland. When one is summoned to *talkoot*, one is summoned to being a good citizen who cherishes the sense of community and carries one’s responsibility towards that community.

In the founding meeting of Block Party association, Elina wanted to make sure that even though they were now founding an association, it would not change the way Kallio Block Party has been organized, based on *talkoo* principle:

*The ethos is that we do things based on talkoot. The association has been founded only to ease responsibilities, but still, the responsibility isn’t taken away from us, it’s still solidarity, to stick one’s neck out, that has been the best thing in the block party.*



*Talkoot* thus meant collective responsibility and solidarity, “sticking one’s neck out” and again, this was contrasted to the associational form. What Elina was saying was that despite the fact that there was now the Block Party association, collective responsibility should still remain in spirit. The talk about *talkoot* was a way of emphasizing that everything, even laborious tasks, was done without any exchange of money or any other self-interest: “everything is done pro bono and as *talkoot* and cooperation and *säättö* [--] you know, basic *talkoo* civic action and activism”, as Elina told me.

In the making of Kallio Block Party, it was not uncommon that someone in a certain task group would call for more people to take responsibility, to “stick one’s neck out”. Either there were too few people in the task group to begin with or there were people who would perhaps attend the meetings but not take up tasks. In one of the general meetings, Silja, an active organizer who was a part of the communications team, called for the spirit of *talkoot* [*“talkoohenki”*], when she needed someone from the programme team to help with the press release. “*Talkoohenki* and DIY” was even voted as one of the key values of Kallio movement in a Facebook poll in 2019, when there was a need to clarify, especially to new-comers, what Kallio movement and thus also Kallio Block Party were all about. What is noteworthy is that *talkoot* was hardly ever mentioned in Right to Live. Obviously, *talkoot* is a Finnish concept with no direct translation to English, and Kallio movement was comprised almost entirely of people who spoke Finnish whereas Right to Live did not. However, there is more to this than the language barrier. *Talkoot* invites people to sacrifice their time and energy for a common cause. In Right to Live, this kind of sacrifice was self-evident, therefore there was no need to summon people to do their part by appealing to the principle of *talkoot*.

The importance of the notion of *talkoot* in Kallio movement is telling in that the ideal of a dutiful citizen is far from dead, even in loose and unofficial (and unregistered) civic groups. In Kallio movement, a sense of dutifulness could be evoked with the discourse of *talkoot* when there was the need to make people committed to the dreams and ideas they had put forward. The evoking of *talkoot* is also proof of the strength of established cultural forms. Interestingly, while Kallio movement fiercely rejected the cultural form of registered associations, it had no problem with resorting to the notion of *talkoot*. Perhaps this was because *talkoot* does not have such an institutionalized form as registered associations, and it is not as directly connected to the state or to “big-P politics” (Kennedy et al 2018). *Talkoot* is by its nature a less structured and short-term effort that does not involve the kind of bureaucratic procedures that an association entails.

However, it is telling that, within Kallio movement, there was a need to evoke the notion of *talkoot* in order to create a sense of collectivity among creative individuals. The picture was different in Right to Live where its members had to be reminded to take time off from the protest.

## 6.2 Commitment culture in Right to Live: demo family

It is difficult to imagine the same kind of discourse in Right to Live that was acceptable in Kallio movement regarding the individual freedom to decide that the civic group didn't have to continue if they didn't feel like it. Rather, many supporters, as well as protesters, were committed to the point of burnout and there was no need for a summoning to *talkoot*. However, the commitment of Right to Live supporters was not that of associational belonging, either. It was the kind of intense and affective commitment that can only last for a short period of time, and that is reflected in calling the protest "demo family". In other words, despite the fact that activists were expected to be more committed to Right to Live than they were in Kallio movement, its commitment culture was still that of personalized politics where, in the long run, activists commit to a cause, not an organization.

The core supporters were at the protest every day for long periods of time, often even during the night, and were on call in the many Facebook groups, chats and Signal groups the protest used in case there was something urgent that needed to be reacted to or solved: "Probably for like a month or so, yeah it was, it was a fulltime job, seven days a week", Ronja said. The supporters used their own money to cover some expenses when needed and used every bit of their imagination, resources and connections to enable the protest to continue.

Calling the protest "demo family" did not only reflect the affective ties in the protest but also the level of investment of the people involved. The maintenance of the protest required and fostered committed individuals:

*February, March, they went with this very intense doing, [there was] this kind of state of intent on all the time and a crazy, strong commitment. (Mira.)*

One supporter, Pia said that at one point, she needed to distance herself from the demo because of exhaustion. She "couldn't even visit there [at the protest], it felt so distressing even to go to the demo site".

The commitment culture in Right to Live became even more evident, as can be seen in the way Eelis told us<sup>50</sup> in his interview that he only considered himself to be engaging in “light protesting”. His commitment style was clearly different from the dominant one and he was clearly aware of this difference, comparing himself to the “real activists”. Eelis’s account of his role and time spent at the protest sounds like a casual recreational activity:

*During that spring I visited a couple of times a week to show my face and catch up...[--] The centre of Helsinki is so convenient, so I went there for half an hour, an hour at a time, so it didn't take up that much time.*

There is a stark contrast to for instance Lotta’s account of the role and time she spent at the protest. She felt that she wasn’t doing enough for the demonstration or the asylum situation, not as much as those who are “really active” and “know what to do”: “I just go there to hang around”. This was despite telling me that for the first two months she had been at the protest “all the time”, and during the first weeks nearly every day, talking to people and helping out “with small things” whenever needed, for instance translating official papers like bills. At the time of the interview in May, with the protest still on-going, she had been going to the demo less, “only visiting”. I asked her how often she visited now, perhaps once a week? “No, like three or four times a week.” She was there an hour or two at a time. As she was a student, and during the week she would go to the protest during the daytime and at weekends she’d go after she got off from work at eleven in the evening and go home with the one o’clock bus. Emotional work, stress, a feeling of not doing enough and burn-out are often a part of migrant solidarity activism (Hansen 2019, 292).

Several things affected this commitment culture, but a crucial factor was the sense of urgency and momentum. According to Joachim Kleres (2018, 220) there was a sense of emergency during the “refugee crisis”, which called for immediate and direct help. The “refugee crisis” was over by 2017, but now the effects of tightened asylum policies were becoming a reality as asylum seekers began receiving second negative decisions to their asylum applications and deportations were beginning to take place among those who had arrived to Finland during the long summer of migration. There was a sense of momentum at hand:

*I concentrated on the demo, because it felt that it was, the moment was there, and that the [work she was currently doing] can wait but this cannot, and if I tell people that “well, I’m doing [the work she was currently doing] and let’s see after that” then at that point those guys would be*

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<sup>50</sup> The interview was conducted together with Lena Näre.

*back in Iraq and Afghanistan, guys who don't have or haven't received a decent asylum procedure and who would after all deserve asylum. (Ronja)*

When asking how much time Suvi, a freelance artist, spent at the protest, she replied:

*Quite a lot, because at that time I only had an evening course once a week, so pretty much all of my time all the way to the end of spring and then I had to kind of like... I'm, trying to think what time I realized that I have to do some more other things that I get, so that I won't drop out of my own life.*

Suvi echoed Ronja's feeling of momentum that could be seen in people's commitment and how the protest raised interest in the media and among politicians:

*I saw in there the kind of significance and potential that I thought it was really absolutely the most important thing to do at that moment, so when I had some savings left from work from the previous work, so you just kind of put the time in that. I mean there is no similar, I mean there are some demonstrations now being planned, but I saw potential there in people's commitment [-]. And this became evident after the [first] few days when we were had been camping at Kiasma, so when it began we assumed that it's for one weekend, and that's that, so in a way when it started rolling it proved that it's possible to do, and that people were terribly interested about it and it reached the media already during the first hours, I think politicians arrived already that weekend to visit there in the tent.*

Despite the fact that no one knew how long the protest would continue, it was likely that it still had an endpoint and would not continue forever. Knowing this also had the effect of making people commit to the protest as long as it lasted. The core supporters were mainly people who had the possibility to use their time at the protest during this momentum: for instance, academics, artists, students and journalists.

Another reason for the binding commitment culture was the strong affective atmosphere and emotional drive of the protest as described in the previous chapter. Similar to Gerbaudo's (2012, 95) analysis on occupied squares, the Right to Live protest became a "venue of magnetic gathering, with a great power of emotional attraction". During one evening at the protest, a few weeks after it began, three Finns (all women, aged about twenty to forty) that I talked to in separate situations said that visiting and spending time at the protest was so "addictive" that they wanted to return day after day. It was easy for me to relate to them since I had experienced the same affective pull. The following excerpt is from an interview with Taina:

*Taina: It's kind of like, you just got stuck there, you couldn't just go for a visit, it didn't really work like that.*

*Majja: What was there that you somehow got stuck?*

*Taina: There was this certain community and like there was always a new person who you stayed to talk to and when I was leaving and then there was someone again coming there again, "hi oh yeah I haven't seen you in a long time" and then you're stuck there again.*

It seemed that for some of the core supporters it was difficult to keep away from the demo, even if they were seemingly tired or not well. On Women's Day celebrations at the protest in May, one of the core supporters, Aino, had informed everyone beforehand in the Facebook group that she was ill and unable to attend, so I was surprised to see her there that day. I asked her, wasn't she supposed to be ill. She said that she had just visited a nearby cafe and just came for a visit. "But I'm not really here", she added. As we were talking, one of the protesters came over to say hi to her. She said the same thing to him as she had told me, that she's "not really here". The protester told her about a family seeking asylum and asked Aino if she could come over and talk to them. She seemed stressed out but agreed to his request without any visible hesitation.

Jaana described to me in an interview how difficult it was to keep away, despite extremely harsh circumstances, because "your heart was in that thing":

*Well I had at that point, I was really tired and there was this thing that I got targeted, that I received a lot of nasty mail [--]I just got tired of it and went to the countryside. [--] [B]ut it was terribly difficult when your heart was in [the protest] and so I was far away and then [I] kept contact through internet all the time that 'what can I do from a distance, can I do some communications stuff, what.*

She said that she had to go to the countryside to get some distance to the protest. Likewise, Ronja told me that she went abroad a few times during the protest just to distance herself from it and charge her batteries. As noted in the previous chapter, how to avoid burn-out and maintain positive energy were in fact regular topics in Facebook posts.

Referring to the protest as "demo family", or "Right to Live family", can be interpreted from several viewpoints. Those who were intensely involved in the protest undoubtedly experienced a spontaneous and a sincere experience, but it can also be seen as a way to weld a group of people together and make them commit to the protest, as they might have very different backgrounds, perhaps different political stances and some might adhere to a more humanitarian view compared to others who were more critical of immigration issues. This will be analyzed further in chapter eight.

Even though supporters were expected to be committed in Right to Live, as many of them were, to many this commitment lasted until the end of the protest. The "Right to Live family" dissolved rather quickly after the physical protest ended and

some of the supporters' commitment to the cause ended with the protest. However, this was not true of everyone. I asked Taina whether she was still involved in helping individual asylum cases and she replied: "Well yeah, there's no choice, I'll probably never get rid of it". She said she spent approximately ten hours a week going through asylum cases. For her, the commitment didn't end with the physical protest, and she perceived her responsibility as a coercive rather than a voluntary one, like "there's no choice".

## 6.3 Conclusions

Civic groups that are not formally organized and have a short lifespan must use more time and effort to weld collectivity (Kontinen & Peltokoski 2010, 9; 98; Sivesind & Selle 2010, 97). A group that is dominated by personalized politics, or the world of inspiration, is not on solid ground to begin with (Lichterhan 1996, 35; Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 159). The comparison between Right to Live and Kallio movement would suggest that an urgent political situation, such as the one in Right to Live, creates more collective organizing, limiting the leeway given to individuals. Therefore, there is some truth in the concerns over crumbling collectivity when civic action is less directed to institutional politics (Wollebæk et al 2010). However, Kallio movement did not lack a sense of commitment either. While its members did not necessarily expect a long-term commitment to the movement from each other, they did expect that one commits, in the short-term, to the action and common goal. One was expected to respond to calls to the common effort, to *talkoot* on the one hand and to take individual responsibility of the tasks assigned to them on the other. Chapter five already showed that "individuality" does not only mean individual, selfish interests, but can also mean creative individuality, and this chapter adds that it can also mean assigning and taking individual responsibility. These remarks are important to note in discussions concerning increasing individualism within civic action.

This chapter has demonstrated how collective action in civic groups that practice personalized politics is possible in practice. The next chapter asks what happens to ideas of (collective) representation that come from these individualized premises.

## 7 INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

The chapters thus far have introduced the group cultures in Kallio movement and the supporters of Right to Live, and presented the groups as ones that practice personalized politics. Kallio movement in particular was infused with “individualism”, more specifically a tenuous composition of two forms of individualism, regime of engaging in a plan and the world of inspiration. While there were characteristics of personalized politics among the group of supporters of Right to Live, such as a commitment to a short-term project and a need for “self-starters”, the common political goal and the urgent asylum situation welded the core supporters into a tight-knit collective during the protest spring. While the previous chapters have looked at the “insides” of the two groups, the subsequent chapters deal with the movements’ outward looking sides: how the two groups face the public. I will begin by analyzing Kallio movement’s and Right to Live’s ideas of representation. What does representation look like in a group that emphasizes individualism compared to a group that emphasizes collectivity and a shared political goal?

Political representation – the idea that one or more persons represent and embody a larger group of people and their interests or an idea – despite having multiple and shifting meanings, is one of the corner stones of modern representative democracies (Pitkin 1967, 2-4). The idea of representative bodies has been especially meaningful in the Finnish political culture where the task of representation has, for historical reasons, been assigned to associations, even more so than political parties: associations were the first to carry representation as a mandate, before universal suffrage and the formation of political parties (Alapuro 2005; Lind 2020). According to Alapuro (2005), the dominant idea of representation in Finland is a descriptive one, as distinct from a constructive one. In descriptive representation, the society and its units are already constructed and known, and the task of representation is to translate this structure (to the state) in a transparent way. In constructive representation, there is no assumption about the society and its units beforehand as these are constructed within the representation process. The latter is how representation is perceived in, for instance, France, where demonstrations and direct

action – instead of for instance associations – carry a representative function (Alapuro 2005), making it more difficult to give an “observable shape” to the performance of “the people” (Rosanvallon 1998, 309-10). In Finland, while demonstrations were also established as a repertoire of action in modern politics, they never gained the legitimacy they have done in France since they were “secondary” in contrast to associations and a clear distinction was made between “orderly” associations and “disorderly” demonstrations (Alapuro 2005, 385). When demonstrations have been held in Finland, they have historically tended to be serious, orderly and non-violent.

The fact that representation has been understood as direct in Finland can be seen in the (historically) close and peaceful relationship between associations and the state, since representation is seen only as a matter of a neat description of interests. This conception of representation has enabled a situation where it is possible that house squatters are given premises by the City of Helsinki (Jokela 2017). The idea of direct representation, combined with the strong role of associations in representing “the people”, leads to a certain kind of idea of politics, where being a member of an association means a direct connection to the public authorities. This conception of politics was echoed in how my informants, especially in Kallio movement, sometimes talked about politics, especially when they wanted to denounce it.

It is important to note that these two ideal types of representation describe how political representation is understood in a certain culture, in other words, what it should be – not necessarily what it actually *is* like<sup>51</sup>. In addition, there is always overlap between these two models, as well as historical changes (Luhtakallio 2012). Direct representation that is based on interests of certain groups has gradually lost some of its significance, and constructive representation has gained more ground in Finland too (Lind 2020). In the more performative forms of protest, such as occupying buildings since the 1980’s and animal liberation acts of the 1990’s, representation and conflict is mediated via television and is therefore more symbolic in nature and more akin to a constructive rather than descriptive point of view regarding representation (Alapuro 1997, 48-51).

It is impossible to separate Kallio movement’s and Right to Live’s ideas of representation from the symbolic performativity they were engaging in: it was the

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<sup>51</sup> Currently, social scientists seem to perceive all representation as constructive (Saward 2009; Talpin 2016; Rättälä & Rinne 2016). In other words, if actors themselves would understand representation to mean direct representation, a social scientist might analyze the representative process differently. However, understanding all representation as constructive does not do away with the analytic concepts of constructive and descriptive representations when analyzing the actors’ own conceptions of representation.



performance that manifested the groups' *raison d'être*. However, before delving into the two groups' performances, we need to take a step back and take a look at the kind of role representation played in these performances. Did the members of Kallio movement and Right to Live think they were representing the interests of a certain group, as in direct representation? The second question follows from the first: if they did indeed think they represented something, what was it?

Since collective representation holds such a central place in institutionalized politics, examining the two groups' ideas of representation also makes it possible to investigate the group members' ideas of "politics" on the one hand and their possibilities for politicization, in the sense of opening new possibilities and challenging givens, on the other. I will begin this chapter by presenting the ideas of individual representation, or of non-representation, members of both civic groups brought forth. As mentioned above, especially Kallio movement challenged the idea of the direct representation of collective interests and, with this, they also challenged the institutionalized sphere of politics as a site for collective good. This kind of ideological resistance to institutionalized politics did not exist within Right to Live – on the contrary, Right to Live was in this sense a traditional protest that was directed towards the powerholders and one where the protesters embodied the claim for asylum seekers' rights. In other words, the protesters directly represented the ones whose rights were politicized with the protest. However, both groups' emphasis on practical matters over political ones was a trade-off where possibilities for politicization or long-term political goals were sacrificed (see Mische 2015, 61).

In the second part of this chapter, I will describe the importance of collective (direct) representation in Right to Live, especially in contrast to protests for the rights of "deserving migrants". I also argue that Right to Live can be seen as both direct representation (representation of asylum seekers' collective interests directed at institutionalized politics) as well as a constructive one, since *how* the asylum seekers were represented mattered a great deal, especially to the supporters of the protest.

## 7.1 Individual representation in Kallio movement and Right to Live

*Like now, do I speak on behalf of Kallio movement all the time or, I mean one should remember that one speaks on one's own behalf. [--] That's the way it is, since everyone has their own opinion, and everyone talks about different things. (Julia, Kallio movement.)*

As the previous chapters have pointed out, "individualism", meaning a combination of the world of inspiration and the regime of engaging in a plan, was emphasized in Kallio movement. It was thus no surprise that members of Kallio movement, such

as Julia above, expressed what I call “individual representation”<sup>52</sup>. The quote from Julia above shows the individuality of this representation at its ultimate form: everyone has their own opinions, thus making collective representation impossible. Julia said that even now, in the interview, she should be careful to not speak on behalf of Kallio movement; she could only speak on behalf of herself. However, this individual representation didn’t only have to do with the movement’s emphasis on individualism, but also with its aversion to associations and their representative function.

It is no surprise that Kallio movement shunned this idea of direct representation since it insisted, at every turn, on not being a traditional Finnish association, thus also refusing the idea of representing collective interests. Recently, Kallio movement had been asked to make a statement about a permanent structure that was meant to be built on one of the rocks in Kallio and I asked Julia what she thought about the fact that the City of Helsinki approached Kallio movement regarding matters concerning the development of Kallio. (Neither of us quite remembered or had really understood what the structure was, my guess was that it had to do with electricity.) Julia’s reply is in stark contradiction to this idea of associations’ representative function:

*I mean if we take a stand on some kind of a structure [pömpeli] on a rock, then it’s pretty much like “Kallio movement says”, like “us in Kallio movement”, can one say this?*

I was told that Kallio movement had at times sent their opinion to the City administration on matters concerning Kallio, but it was obvious that the movement members were much more hesitant to take a representative position, especially compared to Kallio association, the traditional registered neighbourhood association established in 1940. For neighbourhood associations, taking a representative stand on the development of the area is the bread and butter of their action. In Kallio movement in general, there was an aversion towards Kallio association since it was seen to be a stronghold of Nimbyism, something the movement was originally founded against.

Hesitating to take a representative stand, as in the above quote, was not the only meaning of individual representation within Kallio movement and the idea of individual, or at least unclear, representation was also present in the talk from Finnish supporters of Right to Live. I have distinguished three meanings of individual representation as it appeared in the two civic groups. First, individual representation

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<sup>52</sup> Representation, by its definition, means making something (again) present that is not literally and physically there (Pitkin 1967, 8-9). Individual representation is thus non-representation.

had civic meanings: members of the two groups came together as citizens without any statuses such as professions. Second, leaving party politics and political symbols out was a way of remaining neutral (see Luhtakallio 2012), something that gained different meanings in the two civic groups. Third and finally, individual representation was a way to avoid inner conflicts.

There was, however, a difference between the two groups in how ideological their emphasis on individual representation was. In Right to Live, this individual representation was more of a practical choice and a way to keep a heterogeneous group of people together, whereas in Kallio movement, individual representation was more ideologically charged. In the latter, a kind of politics can emerge out that the movement wanted to avoid: politics based on the collective representation of interests. Next, I will introduce the three different meanings of individual representation in more in depth.

## Civic meanings of individual representation

The civic meanings of individual representation – in the sense of civic order of worth, where members of a civic groups came together as equal citizens – were similar in both movements, even though in Kallio movement this kind of individualism was a more conscious and ideological decision. In Kallio movement, it was strictly off-limits to take part in arranging Kallio Block Party as anything but as an individual – not as representative of an association, political party or a company. This was in line with the decision made in the founding of the movement, which was to be ideologically non-aligned, and this alignment was kept alive during my fieldwork, as can be seen from my fieldnotes below.

At the beginning of a Kallio Block Party general meeting in spring 2018, a newcomer announced that she was there on behalf of her company. Alex, who was in charge of the meeting, said "ok", in a reserved tone. Later in the meeting, the newcomer repeated what she had said. This time, another old-timer, Ada, asks what kind of company we were talking about. The woman replied that it's a food company that included a vegan food blog, catering and such. Ada said in a firm tone that if she was involved as a company, she would have to pay rent for the food stall (like the other food companies coming to sell food in the block party): "One can't come here just to benefit". The woman replied that that is what she thought. Ada then suggested that she could take care of the catering for volunteers. The woman seemed happy about the suggestion, said it's a good idea and agreed.

The newcomer was welcomed to the organizing of the block party, not as representative of her company but as a fellow citizen. Being a representative of a

company was seen as being motivated by self-interest (“benefiting”). Again, as chapter five pointed out, pursuing individual interests only was denounced. Likewise, all statuses, such as one’s profession, were left outside the meetings, as Lilli told me:

*I believe that once the doing in the [organizing of the Kallio Block] party intensifies, then people get closer to each other really easily without any barriers, so I don’t have to know anything else except that you’re Maija (--), basically we could be talking here without me having a status, other than [that I’m here] with you doing this thing, and it’s really great and maybe a part of the idea of Kallio movement.*

This kind of individuality is the bedrock of civic worth where everyone is treated equally as citizens without any other statuses, and it was part of the ethos in Kallio movement. Obviously, as in every group, there were invisible hierarchies, but what is important to note here is that this idea of equality was a highly cherished part of the movement, and that this equality was thought to be best achieved by non-representation. In Right to Live, like in Kallio movement, people would come as individuals with certain talents and resources, but not as representatives of their profession. Merja, a journalist, told us in an interview how she “came there as an active person [aktiivi], not as a professional”. She said that, even though she ended up taking a lot of responsibility for the communications in the protest. This emphasis on not taking part in civic action based on one’s profession or status seems to imply, besides equality, the respondents’ sincere motivation – being motivated by the cause, not by, for instance, one’s own CV. In other words, the civic meaning of individual representation meant selflessness and a pursuit of a collective good. While this meaning was important for both groups, again in Kallio movement it was clearly related to not being an association with elected positions. Even though it was often the same people who would act as chairperson or secretary in the meetings, in principle the positions were open to anyone.

## Virtuousness of neutrality

The kind of emphasis on civic worth presented above is not surprising – it is what one might expect to find in a civic group (Lichterhan 2005, 8). However, what is surprising, especially in Kallio movement, was the alignment to leave all political symbols out of Kallio Block Party. This alignment is unusual when perceived from this civic point of view where associations are generally thought to embody – to represent – political ideologies and interests. This alignment to not display any political symbols was not only a remnant from the past but something that was actively kept alive and decided upon during my fieldwork. In Kallio Block Party, if

an association wanted to be a part of the event, they had to provide programme and be part of the organizing team.

In spring 2019, an international human rights organization contacted Kallio movement asking if they could set up their tent at the up-coming Kallio Block Party to collect names for a petition to increase the size of refugee quota. The matter was discussed among the organizers on Facebook. Many of the discussants said they personally supported the NGO, especially in the current asylum situation, and even donated to the organization. However, allowing the NGO to set up their tent would go against Kallio movement's principle to be politically non-aligned: "Same difficulty each year", as one of the discussants said. Another one said:

*It would be great if even for one day a year there would be one area free of politics and agendas in this country.*

This last comment is revealing. It resembles the idea of disavowing "dirty politics" (see e.g. Baiocchi et al 2013, 1–3; 49), where politics is not about the common good but about particular "agendas" and interests, that in the Finnish context have traditionally been represented by associations. According to this logic, serving the (universal) common good is better accomplished by staying neutral in relation to political organizations and is thus more reminiscent of French political culture, which flinches at the idea of the particularism associations are seen to promote (Alapuro 2005; Luhtakallio 2012). What Kallio movement denounced was then "big-P politics" (Kennedy et al 2018) as it has largely been understood at least, but not only, in the Finnish context: as based on *collective interests* and not for the collective good, in other words, as liberal grammar and not civic worth. Disavowing "politics" was therefore a means for Kallio movement of "doing political things" (Baiocchi et al 2014, 49).

This virtuousness of neutrality is similar to Luhtakallio's (2012) findings about argumentation in the Finnish public sphere, where common good is depoliticized and presented as technical facts and calculations and political conflicts are portrayed as "neutral technicalities" instead of ideological questions (Luhtakallio 2012, 171). In this kind of climate, calling someone an ideologist is a way to denounce them. This kind of emphasis on neutrality can also be seen in Right to Live. However, in the case of Right to Live, this neutrality was not ideological as such, as it was in Kallio movement, but rather due to contextual reasons. One of the Finnish supporters, Eelis, explained to myself and Lena Näre, with whom I conducted the interview, that it was important to go to the protest to be seen. When Lena asked him to clarify why it was important to be seen there, he replied:

*Eelis: Well, that people see that we're here as ordinary people. And so it was, too, that Finns that went there were just like anyone.*

*Lena: So, and anyone as opposed to like...*

*Eelis: I don't know, that you only have some activist background, I didn't think of it then, but I thought like, it's good that it becomes visible that there are Finnish people involved, that was maybe it.*

*Lena: So I immediately of course though that some anarchists or...*

*Eelis: Right, right. Yeah, yes.*

Wanting to be seen as “an ordinary person” at the Right to Live protest could be interpreted as representing “the people”. However, what is noteworthy, is that this ordinary person was in distinction to, for instance, anarchists. While it is true that some of the Finnish supporters shied away from being identified as “activists”, another reason for wanting to be seen as an “ordinary” person as opposed to an activist was the more or less strategic use of liberal grammar that portrays individuals as individuals, without connections to larger political coalitions as is the case in civic justification. This emphasis on neutrality and individualism can be seen as a way of portraying one as acting reasonably according to “common sense” and not any hot-headed ideology. This idea of neutrality was especially important among the heated discussion around immigration during Right to Live. According to the public discourse, there were two extremes: the racists and the anti-racists who were at times deemed as either feminine, naïve and gullible “flower-hat aunties” or (in the Finnish context) radical (male) anti-fascists. In this situation it was perhaps considered beneficial to position oneself in what was considered the neutral ground and identify as what had been established in the discourse as a “reasonable” or “common-sensical” person [*‘tolkun ihminen’*]. As I will describe more in depth in the next chapter, Right to Live was not performed to an activist audience but to “ordinary people”. This becomes apparent also in the following vignette.

In March, there was a big, all-day support concert next to the protest site, organized by an extended (Leftist, anti-fascist) activist network beyond the already established group of regular volunteers<sup>53</sup>. The same day, there was supposed to be a protest called “Cleaving” organized by several anti-immigration organizations who had announced they were going to dismantle the Right to Live protest and there was a real threat of violence. The support concert was organized to gather a lot of people

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<sup>53</sup> The concert was a nodal point of activist networks: some of the people involved were or had been also active in Kallio movement.

to practically support and protect Right to Live. However, the large amount of people, some of them presumably drunk and many probably unfamiliar with the protest and its rules, also posed a threat to the peaceful public image of Right to Live since things could get out of hand. For this reason, the concert was not arranged within the borders of the protest site but right next to it. There was a worry about drunken people and hothead activists who would pick fights with the racists. Before the concert, one of the core supporters instructed on Facebook that they didn't want any "angry young men" present. Helsingin Sanomat (Jokinen 8.3.2017) wrote a short news article about the "Cleansing" and the support concert. In the article, it reads:

*The organizers describe the Right to Live support concert as a politically non-aligned event organized by private persons, that is not meant to create polarization but appeal for humanity instead.*

Here, polarization was a self-evidently a bad thing, which could be avoided by the fact that the event was organized by politically non-aligned private persons. Instead, "appeal for humanity" is seen as a neutral, self-evidently good thing. The logic seems to be that political commitments pose a threat of polarization since they are less universal than "an appeal for humanity", represented by private persons. It also reads that: "The event is also organized by Icepark [ice-skating ring], which is located in between the two protest camps". A commercial actor (instead of a political one) that is literally in-between the two opposing poles is seen as important enough to be mentioned by the organizers and the newspaper.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, again, while both civic groups displayed political and ideological neutrality, this neutrality was more ideological (sic) in Kallio movement than in Right to Live, that as a non-citizens' political protest had to weigh its public image much more carefully than Kallio movement. In Kallio movement, ideologies and "politics" were understood as promoting the interests of some, as in liberal grammar, rather than common good as in civic order of worth.

## Individual representation as a means to avoid inner conflicts

It is challenging to discuss issues and make decisions in a non-structured civic group, where group practices are either in the phase of forming as in Right to Live or where established forms and rules are opposed to begin with as in Kallio movement. For

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<sup>54</sup> I do not think that this statement necessarily represents the organizers' "real" ideas of representation but is more likely a strategic statement. The statement is thus illustrative of what is thought of as efficient argumentation in the Finnish publicity, at least in touchy topics such as asylum issues, especially at times of heated discussion on the one hand and the urgency of deportations on the other.

both movements, individual representation was also a way to avoid inner conflicts, something that is especially important in loose and temporal networks. In general, both groups were pierced by a “political pragmatism” that seems to mark Finnish civic groups, without discussion concerning the group’s practices and with no open conflicts (Luhtakallio 2012, 61). While both Kallio movement and Right to Live held meetings, the agendas in these meetings were usually about practical matters, not political or ideological discussions. In addition, not every detail could be discussed in the meetings and some decisions had to be made on Facebook, where discussions are inevitably of a different nature than in face-to-face situations, for instance simplifying complex issues and requiring fast responses (Barassi 2015, 99). This practical orientation that both groups displayed was also due to the short time span of the projects in question (Kallio Block Party and the physical Right to Live protest) which created a sense of urgency and a feel that any deeper discussions on politics would be a waste of precious time. In Kallio movement, this “practical ethos” was also ideological (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021). However, leaving politics out was also a way to avoid internal conflicts within both groups. Julia’s quote in the beginning of this chapter, about the difficulty of representing Kallio movement, continued:

*I mean if we take a stand on some kind of a structure [pömpeli] on a rock, then it’s pretty much like “Kallio movement says”, like “us in Kallio movement”, can one say this? I mean then one should get an approval in Facebook for something like that.*

Kallio movement didn’t have a regular meeting schedule and there were perhaps a few meetings during a year. Most meetings were under the title of Kallio Block Party, which meant that the meetings were mainly about practical arrangements concerning the festival. Sometimes there was a reminder, especially to newcomers, that the block party meetings were also, simultaneously, Kallio movement meetings. Nevertheless, there was not much discussion about general alignments of Kallio movement during my fieldwork or at least these kinds of discussions were usually not on the meeting agenda. There was, however, at least one exception. Since there were no associational rules or manuals for organizing the Kallio Block Party, and since there had been a change in generation and plenty of plug-in volunteers and newcomers didn’t know the values (or that there were any values) behind the event and there had been “slipping”, especially from the principle of non-commerciality, there was a need to explicate the values in spring 2019. Block Party association, consisting mainly of experienced Kallio movement members and block party organizers, made a preliminary list of values, or the “quiet ethos” of Kallio movement as the original member posting the poll phrased it, and posted them on Kallio movement’s private



Facebook page. Members of the movement could then vote the five most important ones out of the suggested ones<sup>55</sup>.

The fact that the values of the movement were chosen through a Facebook vote instead of discussion in a face-to-face meeting is illustrative of, first, a social media era where the affordances of platforms such as Facebook guide civic groups' actions. Second, the vote is illustrative of Kallio movement's ethos that respected each individuals' opinions – "one speaks on one's own behalf", as Julia said – and avoided conflicts that may have resulted from an open discussion. Voting is in fact the prototypical way to solve issues within liberal grammar (Eranti 2018, 15) since while there may, or may not, be an open discussion before a referendum, the act of voting itself is an individualistic act (Adut 2018, 72) and is thus fitting with the idea of individual representation. Therefore, in this case, the sum of individual wants, which is the bases for cooperation in the liberal grammar, was favoured instead of a collective "will of everyone", the form of commonality in the civic order of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 110), and that can be seen to ideal-typically be formed in a Habermasian public sphere. This lack of open discussion over the values was reflected in one of my informants' comment about how would be nice if the values that won the vote would be elaborated on in such a way that it would be clearer what they actually meant. (This decision-making based on liberal grammar is the biggest difference to the civic groups that Lichterman (1996) studied as examples of personalized politics, since these groups valued talk per se and relied on consensual decision-making.)

Interestingly, even the values were thought of mainly as a practicality in Kallio movement, as tools to limit the boundaries of individual actions when arranging the block party. (This does not mean, however, that these values would not have been "real" and shared among especially the core members.) Heta said she was sorry that she hadn't noticed the vote on Facebook and couldn't contribute as she would have voted differently than what the ultimate list was, but was not that sorry after all: "the most important thing is that now we have them". In this sense, even moral-political issues such as the values of the movement were primarily what Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021, 159) call a "practical ethos" that guides action as an ethical undertone.

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<sup>55</sup> The five values that gathered most votes were "equality"; "taking over urban space and more freedom from bureaucracy"; "non-commerciality", "fair play and sense of community", and finally "talkoo spirit and "DIY"". The values that were left out for not getting enough votes were "openness and transparency", "ideological non-alignment", "ecology and responsibility", "anything is possible" attitude", "doing things, not opposing". 149 votes were casted in the vote which was a good turnout in a Facebook group with approximately 170 members.

Also in Right to Live meetings, the focus was on practical matters. Although Right to Live was a political protest, most of the meetings focused on the practicalities of maintaining the 24-hour protest, “organizing, arranging, recruiting” as Merja said, and it was even an unofficial, practical alignment to leave political questions out of the meetings. “Politics”, in the meaning of institutionalized politics, was mainly externalized to the task of political lobbying, which was done mostly by people who were not involved in the daily life of the protest:

*There was a lot people who weren't at the demo, they lobbied. They had daytime jobs and the lobbying takes time, you don't stand in the demo if you're doing that. Demo was the bunch of people who committed to that square. (Merja)*

This way, also in Right to Live, political, in the meaning of politicization, became practical since the daily maintenance of the protest was a way to maintain the political protest.

One reason for a focus on practical matters in both groups was that it was a way to avoid conflicts. The strength of loose networks is precisely in their ability to accommodate a lot of differences by avoiding conflicts (Lichterhan 2005, 68), something that is also characteristic to groups whose political agreement is thin (Blee 2012, 100). Kallio movement can easily be described as a loose network that builds on a minimum amount of common political denominators but, to some degree, so can Right to Live. While everyone involved in Right to Live shared a political goal concerning asylum politics, on a broader spectrum or style of politics they did not, as I will show in more detail the next chapter. As Mikko said, with exaggeration, when describing the group of supporters: “It was everything from Molotov cocktails to the power of prayer”. However, he continued, “because the common goal was important, [it created] quite an amazing common front”. Constructing a political alliance, such as Right to Live and its support network, requires focusing on the political question and leaving other political differences aside, especially when faced with a threat (Staggenborg 1986) such as the accelerating pace of deportations, the counter protest and racist discourses in general. Merja, who explained above that she joined the protest not as a professional (journalist) but as an “active person”, continued by explaining that none of the supporters brought up their political connections or political identities:

*In general, there were no political, no one brought up whether someone is anarchist, is someone Green, someone Social Democrat, Leftie, Commie, it was in this way very non-political, or let's say non-party political, of course everything was political. But I mean yeah, of course I know who were from which, the background organizations and so on. But they were never brought up, whether someone is from some [organization].*

In Right to Live, it was important to come together as citizens, not as representatives of certain political groups, in order to create a common front in support of the asylum seekers and against racists. In this effort, it was best to leave other political ideologies aside. As one of the supporters said in a meeting, that he is a vegetarian himself, but he doesn't preach about vegetarianism in the protest. Jaakko, an active in Free Movement Network and Right to Live, made a similar point:

*When the Railway Square thing was planned, many of us [in the Free Movement Network] were intensively involved, but we weren't there...how to put it, as [Free Movement] network or a separate group but people were involved as themselves. [--] The way [the demo] was constructed was not like that there was Free Movement Network and that there was Right to Live [--] but it was mixed up, and it wasn't necessarily clear to people themselves what groups they were representing.*

While Jaakko is making a similar point as Merja above about the supporters of Right to Live not bringing up their political commitments, it has a particularly Finnish flavour to it. He specifically made the point how the supporters were not necessarily aware “which groups they were representing” but were “involved as themselves” instead. Isn't this similar to the civic mode of individual representation where people come together in a political project as citizens? However, in the promised land of associations, it has been the assumption that when forming political coalitions and networks, people act as representatives of political or civic groups (see Luhtakallio 2012, 52). In Right to Live, this was not the case, as Jaakko points out. To leave out all other political identities can be seen as a way to build an unlikely coalition of networks and people.

Once again, we see that Kallio movement adhered to individual representation, in the sense of remaining neutral, more ideologically than Right to Live. Nevertheless, both groups opted for a focus on practicality rather than open, political discussion. This focus on practicality came with the cost of losing sight of a “long-range transformative vision” (Mische 2015, 61). The fact that there was a lack of a shared utopia was more of a problem in the still existent Kallio movement than in Right to Live, since the protest was intended to last only a limited amount of time. After a generational shift in its membership, Kallio movement was rather clearly in some kind of a crisis as, all of the sudden, there was a need to clarify its values and – reluctantly – set up an association, the Block Party association. However, as I will describe in the next chapter, in Kallio movement as well as in Right to Live, moral-political discussions couldn't be avoided altogether; they leaked into practical issues such as what kind of tents should the festival/protest display. For instance, the Facebook discussion concerning the NGO tent in Kallio Block Party was on the

surface a practical decision about whether to allow the tent into the block party area or not, but it turned into a discussion about the political nature of the block party, as an area free of “politics and agendas”. In other words, in both groups, moral-political issues became practical and practical issues moral-political.

As the above analysis has shown, for different reasons, both groups practiced individual representation. In Kallio movement or Right to Live, this turn to individual representation did not, however, mean a turn to individualism in the sense of pursuing individual interests as one might presume. On the contrary, especially in Kallio movement, there was an ideological charge in the emphasis on individual representation that underlined individualism, and at the same time equality and a pursuit of common good. By looking closely at what Kallio movement members were saying, we can see that what they denounced was a pursuit of collective interests. The members, in other words, denounced interest-based politics that they connected to associations and, in fact, individual representation carried civic meanings: coming together as equals without any status. However, there was still an idea of collective representation in Kallio movement, but it was not in the form of interests but abstract ideas and values related to the identity of Kallio, as the listing and voting of values illustrates, and as I will show in more detail in the next chapter. This kind of representation cannot be characterized as direct but constructive instead.

The fact that individual representation was expressed in both civic groups and that Kallio movement denounced the idea of direct representation does not, however, mean that collective and direct representation is a thing of a bygone era. Even for Kallio movement, the picture is not as black and white since, as mentioned above, the movement had at times taken a representative stand in matters concerning Kallio. Right to Live, on the other hand, clearly made a collective and direct representative claim of representing asylum seekers which I will turn to next. As the section below shows, despite a direct representative claim, in an embodied protest performance there are inevitably also characteristics of constructive representation involved that have to do with *how* what is represented is being represented.

## 7.2 Collective representation of asylum seekers: direct or constructive representation?

In a Right to Live general meeting in April, there was an artist present who introduced her idea to ask the protesters to draft their life stories into visual pieces of art that would then be displayed on collective transportation stations and stops.

One of the Afghan protesters replied that none of the protesters could speak as individual persons since they were representing their countries and that if she was looking for personal stories, she should go to reception centres. He continued by saying that the artist could use the demands of the protest in the artwork strips instead. There seemed to be a misunderstanding about the role of the artwork, and about the role of the protesters: did they represent protesters or asylum seekers at the meeting? The protesters, perhaps also the supporters, thought the artist had approached the protesters *as protesters* and that the artwork would be part of the protest when in fact, the artist had approached the protesters as asylum seekers and intended to use their life stories in her own artistic project, even if inarguably with solidaristic ends. The artist then explained that she can't display the demands (as a piece of art) at the metro station and that the protesters didn't have to represent the protest but could as individuals describe what it was like to be an asylum seeker in Finland. She finally got her message through, and everyone seemed to be on the same page, and the Iraqis and Afghans present said they would discuss the issue within their communities.

What this event illustrates is, first, how the protesters thought of themselves as representatives of collective interests of asylum seekers, an opposite stance to the individual representations above and an example of direct representation. Second, it shows how the protesters wanted to be perceived in the context of Right to Live: as active political agents, not just passive, individualized victims of asylum politics (see Nyers 2003). It also shows how much buzz there was around Right to Live, with many people wanting to contribute or have their piece of the protest. However, the misunderstanding above of what or who the protesters were representing also demonstrates how much the protesters' representative function was temporally and geographically tied to the protest (site) and to the performance of Right to Live. When and where did the protesters, and the supporters, represent Right to Live, and when not? In the protest meeting above, the Afghan protester immediately assumed that they were approached as representatives of collective interests, not as individuals with their individual life stories.

Right to Live was an example of direct representation in the sense that the protest represented the collective interests of asylum seekers (from Iraq and Afghanistan, see below) and the demand to take these interests into account was directed to institutionalized politics. This is how the protest was largely understood by the protesters, as the example above demonstrates. However, the protest can also be seen as constructive representation, since there was a great deal of effort in how the protesters/asylum seekers were represented in public. I will analyze this performance

in more detail in the next chapter. However, perceiving Right to Live as constructive representation explains why the concrete borders of the protest mattered a great deal and why the performance of the protest was such a widely discussed issue.

I will begin this section by describing the importance of collective representation in comparison to representing individual asylum seekers, and then move on to describing who or what the protesters were representing, and the supporters' role in this representative task. I will then show that gender was one of the factors that had to be taken into account in the representation of Right to Live, including protesters and supporters. The importance placed on gender goes to prove how much representation was considered to be embodied and visual. Lastly, I will analyze the importance of the geographical and temporal borders of the protest.

The collective representation of Right to Live was important especially in comparison to protests demanding rights for “deserving migrants”. During and after the long summer of migration, many Finnish people got to know asylum seekers personally and formed close relationships with them. Sometimes these newly formed friendships were the focus of media attention, such as in “the miracle of Kyyjärvi”, a small and remote rural municipality that got media publicity for its “unexpected love story” between asylum seekers and native Finns (Pirkkalainen & Pöyhtäri 2022). However, in the case of Kyyjärvi, the friendship between Finns and asylum seekers was also the justification for residence permits for the particular asylum seekers the Finns had gotten to know and could “vouch for” (ibid.). (What this statement to “vouch” for an asylum seeker reveals, is how asylum seekers are generally thought of as a threat.) It has been noted that in the post-2015 “welcome culture”, in which many of the solidarity activists had become politically active through volunteering or by knowing refugees for instance as neighbours (dellaPorta 2018, 14), protests do not demand universal changes in migrant policies but concentrate only on protesting or helping particular cases, especially those migrants who are perceived as well integrated (Ruedin et al 2018; Probst & Bader 2018) – in other words, deserving migrants. There have been asylum protests also in Finland that have politicized the situation of individual people or families (Bodström 2022, 41-2). Importantly, what set Right to Live apart from these protests was the fact that it represented all asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan and made universal claims about asylum politics and practices.

The Right to Live protesters had three reasons for the protest: demanding a change to asylum policies, providing knowledge about their situation in Finland and about the situation in their countries of origin to Finnish people, and personal reasons concerning their own or their family's future and well-being (Bodström et al

2022). For the protesters, the personal reasons set Right to Live apart from other protests.

Even though many or most of the protesters had received negative decisions to their asylum applications and were thus also protesting for their own individual rights, it was clear from the start that they represented others in the same situation. There were, however, a few spokespersons, chosen from and among the Iraqi and Afghan communities, who could speak English in public interviews. This is not the same thing as individual representation that protests for the rights of specific deserving individuals (Ruedin et al 2018; Probst & Bader 2018; see also chapter two) but collective representation, where one person embodies many, that is the bedrock of representative democracies and the civic world (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006). For instance, Amal, a young man from Iraq, told me that he became “the face of the demo”: he attended discussion events and was interviewed in the media as a representative of Right to Live. However, he was in the media also because of particular reasons: some members of his family had been granted asylum and some were not. However, even if he gave an account of his family’s situation, he drew attention to the universal claims of the protest: “We’ve been able to show who we are and how unjust decisions Migri has done” (Ahonen 2017).

Another protester, Rahim, also a young man from Iraq, received his third negative asylum decision during the protest spring and was taken to a detention centre. His confinement mobilized a lot of support. The protesters and supporters visited him in the detention centre, there were several threads in Refugee Hospitality Club where over a hundred people would send their love and support to him, and his face and the text “Free Rahim” were also printed on banners and used as part of the Right to Live protest. However, Rahim was used as an example of what could happen to other asylum seekers and of how Finland treated people. His case was publicized also because of the urgency of the situation. In other words, it was always clear that Right to Live was not a protest for any specific “deserving” individuals, or even for only the group of protesters, but that the protesters represented larger collective interests. But who exactly were the protesters meant to represent and what was the supporters’ role in this representative task?

According to Nyers (2003, 1071), one of the open questions that “impossible activism” by non-citizens evokes is who should represent the non-citizens: citizens or non-citizens themselves. However, I never witnessed any contestation over who should represent asylum seekers in Right to Live, the supporters or the asylum seekers themselves. The protest was initiated by the asylum seekers, and it was clear to everyone involved that they had the ownership of the protest and that Right to

Live represented the asylum seekers. As one of the Finnish volunteers supporting the protest, Mikko, told me, the supporters provided the protesters with advice since they knew Finnish culture, but in general, the effort was to always place the protesters “on the centre stage”:

*We can give some advice on what things you might want to discuss and what to emphasize because of the culture and so on. But we don't talk on their behalf. We won't go there as white people like “you go there and look sad and I'll do the talking” but it was the other way around. We always placed them on the centre stage.*

While in principle it was agreed that asylum seekers had ownership of Right to Live, as I will describe in the next chapter, the “helping culture” among some of the supporters risked becoming too paternalistic:

*[S]ome Finnish activists they took this thing very personally and a lot of people came with this idea of liberating the refugees or asylum seekers. If they don't know anything and we got to show them the way and when they heard something that [they] did not agree or when they tried to oppose something that people did not agree they were very upset and it caused a lot of conflict. (A protester, Fahim.)*

Fahim said that some Finnish activist wanted to be the centre of attention and give interviews (to the media), and that they came to meetings where the demands of the demo were discussed “with their drafts”, “and what they were proposing was not very close to what we wanted”. This question will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter. Despite some of the Finns perhaps overstepping their roles as supporters, in principle, there was no question of who the protest was meant to represent. However, what was not always clear was whether the protesters represented their countries of origin, all asylum seekers in Finland, or something else. The decision-making structure was organized country-specifically, so that Finns, Afghans and Iraqis had their own groups within which they would discuss matters before the general meetings. (In principle, it was Afghans, Iraqis and supporters, but in practice, the supporters who attended the meetings were Finnish.) Thus, internally within Right to Live, everyone involved were representing their countries, but externally, the protesters were meant to represent a common front. The protest was initiated by Iraqis and Afghans joined the protest and the common representative task of asylum seekers after a few weeks. The official protest statements made no country-specific demands, and it was never stated out loud that the protesters represented asylum seekers from the Middle East, or asylum seekers that had arrived in Finland during the long summer of migration, but this was the implicit representation the protest made through the embodiment of the protesters. During the spring, there was a discussion about whether Somali asylum seekers could also



join the protest, but for several reasons – not least the increasing fatigue – they did not, which further cemented Right to Live as a protest of asylum seekers from the Middle East.

Gender was also something that configured in the representation of Right to Live, since all the protesters were men and most of the supporters were women. Critical voices in the media asked why it was that the majority of asylum seekers during the “long summer of migration” were young men, as they should be the most capable of surviving in their countries of origin, unlike women, children and the elderly. There were also insinuations, especially in the alt-right media, about sexual relations between the male protesters and female supporters. Even in online discussions in mainstream newspapers, the protesters were speculated to be sexual criminals. According to some comments, the protesters were being “fondly taken care of” by “chav girls” [pissaliisa], referring to the protest as a brothel (Vikman 2020, 68-9)<sup>56</sup>. These comments are part of a nationalist discourse that perceive women as symbols of the nation state and in need of protection from foreign men (Keskinen 2011). Therefore, it was considered important to have migrant women at the protest site to combat these racist and sexist discourses. There had been women present at the beginning of the protest, but they had not been visible since they had been inside the tents. I was talking to a few supporters before a meeting in May, and the question of how to attract asylum-seeker women to the protest came up. I asked them what had happened to the women who used to come to the protest and, to my surprise, they replied that there had never been any women. I was perplexed since I vividly remembered seeing women in the tent and baby carriages outside the tent and I had to repeat my question twice, saying that I remember seeing women in the tents. “Oh right, oh well there inside the big black tent...”, one of the supporters finally replied. She was of course not wrong: visibility is publicity (Adut 2018) and, inside the tents, women had not been visible and thus not part of the protest’s performance.

These discussions on the importance of having migrant women on the protest site show the constructive side of Right to Live: representation as an active process where visibility played a key role. One of the supporters, Mira, said that she felt that they need “to get the asylum-seeking women [--] and children here. [--] It was visually somehow very important.” To attract women to the protest, there were two women’s day events that were meant especially for Iraqi and Afghan women, and during which men were not allowed to come to the protest site. In other words, during the

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<sup>56</sup> The practice of calling the protest a family and people involved in the protest brothers and sisters can be seen as one way to do away with this racist and sexist discourse, and the “sexualised figure of the male asylum seeker” (see Merikoski & Nordberg, forthcoming).

women's day events, the men were not the representatives of Right to Live, as they were on other occasions.

As also the women's day event shows, where the borders of the protest ran on each occasion was important, to distinguish it from the Finland First protest, as I will describe in chapters nine and ten, but also in determining who represented Right to Live, and when and where. The interrelated questions of representation and the borders of the protest became visible especially in the arrangement of events related to Right to Live, some of which took place at the protest site and others that were held elsewhere. Within the borders of Right to Live, there were special events such as Women's Day celebrations, a children's day event, the 100th day celebration and the support concert described earlier in this chapter. There was an effort to arrange these special events to raise attention and mobilize people. However, events raised discussions over the question of who can represent the protest and where the figurative as well as concrete borders of the protest ran. If there were enthusiastic volunteers who were considered outsiders (they didn't attend the meetings, were not in the closed Facebook groups and perhaps hadn't actively visited the protest) and wanted to arrange a special event at the protest, it had to be decided whether they could arrange it within the borders of the protest and how much freedom they had in arranging the event. In the case of the support concert, as described above, it was decided that the concert would be arranged outside the borders of the protest to safeguard the image of Right to Live from hothead activists and drunken people – and in general, people who were not familiar with the protest and its code of conduct. This setting-up of a figurative as well as a concrete distinction between the protest site and the concert was so significant that in the newspaper article about the “Cleansing” and the concert, a correction was added to the article after it was first published, according to which the “support concert is not arranged in the asylum seekers' protest camp. A separate stage will be built on the Railway Square for [the concert]”.

The questions of who represents Right to Live, and when and where, were not always simple matters, and at times these questions required collective negotiations. Although these questions were largely agreed upon, the “how” question – how should the asylum seekers be represented – was a more complex one and, in practice, there was a constant balancing act in how much the Finnish supporters could and should interfere in the act of representation. This is the question I will turn to in the next chapter.

## 7.3 Conclusions

The idea of collective and direct representation has been at the heart of civic and political action in Finnish political culture, with associations carrying this representative function. As the case of Right to Live demonstrates, this idea has not vanished in political action, even if this action takes place outside associations since Right to Live protesters considered themselves representatives of the interests of asylum seekers (of the “long summer of migration”). In contrast, Kallio movement hesitated to represent the interests of Kallio residents and declined the idea of direct representation. This difference between the two groups is hardly surprising since Kallio movement emphasized individuality more than Right to Live. However, besides individualism, another key to the question of why this difference existed between the two groups also seems to be related to the kind of politics the two groups were engaging in. Right to Live, first of all, had political goals, unlike Kallio movement, and directed their demands towards politicians. Direct representation is well suited to this kind of political action.

In this chapter, I have shown that Kallio movement members cherished individual representation and declined direct representation along with the idea of interest-based politics. However, in the next chapter I will show that Kallio movement also had ideas of collective representation that surfaced in the organizing of Kallio Block Party. However, these ideas were not about their shared interests but rather about the abstract values of members associated with Kallio. In other words, the members’ idea about representation was constructive and the kind of politics they were pursuing was prefigurative in nature.

## 8 REPRESENTATIVE PERFORMANCE: BEING VISIBLE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

The previous chapter approached representation from the actors' point of view. In this chapter, I take as an analytic point of departure the idea of constructive representation, perceiving representation as an active process whereby the group that is represented is brought into being as the said group by the representatives' embodiment (e.g. Alapuro 2005). Within this constructive framework, the task of representation is to make a group visible through a public performance such as a demonstration – and to construct, give shape to, the said group in this process (see Alapuro 2005). This kind of conception of representation points towards a dramaturgical analysis of representation, and representation can accordingly be analyzed as a cultural performance (Talpin 2016; Eyerman 2006):

*The notion of performance allows us simultaneously to grasp the relational, interactive, and contingent dimensions of representation as well as its performative aspect; the representative performance “performing” the group, making it exist, and shaping it (Talpin 2016, 5).*

The two concepts, representation and performance, are closely related since “representation” carries connotations related to aesthetics, performing, and making something visible (Rätilä and Rinne 2016, 6). In this chapter I will explore the intertwinement of representation and performance in Kallio movement, and more specifically Kallio Block Party, and Right to Live, with the concept of scene styles, that is, the “different, patterned ways in which actors coordinate civic action in a setting” (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014, 800). I depart from the understanding that styles should be understood as different “modes of communication”, consisting also of different performative styles (Mische 2015, 61) and different ways of using urban space (Eliasoph and Clément 2019, 253).

By performance, I refer on the one hand to communication that takes place not only through text and speech but also through non-discursive, affective elements such as sound, materiality, place/space and embodiment (Butler 2015; Eyerman 2006). On the other hand, a performance refers to a scripted event with, for instance, staging and an audience (Alexander 2006; Eyerman 2006). In other words, I am not only interested in what the actors are saying but what they are doing, within the city

space and how, and with what kind of material equipment. What does this action and materiality, and its aesthetics, tell us and what is it meant to tell us? As Butler (2015) reminds us, democracy is not practiced only in the form of deliberation. Following Judith Butler (2015), Mona Lilja (2017) calls the performative embodied meanings of protests “extra cultural meanings” – something that is in excess of its vocalized demands.

The focus in my analysis is on the effort of constructing the performance, or the study of “self-presentation strategies” (Talpin 2016, 5). Talpin (ibid, 62) introduces the idea of analyzing these strategies with the help of the theory of styles<sup>57</sup>, arguing that public performance requires the participants, or the representatives, to have an ability to “embody the style [and] the spirit” of the group. Juris (2008, 62; 65) has also noted that civic groups may “inscribe” and communicate “distinct political messages on the urban and mass media landscapes” through “diverse bodily movements and protest styles”, covering both verbal and non-verbal symbolic meanings that challenge dominant symbolic codes.

In both the cases studied, much attention was paid especially to visibility – what the events, a block party and a protest, looked like, and in this representative performance of Right to Live and Kallio movement, it was not only human but also non-human elements, such as tents, that were employed in the task of representation. Thus, I ask in this chapter what were the performative styles of Kallio Block Party and the Right to Live protest and why? What goes on at the backstage of the performance and how is the performance negotiated? How are human and non-human elements employed in this task of representative performance? And ultimately, I ask what kind of political messages are possible in the performative styles of the two events.

The last question concerning the relations of representative performance and politics is related to changes within the repertoires of Finnish civic action where a turn from direct representation to more expressive character has been noted and which is seen to come with a disconnection from formal politics (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 98; 100-1; 122; Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010) and an emphasis on everyday life and lifestyles instead (Stranius 2009; Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 14; 18). With this performative turn<sup>58</sup>, it is vital that we understand what it means in

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<sup>57</sup> Talpin refers to *group styles* (Eliasoph & Lichterman 2003), but I opt for the concept of *scene styles* (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014) that traces different styles of action to situations or scenes, not to groups. Especially the analysis on the performance of Right to Live below illustrates how same people or groups may practice different styles in different settings.

<sup>58</sup> Although it can be questioned whether a performative turn has taken place in civic action or in the *research* of civic action.

terms of civic actors' political possibilities. Is performativity inevitably accompanied by disconnection to formal politics and a turn to lifestyles, as has been argued (ibids.)? This, as well as the previous, chapter demonstrates that this is not necessarily the case. Chapter seven already established that the protesters in Right to Live represented collective interests and directed their protest to institutionalized politics. The fact that the protest's representation also had "an expressive character", which is the topic of analysis in this chapter, does not do away with this formal politics. However, the analysis shows that *in addition* to the vocalized political demands, there were "extra cultural meanings" (Lilja 2017) to the protest that were communicated in public through its performance. Kallio movement, on the other hand, *did* shun formal politics, as has been shown in the previous chapters. However, this did not mean that the movement, or its key performance Kallio Block Party, were only about private lifestyle matters since the movement made an effort to communicate, through its actions, its moral(political) principles in public. Therefore, the case of Kallio Block Party can be seen as a different form of politics than formal one, as prefigurative politics.

However, what the case of Kallio Block Party also illustrates is that performativity without verbal communication or established political symbols is open to diverse interpretations that are not always what the movement intended. And on the other hand, the case demonstrates how difficult it is to formulate any political stances, let alone communicate, or prefigure, them in public with such individualized premises and lack of open discussion.

## 8.1 Kallio Block Party as prefigurative and symbolic representation

*It's not just "hey, let's have a party!" even though parties are also nice. But it's also about transforming the urban space into something kind of magical or at least into something else. It becomes seen as something a little bit different and there's this kind of sense of community and openness. It's everyone's celebration and not a gated event one has to pay to get into. (Maria.)*

In the previous chapter, I presented how Kallio movement was characterized by individual representation: the thought that Kallio movement members represent nothing but themselves. I also demonstrated that this individualism was not the same as being motivated by individual interests – on the contrary. But the question remains: if Kallio movement was a collection of individuals, what, then, drew the movement members together? If the group represented nothing as a collective, why have a collective in the first place? I will explore this question through the biggest effort and the most significant manifestation of Kallio movement, Kallio Block

Party. I propose that the event can be approached not through direct representation as in Right to Live, but through symbolic representation.

Scholars of the Finnish (and Nordic) civil society that are concerned about increasing individualism and what it means to practices of democracy, as civic groups that used to be “places of the production of the collective good” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101) are turned into “ego projects” that lack a “deeper ideological foundation and change orientation” (Sivesind & Selle 2010, 98). Literature on DIY urbanism again portrays urban activism as being pierced by individualism, leading to an “erosion of the public” (Finn 2014, 391) and a “retreat into everyday practices and personal lifeworlds” (Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021, 260). What these concerns have in common is a threat of a lack of commonality and a lack of politics. I have already shown in the previous chapters that there was a commonality based on personalized politics and, in this chapter, I will show that despite Kallio movement denouncing institutionalized politics and “ideologies”, they still shared a vision of a different kind of urban space and did politics by realizing this vision, but this politics was of prefigurative nature.

Kallio Block Party is per se a completely different event from Right to Live. It takes place every year for a day whereas Right to Live lasted over four months and was a unique event. Kallio Block Party is not an explicitly political event since no political claims are made. In addition, the organizers of the block party had more individual liberties in the creation process of its message than the participants in Right to Live. With the underpinning idea of individual representation, Kallio Block Party was not seen to represent a collective. However, the event was seen to carry abstract ideas and values, partly also related to the Kallio identity, or “spirit”, as it was often called, such as equality, inclusivity, and non-commerciality. Thus, the event can be perceived as political in a prefigurative sense as one of its original and underlying ideas is to show how urban space could be used for other purposes than driving or parking a car. This kind of local, hands-on civic action should be “read” as a performance where certain meanings are prefigured (see also Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 189) or as a form of practical and non-discursive, “hands-on” social critique (Pyyhtinen & Lehtonen 2023) against the use of urban space for cars. Kallio Block Party can also be seen as an example of a form of civic action dubbed a “do-ocracy”, that “refers to active citizens who wish to contribute to the public domain by simply doing things instead of voting, deliberating or negotiating”, often on a local scale (Verhoeven et al 2014; see also Chen 2009). Indeed, Verhoeven et al (ibid) claim that do-ocratic action should be seen as symbolic representation. If in direct representation, there is one-to-one correspondence between what is represented and

how, symbolic representation is characterized by the vagueness and looseness of this relationship. “We can never exhaust, never quite capture in words, the totality of what a symbol symbolizes: suggest, evokes, implies” (Pitkin 1967, 97). Symbols, such as a country flag, work on an affective as well as on a habitual level and are meant to evoke certain emotions, attitudes and action (ibid, 99-100). Similarly, Kallio Block Party is meant to evoke abstract (and vague) values and ideas of Kallio movement and meanings related to Kallio, even though there are no explicit political demands, symbols or slogans. If Right to Live contained an explicit political message that could also be detached from the performance of the protest, Kallio Block Party did not: *the performance was the message*.

It is not a novelty to think of, for instance, street parties as prefiguration (see St. John 2004). However, as Rättilä and Rinne (2016) point out, the discussions about prefiguration have not been brought together with discussions on representation. They suggest that local DIY activism should be approached as prefigurative and performative representation whereby in publicly “doing”, the activists show what they represent”<sup>59</sup>. In other words, even if the activists themselves declare that they do not represent any collective interests, from this constructive point of view one can see that they are still part of politics of representation (ibid, 6).

In many situations, as well as in the interviews with Kallio movement members, it became evident that at least to some, especially to the old-time members of Kallio movement and many of the active organizers of Kallio Block Party, the block party carried prefigurative meanings and values of Kallio movement. This became visible, for instance, in the Facebook discussion over the NGO tent (see chapter seven). The discussants were saying that there was no need for political symbols such as the NGO tent in the festival area since the event itself was meaningful enough – and in fact, political symbols would only weaken the message the organizers were putting out through the block party:

*Discussant 1: We’re doing a good, free urban festival for people according to the values of Kallio movement and I don’t think we need to do any greater deeds than that. The values are visible in our action and [--] are that way communicated also to the city residents.*

*Discussant 2: Well said ❤️ Kallio movement and the doing of block party according to the movement’s values really is a statement in itself and something that is easily left hidden from the public. It would be great to bring free civic action forth, and the fact that everyone is equally welcome, and I think the message is stronger if we don’t advocate the associations’ messages but include it in the doing and the programme.*

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<sup>59</sup> The authors (ibid.) point out, in a constructivist mode, that this is what all political representation is about, but that conventional ideas about (electoral) representation put this out of sight.



The above discussion illustrates, first, that at least some of the organizers thought that there were shared values in Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party, that these values were important for them, and that it was important to bring them forth. Second, they thought that this message would be stronger if it would be included “in the doing and the programme” – this is understandable since the movement’s commonality was created by doing and “*säättö*” (see chapter five). But what were these values? And did everyone involved in arranging the party agree with these values?

As explained in chapter five, the culture in Kallio movement was more focused in practical doing and arranging events and did not encourage reflexive talk about its shared values. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on Kallio Block Party *not* being a political event. Yet some kind of values, ideas and meanings were assumed to be shared among the participants in Kallio movement and the organizing of Kallio Block Party. Open conflicts were not commonplace in Kallio movement and I hardly encountered any during my fieldwork, but there were moments when old-timers clarified certain principles to new-comers or plug-in volunteers. However, I will first introduce the underlying idea of not being a political event.

## No logo: being politically non-aligned

What makes Kallio Block Party an interesting case of prefigurative representation is the fact that Kallio movement wanted the event to be perceived as non-political. In the spirit of individual representation, the movement wanted to stay independent from political ideologies and organizations such as political parties and associations, as the example of the NGO tent in the previous chapter illustrated. One of the discussants in the discussion concerning the tent was concerned about the visual image of Kallio Block Party: “It would be a change in the *image of the event* if we started taking these tents in the future”. In addition, there was an alignment that if the organizers received tents from associations to be used in the block party, the name and slogan of the association were covered up out of sight, meaning there were no visible political symbols in Kallio Block Party. As Lilli told me, when talking about the first Kallio Block Party, the newly formed movement didn’t want to organize “some Green Party ringed seal event”. (An image of a ringed seal is the well-known logo for The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation.) This alignment was made when the movement was established and can be seen as a new civic style that consciously goes against both the idea of the associations’ representative function in the Finnish political system as well as an activist repertoire that emphasizes rather than tones down political symbols. This was a clear rupture to how urban activism

had been practiced before. As Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021, 169) note, “block party can be considered as a more festive, middle-class and moderate descendant to Reclaim the streets, a means of changing the city more discretely” (Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 169).

Reclaiming the streets as an act of critique is not a new repertoire of action. In the 2000’s in Helsinki, Reclaim the Streets, or Street party, and *Katu on punk* [“Street is Punk”] events have both criticized the use of urban space to cars and the commodification of urban space and culture. Both are examples of a carnivalesque and playful protest, or “protestivals”, that operate as an anti-capitalist critique of the spectacular (Juris 2008, 77; St. John 2004 422). From their ideology as well as membership base, they are a part of the same movement family as other anarchist and anti-capitalist (earlier also anti-globalization) movements, such as house squatting (Jokela 2017; Mikola 2008; Luhtakallio 2012) and precarious movements (Monti & Purokuru 2018). There are similarities between Kallio Block Party and these anti-capitalist events: all three are about occupying streets for a day to have a party with music, food and carnivalesque socializing. But there are also crucial differences in the styles of these events, including their vocabulary and performance. Here, Kallio movement resembles DIY urbanism where, despite the fact that “few could claim to be wholly apolitical”, action lacks political communication and many activists do not identify themselves or their actions as radical (Douglas 2014, 11; 13). As is characteristic to DIY urbanism, Kallio movement were happy doing things legally and with authorization (ibid). As some core organizers, few of which were old-time members of Kallio movement, told me, they wanted to show the City of Helsinki how well an event like the block party could be arranged by an unofficial (and most importantly in the Finnish context, unregistered) group of citizens. According to this logic, people would then eventually start having more freedom from regulations. If there is an enemy for DIY urbanists such as the Kallio movement in the society’s structural level, as Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021) note, it is not the capitalist or a politician but the bureaucrat.

Reclaim the streets, or Street party, originated in London in 1995 and organized in Helsinki for the first time in 1997 (Yliselä 2006). One can find a public video of Reclaim the Streets in Helsinki from 2003 online. In the video, people are carrying flags such as one in red and black, symbolizing anarcho-syndicalism, and flyers are handed out. There are carnivalesque elements such as a samba dance group with four members dressed in silver and lilac, a drum group (similar to the one in Right to Live, see below), someone blowing soap bubbles and another juggling. The video shows the group first marching slowly towards the party site and how during the

march, a car is trying to drive through the crowd and activists forcing the car to stop, with a crowd pushing their bodies against the car bumper and someone lying on the street in front of it. The car eventually backs out and, as the marchers reach the party site on the main street Mannerheimintie, right in the centre of Helsinki, they set up banners reading “Reclaim the streets” and “Street party”, and tables for DJ equipment, food and flyers to hold a street party. People mainly sit on the pavement, a few are dancing to rap, reggae and techno music, and others are drawing on the street with chalk.

The differences to Kallio Block Party are notable. Reclaim the Streets was filled with political symbols: banners, flyers, flags and stands from e.g. Anarchist action, animal rights movements and the Left Youth of Finland (Yliselä 2006). This is in stark distinction to Kallio Block Party’s “no flyers, no stands” policy. The activists in Reclaim the streets activists had, in the extreme, to fight off cars with their bodies, whereas Kallio movement had filled in all the necessary applications to make sure the event was official and ultimately secured by the police. In the block party, there were always several volunteers in yellow vests guiding the traffic away from the party area, separated from the surrounding area by plastic fences and pylons, and to my knowledge without any trouble from the drivers<sup>60</sup>.

In addition to the material and embodied performance of the event, the vocabulary of Kallio Block Party is different from its preceding street occupations. The quote below is from the 2014 Street is Punk Facebook invitation:

*Capitalism has exploited peoples’ living space (--). Our street scape is filled with neon colours and ads that ooze pornography. Our streets are filled with cars while humans are lost in the wheels of consumption machinery. But punk and anarchism continue their struggle against capitalist repression, this time by taking back urban space by occupying a street. Welcome to anti-capitalist struggle without sexism, racism or homophobia!*  
(<https://www.facebook.com/events/643313212424370/>)

In the Street is Punk invitation, the reclaiming of the street is framed as only one part of a larger struggle against capitalism that pervades the streets, our “living space”. There is no such universal critique in the Kallio Block Party invitation that, in the spirit of positive new urban activism (Santala 2013), does not actively resist anything:

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<sup>60</sup> In Kallio Block Party in 2019, I went around the barricades where cars were being turned away to take another route and asked the volunteers how it was going. I was waiting to see or hear stories of angry drivers but there were none.

*For the eight time, Kallio Block Party is coming to reclaim the streets of Helsinki and will fill those with people, music, art and good atmosphere without forgetting the good food! No entrance fees, no fences. Kallio Block Party is an urban non-profit community festival. It's organised by Kallio-liike, a movement of active members of the local community.*

While both events are critical in their practice, Street is Punk voices this criticism aloud while Kallio Block Party is “non-discursive” (Pyyhtinen & Lehtonen 2023). From the point of view of performative styles, the block party’s style was non-confrontative compared to previous street parties. However, not only did Kallio movement not vocalize criticism towards capitalism, it was also not self-evident whether the movement was anti-capitalist in the first place. The decision of being politically non-aligned, as well as the movement’s practical orientation to action instead of talk, makes it difficult to pinpoint what the values actually were that were performed in Kallio Block Party.

Some principles were, however, clear and often repeated in the organizing process. Rättilä and Rinne (2016, 12) write how the local activists they investigated as an example of prefigurative representation were proud of their neighbourhoods, “its history and characteristics”, and wanted to bring these forth in their action. Something similar took place in Kallio movement, too. Even if Kallio movement members were hesitant about the idea of representing the collective interest of Kallio residents, as Kallio association does, they were proud to represent the *ideas* they related to Kallio. First, the area where the block party was arranged, different each year, had requirements that were meant to carry certain meanings related to Kallio area and the block party. Second, the event was meant to be non-commercial. These principles will be further analyzed below. In general, what configured in the performance of Kallio Block Party was the thought of Kallio as having a Green-Left identity, with “hippies” and “tolerants”/“toletards<sup>61</sup>”. During my fieldwork the issues of immigration and racism were frequent topics in public discussion and Kallio movement largely identified with the side of “the tolerant”. This became evident during my fieldwork when a few active movement members organized a short-notice counter-event against a neo-Nazi march through Kallio on Finnish Independence Day. This was “an event” only on Facebook: it encouraged residents of Kallio to decorate their windows with colourful symbols such as rainbow flags, peace signs and hearts.

How are these Green-Left and antiracist expressions and identifications compatible with being ideologically and politically non-aligned? I argue that there are

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<sup>61</sup> “Toletard” is a pejorative word for “tolerant”, aimed to “ridicule antiracists and liberal multiculturalists by undermining their cognitive capacities”(Seikkula 2019).

two answers to this question. The first one is the practical orientation of these ideologies. The second one is that there were two conceptions of politics in Kallio movement, as institutionalized politics, that was denounced in the movement, and as everyday politics and moral values, that were perceived to underpin the movement

*The first explanation*, the practical orientation, meant that these political ideals were not meant to be broadcast but to provide guiding principles to action and thus be read off the action. This was the kind of “quiet activism” one of the members, Heta, told me she opted for instead of shouting in demonstrations (see chapter three). Or like Maria said, “we don’t have to be such a protest against the City since it has changed a lot” [for the better]. The below excerpt from my fieldnotes is from Kallio movement’s soup kitchen (or “block kitchen”) that was a part of the Night of the Homeless event in October 2017. Block kitchen served apple pie and coffee for free (or with a voluntary donation to the block kitchen) in one of the several tents set up by civic organizations. There was a lot of hustle and bustle within the tent, with about a half a dozen Kallio movement volunteers making coffee and organizing the counter. A customer came up to the tent and the following short conversation took place between him and one of the volunteers, an old-time member, Sauli:

*Customer: So, what exactly is this block kitchen?*

*Sauli: Well, we cook food together and then distribute it*

*Customer: So, there’s no ideology behind it?*

*Sauli: Well, the ideology is kind of precisely it...*

*Matias then commented, under his breath, from the back of the tent: Well, it’s Left Green*

“Cooking food together and then distributing it” is in line with how DIY urbanism operate, through their action and without vocalized political statements. It is not uncommon for local activism to shy away from “big-P politics” that connects local actions to a larger social issue (Kennedy et al 2018; Eliasoph & Clément 2019). In addition, in Kallio movement, values were quiet knowledge, and a common (enough) value base was simply *assumed* from everyone who joined its activities. (However, the previous chapter pointed out that this assumption was not always correct.)

*The second explanation* to why it was possible to portray moral-political views in Kallio movement despite its emphasis on being non-political, the two different ways of understanding politics, sometimes caused confusing situations. To my surprise, despite the alignment of being a non-political event, some political statements were not banned from the block party. In Kallio Block Party in 2018, the organizer of one of the stages wanted to hang a banderol stating “No one is illegal” over the railing

of a major bridge that was located in the Kallio Block Party area, next to the stage. An active member of Kallio movement, who was also one of the organizers of the stage, posted a question in the Kallio Block Party organizers' Facebook group in the morning of the block party asking whether it was ok to hang the banner (or rather, she asked whether there should be "a collective opinion" on the matter or would it be up to the disco to decide). She justified the banner by saying that the issue was topical since forced deportations were taking place. Most likely she expected there to be no discussion on the issue, as did I, since there was an assumption that everyone involved were green-left tolerants. The post got eleven likes and seven people commented in favor of hanging the banner self-evidently, without any further discussion. There was, however, and to the surprise of many, an active organizer who didn't share this view on free movement. In the Facebook discussion, he tried pleading to the Kallio movement principle of being politically nonaligned and wanted an open discussion on the matter of changing this principle. Others in the discussion argued that the banner represented the Kallio movement values and one of the discussants even said that the movement had *always been political*.

This confusing double standard of being politically and ideologically non-aligned while at the same time displaying a political and ideological message and claiming that in fact Kallio movement had always been political was rooted in different understandings of "political". While Kallio movement denounced institutional politics, many with whom I talked thought that the movement was still political or at least had political elements. In the same way as Kallio movement declined direct representation, it also declined institutional politics, which was at times referred to as "party politics", a sphere of politics that is also closely tied to registered associations in Finland. This was perhaps the reason why displaying logos of associations was not acceptable, while hanging a banner with a political message was.

However, the political message displayed – "No one is illegal" – was slightly vague and not very radical. If one is familiar with asylum activism, one recognizes this transnational slogan, and as asylum issues were still hotly debated in 2018, the message could easily have been interpreted as a comment on asylum politics. However, even the organizer who suggested hanging the banner pleaded, when the message regarding asylum politics was debated in the Facebook discussion, that the message didn't necessarily refer to asylum politics but could refer to several other marginalized groups of people, too. Thus, the message fitted in with the rather vague "politics" Kallio movement practiced. It would be difficult to imagine that the organizers would agree with a message that had a more precise political demand or critique, or one that would frame the message as part of a larger struggle against, for

instance, capitalism. As the message stood, it could be simply read as part of Kallio's (assumed) ideological landscape, placing the organizers on the side of the "good ones" within the current debate on asylum seekers, and the assumption was that block party visitors would share this view. What this example also shows is how being intentionally focused on practical matters when it comes to organizing events, instead of discussing political matters, caused politics to leak into these practicalities and the materiality of the block party.

Next, I will take a closer look at the two guiding principles of Kallio Block Party, the importance of the festival area and non-commerciality. These examples show the intertwining of the practical and the "political" within Kallio movement, in other words, their prefigurative politics, and how this politics was visual through and through.

## Re-configuring places as urban, car-free and inclusive

"Local activism is about specific physical spaces" (Eliasoph & Clément 2019, 273) and place-making: either strengthening or reconfiguring meanings attached to places. The area in Kallio where Kallio Block Party was held, and the fact that it was arranged in a different area each year, was not insignificant. A lot of thought was put into deciding the area. First, there were practical issues to take into consideration, such as public transportation in the area that would have to be cut off for the duration of the festival, how many roadblocks the area would require, what kind of businesses were in the area (grocery stores especially were an asset), if there was a place for a backstage area, if there were a lot of green areas that were more difficult to clean, and so on. All these factors were first discussed in meetings and then by walking together through the area. During these walks, the organizers scanned the area thinking where to place the food stalls, stages and portable toilets, how the acoustics would work in any given place, which direction the sun would shine from and at which angle in an afternoon in August...

More importantly, however, it mattered that the potential places for the festival allowed the occupation of space, in other words, that the location was not a ready-made event space such as a park or a square. The occupation of space was an important element, especially to the old-timers, and some new ones too. In fact, during my fieldwork I came across several people who had studied subjects such as urban geography or aesthetics and were familiar with theoretical ideas of the use of urban space, as the citation from Maria at the beginning of this chapter about "transforming the urban space into something kind of magical" illustrates. However, this principle of occupying space was not clear to all the first-timers. In a meeting, a

newcomer, Eija, asked: “Do we need to block a road? “Block party” as in block a road?”. Someone replied: “Otherwise it’s just a festival, a concert. The idea is that we want to do this one thing, have people partying on the street.”

In addition to occupying space normally occupied by cars, the area should be “urban”. When someone suggested in a meeting a park as the location of the party, an experienced organizer, Julia, stated that then it would not be a “block party” but a “park party”, and that the idea is to close off streets and occupy space. She added that there is no urban element in a park. In 2018, Merihaka, a densely built area with grey concrete housing blocks from the 1970s and 1980s, was one of the options for the location. Siiri, a newcomer, opted for it since it was not beautiful and she thought that it could be made more appealing and “more city-like”. The organizers wanted to have the event in areas that were neglected by pedestrians and that were either occupied by cars or quiet, “boring” “dead spaces” with no activities. In one of the meetings, Mikko said proudly: ‘[A former active organizer of KBP] said that look at the impact of the block party on the area, a lot of the areas are now thriving, they have become livelier, and people now find those areas.’ The idea in DIY urbanism in general is to inject places with new meanings (Hou 2010, 2), but this kind of emphasis on urbanism makes sense especially, again, from the point of view of the short history of cities and “urbanism” in Finland and Helsinki (see chapter two). On the other hand, past Kallio Block Parties had been held in busy areas in Kallio, where the idea was to show what was possible if there were no cars.

DIY urbanism and its purpose is often to demonstrate and declare another possible city within the existing city (Iveson 2013), and to inject spaces with new functions and meanings (Hou 2010, 2). This re-configuration of the places as block party sites happened through material re-arrangements – the concrete build-up of the festival – and importantly also through affects. The ultimate block party had been in 2015 when Kurvi, a busy intersection and a nodal point of buses, trams and metro, was closed to traffic for the day. “I don’t think anything can top that. It was a ridiculously crazy idea”, as Julia told me in an interview. In the fundraising campaign in 2015, the ad says:

*Can you imagine Kurvi without cars and traffic noise? Imagine Kurvi full of people, music, street art and the joy of doing together! For one day, we will create an alternative reality to Kurvi area and see what one of the busiest areas in Helsinki looks like without motorized traffic. Let’s make this reality!*<sup>62</sup>

Maria, who visited Block party in 2015 and later became an organizer, told me:

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<sup>62</sup> (<https://mesenaatti.me/kbp2015/>)



*I remember in Kurvi, it was a wild idea and a wild sight to have a stage in the middle of Kurvi. And I remember walking along Hämeentie street and it was empty and I could walk on tram tracks, and there were these techno stages along the street, and it was just a great feeling. It was an empowering feeling to have the busiest part of Kallio as an esplanade, it was like cool, now the city is mine to walk in and I don't have to dodge cars. Like, all kinds of things are possible if this street can be closed off and a stage put in the middle of it where [a rap artist] Notkea rotta is playing.*

Luhtakallio (2019) describes a similar sense of empowerment when activists take over a highway with bikes. In a Kallio Block Party meeting with a lot of newcomers, an old-timer, Mikko, explained that when the block party was arranged for the first time, it was like “we’re occupying space, great”! But he added that now, after several years of organizing, there’s no longer that “wow’ effect”. Tuuli and Susanna disagreed and said that for them, as first-timers last year, the effect was there and will be each time there are new organizers. Eija added that the wow effect was also there for the visitors to Kallio Block Party since the festival is in a different location each year. Like the bike activists, the block party organizers and visitors felt disbelief and empowerment when they took over the streets:

*The feeling I had at 8 am, when someone banded me this plastic fence and we walked on the top end of Kurvi and then we closed off the streets, like “no one’s driving through this anymore”. And when the streets empty and you get the feeling that damn, now we’re actually... this is it. (Julia.)*

Urban activism often leaves its mark by opening peoples’ eyes to what is possible (Finn 2014, 387-8). In other words, it enlarges peoples’ civic imagination (Baioocchi et al 2019) and is sometimes able to have a permanent impact. For instance, the bike activists influenced Helsinki’s traffic infrastructure and more attention is now paid to biking conditions (Luhtakallio 2018). Events have the power to “[change] citizens’ thoughts and expectations about city life”, and Kallio Block Party, too, has “shown the malleability of space and its political potentiality” (Lehtovuori 2005). In general, Kallio Block Parties have been among the actions that have cemented Kallio as the main cultural hub in Helsinki and sparked, for instance, a pilot to turn one of Kallio’s busiest streets, Vaasankatu, into a pedestrian zone and efforts to improve Piritori square (“Speed square”), which is usually inhabited by drug users, into a more comfortable and safe place. On the other hand, Kallio movement has indisputably been a part of the further gentrification of Kallio.

In other words, although Kallio movement didn’t discursively politicize issues, they were able to open new horizons in the city space through its representative performance of Kallio Block Party, with this representation being symbolic and prefigurative in nature. As Mäenpää & Faehnle (2021, 97; translated by the author)

note, “[e]ven if the purpose of action is to “throw a good party”, it simultaneously produces new ways of experiencing and experimenting with urban space”. Through its action, Kallio movement was manifesting a different reality and inviting people to join in to form temporary demos (see Rättälä & Rinne 2016, 7). Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021, 190) suggest that the partygoers in Kallio Block Party are harnessed in this task of (symbolic) representation. They legitimize the event by being there, in large numbers, and in this way take part in the representative performance.

## Looking like a non-commercial event

In the Facebook discussion about turning down an NGO tent, someone noted that in addition to turning down associations’ stands, one of the block party’s values has been non-commerciality, but that there’s already been “slipping” from that principle. This principle of non-commerciality was discussed in several meetings, but it was not clear to everyone what it meant. It became evident that being non-commercial meant *looking* like a non-commercial event. By saying that Kallio Block Party is, and should be, non-commercial, what was meant was that it should evoke the cultural images of a non-commercial event and, in the end, this discussion over commerciality boiled down to the question of *visible* sponsorship deals. There were sponsors involved in the organizing of Kallio Block Party, but they could only be offered limited visibility in order to safeguard the event’s image as non-commercial. Discussions over sponsorship deals are thus also a good example of situations where different worths, those of market and civic, were negotiated.

In a meeting in spring 2018, Anna raised the issue what kind of visibility they could offer sponsors when contacting them since last year, she said, it was not clear. “We don’t want to be commercial, but how can we provide some visibility [to the sponsors]?” A first-time organizer also asked if it was absolutely non-acceptable for a sponsor to have a tent at the block party. Two more experienced organizers, Juha and Julia, responded that it’s something that can be decided together each year but that last year it was a definite “no”. (Interestingly, there was more flexibility with tents from sponsors than with tents from NGO’s.) Juha then added that at least the visibility of the sponsor should be “toned down”. In the same meeting, he clarified that no one uses the name “sponsor” anymore, and the word that was to be used instead was “collaborator”. What this discussion illustrates is the flexibility and room for manoeuvre that existed with regards to commerciality and sponsors. As the discussion below demonstrates, the ultimate boundary not to be crossed were visible commercial logos.

In another meeting later that spring the question of sponsorship visibility came up again. Markku, who was an organizer for the second time, said:

*We can't have an Atria<sup>63</sup> stage or banners with big logos, or American Express cooperation as Flow festival<sup>64</sup> does. What we can have is "taking part in talkoot" and company logos on our website. We've also had "Church helps in need"<sup>65</sup> stickers on toilets' doors. These are acceptable practices.*

What the above quote illustrates is that it was, in fact, acceptable to have sponsors, or "collaborators", in Kallio Block Party, but that sponsorship deals should not be visible, or at least they should be as little visible as possible. As described in chapter six, *talkoot* is a traditional form of practical, neighbourly help where no money is involved. Saying that sponsors are "taking part in *talkoot*" would mean that the sponsors' are a part of the common effort of organizing the block party out of solidarity.

Later in the same meeting, a newcomer asked if it mattered who the sponsor was. An experienced organizer replied that it did matter, so that for instance Shell would not do as the sponsor should fit the Kallio movement's values. She didn't clarify what these values were, however, and how Shell would rub against them. She clearly assumed that everyone involved in the block party organizing shares the same, environmentalist values. I never witnessed any further discussions over the suitable sponsors – nor could I figure out how some of the previous sponsors, such as a bank, were seen as suitable partners. The entire matter of sponsors and their visibility was a grey area. The example of Laitila brewing company demonstrates the kind of visibility the organizers could offer in return. Laitila, Finland's biggest craft brewery which often caters to small actors in the culture field, provided free drinks to the block party volunteers and artists. In exchange, presenters on some of the block party stages wore the brewing company's t-shirt and in 2018, the brewing company were allowed to shoot a commercial video in the festival. As one of my interviewees pointed out, Kallio Block Party was already commercial since the organizers were walking around with a Laitila beer in their hand. This combination of matter-of-factly having sponsors and, at the same time, looking like an event that is organized purely as a *talkoo* effort with volunteers and no money involved, caused tricky situations and misunderstandings, especially with newcomers who hadn't learned this double strategy. For instance, in the meeting mentioned above, a

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<sup>63</sup> Atria is a major Finnish food and meat company.

<sup>64</sup> Flow festival is a major, internationally acknowledged commercial music and culture festival in Helsinki.

<sup>65</sup> In Finnish, this is a pun. Being "in need", in Finnish, also refers to having a need to go to the toilet.

newcomer questioned whether a logo on the website is enough to attract sponsors. An experienced organizer replied that they were meant to be doing an uncommercial event, to which the newcomer replied: “Yeah, but if we now have [only] about a thousand euros on our account...”, meaning that they should consider providing more visibility to sponsors in order to attract more money.

There was a thin line regarding what kind of commerciality was ok and what was not. However, during my fieldwork there was an incident that clearly crossed this line. There was a stage for a national break dance competition that was part of a global competition, sponsored by Red Bull. The organizers of the stage were clearly unaware of the non-commerciality principle since the morning of the block party revealed a terrifying sight: the Red Bull logo was painted on the dance stage, as big as the stage itself. A DJ was supposed to play from a car with a big Red Bull logo, and right next to the stage there was a parasol with the company logo and a pole with the name of the Red Bull dance competition. The other block party organizers were horrified at the sight, but it was too late to do anything about it. Since Red Bull was the sponsor, it was apparently part of the competition concept to have the logos in sight, and it was too late to cancel the entire competition which was a part of the festival programme (or rather, no one wanted to take such drastic action.) It was this mishap in particular that led to the clarification of Kallio Block Party values discussed in the previous chapter.

It was puzzling to me why it was so important to look like the event was non-commercial. Non-commerciality seemed to have several meanings, all of which are however related to preserving the civic worth of Kallio movement and its events. First, it meant that things were done together in a collective effort and in the spirit of *talkoot*. This logic is similar to how, for instance, the organizers of Burning man festival, a counter-cultural festival organized annually in the Nevada desert and sometimes referenced by some of the block party organizers, wanted to maintain the collective organizing ethos despite the presence of corporate bureaucracy in order to maintain its original meaning and feel as a counter-cultural event (Chen 2009). Even if Kallio Block Party represented a rupture with regards to previous street “protestivals” (St. John 2004), some feel of civic worth in the face of market worth was to be maintained. Preserving the image of Kallio Block Party as a volunteer effort with no entrance fees was also a way of distinguishing it from Flow festival, a major commercial music and culture festival that usually takes place a week after the block party in the greater Kallio area. Looking non-commercial can also be interpreted as seeking authenticity through performing DIY (see e.g. Portwood-Stacer 2013, 42; Deflorian 2021, 348).

Second, it seemed that non-commerciality was, for the organizers, the same thing as being accessible and free to everyone in a spirit of equality and communality:

*I think it's really important it's non-commercial. It's free for everyone and equal. [--] And the fact that it's in Kallio. [--] The fact that all social classes mix, that there's students and grannies and men from the streets hanging around like, well, as per usual in Kallio. But that the men from the streets aren't barbed-wired out, so actually everyone can be there. (Julia.)*

The question of commerciality versus non-commerciality is an example of how the organizers of KBP navigated between different worths, or “goods”, and the “danger zones where goods might clash” (Tavory et al forthcoming, 150). The core organizers had in mind a “purified good” of the kind of civic action that is free of self-interest and dirty “big money” but in practice, organizing an event, one that was growing bigger each year, required either money or sponsorship deals. One way of managing the tension between the ideal, civic state of non-commercialism and the practical solution of sponsorship deals, civic tainted with market worth, was to call the sponsorship deals “cooperation”, or to say a sponsor was a part of *talkoot*. Paradoxically, though, in the material performance of Kallio Block Party, market worth was more visible in the form of the few sponsor logos, that had to be compromised with, than civic worth since, for instance, associations’ stands were not allowed. The banderol “No one is illegal” was only an exception to this order between the two worths.

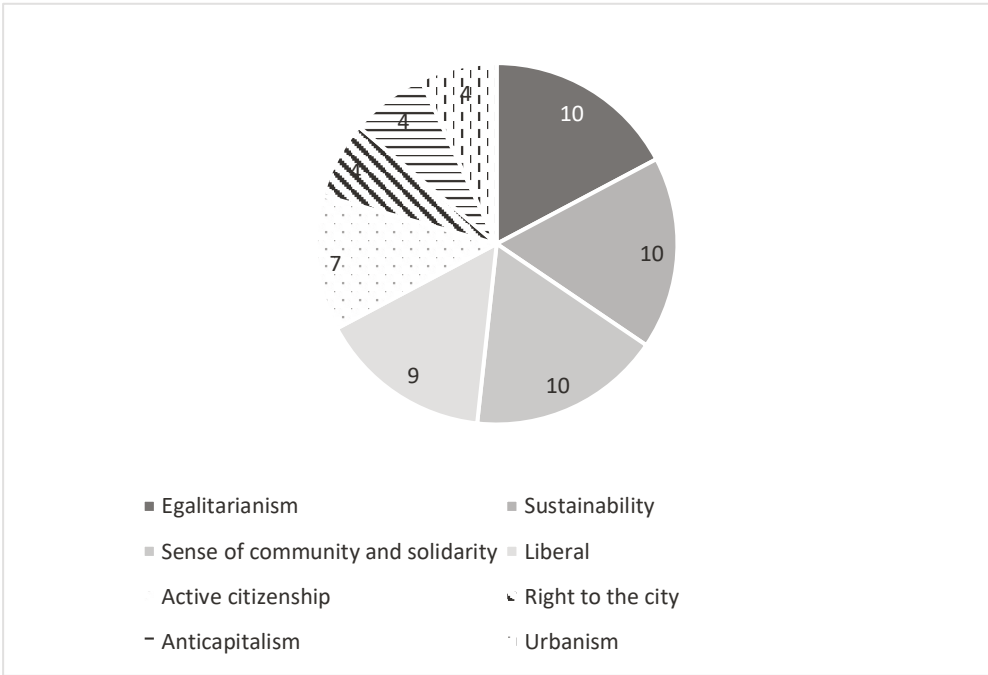
## Reading the performance of Kallio Block Party

Kallio Block Party strived for the kind of neutrality in its non-confrontative and non-political performance as was shown in chapter seven. What resulted was a cool street party where political expressions were an exception, not the rule, as they had been in the previous generation of street occupations. I began this section with a quote from a Kallio movement member saying how Kallio Block Party is not just a party but that there is the intention to transform the urban space into something different and “magical”, as well as build a sense of community and produce a free event that was accessible and equal to everyone. These efforts were not vocalized but were meant to be read off the event itself. As the above analysis demonstrates, the transformation of urban space operated through feelings of empowerment. But did these feelings reach the party-goers, too, and did they translate onto vocalized ideas about the use of urban space? Despite the occasional confusion, misunderstandings and mishaps such as the RedBull stage, the underpinning moral-political principles of the event, such as the (approximate) non-commerciality and the occupation of

urban space, were clear to *most* of the organizers, especially to the old-timers. But were they “read” from the performance of the block party by its visitors?

To find out, I conducted, with help from Tampere university sociology students, a survey of attendees (n=327; see Appendix I for more details). The vast majority (73 %) were aware that Kallio Block Party was arranged by Kallio movement as a volunteer effort (80 %) and a majority (65 %) of the respondents even said they knew the movement’s values. Less than a quarter (22 %) of the respondents wanted, however, to name these values in the survey. I have categorized the open-ended replies to this question in ten categories which are presented here according to their popularity: egalitarianism; sustainability; sense of community and local solidarity; individualism and liberalism; participation and active citizenship; right to the city; anti-capitalism; urbanism and urban culture; promoting culture.

Figure 1. What are the values of Kallio movement? (Open-ended question). N= 71. The results are presented as total numbers.



The category “*Egalitarianism*” includes replies about equality, inclusion, justice and “tolerance”, in one reply in a pejorative sense: “Toletard shit”. “*Sustainability*” includes replies that mentioned environmental friendliness, accountability and “green values”. “*Community*” means here a sense of community and solidarity, “peace

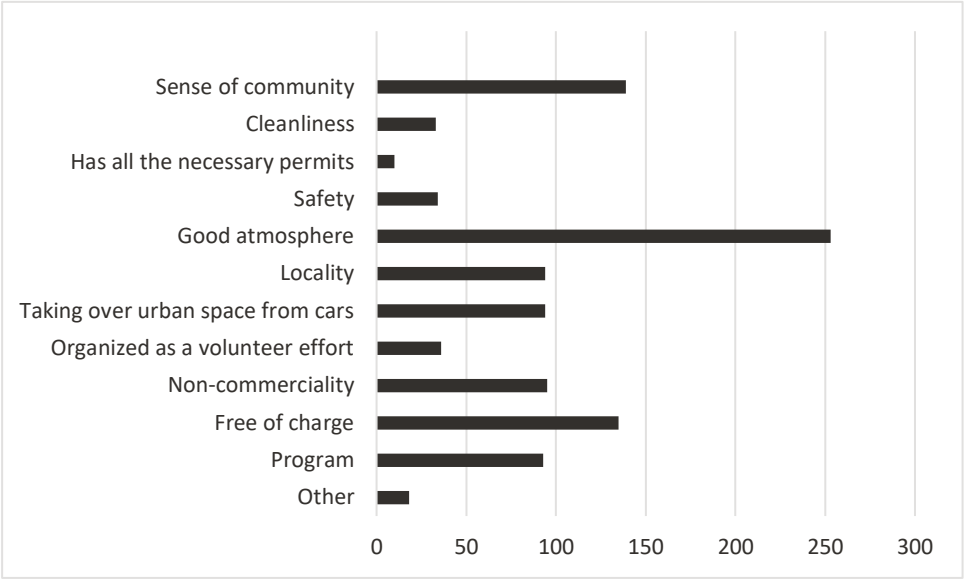
and love” in general, but also on a local level (“neighbourly love”; “highlighting a sense of community in Kallio area”). “*Liberal*” is a category for replies about pluralism/diversity (“pluralism (in the liberal sense)”) and being independent from religion and politics, “freedom”, openness, and individuality. “*Active citizenship*” includes replies about participation, volunteer and “*talkoo*” work, democracy and literally “active citizenship”. The “*Right to the city*” category is constructed of replies about “free spaces” and “occupation of public space”: “the city belongs to everyone”. “*Anti-capitalism*” refers to non-commerciality (“a protest against commercialization”) and the event being free of charge. “*Urbanism*” includes replies such as “promoting urban culture”.

And were these values important for the party-goers, too? I asked the respondents why they had come to the block party that day<sup>66</sup>. The vast majority (97,5 %) replied they had come to enjoy themselves on a sunny summer day with friends, to drink alcohol and listen to live music. Eight respondents (2,5 %) articulated a motivation that had stood out from these “to drink beer” replies by articulating some kind of a moral motivation. Three replies mentioned free urban space (“Interested in non-commercial occupation of urban space”); one mentioned inclusivity (“no entrance fee, everyone can participate”); one respondent was there “to celebrate Kallio identity” and another enjoyed music “in a communal atmosphere”. When asked who the respondents thought block party was for, again a marginal group (eleven people, or 4 %) included a moral dimension, one saying outright that it was for “the good ones”, another that it’s for the “Green Left” and a third one: “Everyone interested in culture and laid-back leisure time (those living in the metropolitan area might implicitly know that [it’s for] liberal and open-minded population)”. To these eleven respondents, Kallio Block Party was for open-minded “tolerants” who cherish a sense of community. However, when asked to pick 1-3 things that were most important in Kallio Block Party to the respondent from a list of suggestions (drafted based on my fieldwork and discussions with Kallio movement members), the results showed more support for the more “moral” motivations for taking part in the event:

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<sup>66</sup> The replies were, again, open-ended but I have categorized the replies only in two categories, to “moral-political motivations” and “others” (see Appendix III).

Figure 2. What is most important for you in Kallio Block Party, circle 1-3 options. N=320. The results are presented as total numbers.



By far, good atmosphere was the most important thing for participants in Kallio Block Party (253 votes), followed by sense of community (139) and that the event was free of charge (135). However, the locality and non-commerciality of the block party and the fact that it occupied urban space from cars shared the fourth place, all of them attracting 94 votes each.

What to make of these results? On the one hand, taking over urban space and non-commercialism, represented here by the categories “right to the city” and anti-capitalism, were important motivations and messages to the organizers but gathered only ten mentions from the respondents. Most respondents said they had come to the block party that day to have a good time and only few of them mentioned more ideological reasons such as “I’m interested in taking over urban spaces in a non-commercial way”. But on the other hand, the more ideological motivations to attend the block party were not absent, either: they could be read off the event if one wanted to. As one of the respondents said outright, there was an *implicit* assumption that the block party was for “liberal and open-minded people”, if one wanted to see it. This is perhaps the key to unlocking the message in Kallio Block Party. The event caters to those wanting a good, free party as well as those who have more ideological or political motivations. This double messaging is no coincidence but reflects the movement’s double understanding of politics, that enables it to claim to be non-



political while at the same time making an effort to prefigure certain meanings and values.

And what did Kallio movement members think of these results? In the last Kallio movement meeting I took part in, I introduced some of the survey results, such as the list of values I had made based on the respondents' open-ended replies to the question what Kallio movement's values were (see Figure 1). I told the participants in the meeting that the three most popular themes were "egalitarianism", "community" and "sustainability", and read out some examples of the responses under each theme. These replies caused a lot of excitement in the group, with many "oohs" and "aahs". Elina exclaimed: "We need to get these people on board! These are smart people!". The meeting attendees were clearly surprised and happy to hear so many block party attendees had recognized their values. This contentment with the results would imply that even the organizers themselves didn't perhaps expect that their values would be widely acknowledged or shared among the party-goers.

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Despite the fact that Kallio movement rejected the idea of direct representation, they still practiced collective representation but of a constructive nature since the representative performance of Kallio Block Party was thoroughly symbolic and constructed around its visual image and affects. With this performance, the movement was prefiguring a (somewhat) shared vision of another kind of Kallio. Therefore, the worries about a lack of common good (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101), crumbling of the public (Finn 2014, 391) and retreat into personal life worlds (Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021, 260) in local or DIY urban activism, and in individualized activism outside associations, are not entirely accurate. There was common good, but not the kind we are perhaps used to seeing in civic groups. While the movement declared itself ideologically and politically non-aligned, this chapter has shown that they denounced institutionalized politics rather than a notion of "the political". This double meaning of political and politics, as party politics on the one hand and as some kind of (often undefined) notion of everyday politics on the other, led to confusing situations where a Kallio Block Party organizer might have thought she was involved in non-political action but was told that in fact, Kallio movement "had always been political". To someone who thought she was taking part in a non-political event, a banner with a political message was a surprise but to someone else, who perceived Kallio movement as a political actor, the banner was a logical extension of the movement's political nature.

The same kind of confusion followed from the movement's double strategy with commercialism and sponsors, as sponsors were needed to make ends meet but at the same time the event was meant to look like it was non-commercial, meaning that the movement preferred sponsorship deals that enabled a minimum visibility for the sponsor, or "collaborator". This double strategy was not explicit (it might be difficult to explain and justify this kind of strategy), leading to mishaps. These confusions were results of the lack of open discussion. While Lichterman (1996) has shown that it is possible that groups that practice personalized politics, where individuals are "the locus of political action", value open discussions, personalism can also lead to the kind of discussion culture that Kallio movement practiced where, as noted in the previous chapter, they took the form of liberal grammar with practices such as Facebook votes instead of face-to-face discussions (see chapter seven). Individuality was valued to the degree that politics became close to a personal, private issue. In the "quiet activism" Kallio movement practiced, the members of the movement didn't feel comfortable with "preaching" or shouting things, but social change was pursued through showing an example by doing things differently. This kind of quiet activism led to a peculiar kind of prefigurative politics where what was prefigured was never openly discussed, but rather there was a reliance on an assumption that everyone shared the same moral-political valuations. This vague prefiguration also made the "reading" of the event a matter of interpretation for each individual party-goer. This kind of communication that ultimately leaves the interpretation to each individual is typical of social-media based connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019, 122).

Does this mean that there is no deeper ideological foundation and change orientation within Kallio movement (see Sivesind & Selle 2010, 98)? The answer is, yes and no. There was no explicit ideology, at least as it is traditionally understood, such as anti-capitalism. However, the movement's individualism and having no "ideologies" is already ideological in Kallio movement, even if it is not coined as such. Also, the non-confrontative performative style of Kallio Block Party was befitting of the "positive civil disobedience" (Santala 2013, 26) of new urban activism, and the style was more ideological in Kallio movement than it was in Right to Live.

Next, I will move on to analyze the representative performance of Right to Live, a protest that also sported a non-confrontative style but for very different reasons than Kallio Block Party. These reasons were, again, rooted in the protesters' precarious situation.

## 8.2 Right to Live: politicizing asylum issues and changing the public figure of the asylum seeker

If the previous chapter analyzed what was represented in Right to Live, this chapter illustrates *how representation was performed* (see Kohn 2013) and how this performative nature of the representation of the protesters/asylum seekers made the *representative performance* a contested issue. In other words, while Right to Live is an example of direct representation since it embodied the protesters' interests, the protest can also be examined as constructive representation since this embodiment of collective representation in the protesters meant that it mattered how they were represented.

A public performance, such as the Right to Live protest (camp), is symbolic work and requires active choices about who are seen as fit to represent and embody a group of people in the right style (see Talpin 2016, 59). In migrant protests, visibility has a heightened importance since occupation is not only about reconfiguring the public space and meanings related to particular places, as it is in Occupy camps, but also the public image of migrants and the visibility of hitherto invisible asylum seekers. In general, migration has become securitized, and thus also de-politicized, and migrant protests may be an effort to de-securitize migrants by politicizing migration. (Falkentoft et al 2014.) Asylum seekers can be perceived as politically invisible and mute objects since they lack the political rights of citizens (Nyers 2003) and by protesting – by making themselves visible (and audible) – they become political actors. Asylum seekers are often invisible also in the concrete sense, in the urban sphere, since they are usually accommodated in remotely located reception centres, and protesting in an urban sphere is a means for asylum seekers to be seen and heard in public space, especially when it is dominated by “threat imaginaries” (Haavisto 2020, 169).

This politics of visibility was one of the motivators for the protest for both Right to Live protesters and supporters. Asylum seekers had arranged a demonstration against deportations a few months before Right to Live with a march that attracted between 500-1000 people, many of whom were from Iraq, but this was hardly noticed in the media (Hevonoja 2016; Bodström et al 2021, 42; Horsti & Pellander 2018). This was why a more visible and drastic protest was called for:

*I thought I should sleep on the street until someone from the government would come and ask me “what are you doing here?” (Bodström et al 2021, 42).*

One of the key strategies of humanitarian organizations in support of immigrants is to alter the stigmatized and xenophobic public figure of the immigrant (Tyler & Marciniak 2013). This meant that the representative performance of Right to Live

had to take into account the cultural representations of asylum seekers, which was produced largely in the media and social media. At the time of the protest, the media often portrayed asylum seekers as either faceless numbers and statistics or as a security threat. The fears related to asylum seekers in the media were related to terrorism, sexual violence and other criminal activity, and immigrants were often illustrated as faceless masses (Kotilainen 2021). This pattern of visualization portrays a picture of asylum seekers as “voiceless and un-credible” objects of policies, incapable of giving accounts of their own situations. (Kotilainen 2021, 118.) Much of the Right to Live protest and its affective infrastructure (Näre & Jokela 2023) was focused on transforming asylum seekers from invisible and faceless numbers into visible subjects and individuals, and from something that is threatening into something that is friendly and non-threatening, and demonstrating that asylum seekers are people just like everyone else:

*They treat us as numbers and statistics, they don't think that we're people. That's why we're here protesting. [--] We may be of different colour, but we're flesh and blood. (A video posted on Refugee Hospitality Club 4.4.2017.)*

One of the supporters told me, that the idea of the protest was to show that asylum seekers had “eyes and mouths” just like everyone else, and that they were individuals with names. Another motivation was to harness support for the politicization of asylum issues from Finnish citizens. For these reasons, Right to Live was not a spontaneous protest but a carefully staged performance:

*At one point we started [thinking] with a few people, perhaps more us Finns, I mean I have studied a bit of communications and I constantly had a communications analysis going on that what is it that we're communicating, how does it feel when you walk past [the protest], what does it look like, what kind of discourses are being created. (A supporter, Mira.)*

In order to build and mobilize this support, and to alter the stigmatized figure of the asylum seeker, the performative style of Right to Live was non-confrontative and humanitarian rather than critical. Next, I will present this performative style in more depth.

## Humanitarian or critical performative style?

*Activists aim to challenge the status quo and stand apart from politics as usual, yet they yearn for legitimisation, which can pull them into politics as usual (Hansen 2019, 294).*

If protests want to get their political message through, they need to resonate and gain legitimacy within a society, especially migrant protests (Bloemraad 2018, 5) that

need to alter the xenophobic image of the migrant. This made the performance of Right to Live a balancing act: while voicing injustices and political demands, the protesters also had to play by the book to enable the continuation of the protest (see chapters nine and ten), to de-securitize the threatening image of the asylum seeker and to mobilize support and seek legitimacy. Therefore the question was, what kind of performative style would best serve these goals.

In migrant solidarity literature, two types of solidarity groups, or styles, have been identified, humanitarian and critical-Leftist<sup>67</sup>. These styles differ in how they perceive the root causes of migration; the role and agency of refugees in their precarious situation; the role of the state in migration; and more broadly, the civic imagination in terms of politics and the favoured modes of civic action. In Right to Live, both of these styles were present among the supporters of the protest, one emphasizing “(solidarity and) humanity” in line with the humanitarian approach and the other “structures and legislation” in line with the critical approach:

*Yeah, I think it's been interesting in the demo how people come from such different backgrounds. [-] For some it was about solidarity and humanity, especially for the people from the church and of course for some others, too. And then the kind of “free movement” that is about structures and legislation. [-] It was everything between Molotov cocktails and the power of prayer.*  
(Mikko)

Or as Jaakko said, “those who had done a lot of [anti-racist activism], and then those who come more from a humanitarian background”. Mira told me how there were “two groups of people” or “two opinions” in the representative performance of the protesters/asylum seekers:

*We kind of had two groups of people and two opinions on whether we should show that these people... That there's beauty, fun and kindness related to the protest, or whether it should just be a cry of suffering.*

Right to Live was a first and foremost a political protest that had a universal and structural claim about asylum politics and practices – characteristics that resonate with the critical-Leftist style of solidarity action. However, it was the humanitarian or “helping culture”, as Jaakko said, that became the dominant style in the performance of Right to Live. As in the “quiet activism” of Kallio movement, the way to gain legitimacy for the protest was not done by shouting but by aggressive chanting, and the soundscape of Right to Live consisted of (Arab) music and chatter instead. There was also no open criticism towards the police nor the role of the state in asylum issues, and supporters were mobilized with fun activities rather than

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<sup>67</sup> Or “charity” and “solidarity” (Hansen 2019).

protest moments. This style was also reflected in the name of the protest. As Jaakko told me, the difference between the humanitarian and activist styles existed “right from the beginning” as there were two parallel names for the protest – Stop deportations, suggested by Free movement network, and Right to Live, from people with a more “general humanitarian” background. Right to Live became the (more) official name for the protest after the first few weeks of the protest, although both names were still used. Hansen (2019, 294) reports similar kinds of strategic choices in the Swedish migrant solidarity movement, where the word “stop” was preferred to the word “anti”.

This humanitarian style was, on the one hand, a strategic choice for the following reasons. First, the protest had to be peaceful since the protesters were in an extremely volatile and precarious position and could not risk getting in trouble with the police (see Lewis 2006, 4–5) or tarnish the reputation of asylum seekers in the media. The counter protest and its provocations increased the inflammability of the situation, putting the future of the protest at stake. Second, the peaceful humanitarian style resonated with dominant ideas about the place of protest within the Finnish political culture. While there is a (growing) activist repertoire within the Finnish political culture, the majority of Finns do not participate in protests and spectacular protests are easily condemned (see chapter two; e.g. Luhtakallio & Wass 2023; Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023, Lindström 2012; Alapuro 1997). In other words, the way to make the protest resonate within the Finnish culture was to make the protest *not* look or feel the way protests usually do: not angry, critical or radical, but friendly and positive. The humanitarian style was thus meant to make the protest approachable in order to gain support from Finnish citizens and in order to construct a peaceful and friendly image of asylum seekers.

After Mira told me that there were “two opinions” on how the protest should be performed, she said: “I represented the point of view that [--] people passing by should feel like [the protesters] are just like me”. In other words, one goal of Right to Live was to make Finns relate to the asylum seekers. But what was this “just like me” like? It became evident that Right to Live was not targeted at an activist audience, one that is used to loud demonstrations and to taking a critical stance towards the state and the authorities, but rather at “normal people”. For instance, in a general meeting in May, one of the topics was how to attract more Finns to the protest when it had begun to lose its buzz and had quieted down. One of the supporters was enthusiastically trying to initiate brainstorming: “What makes people come there, not just activists? What makes my mother come there?”

On the other hand, the humanitarian style of performance was not entirely strategic, since it reflected the style many of the protest supporters were comfortable with, since they ended up having a lot of influence in the performance. This explanation is closely intertwined with the one above about the need to make Finns relate to protesters. Mira told me that she had not been to demonstrations before Right to Live, and that she was not comfortable with the aesthetics of (typical) protesting. She described to me what her first impression of Right to Live was when it was still in front of Kiasma:

*It had all the kind of elements of a demonstration that I find disagreeable, I mean there was aggressive shouting and a bit ugly tents and dirty<sup>68</sup>, and I [thought] heck, this is awful, this doesn't improve your image in anybody's eyes. And I said, can I offer my perspective, I don't want to... but maybe this kind of shouting, powerful scary shouting is perhaps not the best. Then we started thinking about what would be the [best] practices.*

Since Mira wasn't comfortable with aggressive shouting, she thought no other Finn would be either, and thus it would not "improve the [protesters] image in anybody's eyes". In other words, Mira assumed that shouting was not a good strategy. A similar strategy has been documented in Swedish migrant solidarity action, where the "fear of alienating "ordinary citizens as potential allies"" affected the way the movement formulated their message by, for instance, avoiding shouting (Hansen 2019, 294). Mira's reply also reflects the fact that many of the supporters had a background in humanitarian volunteer action rather than activism. In fact, a few of my informants described some of the supporters as conservative. While some clearly had an activist background and didn't hesitate in their criticism towards, for instance, the police, Jenni told me how some others would denounce "activism" and an activist identity: "I'm no activist!", as if "activist" was a swear word". She continued that some of her anarchist friends "felt that they're not welcome there".

However, while the backgrounds and the civic styles the supporters were familiar with probably affected the performative style of Right to Live to some degree, I argue that this style nevertheless had more to do with the asylum seekers' precarious position and was thus a strategic choice. For instance, while not everyone might have agreed with how Right to Live was performed, I never witnessed open disputes over it. Despite Mira saying that there were two groups and opinions, to an outsider the entire support network seemed united in their effort to support the protest. As exemplified in the previous chapter, "the common goal" created "a common front".

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<sup>68</sup> "Dirt" is further discussed in chapter ten. "Dirtiness" is one of the discourses Vikman (2020) discovered in the negative online discourses concerning Right to Live.

This becomes apparent as Mikko told me that after the demo, the differences between people reappeared:

*Of course when the demo ended last June, it in a way brought out again the differences. When people would go back to who they were.*

Also, the distinction between conservatives and activists, or those who favoured a humanitarian style over critical one, was hardly black and white. For instance Mikko, who identified as an anarchist said that “of course, it’s impossible to separate” between the styles he identified – “solidarity and humanity” and “structures and legislation” – and that “there are really radical actors in the religious bunch of people”. In addition, some of the supporters learned a new, more critical style of civic action during the protest spring, especially after losing their trust in the police as they witnessed how asylum seekers were, for instance, stopped by the police for no reason. This change of style of some supporters did not, however, reflect back onto Right to Live’s performative style, which goes to prove that ultimately, the peaceful style of the protest was about safeguarding the image of the protest and the protesters.<sup>69</sup>

Right to Live was not a spectacular protest (Juris 2008) but, according to my informants, it didn’t need to be since simply its visibility as well as its duration sent out a powerful message. Kati told me that there was no need for “protesting” because asylum seekers were now in a visible place for months on end and could not be ignored. However, Kati continued by saying that: “We did have quite many Stop Deportations demonstrations where people were shouting slogans.” During the protest spring, the forced deportations of refugees who had been denied asylum were beginning to take place at an accelerating pace. These deportations raised a lot of anger and concern among Right to Live activists and a created a perceived need to react. On April 3, there was an ad hoc demonstration against a forced deportation of asylum seekers to Afghanistan with hundreds of protesters launching a series of Stop deportations protests. These protests went under a different name than Right to Live (a name that was initially used in parallel with Right to Live) – Stop Deportations (which was used by those supporters with a more critical style of action). They took place outside the Right to Live protest site, initially at the airport

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<sup>69</sup> At times, this safeguarding had a paternalist undertone undermining the protesters’ agency. However, this discussion is out of range of this thesis.



where deportation flights took off<sup>70</sup>, since the protest site was a place for the representation of the protesters/asylum seekers, as the previous chapter illustrated.

The Stop Deportation protest I took part in at the airport in April was much more spontaneous, radical and less strategic in its performance and included angry shouting and, for instance, activists trying to block police cars that were (assumed to be) transporting the deportees by pressing their bodies against the cars, and some activists trying to climb over fences to the runway. This more critical style of protest was possible since Stop Deportations did not primarily represent asylum seekers and most of the protesters were Finns. In fact, in a slightly paternalist fashion, asylum seekers were advised to not take part in the protest since it might turn rowdy. (Many of the protesters did, however, take part in the airport protest.) Many activists took part in Right to Live as well as Stop Deportations protests, but much care was taken that these two protests were not conflated with each other, making it even clearer how important it was to maintain the peaceful image of Right to Live<sup>71</sup>.

The Stop Deportations protest in April was met with heavy policing and some activists were injured, causing a change in many of the Right to Live supporters' style. Mikko told me, "April 3 changed everything. It changed absolutely everything". The change took place especially in how the supporters perceived the police and whether it was ok to do something "risky" in a protest or not:

*I remember even that same day there was discussion how no one can do anything [risky]. [--] When it all happened, you've seen the videos from Pasila [the Helsinki police station], when the dogs are jumping and the [police] bashing with their batons, the shift changed. We were all in the same front. Now it's all upside down, those people who were saying that we can't do anything, are now saying that cops are fucking Nazi pigs. [--] Before that, I and many others had a reputation of just bad-mouthing the police. Then all of the sudden it changed, they all understood that we were bad-mouthing them for a reason. Before, people didn't see all the that, what they now thank god have seen, you know on those videos there are these crying people being dragged away and the police are hitting [them] and all this.*

In Right to Live, one of the dividing lines between the supporters' different styles was in how they perceived the police since, in general, the humanitarian style of solidarity action is less critical towards authorities such as the police and the state than the critical-Leftist style. In Right to Live, especially those with no experience in

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<sup>70</sup> After the first protests, the police no longer allowed demonstrations within airport terminals or entry ways. The Stop Deportations protests have since been arranged in the centre of Helsinki, but with much less protesters and media attention.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, to make sure Stop Deportations would not be connected to Right to Live, after the airport demonstration in April, everyone was told *to represent only themselves as individuals* and not Right to Live, in the following Stop Deportations protests, a similar strategy that had been used in the protest's support concert in March.

how the police deals with protests or racialized asylum seekers, were trusting towards the police. Losing this trust is not uncommon for migrant solidarity activists (see Toubøl 2019) and this kind of crumbling of institutional trust has also been reported by other studies dealing with Finnish citizens' encounters with asylum seekers (Merikoski 2021, 98; Pirkkalainen & Pöyhtäri 2022; Pirkkalainen et al 2022). Along this loss of trust, some of the Right to Live supporters' civic style was now changing. For instance, Eelis, who said he wanted to be seen in the protest as an "ordinary citizen" as opposed to an activist, continued by saying that his anarchism "is growing": "[I]n my fifties I see that yeah, this is the way to do it". He proudly told us, the interviewers<sup>72</sup>, how he had defied a police officer in a protest situation.

However, even if some of the supporters grew critical towards the police and were angry and disillusioned about deportations, they were expected to air this criticism only outside the Right to Live protest site. In other words, protesters and supporters were expected to switch styles according to the protest. This switching of styles further emphasizes the strategic nature of the performative style of Right to Live.

Next, I will describe how the performance was set up materially and then move on to discuss the "non-spectacular" daily rhythm of the protest where strategic and non-strategic, public and non-public, or civic and familiar, sides of the protest were unavoidably enmeshed.

## Setting the stage as "visually beautiful"

Kolehmainen and Mäkinen (2019, 9-10) describe how atmospheres may be created for online content by carefully setting the stage with colourful objects and by creating a positive atmosphere in order to capture smiling faces on Instagram. In Right to Live, the stage was set not only for online content but also for people passing by as well as the police and the mass media. The performance of Right to Live was set up against the dehumanizing discourse of threat that was prevalent in the media concerning asylum seekers and against the feeling of insecurity at the "Railway square" (see chapters nine and ten) that some passers-by had reported to the police. During the protest spring, the appearance of Right to Live shifted from looking like a (refugee) camp, with army tents and a campfire, and with chanting through a megaphone, into a more colourful and joyful performance without chanting.

My first visit to Right to Live that took place during its first week, when it was still in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma and had received an

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<sup>72</sup> Myself and Lena Näre.

eviction notice from the police as there had been complaints about the noise and smoke coming from the protest campfire. It was no coincidence that I was there that night as that was an evening of mobilization. One of the Finnish supporters, who was already fast becoming one of the key figures among the supporters, posted a call on social media to come to a “celebration of civic activism” and show one’s support for the protest. There were roughly about a hundred Finns there that evening and perhaps fifty protesters. The camp consisted of two army-style tents and there were stacks of wood that had been brought for the campfire that had, however, recently been changed into a charcoal grill due to the complaints about smoke. A few Finns I talked to during the evening were nostalgic about the campfire since it had created a camping feeling. Some of the protesters had grey army quilts over their shoulders for warmth as it was a chilly night. At one point, the protesters began chanting “Stop deportations” and “Iraq no safe”, led by one of the protesters shouting into a megaphone.

As one of the supporters, a migration activist who had been involved in Right to Live from the beginning, said in a meeting in March, the army tents had been symbolic, which is why they had looked the way they had. In other words, the appearance of the protest camp was a performance that was meant to carry certain meanings. It reads on the Right to Live Facebook event, updated in February: “Our protest tents represent detachment and a search for a home and safety” (<https://www.facebook.com/events/198690110609975>). Performing a camp and “sleeping” on the streets (actual sleeping was forbidden) was also a way to get the asylum seekers’ message through, something that the earlier, ordinary demonstrations had failed to do since they were hardly noticed by the media (Bodström et al 2021, 42). Tents and camps in general are used in protests and for instance, courts in the US have “repeatedly upheld the status of tents as a form of protected symbolic communication” (Feigenbaum et al 2013, 59).

Later in the spring, protest banners, with political messages such as “Stop deportations” and “Refugee is not your enemy – enemy is who makes them refugees”, were mixed with balloons and flower beds to counter the gloominess of the protest camp. One of the reasons for toning down the “camping” performance was the fact that Right to Live should not resemble a camp, since camping is forbidden in Helsinki outside established camping areas, putting the legality and thus the future of the protest at stake, as I will explain in chapter ten. However, it was also a means to de-securitize the protest and the protesters:

*I thought it was really important that it began to take shape as visually beautiful. That there are the slogans and the message there but that it’s not scary to step into. (Mira).*

The opinion Mira represented, that the protest should be “visually beautiful”, can be compared to how the protest began, as a loud performance of a refugee camp that was not meant to look nice, quite the opposite. Mira’s comment makes visible the conscious build-up of the protest site, the preferred visual style of the protest, and the message this visual style was meant to convey. The fact that Mira said that the protest should not be “scary to step into” is revealing. Perhaps any protest camp would be scary to step into but since the dominant media discourses about asylum seekers approached them primarily from the framework of safety, Mira’s comment can be interpreted to refer to this. If the purpose was to emphasize the safety of Right to Live (and the protesters), the way to do this was to make the protest “beautiful”.

The aestheticization of Right to Live was a recurrent topic during the protest spring. For instance, in March, there was a discussion about the fencing of Right to Live on one of the supporters’ Facebook groups. The fence was meant to mark the boundaries of Right to Live while at the same time making it accessible and appealing to passers-by. It became apparent in the discussion that the fencing was also a part of the visual performance of the protest and could be used to “freshen up the general appearance of the protest”. For instance, orange fences, often used on construction sites, were not considered sufficiently “nice looking”. Eventually, “Message on the line” was initiated, a string where passers-by and visitors could write their (supportive) message to asylum seekers on a piece of cloth. The discussion on the fence sparked a larger discussion about how to make the protest more “colourful, inviting, activating – not paralyzing or depressing” and someone suggested they could ask help from professional set designers and artists. Another supporter agreed and said that they should make the demonstration beautiful and have some kind of an arts and crafts day at the protest. This discussion illustrates how important the appearance and *literally the performance* of Right to Live was to the supporters – important enough to ask help from professional set designers.

What the discussants above suggest is that, in order to get more support, the protest should be beautiful, colourful and activating – the opposite of scary, depressing and paralyzing. The way to activate people would be to have an arts and crafts day – not, for instance, a protest moment.

In a general meeting in late April, tents were discussed again since there was a need for a new tent cloth. One of the supporters opened the discussion by saying that the tents should no longer be in “army colours”, and no one opposed this. Bright colours such as pink and white were suggested, although they were never realized. Bright colours and fun activities were meant to invite passers-by to Right to Live and

to create a favourable and non-threatening image of the protesters to contrast the faceless and threatening representations of asylum seeker created in the mainstream media.

Despite the best efforts to preserve the protesters' agency and ownership of the protest, the aestheticization of Right to Live was more actively driven by supporters of the protest instead of the protesters themselves – this power imbalance is, however, out of scope of this thesis. However, it is noteworthy that the joyful appearance of the protest was in stark contrast to the gloomy situation the protesters were in, as the below section illustrates.

## Performing gratitude

“These defiant young men clearly have no understanding of the meaning of law and justice and no respect for them” (Vikman 2020, 66). This is a quote from online discussions regarding Right to Live and shows one of the discourses the protest was set up to change. During my first visit to Right to Live in front of Kiasma, when the future of the protest was negotiated with the police, there was a sudden eruption by the protesters, chanting: “Thank you! Thank you!”. I was talking to a group of Finns at the moment, and we immediately assumed that the negotiations with the police had ended well, and the protest could stay. I was wrong: the police had decided that the protest should be dissolved. (This was not the final solution as the protest was allowed to be continued in another location, but we didn't know it at the time.) I was baffled by this chant since the police were currently trying to get rid of the protest. One of the Finnish supporters even got angry and asked one of the protesters why were they then chanting “thank you”. He replied it was because they wanted to thank the police for their protection in a situation where the counter-protesters and racist passers-by threatened the protesters' (and supporters') safety. As Amal told me:

*Anybody can come. Somebody can spit at you. Someone can shoot you. [--] Somebody can... anything could... Especially when I was there in the morning time there was nobody. [--] It was scary. We had a lot of trouble out there actually. [--] It was hard. [--] I also had an incident when I was myself alone, I was surrounded by three or four men poking me and pinching me like what are you doing here.*

The police was the only body the protesters could ask for protection. During the protest spring, there was, for instance, an attempt to burn one of the protest tents, leaving one of the protesters injured. The protesters were often followed after leaving the protest and, in general, they were under constant threat of racist attacks, especially by Finland First protesters. During the visit to Right to Live mentioned

above, one of the protesters I was talking to pointed out to me two men from Finland First who had ventured there from across the Mannerheimintie street. He had recognized them from before. The police escorted these men out while they were loudly asking what law their expulsion was based on, and how far did they have to go. After the episode, one of the protesters patted a policeman on the back as way of saying thanks.

However, there was more to the thank you chants than the immediate security of the protesters. During the first few weeks of the protest, after it was moved to the Railway square, again to my surprise the protesters would occasionally chant “Thank you Finland”. There were also several, large Finnish flags displayed in Right to Live. This performance of gratitude to Finland, along with the thanking of the police, becomes understandable if we see the position of refugees within the liberal tradition and one based on nation states. Moulin (2012, 60) argues that, in this tradition, humanitarian protection has the status of a gift and thus the logic of gratitude. He claims that, in this logic, refugees give away their liberty and autonomy and thus also their political subjectivity in exchange for safety. A critical stance towards the host society hampers this gift relationship, whereby the refugee is expected to repay the gift by showing gratitude: “by opting for a position that is eminently political, the refugees are crossing the thin, blurred line that might lead to the loss of the gift of protection” (ibid, 61). As Nyers (2003) claims, asylum seekers are political objects since they lack political citizenship rights. By using their voice, these objects are making not only making themselves visible but also exposing the invisible borders of (the state and) the society, posing a challenge to the state (Nyers & Rygiel 2012). Moreover, protesting is often the last resort by asylum seekers since this visibility also renders them vulnerable (Tyler & Marniciak 2013). Therefore, there was a constant need to balance between “latching on to existing order and challenging this order at the same time” (Hajer & Bröer 2020, 2). As Grove-White (2012, 421) asks, “how far can non-citizens stake their own claims to rights and recognition using political activism and social engagement?”. By performing their gratitude to the police and Finland, the protesters can be seen to be balancing the political agency and the criticism towards asylum politics they were voicing. (It is noteworthy that there was none of the chanting “thank you police” or “thank you Finland” in the more critical-style Stop Deportations protest I took part in April, since the protest was not meant to represent asylum seekers.)

Maintaining the façade in Right to Live required a lot of emotional work from the protesters, as becomes evident in the interview with Amal below:

*Majja: Did you feel like were you angry during spring or..*

*Amal: Of course. Each of us were angry [--], everyone had the same struggle and same trouble. Same thoughts. Mental breakdown [--].*

*Maija: But when you were in the demonstration you couldn't be angry there right? You had to put on a face and..*

*R: Of course. We really had to be like, calm. [--] Specifically it was one old woman. Every single morning she was coming. "Why don't you go back. Why don't you go back to your home. Why don't you protect your own country. You're young people. You can fight." I was like for god's sake. What's wrong with you woman. You want us to die or something. "No. My great grandparent was there and fought." It is not the same. [--] She didn't understand. [--] Our people were there dealing with aggressive people. [--] I was going between them. "Now calm down". [--] My only way was so simple. Do you want a coffee or a tea. I was asking. [--] That's how I handled it.*

The counter protest knew the position the protesters were in and deliberately tried to provoke them by breaching the rule laid out by the police that the protesters on each side should not go to the other protest. Finland First protesters were frequent visitors at Right to Live, trying to provoke the protesters and filming them on their phones. One of the protesters said in Helsingin Sanomat (Jokinen 2017) that "if [the racists] come here, they try to provoke us. We have to remain calm, quiet and not react in any way." Therefore, the rules made in and for Right to Live stated: "Don't provoke anyone. Don't be aggressive or annoy, or yell [--]". The performance of gratitude and the construction of Right to Live as an extremely peaceful protest was not only about securing the protesters' safety, they were also about making an effort to transform the image of the asylum seeker into one that is law-abiding and, as one does in Finland, respects the police. Right before the support concert and the threat of a "Cleansing" event by racists in March, a protester said in an interview in Helsingin Sanomat (ibid.) that "We trust the Finnish police and will not be provoked".

Right to Live's style resembled the humanitarian approach, one that aims for the integration of immigrants into the host state (Tyler and Marciniak 2013, 154). In contrast, the critical-Leftist style of solidarity action takes a more critical stance on nation states to begin with. The critical or autonomous approach contests state sovereignty and the category of citizenship as a "category of control" (Tyler and Marciniak 2013, 154), and these activists embed their action "in a wider context of structural criticism of neoliberal, post-colonial or capitalist structures" (Fleischmann & Steinhilper 2017, 19). Thus, like Kallio movement, Right to Live did not have this kind of anti-capitalist framing, they did not challenge the police, and they ceased chanting after the first weeks of the protest. The next section will explore what a protest without chanting looks and sounds like.

## The daily rhythm of Right to Live and the significance of duration

During the spring, the protest quieted down as the chants and megaphones disappeared altogether soon after moving location to the Railway square. According to one of the supporters, this was due to advice or a ban by the police. The Finland First counter-protest had called asylum seekers rapists and terrorists, and the police had to ban them from using megaphones. The two protests were treated equally by the police, and for this reason there would have been an equal ban on Right to Live. Moreover, one of the reasons for the eviction of Right to Live from Kiasma was the noise of the protest. As Kunreuther (2014) writes, the voice that subaltern groups use is easily interpreted as “noise”. Also, as noted above, some of the supporters didn’t think aggressive shouting was the best way to improve the asylum seekers’ image anyway.

The protest camp infrastructure provided the asylum seekers with continuity and safety, something they lacked in their life situation (Bodström et al 2021, 43), and as the protest continued month after month it became an established part of Railway square, a common-place (Thévenot 2014), familiar, affective and routine-like place for the protesters and their supporters. As the next chapters illustrate, the social (in)side of the protest (familiar regime) became more dominant in Right to Live throughout the spring. Since the protest was visible all the time (apart from inside the tents, see chapter seven), the performance was in principle on-going round the clock. Exactly how much it was a conscious and strategic performance, varied, however – and is impossible to pinpoint exactly. Moreover, some of my informants told me that it was simply the long duration of the protest and the visible presence of the asylum seekers as political actors within the public space, and the encounters with Finns this presence enabled, that conveyed the message of Right to Live. In other words, the daily life at the protest, despite not always being strategic, was politically significant. For this reason, I will briefly introduce the daily rhythm of Right to Live.

Mornings during the week were usually quiet, often with only protesters on site. Afternoons were more lively, as Finnish supporters got off from their duties, coming to the protest to bring supplies, to chat with the protesters while drinking a cup of tea, to talk to passers-by or the police, to keep track of the latest news and needs of the protest, to help them with their legal documents or teach them Finnish or English, or simply be present. Occasionally, there were groups visiting the protest. In March, I happened to be at the protest while a group of university students from another Finnish city were visiting Right to Live. They formed a circle together with



the protesters and played icebreaker games to get to know each other. Getting to know the protesters and hearing their stories was in fact one of the main forms of protesting: “We have come out of the reception centres to meet people face to face”, as it reads on a Right to Live press release published in March.

The evenings and nights were about passing time and keeping warm: playing games or sitting around a charcoal grill and talking or listening to or playing Arab music. I was at the protest one cold evening and gathered with a group of protesters and supporters around the grill while one of the protesters took out his phone and began playing Iraqi music. One of the protesters explained to me that the protesters were telling each other, in Arabic, stories of their negative decisions. The music and dancing at the protest can be seen as a form of lifting spirits but at times, they also had a political meaning. Brown and Yaffe (2014, 48) describe how singing anti-apartheid songs “in a foreign language” at the Non-Stop Picket in London in the 1980’s was itself a political act of solidarity. In Right to Live, playing Arab music in such a central place can be seen to have political meanings. However, the political dimension of music became even more evident in an episode that took place during the support concert in March. The festival ended with an Arab disco: loud Arab disco music accompanied with wild dancing. People all around me were smiling and laughing, everyone dancing and letting loose. Some of the protesters were lifted on each other’s shoulders and they were spinning their shirts above their heads. This was the kind of atmosphere one could find when Finland wins the world ice-hockey championships or the Eurovision song contest. The counter-protest (also much larger in size that day) began playing the Finnish national anthem loudly on their loudspeakers. On the opposite side of the Railway Square this was met with amping up the Arab music, along with people laughing and making fun of the counter-protesters. It seemed that people in Right to Live were having much more fun than Finland First with their solemn hymns. Music worked on two levels: symbolically, with meanings attached to the national anthem and Arab music, and viscerally, making bodies move and intensifying the shared affective and aesthetic experience (Wohl 2015; see also Ylä-Anttila 2017).

Even though sleeping was not allowed in Right to Live (see chapter ten), the police required someone to be present at the protest during the night. There were always at least a few protesters present, and there was always an effort to have Finnish supporters do “night shifts” too, since the risk of racist attacks and drunken, aggressive behaviour was even greater in the small hours. I did a night shift in May from 12 to 4 am. There were a half a dozen protesters and between three to five supporters present, some only stopping by, myself and another young Finnish

woman, Mirja, staying the entire time. Mirja told me she had already spent the evening at the protest and was not supposed to stay the night but ended up doing so after all. A middle-aged Finnish woman was spending time at the protest waiting for her daughter to come out of a nightclub, and another was passing through the protest on her way home and spontaneously ended up staying there a couple of hours, until four in the morning. We would pass the time chatting, learning to juggle and playing *mölkey*, a Finnish game similar to skittles. One of the Iraqi protesters, Rakim, persistently tried to teach me numbers from one to ten in Arabic. There were a few Finns, mostly men, who came to talk to the protesters and wanted to hear about their backgrounds and reasons for coming to Finland, some seeming genuinely interested and others more aggressive. However, that night was peaceful, especially for a Saturday night. There were only a few drunkards and none of them caused any serious trouble.

Occasionally, there was a special programme or events at the protest (see below), but after the buzz of the first few weeks, when there was no special programme or event at Right to Live, daily life seemed tedious and uneventful, apart from the constant looming threat of racist attacks. However, as already mentioned, some supporters told me that the protest didn't make an impact through a spectacular protest (Juris 2008) but rather through its duration:

*The most remarkable thing about the demo was specifically its duration. That [the protesters] just persisted. "We're here and we're not leaving Finland nor the Railway Square." (Merja.)*

The long duration signalled the protesters' perseverance<sup>73</sup>. Mira said that because of the visibility and durability of the protest, no shouting was needed to get the message across:

*[T]he message of the demo was, that we're not going to leave your sight. We will not go back to a reception centre, we exist and we come here before your eyes.*

The continuous and persistent appearance (see Butler 2015, 37) of asylum seekers in the centre of Helsinki sent out a powerful message: that they existed, the numbers and statistics in newspapers had faces and were people just like everyone else, and that they were impacted by the prevailing asylum politics and could not be treated as numbers. Immigration protests create (temporary) counter-spaces and spaces of visibility and recognition where the harmful politics of in/visibility (private visibility and lack of privacy combined with public invisibility) are reversed (Hinger et al 2018; Synnøve et al 2020a), in media and social media as well as in city spaces and among

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<sup>73</sup> A highly valued good in a country that brags about itself as the country of "*sisu*".

local residents (Johnson 2012, 125-6). This means that asylum seekers, who are usually out of sight in reception centres, become visible and a part of the urban structure.

Protest camps in general often garner sympathy (as well as bewilderment or even disgust) through the fact that protesters voluntarily leave the comforts of their homes (Frenzel et al 2014), and the hardship of the weather within the camping conditions made the message even stronger. The weather varied from below zero blizzards to rain, hard winds, and eventually sunshine. There are several mentions of frozen toes in my field notes and astonishment at how the protestors and some of the supporters managed hours of standing outdoors. “Shivering in a tent” meant that no one was protesting for fun:

*Shivering in a tent -- was really important because it sent the message that we really mean it.*  
(Mira.)

It was equally important that there were Finnish people present at the protest to show that there are Finns who support the protest. As Eelis said (see chapter seven), he came to the protest *to be seen*. However, the uneventfulness posed a problem since it was not inviting for potential supporters. Usually when one joins a protest, one knows what to expect: shouting catchy protest chants with others, perhaps holding a sign or a banner and usually marching along the streets. In Right to Live, there was none of these characteristics of a protest. Unless there was a special event at the protest site, the only thing one could do there was to stand and walk around, talk to the protesters and drink tea. In fact, one of the protesters said in a general meeting in May that it was especially the Finns who should do more protesting, for instance by holding a banner every day for fifteen minutes. However, for the supporters, protesting was not the primary solution for the problem of uneventfulness. The issue came up in another meeting in May when one of the supporters said that her friends would like to join the protest but didn’t know what to do there. In the meeting, the solution suggested was to get some games to the protest site, such as a pool or a ping pong table or table football and not, for instance, more protesting.

Playing games at the protest was a way of passing time and staying warm in camping conditions in the winter. “Passing time” had more meanings in the context of Right to Live than it had in a protest camp organized by citizens. Asylum seekers were in limbo, in a state of sustained precarity (McNevin 2020) and fear of deportation. They were subject to “slow violence” that has a negative effect on one’s capacity to act (Pirkkalainen & Horsti 2021). Amal described the time of the protest in the following way:

*[E]verybody's in pressure and pain and waiting and a hell lot of racist people come and shout at you and spit at you. [--] People were upset. People were tired. Some of us organizers who got negative decisions. [--] It was really hard time.*

From this perspective, games as well as the music played at the protest can also be seen as an effort to lift spirits or at least make the waiting time a little more bearable. Hinger et al. (2018) describe how anti-deportation activism not only tries to prevent actual deportations but also mitigates the harmful mental effects of deportability, such as isolation and insecurity.

For a protest camp to be able to continue, especially one organized by non-citizens, it needs support, or an affective infrastructure (Näre & Jokela 2023). This means that there must be structures for “practices of solidarity” (Brown & Jaffe 2014), interfaces that enable and invite people to show their support for the protest (Kohn 2013, 104). The protesters were usually always actively offering tea and coffee, perhaps also snacks or even warm food, to people who would stop by. This was a way to create a friendly atmosphere and public image, build relations and get more supporters for the protest<sup>74</sup>:

*The main idea of the coffee and tea was just to welcome people. No matter who you are or no matter where you come from. No matter why. Just come and drink and eat whatever you want. I remember many mornings we had a thousand homeless people coming [expression of exaggeration] and drinking tea and coffee. It was alright of course. No problem. That was the habit. That was the thing. (Amal, a protester.)*

This effort to build a warm and welcoming atmosphere was constructed especially in the counter-publicity already favorable to asylum seekers. A journalist in the periodical *Maailman kuvalehti*, published by Finnish Development NGOs Fingo, paints an idyllic picture of Right to Live:

*At the [Railway] square an Iraqi or an Afghan would bring a cup of tea right away, another would start singing and a third would add charcoal to the grill. Tea was served even to homeless people and those who had missed their bus.*

One of the means of mobilizing support and constructing the public image of Right to Live was holding events that interrupted the daily rhythm. Events were also a way to lift the protesters' spirits. There were numerous events and celebrations during the spring, for example two women's day events, May Day, a children's event and a support concert. These events were mainly devoid of actual demonstrating, apart

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<sup>74</sup> For some of the protesters, who after receiving their “second negative” had been declined the right to reside in a reception centre, the food offered at the protest was also essential for their daily life (Näre 2018).

from perhaps speeches or reading negative asylum decisions out loud, and their atmosphere was festive rather than aggressive. For instance, at a Women's Day event in May, the protest site was for women only and a visitor could for example get a henna tattoo, have a manicure, print a tote bag with the slogan "Refugee is not your enemy" or attend a knitting workshop. Meanwhile, supporters were entertaining children by taking them ice-skating at the rink on Railway square.

While the protest as a common place, with practices such as games and playing music, was meaningful in helping the protesters/asylum-seekers mentally, these familiar aspects of Right to Live, along with the fatigue and burn-out the supporters and the protesters were experiencing, caused it to turn inwards, threatening its character as a public protest (see Jasper 2014, 2). As chapters nine and ten show, this familiar side of the protest posed a threat of eviction since the police could interpret that it was no longer a public protest. In other words, the civic order of worth was again at odds with the familiar regime.

The last section of this chapter below deals with the different estimates the supporters of the protest and the protesters had about the outcomes of Right to Live.

## The outcomes of Right to Live and the role of publicity

Political protests are about publicity and visibility. This is clearly how the Finnish supporters thought about Right to Live: they thought Right to Live had been successful since it had raised asylum issues in public discussion and since ministers, parliament members and the head of Migri had visited the protest. However, the protesters felt that they were not being listened to and were disappointed since nothing had changed and was unlikely to, at least before a new government was elected. This frustration was one of the reasons why Right to Live continued as long as it did (Bodström et al 2021, 42). Amal, "the face of the demo" had difficulties seeing the significance of the protest and its publicity, at least from a political point of view since nothing had changed:

*[W]e had to focus on shouting and being outside. That really didn't help. [--] Deportations are still happening and still many people, my friends, are waiting.*

The above section illustrated how little shouting there was in Right to Live. Despite this, Amal said that publicity, or "shouting on the streets", made things worse since it made the protesters look bad:

*This is not about publicity. I actually felt more in trouble then because it went public. [--] It's all about the newspaper or what you see on TV. We are all framed in the TV. That's the*

*problem. [--] I really don't see any significant change. I didn't talk about that. That's why at some point of the demo I left. I didn't want to be the face anymore because shouting didn't change anything. It only made us look bad.*

The asylum seekers' visibility was not only a good thing, as Amal pointed out. Visibility made asylum seekers vulnerable to racist attacks and to the way media framed them: "it's all about the newspaper and what you see on TV", as Amal said. Contrary to what the politics of visibility promises, visibility doesn't guarantee access to political and legal institutions (Creech 2020). Amal said, as I asked him what he would do differently in hindsight, that he would "immediately go to the politicians".

Instead of publicity, Amal saw the significance of Right to Live in the individual help the protest could provide to asylum seekers: "Only thing you can do is help others." Fahim, a protester and a migrant activist (positioning himself as a protester as well as a supporter, as the below quote demonstrates) said that he didn't believe in a change in asylum politics but that it was important to give a voice to the asylum seekers:

*We just wanted to give them a voice and take their concern seriously even though it's hard when you look at the bureaucracy of it.*

However, he also said that one of the most important outcomes of the protest was that they were able to provide information to asylum seekers and thus give them with a sense of empowerment:

*I felt good that a lot of people, especially the asylum seekers, they received answers that they were looking for and they got to know the system instead of relying heavily on the lawyers because the lawyers were overwhelmed in many cases. [--] I was quite pleased that people found out how to take their own matters in their own hands and have a say in the decision making. That the lawyers should have their consent before sending that bill to the court. It should be read to them. [--] It was quite nice to pass this message across.*

Fahim was also happy that from now on asylum seekers would be interviewed in their own native language, something that had not always happened thus far. Apart from small improvements in asylum policies and practices, such as having the asylum interviews in one's own language, as they should have been to begin with according to the law, this political effort was not so successful, as Amal and Fahim point out, it was not as successful as providing individual asylum seekers with bureaucratic as well as mental support.

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Especially according to a Leftist critique (Zivi 2012, 74; Hansen 2019, 300), political claims ought to be universal, aimed at the structures of the society, and not particular, aimed at helping specific individuals. The distinction could also be made between practical “doing” (helping individual migrants in practical things such as legal issues) and political claims-making (political protesting against legal and political structures) (Zamponi 2018, 108-9, Passy 2001, 2011). However, several things set protests organized by asylum seekers apart from ones organized by citizens, most importantly the precarious situation of the protesters which meant that they could not afford to make universal claims or wait for long-term structural changes in legislation (Odugbesan and Schwiertz 2018; see also Zamponi 2018, 114; Milan 2018, 198), rendering distinctions made between universal (civic) and particular (familiar) claims less relevant.

Right to Live was a balancing act from beginning to end, on the one hand between performing a political protest and seeking legitimacy, de-securitizing asylum seekers and, as the next chapters demonstrate, safeguarding the continuation of the protest; and on the other hand, it was a balancing act between performing a political protest and helping asylum seekers mentally and with their asylum cases. The humanitarian style of performance was a compromise between these differing and even juxtaposing goals of the protest. As the examples of the more radical Stop Deportations protest at the airport, or the army tents and chanting at the beginning of Right to Live protest illustrate, there were alternatives to this humanitarian style, which again underlines the fact that the humanitarian style was a choice. How much of this was the *supporters’* choice lies out of the scope of this thesis, but it is clear that the supporters had a lot of influence in shaping the performance of the protest and that most of them favored this humanitarian style, for different reasons – some of them because they did not feel comfortable with a more critical and radical style of action, others for more strategic reasons. The strategic reasons are evidenced by the fact that even if some of the supporters, with a background in volunteering instead of activism, learned a more critical and radical style of action, the performative style of Right to Live was still maintained as peaceful.

However, the peaceful image of the protest was actively kept up also by the protesters. As chapter seven and the section on the protesters’ performance of gratitude showed, the protesters were very aware that when they were on the protest site, they represented asylum seekers and, despite feeling angry, had to “remain calm, quiet and not react [in provocations] in any way”. As Amal said in hindsight, the “shouting” made them look bad. On the other hand, the same protesters took part in the more radical Stop Deportations protest at the airport. During one such protest

I talked to one of the active protesters I knew from Right to Live, a young man from Iraq, and asked him whether he was aware of the discussion about the airport protest concerning the possibility that it might turn rowdy and that the Right to Live protesters/asylum seekers were advised (in a slightly paternalist tone) not to take part in it to avoid any trouble with the police. He said he was but that he wanted to take part nevertheless. This, too, goes to prove that the contextual settings of the two protests, Right to Live and Stop Deportations, mattered more in the protesters' performative style than any groups' or individuals' styles<sup>75</sup>. Right to Live represented asylum seekers and Stop Deportations did not, which afforded also the protesters/asylum seekers more freedom in their performative style in the Stop Deportations protest.

The different views concerning the outcomes of the protest reflect the different positions the protesters and the supporters were in. The supporters viewed positively the publicity and visibility that Right to Live raised, whereas for the protesters/asylum seekers, publicity and visibility were not only positive things as they put the protesters in a more vulnerable position. These different points of view regarding publicity also reveal the different expectations and political goals of the protest. Some of the protesters had clearly hoped that the protest would have an impact on institutional politics, but the supporters had the politics of visibility (see Creech 2020) in mind when they viewed the protest as successful.

### 8.3 Conclusions

Despite the fundamental differences between Kallio movement and Right to Live, especially in terms of their political nature, there were similarities in their performative styles. Both were infused with the virtuousness of neutrality, introduced in the previous chapter, giving non-confrontative performances with no shouting and no display of overarching ideologies such as anti-capitalism. In Kallio movement, this neutrality was an ideological decision: "Let's just keep this as an urban culture event that is guaranteed to suit everyone", as someone said in a Facebook discussion over the NGO tent, whereas in Right to Live, the neutral and non-confrontative style was, ultimately, more a result of contextual reasons. In both cases, there was a lot of focus on the materiality of the event, what it looked like, and what kind of message the materials displayed conveyed. For instance, tents were

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<sup>75</sup> In other words, the concept of scene style (Lichterman & Eliasoph 2014) is more apt here than the concept of group style (Eliasoph & Lichterman 2003).



discussed in both events. In Kallio movement, the tents were not allowed to display any party-political signs or association logos – but a banner that stated a (vague) political message in favour of more permissive asylum politics (but that also could be read differently) was accepted for display in Kallio Block Party. (In addition, sponsor logos should not be visible at a non-commercial event.) This double meaning of “politics” reflects the kind of politics that Kallio movement practiced, a pre-figurative kind, where institutionalized, big-P politics (Kennedy et al 2018) is avoided and the political message is, on the one hand, assumed to be shared by the assumed Left Green party-goers and, on the other hand, left up to each individual to interpret, as is typical in connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019). In Right to Live, the army tents were initially meant to represent the protesters/asylum seekers’ gloomy situation, but during the spring the appearance of the tents and the protest site were transformed into what was thought to be more inviting and less scary style, with bright colours and flowers. This transformation was strategic since one of the purposes of the protest was to “de-securitize” asylum seekers (Falkentoft et al 2014) and to gather support from Finns, but it is noteworthy that this strategy was still a choice.

The similarities in these two styles raises questions about whether there is something more that explains this similarity, such as non-confrontative performance as a strategy to gain legitimacy in Finnish political culture or as a post-political tendency in civic groups that are increasingly based on connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019, 122).

## 9 VALUING CIVIC ACTION, VALUING URBAN SPACE

The chapters thus far have explored the two civic groups' dominant logics and styles of action and showed that Kallio movement was balancing between the different sides of "individualism", the world of inspiration, the regime of engaging in a plan and the kind of individualism that is valued within the civic world of equal citizens, while Right to Live was juggling the regime of familiar attachments and civic world. These regimes of action were visible in their ideas of representation, as well as in their representative performances. This chapter takes a step back and looks at the relationship between Helsinki's local public authorities and Kallio movement and Right to Live, respectfully.

Chapter five explored what kind of civic action was valued within the civic groups, but through which order of worth did the actors in these two movements approach the authorities? The latter valuation can be at least partly described as justification: how did the two groups justify their actions to the authorities and what do the justifications used by the two groups tell us about them? On the other hand, I ask in this chapter how – through which regime or order of worth – did the City of Helsinki and, to some extent, the police evaluate Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party, and Right to Live? Through this latter question, it becomes possible to decipher the moral order in the current Finnish society in terms of how different civic practices, and civic actors themselves, are valued or de-valued. This valuation is not only discursive but also concerns the public image of the city. According to Kohn (2013, 104), disputes over protest camps reveal "what the public should look like", and for instance online discussions about the Right to Live protest focus on how it appears and what it signals about Helsinki and Finland. Some comments revealed a fear that the protest would make the streetscape look "non-Finnish" (Vikman 2020, 69-76). This kind of valuation can be applied to all visible, public action, such as block parties. What does Helsinki want to look like in the 2000's?

What sets the analysis of the evaluation of the two movements apart is their temporal difference. Kallio Block Party has, in practice, been arranged each year since 2011, whereas Right to Live was a unique event. I was able to conduct an ethnography study in Kallio movement for two years and can thus describe the

overall evaluation of the movement (chapter nine) and analytically isolate a test moment (chapter ten), in which the good relations between the movement and public officials were placed under a test. The entire Right to Live protest, again, was a test in itself. However, this chapter introduces the reader to the protest's valuation scheme and focuses on the valuation of the protesters, representatives of Iraqi and Afghan asylum seekers. While in other chapters I have looked at supporters of Right to Live, in the two subsequent chapters, the focus is on the protesters since they were the subject of public officials' evaluation. This chapter shows that the valuation of Kallio Block Party and Right to Live as events is impossible to separate from the organizers of these two events.

The temporal difference between the two movements was also significant to the public officials' evaluation. Over a decade, Kallio movement has established itself as a well-known, "trustworthy" civic actor also among public officials. Building a reputation as well as personal relationships with public authorities is not inconsequential. While Finland ranks as one of the least corrupt countries in the world, it is a small population in which networks of power and influence are almost unavoidable (Niska et al, forthcoming). One of the components in these networks is trust. Finland continuously ranks high on measured levels of trust towards the political system, public officials such as the police, fellow citizens (Jackson et al 2019) and even the media (Newman 2022). "Public trust is a cornerstone of the Finnish administrative and political model", as an OECD report (2021) states. However, trust seems to be unequally distributed, especially along the citizenship divide, as the comparison to Right to Live suggests.

Right to Live wanted to be perceived through civic worth, as political actors able to construct a peaceful protest. Officially, in interviews and newspaper articles, public officials, mainly the police, valued Right to Live protest and protesters as civic, but in practice they were ultimately framed through security, a regime that is reserved for those not qualified as full citizens. In contrast, as the Helsinki City Chief of Preparedness explicitly said, Kallio movement or Kallio Block Party "have not been seen as safety issues". Kallio movement wanted to present itself as a movement of capable and trustworthy citizens, but also as a special case among other civic actors. It approached the City through negotiations and making deals, emphasizing its civic as well as market worth. Both of these orders of worth were appealing to the City as Kallio movement, and Kallio Block Party, were valued through their ability to construct a favorable, vibrant image of Helsinki (market worth) but also as model students of active and responsible citizenship (civic worth).

In addition to changes in the overall evaluation scheme in urban politics (Leth Meilvang et al 2018; Pattaroni 2015), political systems are undergoing a change from bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of governing to a system of horizontally-organized network governance that includes politicians, public bureaucrats, the markets, and citizens (Sørensen 2002). On a local level, "instead of a commanding ruler, [authorities] are expected to become enabling and co-operative actors" (Häikiö 2007, 2148). At the same time, citizen participation is emphasized (ibid.). However, these two models of governing/governance are likely to overlap (Sørensen 2002; Häikiö 2007), as can be seen in the comparison of Kallio movement and Right to Live. The interaction between public officials and Kallio movement can be characterized as network governance, with Kallio movement members approaching the City horizontally, expecting cooperation, whereas Right to Live was governed primarily through control.

## 9.1 Kallio Block Party as a flagship of active citizenship and a vibrant city

The valuation of Kallio movement cannot be separated from the overall change in urban culture and policies in Helsinki, both of which have undergone a significant change during the past forty years (see chapter two). This change is due to communication technologies such as the use of social media, grassroots initiatives, and the City of Helsinki's urban policies. I asked the Deputy Mayor, who at the time of the interview said he had been involved in local politics in Helsinki for "33 years", how he thought urban activism and the City's take on it had changed, and he replied at length about how there is now "more and more everything, festivals and events" and how city residents no longer wait for the City organization to organize activities, they do it themselves:

*I remember when I was young, I thought that the City should organize activities, and probably many others did too, and it was a time when the word "City" meant this organization [--], now the meaning is much more about citizens or being active in the city.*

Another change he noted was echoing the ideas of networking governance (Häikiö 2007), that the City has taken on a role of "support and helper":

*The City's role is increasingly a kind of support and helper in the activities organized by citizens. So there has been quite a change.*

As proof of how the City's perspective towards citizen initiatives has changed for the positive, the Deputy Mayor brought up in the interview that, from his suggestion, a well-known urban activist would receive a Helsinki medal that is given each year to established citizens. Kallio movement was the apostle of a new kind of active citizenship that, despite posing new kinds of challenges to local authorities, was in general praised by all. As I will show in this chapter, this kind of citizenship is built on a composition of civic worth and the regime of engaging in a plan and is not celebrated for its radical critique or for its ability to bring issues up for discussion (as in public justification) but rather for being (pro)active in organizing events and activities, in the spirit of positive and active citizenship, without causing disruptions or directly confronting the authorities.

On the other hand, Kallio movement and new urban activism in general were valued through the market world for building a vibrant image of Helsinki and thus attracting international attention and tourists. I would hear stories of hotel staff recommending that their international guests visit Kallio Block Party, and international tourists praising the event as "better than Brooklyn" or Berlin.

However, practical cooperation with the City and the police during the organizing phase of Kallio Block Party was built on good relations between the authorities and Kallio movement members, getting to know the right civil servants personally, and building trust through the event's good reputation. Especially in comparison to Right to Live, it is noteworthy that Kallio movement no longer had to negotiate with the police, and, to my knowledge, there were no dealings with the police during my fieldwork. Those rare dealings with the police were focused on making sure that all the safety regulations were taken care of and that, for instance, there was the required amount of security personnel.

I will begin the analysis by looking closely into the relationships between Kallio movement members and public officials and continue to describe how, in general, Kallio movement was valued through composites of civic order of worth combined with regime of engaging in a plan on the one hand, and market worth on the other, by the authorities as well as the movement itself.

## **Building a good reputation, trust and personal relationships**

The organizers of Kallio Block Party had to deal with the City of Helsinki on several occasions during the organizing process of the festival. Mostly, these dealings were impersonal as necessary documents and applications, such as an event permit, had to be filled online. Occasionally, however, a meeting with civil servants was required. In general, it was not difficult to book a meeting with civil servants, despite their

busy schedules. For instance, the organizers might have suggested a meeting with civil servants from departments such as the Buildings Bureau in case there were problems in the organizing process, as explained later in the analysis. Also, the traffic arrangements were negotiated each year in a face-to-face meeting with a civil servant from Helsinki Region Transport, a publicly owned local authority. “Negotiation” was, however, not the right word to describe the meeting I took part in 2018. I was among a three-women delegation to Helsinki Region Transport office (HSL in Finnish) to discuss the public transportation routes that would have to be redirected on the day of the block party. It was our first time taking part in this kind of discussion with HSL, so we were all nervous about how we would manage to sell our plan to them. When we arrived at the office building, a civil servant, a middle-aged man, greeted us in a friendly manner and offered us coffee from a vending machine. As we were walking towards the meeting room, he made a joke that he was afraid to hear what we had in store this year, but the joke was made in a friendly tone. As we reached the civil servant’s office, we went to the agenda right away and the meeting only took us fifteen minutes. There was no selling on our part, and no negotiations were necessary, we simply informed him which streets would have to be closed to public traffic on the given date and time. We left the meeting baffled at how easy and fast it had been.

Janne had been active in Kallio movement from the early years and had seen how the City’s and police’s attitude towards them had changed. He said that there were no problems with the City officials and the police because Kallio movement had gained their trust by doing things right:

*We’ve thought and talked about it, but one reason is surely, I’ve noticed, the fact that the City, like the police, really think that we have our act together. So we’ve gained trust like that.*

In the negotiations with the civil servants and the police, the worth of Kallio movement members and block party organizers was based on its “trustworthiness”, worth based either on familiarity or fame, where what matters is reputation and the opinion of others (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 178).

In 2018, I was among a group of block party organizers, Elina, Antti and Susanna, who had a meeting at the Urban Environment Division about the Kallio Block Party festival area in 2018, which will be explained in more detail in the next chapter. There were three civil servants present, two from the traffic department and one from the buildings department, who were responsible for permits in public areas. The officials from the traffic department said that, during the festival, the organizers should use arrows to indicate the alternative routes on the roadblocks. The organizers said that they hadn’t used arrows before since they’ve always had traffic controllers, even

double the amount required, and that they've not been "summer temps but real professionals". One of the civil servants then replied: "You've arranged so many events, you've got this". The civil servants no longer brought up the question about arrows and the matter was settled. Clearly, by being an A student, Kallio Block Party, and Kallio movement organizing it, had a good reputation, as Janne said:

*As soon as they saw that this group of people is able to arrange events where nothing [bad] essentially happens... I mean even with the police, prior reputation matters a great deal, so now that we're in a situation where we have for years been organizing bigger and smaller events and systematically the evaluation has been such that there has been no significant misconduct or accidents, so the police is realistic about their demands [regarding e.g. security officers].*

Because of their good reputation, Kallio movement no longer had problems with the police. In the meeting at the Urban Environment Division, one of the three civil servants present asked whether we'd already been in contact with the police about the event. Elina mentioned the name of a police officer, and that "he knows us". After the meeting I asked jokingly how a policeman knows her, and she joked back that she should be on "the green list" (as opposed to a blacklist).

This good reputation and being on good terms with public officials were also among the reasons why Kallio movement wanted to keep doing things by the book. I asked Janne whether the option was ever discussed within the movement that no permits would be applied for, and he replied that it has been discussed but that it has always been self-evident that the movement wants to "do things right and in cooperation with the City":

*Sure, there are also those who would prefer to do this as an event that happens, kind of like some, Restaurant Day and what have you, Cleaning Day and others like that, that just happen naturally, so that not every sub-event would have a permit. Or like street occupations that by definition just happen. But I mean Kallio movement is in such good terms with the City, and it's true that it would be crazy for Kallio movement to jeopardize their relations with the City and their reputation by organizing too big events without permits.*

In other words, the City and the police were friendly with Kallio movement because the movement did things by the book, and as the movement now had a good reputation among the officials and the police, it had to keep on doing things by the book. While "pushing the limits" was one of the most important values to some of the Kallio movement members, as I will explain in more detail in the next chapter, these limits could not be pushed too far, as that would risk losing the good reputation of the movement.

In addition to good reputation, personal relationships with authorities seemed to play a part in the smoothness of the organizing process. It was no secret that some

officials, especially in departments such as the Buildings bureau, whose primary task is not to encourage civic action and urban culture but to make sure regulations concerning the use of urban space are met, were more favorable towards a more creative use of urban space than others<sup>76</sup>

*Yeah, we learned pretty early on that there are differences between the authorities. And maybe we learned to expect to get to speak to a certain person. (Janne)*

Having personal relationships with the authorities, and benefitting from these relationships, goes against the civic ideals of equality among citizens and the idea of Finland as a non-corrupted country (Kukutschka 2021). Janne was also critical towards the significance of personal relationships between Kallio movement activists and the City officials he had noticed:

*I think there is one clear point of critique towards the authorities and that is the fact that at one point, personal relationships gained too much importance. Of course, one shouldn't complain when things go well for us, but in large I think it's problematic if a particular fire inspector or a particular authority of Public Works Department gets to know that "hey, these people are trustworthy", and then when the same person calls again that "hi, we'd like to do this and this, will this work", of course it's nice for that person but I would like to see a city where the service would be the same, no matter who calls.*

This criticism could have been based on ideals from the civic world of justification where everyone is treated equally. However, Janne referred to the relationship between citizens and the City officials as "service". A service is something a paying customer receives and is thus in the domain of market world. While the market worth is present in the above quote only in passing, it reveals something of the civic imagination of Kallio movement. Next, I will turn to look at how Kallio movement valued the City of Helsinki, and vice versa, through two regimes that are closely linked to one another: the regime of engaging in a plan and the market order of worth.

## Building a vibrant city through active citizenship

Janne echoed what the Deputy Mayor told me about the changing role of public officials into one of "helper and support" by saying that "the City officials aren't in the position of a master" anymore since citizens have been empowered to think that "the city is for citizens" and act accordingly. This kind of "shared senses of

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<sup>76</sup> In a public seminar titled "How can and do citizens participate in the building of their city?" in 2015, the Deputy Mayor of the time, responsible for urban planning, said that in addition to legal boundaries, it was up to the individual civil servants' attitudes how urban activism was governed.



commitment and responsibility” between the City authorities and urban dwellers (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, 30) is emphasized in the current urban policies whereby civic worth is deeply entangled with market worth and liberal grammar.

In the meeting at the Urban Environment Division about the festival area of Kallio Block Party in 2018, we had to wait in the lobby to be escorted to the meeting room, and the civil servant responsible for this was late. We noticed how other groups that had been waiting in the lobby were already being escorted to their meetings. Susanna said: “They’re doing this on purpose, this is about use of power”. Elina walked up to the reception for the second time and asked whether the civil servant was coming. The reception personnel replied that she was on her way and that it was a small wonder she even reached her on the phone – apparently, she was very busy. Finns are often meticulous about time and schedules, but Elina’s irritation seemed unreasonable since the meeting was by that time only five minutes late. The civil servant arrived at the lobby some ten minutes late from the scheduled time. She shook hands with us and escorted us to an elevator, glancing at her watch and saying: “Oh, did the previous meeting take this long?”. However, she did not apologize. Instead, she said she was in a hurry, to which Antti replied: “We all are”.

The delegation of Kallio Block Party organizers was acting the opposite of humble citizens who are being generously granted a meeting with the authorities. Instead, they acted as equals with the City authorities, and their time was as important as the time of the civil servants. This kind of stance resonates with liberal grammar which, in principle, assumes an equal position among all parties in a negotiation (Cheyns 2014; Thévenot 2013). It would be difficult to imagine Right to Live protesters attending a meeting with the City officials with a similar kind of self-confidence. Indeed, to practice DIY urbanism requires “a strong sense of self-entitlement” (Douglas 2014, 17). Confidence is supported by the facts that DIY urbanism is typically middle-class and a typical participant, in the Finnish context, is in their thirties or forties (Monti and Purokuru 2018, 284; Mäenpää & Faehnle 2021, 85). Nearly everyone in Kallio movement was also a white, native Finnish speaker.

This belief in negotiations among equals was also visible in another meeting between Kallio movement members and Helsinki City officials in 2017, a meeting that also unearthed how some of the movement members justified their work in arranging Kallio Block Party through market order of worth. Another delegation of Kallio movement, all three of them long-term members of the movement, Alex, Ada and Janne, had a meeting with three civil servants from the City’s tourism bureau Visit Helsinki and the Buildings department, and the Head of Culture and Leisure sector, whose office the meeting was held at and who led the meeting. Kallio

movement had asked for the meeting in order to ask City officials to provide help in organizing Kallio Block Party because, according to the movement members, the event was growing bigger each year and the organizers had too much on their plate and were growing tired, and because the city benefitted from the event since it boosted Helsinki's image. The Kallio movement members suggested that the City provide material and practical infrastructure for the party, such as cleaning services, portable toilets and traffic arrangements. The Head of Culture and Leisure sector began the meeting by asking why Kallio Block Party should receive special support from the City, since according to legislation, the organizer of an event has the responsibility for the things the delegation was asking from the City. Alex responded by saying that Kallio Block Party was a gift to the city residents, but that currently, the City asked for a "triple gift" from the organizers, meaning all the work the organizing required. Ada continued by saying that Kallio Block Party was the "most cost-efficient" way to organize "amazing events" since everything was done for free, taking up "more than a half a year's work". "Helsinki would not get better value for money". The delegation explained that the organizers of the party were exhausted and that there had been discussions about taking a year off from organizing the event. They said that Kallio Block Party was what the taxpayers wanted so supporting the block party would be a good way to spend public money. "Where will taxpayers be on August 5th" [the day of Kallio Block Party that year], Ada asked. The organizers also justified the worth of Kallio Block Party by appealing to the good reputation the event has abroad. Ada said: "There's people coming from the US saying that this is better than Brooklyn, that's why we're asking help from Visit Helsinki." There was apparently no need to explain further why, according to some Americans, being "better than Brooklyn" was valuable, as having a good reputation abroad was self-evidently a good thing. Placing a price tag for the volunteer work done in Kallio Block Party was in stark contradiction with the ethos of unpaid *talkoo* work, non-commercialism and DIY.

If Kallio movement members valued the City as a service provider, through market worth, this valuation was at least partly mutual. Kallio Block Party was also valued through its market worth, especially through the added value it brought to the image of Helsinki in the global competition over tourists and good taxpayers (see chapter two). Maria told me that she had heard from old-timers that there has been a generational shift in the City bureaus and while the organizers had had to "wrestle" with "cranky old men", nowadays there were people "[her] age", in their thirties, and that

*they just love us. They're just like "yes, yes". Anything goes. They also want to use it to market... I mean for instance My Helsinki which is the Helsinki tourism thing. [--] In general, I think it's written in the Helsinki tourism strategy that Helsinki is marketed as a city where there are these small events that are nice and [Kallio Block Party] is the biggest of these volunteer-based events. They like us.*

Janne echoed Maria's account of how the City of Helsinki's attitude has changed for the better:

*Before, in the City [organization], there was the mentality that the first answer to everything was "no" and "no can do" but now, gradually, I have to say that as far as I can see, their stance is exemplary positive.*

The urbanization of Helsinki in the cultural sense in the 1980's was initiated by grassroots actors but has also been fostered by the City authorities for economic purposes since (urban) culture has been acknowledged as a powerful economic driver (see chapter two). As Lehtovuori (2005, 178) writes,

*It would be mistaken to believe that [the post-1989 urban cultural change] was only a grassroots phenomenon or "blind", contingent process. On the contrary, to a large extent it was a planned initiative, the urban policies of the City of Helsinki consciously fostering the changes.*

According to Lehtovuori (ibid), events have had a significant role in the urbanization process from above: "urban events were promoted to address the perceived lack of vibrancy of Helsinki and to boost its image as a nice, lively urban place". In fact, one of the goals of the urban policies has been to get people on the streets to create crowds and an urban and "European" feel, and to reinvigorate the "dead public space" Helsinki was still seen to have in the 1980s and '90s. (Lehtovuori 2005, 178-9). The City's former tourist bureau, Visit Helsinki (currently MyHelsinki), has in fact used images of Kallio Block Party in its marketing (Visit Helsinki 2014). The image used on its Twitter account portrays masses of (young, white) people on the streets, dressed in colourful summer clothes with the sun shining. The main idea of the image seems to be to demonstrate that there are crowds on the streets of Helsinki and that the city is lively and buzzing and thus the place to be.

Market worth has thus become a yard stick through which civic action is valued and that guides urban policies (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, 16). However, civic worth has not disappeared. In the meeting above, regarding the role of the City in organizing the block party, the civil servants tackled the market worth justification by explaining that, for instance, cleaning services would be more expensive if they were provided by the City. However, they changed the register of the meeting into civic justification and stayed in that register persistently, brushing off the market

justifications as irrelevant in the context of the equal treatment of all citizens. The civil servant from the Buildings bureau explained how the Helsinki City strategy of a “fun city” obliges the City to support events and that it already does this, it supports “forty events”, and asked for the Kallio movement members to provide them with a justification of why the block party should be a special case among other events. “The [Buildings] board will be asking for a justification”, she said. The delegation of organizers also switched to civic justification, saying that the way of organizing the block party was “participatory” since every year there were newcomers who “came to learn responsibility”, and that the organizers were “proud amateurs”. This justification was not sufficient for the civil servants who said that they receive similar kinds of requests from organizers of other events. They continued that for now, they were not ready to treat the organizers unequally since the “bureaucratic machinery was built on the principle of equality”.

These kinds of justifications that are based on equal citizenship are civic justifications par excellence. However, this traditional civic justification was also paired with liberal grammar, world of projects, that would provide the City with a justification to provide assistance to Kallio Block Party over other similar events. The civil servants urged the Kallio movement members to come up with specific “tabs”, “something extra”, an emphasis or a project related to, for instance, the environment to provide grounds for special assistance. The civil servants tried to suggest avenues, or participation formats (see Leth Meilvang et al 2018), for assistance that were, in principle at least, equal to all citizens and groups, such as the “OmaStadi” participatory budgeting, or building an alliance of several events the City could then cooperate and negotiate with. These kinds of participation formats are based on the idea of individuals in a liberal public, stakeholders who are joined together by common interests, instead of critical citizens striving for the common good. European-wide urban governance has solved the problem of differing voices by constructing participation formats based on liberal grammar (Pattaroni 2015; Eranti 2018) that tame conflicts by reducing them to interests or personal preferences, turning “troublesome urban citizens” into “manageable and resourceful”, “creative urban user[s] and interested stakeholder[s]” (Leth Meilvang et al 2018, 33-4). This is the kind of citizen that fits into project-based public-private urban planning and policies that skip the discussion and justification phase and aim directly at implementation (ibid, 19). It is no coincidence that this kind of citizenship, infused with liberal grammar, dominated both the City of Helsinki’s take on Kallio movement and vice versa. As Douglas (2014, 10) claims, DIY urbanism is both “a reaction to and a product of the structures and processes that define the

contemporary city”, with its emphasis on participation as well as its neoliberal undertones. While DIY urbanism takes participation steps further than the official participation formats such as hearings and letters provide, “this shift towards a citizen-based model has been influential in shaping DIY practitioners” view of what is “possible [–] in the shaping of urban space” (Finn 387-8).

Along with a larger wave of new urban activism, Kallio movement has indeed broadened the possibilities for the use of urban space for Helsinki city residents, at least in some respect and for some residents, as Janne told me:

*For sure it's not insignificant the work that Kallio movement has been doing, surely it's not just due to Kallio movement that it says so in the strategy but if we look back 5-10 years and rewind to the City's attitude today, then for sure it has mattered that Kallio movement has been doing things. Today, it's normal for the City that these types of non-typical actors [non-registered organizations] contact them and announce they want to arrange something in the city, and the City has some kind of a stance ready about how to deal with them.*

The City has attempted to lessen the bureaucracy related to, for instance, arranging events and selling food and Helsinki's strategy states that “Helsinki makes its permission and organizing principles lighter so that it is easier to organize different events” (The City of Helsinki 2017).

One of the efforts of the urban policies in the City of Helsinki has been to attract people and vibrancy into public spaces. However, what kind of people and what kind of vibrancy are on the streets and squares matters, as the next part of this chapter illustrates. The performance of Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party were met with light governance whereas Right to Live was subjected to governing.

## 9.2 Right to Live and “the Railway square” as threats to public safety

Kallio movement was regarded as a trustworthy party and as such, it hardly had to deal with the police anymore and could negotiate with the City of Helsinki in a cooperative spirit of network governance. The picture of Right to Live is quite the opposite: the protesters and supporters negotiated primarily with the police and were subjected to control and governing. From the point of view of the City officials and the police, Right to Live (and the opposing Finland First) raised issues concerning cleanliness, the protesters' as well as passer-by's (experienced) safety, land use, especially concerning other events at Railway square, and the definition between camping and protesting. What differentiated the valuation of Right to Live from

Kallio Block Party were two things in particular: first, Right to Live was a political protest and second, it was organized by non-citizens, both of which configured in the valuation of the protest, which was carried out mainly by the police. If Kallio movement was valued as a hybrid of civic and market worlds and the regime of engaging in a plan, Right to Live was ultimately valued through public safety, a compromise between the civic and industrial worlds (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 331). In Right to Live, industrial worth was emphasized at the expense of civic order of worth.

As the previous chapter pointed out, immigrants and Muslims are framed through securitization and threat and face heavy policing (e.g. Himanen 2019)<sup>77</sup>. Therefore, the valuation of Right to Live cannot be analyzed without taking into account the regime of citizenship (and non-citizenship), race and racism. European cities are racially structured (Fassin 2017; Picker 2017): “race is about space”, as Fassin (2017, xii) phrases it. In Helsinki, race, ethnicity and citizenship status are visible in several ways. Despite its preventive social mixing policies from the 1970’s onwards (Vaattovaara et al 2010, 70; Dhalmann & Vilkkama 2009), Helsinki is witnessing growing rates of socioeconomic, and thus also racial, segregation (e.g. Dhalmann & Vilkkama 2009). The police have been found to stop people in the city space based on ethnic profiling and East European street workers face continuous evictions (e.g. Himanen 2019; Keskinen et al 2018). In addition, asylum seekers are in practical terms confined to reception centres, that in Helsinki, as in many other European countries and cities, are located peripherally, “out of sight”, negatively affecting the asylum seekers’ possibilities for (voluntary) mobility and participation in the local community (Kivijärvi & Myllylä, 2022)<sup>78</sup>.

In addition, the valuation of Right to Live was at times difficult to separate from the valuation of its counter-protest Finland First. In the media and in dealing with the public officials, Right to Live was contrasted to Finland First. The two protests

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<sup>77</sup> In online discussions, Right to Live was heavily framed by the protesters’ immigrant status: the protest was perceived as a threat because the protesters were foreigners. (Vikman 2020). Asylum seekers were not seen as legitimate protesters and the Railway Square was not seen suitable for protesting. (Vikman 2020.) Vikman (2020) has analyzed the legitimacy of Right to Live and its use of public space in Helsingin Sanomat online conversations, the majority of which were critical towards the protest, and one of the discourses discovered was that of threat, either to other users of the public space or to the unity of Finnish society in large. (The discourse that defended the protest was grounded on the idea of protests as a natural part of the urban sphere and essential to democracy.)

<sup>78</sup> Living in a rented apartment instead of a reception centre was difficult if one didn’t have a job because rents in Helsinki are high – and because of racism. A protester from Afghanistan, unemployed at the moment, told me he had waited five months to get an apartment and that he had viewed 27 apartments: “I went to a place that nobody else was viewing and I was the only applicant, and you leave the application and two days onwards they put the same place up on the internet again”.

were referred to as “the Railway square”, seen as a “cultural battlefield” (Vikman 2020, 72)<sup>79</sup>. The police in fact stated out loud that it treats both parties equally and that they are both subject to the same rules. This symmetrical treatment of both parties is part of a larger cultural discourse of “two extremes” that the Finnish police has on its part enforced (Boldt & Luhtakallio, 2023; Saarinen 2018, 24)<sup>80</sup>. Extreme right and extreme left, including antifascism, are seen to be in a “symbiotic relationship” with each other within this discourse (Saarinen 2018, 24).

As noted in the previous chapter, Right to Live was an effort to de-securitize the asylum seekers/protesters. This chapter suggests that one of the means of this de-securitization was to enact good citizenship that can also be perceived as a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth.

## Valuation through the frameworks of citizenship and public safety

As literature on immigrant protests has pointed out, through protesting, non-citizens may enact their political subjectivity, civic worth, that is usually thought of as the prerogative of citizens (e.g. Isin 2009). However, I would add that as long as the goal of the protest is to attain citizenship, also the style of the protest performance matters as the protest needs to resonate in the society and among those powerholders who have the right to admit or decline citizenship. The immaculate protest performance of Right to Live was an effort to enact the right kind of citizenship. The protesters were trying to prove their civic worth against racist prejudices: that they were capable of protesting peacefully and by abiding to legislation. As part of this enactment of good citizenship, Right to Live tried to build and maintain trust to the police, even if this was a contested issue especially among the supporters. Since trust to public authorities is almost a given in Finland, it was important to at least perform mutual trust in public. A bulletin on Right to Live blog and Facebook page on 23.3 stated:

*We have good, confidential contacts with the police and with Helsinki City officials, and many Finns have found the Railway Square is today actually even safer than before. People drop by for tea and to have a chat with us.*

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<sup>79</sup> A police officer involved in surveilling the two protests refers to the situation as “trench warfare” in his dissertation (Saarinen 2018).

<sup>80</sup> For instance, the Permanent Secretary in Ministry of the Interior in 2017 writes in her book about the two protests on the Railway Square as manifestations of “societal disruption” that resulted from increased migration and the subsequent polarization of two opposing camps (Nerg & Järvenkylä 2019, 17).

As the bulletin above stated, Right to Live wanted to be perceived as trustworthy and safe. As chapter eight pointed out, de-securitization of the protest and the protesters was one of the goals of the Right to Live protest performance. I claim that since migration is often perceived through the framework of security, which is itself a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth (see below), and migrants often valued as potential (efficient and low-cost) labor force, the citizenship Right to Live protesters were enacting was not only in the regime of civic order of worth but a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth. Some of the protesters even contrasted the protest to work, something through which they would gain recognition, money and even a citizenship status, as Amal told me:

*Many people thought that by being there we might get papers. Especially Iraqis. Our community. [--] They were like: "We've been there. We earned something. We get some money or get something." Of course not.*

Having a job is one way to apply for a residence permit in the current asylum policy regime and in general, a migrant is considered welcome if they prove themselves as capable and willing to work (Pirkkalainen & Pöyhtäri 2022). This kind of citizenship that is based on work is rooted in the industrial order of worth, where a person is unworthy if they are unproductive (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 205). As I will describe in the next chapter, this logic of valuation of Right to Live was visible in some online comments where the protest was deemed as "loitering".

The police perceived Right to Live from these same frameworks of citizenship and public safety, and therefore also from the same orders of worth, those of civic and industrial. Public safety is itself a compromise between the civic and industrial worlds (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 331), one in which industrial justifications may easily overrule the civic ones. The protesters' capability for citizenship was measured especially in terms of the potential threat to safety they posed and were constantly juxtaposed to Finland First protesters by the police and in the media. Even though Finland First protesters were Finnish citizens unlike Right to Live protesters, the City of Helsinki Chief of Preparedness said that Finland First protesters "didn't possess as good citizenship skills":

*[F]or instance, the Right to Live demonstration, of course they wanted to and did push their agenda pretty strongly, but all in all it was still done in a pretty decent manner so...The demonstration did their part pretty well in a way that I don't think there were any gross overkills, so...In Finland First demonstration there was perhaps the kind of, maybe everyone there didn't possess such good citizenship skills.*



He used as an example of the lacking citizenship skills a case where Finland First protesters filmed and streamed online the cleaning of nearby bins by the city staff. He continued by saying there were no threats from Right to Live:

*Perhaps it's just a part of citizens trying to make a political impact that you're also trying to influence civil servants who make decisions, so I don't see it as something really bad as long as it's within the limits of good taste, that there are no threats, which there were none from this bunch [Right to Live].*

In comparison, Finland First was evicted based on continuous disruptions and because it was seen to pose an immediate threat to public safety. In addition to previous harassment cases, three Finland First protesters were now suspected of violent assaults on passers-by. As the Chief of Helsinki police stated in a newspaper interview:

*This [eviction] is about the fact that in [Finland First], the protesters have not followed the police orders or known how to behave and have caused risk to its surroundings (Bäckgren et al 2017).*

About Right to Live he said that:

*The police has nothing to notify there. They haven't caused the kind of disturbance that would cause danger to its surroundings. (Ibid.)*

To sum up, the police and other public officials found no “threats” or “disturbances” caused by Right to Live and, in comparison to Finland First, Right to Live protesters were seen to possess better citizenship skills. Despite<sup>81</sup> this positive valuation, the protest was removed from Railway square, officially for safety reasons, causing disappointment and anger among the protesters and supporters. Or was it in fact the civic order of worth of citizenship that posed a threat to public order? For instance, in online discussions, it was precisely the asylum seekers’ political agency that was seen as a threat to the order in Finnish society, especially since the asylum seekers were enacting their political agency through protesting (Vikman 2020, 74), the legality of which is still debatable in Finnish political culture (Luhtakallio & Wass 2023). After removing the protest from the Railway square, the protesters negotiated a continuation of the protest back where they started, in front of Kiasma. The police accepted the new protest but this time they made restrictions: the protest could only take place in the daytime and there could be no tent constructions. The removal of Right to Live from Railway Square was matter of factually the end of the protest and

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<sup>81</sup> One can ask whether the removal of Right to Live from the Railway square took place *despite* or *because* of their successful enactment of citizenship.

“its political message”, as Kati said. By this time, many of the protesters and supporters were extremely tired and the feeling of momentum had passed.

It was unclear to the Right to Live protesters and supporters exactly who’s safety had been under threat, and why. One of the supporters, Mikko, was a long-time migrant activist who had been dealing with the police during Right to Live. The day before the removal of the protest he was among the activists who were invited to the police department for a meeting. This is how he recalled discussions with the police:

*Mikko: The police said there that the reason [for the removal] is that it’s the biggest ever security threat in Helsinki.*

*Majja: And security threat means a racist security threat, or?*

*Mikko: No. We’ve asked many times what it means but there’s been no reply.*

The opposing views of the safety of Right to Live by the police were confusing. In public, the police could not justify why Right to Live was a threat to public safety, and one way to circumvent this question was to vaguely appeal to the “situation in Helsinki” or “Railway square”, hinting at risks that were not explicated:

*They haven’t broken the law and we can’t point our finger at them but the police has to evaluate the entire situation in Helsinki* (Hanhinen & Haavisto 2017).

”The situation in Helsinki” referred to the up-coming weekend that was going to be one of the “liveliest” that summer (ibid) with, for instance, the Helsinki Pride march<sup>82</sup>. Next, I will take a closer look at the justification that relied on the conflation of Right to Live and Finland First into a single security threat.

## “Railway square” as a threat to public safety

Despite Right to Live’s efforts to differentiate the protest from Finland First, the two protests came to be seen as two extremes in the media. Even the police displayed symmetry in the treatment of the protests and referring to the “Railway square” was a sufficient justification for the decisions the police made regarding the two protests. For instance, when Finland First was evicted, Right to Live was not allowed to continue on the Railway Square either: “According to the police, no protests in Railway Square that are connected to the evicted camps are allowed” (Hanhinen & Haavisto 2017). “Railway square” had become a single bundle, the stage for “two

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<sup>82</sup> Three men from the Nordic resistance movement attacked Pride march in 2010 with smoke bombs, tear gas and pepper spray (Mölsä 2011; Manninen 2015; Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023).

opposites”, and this (emotional) polarization in itself was seen to constitute a safety threat:

*This is now my [personal] opinion – but, yes, Railway Square had [–] somehow become a so-called sacred place. And, in a way, [it was] an emotional place that aroused a lot of emotions, I mean in citizens and protesters also. And it became somehow this kind of place that was defended. Somehow, it had become that sort of a flagpole, and then, when this kind of thing, it evokes emotions. Then, soon, those emotions go overboard . . .*

Right to Live activists made several complaints to the Parliamentary Ombudsman regarding the treatment of the protest asking, for instance, why the protest was at that moment regarded as a security threat after several months of protesting, and why the protest in front of Kiasma was restricted to day-time only. The Ombudsman also received several complaints regarding the eviction of the Finland First protest. It is telling that the Ombudsman replied to these complaints in one report<sup>83</sup>. Despite the fact that it states in the report that the protesters and supporters of Right to Live were not guilty of “physical abuse or other crimes” as much as Finland First protesters were, the report is vague in defining the exact threat posed by Right to Live by, for instance, referring to the two camps as “Railway square”. It states, for instance, that passers-by experienced the Railway Square as “an insecure place, because there was a chance of being subjected to physical assault or defamation”, without specifying which protest had actually been guilty of assaults. In addition, the report mentions “general feedback” from citizens about the “increased general insecurity and restlessness”. It also reads that the two camps being (physically) close and opposed to each other for months “in itself provoked protesters and supporters of the different camps to acts of violence”, and that there was a risk of an “escalation of the situation”, echoing the threat of polarization mentioned above. According to the report, the removal of Right to Live was based on securing “general order and safety” in Railway Square and the time restrictions on the protests, after it was removed to Kiasma, were based on “disorder, crime and continuous phone calls to emergency services”. The Ombudsman’s report states that, according to the Assembly Act, the police can make orders concerning the place and time of an assembly if the safety of the protesters or by-standers is at risk and that, in this case, there is nothing to notify the police about. In other words, safety was a sufficient justification to restrict the protest, without explicitly pointing out who’s safety was at risk.

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<sup>83</sup> Or, more specifically, the Ombudsman didn’t reply to any of the complaints but made an investigation based on their own initiative.

The Right to Live protesters and supporters were disappointed and angry that the protest was removed due to security reasons:

*It was pretty sad because [it] got to the point that they tried to link it to security issues and when you look at the whole history of the demo there was not a single incident of violence from [in]side, and to have this sort of [--] security connotation towards a Muslim person, it was quite sad [--]. We were meeting with some of the deputy chiefs of the Helsinki police and [--] the way they were presenting their views was that it was a security... In a very indirect way tried to say that you guys are prone to pose violence. [--] I felt quite disrespected even though it was like can you point them out specifically because you are being very clear that we are a security threat. [--] Has there [been] some actions that has happened that can relate to violence? But there were none. (Fahim)*

Fahim thought the security reason was made up and that it had to do with the protesters being Muslims. This interpretation was tied to previous experiences of racism with some police and City of Helsinki officers. As I interviewed some of the protesters and supporters, they would name some officials who they thought had acted in a racist manner. Moreover, I would hear accounts of how police patrols would not intervene in situations where the protesters or supporters were threatened by Finland First protesters or passers-by, despite calls for help:

*[The police] were being very ignorant. But we did not expect anything from the police anyway because in the very beginning [of the protest] the racists were very aggressive. They just barged into the demonstration area, it was about four or five people that were pushing people and shoving people. [--] They were being really provocative, and they wanted to start a fight and the police were just in their car and they used to see it and then we approached them and they did not even get out of their car. (Fahim)*

These accounts are part a larger picture and for instance activists who have experienced violent threats from the extreme right have felt that the police have not taken the threat seriously (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). However, a justification based on safety is rarely questioned, especially when related to migration. During this millennia, safety issues and the prevention of terrorism have become key issues in European politics and immigration, and Islam and Muslims have been “securitized” as part of this politics, contrasting immigration, terrorism and crime (Himanen & Creutz 2022). Immigration has therefore been criminalized, meaning that it is increasingly dealt with through police measures, fines and imprisonment. These frameworks of security and criminalization are connected to institutional racism. (Ibid.) However, racism is not present only in the *structures* of, for instance, policing since there was a scandal in 2017 when a secret Facebook police group was revealed to include racist comments about, for instance, asylum seekers.

Against these backdrops, it could be argued that, despite the fact that the police could not use racist justifications in public<sup>84</sup> or in the interviews I conducted, the vague explanations concerning the safety threat Right to Live supposedly posed was a part of this larger framework of securitizing migrants and especially (presumed) Muslims<sup>85</sup>. Therefore, it is difficult to disentangle the policing of Right to Live from the policing of asylum seekers and migrants in general, and asylum seekers and others who are racialized and/or in precarious legal and social situations are likely to face heavy-handed policing (Himanen 2019; Himanen & Creutz 2022). As noted in chapter eight, for many Finnish supporters who had no experience of activism, Right to Live was a turning point in how they perceived the police as, for the first time, they saw and heard how the police treat asylum seekers – or how they deal with protests in general since even native Finnish citizens can face heavy policing when taking part in demonstrations. In the 2000s, activism and demonstrations have been contrasted to terrorism, to a degree where the activists' basic civil rights have been trampled on (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). Any kind of protest is still contested in the Finnish political culture (e.g. Luhtakallio & Wass, 2023; Lindström 2009), and protests by Finnish activists have faced heavy policing, at times even by a counter-terrorism unit (Boldt & Luhtakallio, 2023). Right to Live was thus a double contestation to public officials as it was a protest by non-citizens. In addition, the form and duration of the protest were on shaky legal grounds, as the next chapter demonstrates.

However, the picture is not so black and white. As I will describe in the next chapter, the police were not in an easy situation as they found themselves in a (relatively) new situation, facing a long-lasting protest with an equally long-lasting counter-protest, the latter having already perpetrated acts of violence. There is also a difference between the public image of the police and every-day policing work, or between the heads of the police and the police officers responsible for patrolling. For instance, the National Police Board of Finland made an appeal to ban the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement in 2018, and Helsinki police have fired police officers with extreme right-wing sympathies. At the same time, in everyday policing work, the different attitudes of the police officers towards minorities as well as towards protesting lead to their differential treatment. (Boldt and Luhtakallio, 2023.)

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<sup>84</sup> All justifications in the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) are based on the idea of common humanity, an idea that disputes the legitimacy of a racist justification. As the above analyses demonstrates, no racist justifications were used in public, indicating they were not considered legitimate. (Whether racist justifications are becoming more legitimate, at least in some publics such as the police's Facebook group, is another question.)

<sup>85</sup> Not all Right to Live protesters practiced the Muslim faith.

### 9.3 Conclusions

Both Kallio movement and Right to Live approached public authorities through peaceful negotiations. There were, however, also differences in their approaches. Kallio movement approached the City of Helsinki in the spirit of network governance, expecting cooperation, while Right to Live approached the police with a forced humility and even (a performance of) gratitude, as the previous chapter showed, doing its utmost to not overstep any boundaries of what is expected of good citizens. The difference in their approach reflects the two groups' understandings of their positions within the society.

The two events were also treated and policed differently. The first public official that activists often face is the police and therefore the relations between the state, or local municipality, and activists often crystallize in the relations between the police and the activists. (Boldt & Luhtakallio, 2023.) This holds true for both cases studied here. Kallio movement no longer has to negotiate with the police but has access to negotiate with the City of Helsinki authorities. (Although, in the Finnish context, this access is not difficult to get.) In contrast, the primary public official Right to Live had to negotiate with was the police (see more about the jurisdiction in Right to Live in Appendix IV).

Trust and personal connections were essential building blocks in the relationship between Kallio movement members and public officials, and trust is at a high level in Finland in general. However, the case of Right to Live would suggest that trust is primarily a privilege of citizens. And on the other hand, while trust is important for a functioning society, mistrust is equally important too (Rosanvallon 2008; Korvela & Vento 2021). Finns who, for the first time, saw how the police treat asylum seekers or handle protests might join a generation of activists who have a more critical view of police actions (see Boldt & Luhtakallio, 2023).

Public spaces are ideal-typical places for practicing democracy (Butler 2015). However, as the above analyses demonstrates, urban space is experiencing a two-fold development where, on the one hand, it is increasingly subjected to securitization (Koskela 2009) and, on the other, there is an increasing pressure to grant citizens more ownership of the city in the spirit of participatory democracy. Kallio movement was valued for its non-confrontative, participatory civic style, but it was also valuable to the City of Helsinki for its market value, bringing much sought-after crowds to the streets. Right to Live was not celebrated for its civic worth, even though this was the official framework the police was obliged to view the protest from since free speech and the right to assembly are secured by law, as I will describe in the next chapter. In practice, Right to Live was, at best, tolerated,

and in the end, it was valued through the framework that radical activists as well as migrants are often subjected to – that of safety.

Next, I will look into how Kallio movement and Right to Live put the use of urban space to the test, and what the results of these tests were.

# 10 TESTING THE LIMITS OF THE USE OF URBAN SPACE

In this chapter, I will analyze situations, test moments, over the use of public space in Helsinki. While there are ideals concerning public space and the practice of democracy, such as the right to free assembly and the right to protest, these ideals are sometimes put to the test. Moreover, the bureaucratic machinery put into place to ensure and restrict citizen rights has to work in grey areas and make decisions in real life situations, and often it is ultimately street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980), such as the police, who are faced with making decision in situations as they unfold. There is always the need for interpretation of the rules, and especially interpretation of the situation, by all parties involved. Public administration has perhaps never been as neutral as Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy would have it, but current network governance and New Public Management has further emphasized its active and creative role (Sørensen 2002).

This chapter relies on the notion of a test introduced in pragmatic sociology to study controversies, disputes and scandals (Barthe et al 2013; Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; de Blic & Lemieux 2005). Tests are collective productions of truth (Barthe et al 2013) that take place in critical moments when there is a rupture in our everyday routines and the nature of our reality is no longer self-evident. Questions arise such as: what is relevant and irrelevant in this situation; who should we listen to; what rules should we follow to best achieve the common good – and what is the nature of the common good we strive for? In other words, which order of worth (or regime) should we use as a yardstick in the test?

De Blic & Lemieux (2005) have theorized scandals as test cases of a society's norms – of what is acceptable in a society and what is not. According to de Blic & Lemieux (*ibid*), these norms are never entirely fixed and thus foreseeable, but are always re-evaluated and put to the test in each scandal. In other words, scandals do not simply reveal deep norms in society, but they always create them anew (*ibid*, XX). The historicity of rules and norms is well exemplified by, for instance, the #MeToo Movement and the scandals it raised, changing the said rules and norms. Tests are moments of social transformation as they challenge the status quo and thus have institutionalizing power as they might change social practices or even legislation



(ibid.). One form of these tests, as the authors (ibid., IV) note, are public provocations such as modern art or radical forms of protests such as hunger strikes or public suicides.

Testing is not only verbal but includes material elements. Each order of worth has its own set of objects, or tools: household equipment in the domestic world (and the familiar regime), manufacturing machines in the industrial world and monsters and demons in the inspired world (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 131). Objects reaffirm an argument as they offer proof for the claims being made (Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye 2000, 237), making them crucial for testing. Each being (person or thing) has to be adjusted to the (regime and) world of justification that is used as the framework in the test (ibid, 41). This is the way to make the situation, an assemblage of things and persons, to “hold together”, to make it “natural” to the participants (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 130-1). Likewise, objects from other worlds must be “purified”, “reduced to the noise of the contingent circumstances”. Every situation is fragile and prone to fall apart by this external noise, traces of the existence of other worlds. (Ibid, 135; 137.)

Right to Live and Kallio Block Party stretch the limits of the legitimate use of urban space: Right to live is a case of a protest camp that pushes the limits of the Assembly Act and Kallio Block Party is a case of DIY urbanism and new urban activism, the purpose of which is to provide nudges to City authorities and increase the freedom of city residents from bureaucracy. Moreover, both cases are relatively novel ways of using urban space, and they can be seen as test cases that may possess institutionalizing power for similar cases in the future. What kind of tests did Kallio Block Party and Right to Live pose to public authorities and the use of urban space? How was the use of urban space in the two cases interpreted by the police and the City authorities, and with what kind of consequences?

Since the first Kallio Block Party was arranged in 2011, it had undergone several test moments already, establishing itself as an event organized by trustworthy citizens, as the previous chapter demonstrated. The test moment analyzed in this chapter thus flipped what was tested by 180 degrees: the test turned out to be not how far the use of urban space could be stretched, but about confirming the nature of Kallio movement as a non-confrontative movement. The test moment in Right to Live on the one hand confirmed that the protesters were able to construct a peaceful and public civic protest instead of private camping or socializing. On the other hand, as the previous chapter illustrated, the protest was ultimately framed through security, revealing the nature of the test itself as a fraudulent one. These examples show that different parties in a situation (such as a scandal or a conflict)

might differently interpret what exactly is tested and that not everyone agrees on the significance or legitimacy of the test.

## 10.1 Reaffirming the non-confrontative nature of Kallio Block Party

The previous chapters have portrayed Kallio movement as a group that explicitly tried to push the boundaries of how urban space can be used, but (perhaps paradoxically) without explicitly politicizing urban space in general and always with authorization from the public authorities. In comparison to Right to Live protesters, the mainly white, educated Kallio movement members could clearly afford to be more “pushy”, and their civic action was even praised by several authorities. However, initially, Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party were met with suspicion from the City authorities and the police as the first Kallio Block Parties, taking place right after a wave of anti-capitalist activism, were clearly framed as activist events. But, after the first block parties, the police clearly reframed the event since the police have hardly been visible in the event. There were usually no difficulties with the City authorities either, as the previous chapter illustrated, and meetings with the bureaucrats I attended were always held in a friendly spirit.

The most significant test case had been the arranging of Kallio Block Party in Kurvi, a busy intersection and a nodal point of buses, trams and metro, in 2015. On the one hand, from the point of view of Kallio movement members, the test was about how far the use of urban space could be stretched and, on the other, from the point of view of the City authorities, it was about the reliability of Kallio movement and whether they could manage the challenging situation. This Block Party was used as a reference within the movement when the limits of what was possible were discussed, and in negotiations with the City. The occupation of Kurvi seemed to prove to the movement members, as well as to the authorities, that anything and everything was possible.

In 2018 however, for the first time, there was an obstacle in the place Kallio movement wanted to arrange the block party. This proved to be a test case for the movement that confirmed its nature as a non-confrontative civic group.

## Establishing trustworthiness

The first Block party was arranged in 2011, five years after the Smash Asem demonstration in the “crazy year” 2006, a turning point in how the police treated demonstrations (see chapter two; Monti & Purokuru 2018; Boldt & Luhtakallio

2023). Activism and protest events were the first reference point for making an interpretation of the new situation the police had at hand, and the escalation that had taken place between the police and activists since late 1990s and early 2000s clearly formed a backdrop to the policing of the first block parties.

In the second Kallio Block Party in 2012 on the busy Vaasankatu street, the police were visibly present with mounted police, as my interviewees recalled. Mounted police were not an uncommon sight in demonstrations in the 2000s (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). As recollected by Janne, the troubles of the early years are already intertwined with the later success and current good terms with the police:

*Where there really has been a change for the better is the City and the police. At first, the police was perhaps afraid of what this is and what's going to happen, and I remember from one of the first Block Parties an occasion where all of us actives ["aktiivi"] were busy to get everything running, and the police came over and said, "we have to check everyone's permit papers", when they could have checked them in their office and surely they had. [--] And then the mounted police came and acted in a bit of a threatening manner. [--] But in the beginning, it was like that more than once but then, gradually I think it's changed to something more positive.*

While the old-timers would recollect these conflicts with the police in personal interviews, it was not something that was reminisced about or glorified in meetings. Clearly, controversies with the police were not cherished, as they might be in a more radical group. Janne continued his account of how the police's stance had changed to keeping "a low profile":

*They keep a low profile because they know that if the police come there in a threatening manner, especially when they're mounted, there's always someone who becomes aggressive and feels the need to show off.*

Indeed, being less visible had been the police's strategy in the beginning of 2000's, but that changed after anti-globalization protests in Göteborg and Genoa in 2001 turned violent from the side of the police and the black block activists (Boldt & Luhtakallio 2023). Lilli also talked about the presence of mounted police in the first block parties, and how the police's stance changed for the better:

*They really have learned from [the early years], and in fact I think they thanked us afterwards. [--] Next year when we were on the Kolmas linja street, it was already really different, there were only civilian police<sup>86</sup> there, they were just smiling there among people.*

The non-confrontative performative style of Kallio Block Party paid off in the sense that the movement didn't have to deal with the police or prove themselves to the

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<sup>86</sup> What Lilli means is probably that there were no mounted police.

City authorities. As noted in the previous chapter, the Helsinki City authorities didn't perceive Kallio movement or Kallio Block Party primarily as safety issues any more than any other major event. While Kallio movement has to undergo a series of tests each year as it applies for permits for the festival which is held in a different place each year, it is clear that Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party have proven themselves "trustworthy" citizens and the application process is a matter of course. It seemed Kallio movement was on a winning streak, where even the movement members were surprised how easily they gained the permits to hold the party in different, challenging locations:

*We've received the permits surprisingly easy, but the fact that we were able to close off [--]... I mean we talked about Hesari [the busy Helsinginkatu street], "no way" [we thought], never going to happen. It did, and then there was the closing down of Kurvi and even Sturenkatu street [--].*

The amazement of arranging, and getting the permit to arrange, the festival especially in Kurvi, was, unlike the trouble with the police during the early years, something that was at times brought up in meetings and other gatherings, and especially in interviews. It was the ultimate test for Kallio movement, and they had passed it with flying colours, as Alex told me:

*Kurvi hadn't been cut off from traffic since something like the war. And in a way we just didn't know what kind of a mayhem it would cause, and in fact it went pretty smoothly with the traffic. There was no problem [--].*

The fact that there was "no problem" with Kurvi and that everything "went smoothly" consolidated the good reputation of the event. For example, the block party in Kurvi came up in a meeting with civil servants at the Urban Environment Division about Kallio Block Party's festival area in 2018. The civil servants had clearly not met block party organizers before, but they knew the event by reputation. They asked the Kallio Block Party organizers what the police's take on the festival usually was, to which Elina replied that ever since Kurvi was blocked, there have been no problems. One of the civil servants said out loud in amazement how impossible the idea of Kurvi seemed beforehand, and yet it had all worked out.

Kurvi was also an example of Kallio movement's double mission of pushing the limits of the use of urban space and doing things by the book, a mission that I will introduce below.

## “There’s been a bit of a mission to see where the limits are”

Kallio movement was an interesting mix of non-confrontative, non-activist, non-radical styles of civic action combined with a motivation to push the limits of what is possible in urban space. When Kallio movement was established, and still now for some, especially old-timers, this pushing of the limits was one of the main ideas in both Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party. Alex said: “[I]n all the things I do, I really try to push things, push against the City”. However, this was to be done by doing things so well that the bureaucrats would simply have to recognize their trustworthiness. This was “being difficult in a good way”, as Janne said, in the style of the positive civil disobedience of new urban activism (Santala 2013). Elina told me that the mission of Kallio movement has from the beginning been to push the limits on the one hand and to do things by the book to show the bureaucrats what kind of things are possible, in the spirit of “quiet activism” (introduced in chapters three and eight), on the other:

*[T]here’s been a bit of a mission to see where the limits are. [--] Perhaps we had a bit of a mission that you can do this with permits and do it well and it will work out, we’ll show those bureaucrats “don’t always say no”, so we did have a bit of a mission to do this thing so well that they have to notice [--] and not to make trouble and deliberately cause a schism with the authorities, so yeah that was the mission.*

Janne echoed Elina’s views on the need to shake up the bureaucrats:

*I’m not really interested in music or street parties as such, [--] but it’s especially this demarcation with the authorities and governance that interests me. I’m a bit of an anarchist at heart, it’s always fascinating to try to do things differently than before, how you can be difficult in a good way, to awaken organizations and thought patterns that are jaded. To force people to see things in a different way. Just like Kallio Block Party perhaps forces people to see a road in a novel way, when it’s something other than a place that cars drive through, on the level of governance, actors like Kallio movement force the authorities and the governance to look at citizens and the entire field of civic action again from a different angle.*

The goal seemed to be to improve “inflated” bureaucracy in a reformist spirit:

*And also to question which are the things in this world that need a permit and which are those [--] where one can trust that people are sensible, thoughtful actors also when they arrange events and activities. [--] Maybe this type of surveillance governance that emphasizes security tends to inflate and perhaps it’s good to shake it up a little from time to time. (Janne)*

Against this peculiar double mission of pushing the limits and doing things with permits, it was not at all illogical that Janne told me within the same interview that he was “a bureaucrat at heart”, as well as “an anarchist at heart”.

As Elina and Alex both mentioned, to many in Kallio movement, this pushing of boundaries reached its top when Kallio Block Party was arranged in Kurvi in 2015. In Alex's opinion, Kurvi was the best accomplishment in Kallio Block Party's history since they did something that was thought to be impossible, even among themselves; because it was a chance to "push against the City"; and because everything went well. Kurvi proved to the movement that both of these missions were simultaneously possible. However, this paradoxical double mission nevertheless created an inherent tension in the movement's actions. Which mission should overrule the other in a situation where not everything went as planned, and there was a rupture in the routinized action – in other words, a test moment – such as an obstacle for arranging the block party in the area the movement wanted to? This question is what I will turn to next.

## Test moment for Kallio movement: to go radical or not

In 2018, for the first time in the history of Kallio Block Party, the intended location of the festival was not possible, which created an obstacle that tested Kallio movement's double mission. Which mattered more, that of pushing the limits of the use of urban space or that of compliance?

The plan was to organize the party along Sörnäisten rantatie, a busy three-lane motor road, an area that especially in the past had been an underused strip of seashore, and still is to a degree. Recently, there had begun to appear some leisurely activities such as a paddle field and a bar in an old cargo ship, but the motor road still dominated especially the soundscape of the area since it is connected to a major highway and frequented by trucks driving to and from mainland Europe. Trucks were also the reason why it wasn't possible to close off the road for the block party: the curve between Sörnäisten rantatie and the road where trucks would be directed for an alternative route during the festival was too steep, so the obstacle was very concrete and non-ambiguous.

Some of the organizers were passionate about organizing the festival on Sörnäisten rantatie, since the area was mainly for cars and was not attractive for pedestrians. "It would be a statement to show how big a space cars have taken over for themselves", Susanna commented in a meeting. In another meeting, another organizer (speaking in English), commented on the area selection with conviction: "We have to close that Sörnäisten thing. We have to close it." However, even the organizers realized that coming up with an alternative route for the trucks might be impossible. What is telling, then, is that while many of the organizers passionately wanted to close the road, the idea of closing off Sörnäisten rantatie without a permit

was only occasionally thrown up as a joke. Mostly, the organizers simply complied with what seemed like a matter of fact, that the idea of closing the road was impossible. In other words, to arrange the block party without an agreed-upon plan with the City about where to divert the trucks to was out of range of what was considered possible in the movement. This option simply did not lie within the movement's civic imagination (Baiochi et al 2013).

It is telling that, in fact, Sörnäisten rantatie has been occupied at least three times. Reclaim the streets occupied the road twice as a form of protest with a few thousand people (a much smaller number of people than attend Kallio Block Party). This happened in 1999, and 2004 they occupied nine lanes (Yliselä 2006). In 2021, the Finnish Extinction Rebellion, Elokapina, held a protest on Sörnäisten rantatie that lasted for about three hours without giving notice to the police. There were even less people at the Elokapina protest, about a hundred<sup>87</sup>. (Kangas & Mäki 2021.) It must be noted here that Kallio Block Party is attended by tens of thousands of visitors, whose safety the organizers are responsible for. However, this comparison is still illustrative of the non-confrontative side of the movement that was winning over the side that deliberately tries to push the limits of what is possible. Kallio Block Party had already established itself as a non-activist event, one that does not cause a “schism” with the authorities on purpose, and occupying a busy road without permits would inevitably change this nature. I will illustrate this compliant nature of the movement further below.

In 2018, there was a meeting between a delegation of Kallio Block Party organizers and the City officials of the Urban Environment Division about the festival area (see chapter nine). Already before the meeting the group realized that the chances for getting the permit to arrange Kallio Block Party on the plan A spot on Sörnäisten rantatie were slim, and while waiting in the lobby for the meeting to begin, we went through other alternatives we could propose if the plan would not go through. Elina said she was angry and that she'd have to try and hide her feelings in the meeting. The meeting had been postponed and it was now June already, and the area should have been settled by now so that the organizing could proceed at full speed. It didn't help that the meeting was scheduled to start at 9 am and at five past we were still standing in the lobby, waiting for the civil servant Elina had been in contact with, to fetch us. As we were waiting in the lobby, discussing alternative areas, Elina said: “Or then we just occupy [Sörnäisten rantatie] and don't negotiate”. However, she clearly didn't mean it as a suggestion where she would even expect

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<sup>87</sup> There were 40-50 protesters according to the police and 150 according to Elokapina (Kangas & Mäki 2021).

replies, but more as an expression of her irritation. Antti said in a joking tone that since the City of Helsinki now had a concept called “Beach Summer”, where one could set up a small-scale event without permission on one of nineteen predetermined places along the shores of Helsinki and neighbouring Espoo, this could be a part of that concept.

In the meeting, there were three civil servants present, two from the traffic department and one responsible for the land rent in Kallio. It became clear from the beginning that Sörnäisten rantatie was not possible because of the trucks. The two civil servants from the traffic department didn’t see any other problems in the area, but the issue with the trucks was simply insurmountable. One of these two civil servants brought up the Kallio Block Party that was arranged in Kurvi, and that the difference with Kurvi was that the traffic could be redirected to surrounding streets, unlike Sörnäisten rantatie. Before I even noticed it, we had moved on to plan B (Merihaka residential area next to Sörnäisten rantatie), which the civil servants saw no problems with. However, later on in the meeting, Elina drew the conversation back to Sörnäisten rantatie, as if to make sure that it really was not possible in any way:

*We knew there was this problem, but we thought we’d make sure, in case you would have had a solution tucked away in your pocket...*

One of the civil servants replied that they can’t do any magic tricks. Antti tentatively threw in his joke about the Beach summer, that actually if Kallio Block Party was organized as part of that concept, there would be no need for permissions. The civil servant quickly replied that perhaps if the event was smaller it might work, but Kallio Block Party wouldn’t work like that.

The meeting was polite and friendly on both sides and Merihaka was established as the site of the festival. The civil servants were mainly interested in technical details such as bike routes and roadblocks. After it was clarified what happens next in the bureaucratic process, the meeting was finished in less than an hour. Afterwards, our delegation (apart from Elina who had to rush away) gathered for a short de-briefing outside the bureau building. To my surprise, Antti said he was relieved because he was worried about how they would get Sörnäisten rantatie to work. “Oh really!”, Susanna exclaimed. “I would have liked to have the area because it’s so...dismal!”. However, Susanna, too, agreed that Sörnäisten rantatie was off the table and Plan A was buried with no real desire to occupy the area without a permit.

Kallio movement members didn’t condemn civil disobedience such as arranging events or occupying space without permission, and they saw themselves as part of



the same liberal Green-Left movement family as more radical actors<sup>88</sup>. However, the movement had stated from the beginning that they would do things with permits, and in addition, it didn't want to be the one who practices this kind of civil disobedience since it didn't want to lose the block party's good reputation, or the public officials' trust, because they enabled a smooth organizing process. As Janne, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, characterized himself as an anarchist (as well as a bureaucrat) at heart and who wanted to shake things up and "push the limits", said he didn't want to shake things up *too* much:

*Maybe if we look at this field of urban activism at large, I think there is the need for [events without permissions] in this society. Someone needs to push the limits [--] but perhaps it should be some other actor. Because when you do it once, after that you're not on good terms with any authorities and you will never get any permits for anything, so it can't be the same actor.*

The occupation of Sörnäisten rantatie without permits was beyond Kallio movement's civic imagination to begin with. In other words, this reluctance towards civil disobedience came as no surprise since doing things by the book was one of the central ideas of the movement since it was founded. As part of new urban activism, Kallio movement represented a brake on how activism had hitherto been practiced, by for instance Reclaim the Streets, and the dead-end situation with Sörnäisten rantatie posed a test that merely reinforced this compliant course of action. Therefore, the test was not so much about how far the limits of the use of urban space could be stretched according to the public officials, but how far Kallio movement was willing to push these limits. The case of Sörnäisten rantatie proved that in the movement's double mission of pushing the limits but "not making trouble", the latter was seen to be more important. While this was the expected outcome, as de Blic & Lemieux (2005) note, the results of a test are never fully known beforehand. According to Blee (2012), moments of crisis are always possible turning points for civic groups and their path-dependent trajectories. While the decision made by Kallio movement to comply with the authorities is illustrative of this particular group and the new urban activism it represents here, it must also be noted that the threshold for taking part in civil disobedience is relatively high, and only 3% of Finnish people had practiced civil disobedience in 2019 (Luhtakallio & Wass, 2023).

As the below case of Right to Live demonstrates, sometimes public officials use their bureaucratic power to prevent or evict unwanted people or events (see also

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<sup>88</sup> The support of civil disobedience is highest among Green and Left party voters or representatives as well as those who have a degree from university (Luhtakallio & Wass 2023).

Jokela 2017). This was clearly not the case with Kallio Block Party; the trucks simply could not be redirected to another route. In other words, there was no symbolic dimension to trucks and the curve of Sörnäisten rantatie as there was in the world of objects in Right to Live. However, the smooth and efficient flow of traffic for trucks, transporting all kinds of goods for manufacturing and consumption, can be seen to carry meanings related to the worlds of industry and market. Since a free cultural festival, organized as a volunteer effort, was not seen as an important enough reason to disrupt the truck traffic, the worlds of market and industry were valued higher than the civic world by Helsinki City officials and, in a way, even Kallio movement itself since it didn't protest the decision to not arrange the festival on Sörnäisten rantatie.

## 10.2 Right to Live: A (mock) test over the nature of the protest

*At that point, there is the demarcation whether this is camping or demonstrating, so this is a kind of a border... a new situation so that no one in the end... it should be tested somehow, maybe by an authority or even court, that what is it about? What is camping and what is demonstrating and [-] there is no direct answer to this question in the law and that's why we just had to make decisions in this situation and interpretations whether it's camping or... (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

As illustrated in chapter eight, the original idea of the Right to Live protest was to demonstrate that the protesters would rather sleep outside in tents in the Finnish winter weather than be sent back to their home countries. Despite efforts to tone down the references to (a refugee) camp, Right to Live was still a protest camp. However, camping is forbidden in public areas in Helsinki outside designated camping sites, making the definition of whether Right to Live was a camp or not highly important because, while camping is forbidden, there is the right of peaceful assembly. Thus, the definition determined whether the protest could continue or whether it was evicted as a camp.

Right to Live pushed the limits of the Assembly Act by taking over urban space with semi-permanent infrastructure for over three months. What complicated matters further was the fact that the Finnish Assembly Act doesn't recognize long-lasting demonstrations and leaves the definition of, for instance, how long a protest can continue before turning into camping to individual civil servants:

*The Assembly Act doesn't actually recognize this kind of long-lasting "demo". Meaning, when has an assembly ended and when is it for instance camping on public land? (City of Helsinki Chief of Preparedness.)*

Therefore, the nature of Right to Live was under a test: was it a protest or a camp? The question was about whether Right to Live was dominated by the familiar regime or the civic world – was it a private gathering of people, engaged in private activities such as socializing among themselves, cooking, eating and sleeping, or a public demonstration aimed at the wider public, with public activities such as holding protest signs and handing out flyers. The answer to this test was supposed to determine whether the police allowed the protest to continue or not.

As illustrated in chapter eight, the performance of Right to Live was a balancing act between critical protesting and de-securitizing migrants, leading to a non-confrontative performative style with, for instance, no chanting. The previous chapters have also demonstrated how important the social and affective practices of solidarity were in Right to Live, as they are in migrant solidarity action and protest camps in general. However, it was these characteristics – lacking a protest nature and an emphasis on socializing – that jeopardized the interpretation of Right to Live as a protest, since they were not recognized as “public” and legitimate parts of the protest. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Right to Live was ultimately framed through security and, as this chapter describes, it had, according to the officials, “gained [too many] camp-like characteristics”. The result of the test remains unclear, placing the nature of the test itself under scrutiny. Did the test really have validity or was it a phony test to begin with?

I will begin the chapter by describing how the material set-up of Right to Live had to comply with protesting that belongs to the civic order of worth, and then discuss how protesting had to be performed to distinguish Right to Live from non-public socializing.

## Constructing a demonstration

As introduced above, Right to Live had to look like a (peaceful and friendly) protest and not a camp to be able to continue. The word “camp” also carried negative connotations that could be used to undermine the civic aspects, to deny its legality and demand it be evicted. In one newspapers’ online comments, Right to Live was called “a shantytown” and “a pile of filth”. One commentator asked whether “there had been a decision that a refugee camp-like this can be set up in the centre of Helsinki?” (Vikman 2020, 43-44). It was against these kinds of (racist) perceptions that Right to Live was constructing itself as a civic protest.

All situations, their definitions and justifications, are at risk of falling apart when there are competing definitions and justifications (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 137). What made the defining of Right to Live especially volatile was the lack of guidance

from legislation: neither the Assembly Act or the rule (or rather, practice) concerning camping were able to provide any clear guidelines for what differentiates a long-lasting protest from camping, or what should be defined as camping. As Himanen (2019, 174) has noted, the surveillance of the camping ban in Helsinki is based on police discretion and the police have been unable to provide a clear definition of illicit camping which, according to the law, should be “camping that causes a disturbance”. Since there is no legal definition of what defines illicit camping, and how it differs from a protest camp, there is a lot of room for interpretation in policing a protest camp and justifying police measures. As a dialogue police officer told me, “I mean this is very much about interpreting the law and how you want to see things”. (See Appendix IV for the racialized history and unclear legal status of the camping ban.)

Since there were no guidelines in the legislation about how long a protest could last or how camping should be defined, the struggle to define the nature of Right to Live by protesters and supporters as well as the police, and to some degree the City of Helsinki (see Appendix IV for the jurisdiction), took place in the grey area of bureaucracy. The supporters were engaged in constructing Right to Live as a demonstration instead of a camp, since especially the experienced activists knew the Finnish legislation, by-laws and customs. However, the police also actively gave advice to the protesters on how to make Right to Live appear as a protest instead of a camp, since the police had, by law, a duty to protect the right to assembly. This meant that there were frequent negotiations between the protesters and the supporters and the police about the guidelines of the protest:

*[W]e tried to negotiate so that no one would interpret it as camping that it's actually a demonstration so that we can act according to the Assembly Act and ensure their right to demonstrate. (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

If, for Kallio movement, the police were not the authority they had to primarily negotiate with, they were for Right to Live. Especially active in this duty were police officers that are unofficially called dialogue police officers. These officers are part of the Preventive Policing Unit and are sometimes used in demonstrations to act as mediators between the police and protesters, especially in demonstrations that are feared might escalate.

However, protecting the right to assembly was simultaneously a means of controlling the protest, such as sleeping in the protest. Since there was no clear definition of what “camping” is, the police laid out a rule that sleeping in the protest equals camping. This kind of definition has been used in the policing of other protest camps in other countries too, such as the US (Feigenbaum et al 2013, 59). It is

generally “when the tents move from being “merely symbolic” to being actually usable structures for sleeping, eating and other forms of recreation” that limitations are imposed on the protest: “When the protest camp’s tents are seen to be too much like actual living spaces – when they begin to threaten the established, settled, normative state – they are no longer allowed.” In other words, camps can be used for protesting as long as the camp infrastructure is only used symbolically, not actually. This rule has caused absurd situations, for instance in Occupy Fort Meyers, US, where the protesters were allowed “fake sleeping” but not actual sleeping. (Ibid.) In *Right to Live*, the interpretation of whether the demo was illegal camping, or a legal demonstration materialized especially in the control of protest tents and in sleeping and non-sleeping bodies and objects that could be used for sleeping.

This no-sleeping rule, and the entire camping ban, had effects on the material objects the protest could include and what their status should be: symbolic and not practical. It was stressed on many occasions among the protesters and especially the supporters, who were aware of the rule forbidding camping, that the camping equipment was only props and not meant for “actual” camping. Especially the Finnish activists, knowing the rules and regulations that ban camping, constantly worked to define the protest as a demonstration instead of a camp. For instance, during my first visit to the protest, there were not yet clear instructions that it was forbidden to call the protest a camp, but during the evening, some of the supporters were already advising others that people should talk about the tents as “props and a performance”. This was, in fact, the original purpose of the tents: the idea was to show that the asylum seekers would sleep outside in the freezing weather rather than be deported back to their own country where they would possibly face persecution or death (see chapter eight). The infrastructure of the protest was also inarguably practical, however, as it provided shelter from the weather and enabled cooking and eating.

When a situation and its definition and justification are being tested, material objects need to offer proof for the justification (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye 2000). Therefore, the negotiations between the police and the activists over the nature of *Right to Live* also touched upon the nature and meaning of things and objects in the camping infrastructure and gained absurd measures. Similarly, as objects in *Right to Live* had to be symbolic and not practical, they had to offer proof of its civic worth as opposed to a private sphere of the home, such as the familiar regime<sup>89</sup>, and the objects of the private world had to be “reduced

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<sup>89</sup> The sphere of the home is also the ideal-typical sphere in the domestic order of worth. It is not relevant here, which of the two, the familiar regime or the domestic order of worth, the sphere of the

to the noise of the contingent circumstances” (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 137). Indeed, the material infrastructure of Right to Live consisted of materials of the civic world such as banners, flyers and a megaphone, and also objects from the private sphere of the home such as tents and canopies, radiators, charcoal grills, kitchen utensils and garbage bins (as well as a contract with a garbage disposal company to empty them regularly). These objects of the private sphere, and the fact that they are not mentioned in the Assembly Act, caused difficulties for the police about where to draw the line regarding what is appropriate equipment and what is not:

*I mean the discussion was with [Right to Live], also with Finland First, about what the standard demonstration... equipment are. We discussed what size of a tent is ok, is the fencing ok, what kind of heating is ok [--]. (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

Even if there were objects from the familiar regime in Right to Live, they could be used as protest equipment as long as they were controlled by the police. All of the objects the Chief inspector mentioned were indeed controlled. For instance, a campfire was banned in the first week of the protest because of the smoke and replaced with charcoal grills; tents were banned from the protest that took place in front of Kiasma, after Right to Live was evicted from the Railway Square, and replaced with canopies (the openness of the tents was also controlled, see below), and the fencing had to demarcate the borders of the protest that counter-protesters were not allowed to cross, but still be accessible for the general public (see below). Controlling the objects in Right to Live were thus one of the means for the police to exercise control over the protest. It was especially the control of sleeping, and objects related to sleeping, that were used as tools for the police to control the protest. For instance, tents should not be “actual tents” that allow sleeping:

*And then also about whether one spends the night, is there any sleeping in the demonstration or is it camp-like or is it a demonstration. It was really about this demarcation, and the alignment was that it's a demonstration but not a place for encampment. [--] [S]o it was about what kind of tent, is it a shelter from the weather or an actual tent, does it have sleeping, camping equipment. (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

It states in the Assembly Act that temporary structures are allowed in a public assembly, but there are no guidelines for interpreting what is “temporary”:

*Well that [laughter], how the legislator wants to perceive it. Our officers perceived that it means fixed tents where there is the opportunity to camp, sleep, so those are not permitted. (A dialogue police officer.)*

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home is categorized under since this sphere was either way negated in the context of the public protest. However, for consistency I use the concept of the familiar regime introduced in earlier chapters.

“Temporary” was thus also defined through (not) sleeping: fixed tents were not allowed since “there is the opportunity to camp, sleep” in them.

The rule of no sleeping acquired absurd measures. According to my informants, the police would occasionally come during the night to check the tents to make sure no one was indeed sleeping. The police also demanded that at least one wall of the tent should be open so that everyone (the police, the passers-by and the opposite camp) could see inside the tent. This demand was in place since the first week of the protest, but it was not entirely consistent. At one point there was a period of cold weather when the temperature dropped to minus ten Celsius or more, and the wall was allowed to be lowered.

On March 1, I noticed on one of the Right to Live Facebook pages a post saying that during that afternoon the police would come to negotiate with the protesters, since according to the police, the protest had again begun to resemble a camp. I decided to go to the protest and see what kind of meeting it was – or if I would be allowed to attend it. Before the agreed meeting time with the police, a few supporters did a quick cleaning operation to make the protest site look tidy. I helped out and threw away some burned out candles. It turned out that the brief, twenty-minute meeting was very public, being held in the open air at the protest site, without any secrecy or even a round of introductions: the dialogue police was clearly familiar to the protesters and supporters. The police said that they had received complaints from “passers-by” and that one couldn’t see inside the tent, so one didn’t know what’s going on in there. However, the Finnish activists gathered the complaints had come from Finland First. The police officer added that since this was a demonstration, the protest should be “more open”. Thus, to make the protest look more like a demonstration and more see-through, one wall of the tent should, again, be rolled open, beginning from next morning. A supporter tried to tell the police that there was already a window in the tent, and so it was already possible to see what was going on. In an effort to persuade the police not to rule that the tent wall should be open, she also said that there was a (woman with a) baby inside. This persuasion didn’t work, and the rule was set in place. After the meeting, I talked to a few of the supporters and suggested, half joking, that the walls of the tents should be see-through so that they wouldn’t have to be rolled up. The supporters took the suggestion seriously and started thinking where they could get that kind of a tent. However, the idea was never realized.

During the above-mentioned visit to the protest, I stepped inside the tent and there was indeed a woman with a baby, and another small child, accompanied with five other women sitting in a circle, talking to one another. One of the women spoke

English and she told me that she always came to the protest at eleven and stayed until eight. Outside, rain had turned into wet snow and sleet, but it was cosy and warm inside the tent, heated by a radiator. Rolling up a side of the tent would make the tent significantly less comfortable, warm and intimate. After the rule about the tent wall was set in place, the women no longer regularly came to the protest site, unless there was a special occasion such as the Women's day celebration. In general, the protest camp infrastructure in its practicality and its familiar aspects, as common-place (Thévenot 2014), provided the asylum seekers with safety (Bodström et al 2021, 43) and a place to spend their nights— even if they could not sleep there.

After the meeting with the police, I talked to an elderly woman, who was appalled that the tent should be rolled open. She had done a night shift at the protest during the previous weekend when it was extremely cold, and the tent was allowed to be closed. She said that there had been about twenty people present, most of whom had spent the night inside the warm tent. (Those who had been outside had kept themselves warm by skipping.) There was a big difference in the number of people present at the nightshift I did in May, when there were barely ten of us there, protesters and supporters combined. While the rule about the tent was hardly the main reason why the number of attendees at the protest dropped during the spring, the lack of comfort and warmth didn't make it any more appealing to spend long times at the protest. Hence, by controlling the tents, the police didn't control only sleeping but also how attractive the protest was to spend time in during the cold winter months. Not allowing sleeping in the protest tents was especially draconian in a situation where asylum seekers who had received their second negative decision for their asylum application were not allowed to stay in reception centres, leaving their accommodation to volunteers such as the supporters of Right to Live or the Home Accommodation Network.

After the police had laid out the rule that the tents should be made open to ensure the control of sleeping, especially the supporters wanted to make sure that nothing in Right to Live could be connected to sleeping, and for instance mattresses were discussed in one of the meetings. There had been mattresses in the main tent but now there was talk that they should be taken away so that no interpretation could be made that there are people sleeping there. A few days later I noticed in the Facebook group someone suggesting that maybe there could be some bean bags instead, as they would bring comfort and insulation but would not be mistaken for something people sleep on.

In order for a situation to “hold together” in just one world of justification, objects from other worlds must be cleared away (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006). In



Right to Live, objects from the private world, such as mattresses, had to be cleared away in order to steer the interpretation of the situation to the right direction. Things belonging to the private sphere were out of place and broke the harmonious display of civic worth. Unlike protests such as Occupy Wall Street (Dekker & Duyvendak 2020), no one in Right to Live publicly contested the importance of the private sphere and the objects related to it. The necessary objects belonging to the private sphere, such as cooking supplies, were kept in the background and the protesters and supporters kept reminding each other that they must be kept in order. Even if all traces of the private sphere could not be erased, they at least had to be kept in as good order as possible. Cleanliness was, in fact, one of the things that the police would also keep an eye on, and it was something that was discussed online (Vikman 2020). Vikman (2020) has identified a discourse of dirt in online discussions concerning Right to Live, where the appearance of the protest, the way it looked, smelled and sounded, was negatively valued and was seen to disturb the comfort and order at the nationally-significant Railway Square.

Inarguably, controlling the situation with all its material objects was also a way for the police to control the protesters. As Feiganbaum et al (2013, 59) write:

*An encampment's infrastructures are always embedded in, and inter-dependent with, the existing operations and laws of the city or town in which it is located. The laws, or even the by-laws, of the land are often used to police and prohibit what may seem to be minor elements of a protest camp. For the police, these laws provide a means and excuse to exercise control.*

“Minor elements”, such as rolling open a tent wall, were indeed used as means of control in Right to Live.

In general, what is apparent in the case of Right to Live is the nature of governance. It was not the soft network governance as with Kallio movement but “surveillance governance that emphasizes security” as Janne from Kallio movement called it, one that is subjected to those who are not trusted, to potential threats such as foreigners and political activists. This control aspect becomes visible especially if one compares the policing of Right to Live to the previous protest camp, Occupy Helsinki, that occupied Kansalaistori square for eight months in 2011-2012. According to an interview with an activist who took part in this protest camp, the police didn't control their sleeping and they were allowed to have a campfire. (See Appendix IV for a more detailed description.) According to the police, Right to Live required more active policing because of the harassment from the counter-protest. However, perhaps this was also the case because protest camps were still a novelty in the Finnish repertoire of contentious action; because Occupy Helsinki was located in a less visible place than Right to Live and hardly raised any media attention; or

because the Occupy protesters were mainly white citizens. Either way, the flipside of the police not banning these signs of camping was that Occupy was, in the end, evicted based on an interpretation of the protest as camping. The control the police asserted on Right to Live can therefore be interpreted as ensuring the continuation of the protest or as yet another case of the heavy policing migrants face. As mentioned in the introduction, the police were a multi-faceted actor in Right to Live.

This section has described how the material infrastructure in Right to Live had to be civic and symbolic in contrast to practical materials that belong to the private sphere of home, the familiar regime, and that these materials were a part of the test posed on the nature of Right to Live and whether it was public protesting or private camping. However, the demand to distinguish between public (civic) and private (familiar) sides of the protest also became apparent in the performance of Right to Live since it had to perform public protesting, and its social aspects (interpreted as private) were not considered legitimate in this public protest, as I will explain in the next section.

## Political protest or non-political socializing and loitering

According to the Assembly Act, everyone must be able to participate in a public meeting, not only those who are invited, and this openness is what makes a meeting public and not private. This openness of the protest was thus another device with which the nature of Right to Live as a demonstration was constructed – and controlled. For instance, in the negotiation between the police and the protesters mentioned above, the police stated that the protest was too “closed-in”, meaning that it was not clear to passers-by that it was a demonstration. According to the Chief inspector in the dialogue police, the definition of Right to Live was also about “how it’s delimited, the demonstration area, does everyone have free access there”.

As the protest continued, Right to Live became an important meeting place for asylum seekers and, during the spring, a need for a more permanent “social centre” was also recognized<sup>90</sup>. As described in the previous chapters, important aspects of Right to Live were its social, leisurely and affective aspects and the protest was referred to as “a home”, “a village” and “a living room”. In other words, Right to Live became a common-place (Thévenot 2014), something that unites people in the regime of familiar attachments. These social and affective aspects of the protest were

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<sup>90</sup> However, the City of Helsinki was reluctant in subsidizing such a place and it has not been realized: “[The protest] was a place for them to get together and maybe receive peer support and this kind of thing, but then the downer [“mälsä”] side of it is that it’s not our task as a city to arrange something like this.” (Chief of Preparedness.)

not without political meanings. However, for instance neither the police who controlled the protest, nor the public (see below), recognized these meanings since the social side of the protest was categorized as belonging to the private sphere, so it was not considered a legitimate part of the public, political protest. Therefore, the controlling of the openness of the protest again brought to light the tension between the civic world and the familiar regime<sup>91</sup>.

The peaceful performative style of Right to Live, that mainly lacked characteristics of protesting such as chanting, also made it difficult to convince the police that it was still a protest. As I visited the protest for the first time during its first week, on the day it was moved from Kiasma to Railway Square, the protesters and supporters held speeches with megaphones and chanted. Still on March 1, when the meeting between the activists and the police took place, there was a public reading of negative asylum decisions through a megaphone in Finnish, Swedish and English by activists in the “We see you” project, which promotes more humane asylum politics. However, during the following weeks, the protest quieted down with hardly any protest moments, apart from speeches held on special occasions and celebrations, such as on Women’s Day or the 100th day of the protest. During the first weeks of the protest at Railway Square, the protest attracted a lot of visitors, and there was buzz at the protest site, but as it continued and the protesters and core supporters started to get tired, there was less and less stir around the protest.

One of the reasons Right to Live was moved from Kiasma (and Finland First from the opposite square by the Paasikivi memorial) was in fact complaints the police had received about the noise the protest(s) created. However, if there was no shouting and chanting, as there usually is in a demonstration, there was the risk of losing the characteristics of a demonstration and slipping, again, into the category of camping. As the City of Helsinki Chief of Preparedness said:

*The baseline in the Assembly Act has been that a meeting is public meeting, that is, literally, an event where speeches are held and that starts and ends at some point.*

In one of the general meeting between the supporters, Afghans and Iraqis, the need to have “demonstration moments” was discussed to make the protest look more like a demonstration again. During these moments, people would form a line and hold signs with demands, and these moments would then be photographed and posted

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<sup>91</sup> In Thévenot’s (2014) theory, the regime of familiar attachments is considered the least legitimate form of communication. While in subaltern counter-publics (Fraser 1990) such as Right to Live, this regime had legitimacy, in the institutional sphere it did not. Dekker & Duyvendak (2020) describe a similar tension between some insiders, and between insiders and outsiders, of Occupy camps in whether the private sides of the protest should be legitimate and public parts of the protest, or not.

on Facebook. This way, even if there was no shouting, there would be silent demonstrating. There had been protest moments like these in the beginning, right after the protest had been moved to Railway Square, but at the time of the meeting in March, they had nearly stopped altogether. However, these protest moments didn't take off and there weren't any after the meeting. The every-day life at the protest consisted mainly of protesters and supporters handing out flyers and people talking to each other. Occasionally, in the evenings, people at the protest would gather around the grill and play music or games and, as described in chapter eight, these leisurely activities had political meanings since they were one of the means of affective support for the protesters/asylum seekers who were in sustained precarity (McNevin 2020) and since Arab music played at the protest created a rupture to the every-day soundscape of the Railway square. However, this kind of protesting was easy to interpret as only socializing instead of demonstrating. One of the discourses Vikman (2020) identified in online discussions concerning Right to Live was "loitering", which portrayed the protest as "unproductive"<sup>92</sup> and non-political hanging around or camping. To these commentators, the protest didn't look like how political action is usually thought to look like, and political signs such as banners were seen only as a disguise for loitering (ibid, 51).

In the meeting mentioned above, a few Finns also emphasized that the protesters should not stand in circles all the time but that they should always be on the lookout if new Finnish people stop by and be ready to welcome them, talk to them and explain what is going on. The protesters seemed frustrated as they said that they already did this: they always had a few people circulating around, ready to talk to passers-by. The protesters also said that there is a good reason for standing in circles, and that was warmth: people usually gathered in circles around the grill to get warm. The practical conditions of Right to Live, where the protesters would spend hours on end outside, sometimes in the snow, wind, rain or in sub-zero temperatures, were again at odds with the (disembodied) civic worth.

The openness of Right to Live also materialized in the fencing of the protest. Some kind of boundary was needed to mark where the protest began, especially to make sure that Finland First protesters would not cross that boundary, but at the same time, the fence should not make it too difficult or unappealing for passers-by to join in. At first, during the winter, the "fence" was made of a low pile of snow. In the beginning of March, after a suicide attempt next to the protest site, the police

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<sup>92</sup> In chapter nine I propose that citizenship as a category of control can be perceived as a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth. This "unproductivity" is a way to negate the industrial worth of the asylum seekers, therefore making them unfit as citizens.

asked them to make the fencing clearer, according to one of the supporters, for the protests' own safety. As someone in Right to Live Facebook group said:

*After the incident with the tree on Friday, it became very obvious that we are in a public space [--] and that the protest is the only area we can keep free of Finland First.*

If the Finland First protesters entered the borders of the protest, the Right to Live protesters (or supporters) could call the police. This was why it was important to clearly delimit the area. However, echoing the police's view about the importance of the openness of the protest, another commentator added that it would be important that the fencing would enable one to "easily slide inside". Another limitation of the fence came from the Assembly Act, namely that the structure shouldn't be permanent. Taking into account all these requirements, including an aesthetic requirement, the idea of a "Message on the line" was born – this was a length of yarn attached between two poles to which passers-by could write their message to the protesters on pieces of cloth. "Message on the line" was thus simultaneously a way to mark the physical boundary of the protest and a "a bridge", a way to invite passers-by to participate in the protest and convey their support to the protesters.

## The unclear result of the test

The result of the test over the definition of Right to Live is not at all clear. On the one hand, Right to Live was not evicted for camping, as had happened to Occupy Helsinki, so it passed the civic test in that it was defined as more of a protest than a camp. On the other hand, it states in the National Police Board of Finland's report that:

*As the demonstrations have become exceptionally long-lasting, they have, as described in the Helsinki police department's statement, gained camp-like characteristics rather than those that aim for an expression of opinion, thus they can't be perceived as belonging to the absolute nucleus of the right to demonstrate. (The National Police Board of Finland's report and statement in the matter of interfering in the demonstrations on Railways Square, 27.2.2018.)*

What these camp-like characteristics were, is not explicated. In addition, since Right to Live and Finland First were treated in the police statement as one bundle, it is impossible to tell which protest the police are referring to. Like the justification based on security, the camping card was also something that the police always had up their sleeve when policing Right to Live (and Finland First). Since the camping ban, and the difference between "camping" and "protesting" were unclear to begin with, there

was a lot of room for interpretation (see Appendix IV for the officials' critique towards this lack of guidelines in the legislation).

What this shows in terms of the theory of tests is the importance of having clear rules for the test that are known and followed by all for the test to be valid and legitimate. This also requires each party in the test to take the test and its result seriously, as did not happen in Right to Live, since there were no explicit justifications for why Right to Live was finally interpreted as camping instead of protesting, and why it was framed as a security threat. From the protesters' point of view, they were being tried by the heavy policing. Therefore, the disappointment and anger that the removal of the protest caused can be seen against this backdrop of having been tested for nothing.

However, the test did have some significance since Right to Live was not *evicted* like Occupy Helsinki or Finland First, to which it was constantly compared – it was only *removed* from Railway Square. This might have seemed like a technical detail, especially to the protesters, since the result was the same – the protest was cleared away from Railway Square after three and a half months – but it can also be seen as a way to give some recognition to Right to Live and differentiate its treatment from that of Finland First.

### 10.3 Conclusions

In principle, Kallio Block Party and Right to Live both put the legitimate use of urban space to the test. However, in Kallio movement, the testing phase was already a part of the group's successful history of organizing the block party in challenging places such as Kurvi and, through this success, also gaining the trust of public officials in the City of Helsinki and the police, which made it easy for them to get permits. What the test that was posed to the movement during my fieldwork, a technical obstacle within the desired festival area on Sörnäisten rantatie, showed, was how far the use of urban space could be legally stretched in a non-confrontative style. As the examples of other street occupations such as Reclaim the Streets or Elokapina illustrate, the occupation of Sörnäisten rantatie is possible, but it was not in the limits of possibilities within Kallio movement. Therefore, the test turned out to be a test over the civic style of Kallio movement, resulting in the confirmation of its non-confrontative style.

Dekker and Duyvendak (2020) describe how Occupy protests were a test of the legitimate use of urban space. Strictly speaking, this was not the case with Right to Live since camping (and everything deemed “private” such as socializing) were

illegitimate from the outset. In addition, Right to Live protesters did not test the limits of what is possible within urban space – as asylum seekers, they could not afford to. Instead, the test was over the protest’s nature as either illegal and private camping or legal and public protesting. At least, this is what the test appeared to be. However, as the protest was ultimately defined as having gained “camp-like characteristics” and was ultimately framed as a security threat despite its peaceful performance, without any explicit justifications, the nature and credibility of the test itself becomes questionable.

# 11 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In this concluding chapter, I will first sum up my main findings in each analytic chapter, beginning from chapter five, and then return to discussions set out in the beginning of this dissertation, as well as touch upon the topics that had to be cut off entirely from this book or be only side-lined.

*Chapter five* explored the different ideals of civic action and the place of politics within the two civic groups. With the concepts of pragmatic sociology, it became possible to describe the key tensions within these ideals and valuations. Both groups practiced “personalized politics” (Lichterhan 1996) that emphasizes individualized expression, but in Kallio movement this civic style was especially poignant since it explicitly valued “individualism”. In Kallio movement, the key tension was therefore between individualism and collectivism, which translates as a tension between different forms of individualism: the world of inspiration that values *individualized expression* while serving the common good; and the regime of engaging in a plan that prizes the pursuit of *self-interest* without requiring a motivation based on any common good. One way to solve this tension in Kallio movement was to “purify goods” (Tavory et al 2022) by reminding the organizers of Kallio Block Party that despite it being acceptable to be motivated by building one’s CV, it was still important to know the values of Kallio movement and commit to the collective organizing process of the block party. Therefore, non-organized neighbourhood action and DIY urbanism do not automatically mean “ego projects” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101), as some scholars have feared. I will continue this discussion in the section “Individualism revisited” below. In Right to Live, individual interests was not the biggest threat. Rather, the tension in Right to Live concerned the relationship between the political and the affective (and practical) sides of the protest, which I have conceptualized as the civic world and the familiar regime. This tension will be explored further in the thematic part of this chapter below, under the title ““Civic” in “civic action””. There were several similarities between the groups in their daily practices, which will be outlined in the section “Temporality, practicality and the place for politics”. However, chapter five also pointed out how both groups’ members talked about their motivation to take part in civic action and how civic action has to “feel right”.



*Chapter six* investigated Lichterman's (1996, 34) question about how a group of activists, who act as "individual political agents" instead of members of established organizations, is able to function and build solidarity. As Lichterman (ibid.) has pointed out, if there are no commitment structures, groups need to build *commitment cultures* (see also Konttinen & Peltokoski 2010, 9; 98; Sivesind & Selle 2010, 97). The two groups' cultures were quite opposite of each other. Kallio movement emphasized the movement's and its members' freedom and, in line with what Lichterman (1996, 48) discovered in groups that practice personalized politics, fun-ness of action as a way to attract new members. When there was a need to get these new people committed, *first*, they were reminded of their (individual) responsibilities. If chapter five already showed that "individuality" does not only mean individual, selfish interests, but can also mean creative individuality, chapter six added it can also mean assigning and taking individual responsibility. This observation goes to prove that collective action can also be based on liberal grammar (the collective form of the regime of engaging in a plan) – even though it may not be the best way of organizing. In Kallio movement, this kind of emphasis on individual responsibility became visible, for instance, in a draconian notion of "separating the wheat from the chaff", the willingness to take on tasks and responsibility, during the organizing process. These remarks are important to note in discussions concerning increasing individualism within civic action. *Second*, the members were reminded of the common effort by talking about *talkoot*, a traditional "form of volunteer work based on norms of solidarity and communality" (Tedre and Pehkonen 2014). Right to Live, on the other hand, didn't have to make an effort to commit members to action – the problem was the opposite, how to get people to take time off and take care of themselves. The comparison between Right to Live and Kallio movement would suggest that an urgent political situation, such as the one in Right to Live, creates more collective organizing, limiting the leeway given to individuals. Therefore, there is some truth in the concerns over crumbling collectivity when civic action is less directed to institutional politics (Wollebæk et al 2010). Even if Right to Live didn't have organizational structures, its political goal and the sense of momentum had created a "common front" of heterogenous actors, whereas Kallio movement had more trouble with commitment since it did not have organizational structures *nor* political goals that would have welded its members together. However, chapter six also pointed out that Kallio movement did not lack a sense of commitment altogether, but this commitment was short-term, in line with the world of projects introduced in chapter five. While Kallio movement members did not necessarily expect a long-term commitment to the movement from each other, they did expect

that one commits, in the short-term, to the action and common goal, the organizing of Kallio Block Party.

*Chapter seven* took a step back from the groups' cultures and looked at how the groups approached the idea of political representation, a concept that is still pivotal in representative democracies despite changes in, for instance, voter turnouts and the forms of civic action. In the Finnish political tradition, registered associations have been important carriers of (direct) representative task. What happens to this task in civic groups that are not associations – and that even consciously stand against the associational tradition? In line with what was discovered in the previous chapters, representation looked different in Kallio movement that emphasized individualism and lacked an explicit political goal, compared to Right to Live that did have a political goal. In this chapter, the idea of *individual representation* (or of non-representation) was introduced, an idea that was present in the talk of both groups' members, and three meanings thereof was distinguished. First, *civic* meaning emphasized the equality of the groups' members and leaving out all statuses. The second meaning was named *virtuousness of neutrality*, and it included leaving out all political symbols in Kallio movement and political affiliations in Right to Live. However, in Kallio movement this neutrality was more ideological than in Right to Live, where it was a way to maintain the common front among people with very different backgrounds. The third meaning of individual representation was *avoiding internal conflicts*.

Since collective representation holds such a central place in institutionalized politics, examining the two groups' ideas of representation also made it possible to investigate the group members' ideas of "politics" on the one hand and their possibilities for politicization, in the sense of opening new possibilities and challenging givens, on the other. As mentioned above, especially Kallio movement challenged the idea of the direct representation of collective interests and, with this, they also challenged the institutionalized sphere of politics as a site for collective good. This kind of ideological resistance to institutionalized politics did not exist within Right to Live – on the contrary, Right to Live was in this sense a traditional protest that was directed towards the powerholders and one where the protesters embodied the claim for asylum seekers' rights. In other words, the protesters directly represented the ones whose rights were politicized with the protest.

The importance of collective and direct representation in Right to Live was then described, especially in contrast to protests for the rights of "deserving migrants". Therefore, as the case of Right to Live demonstrates, the idea of direct political representation has not vanished in political action, even if this action takes place

outside associations. Direct representation is befitting to a political protest that is aimed at institutional politics, especially if the protesters embody the protest's collective interests. However, I argued that even though the participants in Right to Live clearly perceived the protest as direct representation (representation of asylum seekers' collective interests directed at institutionalized politics), from a theoretical point of view it can also be perceived as constructive representation (where the object of representation is constructed within the representation process) since *how* the asylum seekers were represented mattered a great deal, especially to the supporters of the protest. This became visible in, for instance, how important it was to define the physical borders to the protest since the protesters were representative at the protest site; and to have asylum seeking women at the protest to counter racist and sexualized discourses about male asylum seekers and their female helpers.

If chapter seven looked primarily at what the groups' members thought about political representation, *chapter eight* took a more theoretical point of view to representation, analyzing the groups' *performative events as constructive representation*. Within this constructive framework, the task of representation is to make a group visible through a public performance such as a demonstration, and to construct, give shape to, the said group in this process (see Alapuro 2005). This point of view opened up a dramaturgical analysis of a cultural performance (Talpin 2016; Eyerman 2006). The previous chapter established that the participants of Right to Live thought of the protest primarily as direct representation (where the unit of representation is already known before the performance) but I also noted that Right to Live can be perceived from a constructive framework and in chapter eight, I analyzed this *representative performance* (Talpin 2016). Kallio movement declined the idea of direct representation (nearly) altogether since the members associated representation to interest politics. However, in the analysis of Kallio movement's representative performance of Kallio Block Party, it was discovered that the groups' members perceived themselves as prefiguring certain "Left Green" meanings and values in their "quiet activism", most notably the organizing of Kallio Block Party. In other words, they were engaging in constructive or symbolic representation and prefigurative politics. This prefigurative politics was, however, a peculiar kind since the values were vague and not openly discussed.

Despite these fundamental differences between Kallio movement and Right to Live, in terms of their political nature and their ideas of representation, there were similarities in their performative styles. Both were infused with the virtuousness of neutrality, introduced in the previous chapter, giving non-confrontative performances with no shouting and no display of overarching ideologies such as

anti-capitalism. In Kallio movement, this neutrality was an ideological decision whereas in Right to Live, the neutral and non-confrontative style was, ultimately, more a result of contextual reasons such as the asylum seekers' precarious situation.

Chapter eight also demonstrated how both civic groups focused a great deal on the materiality of the events, what they looked like, and what kind of message they conveyed. For instance, tents were discussed in both events. In Kallio movement, the tents were not allowed to display sponsor logos since Kallio Block Party was meant to look like a non-commercial event. In addition, and in line with the decision of being politically non-aligned, the tents should not display any party-political signs or association logos. However, and to my surprise, a banner that stated a (rather vague) political message in favor of more permissive asylum politics was accepted for display in Kallio Block Party. This double meaning of "politics" in fact reflected the kind of politics that Kallio movement practiced, a pre-figurative kind, where institutionalized, big-P politics (Kennedy et al 2018) was avoided and the political message was, on the one hand, assumed to be shared by the assumed Left Green party-goers and, on the other hand, left up to each individual to interpret, as is typical in connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019). In Right to Live, the army tents were initially meant to represent the protesters/asylum seekers' gloomy situation, but during the spring the appearance of the tents and the protest site were transformed into what was thought to be more inviting and less scary style, with bright colours and flowers. This transformation was strategic since one of the purposes of the protest was to "de-securitize" asylum seekers (Falkentoft et al 2014) and to gather support from Finns, but it is noteworthy that this strategy was still a choice. Especially the supporters of the protest, many of whom were not experienced in activism, had a lot of influence in the shaping of the performance of Right to Live.

Finally, the similarities in these two performative styles raises questions about whether there is something more that explains this similarity, such as non-confrontative performance as a strategy to gain legitimacy in Finnish political culture or as a post-political tendency in civic groups that are increasingly based on connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019, 122).

*Chapter nine* looked at the relationship between Helsinki's local public authorities and Kallio movement and Right to Live, respectfully, and through which order of worth the groups approached the authorities and vice versa. Both Kallio movement and Right to Live approached public authorities through peaceful negotiations but there were also differences in their approaches. Kallio movement approached the City of Helsinki in the spirit of network governance, expecting cooperation, while

Right to Live approached the police with a forced humility and even (a performance of) gratitude, as chapter eight showed, doing its utmost to not overstep any boundaries of what is expected of good citizens. From the perspective of the public officials, Kallio movement was valued for its non-confrontative, participatory civic style, but it was also valuable to the City of Helsinki for its market value, bringing crowds to the streets, which has been within the City of Helsinki strategies since the 1990's (Lehtovuori 2005, 178-9). Right to Live did not primarily negotiate with the City but with the police, also affecting how it was valued. The protest was not celebrated for its civic worth, even though this was the official framework the police was obliged to view the protest from since free speech and the right to assembly are secured by law. In practice, Right to Live was, at best, tolerated, and in the end, it was seen through the framework that radical activists as well as migrants are often subjected to, that of safety. The valuation of these two forms of civic action was impossible to separate from the actors themselves, the ones in Kallio movement being white citizens and the ones in Right to Live racialized non-citizens.

The relations between the state, or local municipality, and activists often crystallize in the relations between the police and the activists (Boldt & Luhtakallio, 2023). From this point of view, it is revealing how differently the two events were policed. Kallio movement no longer has to negotiate with the police but can negotiate with the City of Helsinki authorities instead. In contrast, the primary public official Right to Live had to negotiate with was the police (see jurisdiction in Appendix IV). Trust and personal connections were essential building blocks in the relationship between Kallio movement members and public officials, and will be discussed in the thematic section "Trust as a glue in the use of urban space" below.

*Chapter ten* utilized the notion of a *test* introduced in pragmatic sociology to study controversies, disputes and scandals (Barthe et al 2013; Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; de Blic & Lemieux 2005) to analyze test moments over the use of public space in Helsinki. Kallio Block Party and Right to Live stretch the limits of the legitimate use of urban space since the first was a case of DIY urbanism and new urban activism, the purpose of which is to provide nudges to City authorities and increase the freedom of city residents from bureaucracy, and second was a case of a protest camp that pushes the limits of the Assembly Act. Since the first Kallio Block Party was arranged in 2011, it had undergone several test moments already, establishing itself as an event organized by trustworthy citizens. The test moment analyzed in chapter ten thus turned around what was tested, that is, how far the use of urban space could be legally stretched in a non-confrontative style, resulting in the confirmation of Kallio movement's non-confrontative style. Right to Live protesters did not

purposefully test the limits of what is possible within urban space since this kind of testing seems to be a prerogative of non-racialized citizens. Instead, the test was over the protest's nature as either illegal and private camping or legal and public protesting. The test moment in Right to Live on the one hand confirmed that the protesters were able to construct a peaceful, civic protest instead of camping (familiar regime). On the other hand, as the previous chapter illustrated, the protest was ultimately framed through security, revealing the nature of the test itself as a fraudulent one. These examples show that different parties in a situation (such as a scandal or a conflict) might differently interpret what exactly is tested and that not everyone agrees on the significance or legitimacy of the test. I continue this discussion in the section ““Civic” in “civic action””.

Next, I will discuss in more in-depth some of the main themes of this research. First, I will summarize the nature of civic action in loose and unofficial groups and the consequences thereof to the “political”; second, I return to the concept of “civic” in “civic action”; third, I present that trust between civic actors and public officials is an essential factor in the civic uses of urban space; and fourth and finally, I revisit the discussions on individualism in light of my findings.

## Temporality, practicality and the place for politics in networked activism

This dissertation has investigated two civic groups that were visible in their occupation of urban space in 2017-2019 and that communicate and organize in Facebook. These groups were very different from the outset. Whereas Right to Live was a political protest, Kallio movement's Kallio Block Party was a cultural event with prefigurative meanings stashed in its performance. Right to Live as a physical protest was a momentary nodal point of networks of asylum work (activism and volunteering) whereas Kallio movement still exists. Yet there were many similarities between the two groups, characteristics that seem to have much to do with the temporality of their action.

*First*, both groups were project oriented and their timespan was thus rather short. In Kallio movement, the most active part of the movement, Kallio Block Party meetings, began in the beginning of each year, aiming to a one-day event in August. In Right to Live, while the end date of the protest was not in sight, it was clear that the physical protest would have to end at some point. This kind of temporality is a logical in a neoliberal context where the regime of engaging in a plan is considered “normal action” (Thévenot 2007, 419) and as Eliasoph (2011, xviii; see Appendix V) has noted, is in line with short-term jobs and marriages. This time limitation, as well

as a feeling of momentum made the core participants of the protest (protesters and supporters alike) commit to the action, putting their everyday lives on hold. *Second*, both groups relying heavily on social media and smart phones in internal communications and organizing meant that one did not participate in the civic groups' action only in meetings or at the protest site, but potentially 24/7. This potential or even an implicit expectation of non-stop communication had several consequences. First, it created a feeling of constant urgency and a need to react. In Right to Live, this urgency was also due to the urgent asylum situation, but the numerous discussion threads and Messenger and Telegram chats added another layer of a feeling of rush. In Kallio movement, while the goal and purpose of the organizing process was less urgent rather than lives at risk as in Right to Live, the looming dead-lines in the organization process of the festival, and oftentimes a lack of a sufficient number of volunteers willing to take initiative and responsibility of tasks still caused occasional needs for spurts. *Third*, this constant state of being on-call caused fatigue and burn-out especially in Right to Live, although it is difficult to disentangle this from other factors such as emotional distress of the asylum seekers and their supporters that caused similar effects. In Kallio movement, long-time members would occasionally take years off from arranging Kallio Block Party since the organizing process was intense and time consuming. Therefore, a burn-out culture seems to be a phenomena related not only to working life but also to civic action. The activists' well-being was a topic that was actively discussed and dealt with in Right to Live by providing counselling sessions and by the activists reminding each other to take some time off and for instance, do yoga or meditate. This kind of attention to dealing with fatigue and burn-out is even more topical in new civic groups and for instance Extinction rebellion's "emotive protest practices" include practicing mindfulness (Jokela et al forthcoming; Sauerborn 2021).

The fact that both civic groups relied heavily on social media in their internal communications and organizing also had the effect of making their decision-making blurry. In both groups, I witnessed situations where it was unclear how urgent a decision was and therefore where it should be decided upon, instantly on Facebook or Telegram or after some time in the next meeting, and by whom. Both groups were informal and "structureless" and thus, despite both groups holding regular meetings, there were no official and decided-upon leaders or decision-making practices such as (only) consensual decision-making or (only) voting. The decisions on how to make decisions were practical and often ad-hoc. The feeling of urgency especially in Right to Live and a dislike to meetings and a preference on hands-on action in Kallio movement had the effect that meetings in both groups were focused on practical

issues and a lengthy discussion about the principles of decision-making would have seemed out of place.

This kind of seeming lack of structures is obviously a fertile breeding ground for unofficial and invisible leadership, something Jo Freeman (1970) pointed out in her essay "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" and something that more or less took place in both groups. (It is important to note that structurelessness of civic groups, and the resulting issue of invisible power, is not a novelty but it does seem that civic action organized in social media is increasing or amplifying this lack of structures, see eg. Gerbaudo 2012.) Especially Kallio movement had leadership positions that were recognized by other members, since the movement had already existed six years when I started my fieldwork. These unofficial leaders were usually either the old-timers in the movement or new Kallio Block Party organizers who had relevant skills and experience, who stood up and took a lot of tasks and responsibility of the organizing process. The leaders were often the ones who would chair the meetings. In Right to Live, the leadership positions among the groups of supporters were less clear since the core group was only in a stage of forming – and of course, the forming stage was cut short when the protest had to be cleared away. The power differences between the protesters and supporters is another question entirely, something I have briefly touched upon in this dissertation. While there was clearly a power imbalance between these two groups (or rather, three, since protesters were divided into Iraqis and Afghans), one that I claim was visible especially in the construction of the performance of the protest, the issue was constantly discussed and reflected upon.

As mentioned, another similarity between these groups was an emphasis on practical matters instead of, for instance, shared values or long-term political goals. The to do lists in both groups were indeed endless. This emphasis on practicality over politics resulted in both groups from many of the characteristics mentioned above, such as a sense of urgency and decision-making on Facebook but also from fear of internal conflicts. There were, however, also differences between the reasons for the practical orientation of the two groups. Right to Live was a political protest and therefore all the participants could rely on the fact that everyone shared (approximately) the same political stand in terms of asylum politics, but since the main responsibility of the support group was the maintenance of the protest, there was no room for lengthy political discussions. This avoidance of politics inside Right to Live was thus more due to contextual reasons. In Kallio movement, however, there was more of an ideological emphasis on action instead of talk (which led to a situation where common values were simply assumed instead of discussed) as well as a respect for each individual's moral and political values (as long as they didn't



explicitly contradict the movement's values), characteristics that led to this prioritization of practical matters.

However, the emphasis, especially if combined with the non-confrontative nature of the movements' public performance leads to further questions whether this avoidance of politics and conflicts is a broader phenomenon and has something to do with either a post-political tendency or the logic of fame in social media (Luhtakallio & Meriluoto 2023), as also Mäenpää and Faehnle (2021, 169-170) suggest. For instance, both groups avoided a larger ideological framing in their performances. Studies on the recent youth environmental movements, such as Extinction rebellion, have noted that even though these movements openly politicize environmental issues, even these movements have a "politically 'neutral' framing of climate change" (Buzogány and Scherhauser 2022; De Moor et al. 2020, 619), avoiding for instance an anti-capitalist framing. This question is left open for further inquiries.

However, I have presented that in Kallio movement and Right to Live the moral-political issues inevitably leaked onto practical matters. For instance, the material and visual appearance of Kallio Block Party turned out to matter a great deal to the organizers, especially the old-timers, leading to discussions concerning who and what (such as an NGO, commercial actors, political banners) could be represented at the event and why or why not. In other words, even if there was an effort to avoid moral-political discussions, they could not be avoided altogether.

There were differences as well as similarities between the two civic groups regarding how politics came to be defined in them. Right to Live was a traditional protest since it was directed to institutionalized politics and the protesters represented asylum seekers' collective interests whereas Kallio movement shied away from the idea of collective representation (of interests) and everything else that resembled institutionalized politics. Kallio movement was an interesting case in regards to politics since it displayed a double meaning of politics: institutionalized party politics was not an accepted part of the movement whereas loosely defined "Left Green" values were expected of the membership and there was an effort to communicate these values in the organizing of Kallio Block Party. This is why it is important to study not only what a civic group such as Kallio movement says but also what it does and how, what kind of performance it constructs. (I have also argued that, in line with literature on protest camps and migrant solidarity movements, also the backstage of Right to Live with its affective and material practices of solidarity such as calling the protest "demo family" or "Right to Live family" carried prefigurative political meanings (and that it was difficult to

differentiate between the front and back stages to begin with)<sup>93</sup>. I will discuss this prefigurative dimension of Right to Live further in the section below.) However, it became clear especially in the survey results conducted to Kallio Block Party visitors that these values were not communicated clearly enough, since vast majority of the respondents hadn't either recognized these values or were indifferent about them. Therefore, one needs also to be cautious about the effects of a performance since communication that is non-verbal opens up a bigger array of interpretations than verbal communication. As also Deflorian (2021) has noted, performances may create and nurture "alternative imaginaries" but only for a moment.

## The "civic" in "civic action"

"Civic" has been one of the key concepts used in this research and it has had a double function. *First*, I have used the concept of "civic action" non-normatively as an attempt to capture as wide a scope of, well, civic action as possible, without making a priori assumptions on whether they are "civic" or political or not. In this sense, it has been a translation of the Finnish concept of "citizenship action" (*"kansalaistoiminta"*). Lichterman and Eliasoph (2014, 810) conceptualize civic action in a way that fits my use of the term: "participants are coordinating action to improve some aspect of common life in society, as they imagine society." The *second* use of the term "civic" in this research has been in relation to requirements of civic order of worth in the work of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), especially in the analysis of the nature of civic action in the Right to Live support group and the valuation of the protest by the police and the City of Helsinki. Next, I will summarize and critically reflect this second use of the concept.

Migrant solidarity movement and protest camp literatures both emphasize the importance of a movement's affective inside that construct the movement's "micropolitics" (Brown & Yaffe 2014) or that prefigure another kind of society (Hage 2012). In migrant solidarity literature this "inside" refers to, for instance, providing mental support to asylum seekers who are in precarious situations (e.g. Hinger et al. 2018), and in protest camp literatures the maintenance of also the backstage of the protest is noted to be essential to the continuation of the protest (e.g. Mokre, 2018, 216), and some protesters for instance in Occupy camps have also

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<sup>93</sup> In addition, the protesters were also prefiguring another kind of society, one where they had the "right to live", in which they were a visible part of and where they formed relations to citizens – in other words, they were prefiguring their own citizenship.

politicized the importance of this private sphere (Dekker & Duyvendak 2020). These important remarks within these literatures imply a politicization of the notion of care. I have presented the prefigurative dimension of Right to Live, such as the practices of calling the protest a family and of serving and drinking tea and socializing at the protest, as a tight yet tenuous composition of the civic world and the familiar regime. This conceptualization has enabled a more nuanced description of the “micropolitics” or prefiguration.

*On the one hand*, I have argued that, while the practices of solidarity of the supporters of Right to Live were unquestionably of civic nature, and done mostly on the grounds of abstract and universal solidarity (as is required in the civic world) regarding all asylum politics instead of deserving migrants, many of the supporters were mobilized and motivated by knowing the asylum seekers personally and a big part of their solidarity work was not abstract in nature but concerned getting to know the protesters personally and supporting them emotionally. I have described this as so tight a composition between the civic world and the familiar regime that the seam between the two regimes was invisible. In fact, it was even nonsensical to the supporters to differentiate between the two regimes. This became visible for instance in how emotional work and mental support was such an essential part of the support work and in how the supporters of the protest would rather be thought of as friends or even family-members with the protesters rather than “volunteers” (see also Merikoski 2019, 120). The practice of calling the protest “Right to Live family” or “demo family”, and of calling the protesters brothers was a way to recognize the racialized non-citizens as fellow human beings, over and above the category of citizenship. Socializing at the protest site was important in many ways. First, it showed to the media and passers-by that asylum seekers have support from “ordinary” citizens and that therefore asylum seekers are just like the rest of us. Second, a large number of supporters helped gain more attention and politicize asylum issues. Third, socializing at the protest was a way for citizens and non-citizens to get to know each other and therefore provided opportunities for Finns to support protesters mentally and practically, for instance with bureaucracy. Getting to know the asylum seekers and their situations also politicized many of the supporters, leading them to lose their trust to the authorities and the Finnish society at large.

This tight composition between the civic world and the familiar regime made me question some aspects in pragmatic sociology. I struggled especially with the idea that the familiar regime is the least legitimate of the three regimes, since I could see that for instance that a compassionate expression of emotions was expected at the protest as well as in online discussions, especially at Refugee Hospitality Club. The

familiar regime was legitimate within the subaltern counter-publicity (Fraser 1990) of the protest and communicated to others through bodily gestures and emojis. I therefore argue that the publicity and legitimacy of each regime, such as the familiar regime, are subject to change in time and place and thus should not be decided upon a-priori but should be proven with empirical evidence.

*On the other hand*, however, the tension between the familiar regime and the civic world in Right to Live – the back- and frontstages, private and public sides of the protest – became visible in several situations. This is in fact where the strength of pragmatic sociology lies, in its ability to depict tensions between different regimes. In Right to Live, the seam between the civic world and the familiar regime became visible, *first*, in critical comments about the “Right to Live family” and especially after the physical protest, when mere socializing no longer had political meanings or value and when differences in for instance political views resurfaced. After the protest, it was no longer enough to socialize with the asylum seekers, or nostalgize the “Right to Live family”, but one was expected to do practical asylum work by assisting the asylum seekers with their applications. Therefore, in some situations, it is not sufficient for citizens and non-citizens to merely get to know each other and socialize to be considered political activism, contrary to what had been argued in the literature on migrant solidarity movements (see e.g. Hinger et al. 2018, 173). Context is always crucial in defining an act as political. As shown in chapter five, one of the protesters also pointed out how calling the protest “Right to Live family” was exclusive to for instance those who came from outside Helsinki, which goes against the protest’s civic nature. This kind of exclusivity is in fact an inherent part of the familiar regime (see e.g. Ylä-Anttila 2017).

The *second* situation that brought to light the inherent tension between the two regimes was in how in Right to Live, despite the familiar regime was legitimate *within the protest* as described above, outside the protest it was not as the test over the use of urban space demonstrated (see also Dekker & Duyvendak 2000; Centemeri 2017). As Thévenot (2011, 58) argues, there is an inherent tension between (private) “care” and the more public and legitimate forms of action. In Right to Live, the private backstage of the protest was to be kept hidden, and the protest was not supposed to be too much inward-looking with private socializing but to be kept open and inviting for everyone and include elements of a demonstration. (However, too much protesting would risk being too great a contestation within a political culture where the majority of citizens do not feel comfortable with civil disobedience or even regular protest, and especially because of the protesters’ precarious situation and the

threatening public image of the asylum seekers. For these reasons, the performance of Right to Live was a challenging balancing act.)

One of the problems with the concept of “civic” (action) has been the fact that civic is from the outset reserved for citizens especially in the pragmatic tradition. However, this need not be a problem for the use of the concept in the analysis. As I have demonstrated in my research, fulfilling the requirements of civic action by, for instance, taking a representative stand and performing a peaceful and lawful political protest, the Right to Live protesters were performing citizenship prefiguratively. The fact that civic action is a prerogative of citizens did, however, become evident in the events of the protest spring since, as I have demonstrated, despite qualifying as civic, the protest was eventually framed as a security threat, a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth. This framing of Right to Live as a security threat was also related to the issue of trust, another factor that seems to be a prerogative of citizens, as discussed below.

I have claimed that citizenship, when perceived from the point of view of migration, cannot be perceived only through the civic order of worth but as a compromise between civic and industrial orders of worth, at least. (The hierarchical order between a host/citizen and a guest/migrant would also imply a domestic order of worth. In general, the compromises between different orders of worths or regimes of action are always context dependent, making the list of possible compromises nearly endless.) This argument is in line with critical migration studies, that perceive citizenship primarily as a category not of political action but of control and exclusion (Tyler and Marciniak 2013, 154) that explicitly makes political action of non-citizens more difficult.

## The role of trust in the use of urban space

One of the findings in this dissertation I was not expecting was the role of trust especially in the relationship between the civic actors and public officials – both trust and mistrust towards the public officials but also trust and mistrust the public officials had towards the civic actors. In addition, this finding was not only a result of my analysis but was a topic that was openly reflected on in (some of) the interviews I conducted with members of both groups. In Kallio movement, some of the old-time members were aware of the fact that they had gained the trust of the police and some city officials and had even gotten to know some of them personally. While Finland is continuously rated low on its level of corruption, it is a small country with intertwining networks of influence (Niska et al, forthcoming). This trust was verified by the interviews I conducted with the City officials, by being present in

meetings between Kallio movement and the City officials and simply by looking at Kallio Block Party events: the police was hardly visibly present. Especially when compared to Right to Live, it becomes obvious that this kind of trust was enabled by the fact that the organizers of the block party were white citizens and that they were not confrontative, or even openly political. As I have presented in this dissertation, Right to Live was a double contestation since it was a political protest, and it was organized by racialized non-citizens. Therefore, for white, middle-class citizens the limits of the use of urban space are perhaps broader than before, at least as long as that use is not political, but it is equally true that for others, such as those who are racialized, urban space is a place for control and even fear. As Blühdorn & Deflorian (2021, 265) note, “neoliberal governance is selective: it makes a sharp distinction between desired and undesired forms of social activism”.

However, while trust is important for a functioning society, mistrust is equally important for democracy (Rosanvallon 2008; Korvela & Vento 2021). The level of trust towards the legal and political system, public institutions and officials as well as fellow citizens has been high in Finland in international comparisons (e.g. Jackson et al 2011) and is even part of the Finnish self-understanding. In the beginning of the Right to Live protest, many of the supporters unexperienced in activism or asylum issues were uncritical towards the police. However, this changed during the protest spring. This finding is in line with studies that have discovered that asylum solidarity activists lose their trust to the police or to the society when they witness how the police treats asylum seekers (Merikoski 2021; Toubøl 2019; Pirkkalainen & Pöyhkäri 2022; Pirkkalainen et al 2022). The police acted in multiple and at times contradictory roles in the case of Right to Live. First, especially the dialogue police officers worked continuously to enable the continuing of the protest by making sure that the protest remained “protest-like”; second, the flip-side of this work was the fact that it also enabled control over the protest; third, patrolling police officers did not always secure the safety of the protesters in threatening situations; fourth, the heads of the police made the decision to remove the protest due to security reasons that remained undefined. In addition, in the background of the actual protest events, many supporters heard about or witnessed situations where asylum seekers were being stopped by the police without any cause, based on ethnic profiling (see Himanen 2019). The last straw seemed to be the Stop Deportations demonstration at the airport in April 2017 that showed the activists how the police may respond to peaceful demonstrations. This kind of response was nothing new to experienced activists but changed the view of the entire society of those new to activism.

It is also noteworthy that while there was less trust between city officials or the police and Right to Live, compared to Kallio movement, trust was an essential glue of action within Right to Live – a topic I have not had the space to discuss more in-depth. It was an absolute requirement that a new volunteer was trusted, especially since there was a fear of racist moles, and trust was also essential to the maintenance of the protest infrastructure since people donated the protesters supplies and money through various official and unofficial routes.

## “Individualism” and “politics” revisited

The cultural trend of individualism is inarguably shaping how collective civic action is practiced and what is valued within these groups, and I argue that we must be equipped to understand what exactly this individualism means. Lichterman (1996) has pointed out that individualism is not just one thing and the individualism that is likely to be found in collective action is “personalism”, or “personalized politics”, that emphasizes individualized expression and initiative but not selfish interests, the pursuit of which can be called instrumental or utilitarian individualism (ibid, 5). I noticed early on that individualism was highly valued especially in Kallio movement, but this valuation was not absent in the support group of Right to Live either, and that the concept of personalism aptly describes the kind of individualism that was in these groups – however, not entirely. The concept of personalism is not able to describe the *tension* between individualism as self-expression and individualism as pursuit of self-interest, or the slipping from personalism to instrumental individualism, slipping that easily takes place in groups that cherish the idea of individualism. Therefore, one of the goals and contributions in this research has been the translation of “personalism” onto pragmatic sociology: which regimes or orders of worth are at play in a group that practices personalized politics, and that in general values “individualism”? In this dissecting of “individualism” or “personalism”, pragmatic sociology has again proven to be a useful tool since it recognizes the inherent differences and tensions but also similarities between different regimes and orders of worth. For instance, the case of Kallio movement showed that the regime of engaging in a plan is close to the world of inspiration in the sense that individuality is of high value in both regimes/worlds. However, individuality meant different things in these two regimes/worlds: the world of inspiration values individualized expression while the world of inspiration prizes ability to make individual life plans. Another crucial difference between the two is that in the world of inspiration, serving a common good is cherished (as in personalized politics) while in the regime of engaging in a plan it is not (as in instrumental individualism). Therefore, I argue that

the concept of “personalism” can be translated as the world of inspiration since both value individualized expression as well as serving the common good.

These differences as well as the similarity between the regime of engaging in a plan and the world of inspiration has helped make sense of situations in Kallio movement that might have otherwise go unnoticed or remain perplexing. What this meant in practice was that the kind of individualism that the regime of engaging in a plan prizes, such as raising one’s CV, was tolerated in Kallio movement, especially since the movement needed creative individuals to organize Kallio Block Party, but only up until a moment when the organizers of the block party began losing sight of the collective effort and its values. When collectivity was threatened (when participants didn’t take collective responsibility for instance by attending general meetings or when the Kallio Block Party organizers didn’t know the principles of the event), the kind of individualism the regime of engaging in a plan prizes was denounced.

All collective, or even “connective” (see Bennett & Segerberg 2013) action, requires at least “minimum common denominators” (Milan 2019, 123). As I will explain in more detail below, pragmatic sociology conceptualizes this collectivity as commonality, one that can be based on any regime. However, some commonalities are not on equally solid foundations as others. For instance, a commonality such as Kallio movement’s that is based on the world of inspiration is fragile to begin with since in this world, what is worthy cannot be measured or controlled (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 159). This fragility is also what Lichterman has recognized as part of personalized politics, claiming that collectivity in groups that practice personalized politics is a “tenuous accomplishment” (Lichterman 1996, 35). The up-keep of collectivism was indeed a constant effort in Kallio movement since is easy to slip from one form of individualism (personalism or the world of inspiration) to another (instrumental individualism or the regime of engaging in a plan). This kind of balancing act is likely to take place in loose and unstructured civic groups, especially ones that do not share a clear political goal.

Increasing individualism has also been one of the main concerns of the Finnish (and Nordic) scholars of civil society (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009; Sivesind & Selle 2010, 98; Wollebæk 2010, 147). According to this literature, the challenge loose and unofficial civic groups, such as those organized in social media, pose to the cultural form of registered associations, is an increase of instrumental individualism, or “ego projects” (Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009, 101). This concern is, however, not specific only to Finland as literatures on new forms of civic action such as DIY urbanism have been alarmed by an “erosion of the public” (Finn 2014, 391) and “retreat into



everyday practices and personal life worlds” (Blühdorn & Deflorian 2021, 260). What these concerns have in common is a fear of a lack of commonality and a lack of politics. Traditionally, both of these have been described with the concept of “ideology”, or in the new social movement literature, with “collective identity” (eg. Melucci 1994). However, as literature on social media activism has pointed out (eg. Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Milan 2019), these new movements do not necessarily share an ideology (and in Kallio movement, having no ideologies was already ideological), and as Luhtakallio and Tavory (2018) point out, the concept of collective identity is fuzzy to begin with. Luhtakallio and Tavory suggest the use of concepts of pragmatic sociology instead, which is something that I have done in this research and discovered that there is a commonality even in a movement that emphasizes individualism. As explained above, “individualism” does not automatically mean selfish “ego projects”, even though inarguably for instance some of the organizers of Kallio Block Party used the event as a steppingstone in their own careers. In other words, what the above concerns within the different literatures of civic action fail to recognize is that first, the several meanings of individualism, such as expressive individualism, and second, the simple fact that a collectivity always needs some shared understanding of what they have in common in order to function (see Milan 2019). However, this commonality is indisputably different from especially the one typical to registered associations, not least because of the lack of associational structures and practices – but it is a commonality, nevertheless. The concern about a lack of politics is a more complex question and is not without cause, as again the case of Kallio movement exemplifies and as discussed above.

Finnish political culture has relied on the idea of collective and direct representation, and associations have been the main carriers of this representative task (Alapuro 2005). What happens to idea of representation in civic groups that refuse this cultural form of associations? Again, Right to Live was unproblematic in terms of collective and direct representation since the protest was thought to directly represent asylum seekers. Kallio movement, however, shied away from representation of collective interests in its avoidance of institutionalized politics. This traditional idea of political representation gained meanings within the movement that related it to “dirty politics” (Baicocchi et al 2014, 1-3; 49) and self-interest instead of collective good. Thus, interestingly, and in juxtaposition to the way collective representation has historically been thought of, to Kallio movement the best way to achieve the common good was to stay clear of collective representation and opt for “free civic action” of individuals instead. Therefore, I have called this approach “individual representation” (even though it is a contradiction in terms). With the

concept, I have wanted to emphasize the thoroughly individual nature of this idea of representation.

One of the concerns in the Nordic literature on new forms of civic action is their disconnection to institutional politics (see Siisiäinen & Kankainen 2009; Kontinen & Peltokoski 2010; Sivesind & Selle 2010). If we look at Right to Live protest, we can see that this concern is unnecessary, but looking at Kallio movement, its distinction to institutional politics could hardly be more pronounced.

“Politics” in Kallio movement is therefore a tricky and not a straight-forwards issue. Despite Kallio movement denounced the idea of collective representation of interests, along with other signifiers of institutionalized politics, and “ideologies”, they still did politics shared a vision of a different kind of urban space, which they realized prefiguratively in the organizing of Kallio Block Party. Therefore, the case of Kallio movement may broaden how we perceive “politics” or “political”.

This is why I have argued for an analysis of prefiguration as representation along with Rättilä and Rinne (2016). Especially if civic action increasingly takes the form of expressive and performative events instead of seeing representation as their main function, it becomes necessary to read these events as representation or political communication, especially with the increase of visual politicizations in social media platforms such as Instagram (see e.g. Meriluoto 2023). However, as discussed above, this kind of prefigurative (or symbolic, performative or constructive) representation is inevitably different from direct representation. If, like in Kallio movement, there are no vocal demands, the interpretation of the representative performance is bound to be less clear and precise, as it always is in symbolic representation (Pitkin 1967), leaving the interpretation of the political message ultimately to the “reader” of the performance.

## Epilogue

Finally, I will briefly recap what has taken place in the civic groups, and activist scene in Helsinki in general, since I finished my fieldwork.

The active members of Right to Live continued their asylum activism, focusing now primarily in helping asylum seekers with their cases. However, the Right to Live as a name and a loose network remained, merging with other migration activist networks such as Free Movement Network and reappeared as a citizens’ initiative in 2021, this time with a Finnish name “Lupa elää” (“the Right to Live”). The initiative demanded a four-year residence permit for asylum seekers who had applied for asylum before 2017. It received the necessary amount of signatures that are required for an initiative to be discussed in the Parliament, but thus far it has not been

proceeded. In addition, the war in Ukraine brought refugee and asylum issues again to public discussion. This time, however, even the nationalist Finns party members welcomed the refugees, making the racialized status of asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan even more visible.

Kallio movement still exists, at least in principle. I decided to organize an event to the movement members about my research results (see Appendix II) and published a post on the movement's Facebook group about this idea. Interestingly, one discussant said this would be a good chance to bring Kallio movement back to life after the pandemic, and another asked whether the movement still existed since the block party seems to have been "hijacked". It seems that the movements' already fragile commonality has suffered from the pandemic and that Kallio Block Party, with its plug-in volunteers, has taken over the movement. Questions concerning the use of urban space have not disappeared but on the contrary, have – again – taken a more explicit form. A DIY skatepark in the greater Kallio area is threatened to be dismantled from the way of a major, commercial entertainment center. This mobilized hundreds of people to take part in a demonstration in May 2023.

The most visible public action during the past few years have been environmental protests such as school strikes and performative demonstrations and roadblocks by the Finnish Extinction Rebellion, Elokapina. These protests have taken more radical forms than the performances of Kallio movement or Right to Live. However, even these movements avoid for instance anti-capitalist framings, as discussed above, and are based on networked individualism (Jokela et al, forthcoming). How these characteristics affect these movements' cultures and politicizations remains to be studied further.

## 12 APPENDIX I LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The lists of questions for the members of the two civic groups bear resemblances as well as differences. The questions for Right to Live reflect the intensity of the protest since these questions regard only those related to the protest whereas the Kallio movement I also wanted to find more about the members' civic imagination (Baiocchi et al 2014). In hindsight, it would have been informative to ask these questions also from the Right to Live participants.

### RIGHT TO LIVE

#### Henkilökohtaiset taustat ja kokemukset

Milloin tulit mukaan demoon? Mitä kautta? Tunsitko ketään demosta? Mikä oli kimmoke lähteä mukaan demoon?

Mitä olet tehnyt ennen demoa: oletko ollut mukana turvapaikka-/maahanmuuttoaktivismissa tai -vapaaehtoistoiminnassa? Entä oletko toiminut /toimitko parhaillaan järjestöissä tai muun aktivismin parissa?

Kuinka paljon arvioit käyttäneesi aikaa demossa (keskimäärin tai enimmillään)? Miten järjestit muun elämäsi demon aikana? Missä roolissa toimit demossa eli mitä käytännössä teit siellä?

Mihin asti olit demossa mukana?

Mikä oli demossa raskainta? Mikä sai sinut jaksamaan?

Mitä teet nyt, esim. avustatko turvapaikanhakija-keisseissä, oletko mukana Vapaa liikkuvuudessa? Pidätkö yhteyttä Right to Live -verkostoon?

Millaisena näet demon poliittisen/yhteiskunnallisen merkityksen? Oliko se merkityksellinen omassa elämässäsi, miten? Millaisia tunteita herää kun nyt mietit demoa? Mitkä tunteet olivat demon aikana päällimmäisenä?

Mitä opit demon aikana, tekisitkö nyt jotain toisin?

Koetko olevasi aktivisti? Miten ymmärrät aktivismin tai aktivistin, mitä se tarkoittaa mielestäsi?

## Haastateltavan käsitykset demosta ja suomalaisista vapaaehtoisista

Miksi mielestäsi suomalaisista vakiintui nimitys ”vapaaehtoinen”? Heijasteliko se ihmisten taustoja vapaaehtoistyön parissa? Mikä on käsityksesi ihmisten kansalaistoiminnan taustoista?

Huomasitko, että suomalaisten keskuudessa olisi ollut eriäviä näkemyksiä mielenosoituksen tyylistä tai keinoista (esim. huutaminen megafoniin)? Miten suomalaisten verkosto mielestäsi toimi? Huomasitko ennakkoluuloja anarkisteja kohtaan?

Millainen oli tyypillinen suomalainen vapaaehtoinen?

Pistitkö merkille, että suurin osa suomalaisista oli naisia? Mistä tämä mielestäsi johtui? Näkyikö se jotenkin toiminnassa tai huomasitko, että miesten ja naisten välillä olisi ollut eroja siinä millaisissa rooleissa ja tehtävissä he toimivat?

(Jos haastateltava on kokenut aktivisti, kysyn: Mukana oli paljon ihmisiä, jotka eivät ennen olleet olleet mukana tällaisessa toiminnassa. Mitä ajattelet siitä? Näkyikö tämä käytännössä? Minkä arvelet saaneen niin monen ihmisen liikkeelle?)

(Jos haastateltava ei tule kirkosta, kysyn: Mitä mieltä olit siitä, että kirkko oli mukana demossa? Muuttiko se käsitystäsi kirkosta?)

Mikä oli mielestäsi suomalaisten tärkein rooli demossa?

Miten suomalaisten ja turvapaikanhakijoiden yhteistyö/kommunikointi/päätöksenteko mielestäsi toimivat?

Mistä mielestäsi demon voimakas yhteisöllisyys johtui, millaisista asioista se rakentui?

Haastateltavan kokemukset neuvotteluista poliisin (ja kaupungin) kanssa

Olitko poliisin kanssa tekemisissä demon yhteydessä? Millaisia kokemuksia sinulla siitä on? Voitko kertoa esimerkkitilanteita? Mistä asioista käytiin neuvotteluja; mistä syntyi kiistoja ja mitkä kuumensivat tunteita? Muuttivatko nämä tilanteet käsitystäsi poliisista?

Olitko mukana virallisissa tapaamisissa poliisin ja/tai kaupungin kanssa? (Jos olivat, pyydän kertomaan niistä lisää)

Olitko Pasilan poliisiasemalla ison lentokenttädemon yhteydessä? (Jos, niin pyydän kertomaan siitä lisää)

Mikä käsitys sinulla on kaupungin roolista demossa?

Jos haastateltava on kirkon toimija, kysyn:

Miten seurakuntanne (tms) lähti demoon mukaan? Millainen keskustelu sitä edelsi?  
Oliko tästä ristiriitaisia näkemyksiä seurakuntanne (tms) sisällä?

Mitä itse/mitä seurakuntanne (tms) käytännössä teki demossa?

Suomessa ei ole totuttu siihen, että kirkko on näin poliittinen toimija ja asettuu melko radikaalisti valtiota vastaan. Mitä ajattelet tästä?

Miten sinuun suhtauduttiin kirkon edustajana demossa?

## KALLIO-LIIKE

Ikä

Koulutus, ammatti

Tämänhetkinen elämäntilanne: töissä, koulussa, työtön..

Kotipaikka

Milloin tullut mukaan, miten, miksi? Kallioliike vai KBP? Oliko tuttuja?

Onko nyt jossain muissa yhdistyksissä tai liikkeissä?

Mitä tehnyt Kallioliikkeessä / KBP:ssä? Montako kertaa ollut mukana KBP:ssä?

(Pitkäaikaisilta jäseniltä kysyn) Onko Kallioliike tai KBP muuttunut vuosien varrella, miten? Onko rahaa alkanut jäädä enemmän tilille?

Mitä mieltä Block Party ry:stä? Mihin suuntaan ry:tä, Kallioliikettä tai KBP:tä pitäisi viedä mielestäsi? Mihin suuntaan näet että ne ovat menossa?

Onko Kallioliikkeellä ollut vaikutusta johonkin? Kaupungin suuntaan? Onko välit kaupunkiin muuttuneet?

Kuvaile ensimmäisiä KBP:itä. Tekemisen tapa, tunnelma, kaupungin ja poliisien suhtautuminen?

Miksi olet halunnut itse olla mukana? Mikä on ollut paras asia KBP:ssä?

Miksi KBP:n eetoksesta on käyty keskustelua nyt keväällä? Mikä se mielestäsi on?

Kallio-liikkeen/KBP:n arvot:

Yhdenvertaisuus ja tasa-arvo; Kaupunkitilan haltuunotto ja byrokratian rajat kauemmaksi; Epäkaupallisuus; Talkoohenki ja DIY; Reilu peli ja yhteisöllisyys

Mitä mieltä näistä, miten ymmärrät nämä arvot?

Näetkö että kaduvaltauksella on rooli KBP:ssä? Mitä se sinulle merkitsee? Onko se mielestäsi poliittista?

Onko KBP:ssä mielestäsi muita tärkeitä puolia, esim. alikäytettyjen paikkojen esiin nostaminen, se että paikka aina vaihtuu, epäkaupallisuus?

Miten epäkaupallisuus näkyy KBP:ssä ja onko se muuttunut vuosien varrella? Miksi se on tärkeä arvo?

Entä yhteisöllisyys, sitä on korostettu KBP:n arvona. Mitä se mielestäsi KBP:ssä (tai Kallio-liikkeessä) tarkoittaa?

Miten kuvaisit liikkeen / KBP:n päätöksentekoa tai sisäistä viestintää? Toimiiko se mielestäsi? Millaista oli tulla mukaan KBP:hen, muistatko ihan ensimmäisiä kokouksia?

Kuinka tärkeää sinulle on, että Kallio-liike ei ole yhdistys? Mikä sen (ettei se ole yhdistys) merkitys mielestäsi on?

Onko Kallioliike mielestäsi poliittinen? Entä KBP? (Mikä mielestäsi on poliittista?)

Kun toimit Kallioliikkeessä tai KBP:tä, miellätkö olevasi aktivisti? Mitä se tarkoittaa sinulle, miten ymmärrät ”aktivismin”?

Koetko kuuluvasi johonkin yhteisöön kun teet KBP:tä?

Mikä on ollut vaikuttavin tai mieleenpainuvuin KBP, miksi?

### Muu poliittinen toiminta

Oletko ollut aiemmin muunlaisessa kansalaistoiminnassa tai esim. mielenosoituksissa? Millaisessa? Nämä esimerkkeinä, jos ei lähde liikkeelle: esim. partiossa, 4H:ssa, oppilas- tai opiskelijatoiminnassa tai nuorisovaltuustossa? Kaupunkiaktiivismissa (esim. tapahtumien järjestäminen, kaupunkiviljely) tai talonvaltauksessa? Vapaaehtois- tai kirkon toiminnassa?

Mitä sosiaalista mediaa käytät, mihin tarkoitukseen ja kuinka usein? (Esim. seuraa, kommentoi, aloittaa keskusteluja, postaa kuvia) Miten suuri merkitys sosiaalisella medalla on omassa poliittisessa toiminnassasi? Millä tavalla some yleisesti ottaen vaikuttaa mielestäsi poliittiseen toimintaan?

Äänestätkö yleensä vaaleissa? Jos haluaa kertoa, mitä puoluetta?

Onko kotona puhuttu politiikasta?

Äänestävätkö vanhempasi yleensä? Tiedätkö mitä puoluetta? Toimivatko he jossain järjestössä, puolueessa tai esim. kunnan politiikassa?

Kuulutko johonkin puolueeseen tai oletko miettinyt johonkin puolueeseen liittymistä? Miksi juuri siihen puolueeseen?

Oletko miettinyt, että asettaisit joskus ehdolle kunta- tai eduskuntavaaleissa?

Mikä on mielestäsi paras tapa vaikuttaa asioihin/yhteiskuntaan/politiikkaan?



## 13 APPENDIX II CASE SELECTION, ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

My master's thesis was based on research into a squatting movement and I wanted to continue researching some themes I touched upon in this previous study: civic action that takes place outside established associations and the use of urban space by these activist groups. My case selection for this research was dependent on what kind of civic action took place during my PhD since my purpose was to observe civic action *in action*. For this reason, the range of possible research cases was limited to those activist groups that were active at the time. Moreover, activist circles in Helsinki are rather small and over-lapping, and when there is a peak moment in cycles of contestation, one issue often drains people from other issues. For instance, in my master's thesis I stumbled upon the issue of Eastern European precarious (street) workers, who were accommodated in the backyard of a squatters' movement's social centre. After my thesis, I continued to follow both the squatter group as well as the situation with the East European workers with the possibility of continuing research on both. However, the group of squatters, now in a different social centre, closed in and it proved more difficult to gain their trust and to be able to conduct research with them. The house squatting wave that took place in Helsinki during 2010's had quieted down and gone more underground, with less people and buzz around the squats. (See Jokela 2017.)

The network of civic actors that strived to politicize the East European workers' issue and concretely help the workers by providing them with accommodation and health services practiced a similar form of activism as the supporters in Right to Live, one that combined politicization with concrete voluntary help, and some of the activists and activist networks were the same in both cases. When Right to Live happened, the focus of these activist networks tilted towards asylum issues and asylum seekers. This also changed the focus of my research from East European street workers to asylum issues. However, I hesitated to take on this new mobilization as a case study since it seemed like taking a big leap towards migration and asylum issues, topics that were mostly new to me – thus far, I had been focusing on activism by citizens on behalf of non-citizens, whereas Right to Live was a political mobilization by non-citizens. I wasn't sure whether I could still focus on my

initial questions about the changing form of civic action within Finnish political culture and activists' use of urban space. On the other hand, visiting Right to Live for the first time, I felt the affective pull of an urgent issue, the quickly-forming strong sense of community and the immense commitment of the protesters and their supporters, blurring my role as a researcher and a civic actor. I found myself asking if it was wrong to take part as a researcher when so many people were doing so much more that concretely helped the asylum seekers here and now, as my research would come out sometime in the far future and was not even about migration or asylum politics. Also, no one knew how long the protest would continue and initially, it was meant to last only for one weekend.

For these reasons, my research in Right to Live began tentatively. I would take notes at the protest site<sup>94</sup> and talk to people, telling them that I was interested in the protest as a citizen and a researcher. My first fieldnotes are from February 16, the evening when the protest had been in front of the contemporary museum Kiasma for almost a week and had to be moved to Railway Square, and the last one is dated May 31. I have written on my fieldnotes on that last day that there had been a discussion on Facebook about how there was no one at the protest site. A lot was happening but not at the protest site, since there was a fear of another deportation taking place that day and everyone was busy with that. However, the fact that no one had been at the protest site is telling about the course of the protest that spring.

My participation in Right to Live followed the course of the protest from a very public protest that was visited by large numbers of supporters to a protest that was, in the end, waning and closing in. At first, I focused mainly on the public performance of the protest on Railway Square. However, already in February it reads in my fieldnotes that “nothing is happening on the square” and that “occasionally, something happens (politicians visit the camp, people are building a snow castle at the protest, etc.) but this means that I should be there ALL THE TIME (I haven’t had the chance this week) or follow Facebook all the time and be ready to go there”. “How to make the demo more lively” was already discussed in meetings at the beginning of March. As nothing seemed to happen on the square, or if I was unable to attend when something did happen, I focused more on what happened backstage, in Facebook and in the meetings. In the beginning of March, even the backstage of the protest was more public, as defined in the Assembly Act: in practice open to everyone. At this point, trust was not such a big issue as it was later in the Spring. The protest meetings were held in a nearby pub (“public house”) and occasionally

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<sup>94</sup> Or rather, I took mental notes at the protest site and wrote my notes immediately once indoors: at home, in a café, at my office. I only taped the “official” interviews, not informal talks in the field.

in a public meeting space for civic organizations in the New student house, owned by the Helsinki University Student Union. These meetings were attended by those who would eventually form the core of the supporters, but also many people whom I only saw once, such as a local politician from the Social Democrats. The buzz around the protest attracted many people who also had their own stake in the issue: politicians, journalists and documentarists (Right to Live was filmed for at least one documentary, called “Asylum seeker cries” [“Turvapaikanhakija itkee”] that was aired in 2017 on the Finnish public service broadcasting company YLE), artists – and social scientists, some of whom were involved mainly as citizens, others having a double role as a researcher and civic actor. In these meetings, I would introduce myself as a researcher who studied activism without briefing that I was conducting research in Right to Live, for two reasons. First, I was not sure whether I was in fact attending the protest and protest meetings primarily as a researcher and not a civic actor, and whether I would include Right to Live as a case study in my research. Second, the intense atmosphere in the protest and protest meetings was coloured by urgency and filled with emotions. Now was the time to act, since deportations were beginning to take place, and a lot had to be discussed among the forming group of supporters (and the protesters), many or most of whom were new to each other and some to this kind of activism and asylum issues in general. In this heated atmosphere and whirl of action, with a lot of people new to each other, all wanting to do their part to change the lives of asylum seekers for the better, I felt uneasy taking centre stage with my research, which was not primarily even about asylum seekers or asylum issues but styles of civic action and the use of urban space. This situation also made me question my right to do such research in the first place, and I was hesitating to make my decision. Much of this hesitation had to do with my right to conduct the study: I wanted to make sure my point of view of the protest had enough sociological contributions.

In March, I was largely unable to do fieldwork and as I returned to the protest in late March, I found its character changed. The meetings were now held in a more private space, further from the protest site, and much more caution was taken in terms of who was allowed to attend. They were now frequented by a much smaller and tighter group and trust had become an issue since the protest had become the focus of attention in the media, increasing the risk of racist attacks. Apparently, some of the Right to Live Facebook groups had had racist “moles” and new, smaller groups had to be created. Instead of a spiraling out, as is the intention of civic groups (Lichterman 2005), the situation created an inward spiral. This new situation in Right to Live was less and less public, both front- and backstage: the protest site itself had

quieted down, with much less buzz and new people visiting the protest, and the protest meetings were attended only by the now formed core group of supporters. In this new situation, it was impossible to do only tentative research. While I had individually told most of the core supporters and the protesters I had gotten to know, that I was not involved only as a citizen but also as a researcher, this was not known to everyone. By this time, I had decided to include Right to Live as a case study in my research and posted about my research in Right to Live's Facebook group. Facebook would reach more people than the meetings, ensuring that as many people as possible had been informed and I also used the chance to ask for interviewees. My post did not raise comments and only one person, someone who lived far from Helsinki, who was not part of the daily life of the protest and whom I hadn't met at the protest, replied to my request about being interviewed, and I talked with her on the phone. The rest of the interviewees were gathered through asking people directly. My post raised most interest among other social scientists, with whom I talked about what our research topics were, and we agreed to not do a round of interviews at the same time to avoid putting too much strain on people. (I agreed that I could do the interviews after the protest was over.)

Looking back, my analysis would have been richer had I conducted more interviews with the protesters. However, there were several reasons why I chose not to focus on them. First, what interested me more was the less obvious (and less studied) target of analysis, the network and the group of Finnish supporters acting in solidarity with the asylum seekers. Second, as a scholar focusing on civic action rather than migration, I felt unequipped in questions related to the asylum seekers' current status and past experiences – things that I was not focusing on in my research but that would potentially come up in the interview. While research has the “potential to contribute to improved policy”, research on vulnerable groups of people, such as those facing forced migration, always requires extra considerations because of uneven power relations between the interviewer and interviewee; the migrants' precarious legal situation that might be jeopardized by the interview; and because asylum seekers are “called upon to tell their story many times” in different institutional contexts, research interviews may add to their burden of recalling their traumatic experiences (Clark-Kazak 2017). I witnessed how tired and under enormous emotional stress the protesters were, as many of them were waiting for a second decision on their second asylum application, and I also knew the protesters were being interviewed by other social scientists during the protest spring. The cost-benefit analysis (ibid) I did made me question my entitlement to ask for yet another interview, especially one that focused on the protest itself rather than their situations

or asylum politics. There was also the question of language: practically none of the protesters spoke fluent Finnish and only some of them spoke fluent English. This would have required an interpreter and thus brought on a new set of practices and ethical considerations.

For these complex ethical reasons, I have heavily relied on interviews, especially in describing the inside of Right to Live. However, being a participant in Right to Live has influenced my interviews: I would not have been able to ask the questions I did had I not taken part in the protest. I have carefully weighed each ethnographic cue that has ended up in this research, making sure that no one can be recognized and changing some details of the events and the actors. I have done this in both research cases but, for the reasons stated above, I have paid extra attention in the case of Right to Live. I have sent two key informants (one protester and one supporter) a synopsis of every chapter, including the ethnographic cues and quotes from interviews with them, and asked for their feedback. (Thus far, only one of the two has replied, saying that I have done an important research and commenting on the quotes by saying that her viewpoints have changed in these years in-between, but that it is valuable that I have documented what she thought at the time of the protest. I also offered them the chance to read full chapters or the entire manuscript but thus far, neither has taken up on this offer.) Most importantly, however, as in all social science research, I have had to do a cost-benefit analysis (see Clark-Kazak 2017): to weigh the sociological significance of especially the sensitive parts of my data. This significance is of course ultimately left for all readers to estimate.

A lot has been written about ethnography as a method and how it requires, for instance, the reflexivity of the researcher (e.g. Lichterman 2017; O'Reilly 2011). However, I would add that the method requires a great deal of confidence and a feeling that one has the right to intrude into peoples' lives – even if the lives in this research are more on the public instead of the private side of life (this division is, however, not so straight-forward, as the analysis chapters especially on Right to Live illustrate). This kind of confidence is difficult, especially as someone who is still learning to do research and ethnography.

My entry into Kallio movement was more premeditated and organized since doing research on the movement had been my plan from the start. Kallio movement was an example of a loose and non-official (read: non-registered) civic group whose main idea was to use urban space in novel ways. Kallio movement was an interesting case since, on the one hand, it seemed like a continuation of previous forms of urban activism in Helsinki, such as squatting and street parties, and on the other hand it was the complete opposite to these forms and a break in local activist repertoires.

However, despite my attempt to be official in my role as a researcher, the relaxed and unofficial settings of the Kallio movement meetings, where everyone was involved only “as themselves”, stripped from their professions and political affiliations, made this difficult and “unnatural”.

I first touched upon the movement by conducting an interview with one of its members, Elina, who was also organizing a support concert for Right to Live. I thought this overlap was interesting and something to be seized on. It turned out that Elina was also one of the key members in Kallio movement. She told me that I had just missed a recent Kallio movement meeting because I had been following the wrong Facebook group, or rather a Facebook page and not a group, and she instructed me to join the right group. The next general movement meeting, that was not about organizing the block party, took place several months later. However, I was planning to attend the next Kallio Block Party meetings and decided to post a briefing about my research:

*“I’m conducting a sociology PhD for Tampere University about different types of activism in Helsinki and I study Kallio movement as one of the movements. I would like to be part of arranging KBP and do participant observation and interviews. How does this sound to you? I can tell you more about my research today.”*

*[Teen Tampereen yliopistolle sosiologian väitöskirjaa erilaisista aktivismeista Helsingissä ja yhtenä liikkeenä tutkin Kallio-liikettä. Tulisin mielelläni mukaan järjestämään KBP:tä ja samalla tekemään osallistuvaa havainnointia ja haastatteluja. Miltä tämä teistä kuulostaa? Voin myös kertoa tänään lisää tutkimuksestani.]*

I posted the briefing on the event pages made for Kallio Block Party meetings. I thought at the time that this would be the best avenue for reaching the currently active members of the movement/KBP organizing – with the current knowledge, I would post it to another Facebook group. The first time, “Kallio movement” (in other words, one of the admins of the Facebook page) liked the post but no one commented on it. The second time, no one commented it either and it got only one “like”, by someone I knew from my personal life.

My first Kallio movement meeting was between a small group of members who had been in the movement for several years and were planning to organize Kallio movement’s 6th anniversary event. I had just posted a briefing about my research and was able to talk about it to three members, Julia, Katri and Tuukka. I had printed out briefings and had them in my backpack, but the meeting turned out to be so relaxed that I simply forgot to give the members the handouts. I had also come prepared for the first Kallio Block Party meeting I attended, in which we were supposed to walk through the area the block party was going to take place that year.

As I arrived a few minutes before the meeting was meant to begin, outdoors in front of Kulttuuritalo (“Culture house”), I noticed attendees circling a tall man, dressed in a relaxed and trendy manner, all in black, who was taking names of volunteers and signing them up for different task groups. I gathered he was leading the meeting and went up to him and told him I was there as a researcher and asked him if I could introduce myself to everyone. The man, Alex, said that there was no need for that since they had had so many people doing research on Kallio movement, this was nothing new. (This was true. During my fieldwork, there were continuously posts in the movement’s Facebook group about someone asking for interviews or participation for their thesis or presentation in, for instance, architecture, finance, real estate development and cultural management, about pop-up events, city centre development, culture and/or volunteer events, Kallio identity...) <sup>95</sup>. I settled for his answer, which he gave in a very authoritative manner, even if in hindsight I would now act differently.

The core membership in Kallio movement stayed approximately the same during my fieldwork and Elina, Julia and Tuukka, with whom I had talked in person about my research and ethnographic data gathering, were frequent and active participants in the movement meetings. However, there was also plenty of flux in the membership and the Kallio Block Party meetings. As the meetings would often begin with a round of introductions, I would introduce myself as someone who is doing research on Kallio movement but would also participate in organizing the block party. This would, at best, raise some of the new attendees’ eyebrows and occasionally someone would ask me, in the meeting or in a more private setting, how my research was going, but no one ever questioned my research as such. A casual atmosphere and a culture of avoiding all official statuses, positions and representations was reflected on my position as a researcher – it felt a little strange

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<sup>95</sup> During my fieldwork, Kallio movement was also approached by, for instance Helsinki City museum which gathers photos and memories about grassroots music venues and events; a service design company doing a survey about the liveliness of Kallio area for a client; the Ministry of Justice to participate in changing legislation to lessen bureaucracy for non-registered groups; a Finnish media corporation to ask for an interview about the event “Kallio belongs to everyone”; an Austrian political journalist interested in changes in the Scandinavian political system and specifically, how Kallio is “changing and flourishing – and how initiatives kind of stand against the right-conservative course of the government” and “how much political consciousness is there in the events of Kallio movement”; an artist writing a book about activist uses of urban space; Helsinki Design Week about DIY action in the city; and the City of Helsinki asking for the movement’s opinion on current, local urban planning matters and for instance replying to a survey about how to further develop Helsinki into a “city of events” and to a workshop about the potential of night-time events in the city of Helsinki, and another workshop on the development of tourism. In other words, everyone wanted their piece of Kallio movement and the movement’s Facebook page was filled with requests to participate, reply to surveys, attend workshops or give interviews.

to highlight my status, even though there were ethical reasons for doing so. There were, however, moments when I felt like an intruder in the movement, even when my status as a researcher was known to most. One such moment was in a meeting where I was, as usual, taking very detailed (and messy shorthand) notes, trying to catch everything that was said. An organizer who was involved in Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party for the second year was sitting next to me. She leaned over and looked at my notes and, seeing the level of detail of my notes, raised her eyebrows and widened her eyes in amazement as if to say: is this what you're doing.

Since Kallio movement is still an existing movement, I decided to organize an event to the movement members about my research results. I posted on the movement's Facebook group, informing about this idea and asking whether it would be better to organize a separate event or combine this with Kallio movement meeting or the annual Kallio Block Party after-party ("*karonkeka*") that is arranged weeks or months after the block party to celebrate a job well done and thank all the volunteers. Six members took part in the discussion, saying they were interested to hear the results and that it would be better to organize a separate event since the *karonkeka* is always attended also by the volunteers that year (who are not really a part of Kallio movement). One of the original members, who works at the library, suggested that I could arrange the event in a meeting room at the library, saying that it would be appropriate since of the first movement meetings was held in the same place. I took up on the suggestion and booked the library space for a late Friday afternoon in September. Another interesting detail, telling about the informal nature of the group, was that a long-time member messaged me telling me she has a Kallio movement cash deposit and offered to buy some food and drinks to the event. I declined saying that it would be better if I bought them since in this event, I would be strictly in the role of a researcher.

I organized the event on an exceptionally warm and sunny Friday late afternoon in September 2023, expecting that many of those who had clicked "attend" to the Facebook event would eventually opt for starting their weekend outdoors rather than come listen to my talk in the basement floor of the Kallio library. However, the turnout was surprisingly successful with ten participants, most of whom I knew from my fieldwork and with two former members from the very early years of the movement I had not met before. I had chosen topics for my presentation that I thought were either the most important (non-theoretical) findings from Kallio movement or what I thought would interest the movement members. I talked about the different ways individualism was manifested in the movement; about the tricky, double-meaning of politics; and, relying on Jo Freeman (1970), about the hidden



power structures within the movement. Many of these topics culminated in my critical comments about the lack of open discussion or formalized decision-making practices. I had planned a concise presentation of maximum 40 minutes and was surprised when, after almost two hours of presenting, mixed with a lively discussion, I eventually had to skip one slide and apologize that I would have to leave at six. To my relief, the participants agreed with most of my critical remarks and, to my surprise, the participants even raised the same examples of failed communication and double understanding of politics as I did in my presentation, namely the “RedBull gate” (as one participant called it) and the dispute over the “No one is illegal” banner. The only critical remark they did not recognize was the avoidance of internal conflicts. This difference in our understanding of the role of conflicts were, perhaps, matters of interpretation and emphasis. While there might have been disagreements within the movement, in my view the possibility of disagreement was not embedded in the decision-making practices – or rather, there were no decision-making practices, and like-mindedness was assumed of the participants. In addition, while there were some disagreements, they were not as commonplace as one might expect in a social movement.

## 14 APPENDIX III SURVEY IN KALLIO BLOCK PARTY 2019

As shown in chapter eight, the values of Kallio movement and Kallio Block Party were important to members of the movement, but they aimed to be non-political in their communications and, instead of preaching, wanted to let their actions speak of those values. I wanted to find out how well these values were in fact communicated to visitors to Kallio Block Party, and how important the ideological reasons behind the event were to them. I decided to do this, if the movement was ok with the idea. I presented the survey idea to the movement in 2019, on Facebook, and the idea was well received. Thanks to the Citizens in the making project, I was able to recruit sociology students from Tampere university to conduct the survey.

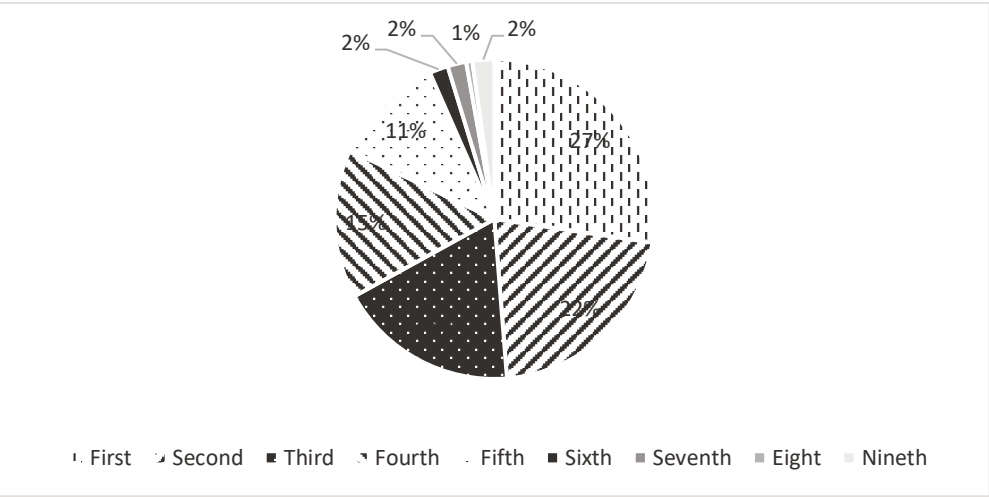
I wanted the survey to benefit the movement itself, too, so (based on discussions during my two years of fieldwork) I included questions that I thought would interest the movement members, such as whether Kallio Block Party had ever caused any disturbances (if the respondent lived in Kallio), and what kind of programme the visitors would like to see in the next block parties. I also posted the preliminary survey questions on one of Kallio movement's Facebook groups, and asked whether someone wanted to add any more questions – even though I wanted to keep the number of questions limited to ensure that as many people as possible would want to take part in the survey in the midst of the party. (Someone suggested asking if the respondent would be interested in taking part in Kallio Block Party or Kallio movement, but I thought this would be too close to recruiting volunteers, a position I didn't feel comfortable with and, on the other hand, would probably require taking personal contact information which would compromise the anonymity of the survey.)

I emailed the students a briefing about conducting the survey and we went through the guidelines again on the day of the Block Party. I divided the students into groups of two and each team was responsible for a specific party area. I instructed the students to approach groups of people (I thought it would be easier to do this in pairs rather than alone) and to be polite and not be too pushy. I encouraged the students to approach both men and women, people of different ages (over 16 years of age) and also people who didn't speak Finnish – I had printed the

survey in Finnish and in English too. The minimum goal for each student was 50 surveys, and everyone met this goal.

## Results of the survey

Q1. How many Kallio Block Parties have you been to? [Open-ended question. In the Finnish version: “Monesko Kallio Block Party tämä on sinulle?”] (N=319)



Since the questions in Finnish and English are slightly different (the one in Finnish reading literally “how “manyth” Kallio Block Party is this for you?”), the replies were analyzed separately and combined in the end to reply to the Finnish question. In other words, the replies now read “first”, “second” etc. Kallio Block Party. Some had replied for instance “4-5”, in which case I chose the smaller number. One respondent had estimated it was their 10th Kallio Block Party, but since the block party in question was the 9th, I changed this estimate to 9. Some respondents had replied that they didn’t remember how many times they had attended the block party or replied “many!”, which meant I had to leave these replies out.

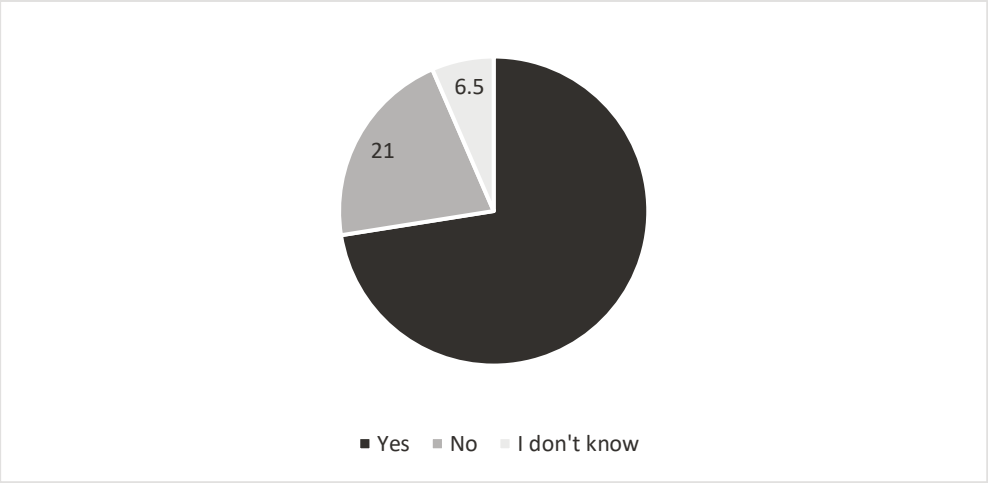
Q2. Why have you come to Kallio Block Party today? [Open-ended question] (N=326)

The majority (97,5 %) of responses were about partying, enjoying a sunny day and the programme, drinking alcohol, and meeting friends. A few respondents said that the Block Party had “parked itself” by the respondents’ home. For this reason, I have not presented the results in a chart since the difference between these kinds of replies are not relevant for this research. Instead, what is interesting for this research are the more “ideological” reasons – any kind of mention of a moral background that stood

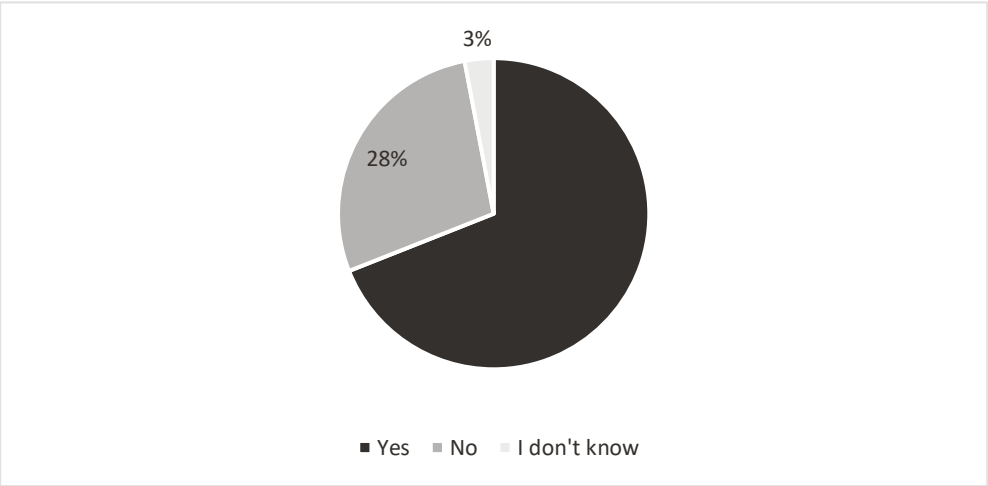
out from the majority of “drink beer and party” replies –, eight out of 326 replies: ”Interested in non-commercial occupation of urban space”; ”Freedom & use of urban space”; “Free urban space, culture, music”; “Good mood, no entrance fee, everyone can participate”; ”Because I want to support culture like this”; “To celebrate art, freedom!”; “To celebrate Kallio identity”; “Enjoy music in a communal atmosphere”.

Q3. Did you know Kallio Block Party is arranged by Kallio movement? Circle the right option:

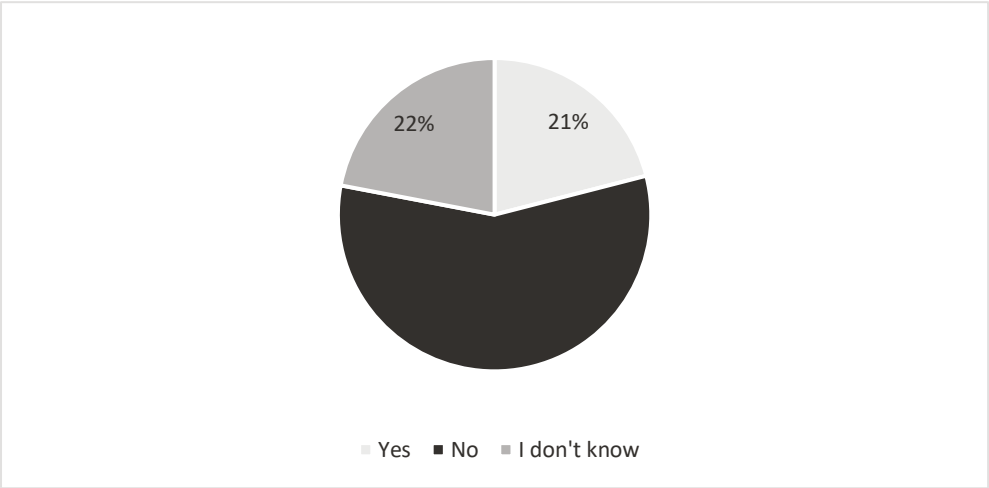
Yes No I don't know (N=324)



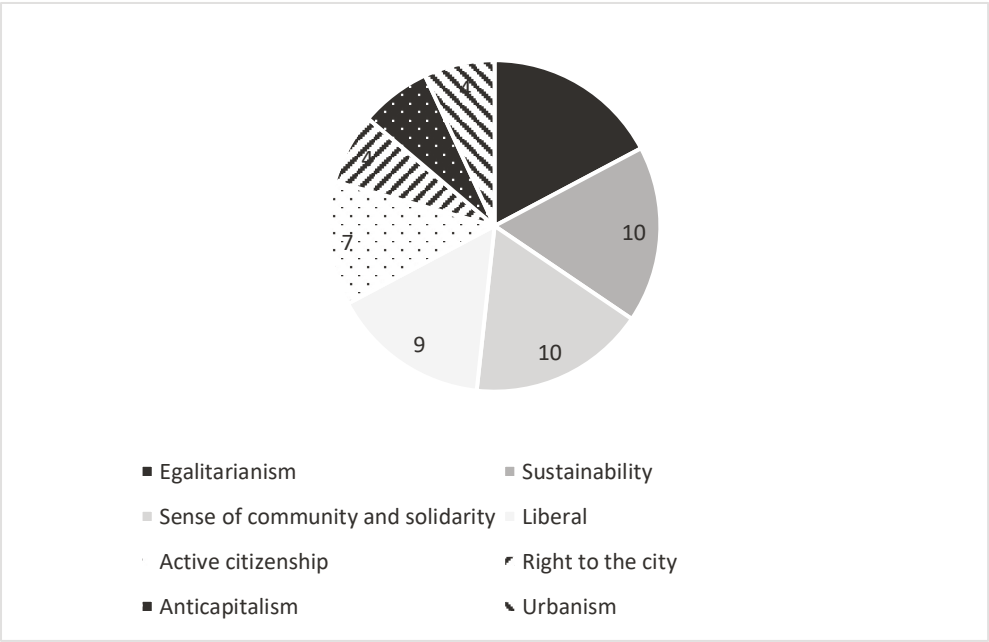
Q4. Have you heard about Kallio movement? Circle the right option: Yes No I don't know (N = 324)



Q5. Do you know Kallio movement's / Kallio Block Party's values? Circle the right option: Yes No I don't know (N=314)



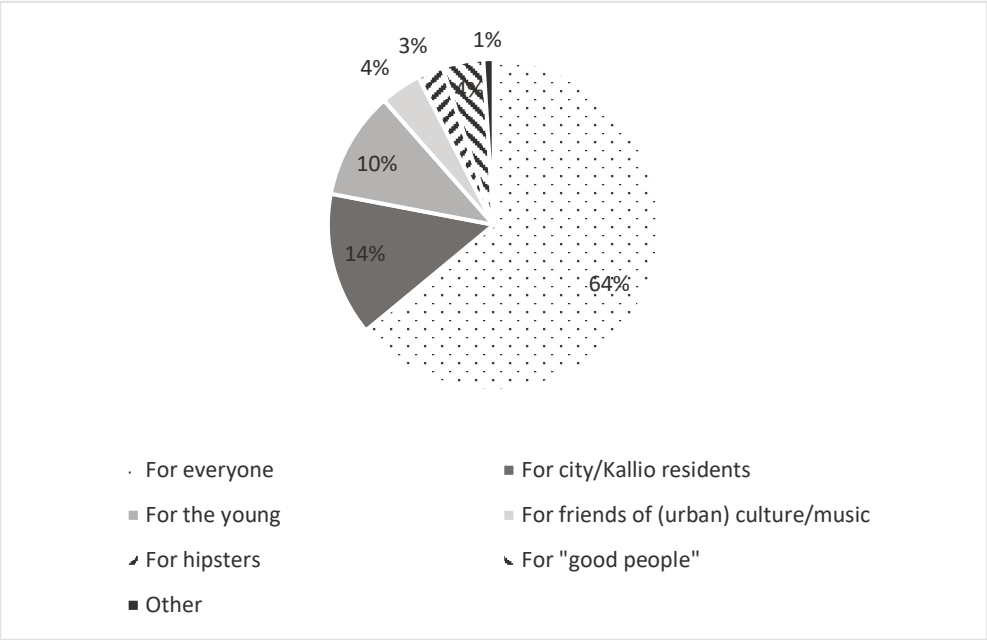
Q6. If you replied "Yes" to the previous question, what are the values? [Open-ended question] (N= 71)



The values here are not percentages but numbers of how many times a theme was mentioned. One reply might have included several themes. Below are all the replies under the eight themes. (Replies have been divided so that, for instance, a reply

“Opposition to commercialization and raising community spirit” included two themes, “anti-capitalism” and “community”.)

Q7. Who do you think Kallio Block Party is for? [Open-ended question] (N=323)



”Who do you think KBP is for?” was an open-ended question. It is noteworthy that 157 out of 323 respondents (49 %) simply replied “for everyone” (in English or in Finnish, “*kaikille*”). In addition, I counted in this category of “everyone” for instance replies that said “adults” or “the entire family”, making it 64 % of all responses. This is interesting: Kallio movement has succeeded in its effort to make the event open, accessible and for (almost) everyone – at least when asking the people who attended the block party. The responses would most likely look different if people who did not attend the party were asked.

Another category close to the first one is “city/Kallio residents” (14 %). While some might have emphasized that the block party was, or should be, only for Kallio residents and not for people living elsewhere in the city, this did not come through in the replies (for instance, no one had added an exclamation mark at the end). Instead, many had replied: for Kallio/city residents. One reply reads: “For residents of the area. Thank you that it’s also for the rest of us”.

A third category close to the category “everyone” was one I have named “friends of (urban) culture/music” (4 %). This category needs no further clarification. I have

also included in this category replies such as: “People who like to party”. The differences between these three categories are minimal and there was also an overlap in the replies so I included replies such as these: “For everyone living in Kallio and all others in good spirit” and “For residents of Kallio/the young”. (I counted each reply in one category only. If there were two categories in one reply, such as in the example above, I chose the category according to what was mentioned first, “To residents of Kallio”).

While many replied that the event was for “the entire family” and for people of “all ages”, “from babies to grandpas”, many (10.5 %) specified that the event was mainly for adults, young or “youthful” people, or “young adults”, with some specifying age groups such as 20-40 or 30-40.

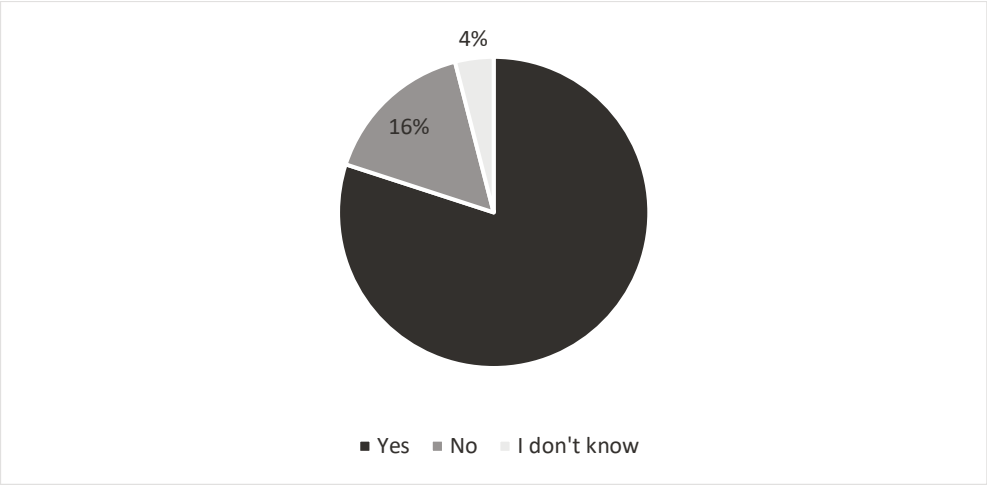
Interestingly, while the organizers were concerned that the festival was considered a hipster event, only eight respondents (2.5%) replied either “hipsters”, “underground people” or “the alternatives”.

Twelve respondents’ (4 %) replies took some kind of a moral stance (and in one reply, a political one: “The urban Green-Left”). The event was for “the good ones”: open-minded tolerants who cherish a sense of community: “Everyone interested in culture and laid-back leisure time (those living in the metropolitan area might implicitly know that [it’s for] liberal and open-minded population)”. Or as an English-speaking respondent replied, slightly off-topic: “To bring youth culture, to connect people, to take urban space -> to give a social & cultural importance”. Here are the rest of these replies:

*“Tolerant people”; “Toletards”; “Toletards and immigrants [matu]”; “People who do not discriminate”; “Everyone but racists”; “A bit bobemian urban open people”; “To communal people”; “To the good ones”*

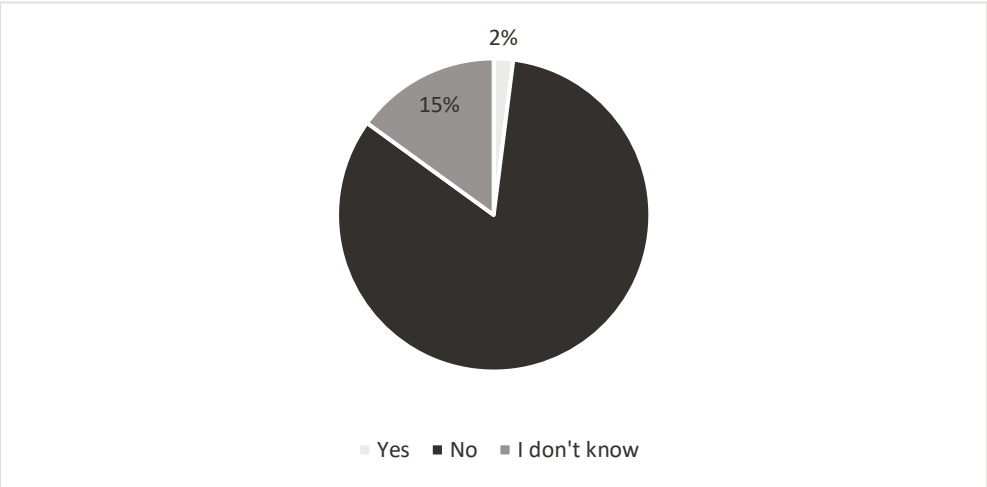
The category “Other” (1 %) included responses such as “No idea” (in English) and one reply that was the only one to mention tourists: “People of Helsinki, also for tourists & travellers who want to experience Helsinki like a local”.

Q8. Did you know that Kallio Block Party is arranged by volunteers? Circle the right option: Yes No I don’t know (N=322)



Q9. If you live or have lived in Kallio, have you experienced disturbances from Kallio Block Party? Circle the right option:

Yes No I don't know (N=251)



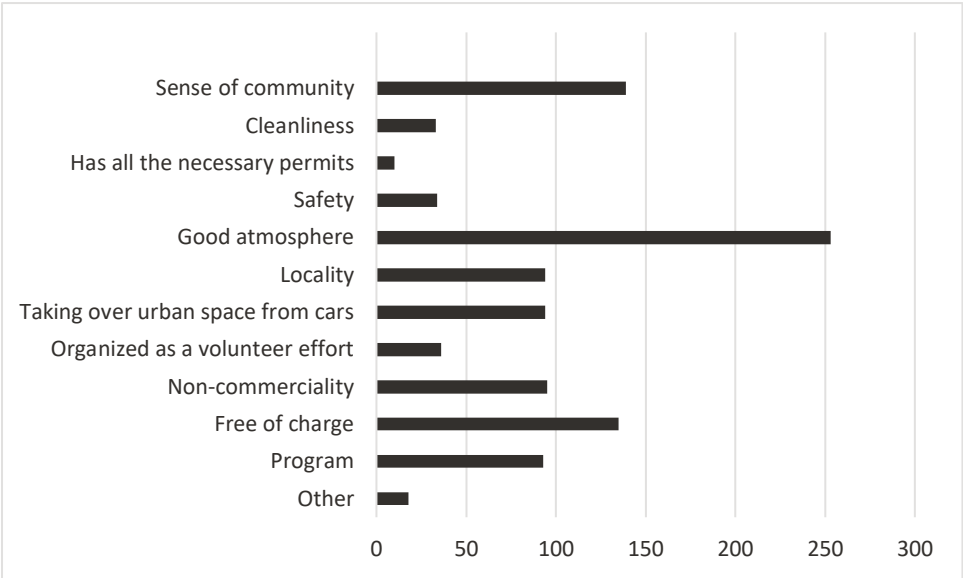
Q10. If you replied “Yes” to the previous question, what kind of disturbances have you experienced? [Open-ended question] (N=10)

Only ten respondents replied to this question, out of which only four were negative. Two responders complained about trash or untidiness, and one of these also noted the smell of pee (that “lasts for the following week”). Two complained about noise, but one of these two, who said they lived next to a stage, still said that “it’s good that the event is still organized”. One reply to this question, “Kallio Block Party causes



joy and positivity”, seems to capture the respondents’ overall attitude towards possible disturbances of the event. However, responses to this question would also presumably look different if asked from people who did not attend the party.

Q11. What is most important for you in Kallio Block Party, circle 1-3 options (N= 320). Presented in total numbers, not percentages.



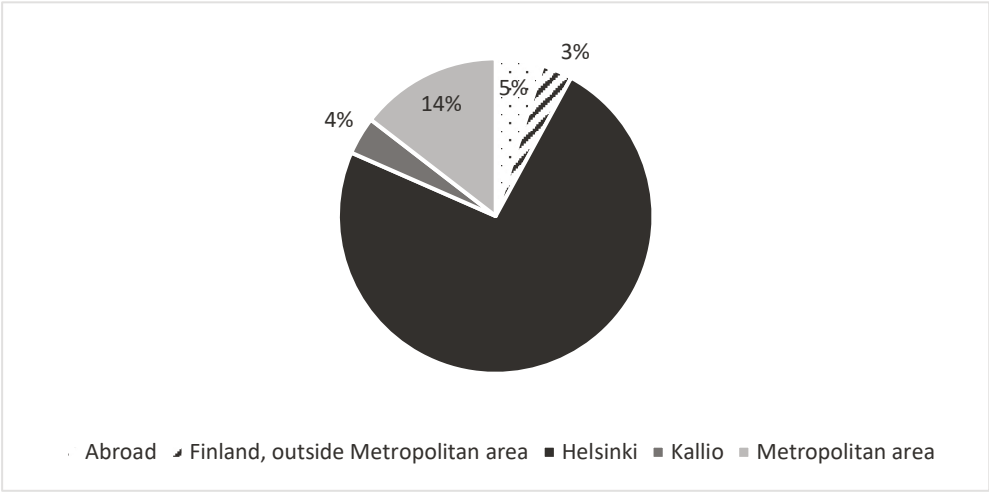
Q 12. What kind of programme would you like to see in the following Kallio Block Parties? [Open-ended question]

Q 13. Other comments [Open-ended question]

I have not analysed these open-ended comments since they were mainly for Kallio movement and do not include findings relevant for this study.

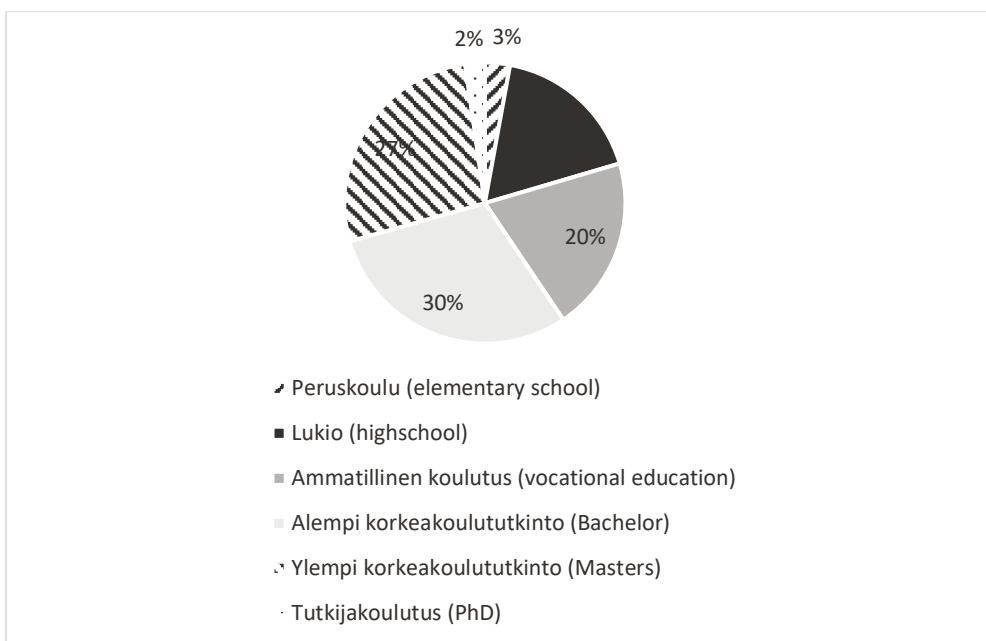
**Background information**

Q14. Country and city of residence [Open-ended question] (N=317)

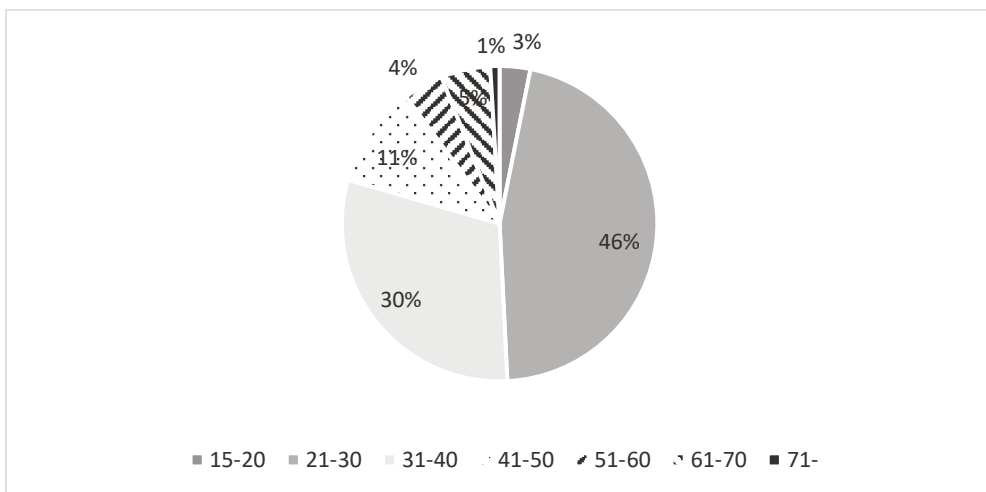


Respondents were included in the category “abroad” only if they named a place of residence outside Finland. Those respondents lived in Germany (five respondents), Belgium (two), Vietnam (two), Australia (one), Ireland (one), France (one), Sweden (one), Estonia (one) and the UK (one). If a respondent named both a city or a country outside Finland as well as (a place in) Finland, they were included in the Finland categories. I included in the “Metropolitan area” cities and municipalities close to Helsinki: Espoo, Vantaa, Kirkkonummi, Lohja, Hyvinkää, Järvenpää, Kerava, Vihti, Lohja, Klaukkala, Porvoo and Riihimäki. Included in the category “outside the Metropolitan area” were places such as Turku, Tampere, Seinäjoki and Oulu.

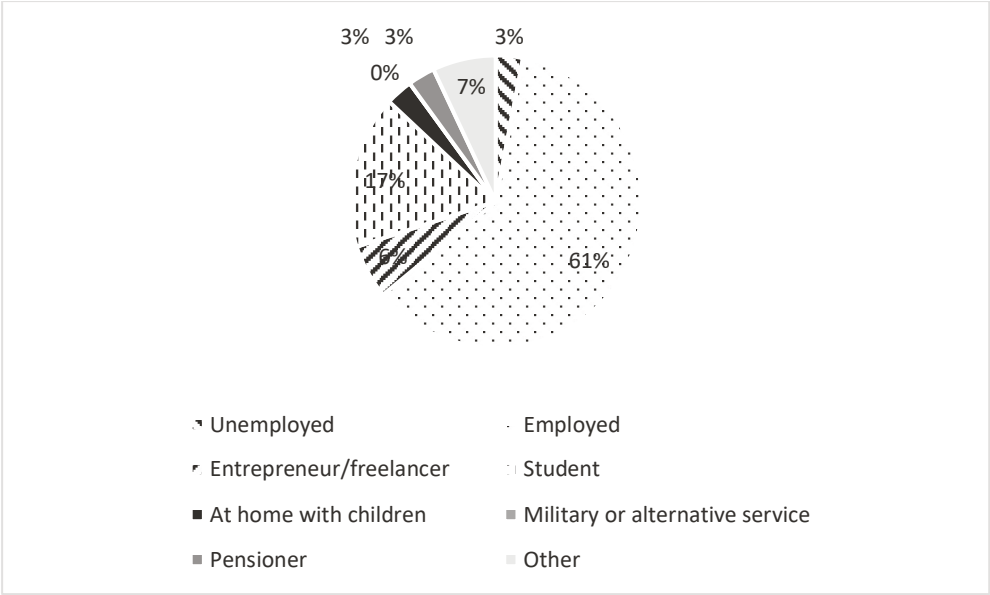
Q15. Education [Open-ended question in the English version, in the Finnish one: Ympyröi korkein suorittamasi koulutusaste: peruskoulu / lukio / ammatillinen koulutus / alempi korkeakoulututkinto / ylempi korkeakoulututkinto / tutkijakoulutus] (N=313)



Q16. Circle your age group (N=315)



Q17. Circle your current occupation: Student / employed / unemployed / entrepreneur (including freelancer) / stay-at-home parent / pensioner / other (N=304)



## 15 APPENDIX IV: JURISDICTION BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE CITY OF HELSINKI, RACIALIZED HISTORY OF THE CAMPING BAN, AND TESTING THE ASSEMBLY ACT

In this section, I will describe how Right to Live was not only a test for the use of urban space but also for the Assembly Act, especially regarding the legality of the form and duration of a protest. I will first, however, introduce the messy jurisdiction concerning Right to Live; the racialized history of the camping ban; and the first test case regarding the definition between camping and protesting, namely the Occupy Helsinki protest camp.

### Jurisdiction and the camping ban

The definition of Right to Live had consequences for the jurisdiction between the police and the City of Helsinki. This jurisdiction was all but clear to what seemed like everyone: the researcher, the media, the protesters and supporters, and even to some officials. The Deputy Mayor of Helsinki at the time of the protest clarified the jurisdiction to me:

*[T]here's also this borderline of jurisdiction, for instance the demonstrations on the Railway square, the police surveil the safety and that the law is complied with, the city is only a landowner, and the landowner can move the demonstration only if it causes unreasonable disadvantage to the landowner. [...] [T]he police evaluate the safety situation, but the city doesn't have the police's authorities. This is something that people don't seem to understand, and I've received a lot of mail that I have to remove these camps from the Railway square. Then I try to explain them that there is this freedom of assembly and demonstration in the constitution."*

In other words, as long as Right to Live was defined as a demonstration, it was the police's legal duty to protect the right to assembly: "[t]he City decided where one can camp and where not but then again one can protest on public streets and squares without the City's resolution" as Chief inspector in the dialogue police said. Had Right to Live been defined as camping, they would have been dependent on the goodwill of the City authorities as the City could have asked the police to remove the camp based on the by-law that bans camping in public areas or decided to leave

it be. As the Chief inspector in the dialogue police said, “[I]f the City allows the camping then in that case one can camp”:

*[I]f it’s generally interpreted as camping, then there are problems about the use of urban space for camping and then does the police have to act on the request of the City to remove the camp. So these were the kinds of conversations we had constantly within our organization but also with the protesters. (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

However, since the City of Helsinki owns the land on the Railway Square, it had some authority even when Right to Live was defined as a demonstration since it states in the Assembly Act that:

*The owner or holder may restrict the use of such a place for meeting purposes, if it is to be anticipated that the arrangement of the meeting will cause unreasonable inconvenience to the owner or holder or unreasonable damage to the environment.*

However, this decision to restrict the use of a place for a public meeting is again a matter of weighing up the right to assembly in public areas on one hand and the rights of the landowner on the other. In fact, Right to Live was nearly removed from Railway Square already in May when the World Village festival was held there too. However, the organizers of the festival, which “promotes global action” ([www.maailmakylassa.fi](http://www.maailmakylassa.fi)), didn’t want Right to Live to be evicted and they were allowed to stay. Finland First was, however, removed for the duration of the festival.

According to the City of Helsinki Chief of Preparedness, the City defined the nature of Right to Live by balancing “the right to expression”, which can be defined as a civic justification, and “disadvantages to the area”, an industrial justification:

*Here, of course, what the City didn’t do was perceive that now the meeting has ended and it would be camping on our area. In this case, we did see the freedom and right of expression, as it’s meant in the constitutional right of expression, is such a high, basic value, that in relation to the disadvantages to the area we couldn’t have afforded, or have the need for, such an interpretation [that the protest was camping], perhaps.*

However, he continued by saying that had the protest continued, at some point an evaluation would have been needed and that this kind of evaluation should not be left to individual authorities: “I think it would be important for the legislator to take a stand”.

In addition to the Assembly Act, the camping ban was another problematic legal framework that came into play during Right to Live. During and after my fieldwork, I tried to find out where the camping rule derives from: where is it actually stated and what is defined as camping. As it turned out, the rule was formerly mentioned in Helsinki City’s rules and regulations, but in 2003 local rules and regulations were

replaced by the national Public Order Act, in which there are no rules concerning camping. Even the City officials and a police officer involved in the protest were confused about the background to this rule:

*I mean there are no city rules and regulations but I recall that there was some alignment in the city board some years ago that there will be no camps set up in the city. (Deputy Mayor of Helsinki.)*

*Well, actually I don't know other than it's the City's, I don't know if there even exists such a law, but I mean the City as the landowner of course decides what the urban space can be used for and for what purposes an area is assigned to in zoning [--]. But I guess there isn't really a regulation. It's more of the City's interpretation of the use of urban space. (Chief inspector in the dialogue police.)*

*I mean the City no longer has rules and regulations since the Public Order Act has replaced the municipal rules and regulations... I might not be the best person to answer that but in practice...it's also the landowner's right to decide about the area, and on the other hand it's perhaps common law [--]. It's a bit similar to the Assembly Act in that it's based on case-based consideration. (Chief of Preparedness, City of Helsinki.)*

As the officials above said, policing the camping ban is based on case-to-case consideration and “interpretation of the use of urban space”, leaving a grey area to condone camping when it is not seen to cause a disturbance. In fact, as Himanen (2019, 173) writes:

*This policy is largely based on police discretion, as the City of Helsinki does not have the jurisdiction to ban short-term camping or rough sleeping in common places, irrespective of if the land is owned privately or by the City: every person has the right to sleep temporarily in a common place if they are not causing a disturbance.*

Therefore, both the Assembly Act and the camping ban left plenty of room for individual officers' interpretations.

However, the Deputy Mayor was right in tracing the camping ban to a recent alignment, made in 2011 to police East European street workers. After Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, street workers, most of whom are Roma<sup>96</sup>, appeared in the Helsinki cityscape, “begging, peddling, collecting cans for recycling, and other types of informal street work” (Himanen 2019, 162). In 2010, the City of Helsinki established a “multi-administrative task force set up by the mayor of Helsinki to deal with the issue of begging” (Lehtonen 2016) (the task force's name literally translated as “beggar task group”). Its report from 2011 states that illegal camps should be

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<sup>96</sup> Roma is, however, a problematic concept since not all who are labelled Roma identify as such (Himanen 2019, 165).

evicted, and camping was only allowed in designated camping sites (City of Helsinki 2011)<sup>97</sup>. The City of Helsinki gave the Helsinki Police Department the permanent authority to urge those camping in areas owned by the City to leave and move to official camping areas (Lehtonen 2016, 102), so precarious street workers have faced evictions from their tents and other sleeping places (Jokela 2017; Himanen 2019, 169). This “politics of race” in for instance the spatial segregation of Roma is a European-wide question (Fassin 2017, xi-xii).

The first test case for this camping rule was not Right to Live but Occupy Helsinki. Occupy Helsinki was a protest camp with a half-platoon tent, barrack and a sauna (Lehtonen 2016, 67), with a handful of people occupying it: “we were at best forty people in a general meeting” (Interview with Markku, an activist in Occupy Helsinki). It took place in central Helsinki from October 2011 to June 2012, on Kansalaistori square (“Citizen Square”), which is located centrally, next to the modern art museum Kiasma and opposite Parliament House, but compared to Railway Square in a less visible place. Compared to Right to Live, the protest remained small in size and was unable to raise their agenda in the media. Nevertheless, as the protest continued, it raised questions about its nature, whether it was camping or a public assembly, and thus about its legal status. The protest had initially notified the police about a week-long public meeting but, since “no-one knew the end date of the demonstration”, the protest continued and people began to spend their nights there, also by sleeping. The City gave the protest an eviction notification in April and, when the protest refused to leave, again in June, at which point the protest was finally evicted. The eviction notice stated that camping equipment such as “a place for a campfire, tents, carriages or canopies” were not appropriate meeting equipment<sup>98</sup>.

While Occupy Helsinki was eventually evicted as camping, it was not as heavily policed as Right to Live during the time it was still active, and the “camping” side of the protest was not toned down as it was in Right to Live. I asked Markku how much he had had to deal with the police in the month that he spent “pretty much all the time” in Occupy, when the protest camp was established: “Hardly at all, probably not once”. The dialogue police officer recalled that “apparently, they were pretty much left alone and in peace”. Unlike in Right to Live, sleeping was not forbidden,

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<sup>97</sup> In 2010, there was even a law proposal to criminalize aggressive begging and unauthorized camping in urban areas, but the law was never passed (Himanen 2019, 167).

<sup>98</sup> More specifically, the notice states: “The City no longer permits the containment of the public area from public use with other structures than assembly equipment that are compliant with the Assembly Act 11 §, without the permission of the landowner”.



and people indeed slept in the tents and even campfires were set up, something that was banned during the first week of Right to Live: “Yeah we had a campfire, but [the police] didn’t see it as necessary to interfere with it”.

I wanted to find out whether the Occupy camp was used as a reference case in the policing of Right to Live, but according to the Chief inspector in the dialogue police, it was not. He told me that Occupy didn’t come up in conversations with the City or within the police during the Right to Live protest. According to the police officer, what distinguished Right to Live from Occupy camp was the harassment Right to Live faced from the counter-protesters:

*[Occupy] was very different from its setting because there was no harassment involved. So, [Right to Live] is a very peculiar situation on the whole. This kind of long-lasting demonstration that comes with a long-lasting counter-demonstration, and how they should be interpreted.*

However, one cannot help wondering how much more surveillance there was of Right to Live where protesters were non-citizens, compared to Occupy Helsinki where protesters were mainly white Finns.

The Occupy camp attracted the interest of the “beggar task group”, which perceived the protest as a risk to the City’s alignment on camping:

*The Occupy camp was an ensemble that tested the task group’s and the City’s statement and policy on illicit camping (Lehtonen 2016, 68; 111).*

The task group noted that foreign camps had been evicted “immediately”, whereas Occupy was allowed to camp for months, and stated that there should be “equal treatment regarding eviction of camps of all people irrespective of their citizenship” (Lehtonen 2016, 122). In other words, it was stated out loud that camps were treated unequally, based on the citizenship of the campers.

Lehtonen (2016, 122, emphasis added) also writes how Occupy demonstrated “that it is not as simple to evict a systematic camp compared to a sporadic camp”, and that “the eviction requires [--] *a clear stand on the illicit nature of the camp*”. Like in Right to Live, this illicit nature was difficult to define since:

*The line between an illicit camp and a “general meeting” was unclear, at least from the point of view of those who intervened in it. (Ibid.)*

This is a question I will turn to next.

## Putting the Assembly Act to the test

Right to Live (and Finland First) put the Assembly Act to the test, especially regulations concerning meeting equipment and the duration of an assembly. This test clearly shows that the current Assembly Act is not able to give enough guidelines for the policing of protest camps: “the Assembly Act is out of date”, as the Chief Inspector in the dialogue police said. Tests may have the power of institutionalization (de Blic & Lemieux, 2005). As Feigenbaum et al (2013 ,60) write, “[i]n the wake of many protest camps, governments have also enacted legislation that explicitly prohibits or severely limits protest camping”. This kind of legislation has been passed at least in the UK and Canada. In Finland, no changes in the Assembly Act have taken place after Right to Live, nor have there been protest camps after Right to Live that would have demonstrated whether the rules made for Right to Live, such as that of no sleeping, would have been posed to another protest camp. Many of the officials I interviewed recognized Right to Live as a case that tested the limits of the Assembly Act, and the border between camping and the Assembly Act. The legality of the policing of both Right to Live and Finland First was tried since several complaints about the treatment of both protests were made to the Parliament’s ombudsman. One of the complaints was about why Right to Live, after it had been moved from the Railway Square to Kiasma, was restricted to day-time protesting only:

*It’s interesting to see how the Parliament’s ombudsman aligns it, how, according to the law, the time restriction [works], since there is no such thing in the Assembly Act. [--] It’s surely a precedent. [--] I don’t doubt it at all that the head of the Helsinki police department has gone through the case with lawyers. (A dialogue police officer.)*

The officials also thought that the interpretation between protesting and camping should not be left to individual officials to decide, but that legislation should be improved in that regard. The City of Helsinki Chief of Preparedness recognized the difficulty of the grey area created by what from a bureaucratic point of view seems like a loophole in the legislation:

*As a civil servant I think it would be... appropriate that the Assembly Act, on the level of legislation, would regulate for instance the typical duration of a meeting. [--] In a way it’s more reasonable that these things would be regulated in legislation instead of always returning to the judgement of an individual civil servant, because the judgement of an individual authority as a means of due process, I don’t think it’s appropriate to solve it each time case by case.*

According to the Chief of Preparedness, having more specific guidelines in the legislation would be more just than leaving the judgement of each case to civil servants. The Chief inspector in the dialogue police echoed the opinion of the Chief of Preparedness:

*Probably it would make sense to update the Assembly Act. [...] And precisely so that there wouldn't be these cases of interpretation and... On the other hand, it's good that we take into account each context and era in the decisions, but if there starts to be suspicions about what grounds the decisions are made on then, for that reason, it would be good to have an Act.*

The duration of a protest (camp) was one of the things that was thought to provide a solution to the problem of the definition between a protest and a camp. For instance, the Ombudsman's report on the Right to Live and Finland First protests takes a stand on the duration of the protest as it paraphrases the justification the police gave for evicting Finland First and removing Right to Live from the Railway Square. It reads in the report that Right to Live had had "a very long time to demonstrate" and, appealing to a case in the European court of human rights<sup>99</sup>, that Finland First had lasted for several months during which the protesters had got "their message heard".

However, there are also grounds for not applying restrictions to the Assembly Act. For instance, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has stated in their submission to UN Human Rights Committee, concerning Article 21 (Right to Peaceful Assembly), that "restrictions imposed on the time or duration of an assembly must be based on an assessment of the individual circumstances of each case" and that "in some cases, the protracted duration of an assembly may itself be integral to the message that the assembly is attempting to convey or to the effective expression of that message". (OSCE, 18.3.2019.) In other words, the duration of the protest can be seen as pivotal in the political message of the protest – as was the case in Right to Live (see chapter eight). Besides duration, the tents in a protest camp can also be seen to hold symbolic value. In several court cases, protest camps with their tent structures have been interpreted as a form of symbolic expression and thus protected by free speech (Feigenbaum et al 2013, 59; Kohn 2013; OSCE, 18.3.2019): "*the "manner and form" is the protest itself*" (England and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Division) Decisions; emphasis added.) This, again, goes to prove the importance of the material form and performance of a protest.

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<sup>99</sup> Çiloğlu and Others v. Turkey (6.3.2007) "in which the Court noted that unlawful weekly sit-ins (every Saturday morning for over three years) of around 60 people in front of a High School in Istanbul had become an almost permanent event which disrupted traffic and clearly caused a breach of the peace. It thus found that when dispersing the assembly, the authorities had reacted within the margin of appreciation afforded to States in such matters." (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2019.)

## 16 APPENDIX V: DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALISMS

Individualism can mean several things (Lichterman 1996, 5-6; Thévenot 2007, 416). In the following, I will explore the different meanings of individualism in more in-depth than what was possible in the analysis chapters, with the help of French pragmatism and Paul Lichterman's (1996) theory on personalized politics.

Instrumental or utilitarian instrumentalism guide us to rationalize and optimize our life choices on the bases of self-interest (Lichterman 1996, 5-6). In sociology of engagements, this translates as the regime of engaging in a plan, that values individual "project, plan, interests, decision-making, will, autonomy, responsibility" (Thévenot 2007, 416). This regime offers the satisfaction of being able to "project oneself successfully into the future". When this regime is used for coordinating commonality, it is referred to as liberal grammar. Another<sup>100</sup> kind of individualism can be found in the regime of public justification, in the world of inspiration. The world of inspiration comes close to liberal grammar in that it emphasizes unique individuals who feel a duty for seeking "individual liberation":

*Worthy persons in the inspired world understand other beings [-] by asserting their own uniqueness. It is through what they have that is most original [-] that they give themselves to others and serve the common good. They thus have the duty of [-] seeking individual liberation, not in order to pursue a selfish goal but in order to achieve human dignity while re-establishing authentic relations among human beings. (161-2).*

In the world of inspiration, feelings, passions, experiences and novelty are valued. People are worthy if they are "capable of experiencing the outpouring of inspiration and thus of acceding to perfection and happiness". This is an "experience of an inner movement that takes over and transforms". (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006, 159). Experiences are valued over efficiency and thinking outside the box, "breaking out of habits and routine", is a value in itself (161). People are encouraged to imagine, create and seek new encounters, ask new questions. Trajectories that are known beforehand, as in industrial and domestic worlds, are considered as something in the way of genuine creativity.

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<sup>100</sup> *Familiar engagements* can also be seen as a form of individualism since it is based on very personal attachments, difficult to communicate to others (Thévenot 2014). However, in this study, familiar engagements were the bases for commonality.

Liberal grammar, the world of individual life projects, and the world of inspiration thus accentuate individuals and seem to make a good fit:

*Project management explicitly points to joint planned actions, but it pushes workers to engage in uncertain and open exploration in the designing of each new project (Thévenot 2007, 419).*

In other words, liberal regime encourages individuals to engage in the world of inspiration. In times of neoliberalism, regime of plan tends in fact to be the overall logic of people's lives, almost impossible to escape, and it is what is considered "normal action" (Thévenot 2007, 419). It is thus also the framework where political and civic projects take place, fuelled not by dutiful citizens but by passion, enthusiasm and inspiration. However, the composition of liberal grammar and inspired worth is tenuous. As liberal grammar pulls one towards individualistic rewards, such as building one's CV or networking for future projects, the world of inspiration prizes "serving the common good".

This composition of inspired worth and liberal grammar resembles the personalism and personalized politics described by Paul Lichterman (1996). Personalism highlights an empowered and unique person: "It is the individualism women and men practice when they seek self-fulfilment and individualized expression, growth in personal development rather than growth in purely material well-being" (ibid, 6). When individuals engaging in personalism unite to form a collective, they are likely to engage in "personalized politics" which Lichterman (ibid) identifies as prevalent in (US white, middle-class) grassroots activism since the 1960s and '70s.

*[P]ersonalized commitments [--] both create and are sustained by a form of political community that emphasizes individual voice without sacrificing the common good for private needs (Lichterman 1996, 4).*

In other words, as in world of inspiration, in personalized politics it is not legitimate to place individual interests above common good. Personalized politics emphasize self-expression and rely on inspired individuals. Individuals are the "locus of political efficacy", and they carry their "portable" political commitments within themselves, to be practiced in everyday life as well as in different organizations. In other words, commitments to causes endure whereas commitments to organizations may not (ibid, 35).

This is precisely the kind of individualism that was not only tolerated but encouraged and indeed needed in both Kallio movement and Right to Live. In both cases, the orientation to arranging things – setting up and maintaining infrastructure – and the lack of recruitment practices combined with a project-type of temporality

required and nurtured the kinds of goods found in this world of personalized politics: having knowledge and skills and having the ability to learn (quickly), and being passionate about what one engages in. “[L]earning experiences require the creativity of the inspiration worth” (Thévenot 2011, 58).

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) describe the world of inspiration as one of outcasts: the impoverished, starving and misunderstood artist or the religious hermit escaping their followers. Grace, compassion and humility are the trademarks of inspirational worth, as one doesn’t need recognition from others. In fact, this recognition (or fame) would cast doubt over the sincerity of the action. For this reason, the world of inspiration is in constant tension with the world of fame. (Ibid, 85.) However, in the age of symbolic economy and constant need for innovation, creativity and the ability to adjust to ever-changing conditions have become valued characteristics in general (see Thévenot 2011, 51). This is the ideal subject that the American empowerment projects, studied by Nina Eliasoph (2011), are moulding the youth into. In these “open-ended” projects, everything becomes the expression of one’s “deepest self”, or (in the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words), one’s “internal ocean” (ibid 6), one that surpasses all restrictive institutions, rules, old habits and social conditions: “the only reliable source of morality is the sacred ocean within” (7). This kind of creative citizenship believes in “bringing people together” in order to “spur creativity and generate new ideas” (Baiocchi et al 2014). According to Eliasoph (2011, xviii), these empowerment projects have the aim of “creating citizens who will placidly accept contemporary governments’ increasingly short-term projects; who will not panic about short-term employment in an unsteady job market; who will feel calm about short-term marriage; not become too passionately attached to any people or ideas; citizens who will change their souls rather than conditions”. Under these neoliberal conditions, the logics of fame and liberal grammar may indeed accompany the world of inspiration, as for instance Tavory et al (2022, 7) have shown in their book about advertisers’ pro bono projects:

*[M]orality, creativity, prestige. These alternative goods animated our respondents’ understandings of what a good pro bono project was and what pro bono projects were worth doing.*

Therefore, the relationships and possible combinations of orders of worth may change over time (see e.g. Boltanski & Chiapello 2005; Centemeri 2017; Pattaroni 2015).

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