

Crafting Feminism

- A Study of the Intersection of Crafts and Contemporary
Feminisms in Sweden

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Abstract

This thesis studies the intersection of crafts and feminism in the Swedish context by focusing on two events organized in Stockholm in the spring of 2018: a feminist market and a #MeToo tagging event. The thesis focuses on the relationship between crafts and contemporary feminism in the Swedish context, in particular how feminism is expressed and done through crafts as well as what kind of feminism is expressed and whom it can be said to represent. Moreover, the thesis explores possible connections between Swedish feminist crafting and activism.

Based on field notes from the two events as well as recorded material from six interviews with seven women from the two events, this thesis suggests that there exists a feminist crafts movement in the Swedish context. Moreover, this thesis shows that there are many ways in which crafts may be feminist, such as when crafts are used to convey explicit feminist statements, when they are placed in public or when they empower women. The kind of feminism expressed through crafts has women as its subject, though without specifying if this includes all women or only certain kinds of women. As demonstrated by the visitors and exhibitors at the feminist market and the tagging event, this feminism seems to mainly attract white, middle-class women and feminists. The question of whether feminist crafts in general, and these two events in particular, are connected to activism cannot be easily determined and it is thus argued that what is of importance is not if these two events can be labeled as activist, but rather if they can be understood as events that make a difference.

As a result, this thesis suggests that feminist crafts reflect a broader Swedish feminist discourse that, despite acknowledging the importance of intersectionality, fails to analyze how sex/gender intersect with ethnicity and race. A critical discussion is thus needed within the feminist crafting community where the issue of homogeneity within the community is prioritized. More specifically, this thesis suggests that the community ask itself how it can change, and what actions could be taken in order to make feminist crafts more attractive to a wider group of feminists. Likewise, they should also reflect on the underlying factors as to why this community is homogenous and why it fails to attract a more diverse crowd of feminists.

Keywords: contemporary feminisms; crafts; craftivism; Sweden

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1. Introduction

On 21 January 2017, hundreds of thousands of people attended the Women's March in Washington, organized as a reaction to the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump and his infamous statement 'grab them by the pussy' (Benaissa 2017; McCarter 2017; Earnest & Amoroso Leslie 2017). They were all wearing 'Pussyhats', pink knitted hats designed to resemble two cat ears and named in relation to the above-mentioned statement, as a way to reclaim the word 'pussy' (Pussyhat Project 2018). A lot of criticism has been directed against the Pussyhat, particularly focused on how it reinforces gender norms as well as excludes people of color, trans people and non-binary people. However, the Women's March and its Pussyhats became popular and spread all over the world, among other places to Sweden where protests were held in several cities (Palm 2017). An additional happening that gave the Pussyhat further attention in Sweden was when the board for the Swedish builder's union decided to post a picture of themselves wearing Pussyhats on the International Women's Day (8th of March) 2017. This picture gained a lot of attention since all board members were men, making critics ask how wearing Pussyhats could become an act of solidarity for women when, in fact, no women were represented on that board and consequently, on the photo (Wilhelmson 2017).

In Sweden, like in many other countries, the Pussyhat has continued to be used as a symbol for the struggle for women's rights in general and has been used in marches and demonstrations since its debut (Dutt 2018; TT 2018). Thus, the Pussyhat becomes an example of how crafts, feminism and activism can intersect, and it is this intersection I want to explore in this thesis¹. My scope will go beyond the Pussyhat alone and instead focus on the broader Swedish feminist crafting community where two particular events will serve as the main focus: a feminist market organized in Stockholm in the spring of 2018 and a so-called tagging event with the theme of #MeToo, also organized in Stockholm in the spring of 2018.

Fiona Hackney (2013) states that "we need to understand more about the practices, networks, meanings, and values bound up with amateur making" (Hackney 2013, p. 171) in order to realize the activist potential of crafts and to make sure that the contemporary feminist crafting movement does not end up being a short-lived trend. Drawing on this, I want to look at contemporary crafting as a feminist project by focusing on those involved in the practice, primarily looking at those who identify as crafters themselves but also those who are involved in the Swedish crafting community in other ways. Previous research on the intersection of crafts

¹ I have chosen to use the word crafts throughout this thesis as an English translation to the Swedish word 'hantverk'. I define the word further in the subsection called 'Crafting and Feminism' in chapter 2.

and feminism has to some extent been skeptical about the feminist potential of crafts, questioning “under which [conditions] knitting [and crafts in general] represents intentional engagement with feminist activism or participation in a larger feminist project without articulated intentionality” (Kelly 2014, p. 133). I am therefore interested in listening to the crafters themselves to see how they understand crafting as feminist.

Nicole Dawkins (2011) writes that “craft appears to be a revealing standpoint from which to explore” (Dawkins 2011, p. 275) what constitute contemporary feminisms today as it shows tendencies of both feminist and conservative politics. I am therefore interested in looking at how crafters understand and define feminism, as well as what kind of feminism is being represented in these events and who this feminism can be said to represent. Following the advice of Elizabeth Evans (2016), who highlights the importance of focusing on specific contexts when looking at contemporary feminism, I have chosen to focus on my own context, that is, Sweden. Besides being the context I am familiar with, it is also a context that is relatively underexplored in previous research, which is mostly produced within and focused on the United States.

Jack Bratich and Heidi Brush (2011) suggest that the contemporary (re)turn to crafts helps us question several binaries, such as those of feminine/masculine, amateur/professional, craft/art, private/public, past/present and old/new. Historically, crafts have been associated with and connected to the female amateur, active in the private sphere. Crafts, and particularly domestic crafts have also been mostly associated with women from earlier generations and they have therefore been interpreted as being old and belonging to the past. Elizabeth Groeneveld (2010) shows that in an attempt to (re)claim crafts as something new, trendy and progressive, discourses around contemporary crafting tend to distance themselves from ‘old’ crafting that is sketched out as depoliticized and oppressive. At the same time, Groeneveld also suggests that crafting may actually improve the connection between younger and older generations of women. In that sense, contemporary crafting is rather a continuation of old crafting practices than something ‘new’.

Contemporary crafting also challenges binaries by reclaiming the public space through, for example, craftivist (craft activist) actions such as the Pussyhat Project. The Stitch‘n Bitch groups that originate in the US context but can now be found in many places around the world also challenge the private/public binary by bringing crafting, particularly knitting, into public space. These groups are named after a book with the same name written by Debbie Stoller (2003), who envisioned these groups as an explicitly feminist project because they would “challenge the public/private spheres, reclaim a devalued female craft, challenge stereotypes about knitters, and trouble gender norms” (Kelly 2014, p.140). Challenging the private/public

divide through making crafts visible in the public space is therefore an important part of how the contemporary turn to craft claims itself as feminist.

Through the emergence of online spaces such as Etsy, where crafters sell their finished products as well as crafting supplies, contemporary crafting also helps us question the old/new binary by bringing ‘old’ craft knowledges into ‘new’ online spaces. These spaces enable craft-work as a profession and as a source of income. This trend also shows how crafting has become intertwined with technological developments, as online spaces have become an important source of community-building and crafting-related consumption (Bratich & Brush 2011). Thus, the contemporary crafting movement’s intertwinement with the internet helps us challenge the binary of old and new.

Previous research, often produced within the US context, states that we are witnessing a feminist (re)turn to crafts, particularly domestic crafts (Chansky 2010). This thesis will focus on the Swedish context. The fact that the Pussyhats spread to Sweden indicates that there exists an interest in crafts as a way of expressing feminism in this context as well. By exploring how the intersection of crafts and feminism manifests itself in the Swedish context, this thesis will contribute to knowledges on both Swedish contemporary feminisms and feminist crafts.

1.1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to explore the intersection of crafts and feminism in the Swedish context. My interest lies specifically in understanding how crafters understand a potential connection between crafts and feminism and in case they see such a connection, I am also interested in understanding what kind of feminism is being expressed through crafts and whom it represents. Because of the recent coining of the term ‘craftivism’ (Greer 2007; 2011), I am also interested in understanding how feminist crafts is potentially linked to activism. The following research questions will be my guide through this thesis:

- What is the relationship between crafts and contemporary feminism in the Swedish context?
- How is feminism being expressed and done through crafts?
- What kind of feminism is expressed? And ‘whose’ feminism is it?
- Can Swedish feminist crafting be linked to activism? In which way?

1.2. Contextualizing Swedish Contemporary Feminisms

Contemporary Western feminism is often described as third-wave feminism, making clear that it supposedly differs from the second-wave feminism present primarily in the 1960s and 1970s and the first-wave feminism present in the early 20th century (Gemzöe 2014). However, using waves as a metaphor has not gone uncriticized. For example, critics have pointed out how this metaphor creates a story of a singular feminism (Laughlin et al. 2010), reifies ageism by claiming generational difference (Hogeland 2001), “creates historical amnesia about the long and complicated trajectory of women’s rights and feminist activism” (Hewitt 2012, p. 660) and lastly, it is Eurocentric, racist and heteronormative as it fails to include the struggles of non-western, black and lesbian feminists (van der Tuin 2009). Clare Hemmings (2005; 2011) also argues that telling feminist history in this way creates a linear narrative of progress, loss and return that “oversimplifies the complex history of Western feminisms” (Hemmings 2005, p. 115) and fails to recognize the many ways in which different feminisms have evolved over time. To avoid this trap, I will talk about ‘contemporary Swedish feminisms’. I assert that this expression is preferable over third-wave feminism as it suggests that more than one feminism can exist at the same time while it also does not contrast one feminism against another in the way that the wave metaphor suggests. Moreover, it shows that I am looking at one context in particular, further suggesting that more than one kind of feminism exists at the same time.

Writing about contemporary Swedish feminisms could be a thesis topic on its own, and for that reason, I am forced to limit myself here. For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on three spheres: the political sphere, the academic sphere, and the activist sphere. These three spheres are entangled in many ways, for example, academics may identify as activists too (Edenheim & Rönnblom 2014), and discussions going on in one sphere may and do influence others. In my account of contemporary Swedish feminisms, however, these spheres may seem to be more separate than they really are. This is a result of the limited space as well as the source material, which often only speaks about one of the spheres and not their interconnections per se. Nevertheless, the aim is to contribute to a preliminary understanding of contemporary Swedish feminisms that will also contextualize this thesis.

Politically, Sweden is often regarded as a country driven by both anti-racism and gender equality (Hübinette & Lundström 2014) though Marta Cuesta and Diana Mulinari (2018) suggest that this is mainly a ‘feel-good antiracism’, which “reinforces the moral superiority of whites as antiracists” (Cuesta & Mulinari 2018, p. 11). This is not an antiracism that engages in the everyday complexities, but rather an antiracism that is performed to demonstrate that the

'anti-racist' is good and keeps up with Swedish values. Cuesta and Mulinari argue that the same goes for feminism, that is, that identifying as both feminist and antiracist are ways to perform the right kind of political self rather than actually contributing to the feminist and anti-racist struggles. Furthermore, Mia Liinason (2018) suggests that (certain) feminisms in the Nordic context have come to produce assumptions of a 'Nordic familiarity' that fails to reflect on heterosexuality, ethnicity and race. Consequently, Nordic women are seen as a homogenous collective, reinforcing the false picture of the Nordic countries as homogenous societies.

The current Swedish government refers to itself as "the world's first feminist government" and aims at giving women and men equal opportunities to shape their own lives (Regeringskansliet 2017). An example of this is the feminist foreign affairs policy, promoted by the Swedish minister for foreign affairs Margot Wallström who strongly argues, among other things, that women should be included in conflict negotiations as a way to bring in new perspectives into the discussion (Mårtensson 2018; Regeringskansliet n.d.). She also gained a lot of attention for criticizing Saudi Arabia after a human rights activist and blogger got whippings as part of his sentence, which Wallström called 'medieval'. In relation to this, she also criticized Saudi Arabia for its lack of feminist politics, highlighting how it is primarily the rights of women that are neglected in the dictatorship (Andersson & Mattson 2015; TT 2016). This is one example of how the Swedish government's proclamation as 'feminist' manifests itself. It is also well worth noting that the Swedish government, from the year 2005 up until the year 2015, had a controversial military cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia that resulted in Sweden helping Saudi Arabia's weapons industry. It was finally the 'feminist government' that ended the cooperation agreement, though the Swedish Prime Minister proposed to keep the agreement but with new terms (Wicklén 2015). Consequently, understanding the Swedish government as feminist or not is a complicated matter though these two short illustrations give an idea of how Swedish feminism manifests in the political sphere.

Another particular characteristic of Sweden is what Astrid Henry (2014) calls a form of 'state feminism', meaning a form of feminism maintained by the state through, for example, policies, redistribution and female representation (Borchorst & Siim 2008; Henry 2014; Ahl et al. 2016). Besides the feminism expressed by the state, Sweden has had several strong women's movements which have, for example, achieved women's right to vote in 1919 and the right to contraceptive pills in 1964. These women's movements have, according to Harriet Silius (2011), professionalized in two directions: to academia and to the equal opportunities sector. As a result, gender studies in Sweden have reached a high level of disciplinisation, institutionalization as well as professionalization.

One influential debate that stems from the academic sphere is that of the importance of intersectionality as a theoretical concept (Gemzöe 2014). Intersectionality was brought into the Swedish context in 2002 through the book *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader. Kön, klass och etnicitet i det postkoloniala Sverige*² (de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2002/2012) that showed how gender, race, and class structure the Swedish context and how these intersections are manifested in everyday life. In 2003, Nina Lykke (2003) further argued for the necessity of using the concept of intersectionality within a Swedish (academic) context in an article in the Swedish academic gender studies journal *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*³. Tiina Rosenberg (2007) points out though that although Lykke (2003) argues for the necessity of using intersectional analyses in Swedish research, she puts gender in the center of analysis and makes no further comments (in that particular article⁴) about which other power structures to ‘add’ and how many should be ‘added’. Moreover, Rosenberg (2007) states that it is often gender, race/ethnicity, class and sometimes also sexuality that is at the center of intersectional analyses.

Historically, the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity has been important for intersectionality theory since it was, as Paulina de los Reyes and Diana Mulinari (2005) point out, originally formulated as a way to show and criticize the whiteness of feminism. The concept was coined by African-American feminist lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) but described earlier by other women of color such as Sojourner Truth (1851/1997) and The Combahee River Collective (1977/1981) although in other terms. In intersectionality’s journey to Sweden, race has mostly come to mean ethnicity (Knapp 2005) and one can question if this journey has led to race/ethnicity not being incorporated in intersectional analyses often enough, as Henry (2014) argues for the need for more research that would problematize the intersections of gender and ethnicity in the Nordic context.

The academic debate around intersectionality has, in turn, influenced both the political and the activist sphere. Lena Gemzöe (2014) mentions that two important debates within activism during the twenty-first century in Sweden are those around the Swedish gender-neutral pronoun ‘hen’ and anti-racist feminism. These, Gemzöe argues, are examples of how different power structures, in this case, for example, gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality, intersect and can therefore be connected to the academic debate on intersectionality.

² The title is based on a word play with the words ‘olika’ and ‘lika’ (different and equal) which does not translate well to English, but an English translation of the title could be *The (Dis)similar Disguises of Power. Gender, Class and Ethnicity in the Postcolonial Sweden*.

³ In English: Women’s Studies Journal.

⁴ She does, however, reflect further on the topic in later work, such as her book *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (Lykke 2010).

Another very recent debate that has received a great deal of attention is the social media campaign #MeToo and the associated debate of sexual assault and harassment. The hashtag was created by Tarana Burke in 2006 and truly came to light in 2017 when it was used by Hollywood actresses to show the extent to which sexual assault and harassment manifested in their industry (Pascalidou 2017; Delin 2018). In Sweden, the hashtag grew to become several hashtags, each one related to a profession or a sphere, such as the private sphere (Delin 2018). The conversation following the hashtag has mainly focused on (white) women as victims and men as perpetrators, something that has gotten critique from both academics and activists (see, for example, Björklund & Dahl 2017; Garcia 2017; Purtill 2017). At the time of writing this thesis, the aftermath of the MeToo hashtag is still playing out in Sweden, indicating its huge impact on the Swedish society. For example, the #MeToo movement has led to a crisis within the Swedish Academy after a person with close connections to the academy was accused of several cases of sexual abuse in the wake of #MeToo (Anderson 2018). As part of this crisis, the Swedish Academy's permanent secretary Sara Danius left her post. This resulted in what was called a 'knytblusmanifestation'⁵ where people all over Sweden dressed in pussy-bow blouses as a tribute to Danius, whose signature garment is this type of blouse. The manifestation aimed to show the injustice in how Sara Danius, who had tried to investigate the academy's involvement in the sex abuse allegations against the closely connected 'cultural figure'⁶, had to leave the academy when in fact the problems lied elsewhere. In particular, the manifestation criticizes how allegations of sexual abuse against a man instead led to a debate of whether or not Sara Danius was suitable for her position (Grönberg 2018). This manifestation has been interpreted as a feminist act as it is done in solidarity with a woman and the pussy-bow blouse has become a local feminist symbol.

In conclusion, Swedish contemporary feminisms manifest themselves in all three spheres I have looked at: the political sphere, the academic sphere, and the activist sphere. These three spheres are more entangled than what my presentation of them has shown. For example, the #MeToo movement has had a great impact in all three spheres. In the same way, the debate around intersectionality can be found in all three spheres even though it originates from the academia. It is therefore important to bear in mind that Sweden is characterized by a type of state feminism, its strong academic tradition of gender studies as well as a strong women's movement.

⁵ In English: a pussy-bow blouse manifestation.

⁶ Swedish newspapers refer to him as 'kulturprofilen'.

What must also be mentioned when writing about contemporary feminisms is the ‘trend’ of neoliberal influences on and streams within (Western) society in general, and (Western) feminisms in specific. In other words, this trend is not specific to the Swedish context only, though it is visible in this context as well. Wendy Larner (2000) defines neo-liberalism as denoting “new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships” (Larner 2000, p. 5). For Siv Fahlgren, Katarina Giritli Nygren and Anders Johansson (2016), a societal change towards neoliberalism is characterized by a system that centers around the market as a general solution to societal problems and in particular, the individual’s, rather than the states, responsibility of its own success and well-being. In the Swedish context, this has meant a change where politics have gone from regarding the collective as the most important political unit to now focusing on the individual instead.

Nancy Fraser (2012; 2013) argues that the development of a neoliberal feminism can be traced back to a neoliberal cooptation of feminist critique of issues such as the social-democratic ‘economism’, the ‘family wage’ and the paternalistic welfare-state. By addressing the same issues as mainstream feminism, neoliberal feminism has been able to gain influence. However, whereas mainstream feminism promotes radical change, neoliberal feminist solutions are market-centered and “expressed in individualist terms” (Fraser 2013). For example, a neoliberal way of handling the issue of the “family wage” is to promote the ideal of a household with two incomes. To achieve this, women must be able to focus on their careers to a greater extent, making it into a problem of women’s work-family balance. Catherine Rottenberg (2014; 2016; 2018) argues that this balance is central to neoliberal feminism because it has come to view the lack of women in top positions as *the* feminist issue and *the* expression of inequality. Neoliberal feminism is, according to her, a feminism that recognizes gender inequality, while at the same time denying that cultural and socioeconomic structures produce these very same inequalities. Thus, Rottenberg state that neoliberal feminism produces a new feminist subject that “accepts full responsibility for her own well-being and self-care” (Rottenberg 2012, p. 418), making feminism an issue of individual women’s ability to manage a work-life(family) balance. As such, neoliberal feminism therefore assumes that all women have, or at least want to have, kids, as implicitly implied by ‘family’.

A relevant question to pose is for whom the issues sketched out by neoliberal feminism (i.e. the problem of underrepresentation of women in top positions and the need for work-life balance) are important, and for whom they are secondary or even irrelevant. In other words, who regards these issues as their most important feminist issues? Who can identify with the struggle of advancing their career as their prime (and sole) issue related to gender inequality?

Like Rottenberg (2018), I suggest that neoliberal feminism mainly represents the white, heterosexual, class-privileged woman as it “[encompasses] only so-called aspirational women in its address” (Rottenberg 2018). I would suggest that those women who fall outside this description are not always adequately represented in mainstream Swedish contemporary feminisms either, as these feminisms have become influenced by a neoliberal perspective on gender issues and gender inequality (Wottle & Blomberg 2011). Thus, Swedish feminist crafts may also struggle to successfully include and represent a diverse group of feminists in the community, assuming that it is influenced by the mainstream Swedish feminist discourse.

2. Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework consists of both what would be called previous research and theory which I will present in the form of three different topics: ‘crafting and feminism’, ‘crafting and activism’ as well as ‘the feminist subject’. The first two lean more toward previous research whereas the latter fits better under the label ‘theory’. When it comes to the previous research I will present, I would like to point out that this research is mostly based on a US context. The closest I have come to finding Swedish research on feminist crafts is the book *Gerillaslöjd* (a Swedish version of the word craftivism) by Frida Arnqvist Engström (2014). This book describes how contemporary crafting can be used to make change by interviewing crafters while and describing different ways of doing craftivism. It does not look explicitly at how the craftivist movement intersects with the feminist movement, though it does mention feminism as one of the many examples of political movements represented within the craftivist community. The book also does not focus solely on the Swedish context. My study, however, will contribute to the research field of crafts and craftivism by focusing explicitly on how crafts and feminism intersect in the Swedish context.

2.1. Crafting and Feminism

In this section, I will present previous research that in different ways relates to the topic of crafts and feminism. This research focuses on understanding crafting as a feminist project, and I will contextualize it by presenting research that shows how crafts have historically been considered as women’s leisure work. Moreover, I will also present research that problematizes the accessibility of crafting and the ‘crafter’ identity. However, I will begin by trying to define what crafts mean in the context of this thesis as well as how they differ from related concepts such as art and design.

Kristina Niedderer and Katherine Townsend (2010) see crafts as a third category besides art and design, yet state that these three categories can be hard to separate at times. At the same time, they argue that craft differs from art in its status and from design in for example its economic value. Crafts must, therefore, be interpreted on their own. For the purposes of this thesis, crafts will be defined as a practice that produces a product by hand that cannot be interpreted as either art or design. This can include what is called the domestic arts, which consists of, for example, weaving, sewing, knitting and embroidering (Chansky 2010), but also other crafts such as pottery, woodcarving and the work by silver- and goldsmiths (Niedderer and Townsend 2015). Keeping the definition broad and open is a deliberate choice because I

want to have the possibility to include in my data collection as much craft-work as possible from the two events I attended. However, one result of my definition was also that some work still got excluded, especially work in the form of printed posters. I suggest that these kinds of products are better labeled as either design or art than as craft and therefore chose not to include them in this thesis.

Another reason why I want to separate crafts from both art and design is that of the historical position of crafts within the society. Roszika Parker (2010) argues that the art/craft hierarchy emerged as a result of their respective connotations with space and crafter: for art, it means connotations with the public sphere, with men and masculinity. Respectively, for crafts, it means connotations with the private sphere, with women and femininity. This has led to crafts being labeled as a female leisure activity and to its loss of status, especially in the case of domestic crafts such as weaving, sewing and knitting. Even though not all of the women that I interviewed are involved in making the kinds of crafts that have a lower status as a result of their historical connections to femininity, I still find it important to acknowledge this history by looking at crafts as a separate category. For me, separating crafts from art and design does not mean that I personally see a difference in either quality or status. On the contrary, I value craft-work highly. My reason for focusing on crafts, in particular, is that I want to acknowledge crafts as a category of its own, focusing on many types of craftworks that have historically been regarded as having a low status. Having defined what crafts mean in the context of this thesis, I will now move on to presenting previous research on crafts and feminism.

A reoccurring topic in previous literature is the question of whether or not crafts have a 'feminist potential' or can be regarded as a feminist project (see, for example, Pentney 2008; Kelly 2014; Bain 2016; Clarke 2017). This stems from the fact that historically crafts, domestic crafts, have been regarded as part of women's oppression (Parker 2010). Maureen Daly Goggin (2002) argues that it is more true to say that crafts have been a tool of both oppression and liberation for women, yet, I suggest this is not considered when asking if crafts can be feminist or not. I would, therefore, claim that the question is not whether or not crafts can or should be labeled as 'feminist', but rather how crafts should be understood as a feminist project considering its alleged past. For Nicole Dawkins (2011), contemporary crafting has both bits of feminist politics and "conservative feminine desires" (Dawkins 2011, p. 275). On the one hand, it brings "traditionally domestic handicrafts into casual 'third spaces'" (Dawkins 2011, p. 275), that is, "place[s] of refuge other than the home or workplace where people can regularly visit and commune with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers" (Mehta & Bosson 2010, p. 780). On the other hand, it can also signal nostalgia for and a wish to return to the past

(Bratich & Brush 2011; Dawkins 2011; Solomon 2013; Bain 2016). Following the reasoning of Dawkins, intention and context become important as this can determine whether crafts are being practiced as a feminist project or not. Both Maura Kelly (2014) and Jessica Bain (2016) highlight the importance of intention and context too, arguing that crafts as a feminist project depend on where they are being practiced as well as why. For example, when a woman brings a knitting project out in the public sphere with the intention of troubling the private/public division of crafts, it can be interpreted as a feminist crafting project. On the other hand, intention does not necessarily manifest in how an action is interpreted. Therefore, the very same project can be interpreted as simply a woman knitting, without any political dimension. In the same way there can also exist subversive elements without intentionality, such as men troubling gender norms by knitting, even though this might not be their intention (Kelly 2014). As a consequence, it is also important to consider how the craft work is interpreted by others in determining if crafting can be interpreted as feminist or not.

One way of understanding crafts as a feminist project is by looking at the different ways in which it is possible to ‘do’ feminist crafts. Beth Ann Pentney (2008) does this by sketching out a continuum of feminist knitting practices. Applying this to crafts in general, the continuum stretches from community building and celebration of the craft in itself to political protests in the public that involve crafts. The middle of the continuum consists of activities aimed at fundraising and outreach. Understanding feminist crafting practices along a continuum, as Pentney does, means recognizing how both feminisms and practices may differ in their expression yet still valuing how all of these, in the end, contribute to the feminist project. This becomes relevant for this thesis as the two events that I visited differ a lot in both their aim and expression. Having a tool that is broad in its definition of feminist practices might, therefore, prove to be useful when analyzing the feminist market and the tagging event.

Another common topic, or rather statement, in previous research is that we are witnessing a feminist (re)turn to crafts (see, for example, Minahan & Wolfram Cox 2007; Chansky 2010; Groeneveld 2010). Jack Bratich and Heidi Brush (2011) argue that this resurgence of craft forces us to rethink binaries such as private/public, past/present, old/new, masculine/feminine, amateur/professional and art/craft. It does so as it not only questions the strong link between crafts and the private sphere by taking crafting into the public sphere (see, for example, Corbett & Housley 2011) but also blurs the lines between past and present, as well as old and new, by bringing crafts that are associated with the past into the present and by combining ‘old’ crafts with new technology. Bratich and Brush (2011) state that the renewed popularity of crafts is

neither a return to the old, nor something new, but rather a continuation of a phenomenon that might manifest differently now than before.

The last common topic in the previous research that I would like to present is critical analyses of crafts in general and the ‘crafter’ identity, in particular. These focus on the way in which crafts are only available for a certain part of society, namely those that have enough time and money to invest in learning and practicing a craft (Solomon 2013). As a result, having access to crafting and the crafter identity becomes a question of both time and money (Portwood-Stacer 2007; Clarke 2017). Laura Portwood-Stacer (2007) also states that “the construction of needlecrafts as a leisure activity presumes that one does not spend one’s days doing similar labor” (Portwood-Stacer 2007, p. 16). What was earlier a way to make sure that the family had, for example, the clothes they needed has today become a luxury as nowadays it is in many cases cheaper to buy clothes produced in sweatshops rather than to make them yourself (Groeneveld 2010).

Shannon Black (2017) writes that the current feminist turn to crafts is marked by both middle-class status and whiteness and that “white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual women become synonymous with the identity of ‘crafter’” (Black 2017, p.706). bell hooks (1995) also suggests that identification and representation play an important part in who becomes interested in art, and I would also maintain that the same is true for crafts. Those who are represented neither in the crafts movement nor among crafters may not develop an interest in crafts, to begin with. It seems then that the position of the crafter is not equally accessible to all and therefore, the feminist turn to crafts might not represent all feminists and all kinds of feminisms. It is for this reason that I have chosen to explore what kind of feminism is being expressed through feminist crafts, as it is important to recognize that there is no single feminism and that different feminisms may not represent all feminists in the sense that they represent different interests and visions.

2.2.Crafting and Activism

The recent term ‘craftivism’, coined by Betsy Greer in 2003 (2007; 2011) to illustrate craft activism, shows that there exists an intersection between crafts and activism. In this section, I will present previous research related to craftivism and discuss the Pussyhat as an example of recent feminist craftivism. I will also contextualize this research through introducing the broader term ‘visual activism’. Before this, however, I will discuss different ways of

understanding and defining the term ‘activism’ and why people involved in activism may reject the activist identity.

A dictionary definition of activism defines it as “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue” (Merriam-Webster n.d.). This rather common definition makes action central (Bryan-Wilson, González & Willsdon 2016). The question though is what kind of action is prioritized and where it is supposed to be carried out? Deborah Martin, Susan Hanson and Danielle Fontaine (2007) propose another way of defining activism that takes the acts of women into greater account, suggesting that the dictionary definition may have a male ‘bias’ in the sense that it promotes the actions easier accessible to men, that is, actions that are done in public or within organizations, for example. Another way of defining activism can therefore be to understand it as “everyday actions by individuals that foster new social networks or power dynamics (Martin, Hanson & Fontaine 2007, p. 79). This opens up for an understanding of activism that includes activities and actions that have a great impact on the lives of women and their communities, but that normally are not considered as activism due to their limited geographical reach. Those kinds of actions and activities could be of a kind that either stimulates awareness and motivation in certain issues or fosters social relations which in turn may enable future political action.

Despite the many ways in which activism can be defined, many people distance themselves from identifying as activists. Chris Bobel (2007) argues that the reason behind this is that participants in social movements define the activist according to a ‘perfect standard’ which is nearly impossible to attain. This perfect standard consists of two key values: humility and rigor, making an activist a person who ‘lives the issue’ yet does not flaunt it in a way that makes them seem too self-important. This seems to be the time to ask:

Who, exactly, does satisfy the criteria for activist? Who can afford to devote nearly every waking hour to their chosen cause? And while this mythic activist is off doing the good work, who, after all, is caring for the children, preparing meals, washing laundry, paying the bills? (Bobel 2007, p. 156)

This quote suggests that while the activist is out ‘living the issue’, there is someone else staying behind to make sure that the everyday chores are running smoothly. At a first glance, it would be easy to make the assumption that it is men who are the activists, and those who stay behind are women. However, such an assumption fails to consider that not all women and all men are heterosexual or live in a monogamous setting with kids and two parents present. Nevertheless,

Bobel (2007) urges future researchers to explore the (possibly) gendered dimensions of activism. To that, I want to add that future research must also consider how gender intersects with, for example, sexuality and race and how this might also have implications for activism. A first attempt to capture the gendered aspects of activism is the earlier described definition by Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine (2007) that prioritizes the type of activism that mainly (certain) men have been able to do. For this reason, craftivism becomes interesting, as many crafts have traditionally been considered to be women's work and consequently, craftivism could be considered as a way for women to express their voices through a medium 'of their own'.

As already mentioned, Betsy Greer (2007; 2011) is often credited for coining the term 'craftivism', which is a combination of the two words 'crafts' and 'activism'. Greer defines it as "the practice of engaged creativity, especially regarding political or social causes" and as "a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper & your quest for justice more infinite" (Greer 2007, ampersand in original). Craftivism can also be understood as part of the broader concept 'visual activism', defined by TJ Demos (2016) as "politically directed practices of visibility aimed at catalyzing social, political, and economic change" (Demos 2016, p. 87) and by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2016) as the intersection of pixels and actions aimed at change. The term visual activism can by these definitions be used to understand how visual material can be used for processes of change, which is also what craftivism is about. Likewise, in an art context, Nina Felshin (1995) uses the term activist art, which I interpret as naming a similar phenomenon as visual activism. According to Felshin, this kind of art is focused on processes rather than products and more often takes place in public rather than in traditional art contexts. This is also true for the different kinds of craftivist actions, which can take place in art contexts but are more common in public space where we can find actions such as 'yarn bombing' or 'knit graffiti', which are public installations of fiber crafts for different purposes (Kelly 2014; Mann 2014).

The political and social causes that craftivism targets do not necessarily need to have a feminist agenda (Jefferies 2016). For example, Maria Elena Buszek and Kirsty Robertson (2011) state that the intentions of craftivist action may differ greatly, ranging from "actions that unveil sweatshop conditions in the production of clothing to extremely personal memorial projects" (Buszek & Robertson 2011, p. 199). Kristen Williams (2011) mentions craftivism in relation to four political movements: third-wave feminism, anti-capitalism and anti-sweatshop organizing, antiwar politics and environmentalism. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the intersection of feminism and craftivism.

Elena Solomon (2013) writes that craftivism is often used in one of two ways: “either posted or worn in public for general viewing, outside the specific context that the work comments on or as a tool within a protest” (Solomon 2011, p. 16). A well highlighted contemporary example of feminist craftivism as a tool of protest is the pussyhat: a pink, knitted hat used during the Women’s March in Washington in January 2017, and other marches that followed (Earnest & Amoroso Leslie 2017; Janigo et al. 2017; Pussyhat Project n.d.). The purpose of the Pussyhat Project was to create a symbol that would unify the collective present at the march, as well as give those people not able to participate in the marches a way to contribute, by inviting them to make pussyhats that could be distributed on site (Pussyhat Project 2018). The Pussyhat Project can therefore be understood in the larger context of craftivism as it uses crafting techniques such as knitting, crocheting or sewing to make the pussyhat, which then in turn is used as a political statement. The project and statement have received some critique though, which I want to mention next.

Shannon Black (2017) writes that though the Pussyhat Project has been understood to make achievements, there are also parts of the project that must be criticized in terms of its limitations in relation to gender, race, class and space. This is indeed what the criticism has touched upon. One part of the criticism is based on the inclusion of the word ‘pussy’, indicating that the symbol is “a literal symbol of female anatomy” (Pussyhat Project 2018), excluding trans- and non-binary people. Moreover, if the pink color of the hat is interpreted as a symbol for skin color, then it also excludes people of color (see, for example, Stockman 2017; Shamus 2018; Washington-Harmon 2018). One of the founders of the project writes on their website that they are listening to the criticism and that their original intention was to use the word ‘pussy’ in an attempt to reclaim it and the same applies to the color pink, which is closely intertwined with the feminine ideal (Pussyhat Project 2018). However, this does not touch upon the further critique which argues that the pussyhat project has a liberal and class privileged aspect to it which becomes clear in the “intentionally ‘unthreatening’” message, a result of the pussyhat being “directed at a relatively privileged sector of society” (Black 2017, p. 703). To sum up, the criticism addresses not only the project being exclusionary but also it having a relatively unpolitical potential. There are other, more historical and contemporary, examples of what we might today call feminist craftivism.

Both Shannon Black (2017) and Roszika Parker (2010) mention the suffragettes, who used needlework in their fights for the right to vote. Stephanie McCarter (2017) adds that the suffragettes’ use of embroidered handkerchiefs to record their names and the force-feeding they had to endure in prison. Kyra Clarke (2017) writes about the “Casting Off My Womb”

performance art piece, in which the artist Casey Jenkins knits a long passage in white wool from her vagina for 28 days, marking a full menstrual circle. Another example is the ‘Stitch’n Bitch’ groups, originally started in the US context (Minahan & Wolfram Cox 2007; Kelly 2014). These groups do not all necessarily identify as feminist (Kelly 2014), but those that do can be understood as part of the feminist craftivist movement. Since the members (who are often women) usually meet up in so-called ‘third places’, places separate from both home and work, the Stitch’n Bitch groups may be understood as a protest movement who uses crafts “as a subversive vehicle for comment on gender as well as on the increasing commodification of society and technology” (Minahan & Wolfram Cox 2007, p. 11). Like other forms of feminist craftivism, the Stitch’nBitch phenomenon challenges the private/public binary by bringing the crafts associated with the private out to the public so-called third spaces (Bratich & Brush 2011).

Another way in which craftivism has the potential to challenge binaries is illustrated by Kirsty Robertson (2011) who writes the following about an anti-nuclear protest in England in the 1980s:

the very feminine qualities that were used to dismiss textiles as art forms were ironically reversed to demonstrate the peaceful nature of the protests versus the brutality of (masculine) police oppression and the wider politics that had brought the threat of nuclear war (Robertson 2011, p. 185).

It is not only as a symbol of peace that textile crafts can be understood as craftivism but also, as already mentioned, through bringing crafts that are traditionally connected to the private sphere out to the public as well as through using crafts that are traditionally connected to femininity and leisure to convey political messages. The underestimated political potential of crafts is exactly what is its strength because this leads to “its ability to take viewers completely off guard” (Chansky 2010, p. 682). Jack Bratich & Heidi Brush (2011) call this a “reconfiguration of political activism” (Bratich & Brush 2011, p. 254). By challenging binaries, craftivism also challenges what constitutes activism, making its ability to surprise its strength.

2.3. The Feminist Subject

Part of the aim of this thesis is to examine what kind of feminism is expressed through crafts, as well as whom this kind of feminism represents. One way of answering this question is by looking at the so-called ‘feminist subject’, that is, whom one considers as the main focus of

feminism. To understand this debate I will bring forth three different perspectives on the matter which are based on feminist standpoint theory, intersectionality theory, and poststructuralism.

According to Nina Lykke (2010), feminist standpoint theory sees women's or feminist standpoints as "prerequisites for a critical transgressive conceptualization of society that can be used as a basis for a new, socially just societal order without oppression or inequality" (Lykke 2010, p. 206). This means that from the perspective of feminist standpoint theory, women and feminists are positioned in the society in a way that leads them to having special insights and knowledge about contemporary society, particularly when it comes to experiences of gender and gender oppression. For this reason, women's and feminists' accounts of the world must be valued and put at the center of attention when analyzing gender issues. I would therefore assert that according to feminist standpoint perspective, the subject of feminism is the woman, as she has the particular experience of gender oppression that is of value when understanding contemporary society. Feminist standpoint theory could, therefore, explain the kind of 'gynocentric feminism' that Lena Gemzöe (2014) writes about and describes as a feminism which puts women at the center. Using feminist standpoint theory as a way of understanding this then means focusing on the particular experiences of women and how these can give important insights into the current structures of society.

Different intersectionality theorists have questioned and problematized the way in which feminism portrays the group 'women' as a heterogeneous group with no intra-group differences. Authors like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984), Gloria Anzaldúa (1981) and Audre Lorde (1981/2007) have shown how this group instead has different experiences and visions due to their position with regard to, for example, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and dis/ability. From this perspective it is not necessarily problematic that feminism has women as its subject but rather the way in which this has often implicitly meant white, middle-class, able-bodied, Western, heterosexual women, women who in every other way besides their sex/gender are privileged. For this reason, I would maintain that a possible feminist 'subject' seen from this point of view could still be women as long as this group's heterogeneity is considered. At the same time, the debate around who counts as an intersectional subject can complicate the question further. The question is "whether intersectionality is a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity" (Nash 2008, p. 9), that is, are all subject positions intersectional or just those that consist of multiple marginalizations? There is no definitive answer to this question, though Jennifer Nash (2008) states that most intersectional scholarship has focused on those subjects that are multiply marginalized. For Naomi Zack (2005) 'women' become intersectional subjects because of the

possibility that their position as a woman, a marginalized position, intersects with other marginalized positions. In that way, ‘women’ can be an intersectional, feminist subject.

The third, and last, perspective I want to present when it comes to the question of the feminist subject is poststructuralism, which criticizes and problematizes how women have become the feminist subject. A strong advocate for this perspective is Judith Butler (1997; 2007) who argues that centering feminism around women reinforces the gender binary by viewing ‘woman’ as a stable category. This poststructuralist perspective is skeptical in general of fixed categories such as that of ‘women’ and focuses on finding differences rather than similarities within and between groups. Another argument for not having ‘women’ as the subject of feminism is thus that it erases the intra-group differences among women by indicating that there is one single oppression and that this is faced by the universal group of women alone. Butler (1997; 2007) as well as other poststructuralists would, therefore, distance themselves from a feminism of the kind that Gemzöe (2014) describes as ‘gynocentric feminism’ as it fails to consider both how the position of ‘women’ is a construct as well as how ‘women’ is not a homogenous group. Therefore, feminism must actively situate the category ‘women’ when used, so that they “reflect consciously on the exclusions, reductionisms, normativities, power differentials and so on” (Lykke 2010, p. 33) that results from this category being used.

Understanding the question of whether there should be a feminist subject, and if so, whom it includes, from these three perspectives gives us three different views. Feminist standpoint theory advocates the female standpoint, that is to say, that women should be the feminist subject. Intersectionality theory complicates this view by pointing out that there is no such thing as a singular female subject and that one must take into consideration the way in which ‘women’ are positioned in regard to, for example, race, class, nationality, sexuality, and age. This perspective does not necessarily exclude the possibility of a feminist subject but rather contests the way this subject has come to exclude marginalized women. Thinking intersectionality, the feminist subject must include all women regardless of their position with regard to other power structures. The last perspective that I presented is based on poststructuralism which problematizes that there is a feminist subject at all, and in particular that it has come to be ‘women’ as this reinforces ‘woman’ as a stable category which in turn also reinforces the gender binary. Depending on one’s perspective, it is thereby not only a question of who should be the feminist subject, but also, if there should be a feminist subject at all.

3. Method and Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

I have collected the data for this thesis in two steps. As the first step, I attended two events that connected to the topic of feminist crafts; a feminist market and a so-called tagging event. Both are described more in-depth in the analytical chapter. The second step of the data collection was carried out through interviews with some of the participants in these two events. As a result, I have field-notes from two different events and recorded material from six interviews. One of the interviews was done with two people at once though, so I have in total interviewed seven people, who are all described further in the analytical chapter as well. Five of these interviews were done in person and one was done over Skype due to scheduling issues. All interviews lasted for about 20-25 minutes, with the exception of the interview I did with Frida and Maria which lasted for about 45 minutes. In conclusion, my data relies heavily on the transcripts from these interviews, but also on the field notes I made when I attended the market and the tagging event.

3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

I chose to carry out semi-structured interviews, meaning that I had some structure in the form of an interview guide (which can be found in Appendix III and IV), but I also had some flexibility that allowed me to add new questions along the way or in specific interviews, to mix up the order of the questions according to the flow of the conversation and to ask follow-up questions (Denscombe 2007; May 2011; Bryman 2016). I enjoyed the combination of structure and flexibility as it made sure that I was covering the most important questions while at the same time allowing me to adjust the questions in relation to whom I interviewed, which was especially important in this case as I interviewed people from two different events, meaning that I had to adjust my questions depending on the event they had attended. For example, the women who were exhibitors at the market got questions about the market in general, but also questions related to what they had sold at the market. The women from the tagging event, on the other hand, got questions about this specific tagging event, but also about their previous experiences of doing similar craftivist actions. This flexibility would not have been possible had I instead done structured interviews, where the already set questions should stay the same throughout the process of data collection, in order to compare the answers of different interviewees (Bryman 2016). In the same way, I could not have maintained the level of structure

had I instead used unstructured interviews. For these reasons, semi-structured interviews were a good choice of method for this thesis.

Looking more critically at interviews as a tool for data collection, Ann Oakley (1981; 2016) argues that ‘conventional’ ways of interviewing are based on a “predominantly masculine model” (Oakley 1981, p. 31). She further argues that conventional interviews are based on a pseudo-conversation, meaning that the conversation is taking place only for the researcher to extract data, but to make sure that the interviewee wants to participate it must still seem like a conversation, making it a pseudo-conversation. This means that even though the information is going in one direction only, from the informant to the researcher, the researcher still needs to act kindly and sympathetically to make it seem more conversation-like. Oakley argues that the best interviews happen when the personal identity of the interviewer is also invested in the interview. That is, when the interviewer does not distance themselves as a way of avoiding ‘bias’. Thus, a way for me to also invest in the interview was by answering the questions that the participants asked me, something that Oakley encourages. All of the interviewees were interested in hearing about my connection to this topic and therefore asked if I was a crafter myself and what kinds of things I usually craft. In one interview, in particular, I also got questions from the interviewee asking me how I felt about the subject we were talking about. I decided to answer these questions, as they were an opportunity to make the information flow in more in one direction and to make sure that the interviews were not for my gain alone, but also an opportunity for the participants to ask for my opinions and thoughts in relation to the topic. For the most part of the interviews though, it was me asking the questions and the participants answering.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Nina Lykke (2010) describes ethics as “how to conduct research in ethically sustainable and morally responsible ways” (Lykke 2010, p. 144). For the Swedish Research Council⁷, this comes down to a matter of evaluating society’s need for new relevant research and knowledge against the individual’s right to not have their private life intruded upon as well as their right to not suffer from harm as a result of research (Vetenskapsrådet 2002; 2017). To make sure that the individual’s rights are well considered, they suggest some guidelines. In summary, these state that participation should be voluntary with the possibility to withdraw from, that participants should be informed beforehand about the study, that any collected data should be

⁷ In Swedish: Vetenskapsrådet

confidential and that the collected data should be used for research interests only. To meet these requirements, I wrote a letter of information (which can be found in Appendix I and II) that I handed out to the participants when I asked them to participate in the study. I also read through the letter of information again before starting the interview. Finally, I encouraged them to contact me at any point if they had any further questions.

Part of the requirement of confidentiality is that of complete anonymization of the participants. That is, anonymization to the degree that a participant cannot be identified at all. For this thesis, I have decided not to offer this degree of anonymization to the participants for two reasons. First of all, I would suggest that the ‘circle’ of people involved in both feminism and crafts is rather small and that only by describing, for example, what kind of crafts a person is involved in will, if not reveal their identity, at least give a good idea of who the person is. I could not have included the information necessary for this thesis while at the same time giving the participants full anonymization. Second of all, I suggest that the information that I am sharing in this thesis, and that the participants have shared with me, is not of such a sensitive nature that the participants need full anonymization. For these reasons, I did not offer the participants full anonymization, but instead the opportunity to have their names anonymized. All of the participants gave their consent to use their real names.

David Silverman (2010) suggests another guideline that highlights the importance of the researcher’s impartiality and independence. This means that any conflicts of interest or partialities on behalf of the researcher should be made clear. Caroline Ramazanoğlu and Janet Holland (2002) state that “even the most committed feminist researcher is in the game of research out of self-interest” (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, p. 157), however that does not mean that this self-interest is in clear conflict with the outcome of the study. An obvious starting point for reflecting about my self-interests in writing this thesis is that this is the final project of my studies, meaning that completing this thesis is my way of getting my master’s degree. In the letter of information that I handed out to all potential participants, it was clearly stated that the interviews would be conducted with the purpose of contributing to this master’s thesis. The participants’ decisions to participate in the study was thus taken with this consideration in mind.

Another self-interest of mine in this study is based on how it very clearly combines two facets of my identities, those of a feminist and a crafter. In contrast to the participants in this study, however, I do not combine them. That is, my interest in crafts is not connected to my feminist identity and it is not part of how I, personally, do feminism, as of right now at least. This means that I am studying a topic that I can, at least to some degree, relate to. Part of my self-interest is therefore to gain further understandings about a community that I have a lot in

common with (identifying as a feminist and being interested in crafts), but that I am still not fully part of. This does not mean, however, that my self-interest necessarily must have a negative impact on my study. I would rather claim that the fact that I share similarities with the participants gives me an advantage, as I already have knowledge about certain kinds of crafts, for example. Furthermore, I would seriously question if there exists an ‘objective’ position from which one can look at a phenomenon. I would therefore like to introduce Donna Haraway’s (1988) thoughts about situated knowledge.

Donna Haraway (1988) underlines with her concept of situated knowledges that there is always a subjective dimension to research. The researcher can never occupy the position of an objective outsider, watching the world from above. Haraway calls this illusion ‘the god-trick’ and suggests that we must depart from our own position and account for our ‘site’ and ‘sight’. With site, Haraway refers to our particular situatedness in regard to for example time, space and power structures. Sight, on the other hand, refers to the research technologies used. This means that the researcher must account for the particular position of which they speak, as well as for the used research technologies that help the researcher see in a specific way.

Accounting for my own ‘site’, that is, my own particular situatedness, I must first mention what I have mentioned earlier too – my feminist identity and my interest in crafts. These are the reason why I got interested in the topic in the first place and they have also helped me connect with the women I interviewed because the fact that we are all interested in the same topic and causes created a sense of solidarity. I also suggest that my situatedness within contemporary societal structures has contributed to my interest in this thesis topic as the majority of the visitors at the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event were white, middle-class women like myself. Another aspect that I also want to point out is how my gaining access to interviewing these women, to some extent at least, depended on me being a woman too. For the most part, this was not explicit, except in one of the interviews in which agreeing to participate in the interview was given as an example of practicing feminism through helping other people. Moreover, me gaining access and being met with openness at the #MeToo tagging event also relied heavily on me being a woman too as the #MeToo movement, in Sweden at least, has come to be about women as victims and men as perpetrators. Thus, I was interpreted as belonging to this group that has experiences of incidents like those told in the wake of the #MeToo movement and was therefore invited to participate without any complications.

When it comes to my ‘sight’ (Haraway 1988), I have already accounted for my research technologies. I want to shortly reflect on their impact on the study though. To me, the choice to do interviews for this study seemed like the ‘obvious’ choice quite early on, as my interest lied

in hearing the stories and reasonings of feminists involved in crafting in different ways. Doing interviews allowed me to access these stories first hand. However, another possible route could have been to look at online spaces and how the discourse around feminist crafting looks like there. For me to gain access to these stories through online data, however, it would assume that these stories are already available there; that feminist crafters have shared these stories already in a way that I could have accessed them. My decision to not include online spaces in this thesis was thus a result of wanting to hear these stories first hand and wanting to be able to ask questions myself. Moreover, focusing on offline spaces also allowed me to attend the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event, which in turn also produced data through my own reflections. For future studies though I think that looking at feminist crafting in online spaces is an aspect worth exploring too, but in this thesis, I made the choice to focus on offline spaces. The separation of these two spaces is not as neat as it might seem here though, as all of the women I interviewed for this study are active in online spaces as well, although to different extents. However, as I met them at ‘offline’ events and also mainly spoke about these with them, the online aspect did not become a significant part of the research. Once again, this is something to explore in future research.

3.4. Methodology and Processing the Data

Methodology is, according to Nina Lykke (2010) “*rules, principles and procedures* for the production of knowledge” (Lykke 2010, p. 144, italics in original). Ontology and epistemology are both closely connected to methodology, that is, questions of whether there is an objective reality ‘out there’ and what constitutes ‘real’ knowledge and how it can be obtained (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002). Together, methodology, ontology and epistemology impact the way an analysis is done, as they influence both the way in which knowledge should be produced as well as the way in which it can be interpreted and assigned significance. I will therefore describe my ontological and epistemological as well as methodological stance in this thesis before moving on to describing my process of coding the material and analyzing it.

Feminist standpoint theory departs from the standpoints of women as it is believed that this is the best way of gaining knowledge of gender and of gender relations (Harding 1986; 1991). These experiences and this knowledge are in no way true for all women, that is, this knowledge is not universal (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002). Instead, this knowledge is situated (Haraway 1988). However, that does not mean that feminist standpoint theory epistemologically values knowledge as relative. On the contrary, feminist standpoint theory still

attempts to make claims about objectivity. Sandra Harding (1991) uses the term ‘strong objectivity’ to show how she believes that feminist standpoint theory can still claim objectivity in relation to the knowledge produced. This is done by not only reflecting on the position of the research participants but also by reflecting on the position of the researcher themselves (Lykke 2010).

Instead of departing from the standpoint of women, this thesis departs from the standpoint of feminist crafters, or people within the community of feminist crafts. I argue that they have access to and possess knowledge that is crucial to understand how crafts and feminism (possibly) intersect. I therefore agree with feminist standpoint theory that certain standpoints are more important than others when examining a phenomenon. Feminist standpoint theory helps me make the claim that the knowledge produced by the women I interviewed as well as the knowledge presented in this thesis is ‘true’ in the sense that it is true both from the interviewees as well as my own standpoint which I have accounted for earlier.

Because I join the tradition of feminist standpoint theory, my analysis builds on the accounts on the interviewees as well as my field notes from the two events: the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event. I find the accounts of the women I interviewed to be particularly important as due to their particular position, they can contribute with valuable knowledge. Because of the way in which the feminist crafting community is composed, these standpoints are very homogenous. Because the knowledge that this thesis produces is based on accounts from similar standpoints, it is only objectively true in relation to these positions. Moreover, it is also only true if my own position is considered. This does not mean that this thesis is invalid in any way, just that this knowledge is situated in relation to me and the participant’s standpoints. As I have also presented earlier, Donna Haraway (1988) suggests that knowledge can be objective only if the research technologies are accounted for. I have already described my way of collecting data and would therefore now like to move on to describe how I processed it.

As the first step of most qualitative analyses is to code the material and consequently, this is how I started processing both my recorded material from the interviews as well as the field-notes from the two events. Following how Alan Bryman (2016) suggests one should code the material, I first read through all the transcribed recorded material and the field notes and made some general notes about the material at the end. As a second step, I read through the material again and noted codes in the margins and highlighted quotes and keywords that seemed to be significant. After this, I reviewed my notes and highlighted sections in the material to see if I had used different terms to describe the same phenomenon, but also to start thinking about

connections between different codes. As the last step, I considered theoretical ideas in connection with my material and codes and went back to the material to see if these, in fact, did connect. This process resulted in a few codes, that had to be re-worked into themes in the next step.

I chose to use what is called a thematic analysis, which uses the codes from the coding process and further works with them in order to develop categories, also referred to as themes. Alan Bryman (2016) states that “for some writers a theme is more or less the same as a code, whereas for others it transcends any one code and is built up out of groups of codes” (Bryman 2016, p. 584). By Gery Ryan and Russel Bernard’s (2003) suggestion, I particularly looked for repetitions, metaphors and analogies, similarities and differences, missing data as well as theory-related material in my development of codes into themes. Consequently, a theme in the frame of this thesis means that a pattern of some sort has been identified in the material and that this theme builds on this pattern. A pattern, or theme, does not have to be reoccurring in all of the interviews, in fact, a discrepancy between participants can in itself be more interesting than conformity. Similarly, the lack of a pattern in the sense of an expected theme of conformity may in itself constitute an interesting theme. A theme can therefore be a pattern of conformity, of discrepancy or of a lack of something expected. In the end, my process of coding and finding themes resulted in the four themes I present in the analysis, regarding the nature of feminism, its connection to crafts, the identity of feminist crafters and the connection between feminist crafts and activism.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. The Feminist Market

One of the events I attended as part of this thesis was a feminist market which took place in Stockholm in the spring of 2018. This market, which in Swedish was called ‘feministisk marknad’ (‘feminist market’) was the second market organized by the same organizers and had on this occasion about fifty exhibitors selling their products. It was mainly advertised online, both on the market’s own pages on Facebook and Instagram as well as by the exhibitors. Feministisk marknad states that “we back female design and entrepreneurship in Stockholm” (Feministisk marknad, n.d.), which in combination with the announcement of the exhibitors is what made me interested in the event. It seemed to me like this market in a broader sense highlighted the same intersections that I am interested in, which is why I decided to attend the market.

Looking closer at how the intersection of feminism and crafts becomes visible at the market, the name ‘feminist market’ seems to be the obvious starting point. As I have mentioned earlier, it is not my intention to make claims about whether or not the practice of crafts in general or the practices of the participants and the events I attended are specifically feminist or not. With that said, a question that I started thinking about quite early on after having decided to attend the market was feminist *how*. Once again, not as a way of calling into question whether the event was feminist or not, but rather in what way the participant, exhibitors and organizers understood it to be feminist. Going back to the description of the feminist market, it seems like “backing women” is somehow central to this. I will come back to the understandings of feminism later in this chapter, looking more closely at how the participants understand feminism in general but also more specifically in relation to crafts.

Crafts were represented in many different ways at the market. Just to name a few examples, some of the things that were sold at the market were posters, jewelry, handmade clothes for both adults and children, handmade leather products such as bags, ceramic products such as pots with breasts and the woman symbol, tote bags and feminist panties. Because of the broad range of products being sold at the market I believe that not all of the exhibitors identify with being crafters but instead identify as designers or artists. In fact, some of the participants in this study even rejected the crafter identity to some extent. At the same time, many of the products that were for sale at the market can be understood as crafts following my definition. Thus, this event visualizes the intersection of crafts and feminism as it advertises itself as a feminist market where exhibitors can sell their handicrafts.

One of the things that intrigued me about the market was its obvious connection to consumerism. I am specifically thinking about how a ‘feminist market’ in itself becomes contradictory in relation to anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist feminisms. While it is not the main focus of this thesis, it is curious to note that this issue was not brought up by any of the women I interviewed. It could be that they simply did not reflect upon it during the interview as I did not specifically ask about it, or it can indicate that for these women, anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist issues are not part of what they regard as feminism. In any case, I suggest that the intertwinement between feminist crafts and consumerism is an aspect to explore in future research as it has the potential of contributing further to the understandings of feminist crafts as a phenomenon.

4.2. The #MeToo Tagging Event

The other event I attended was a tagging event with the theme of #MeToo. A so-called tagging event can also be described in terms such as yarn bombing (Moore & Prain 2009; Williams 2011; Kelly 2014), guerilla art (Williams 2011) or knit graffiti (Kelly 2014). The participants in a tagging event bring their own ‘tags’, which can range from knitted sweaters or scarves made to cover public statues (Williams 2011) to bigger projects such as knitted or crocheted pieces that cover, for example, benches or lampposts (Corbett & Housley 2011; Kelly 2014). The purpose of making these tags and placing them in public places is “open to interpretation by those participating. For some, it may be a comment on the contemporary cultural and political climate but for others, it may be just about aesthetics [sic]” (Kelly 2014, p. 134). Sarah Corbett and Sarah Housley (2011) and Sarah Corbett (2013) also write about ‘mini protest banners’ which are cross-stitched pieces with a message connected to a particular issue that encourages the viewer to reflect and think about the topic.

In this particular case, the event was initiated by one of the participants who wanted to create something in relation to the topic of #MeToo and wanted company and support in this process. Participants were encouraged to create something in relation to the topic of #MeToo and to join the event to put their tags in a previously agreed upon space. Other than myself and the woman who had initiated the tagging event, about ten other women showed up. The tags that were put up ranged from smaller pieces to bigger pieces that were either knitted, crocheted, cross-stitched or embroidered. My tag was inspired by mini protest banners (Corbett and Housley 2011; Corbett’s 2013) and said: “in solidarity with #metoo”⁸. I chose this message as

⁸ A picture of the poster can be found in appendix V

I knew that I would share my tag in this thesis and therefore did not want to make it too personal. I was not the only participant that had made a tag that did not directly relate to personal experiences. For example, one tag said “#MeToo and then what?”⁹, encouraging further reflection and political action. Many of the tags made by the other participants, though, were deeply personal as they told their stories of experiencing sexual abuse and assault.

The tags remained in their place for about two months after the event, then one of the participants saw that someone had taken the tags down and put them on top of a trashcan. At the time of writing this thesis, the plan is for those who can to meet up again to put the tags up somewhere else.

4.3. The Participants

The participants of this study are all involved in the feminist crafts community, though in varying ways. All the participants self-identified as women and feminists and their age ranged from 28 to 43 years. To give an idea of which of the women attended the feminist market and which attended the #MeToo tagging event, as well as to give an idea of their relation to crafts and the crafter identity, I will introduce them one by one:

Caroline

Caroline runs a business where she crafts silver jewelry which she names after important women in her surroundings. Some of the jewelry is sold together with a short, empowering and descriptive text with the purpose of empowering its owner and being inspirational in the way that these women have been for Caroline. At the moment, her business is a project on the side of her studies, but with the hope of it becoming a bigger part of her living in the future. Caroline participated at the feminist market as an exhibitor.

Nathalie

Nathalie was also an exhibitor at the market, where she sold her jewelry. She runs her business as a full-time job and is probably most famous for her jewelry that has the shape of the feminist symbol/Venus symbol/copper symbol. She has, however, redesigned this symbol by rearranging the lower bar of the cross so that it more resembles the proportions of a human body with a head and two arms. To her, this redesigned symbol represents the feminist.

⁹ In Swedish: '#MeToo och sen då?'

Gina

Gina is a graphic designer who creates patterns inspired by women's history. At the feminist market, where she participated as an exhibitor, she sold these patterns in the form of toilet bags and gym sacks. At the moment, she is developing her products as part of a project course but is hoping to be able to make it a business of hers in the future. Gina was one of the women that did not fully identify with the label of being a 'crafter' but instead identifies as a 'designer' as she has a background in graphic design. She does recognize having sewn her products for the market as a craft, however, so she still somehow relates to the identity of the crafter.

Jennifer

Jennifer runs a website where she promotes creative women through articles that describe their thoughts about, for example, being women in their line of business. At the moment, this is only a side-business and as her main source of income, Jennifer works as a digital marketer. At the feminist market, where she participated as an exhibitor, she was selling printed posters that were created by some of the people she had previously interviewed as well as tote bags with prints that she herself had designed. Jennifer did not explicitly distance herself from the term crafter, though she described herself as a graphic designer and more often talked in terms of having designed something rather than having crafted or created something.

Frida

Frida is a freelancer that works with questions of craftivism and crafts by, for example, giving lectures on the topic. She has also written a book about craftivism and works together with Maria in organizing events that in different ways relates to craftivism. The interview with her was, therefore, done together with Maria. She very explicitly stated that she views herself as a theorist rather than a practitioner and thus, she joined the #MeToo tagging event as part of her profession rather than as a craftivist. She crafts to some extent though, but more as a leisure activity and did therefore not really identify as a crafter in that sense.

Maria

Maria also participated in the #MeToo tagging event, though in contrast to Frida, she was there as an active participant meaning that she contributed with a tag she had created. Beside her day-time job as an administrative officer, she works together with Frida to organize events related to craftivism which she also hopes will become a bigger part of her life in the future. As a

crafters, she creates handicrafts with the purpose of doing craftivist actions as well as with more practical and leisurely purposes.

Liv

Liv participated in the #MeToo tagging event and like Maria, she was an active participant as she brought her own tag. She mainly knits and has previous experience of tagging, both on her own and together with other people. Not all of her crafting is done in relation to craftivism as she also crafts what she calls ‘functional’ pieces like socks and scarves. For Liv, crafts can also function as a social activity as she often joins ‘stickcafé’ (knitting cafés) where people meet to knit together.

In conclusion, the women I interviewed all have a connection to crafts, but this connection takes on different forms. Most of the women are crafters themselves, but not all. Moreover, the type of craft they engage with differs too. I will engage in a longer and deeper reflection and critical discussion of my selection of interviewees as well as the participants at these two events as part of a later subsection in this chapter but would like to highlight now already the way in which my selection of participants was very homogenous and how this selection also reflected my own situatedness.

Like myself, the participants consisted of a group of white Swedish women though they were all older than me. The lack of heterogeneity among the participants in this thesis is symptomatic of the feminist crafting community in the Swedish context at large being (mainly) inhabited by white middle-class women. In that sense, the participants in this thesis reflected the general crowd of participants and visitors in the two events very well. At the same time, it makes me wonder why the events I attended were so homogenous. For now though, I would like to conclude by stating that the homogeneity among my selection of participants has implications for this thesis as it means that the perspectives of those with experiences of marginalization and oppression due to, for example, ethnicity, race or class are not represented and these perspectives could have contributed with new insights into the thesis topic: crafts and feminism. However, in order to be able to include other perspectives I would have had to either find events like the feminist market in which, for example, women of color were better represented among the exhibitors (if such spaces even exist) or I would have had to expand the scope of my thesis, including the market visitors as possible interviewees.

4.4. What is Feminism?

In this section, I will account for and discuss how the women I interviewed resonated around what feminism 'is' as well as how they practice feminism outside of crafts. I will also discuss the position of being a woman, a topic that occurred frequently in the interviews. I will analyze this both with the help of the previous research I have presented earlier as well as of the different perspectives on the question of whether there is a feminist subject and who that is, as presented in the theoretical framework.

One question that I asked all the women I interviewed was what feminism meant to them, that is, how they understand what feminism 'is'. Several of the women mentioned phrases like 'equal rights', 'equal opportunities' and 'everyone's equal worth'. When I asked Jennifer about what feminism means to her, her first immediate response was exactly the phrase "well that is the equal worth of everyone". When I later asked her if feminism is something that manifests in her life outside of her project where she promotes female creators and crafters, she answered that:

yes, well I think about it like in the everyday how you talk about both men and women, assumptions and, and someone like makes a rather unpleasant comment or makes a bad joke then I am not the one laughing just to contribute to a nice mood but rather maybe say like well how did you think now or well, and then it is, it is also about, about like backing other women, in work life (Jennifer)

One thing that this quote highlights, which was also common in the other interviews, is that it is through everyday acts such as speaking up that these women practice feminism outside of crafts. Caroline said that "if a conversation is started among well people I hang out with then I still join the discussion" as an answer to the same question, agreeing with Jennifer in seeing speaking up as a way of doing feminism. Gina also answered this question by saying that in her life, feminism also manifests in another way which is:

but just to help each other, (...) in some way and with one's friend and network and like being there for each other (...) well, so small things (Gina)

The last part ("so small things") sums up everyone's answer in a way because this question was always answered by giving examples of everyday acts. For example, no one answered that they were politically engaged, that they had other bigger projects or attended demonstrations. This

does not mean that one way of doing feminism is by definition better than the other, but it shows that that for the women I interviewed, it was through everyday acts that they practiced feminism.

Another recurring theme in the interviews was the way in which the participants were talking about women, which I argue is because they regard women as the feminist subject. So, for example, when I asked Caroline about what feminism means to her, she said that:

for me it is not ___ that it is women against men or like that there should be two camps but that it well, it should be equal and, but as it is right now then we women need to get some help along the way (Caroline)

In this quote, Caroline recognizes the end goal for her, which is gender equality, but at the same time states that as of right now women are subordinate and that ‘we’ (implying that both she and I belong to this group) need help in reaching equality. In that way, it is the position and reality of women that becomes central and it is therefore them we should focus on when it comes to the struggle for gender equality. This is in no way an uncommon opinion. Lena Gemzöe (2014) calls it gynocentrism, meaning that the project of feminism departs from the position of the woman. Judith Butler (1997; 2007), as well as other poststructuralists, strongly critique this kind of feminism by saying that a feminism that departs from the universal category ‘woman’ fixates the idea of a universal patriarchy and a universal oppression. It fails to see the way in which being a ‘woman’ can still mean having different experiences, goals and utopias and it fails to see how this also reinforces not only the gender binary but also the construction of the category woman. A poststructuralist perspective would, therefore, maintain that speaking about women in the way that the participants did reinforces the very same structures that they wish to eliminate. Thus, speaking about ‘women’ in this way is not encouraged by a poststructuralist way of looking at it. Another quote that becomes interesting in this respect is the following one by Maria, who said that:

there are still things that the feminist movement must get better at too, to change and become more open to well the rights of various women (Maria)

Viewing what Maria said from a poststructuralist perspective it would suggest that she considers the category of ‘women’ to be heterogeneous. On the other hand, a poststructuralist would still oppose to the way in which she talks about women in the first place as she does not

contextualize it which results in a reinforcement of ‘women’ as a stable category and in turn, a reinforcement of the gender binary. This does not change the fact that ‘women’ was a reoccurring word and topic in the interviews though, but rather tells us that the participants in this study understand the question of the feminist subject differently than poststructuralists feminists do.

Another way of understanding how the women I interviewed centered feminism by around women is by looking at it from a feminist standpoint theory perspective, which argues that women have a particularly important knowledge about contemporary society and gender structures because of their particular standpoint (Harding 1986; Harding 1991; Lykke 2010). This means that for feminism, the standpoint of women is key to both analyzing society and reconfiguring it. As a result, women must necessarily be the subject of feminism. In the interviews, it seemed clear to me that the women agreed that it is women that are (most) disadvantaged by current gender structures as shown, for example, when Caroline said that “as it is right now then we women need to get some help along the way”. Using feminist standpoint theory, I interpret the centering of women in feminism as an expression of the opinion that it is the experiences and knowledge of women that should guide feminism both in its analyses of society as well as in its goals and visions. This would explain why ‘women’ was a reoccurring word in these interviews. I am wondering though which women’s experiences and lives are included when ‘women’ as the feminist subject are being talked about considering that ‘women’ is not a homogenous group at all. Is it all women or is it women with particular experiences of being white and middle-class?

In conclusion, the women I interviewed spoke a lot about ‘women’ when describing what feminism meant to them, which I have argued means that they see women as the feminist subject. That is, that feminism should depart from women’s experiences and needs. This kind of feminism that they described, which they mainly expressed through everyday acts such as speaking up, influenced their reasoning about possible linkages between crafts and feminism. Following this definition of feminism, feminist crafts must somehow improve the situation for women, or at least center around women, for it to align with the kind of feminism that the participants described.

4.5. When is Crafting Feminist?

As both the topic of this thesis as well as my main research question is about the intersection of crafts and feminism, I asked the women I interviewed if they thought that there were any

connections between feminism and crafts as well as if they felt that they could express feminism through their crafting. In this section, I will discuss their answers to these questions and try to understand it in relation to both their view on feminism as I have already presented as well as the previous research on crafts and feminism that I have presented in a previous chapter.

In several of the interviews, I specifically asked the women I interviewed if they could see a general connection between crafts and feminism. In my interview with Liv, I was surprised when I heard the answer to this question because she, in contrast to the other women, answered no. Specifically, she said:

Well I would say that, that I cannot see it, if you look at it historically then I cannot see that there is a, a, a general connection between what is, what for me is feminism with equal treatment and that we should have the same rights and assets, it has however been a way for, especially for women for example to, to get a profession, because it has been craft skills that you have had or that you have been able to create things, that you have been able to create your own things and wear because you have had the knowledge for example and you have perhaps not had the access to money or to, to other possibilities so in that way it, it has surely been possible to be so but not in itself (Liv)

Like the other women I interviewed, Liv had an understanding of feminism that highlighted the equal worth and rights of everyone as a goal, and that centered around feminism. It is this way of understanding feminism that she refers to when she says that she cannot see a general connection between crafts and what she understands feminism as. In more specific cases and contexts, however, this connection is more apparent for her which became clear when I asked her if crafts were a way of expressing feminism for her. She answered:

Yes, sometimes I think so, like, like in the case of this tagging that is about showing how women are treated and more often, at least if you look at the statistics that we have and how we see historically, have been treated badly because of their sex and then based on having less opportunities to speak up and when you have done so, as in the case of for example, this range of, of different kind of sexual harassments or even worse stuff, ehm, that you have been in a disadvantaged position then I absolutely think it can be in this case (Liv)

Two aspects of understanding when crafting is feminist are, according to Maura Kelly (2014) and Jessica Bain (2016), intention and context, meaning that crafting is feminist when there is a feminist intention behind the crafting or when it takes place in a context which makes the

crafting subversive. Liv refers to the #MeToo tagging event as an instance when crafts, from her point of view, became feminist as the intention behind the event was to make the sexual harassment and assault that women experience visible. Kelly (2014) states that it is up to the participants of an event such as the tagging event to interpret the purpose of it, meaning that at the #MeToo tagging event it was up to each and every one of the participants to have their own interpretation of the purpose of the event. In this case, Liv interpreted the tagging event as feminist and thereby also recognized an instance when she saw that crafts and feminism intersected. For Liv, crafts can be feminist when they are explicitly used to convey a feminist message such as in the case of the #MeToo tagging event.

Maria and Frida, who also attended the #MeToo tagging event, both thought that the connection between the event and feminism was clear. They also thought that feminism and crafts were connected more generally too. Frida, whose perspective and 'site' (Haraway 1988) differs from Maria's and Liv's in the sense that she actively distances herself from the position of a practitioner and instead defines herself as a theorist, did not speak about her own experiences as a crafter when I asked her about a general connection between crafts and feminism. Instead, she spoke from her position as someone who observes the phenomenon of craftivism rather than practices it:

I get happy when, when, when you even say it that this is a feminism deed or act, but most often people are perhaps not that, but a little bit more vague in, in, well the wordings, but, but that that connection is being drawn I think is clear, very, very many, especially within this movement talk like that, in that, exactly those terms that I am a feminist this is a feminist act (Frida)

Through her work within the craftivist movement, Frida has identified that it is common to identify as a feminist and to regard one's work as a feminist act. The reason why Frida sees a clear connection between crafts and feminism is, therefore, that other people that she has met through her work have identified this link when talking with her. Looking at it this way, crafts becomes feminist when there is an (explicit) intention behind it. Another way in which Frida understands feminism and crafts to intersect is in the way crafts gives women an opportunity to express themselves. For her, the craftivist movement becomes:

a process of democracy, where women, because 98% of the practitioners are women, and the craft becomes the female weapon so to say, 98, or well, it, these 98% might not usually have a voice

and then it also becomes a feminist deed to contribute with a, a female voice in a, in a society
(Frida)

Connecting back to the way in which Frida and the other women defined feminism it is easier to contextualize the quote above. For Frida, giving women an arena in which they can express their thoughts and opinions become a feminist deed because for her, as well as for the other women I interviewed, women are the subject of feminism; it is women that feminism should focus on. And because craftivism gives women the opportunity to speak up, it becomes feminist. It is also no coincidence that it is the public sphere that craftivism has as its arena, in fact, it is a deliberate act. Through history, the private sphere has come to be the woman's sphere whereas the public sphere has come to be the man's sphere. For Maria, it becomes a feminist act to "go out in the public and well, take one's place and put things up" for this reason. Because of this, crafting can thereby be feminist when it gives women an opportunity to express their thoughts, especially if it happens in public which historically has not been women's space to 'claim'.

The craftivist movement is generally very focused on different types of textile crafts, such as knitting and crocheting, that may also be called domestic crafts. These crafts, in particular, have been closely connected to womanhood and femininity in a way that has close to naturalized the relationship. This has led to an ambivalent understanding of crafts in the sense that, on the one hand, domestic crafts have been viewed as part of women's oppression while, on the other hand, others have regarded it as an opportunity for women to speak their minds (Daly Goggin 2002). Regardless of one's stance in this debate, what can be said is that the relationship between femininity and domestic crafts has led to domestic crafts being viewed as a 'lesser' crafts without status or prestige, at least when practiced by women in the private (Parker 2010). I suggest that this is what Maria and Frida had in mind when they both mentioned the connection to the knowledge and craft work of earlier generations of women as a reason to why crafts can be feminist. Maria said that:

my father's mom, my mother's mom, they have not specifically crocheted but woven, and they have knitted, that there also becomes some sort of feminist power in like taking that with you too
(Maria)

Frida said that her experience is that when these women from earlier generations are mentioned, it is often a way praise someone and to show that they want to continue this craft work from the

past. In that sense, the so-called 'return to crafts' (see for example Minahan & Wolfram Cox 2007 and Chansky 2010) is, as Jack Bratich and Heidi Brush (2011) state neither something new nor a return to the past, but rather a continuation. Furthermore, feminist crafts challenge both the binary of old/new and past/present by bringing crafts that are associated with the past into the present. Another way in which this manifested at the #MeToo tagging event was through the tag that one of the other participants had created. She had bought an embroidered cloth at a secondhand store on which she had thereafter added her tag. She mentioned that for her, it felt good to bring attention to the work of women before her. In this case, she did it in two ways. First of all, she used the knowledge that many women before her possessed as well, that is, how to embroider, a knowledge that in many ways has been women's knowledge. Second of all, she used the work of a particular, yet unknown, woman by using an already embroidered cloth for this event. By paying tribute to women of earlier generations through recognizing the value of (domestic) crafts in general, and by valuing the handicrafts they have crafted in particular, the women I interviewed, as well as (some) of the other participants at the events, argue that crafts become feminist.

When I asked the women who had participated at the market about possible connections between crafts and feminism, they mostly answered in ways that related to how crafts are present in their lives. In other words, in ways that relate to them crafting with the purpose of selling their products. Both Nathalie and Jennifer reflected on the importance for women to have the opportunity to craft not only as a hobby but rather as a profession. Historically, it has not been possible for women to support themselves through their crafting. Instead, women's crafting has been regarded as part of their domestic chores and as amateur crafts because the professionalized part of crafts was for a long time only available to men (Parker 2010). The feminist market, therefore, challenged not only the binary of amateur/professional but also that of private/public as it gave these professional crafters, designers, and entrepreneurs a place in public to show and sell their products. For Caroline, this makes crafting feminist. She also reasoned that:

it does not have to be completely obvious but when you see someone who has created a jewelry or someone who has created a, a bag that like, that the message there when you see the product in itself, that it shows that it is out-, but it can be the thought behind why you started the company, or, in the business idea in general, that it, it is different how people think about like the feminist part too (Caroline)

The selection of crafts sold at the market was broad and in that sense, Caroline's thoughts about feminism manifesting in different ways may very well be true. Caroline herself was one of several exhibitors who sold jewelry. The idea behind her business is that "the woman should be the center of attention" and this manifest through her products who are named after important women in Caroline's life. Her products also have texts associated with them that are supposed to be both inspirational and empowering. The buyers can then hopefully either identify with these texts themselves or identify someone else in the texts. I interpret 'the feminist part' of Caroline's crafting to be in the way she tries to empower and celebrate women. In this sense, it connects very well to the gynocentric feminism I presented earlier, and I argue that this focus on women is also visible in the work of the other market exhibitors that I interviewed.

Gina's work aims to give attention to women. However, the women she wants to give attention to are women throughout history. She wants to "tell women's history through patterns" and has, for example, created a pattern that is inspired by Marie Curie and how her fingerprints to this day are radioactive as a result of her work with radioactive material. This pattern, which Gina also showed me during our interview, has two meanings to Gina; the first one is the connection to Marie Curie as I have already mentioned, and the other is how it also "symbolizes all women through history who has put their imprint on history in one way or another". Like with Caroline's jewelry, Gina's patterns, which at the market were sold in the form of toiletry bags and gym sacks, also revolve around 'women'. This is the case of Jennifer's business as well which consists of an online platform on which she aims to "give attention to creative women" by interviewing them about their professional journey and what it is like being a woman in their profession. For Jennifer, it is important that there is a feminist thought behind all parts of her work and she interprets her platform as feminist as it "portrays women on their own terms" in a way that empowers them. Because of this focus on women, I would assert that Jennifer's platform, as well as Gina's patterns and Caroline's jewelry, aligns well with how they understand feminism as previously discussed.

Nathalie's work as a jeweler, on the other hand, is not as easily interpreted as 'woman-centered', though her business can clearly be understood to represent the intersection of crafts and feminism. For example, her most sold product is a redesigned woman's symbol. Nathalie herself explains this redesign by saying:

I have tried to make it a bit more human in its appearance so that it becomes a, a feminist symbol as it ca-, if you look at the copper symbol for example it is a circular head, a, a body, but the arms are positioned a bit further down on it, but then I have chosen to, to reposition the arms a bit

further up so that it becomes more like a head and, like more of a body and that it then becomes a feminist so it gives a bit more STRENGTH, a bit more power (Nathalie)

As the quote shows, Nathalie mentions the word power which can be related back to Jennifer who also wants to empower women. The way that crafts and feminism intersect in the work of these four women is then that they make use of symbols that are strongly linked to feminism, they center around women and they themselves interpret their work as feminist. This demonstrates that the ways in which feminism manifest in the crafts by the interviewees are diverse and not always explicit, as suggested by Caroline. Moreover, the work by Caroline, Gina and Jennifer, in specific, is clearly tied to their definition of feminism as they all focus on women in their work by telling women's history in patterns, crafting empowering jewelry and by telling the story of creative female crafters.

This diversity of crafts and ways of expressing feminism was also present at the market in general. Before the market, I was therefore curious about how the exhibitors, visitors and organizers interpreted the market as feminist since it was called 'feminist market'. In some cases, it seemed obvious to me that the products in themselves were supposed to be interpreted as feminist, such as in the case of Nathalie's jewelry. In other cases, it seemed to me that it was not the products in themselves that 'represented' feminism, but rather that the visitors of the market were supposed to interpret the businesses as feminist because of their business ideas or their (female) business owners. The organizers of the feminist market describe the market as backing female design and entrepreneurship, supporting the idea that crafts are feminist when done by women. Nathalie, who had been in contact with the organizer throughout the process of planning the event also said that:

what we feel that, also adds a little more feminist than a regular market is also speakers and that there is more of a community and like and some of these passionate speeches and kind of cheerful and so and then also that everyone who is there have eh are designers, artists, create it themselves, is there, can meet visitors and talk and that is also should like well but like this sisterhood and community (Nathalie)

Following Nathalie's reasoning, the market becomes feminist because it not only gives women an arena to sell their handicrafts but also because it creates a community for the female crafters. Having attended the market myself, I noticed something which I interpreted as community or sisterhood too. Right before the market opened, I could hear how the exhibitors joined in a

cheerful cry of joy and when walking around in the room in which the market took place, both exhibitors and visitors were incredibly happy and cheerful. I made the same reflection at the #MeToo tagging event. But what was this sense of community based on and who might have felt included? I suggest that the answer lies in the homogenous group of attendants at these two events. A sense of community was created because the people present at the events shared experiences related to gender, ethnicity, class and, to some extent, age.

In sum, the women I interviewed considered crafting to be feminist when it conveyed explicit feminist messages or were created with a feminist intention, such as in the case of the #MeToo tagging event, or when it gave women a platform to speak their minds about the oppressions they face. They also considered crafting feminist when it took place in public and when it paid tribute to earlier generations of women. The last examples given were that crafting is feminist when it centered around women and when it empowered women. I also interpreted the feminist market description as understanding crafting to be feminist when the crafter is a woman. A common thread is the reoccurrence of ‘women’ in these answers which ties back to how they define women as the feminist subject. This tells us that the way these women defined feminism is also reflected in how they regard crafts as a tool for doing feminism.

4.6. Who is a Feminist Crafter and Who Participates in Feminist Crafting Events?

Before the feminist market took place, I saw in my online feeds that one of the exhibitors had shared a post saying that the feminist market was looking for more female/non-male artists and crafters that are people of color to join as exhibitors. I interpret this ‘call for people of color’ to be a result of an increased awareness of the importance of representation which might follow from the Swedish and international debate around intersectionality (see, for example, de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2002/2012; de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005; Gemzöe 2014). What caught my attention about this open call though is the question of why this had to be done as an open call rather than having the people involved use their already existing networks? To me, this indicates that the community that this market has created has failed to attract a diverse group of designers, crafters and entrepreneurs. This was not a problem only among the exhibitors, but also among the visitors at the market as well as among the participants at the #MeToo tagging event. This leads me to questions and reflections about accessibility and representation in these events, that is: who is represented at these events? Who has the time, money and interest to attend them? And who is not participating? I, therefore, want to further

critically analyze the two events I attended (the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event) as well as discuss the (lack of) reflections from the participants on this topic.

In the interviews, I did not ask any questions that had the clear purpose of getting answers that were critical reflections about these two events specifically or about feminist crafting in general. This was a deliberate choice because I wanted to see if these reflections came up on their own in the interviews. The lack of reflections is as interesting as the reflections themselves since it suggests that the feminist crafting community, that the respondents are part of, has most likely not initiated a critical discussion of the own community. Had this been a so-called 'hot topic' at the time, it should have come up in the interviews which, in most cases, it did not. At the same time, the feminist market's 'call for people of color' shows an ambition and will to be more inclusive, indicating that there is some kind of awareness of the importance of representation within the community. Nevertheless, I chose to not explicitly ask the women about their thoughts about what I had experienced as homogenous crowds at the two events but instead decided to see if these reflections came up on their own. Those few moments of critical reflections that did come up are the result of the participant's own reflections rather than me asking them on these questions.

When I talked with Maria and Frida about possible connections between crafts and feminism, Maria made the following reflection:

Then you can also say like this that this is a very white movement, well white middle-class women, so it is like, that is something you can problematize a lot but still like a strong feminist movement, there are things to investigate in it too (Maria)

The movement that Maria is referring to is the craftivist movement which she is also part of. What she problematizes is the homogeneity of the movement, which she claims consists of mainly white, middle-class women. This reflects the participants of the #MeToo tagging event well where I would argue that the participants, myself included, fit this description in the sense that all of us were white, middle-class women. At the same time, the group at the tagging event was more diverse age-wise which Liv also observed. She said that:

But sometimes activism is a bit age-based, there are many who are still activist when they are 40 50 60 70 I am sure, but it is often regarded as, I believe in society and in media as a youth movement and it is of course very important that the youth are activist but it is also important to

show the range and here I believe, I guess without having asked these women, that they feel welcome, and that is perhaps not always something that you do (Liv)

As a 23-year old, I was the youngest participant at the event and I believe that the oldest women were in their seventies. So when it came to age the group was more heterogeneous than when it came to for example race/ethnicity which Liv also reflected upon. She said:

However, one thing that I can, eh, sometimes I think as I thought now, now that we talk about it too, in this group and in many of these groups there are perhaps not so many people with different ethnical backgrounds and I think that is a shame eh I think there are a lot of people that craft (...) cause I believe that there are a lot of people that do this on their own at home and that could be interested in engaging in this, so that is perhaps a group that was missing in that sense (Liv)

Liv believes that there exists a group of people of color that are either doing crafts or would be interested in doing it and it is this group that she felt was missing at the #MeToo tagging event and maybe also in the Swedish craftivist movement in general. Shannon Black (2017) states that the current feminist turn to crafts is marked by both whiteness and middle-classness, and while she is making this statement primarily in relation to the US context, I suggest that the same goes for the Swedish context. The question is: why?

Previous research on crafts and feminism mentions time and money as factors that influence crafts popularity and accessibility among feminists (Portwood-Stacer 2007; Solomon 2013; Clarke 2017). Because crafts are both time-consuming and, potentially, expensive, not all feminists can or want to use crafts as a way of doing and expressing feminism. bell hooks (1995) also raises the issue of interest in relation to arts (and crafts), specifically addressing how cultural capital facilitates such an interest. Moreover, she mentions representation and identification as two additional factors that promote an interest in crafts. By that, she argues that feeling represented in either the crafts community or the handicrafts in themselves, or by any other means identifying with the crafts community facilitates an interest in crafts. Time, money and interest are therefore factors which may, at least to some extent, explain the homogeneity in the general Swedish crafting community, and specifically at the two events.

In addition to this, I would suggest that there is another aspect that explains why feminist crafts only attract a particular group of feminists. That aspect is the kind of feminism represented in the feminist crafting community. If we regard the responses from this study's participants as symptomatic or representative of the feminist crafting community in general,

then this community stands by and represents a feminism that has women as its subject. For their understanding of feminism in general to align with how and when they understand crafting as feminist, crafts should also focus on women to become feminist. Accordingly, the women I interviewed focused on women in their answers regarding when crafts can be feminist. I assert that there are two (related) ways in which this understanding of feminism, as well as this understanding of crafts as feminist, explain why the feminist crafting community has become to mainly consist of white middle-class women.

First of all, I suggest that the way that the women I interviewed talk about feminism and crafts as being feminist recall, to some extent, a neoliberal way of understanding gender inequality and that this has an effect on who feels represented in the feminist crafting community. For example, stating that crafting is feminist when it gives women the opportunity to work professionally with their crafts prompts a formulation of feminism that promotes women's inability to make a career as an important feminist issue and expression of gender inequality, thus corresponding to a neoliberal understanding of gender inequality (Rottenberg 2014; 2016; 2018). Similarly, speaking of empowerment as an important part of feminism reminds of neoliberal feminism's focus on the individual, rather than the collective. I also suggest that the feminist market in itself is an expression of an entanglement between feminism and capitalism. Thus, it recalls of neoliberal feminism which involves the market in its solution to societal problems (gender inequality included) rather than criticizing capitalism and consumerism (Fahlgren, Giritli Nygren & Johansson 2016). Even though this might not be the intention, a consequence of feminist crafts (at times) resemblance to neoliberal discourse is that it mainly attracts the women that are also represented by neoliberal feminism. That is, the white heterosexual class privileged women (Rottenberg 2018).

Second of all, I suggest that the feminist crafting community fails to represent an interest in a broader range of feminist issues, which could have attracted a wider group of feminists. Specifically, I contend that not including and promoting feminist issues that are relevant and important for women (given that women are the feminist subject) with experiences of multiple marginalizations and oppressions are an important reason to the community's homogeneity. For example, incorporating the specific experiences of misogynoir¹⁰ as a key issue is not prohibited by the way the women I interviewed define feminism. In fact, they recognize the existence of societal structures that manifest either through oppression or privilege and many of them also defined feminism as 'the struggle for everyone's equal worth' or 'the struggle for

¹⁰ This term was coined by Moya Bailey in an attempt to capture the "anti-Black racist misogyny" that is particularly aimed at Black women (Bailey & Trudy 2018, p. 1)

equality', opening up for an understanding of feminism that recognizes the interweaving of multiple structures. And admittedly, their way of understanding crafts as feminist does not explicitly exclude women (once again, given that women are the feminist subject) with experiences of multiple marginalizations and oppressions. At the same time, this understanding also does not actively include these experiences and these women in the way it expresses feminism. In other words, defining crafts as feminists in the way that the participants in this study do fails to include all women's experiences in the way that their definition of feminism (possibly) does. Thus, I suggest that women with experience of multiple, interlocking oppressions seek themselves to contexts where they are better represented and that this is the reason for why the feminist crafting movement is 'left' with a homogenous group of feminists.

4.7. Are Feminist Crafts Connected to Activism?

As the last part of my analysis, I will look closer at how feminist crafts intersect with activism. I will do this in two ways: first of all, by discussing a particular moment during my interview with Caroline where she actively distanced herself from being an activist and second of all, by discussing whether or not the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event can be (or should be) understood as activist events.

When talking about how feminism manifested in her life, besides her crafting project, Caroline said that:

I cannot say that I am an activist in that way (...) not that I am out demonstrating or, well not in that way (Caroline)

By saying this, Caroline links together activism with big public actions such as demonstrations. This is a common way of defining activism (Bryan-Wilson, González & Willsdon 2016) that puts "vigorous action" (Merriam-Webster n.d.) at the center of the definition. At the same time, Caroline was the one who also talked about how she practiced feminism through everyday actions such as speaking up. She does not seem to consider this to be activism though since she is rejecting that label. Following from the definition of activism as "everyday actions by individuals that foster new social networks or power dynamics" (Martin, Hanson & Fontaine 2007, p. 79), Caroline's actions, as well as the actions other women I interviewed, of speaking up against for example, sexist jokes could be understood as activism. This includes the kind of acts mainly performed by women, that is, a form of activism that does not take place in public and that is often more informal than for example demonstrations and boycotts in the definition

of feminism. This means that acts such as speaking up could be considered as activism as well, making the women I interviewed activists.

Another reason why Caroline actively distances herself from identifying as an activist may be a result of setting up a ‘perfect standard’ of what is considered activism (Bobel 2007). Chris Bobel (2007) suggests that perfect standard of activism consists of two parts: humility and rigor, meaning that an activist should be humble about their own political work while at the same time ‘living the issue’, that is, dedicating more or less all of one’s time to activism. As a consequence of setting the standard so high for what counts as activism, most people cannot reach it and are forced to reject the activist identity even though they might, in fact, be involved in activism. So while we can understand Caroline’s actions as activism following how Martin, Hanson and Fontaine (2007) define activism, Caroline still does not identify as an activist because she feels that she does not satisfy the perfect standard.

Moving on to the discussion of the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event as an activist event, I would first like to point out how the two events differed in their purposes. The primary (and obvious) purpose of the feminist market is based on consumption, considering that it is a market. At this particular market, part of the purpose of the consumption is to support female creators who, implicitly stated, do not have the same opportunities to support themselves on their crafts. Another purpose of the market is, as previously mentioned in this thesis, to build a community among women and feminist crafters, designers and entrepreneurs. The main purpose of the #MeToo tagging event, on the other hand, was to share experiences and opinions related to the #MeToo movement that had unfolded during the months prior to the event. The tagging event is easily linked to the craftivist movement considering that different kinds of crafts were used to make political statements. The #MeToo tagging event thus becomes an activist event. Understanding the feminist market as an activist event is more difficult. Neither a dictionary definition of activism which focuses on “vigorous action” (Merriam-Webster n.d.) nor the definition by Martin, Hanson and Fontaine (2007) that instead focuses on everyday actions that foster social networks allows us to label the feminist market as an activist event. The act of the organizers who have created the community behind the market may be considered activists by the latter definition though. One question that immediately emerges in my head at this point is: does it really matter if the event is considered activist or not?

Maybe it is not the question of whether or not the event can be labeled as an activist event, but rather if the event contributes to the feminist goal of social change. In other words, the label does not matter as much as whether the event can be understood as an event that makes a difference. This is not a question that I can answer once and for all but what I can say, however,

is that judging from the interviews I did with some of the exhibitors from the feminist market, having the opportunity to participate meant a lot to them. Moreover, they saw feminist potential both in their own crafting and in crafting in general. Even though the feminist market is just one of many possible ways of expressing feminism, it is still a feminist event going by the understandings of the participants of this study. At the same time, I find the clear connections to consumerism intriguing and suggest that this is something to look closer at in the future, especially in relation to the terms feminist consumerism (Johnston & Taylor 2008) and anti-capitalist feminism (Taylor, Johnston & Whitehead 2016).

With that said, I find it useful to go back to the continuum of feminist crafting practices sketched out by Beth Ann Pentney (2008) as it allows us to understand a broad range of activities as feminist. Trying to fit these two events into the continuum we see that they represent both ends on the continuum. The market can, as I have suggested earlier, be interpreted as a way of building community and the tagging event is part of public forms of political protests. With the help of Pentney's continuum, it is therefore possible to see how these separate and different events are still similar in the sense that they can be considered feminist. This shows that feminism can be done in diverse ways and still contribute to a larger feminist project of "empowerment, social justice, and women's community building" (Pentney 2008).

4.8. Understanding Feminist Crafts: A Summary

In this analysis, I have presented the results of the study in the form of four different themes. In the first section, I presented the way in which the women I interviewed defined feminism and how they practice feminism in their lives besides their crafts. What connected the interviews was the reoccurrence of the word 'women' which I interpreted as a symbol for a feminism that has women as its subject and that they gave examples of everyday actions such as speaking up when hearing a sexist joke when speaking about how they practiced feminism. The second section revolved around understanding when crafting can be interpreted as feminist, to which the respondents gave many examples. All the women I interviewed agreed that crafts could be feminist although disagreed that crafts in itself were feminist. Once again though, the answers regarding when crafts are feminist often came back to women: that crafts are feminist when it gives women a chance to speak their minds, when it pays tribute to women of earlier generations or even when the crafter is a woman. In the third section, I therefore argued that a reason as to why the two events I attended were very homogenous (as they were mostly attended by white, middle-class women) could be because not all women feel represented and included in events

like these. That is to say, that they do not feel represented by the kind of feminism present in these events. Moreover, I also discussed the factors of time, money and interest as mentioned in previous research as further excluding factors.

In the last section, I discussed the particular situation in which Caroline, during my interview with her, distanced herself from identifying as a feminist. I suggested that this may be due to a definition of activism which sets a 'perfect standard' which makes the activist identity unreachable for most people. Moreover, I also suggested that it is possible to regard the women I interviewed as activists if one uses a definition of activism that takes geographically limited actions such as everyday actions into account (Martin, Hanson and Fontaine 2007). Lastly, I discussed whether or not the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event should be understood as activist events and in turn what difference it makes to call them activist events or not. As the tagging event is clearly connected to the craftivist movement, I argued that it is easily interpreted as an activist event whereas the feminist market is more ambiguous in its purposes: aiming both at consumerism and community-building. As a result, I suggested that it might not be important to ask whether or not the events should be called activist or not, but rather look at if they contribute to a feminist change work or not. Therefore, I incorporated the continuum of feminist crafting practices by Beth Ann Pentney (2008) which takes a broad range of practices into account while at the same time not valuing them hierarchically. Using this continuum, I suggested that both the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event can be understood as feminist practices but that they are located at the two ends of the continuum. As a result, I concluded that the two events are examples of how feminism can be done in many diverse ways yet still contribute to the larger feminist project.

5. Conclusion

This thesis shows that the feminist crafts movement that has been described in previous research, mainly from a US context (see for example Chansky 2010; Groeneveld 2010; Kelly 2014), also exists in the Swedish context. As illustrated by the very broad range of crafts represented at the feminist market and the #MeToo tagging event, feminist crafts can be done in many different ways and still contribute to a larger feminist project of social justice. I argue that because of the #MeToo tagging event's close connections to craftivism, it can easily be interpreted as an activist event, whereas the feminist market is more ambiguous in its expression and purposes which makes it harder to maintain that it is connected to activism. At the same time, I question whether it is important to be able to call these events 'activist' or if the focus should be on their actual contribution to feminism? Both events can be understood as part of feminist crafting practices as illustrated by Beth Ann Pentney's (2008) continuum, despite their differences in purposes and aims. The fact that the two events represent each side of the continuum indicates that crafts do not only express feminism in one way, but rather in many different ways.

This thesis also shows that feminist crafts mainly attract white, middle-class women. I assert that part of the reason behind this are factors of time and money and interest, as pointed out by previous research on the topic of crafts and feminism (see, for example, Portwood-Stacer 2007; Clarke 2017). However, I also suggest that there is another aspect that explains the feminist crafting community's homogeneity. Namely, its definition and expression of feminism and feminist crafts. The participants of this study described a feminism that has women as its subject and accordingly, understood crafts to be feminist when they, in different ways, focus on women. By pointing at how their understanding of crafts as feminist, to some extent, recall a neoliberal way of understanding gender inequality (for example, that it is important to women's ability to make a career), I argue that the feminist crafting community mainly represent those women that are also represented by neoliberal feminism. I also argue that the feminist crafting community fails to represent a feminism that actively includes issues relevant and important for those women experiencing multiple oppressions and marginalizations. Consequently, feminist crafts do not represent all feminists nor all kinds of feminisms. A conclusion from this thesis is, therefore, that there does exist a relationship between crafts and feminism, but the question is to whom this relationship matters? Judging by the results of this thesis, feminist crafts must change in order to attract a more diverse group of feminists.

Previous research on feminist crafts argues that the contemporary (re)turn to crafts helps us question binaries such as amateur/professional and private/public. This research is mainly produced in the US context and consequently, this thesis contributes to knowledge production as it shows that feminist crafts in the Swedish context have the potential of challenging and questioning binaries too. For example, the feminist market blurs the line between amateur and professional crafters by giving the exhibitors, who in many cases do not have their crafts as their main source of income, an arena to show and sell their products. Moreover, the feminist market, as well as the #MeToo tagging event, challenge the private/public binary by bringing crafts traditionally interpreted as belonging to the private sphere out in the public. The tagging event also helps us understand the political potential of domestic crafts as it was used to convey a strong political message in relation to the #MeToo movement. Despite separating crafts from arts in this thesis, I would also argue that feminist crafts blur the line between crafts and arts. A significant part in the separation of these two is the status assigned to arts, but not crafts due to arts being associated with the public sphere, to men and to the figure of the professional. This thesis shows that feminist crafts aim to bring crafts into the public sphere and moreover, to value the techniques and knowledges associated with crafts. It is not as clear if this movement also tries to challenge the feminine/masculine binary in relation to crafts, though I suggest that this is the result of a feminist movement that both want to trouble gender norms while also wanting to cherish the importance of what has historically been considered female, such as crafts. Thus, I suggest that the feminism represented through feminist crafts not only centers around women due to it identifying women as the feminist subject but also due to it wanting to value traditionally female characteristics, expressions and knowledges, such as knowledges related to crafts. Consequently, I suggest that the contemporary feminist turn to crafts is dependent on crafts' historical ties to femininity.

Feminist crafts in the Swedish context can be connected to a broader Swedish feminist discourse, where intersectionality has in the last 15 years become an important theoretical contribution both to academic and activist spheres. At the same time, I would argue that mainstream Swedish feminisms still focus on sex/gender and often forget to include analyses of how sex/gender intersect with, for example, ethnicity and race. This explains why the interviews focused on women as feminist subjects, without any further explanation of who 'counts' as a woman, that is, which women's experiences are considered. While many researchers have pointed out that more Scandinavian research that problematizes the intersection between gender and ethnicity is needed (see, for example, Henry 2014), I would argue that this problematization also needs to take place in feminist spaces outside of academia,

such as in the feminist crafting community. Feminist crafters should ask themselves why the community has failed to attract a more diverse group of feminists. Moreover, they should reflect on how the community can and should change, and what actions could be taken in order to make feminist crafts more attractive for a wider group of feminists. The feminist markets ‘call for people of color’ shows that there is a desire among the community to include more people, but what is missing is a discussion and reflection regarding the underlying reasons that made this call necessary. Similarly, a conversation about why the very same ‘call’ failed needs to take place. Until then, the feminist crafting community is stuck with a kind of feminism that lacks reflection around ethnicity and race and reproduces the ‘Nordic familiarity’ which characterizes (certain) Scandinavian and Swedish feminisms (Liinason 2018). That is to say, until the feminist crafts movement successfully represents a more diverse group of feminists, it will mainly promote the interests of white, middle-class women.

5.1. Suggestions for Future Research

There are some aspects of feminist crafting that I have had to exclude from this thesis in my process of limiting the scope of the study. One such aspect is feminist crafting’s visibility in online spaces which is worth exploring in future research. For example, this research could explore how the discourse of feminist crafting looks like online or in what online contexts crafts gets interpreted as feminist. Another aspect of feminist crafts that future research should explore is one that I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, namely, its relationship to consumerism. I have suggested that future research look at how events like the feminist market can be understood from concepts such as feminist consumerism (Johnston & Taylor 2008) and anti-capitalist feminism (Taylor, Johnston & Whitehead 2016). Specifically, more research is needed that critically examines what this relationship between feminism and consumerism looks like and how it impacts feminism in general but also who identifies with this kind of feminism. My last suggestion for future research is to look closer into why feminists choose not to engage in feminist crafts. Maura Kelly (2014) has done a study on knitter’s understanding of knitting as feminist (or not). I suggest a study that looks at it the other way around, that is, looking at feminists understanding of crafts as feminist (or not). This would be a continuation of this thesis and may contribute to a more nuanced understanding of why feminist crafter events, such as the ones I attended, attract a very homogenous crowd of people.

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Appendix

- i. Letter of information – English
- ii. Letter of information – Swedish
- iii. Interview guide – English
- iv. Interview guide – Swedish
- v. Photo of mini protest banner from #MeToo tagging event
- vi. Quotes - guide
- vii. Original quotes and translations

Information to Participant in Study about Crafting and Feminism

Hello!

My name is Rebecka Söderström Gardevåg and I am a master student in Gender Studies at Tema Genus, Linköping University. I am currently writing my master's thesis about crafting and feminism.

The aim of the study is to understand how feminists themselves understand crafting in relation to feminism. I believe that you could contribute with interesting thoughts and perspectives and am therefore inviting you to participate! Your participation would consist in an interview that will take up to an hour. We would do this interview in a place of your choice, where you feel comfortable. If it is possible, it would be lovely if you could bring something that you have crafted yourself to the interview!

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any point without further explanation. You may choose to not answer specific questions. Your answers will only be used for this master's thesis, and if you want to, then I will not use your real name in written and spoken presentation of the results. I wish to record the interview, in which case the recording will be deleted at the end of the study.

I will present the result of the interviews in my master's thesis, which will be available online once it is done. If you wish, I can send you an electronic copy of the thesis once it is finished.

If you have any reflections or questions before, during, or after the study you are more than welcome to contact me!

Rebecka Söderström Gardevåg

Email: [...]

Information till deltagare i studie om hantverkande och feminism

Hej!

Jag heter Rebecka Söderström Gardevåg och är en masterstudent i genusvetenskap vid Tema Genus, Linköpings Universitet. Jag skriver just nu min masteruppsats som handlar om hantverkande och feminism.

Syftet med undersökningen är att förstå hur feminister själva förstår hantverkande och skapande i relation till feminism. Jag tror att du skulle kunna bidra med intressanta tankar och perspektiv och bjuder därför in dig till att delta! Din medverkan skulle isåfall bestå av en intervju som tar upp till och med en timme. Denna gör vi på en plats som du väljer, där du känner dig trygg och bekväm. Om det är möjligt så vore det jätteroligt om du kunde ta med något som du själv skapat till intervjun!

Ditt deltagande i studien är helt frivilligt och du kan välja att avbryta din medverkan när du vill utan närmare förklaring. Du kan välja att avstå från att svara på specifika frågor jag ställer. Dina svar kommer endast att användas för denna masteruppsats, och om du önskar så använder jag inte ditt riktiga namn i skriftlig och muntlig framställning av resultatet. Jag önskar helst att spela in intervjun och ljudinspelningen kommer isåfall att raderas när studien är klar.

Jag kommer att presentera resultatet av intervjuerna i min masteruppsats, som kommer att finnas tillgänglig online när den är färdig. Om du vill så kan jag skicka en elektronisk version av uppsatsen till dig när den är klar.

Om du har några funderingar eller frågat innan, under eller efter studien är du mer än välkommen att kontakta mig!

Rebecka Söderström Gardevåg

Email: [...]

Name:

Name to use in thesis:

Age:

Sex/gender/pronoun they identify with:

Occupation/employment:

Crafts

- What does crafts mean to you today?
- Has crafts had a different meaning to you before?
- What kinds of crafts are you interested in? Why these specifically?
- What do you craft?
- When do you craft? Alone and/or in community?
- When did you start with crafts?

Feminism and crafts

- Do you combine your interest in crafts and your feminist identity/feminism? How?
- Can crafting be feminist according to you?
- What makes crafting feminist according to you?
- How does crafts express feminism to you?
- How do you express feminism through crafts?

Specific handicraft(s)

- Would you like to tell me what this is and what it represents/means to you?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about this handicraft? What did you think about when crafting it?
- (How) does it represent feminism to you?
- What reactions/feedback have you gotten to this handicraft?

Feminism

- Do you identify as a feminist?
- What is feminism to you/What does feminism mean to you?
- What does identifying as a feminist mean to you?
- When did you start identifying as a feminist?
- What brought you to feminism?
- In what ways do feminism manifest in your everyday life?

Closing questions

- Is there something that you would like to add or expand on?

Namn:

Namn att använda i uppsats:

Ålder:

Kön/pronomen du identifierar dig med:

Sysselsättning:

Hantverkande

- Vad betyder hantverkande för dig idag?
- Har hantverkande haft en annan betydelse för dig tidigare?
- Vilka typer av hantverk är du intresserad av? Varför just dessa?
- Vad hantverkar du?
- När hantverkar du? Ensam och/eller i en grupp/sammanhang?
- När började du med hantverk?

Feminism och hantverk

- Förekar du ditt intresse för hantverkande och din feministiska identitet/feminism? Hur?
- Kan hantverkande vara feministiskt enligt dig?
- Vad gör hantverkande feministiskt enligt dig?
- Hur uttrycker hantverk feminism enligt dig?
- Hur uttrycker du feminism genom hantverkande?

Specifikt hantverk

- Skulle du vilja berätta för mig vad detta är och vad det betyder för dig?
- Vad är dina tankar och känslor om detta hantverk? Vad tänkte du på när du skapade det?
- (Hur) representerar detta hantverk feminism för dig?
- Vad har du fått för feedback/reaktioner på detta hantverk?

Feminism

- Identifierar du dig som feminist?
- Vad är feminism för dig/vad betyder feminism för dig?
- Vad innebär det för dig att identifiera dig som feminist?
- När började du identifiera dig som feminist?
- Vad gjorde dig intresserad av feminism?
- Hur visar sig din feminism i ditt (vardags)liv?

Avslutande frågor

- Finns det något du skulle vilja tillägga eller berätta mer om?



Quotes - Guide

Code	Explanation
(.)	Short break in speech
(3)	Longer break, in seconds
WORD	Emphasized word
(laugh)	Laughter
<<laugh> word>	Word spoken while laughing
-	Word interrupted or not finished
—	Uninterpretable

Original Quotes and Translations

The quotes are presented in the order as they appear, sorted by person. Quotes that are repeated are only shown once.

Maria

Translation	Original
there are still things that the feminist movement must get better at too, to change and become more open to well the rights of various women	det finns fortfarande saker som den feministiska rörelsen måste bli bättre på liksom också, att förändra sig och bli mer (.) öppen för aa men liksom olika kvinnors rättigheter
go out in the public and well, take one's place and put things up	gå ut i det offentliga och liksom (.) aa men ta sin plats och sätta upp saker
my father's mom, my mother's mom, they have not specifically crocheted but woven, and they have knitted, that there also becomes some sort of feminist power in like taking that with you too	farmor, mormor, de har ju inte just virkat men asså vävt, och dem har stickat, att det också blir nån såhär feministisk kraft i att liksom ta det med sig också
Then you can also say like this that this is a very white movement, well white middle-class women, so it is like, that is something you can problematize a lot but still like a strong feminist movement, there are things to investigate in it too	Sen kan man ju också säga såhär att det är en väldigt vit rörelse, asså vita (.) medelklasskvinnor (heh) asså det är väl liksom, det är nånting som man kan problematisera kring väldigt mycket men ändå liksom en stark feministisk rörelse, det finns ju saker att undersöka i den liksom också

Frida

Translation	Original
I get happy when, when, when you even say it that this is a feminism deed or act, but most	jag blir glad, när, när, när man till och med säger det att det här är en feministisk gärning

often people are perhaps not that, but a little bit more vague in, in, well the wordings, but, but that that connection is being drawn I think is clear, very, very many, especially within this movement talk like that, in that, exactly those terms that I am a feminist this is a feminist act	eller handling, men oftast kanske inte folk är så, men lite vagare i, i, men ordalydelsen, men, men att det sker den kopplingen tycker jag är tydligt, väldigt väldigt många, speciellt inom den här rörelsen pratar ju så, i den, precis dom termerna att jag är feminist det här är feministisk handling
a process of democracy, where women, because 98% of the practitioners are women, and the craft becomes the female weapon so to say, 98, or well, it, these 98% might not usually have a voice and then it also becomes a feminist deed to contribute with a, a female voice in a, in a society	en demokratiprocess, där kvinnor, för det är ju 98% av utövarna som är kvinnor, och hantverket blir det kvinnliga vapnet så att säga, 98, eller liksom, den, dem 98% kanske inte vanligtvis har en röst och då blir det också en feministisk gärning att bidra med en, en kvinnlig röst i ett, i ett samhälle

Caroline

Translation	Original
if a conversation is started among well people I hang out with then I still join the discussion	om samtal tas upp bland ah folk jag umgås med så är jag ändå med och diskuterar
for me it is not ___ that it is women against men or like that there should be two camps but that it well, it should be equal and, but as it is right now then we women need to get some help along the way	för min del är det inte ___ att det är kvinnor mot män eller asså det ska vara två läger utan att det är liksom, det ska vara jämställt och, men som det är nu så behöver ju vi kvinnor få en hjälp på traven
it does not have to be completely obvious but when you see someone who has created a jewelry or someone who has created a, a bag that like, that the message there when you see the product in itself, that it shows that it is out-, but it can be the thought behind why you started the company, or, in the business	det behöver inte vara att det är helt uppenbart men man ser nån som har gjort ett smycken eller nån som har gjort en, en väska att såhär, att budskapet där när man ser själva produkten, att det visar att det är ut-, men det kan vara tanken bakom varför man startade företaget, eller, i affärsidén överhuvudtaget,

idea in general, that it, it is different how people think about like the feminist part too	att det, det är så mycket hur folk tänker liksom med den feministiska biten också
the woman should be the center of attention	kvinnan ska stå i centrum
I cannot say that I am an activist in that way (...) not that I am out demonstrating or, well not in that way	jag kan ju inte säga att jag är nån aktivist på det sättet (...) inte så att jag (.) är ute och demonstrerar eller, asså inte på det sättet

Nathalie

Translation	Original
I have tried to make it a bit more human in its appearance so that it becomes a, a feminist symbol as it ca-, if you look at the copper symbol for example it is a circular head, a, a body, but the arms are positioned a bit further down on it, but then I have chosen to, to reposition the arms a bit further up so that it becomes more like a head and, like more of a body and that it then becomes a feminist so it gives a bit more STRENGTH, a bit more power	jag har försökt göra den lite mer mänsklig i utseendet så att det ska bli en, en feministsymbol i och med att det gå-, om man kollar på kopparsymbolen tillexempel så är den ett runt huvud en, en kropp, men armarna sitter lite längre ner på den, men då har jag valt och, och flytta upp armarna lite så att det ska bli mer som ett huvud och, ah men mer som en kropp liksom och sen så att det ska bli en feminist så att den ger lite mer STYRKA, lite mer power
what we feel that, also adds a little more feminist than a regular market is also speakers and that there is more of a community and like and some of these passionate speeches and kind of cheerful and so and then also that everyone who is there have eh are designers, artists, create it themselves, is there, can meet visitors and talk and that is also should like well but like this sisterhood and community	det vi känner att, tillför att också lite mer som är feministiskt än en vanlig marknad är ju också talare och att det blir en mer samhörighet och liksom och lite såna brandtal och lite peppande så och sen också att alla som är där har eh är designers, konstnärer, tillverkar det själva, är på plats, kan träffa besökare och prata och att det också ska liksom ja men liksom det här systerskapet och gemenskapet

Jennifer

Translation	Original
well that is the equal worth of everyone	Det är ju allas lika värde
yes, well I think about it like in the everyday how you talk about both men and women, assumptions and, and someone like makes a rather unpleasant comment or makes a bad joke then I am not the one laughing just to contribute to a nice mood but rather maybe say like well how did you think now or well, and then it is, it is also about, about like backing other women, in work life	jo men jag tänker på det liksom i vardagen hur man pratar om (.) både män och kvinnor, antaganden och (.) och nån liksom säger en ganska oskön (.) kommentar eller drar ett dåligt skämt så är inte jag den som skrattar för att bidra till en god stämning utan kanske säger aa men hur tänkte du nu eller aa, och sen så (.) sen så handlar det ju också om att, att liksom backa andra kvinnor, i arbetslivet
give attention to creative women	lyfta kreativa kvinnor
portrays women on their own terms	porträtterar kvinnor på deras villkor

Gina


Translation	Original
but just to help each other, (...) in some way and with one's friend and network and like being there for each other (...) well, so small things	men (.) bara att eh (2) hjälpa varandra (...) på något sätt så, och eh (.) med ens vän och nätverk och liksom att ställa upp för varandra (...) liksom, så små grejer
tell women's history through patterns	berätta kvinnohistoria genom mönster
symbolizes all women through history who has put their imprint on history in one way or another	symboliserar alla kvinnor i historien som har satt sitt avtryck på ett eller annat sätt

Liv

Translation	Original
Well I would say that, that I cannot see it, if you look at it historically then I cannot see that there is a, a, a general connection	Asså jag skulle säga att, att jag kan inte se den, om man ser det liksom historiskt så kan jag inte se att det finns en, en, en generell just

<p>between what is, what for me is feminism with equal treatment and that we should have the same rights and assets, it has however been a way for, especially for women for example to, to get a profession, because it has been craft skills that you have had or that you have been able to create things, that you have been able to create your own things and wear because you have had the knowledge for example and you have perhaps not had the access to money or to, to other possibilities so in that way it, it has surely been possible to be so but not in itself</p>	<p>koppling mellan det här som, som för mig är feminism med lika behandlande och att man ska ha samma rättigheter och tillgångar, däremot att det har varit en väg för, för framförallt tror jag kvinnor tillexempel att, att få ett yrke, för det har varit hantverkskunskaper som man har kunnat eller att man har kunnat göra saker, man har kunnat skapa egna saker och ha på sig för att man har haft den kunskapen tillexempel och man kanske inte har haft tillgång till pengar eller till, till andra möjligheter så på det sättet så, så har det säkert kunnat vara det men inte i sig självt</p>
<p>Yes, sometimes I think so, like, like in the case of this tagging that is about showing how women are treated and more often, at least if you look at the statistics that we have and how we see historically, have been treated badly because of their sex and then based on having less opportunities to speak up and when you have done so, as in the case of for example, this range of, of different kind of sexual harassments or even worse stuff, ehm, that you have been in a disadvantaged position then I absolutely think it can be in this case</p>	<p>Ja, ibland tycker jag det, som, som just den här taggningen som ju handlar om eh att påvisa hur kvinnor behandlas och oftare, iallafall om man ser till den statistik vi har och hur vi ser historiskt sett, har behandlats illa på grund av sitt kön och så utifrån att man haft mindre möjligheter att säga ifrån och när man har gjort det, som det gäller tillexempel eh, just det här spannet som, av olika sorters av sexuella trakasserier eller ännu värre saker, ehm, att man där har varit i ett underläge så då tycker jag absolut att det gäller där</p>
<p>But sometimes activism is a bit age-based, there are many who are still activist when they are 40 50 60 70 I am sure, but it is often regarded as, I believe in society and in media as a youth movement and it is of course very important that the youth are activist but it is</p>	<p>men ibland så är aktivism ehm lite åldersbaserat, det är ju många som fortsätter och vara aktivistiska när de är 40 50 60 70 säkert, men det ses oftast, tror jag i samhället och i media som en ungdomsrörelse och det är ju otroligt viktigt att ungdomen är</p>

<p>also important to show the range and here I believe, I guess without having asked these women, that they feel welcome, and that is perhaps not always something that you do</p>	<p>aktivistisk men det är ju också viktigt att visa på spannet och här tror jag, gissar jag utan att ha frågat dom här kvinnorna, att dom känner sig välkomna, och det är kanske en sån sak som man inte alltid gör</p>
<p>However, one thing that I can, eh, sometimes I think as I thought now, now that we talk about it too, in this group and in many of these groups there are perhaps not so many people with different ethnical backgrounds and I think that is a shame eh I think there are a lot of people that craft (...) cause I believe that there are a lot of people that do this on their own at home and that could be interested in engaging in this, so that is perhaps a group that was missing in that sense</p>	<p>sen så just som sagt, det var, att det var lite olika åldrar och så, däremot en sak som jag ju kan, eh, ibland tänker jag som jag tänkte eh nu, nu när vi pratar om det också, i den här gruppen och i flera av dem här grupperna så är det kanske inte så många personer med (.) eh olika etniska härkomst och det tänker jag är lite synd eh jag tror att det finns jättemånga personer som handarbetar (...) för att jag tror att det finns jättemånga som själva hemma också sysslar med den här och som skulle vara intresserade av att engagera sig, så det är kanske en grupp som möjligtvis saknades på det sättet</p>

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Publication Title Crafting Feminism – A Study of the Intersection of Crafts and Contemporary Feminisms in Sweden Author(s) Rebecka Söderström Gardevåg

Abstract <p>This thesis studies the intersection of crafts and feminism in the Swedish context by focusing on two events organized in Stockholm in the spring of 2018: a feminist market and a #MeToo tagging event. The thesis focuses on the relationship between crafts and contemporary feminism in the Swedish context, in particular how feminism is expressed and done through crafts as well as what kind of feminism is expressed and whom it can be said to represent. Moreover, the thesis explores possible connections between Swedish feminist crafting and activism.</p> <p>Based on field notes from the two events as well as recorded material from six interviews with seven women from the two events, this thesis suggests that there exists a feminist crafts movement in the Swedish context. Moreover, this thesis shows that there are many ways in which crafts may be feminist, such as when crafts are used to convey explicit feminist statements, when they are placed in public or when they empower women. The kind of feminism expressed through crafts has women as its subject, though without specifying if this includes all women or only certain kinds of women. As demonstrated by the visitors and exhibitors at the feminist market and the tagging event, this feminism seems to mainly attract white, middle-class women and feminists. The question of whether feminist crafts in general, and these two events in particular, are connected to activism cannot be easily determined and it is thus argued that what is of importance is not if these two events can be labeled as activist, but rather if they can be understood as events that make a difference.</p> <p>As a result, this thesis suggests that feminist crafts reflect a broader Swedish feminist discourse that, despite acknowledging the importance of intersectionality, fails to analyze how sex/gender intersect with ethnicity and race. A critical discussion is thus needed within the feminist crafting community where the issue of homogeneity within the community is prioritized. More specifically, this thesis suggests that the community ask itself how it can change, and what actions could be taken in order to make feminist crafts more attractive to a wider group of feminists. Likewise, they should also reflect on the underlying factors as to why this community is homogenous and why it fails to attract a more diverse crowd of feminists.</p>

Keywords contemporary feminisms; crafts; craftivism; Sweden
